

Bibliometric Analysis of the Role of Employee Experience in Driving Digital Innovation

Loso Judijanto¹, Novian Aldo², Arnes Yuli Vandika³

¹ IPOSS Jakarta, Indonesia and losojudijantobumn@gmail.com

² Poltekkes Kemenkes Tanjungpinang and novian_aldotpi@yahoo.com

³ Universitas Bandar Lampung and arnes@ubl.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Digital innovation has become a critical driver of organizational transformation in the modern business landscape, and employee experience (EX) plays a pivotal role in facilitating this process. This study employs bibliometric analysis to explore the evolving research landscape on the relationship between EX and digital innovation. Using data from leading academic databases, the analysis identifies key themes, trends, and influential works in the field. Findings highlight the centrality of transformation, performance, and human-centric factors, such as leadership, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, in driving digital innovation. Emerging themes, including sustainability, green innovation, and digital literacy, underscore the shifting priorities in the literature. The study also reveals significant research gaps, including the need for more longitudinal studies, individual-level analyses, and insights from diverse cultural contexts. Practical implications suggest that organizations should adopt a holistic, employee-centric approach to digital strategies, integrating technological advancements with initiatives that enhance engagement, skill development, and sustainability. This study provides a foundation for future research and actionable insights for practitioners aiming to leverage EX for sustainable innovation.

Keywords: *Employee Experience, Digital Innovation, Digital Transformation, Leadership, Sustainability, Bibliometric Analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary business landscape, digital innovation has emerged as a cornerstone of organizational success and competitiveness. The integration of digital technologies in workflows, customer interactions, and operational strategies has enabled organizations to achieve unprecedented efficiency and scalability. However, the success of digital innovation is not solely dependent on technology but is intrinsically linked to the human factor—the employees. The role of employee experience (EX) in fostering and driving digital innovation has garnered increasing attention in academic and professional discourse. This study employs bibliometric analysis to examine the dynamic relationship between employee experience and digital innovation, providing insights into the evolving research trends and implications for organizations.

Employee experience, defined as the sum of perceptions, feelings, and experiences employees have throughout their journey within an organization [1], has become a central focus for organizations aiming to enhance workforce engagement and productivity. Positive EX is associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction, loyalty, and innovation [2]. In the context of digital innovation, employees are not merely implementers of technology but active contributors to its ideation, adaptation, and improvement. Research has demonstrated that organizations that prioritize EX are more likely to foster a culture of innovation, where employees feel empowered to experiment, collaborate, and embrace new technologies [3].

The link between EX and digital innovation is particularly relevant in the era of Industry 4.0, characterized by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), and

automation. Organizations must navigate complex technological landscapes while ensuring that their workforce is engaged and aligned with strategic goals. Employees' willingness to adopt and champion digital tools is often influenced by their overall experience within the organization, including factors such as leadership support, access to training, and opportunities for growth [4]. Thus, understanding the role of EX in driving digital innovation is crucial for organizations seeking to thrive in a digital-first world.

Bibliometric analysis, a quantitative method for evaluating scientific literature, has become a valuable tool for uncovering trends, networks, and knowledge gaps in various research fields [5]. By analyzing citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence, bibliometric studies provide a comprehensive view of the intellectual structure of a research domain. In the context of EX and digital innovation, bibliometric analysis can shed light on how these concepts have evolved over time, identify key contributors and seminal works, and highlight emerging areas of interest.

Previous bibliometric studies have explored related themes such as digital transformation, workplace engagement, and innovation management. However, there is a paucity of research focusing specifically on the intersection of EX and digital innovation. This gap underscores the need for a systematic analysis of the existing literature to better understand the theoretical and practical implications of this relationship. By employing bibliometric analysis, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on EX and digital innovation, offering a foundation for future research and practice.

