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CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON SCIENTIFIC LANGUAGE IN SKINCARE PRODUCT NAMES AND DESCRIPTION

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Abstract

This study examines how "scientific" language in skincare product names constructs authority, efficacy claims, and consumer subject positions. Since skincare naming with chemical elements and specific quantification may have impact to the issue of prodcuts overclaim dan idea of scientism, critical analysis is imprtant to encounter those issues. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it analyzes two skincare products naming namely Skintific and Wardah. The analysis follows three dimensions: (1) text analysis which includes phrase analysis on lexical borrowing from science, quantification and statistical authority and hybridization of science and beauty rhetoric; (2) discursive practice which analyze how names are produced (brand style and platform constraints), distributed (packaging, e-commerce), and consumed (consumer readings of numbers and technical terms); and (3) social practice to reveal the ideology behind the text. Findings indicate systematic patterns on the scientific language is less about empirical precision and more about constructing trust and authority. The common phrases construction comprises the formula of "quantification + chemical compounds" which are commonly used in the skincare names. The study contributes an operational scheme for identifying the ideology of scientism in naming, clarifies meaning-making mechanisms, and discusses implications for consumer literacy and marketing communication regulation.

Keywords: CDA, Fairclough, scientific language, skincare, product names

INTRODUCTION

Scientific language in cosmetic names and descriptions refers to the use of technical terms, chemical compounds, and scientific jargon to describe the ingredients and benefits of a cosmetic product. This type of language is often used to convey a sense of credibility and efficacy to consumers, as well as to differentiate the product from competitors. By using scientific language, cosmetic companies aim to appeal to consumers who are looking for advanced, cutting-edge skincare solutions backed by scientific research and evidence. Additionally, scientific language can also help consumers better understand the specific ingredients in a product and how they work to improve the skin. This trans-

parency can build trust and loyalty among consumers who are more informed about what they are putting on their skin. Overall, the use of scientific language in cosmetic names and descriptions plays a crucial role in the marketing and branding of skincare products, emphasizing the product's effectiveness and quality.

By using language containing chemical compounds, skincare brands can appeal to a more discerning consumer base that values evidence-based products. This can help differentiate their products from others on the market and position them as leaders in the industry. This "scientifization" is the result of promotional strategies such as the presentation of numbers and statistics, scientific or pseudoscientific vocabulary and other characteristics of scientific discourse. Furthermore, it can also help educate consumers about the benefits of specific ingredients and how they can address their skincare concerns. Ultimately, incorporating scientific language into skincare marketing can help bridge the gap between consumers and the science behind skincare products, leading to more informed purchasing decisions. For example, a skincare brand could highlight the use of retinol in their products by explaining how it promotes collagen production and reduces the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. By using terms like "retinol" and "collagen production", the brand can communicate the effectiveness of their products to consumers who are seeking anti-aging solutions. This scientific approach not only sets the brand apart from competitors but also empowers consumers to make informed choices based on their specific skincare needs. (Hutagalung et al., 2023).

Critical discourse analysis plays a crucial role in understanding the language used in cosmetics, as it allows for a deeper examination of the power dynamics and ideologies embedded within marketing and advertising strategies. By critically analysing the language used in skincare products, advertisements, and packaging, we can uncover hidden messages, stereotypes, and biases that may influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. This analysis can also reveal how language shapes our understanding of beauty standards, self-care practices, and the relationship between consumers and the skincare industry. Ultimately, by applying a critical lens to language use in cosmetics, we can challenge dominant narratives, promote inclusivity and diversity, and empower consumers to make informed choices about their skincare routines (Mendrofa, 2020), (Kaur et al., 2013).

By questioning the language used in skincare products, this paper has a research problem of how the naming of skincare products containing scientific language reveals ideology through critical discourse analysis. This study may contribute to dismantling harmful beauty ideals and promote a more inclusive definition of beauty. This critical analysis allows us to recognize the importance of representation and diversity in the skincare industry, and encourages brands to be more mindful of the messages they are sending to consumers. This study aims to conduct a critical analysis of the use of scientific language in the names of cosmetic products through a more rigorous phrase analysis and the implications on how such language functions, what persuasive work it does, and what implications this has for consumer understanding and regulatory oversight.