This study aims to achieve the following objectives: (1) to analyze the evolution of research on EX and digital innovation over time, (2) to identify key literature contributing to this field, (3) to explore the thematic structure and emerging trends in the literature, and (4) to provide recommendations for future research and practical applications. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical knowledge. Theoretically, this study provides a systematic synthesis of existing research, highlighting gaps and opportunities for further investigation. Practically, it offers actionable insights for HR professionals, innovation managers, and policymakers seeking to enhance EX and drive digital innovation. By aligning employee-centric practices with technological advancements, organizations can create a virtuous cycle of innovation and engagement, ultimately achieving sustainable success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *The Concept of Employee Experience*

Employee Experience (EX) has become a central focus in organizational research, representing the totality of perceptions, emotions, and experiences employees encounter throughout their tenure in an organization. It extends beyond traditional human resource practices to encompass every interaction an employee has with their workplace, from recruitment to exit [6]. Scholars agree that EX is multidimensional, involving physical, cultural, and technological aspects that collectively shape employees' engagement, satisfaction, and productivity [7]. The increasing importance of EX in the digital era stems from its impact on employee performance and organizational outcomes, including innovation, retention, and customer satisfaction.

Organizations that excel in EX design often focus on employee-centric approaches, such as providing meaningful work, supportive management, and technology that enhances productivity [8]. The interplay between EX and technology is particularly significant in the context of digital innovation, where employees' willingness and ability to adopt new tools and processes can determine the success of organizational transformation. However, there remains a gap in understanding how EX directly influences digital innovation outcomes, necessitating further investigation.

2.2 Digital Innovation and Organizational Transformation

Digital innovation refers to the implementation of digital technologies to create or improve products, processes, or business models [9]. It is a critical driver of organizational transformation in the age of Industry 4.0, characterized by advancements in artificial intelligence, machine learning, the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics. While digital innovation promises enhanced efficiency and competitiveness, its success depends significantly on the human factors involved in its implementation and utilization. Research highlights the challenges organizations face in aligning digital innovation with their workforce's needs and capabilities [10]. Employees often encounter barriers such as resistance to change, skill gaps, and inadequate training, which can hinder the adoption of new technologies. Conversely, a positive EX can mitigate these challenges by fostering a culture of trust, collaboration, and continuous learning. For example, studies have shown that organizations with high levels of employee engagement are more likely to achieve successful digital transformation [1], [11]. Despite these insights, the mechanisms through which EX influences digital innovation remain underexplored.

2.3 The Intersection of Employee Experience and Digital Innovation

The relationship between EX and digital innovation is inherently bidirectional. On the one hand, a positive EX can drive digital innovation by empowering employees to embrace and leverage new technologies. On the other hand, digital innovation can enhance EX by streamlining workflows, enabling remote work, and providing tools that improve collaboration and decision-making [12]. This interplay underscores the need for organizations to adopt holistic approaches that integrate EX into their digital strategies. Theoretical frameworks such as Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory provide valuable insights into this relationship. The theory posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential for intrinsic motivation, which is a critical factor in fostering innovation [13]. When employees experience autonomy in decision-making, opportunities to develop competencies, and a sense of belonging, they are more likely to contribute to innovative outcomes. Similarly, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggests that perceived usefulness and ease of use influence employees' acceptance of digital tools, which is directly linked to their overall experience [14].

2.4 Empirical Studies on EX and Digital Innovation

Empirical research provides evidence of the positive impact of EX on digital innovation. For instance, a study by Gallup (2019) found that companies prioritizing EX reported 21% higher profitability and 17% higher productivity, alongside improved innovation metrics. Another study by [15] highlighted that organizations with robust EX strategies were more likely to succeed in digital transformation initiatives. In the context of

technology adoption, several studies emphasize the role of leadership and organizational culture in shaping EX and innovation outcomes. For example, [16] argues that transformational leadership is crucial for fostering a culture of innovation, as leaders inspire and empower employees to embrace change. Similarly, [17] emphasizes that organizational culture serves as a foundation for innovation, with employee-centric cultures being more conducive to digital experimentation and risk-taking. However, not all studies present a linear relationship between EX and digital innovation. Some researchers caution against over-reliance on technology as a solution for improving EX, arguing that technology can exacerbate stress and reduce employee satisfaction if not implemented thoughtfully [18]. This highlights the importance of balancing technological investments with initiatives that address employees' emotional and psychological needs.

3. METHODS

This study employs a bibliometric analysis approach to systematically examine the body of literature on the role of employee experience (EX) in driving digital innovation. The analysis focuses on scholarly publications indexed in Scopus, to ensure a comprehensive dataset. The study utilizes quantitative techniques to analyze publication trends, citation patterns, and co-authorship networks. Keywords such as "employee experience," "digital innovation," and "workplace innovation" were used to retrieve relevant articles, ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Tool like VOSviewer was employed for network visualization and thematic analysis, enabling the identification of influential works, emerging themes, and research gaps. The analysis was conducted with an emphasis on ensuring rigor and replicability, providing a robust foundation for understanding the intellectual structure and evolution of this research domain.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

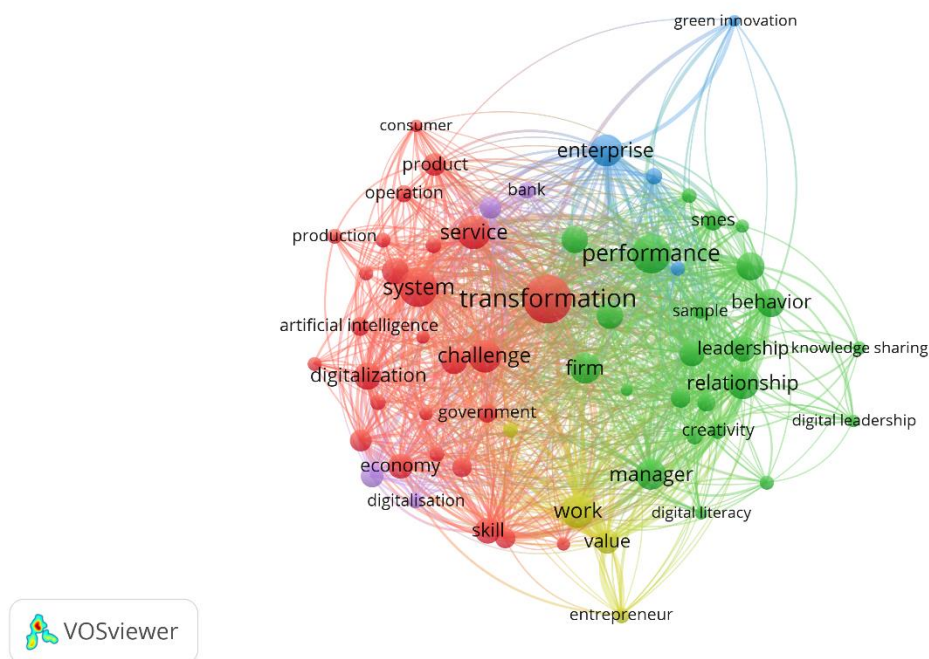


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2024

This VOSviewer visualization represents a network analysis of keywords or concepts frequently co-occurring in the field of study, likely related to employee experience, digital transformation, and innovation. The nodes represent keywords or topics, and their size indicates the frequency of occurrence in the dataset. Larger nodes, such as "transformation," "system," and "performance," indicate central themes in the research. The connecting lines represent co-occurrence relationships between these topics, and the density of connections reflects the level of interrelation. The clustering of nodes into distinct colors suggests thematic groupings within the broader research area.

The red cluster predominantly focuses on terms such as "transformation," "system," "challenge," and "digitalization," indicating that these keywords are central to discussions about technological and organizational change. This cluster emphasizes the systemic challenges organizations face during digital transformation, including the integration of digital tools, optimization of workflows, and management of disruptive innovations. Additionally, terms like "economy" and "government" suggest an intersection between macroeconomic policies and organizational digitalization strategies.

The green cluster highlights topics like "performance," "relationship," "manager," and "work," suggesting a focus on human-centric aspects of digital transformation. This cluster appears to center on the role of employee experience, leadership, and interpersonal dynamics in achieving performance outcomes. Keywords such as "knowledge sharing," "creativity," and "digital leadership" indicate the importance of fostering collaborative and innovative workplace cultures to navigate digital changes successfully.