The "Scientification" of Beauty Discourse

Several scholars have argued that modern cosmetics advertising has adopted a

rhetoric of science to enhance credibility and appeal. Amalina (2023) emphasizes how linguistic devices used by advertisers as a marketing technique to promote their brands to empower and attract consumers. The study employs Fairclough's CDA, hence the text analysis has short analysis on the use of pronouns, rhetoric, simile, repetition and slogans. Those linguistic features are working as strategies, manipulators, and controllers of consumers' minds. The discursive practices are found in the way of the text presents positive representation, the strategy of discunt and give away, limited time sale, customer proof and famous celebrity endorsement. Meanwhile Widyawati & Widodo (2025)but the practice of overclaiming in marketing is increasingly common. Overclaiming occurs when manufacturers state the benefits of a product without being supported by adequate scientific evidence, which can mislead consumers. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of regulations implemented by the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM points out that overclaiming occurs when manufacturers state the benefits of a product without being supported by adequate scientific evidence, which can mislead consumers. The study focuses on the effectiveness of regulations implemented by the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM) in overcoming overclaims on skincare products. Another reserach by Kholifah (2022) shows the study to shed light on the way producers of beauty products employ and exploit scientific-sounding terms to gain improved market.

Studies also demonstrate that consumers often interpret technical terminology as evidence of product safety and effectiveness (Kaur & Kaur, 2019). Yet, regulatory bodies such as the FDA and European Commission have flagged misleading scientific claims as a persistent issue (*FDA*, 2022). This suggests a gap between the linguistic presentation of scientific legitimacy and the actual evidence supporting product claims. Thus, critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a valuable framework to uncover the ideological underpinnings and marketing strategies embedded in cosmetic scientific language. This paper investigates two main cosmetic brands that popular in Indonesia in the name of the product and limit to the ingridients as the main feature in the products'name.

Ringrow (2014) in (Kenalemang-Palm & Eriksson, 2023) analyses English and French beauty advertisements and finds that brands frequently employ scientific or pseudo-scientific lexical items (e.g., "DNA-repairing", "cell-code", "peptide") to legitimize cosmetic products. According to Ringrow (2016)the topic of cosmetics advertising discourse is examined using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. One common theme underlying most cosmetics advertising discourse is that the female body always requires 'work' to fix its 'problems': flat skin, dry hair, and so on. The author uses themes of language and gender, media and identity, and advertising across cultures to expose exactly what is going on in the language of cosmetics advertising and to offer a first step towards challenging these ideas and thinking about alternatives. According to Ringrow (2016, although some of these claims may have genuine scientific basis, much of the discousrse functions as persuasive rather than strictly informative, employing the aura of science to enhance attractiveness. This point of view gives an insight on analyzing the synthesis of skincare names in form of phrases. The choice of words that are supposed to be common become questionable object to study such as the element of niacinamide, Hyaluronic Acid, retinol, etc. to be critically analyzed.

Similarly, Díez Arroyo (2013) inves-

tigates the use of scientific language in skin-care advertising, showing how specialized terminology, Greco-Latin roots, and etymological opacity ("bio-active glycoproteins," "syn-collagen") function to persuade lay consumers by invoking scientific authority. In effect, the more opaque or specialized the term, the greater its persuasive power, even if the consumer cannot unpack its meaning. This process has been termed the "scientification of beauty" (Chen 2015 in Diez-Arroyo) and signals a shift in cosmetic marketing from mere beauty appeals to a more technological/scientific framing. This research completes the present studies on the framing issue to persuade the consumer in the discursive practice.

Fairclough's CDA and the three-dimensional model

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a research approach that examines the ways in which language is used to construct and reproduce power dynamics in society. One of the central tenets of critical discourse analysis is the idea that language is not neutral, but rather reflects and reinforces existing power structures. Fairclough (1992) conceptualizes CDA as a three-dimensional analysis: (i) text (lexis/grammar, cohesion, intertextual markers), (ii) discursive practice (text production, distribution, consumption), and (iii) social practice (ideology, hegemony, institutional/regulatory regimes).