The blue cluster, which includes keywords like "enterprise," "SMEs," and "green innovation," points to research on specific organizational contexts and sustainability dimensions. This cluster likely addresses how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are leveraging digital transformation to achieve performance gains while aligning with sustainability goals. The presence of "green innovation" suggests an emphasis on eco-friendly technologies and practices within the broader narrative of digital transformation and organizational performance.

Overall, this visualization underscores the interdisciplinary nature of the research, bridging topics such as digital transformation, employee experience, leadership, and sustainability. The interconnections among clusters reflect a holistic approach to studying how organizations adapt to technological advancements while considering economic, environmental, and human factors. This analysis offers valuable insights for researchers and practitioners looking to understand the multifaceted drivers and challenges of digital transformation in diverse contexts.

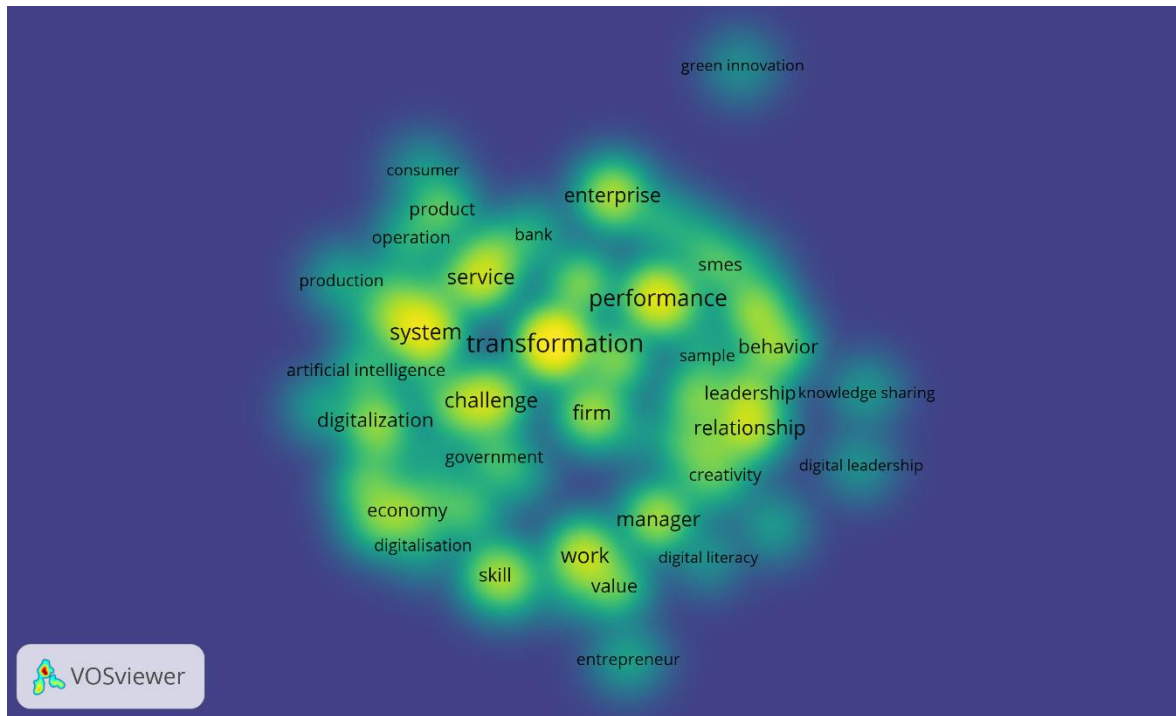


Figure 3. Density Visualization
 Source: Data Analysis Result, 2024

This heatmap visualization created in VOSviewer highlights the density of keywords within a research domain, indicating the frequency and relevance of specific terms in the literature. Brighter areas, such as those around "transformation," "system," and "performance," represent higher concentrations of research activity, emphasizing these terms as central themes in the field. The high-density regions suggest that much of the academic discourse focuses on the processes and challenges of digital transformation, particularly how organizational systems and performance outcomes are influenced by technological advancements. The outer regions, featuring terms like "green innovation" and "digital literacy," show lower but emerging areas of interest in the literature. These terms highlight growing trends in sustainability and skill-building within digital transformation contexts, suggesting their increasing importance in recent research. The heatmap also reveals the interconnectedness of topics, with human-centric terms like "relationship," "manager," and "work" linking closely to technological and organizational themes, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of studies in this area. This visualization thus provides a snapshot of key focal points in the research and emerging areas that may shape future studies.

4.2 Citation Analysis

Table 2. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title	Contributions
603	[19]	Digitalization and its influence on business model innovation	Examines how digitalization drives business model innovation, emphasizing the need for strategic adaptation in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.
267	[20]	Investing in the IT that makes a competitive difference	Highlights the role of IT investments in creating competitive advantages, focusing on strategic alignment between technology and organizational goals.

Citations	Authors and year	Title	Contributions
242	[21]	The impact of low-carbon city pilot policy on the total factor productivity of listed enterprises in China	Investigates the effect of low-carbon city initiatives on productivity, providing insights into the intersection of environmental policy and corporate efficiency.
242	[22]	The next 20 years: How customer and workforce attitudes will evolve	Explores generational shifts in workforce and customer behavior, forecasting trends that will shape organizational strategies and workplace dynamics.
213	[23]	Small businesses in the new creative industries: Innovation as a people management challenge	Discusses the unique challenges of fostering innovation in creative industries, focusing on people management as a critical enabler of innovation.
212	[24]	Is this time different? How digitalization influences job creation and destruction	Analyzes the dual impact of digitalization on job markets, highlighting trends in job creation and destruction in response to technological advancements.
207	[25]	The digital workplace is key to digital innovation	Emphasizes the importance of a digital workplace in fostering innovation, focusing on collaboration tools and organizational culture as key enablers.
191	[26]	Personal Resources and Work Engagement in the Face of Change	Investigates how personal resources (e.g., resilience, optimism) enhance work engagement, especially during periods of organizational change.
150	[27]	Industry 4.0 – organizing routines or innovations?	Examines the balance between routine optimization and innovation in Industry 4.0, highlighting the organizational strategies needed for technological integration.
148	[28]	Early evidence of digital labor in accounting: Innovation with Robotic Process Automation	Explores the introduction of robotic process automation (RPA) in accounting, providing insights into its potential for innovation and efficiency improvements.

Source: Publish or Perish Output, 2024

Discussion

1. Centrality of Transformation and Performance

The analysis reveals that "transformation" and "performance" are among the most central and frequently studied themes in this domain. This finding aligns with the broader discourse on digital transformation, which emphasizes the need for organizations to adapt their processes, culture, and technologies to remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment [29]. Employee experience plays a pivotal role in facilitating this transformation by fostering a supportive environment for innovation and change.

Performance, as a key outcome, underscores the importance of aligning EX initiatives with organizational objectives. Studies have shown that a positive EX enhances employee engagement, productivity, and creativity, which are critical for achieving performance goals during digital transformation. However, the findings also suggest that the relationship between EX and performance is complex and influenced by multiple factors, including leadership, organizational culture, and technological readiness. Future research could explore these mediating factors to better understand how EX contributes to performance in diverse organizational contexts.

2. Human-Centric Dimensions of Digital Innovation

One of the notable trends highlighted in the analysis is the growing emphasis on human-centric dimensions such as "relationship," "behavior," "knowledge sharing," and "digital leadership." This shift reflects a broader recognition of the importance of human factors in driving digital innovation. Leadership, in particular, emerges as a critical enabler, with terms like "digital leadership" and "manager" indicating the need for leaders who can inspire, empower, and guide employees through the complexities of digital transformation [30]. Knowledge sharing and collaboration are also key themes, highlighting the role of EX in fostering a culture of innovation. Research suggests that when employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to share ideas and collaborate effectively, leading to innovative outcomes [13]. This finding underscores the need for organizations to create environments that encourage open communication, trust, and teamwork. Digital tools can facilitate these processes, but their effectiveness depends on how they are integrated into the workplace and aligned with employees' needs.