Studying scientific language in skincare products is crucial for understanding how power dynamics and inequalities are perpetuated in the beauty industry. The language used in product descriptions, ingredient lists, and marketing materials can often be misleading or deceptive, leading consumers to make uninformed decisions about their skincare routines. By conducting a critical analysis of this language, we can uncover how certain brands may be exploiting consumer trust and perpetuating harmful beauty standards. The model allows us to read product names not only for what they say (e.g., "15% L-Ascorbic Acid") but also for how they are produced (brand guideline toolkits; retailer metadata) and what societal beliefs they mobilize (faith in techno-science; risk/efficacy framings). Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA is well-suited to interrogate such naming because it links textual form to production/consumption practices and to wider socio-regulatory ideologies of science, expertise, and beauty.

Fairclough (1996) in (Durmaz& Yogun, 2022) assumes that every language case can be defined as a communicative event, and he claims that analysis of the communicative events and the discursive order are included in the critical analysis of media discourse. Fairclough stresses that communicative event analysis is composed of three distinctive elements including to analyze advertisement discourse namely the textual analysis on the ads, the social practice

METHOD

This study adopts critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach drawing from Fairclough's three-dimensional model: (1) textual analysis of linguistic features, (2) discourse practice examining production and consumption, and (3) socio-cultural practice situating discourse within broader consumerist ideologies. The textual analysis begins with the analysis of the language unit constructing the phrases. The dataset consists of two famous cosmetics brands skincare products that commonly used in Indonesia namely *Skintific* and *Wardah* for skincare products. The sampling criteria is based on the actual situation where those two cosmetics brands are now very popular

in Indonesia. The names of skincare are collected from the websiste and Cosmetic advertisements platforms in 2025. By excluding decorative make up and limit the data to the name of skincare products such moustirizer, serum, gel and other skoncare products. The textual analysis is conducted by analyzing the structure of the skincare product names in form of phrases to be dervied into the elements which construct the phrases. The text analysis also highlights the choice of vocabulary used in the sceintifc name of the products and the quantification constructing the products name.

Next, the data of the cosmetic name are analyzed into the step of interpretation as discursive practice. This step comprises analysis on the production and the consumption of the skincare product names. The last step of analysis is by grounding the text analysis and the discursive practice into socio-cultural practice with descriptive analysis related to the actual context. This last step links the finding of textual analysis and discursive practice to reveal the ideology in the skincare names.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the Fairclough's CDA framework, there are three steps to discover the ideology behind the text namely the text analysis, the discursive practice and the social practice. The text analysis limits the discussion to the phrases analysis on the name which contain quantification, pre modifier and head. The discursive practice comprises how skincare names are produced, distributed, consumed. Finally, the ideology is revealed through the correlation of discursive practice and consumerism. Below is the description of each step in CDA on the cosmetics name with scientific language:

The text analysis

The 'text' is used in a sense which is quite familiar in linguistics but not elsewhere, to refer to any product whether written or spoken, so that the transcript of an interview or a conversation, for example, would be called a 'text' (Fairclough, 1992). In addition, Fairclough (1992) argues that text analysis can be organized under four main headings: vocabulary', 'grammar', 'cohesion', and 'text structure'. This part of analysis reveals three dominant strategies in the use of scientific language in cosmetic advertising namely lexical borrowing from science, quantification and statistical authority and hybridization of science and beauty rhetoric. Ads frequently adopt scientific terminology such as "Niacinamide," "ceramide," "hyaluronic Acid", "salycilic acid"—without contextual explanation. This borrowing lends products a veneer of innovation, even when consumers may not fully grasp the terms. The next analysis of the phrase is the quantification and the hybridization of science and beauty rhetoric. The text analysis is based on the data of skincare names in the following table:

Table 1. The data of Cosmetics name of *Skintfic*

Products Name	Quan-tifica-tion	Pre Modifier	Head
SymWhite 377 Dark Spot Eraser Serum	-	SymWhite 377 Dark Spot Eraser Serum	serum
5X Ceramide Low pH Cleanser	5X	Ceramide low pH	cleanser
MSH Niacinamide Brightening Moisture Gel		MSH Niacinamide	gel
5X Ceramide Serum Sunscreen SPF50 PA++++	5X	Ceramide	Serum sun-screen
Mugwort Anti Pores & Acne Clay Stick		Mugwort Anti Pores&Acne	Stick
4D Hyaluronic Acid (HA) Barrier Essence Toner	4D	Hyalurnic Acid (HA) Bar-rier Essence	toner
10% Niacinamide Brightening Serum	10%	Niacinamide Brightening	serum
5X Ceramide Barrier Repair Moisture Gel	5X	Ceramide barrier Repair Moisture	Gel
3X Acid Acne Gel Cleanser	3X	Acid Acne	cleanser
2% Salicylic Acid Anti Acne Serum	2%	Salicylic Acid Anti Acne	serum
4D Hyaluronic Acid Barrier Essence Toner	4D	Hyaluronic Acid Barrier Essence	Toner
4D Hyaluronic Acid Hydrating Serum	4D	Hyaluronic Acid Hydrating	serum
Amino Acid Ultra-Gentle Cleansing Mousse		Amino Acid Ultra-Gentle Cleansing	cleansing
10% Niacinamide Brightening Serum	10%	Niacinamide Brightening	serum
5X Ceramide Barrier Repair Moisture Gel	5X	Ceramide barrier repair	gel
3X Acid Acne Gel Cleanser		Acid Acne Gel	Gel cleanser
2% Salicylic Acid Anti Acne Serum	2%	Salicylic Acid Anti Acne	Serum
4D Hyaluronic Acid Barrier Essence Toner	4D	Hyaluronic Acid Barrier Essence	Toner
4D Hyaluronic Acid Hydrating Serum	4D	Hyaluronic Acid Hydrating	Serum
5% Panthenol Acne Calming Water Gel	5%	Panthenol Acne Calming Water Gel	Water gel
AHA BHA PHA Exfoliating Pads		AHA BHA PHA	Pads
Amino Acid Ultra-Gentle Cleansing Mousse.		Amino Acid Ultra-Gentle	Cleansing mousse
Retinol Skin Renewal Moisturizer		Retinol Skin Renewal	Moisturizer
10% Pure Vitamin C Brightening Serum	10%	Pure Vitamin C	serum
12% AHA BHA PHA LHA Peeling Solution Serum.	12%	AHA BHA PHA LHA Peeling Solution	serum
MSH Niacinamide Brightening Moisture Gel		MSH Niacinamide Brightening	gel
Glycolic Acid Daily Clarifying Exfoliating Toner		Glycolic Acid Daily Clarifying Exfoliating	toner

Table 2. The data of Cosmetics name of Wardah

Products Name	Quantification	Pre Modifier	Head
SymRadiance399 + 10% Niacinamide Bright & Barrier Repair Serum	10%	SymRadiance399 + 10% Niacinamide Bright & Barrier Repair	serum
Renew You 1% Retinol Microcapsule + Ceramide Cell Renewal Serum	1%	Renew You 1% Retinol Microcapsule + Ceramide Cell Renewal	serum
Wardah Nature Daily Aloe Hydramild Serum		Wardah Nature Daily Aloe Hydramild	serum
SymRadiance399 + 10% Niacinamide Bright & Barrier Repair Serum	10%	SymRadiance399 +10% Niacinamide Bright & Barrier Repair	serum
Lightening Day Cream Advanced Niacinamide		Lightening	Day cream
Lightening Night Cream Advanced Niacinamide		Lightening	Night cream
Lightening Face Toner — Niacinamide; Glycolic Acid; Aloe vera; Pro-vitamin B5; pH balance		Lightening Face	Toner
Nature Daily Aloe Hydramild Serum		Nature Daily Aloe	Serum
Nature Daily SuperSerum Mask — [2× Hyaluronic Acid; seaweed fiber].		Nature Daily	Superserum mask
Crystal Secret Bright Peptide + 5% Niacinamide Night Moisturizer	5%	Crystal Secret Bright Peptide	Moisturizer
Crystal Secret Alpha Arbutin + 5% Niacinamide Day Moisturizer	5%	Crystal Secret Alpha Arbutin	Day Moisturizer
Crystal Secret 3% Tranexamic Complex α-Arbutin Dark Spot Corrector Serum	3%		Corrector Serum
Crystal Secret Eyes Dark Circle Corrector		Crystal Secret Eyes Dark Circle	Corrector
Renew You 1% Retinol Microcapsule + Ceramide Cell Renewal Serum	1%	Renew You	Serum
Renew You Ceramide Matrixyl 3000 Lift & Firm SPF 35 PA+++ Day Moisturizer	3000 35 PA+++	Renew You Ceramide Matrixyl	Day Moisturizer