3. Emerging Focus on Sustainability and Skill Development

The emergence of terms like "green innovation" and "digital literacy" in recent years indicates a shift towards sustainability and skill development as critical components of digital transformation. This trend reflects the growing importance of aligning organizational goals with broader societal and environmental objectives. Green innovation, in particular, highlights the intersection of EX and sustainability, suggesting that employees who are engaged and motivated are more likely to contribute to eco-friendly practices and innovations [31]. Digital literacy, on the other hand, underscores the need for continuous learning and upskilling to keep pace with technological advancements. As organizations adopt new digital tools and processes, employees must develop the skills required to use these technologies effectively. This finding aligns with the literature on workforce development, which emphasizes the importance of training and education in enabling employees to thrive in a digital-first world [1]. Future research could explore how EX initiatives can support skill development and lifelong learning in diverse industries and cultural contexts.

4. Integration of Employee Experience in Digital Strategies

The findings suggest that integrating EX into digital strategies is crucial for achieving sustainable innovation. This integration requires a holistic approach that considers both technological and human factors. For example, organizations must ensure that digital tools are not only effective but also user-friendly and aligned with employees' workflows and preferences. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a useful framework for understanding how perceived usefulness and ease of use influence employees' adoption of digital tools [32]. However, the analysis indicates that these factors alone are insufficient; organizational culture, leadership, and employee empowerment are equally important. The relationship between EX and digital innovation is bidirectional. While a positive EX can drive innovation, digital innovations can also enhance EX by streamlining workflows, enabling remote work, and fostering a sense of purpose and belonging. This dynamic interplay underscores the need for organizations to adopt employee-centric approaches to digital transformation. For example, involving employees in the design and implementation of digital tools can enhance their engagement and ownership, leading to better outcomes.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Despite the rich insights provided by this analysis, several research gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature focuses on organizational-level factors, with limited attention to individual and team-level dynamics. Understanding how individual employees perceive and contribute to digital innovation is crucial for designing targeted interventions. For instance, future research could explore the role of personality traits, job roles, and demographic factors in shaping employees'

experiences and behaviors during digital transformation. Second, there is a need for more longitudinal studies that examine the long-term impact of EX on digital innovation. Most existing studies are cross-sectional, providing only a snapshot of the relationship between these variables. Longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into how EX evolves over time and its sustained impact on innovation outcomes. Third, the literature is predominantly Western-centric, with limited insights from developing regions. Cultural and economic factors can significantly influence the EX-innovation relationship, and future research should aim to address this gap by examining diverse contexts. For example, studies could explore how cultural values such as collectivism or individualism affect employees' willingness to adopt and champion digital innovations. Finally, there is a need for more interdisciplinary research that bridges organizational behavior, technology management, and sustainability studies. The findings highlight the interconnectedness of these domains, suggesting that holistic approaches are needed to address the complex challenges of digital transformation. For example, future studies could investigate how EX initiatives can simultaneously enhance innovation, employee well-being, and environmental sustainability.

Practical Implications

The findings have significant implications for practitioners seeking to enhance EX and drive digital innovation. Organizations should adopt a human-centered approach to digital transformation, ensuring that employees are actively involved in decision-making and design processes. Leadership development programs should focus on cultivating digital leadership skills, enabling leaders to inspire and empower their teams in a rapidly changing environment. Investments in technology should be complemented by initiatives that address employees' emotional, social, and developmental needs. For example, providing training and mentorship programs can enhance employees' confidence and competence in using digital tools. Additionally, organizations should leverage data and analytics to measure and optimize EX, using insights to inform strategic decisions. Sustainability should also be a key consideration in digital strategies. Organizations can engage employees in green innovation initiatives by creating a culture that values sustainability and provides opportunities for meaningful contributions. For example, involving employees in designing eco-friendly products or processes can enhance their sense of purpose and commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of EX in driving digital innovation, highlighting key themes, trends, and research gaps. The findings underscore the importance of integrating EX into digital strategies, emphasizing the need for holistic approaches that consider both technological and human factors. By addressing these challenges and opportunities, organizations can create environments that foster innovation, engagement, and sustainability, ultimately achieving long-term success in an increasingly digital world.

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