Based on the above data, almost nowadays skincare names propose scientific ingredients in the phrase pre modifier. Several materials are claimed to enhance skin performance to gain ideal beauty. The phrase is therefore a preconstruction which is infinitely flexible in that it can refer to a wide range of circumstances including the name of skincare products (Mills, 2002). The phrases also contain chemical compound which is claimed to several verbs such as "lift", "firm", "rejuvenate", "calming" and "hydrating", etc. The text also chemistry tokens: ingredient names and Latin/Greek roots (retinol, niacinamide, hyaluronic, peptide, ceramide, arbutin). Prior research indicates that such morphology indexes expertise and "medicalizes" skincare.

The next analysis of the text is the presence of quantification and statistical authority. Phrases such as "1% Retinol", "3% Tranexamic Complex", 10% Niacinamide, 5% Panthenol, SPF 35+++ , etc. invoke statistical legitimacy. Numbers simulate measurement and dose. However, many lack transparent reference to methodology or sample size, raising questions about validity. The consumer have to hardly interpret the number of percentage in each composition described such as 12%AHA BHA PHA LHA without any further explanation. Furthermore, hybridization of Science and Beauty Rhetoric also appear in the skincare names and descriptions. For instance, "**NMF Amino + Ceramide Rejuvenating", "**Ceramide Matrixyl 3000 Lift & Firm", "MSH Niacinamide Brightening". Scientific claims are blended with aesthetic promises", "molecular hydration for glowing skin" or "DNA protection for youthful radiance." This discursive fusion aligns scientific legitimacy with beauty ideals, reinforcing consumer desires

These strategies reveal that scientific language in cosmetics is less about empirical precision and more about constructing trust and authority. While consumers perceive scientific claims as markers of safety and effectiveness, the reality is often rhetorical rather than evidential.

Discursive Practice Analysis

The next analysis of Fairclough CDA is the discursive practice on how the skincare products are produced, distributed and consumed. Through CDA, the audience will be given an understand that language will bring about change. The sentences we make and the words we choose to utter are important (Durmaz & Yogun, 2022). The process of text production involves several techniques such as morphological modification, co-occurrence of the elements and the percentages as well as formula. The appearances of techno-morphology are shown in the process/engineering lexemes such as "micro-, nano-, complex, matrix, encapsulated, system". Those affixes have influence on the importing the semantics of delivery systems and controlled release.

In addition, clinical framers and biomedical metaphors such as PA++++, pro+, advanced, defence/shield, even "DNA" references evoke medical depth, protection, and risk mitigation. These elements frequently co-occur—for example, a name like "**Alpha Arbutin + 5% Niacinamide**" stacks initialisms, actives, and a percentage to project precision and laboratory lineage; a name like "Micro-Sculpting" adds techno-process semantics; "5X Ceramide" multiplies a biomaterial with a potency operator. Prior scholarship predicts this stacking effect intensifies perceived credibility and "high science." Advertisements have the power to construct the identities of the individuals therefore, CDA aims to discover the influence of words, colours, and other visual representations on the minds of the audience (Saeed & Khan,

2022).

In the production aspect, naming of the products travels through internal brand templates and legal vetting. Names must fit pack real estate, synchronize with INCI (the International Nomenclature Cosmetic Ingredient) ingredient lists and with retailer database fields, and remain consistent with trademark strategy. Product names which compress actives, percentages, and techno-morphology will perform a similar function perhaps even more forcefully because names are repeated, searchable, and portable.

In the distribution analysis of the skincare products, e-commerce infrastructures amplify naming features via title slots, search filters (e.g., "with Retinol," "with Niacinamide"), and SEO. Because platform search favours keywords, scientific tokens in names are algorithmically rewarded, increasing visibility—an incentive to create names sound scientific even when the science is just subordinary. Through those keywords, the legitimation of chemical elements mentioned in the skincare names become commodification in the distribution process.

For consumption analysis, influencers, reviewers, and comparison sites repeat product names verbatim, entrenching the science register in everyday talk. Numbers and actives become shorthand for value ("this one has 10% niacinamide"). This echo chamber effect forms the production moves to platform metadata and finally goes to the user discourse illustrates Fairclough's mediation chain that the discursive practices recontextualize scientific lexicon as consumer common sense. Consequently, the meso-level system privileges legible techno-tokens over nuanced evidence. That helps explain the resilience of pseudo-scientific descriptors identified in prior advertising research.

Social practice in Skincare Product Names

From the text analysis and discursive practice, it can be revealed the ideology of scientism and neoliberal consumerism. The ideology of scientism is shown in the naming mobilizes a scientist–inventor imaginary: the product as the "technology", the user as rational chooser optimizing a regimen. This aligns with neo efficacy becomes a consumer's research task (reading % signs, decoding actives), not merely a manufacturer's duty to demonstrate. Prior work shows how this "science aura" legitimizes products even with terminology which is not transparent. The idea of scientism build consumers' paradigm to believe that the niacinamide for instance is claimed to "brighten" the skin tone since it is mentioned repeatedly on those two brand s of skincare.

Regulatory rationalities such as from the EU Common Criteria demand that claims be substantiated, truthful, and understandable. Although primarily aimed at "claims," names that imply clinical or cellular effects (e.g., "**1% Retinol Microcapsule + Ceramide Cell Renewal,** Matrixyl 3000 Lift & Firm SPF 35 PA+++") inhabit a grey zone. Legally, the whole presentation can be evaluated. The Commission's guidance and national authorities (and their technical documents) emphasize evidence proportionality and clarity principles at odds with over-stacked jargon. The skincare naming, therefore can be evaluated by a standard naming of the phrase formula such as "quantification + chemical compounds"

The ideology of consumerism is seen in the situation in which skincare products naming habituates consumers to scientific-looking ingredient lists. This makes science-tinged names feel natural and credible. Technical naming presumes literacy in chemistry/dermatology and may disadvantage

consumers with lower health-communication literacy. Advertising sources warn that too much jargon can backfire, reducing trust and comprehension as evidence of a persuasion and comprehension paradox at the social level. Thus, an important issue in the context of this critical discourse analysis is related to how a reality can be conveyed by the media especially advertisement of skincare products. Reality can mean how the actors involved in an event are represented in the news through the language used. Therefore, language is a representation of a reality that can change and be different when compared to the actual life (Wiati et al., 2023). Therefore, even when no explicit clinical claim is made in the name, the ensemble in the formula of phrase which contain numbers/quantification + actives + techno-morphology implies efficacy and mechanism.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that cosmetic advertising strategically deploys scientific language to legitimize products, enhance consumer trust, and bridge the gap between science and beauty ideals. However, the critical discourse analysis highlights a recurrent tension between persuasive marketing and scientific accuracy. The implications are twofold: (1) consumers may be misled by jargon that appears authoritative but lacks empirical support, and (2) ethical concerns arise regarding transparency in advertising practices. Future research could extend this analysis to cross-cultural contexts, exploring how scientific language resonates differently across consumer markets. Moreover, stricter regulatory frameworks are needed to ensure that the use of scientific claims in cosmetics is both accurate and transparent. Ultimately, the critical examination of cosmetic scientific language underscores the necessity of balancing persuasive marketing with ethical responsibility in consumer discourse.

Embedding scientific language into cosmetics names is now a constitutive feature of beauty discourse. Through Fairclough's CDA, the audience can see how micro-textual stacking of chemistry tokens, numbers, and techno-morphology co-operates with meso-level platform logics and macro-level ideologies to produce a powerful aura of science, one that can overtake explanation and outpace evidence. In addition, CDA on skincare names can contribute to the regulatory criteria and INCI standards which is designed for protection and transparency in the marketing discourse as well as regulation and also form the interdiscursive backdrop that normalizes scientific-looking names.

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