

# Impact of Electronic Stories on the Development of Touristic Awareness for Kindergarten Children

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## Abstract

Touristic awareness for kindergarten children is a neglected subject in early childhood research, although the importance of cultural and social impact on the children's national identity, sense of belonging and loyalty to the homeland. Accordingly, we aimed to examine the impact of electronic stories, which identify the most important touristic elements of Saudi Arabia, on developing touristic awareness among kindergarten children. The study used an experimental approach, wherein a touristic awareness pictorial scale had been developed for a randomly chosen sample of 60 kindergarten children (boys and girls). The aforementioned scale had been applied before and after on the sample of study. A number of electronic stories of the most important historical and touristic elements of Saudi Arabia had been designed and presented to the children who were divided into two groups experimental and control (each of 30 children; 5-6 years old). The results revealed that the proposed electronic stories are of great effectiveness on developing the children's touristic awareness and in turn sense of belonging and loyalty to their homeland.

**Keywords:** Electronic stories; Kindergarten; Touristic awareness; Historical awareness; Children; Saudi Arabia

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Theoretical framework and literature of the study

The nations progress is measured by how they prepare their children culturally and educationally from childhood. Social, cultural, scientific, and educational influences effectively impact the culture of individuals and nations. Kindergarten is an important independent educational stage wherein children can acquire skills, knowledge and experiences that greatly impact their future (Sherif, 2014). People unite through their culture and heritage.

Tourism is a human and social phenomenon known since ancient times, which has developed into an important non-traditional modern industry wherein individuals play an important role in achieving various economic, social and cultural outcomes. As a product of previous generations, tourism is an example of human heritage and the creative mind. It preserves history, nation's memory and generations' link across time. In modern societies, the tourism represents an increasingly important experience in the life of a growing number of people (UNWTO Annual Report 2015). It can influence the life trajectory of children through gaining pre-determined enjoyed spontaneously enduring educational and cultural value (e.g., Robette, 2011). Therefore, strengthening the interdependence and interaction between children and civilization is a challenge necessary to be achieved through the proper growing of children, including meeting the requirements and needs of the stage where media and enhance their knowledge and creativity. The tourism industry has been witnessing great momentum, with its prevailing growth enhancing the development of education and touristic awareness among children. Therefore, the tourism industry provides a dynamic pattern to develop children touristic awareness (Ling and Linkai, 2020). Compared to research in early childhood, the tourism industry is proving (to some extent) much attention to the subject of children touristic awareness (e.g., Cohen et al., 2012; Tung et al., 2011).

The children touristic awareness is a basic pillar and of great importance in improving the community's touristic image. They will grow up with education on and familiarity with their nation's history and geography, thus increasing the sense of belonging and pride. Children's lack of touristic awareness leads them to pollute the environment, distorting the tourism image and destroying resources. Therefore, it is crucial to link children with their environment (Hussain, 2019).

Saudi Arabia is suitable for different types of tourism. It is unique in many historical, environmental, natural and cultural characteristics, which can attract and offer various types of touristic activities. Saudi Arabia has realized the importance of tourism at various levels and had headed over to establish the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTNH) in 2000 that was transformed into a Ministry of Tourism in 2020.

The 2014 SCTNH report confirmed that attention to touristic awareness is one of the main pillars of the tourism sector future. The report also emphasized the important role of educational institutions, which are responsible for developing touristic awareness through curricula, activities and teachers (Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, 2014).

The story has acquired a special regard in children literature in all forms and methods of presentation at different age stages through curricula. The child learns about the history of his nation, its heritage and its glories, which supports and develops his sense of belonging to this nation and this heritage. The stories are important in children literature as an educational tool that helps in shaping their future personalities. Therefore, it is the responsibility of kindergarten curricula to include all kinds of stories as well as train teachers regarding to their presentation (Barakat, 2010).

Regarding the rapid development in revolution and information technology, many countries have tended to produce electronic stories (e-stories) due to their animation characteristics of movement, sound and colors. This story type has gained popularity, as children are eager to watch and listen to it, and quickly absorb its educational content (Al-Jarf, 2014). Accordingly, electronic stories are therefore of great significance.

Consequently, activities involving e-stories will inevitably lead to the development of tourism awareness among children, which makes them recognize the value of the surrounding tourist and historical attractions, and appreciate, preserve, cherish and brag about them. The aim of promoting tourism awareness among kindergarten/preschool children is to develop the sense belonging and loyalty to their homeland. As well as prepare children to become responsible for protecting their heritage through their behavior and actions toward the tourism sector.

## 1.2 Problem of the study

In the last decades, published research on children tourism and touristic awareness is very scarce and still represent a critical deficiency in the academic literature (e.g., Poria and Timothy, 2014). Moreover, the early childhood research categories in tourism are still marginal in the context and virtually unexplored, because of the shortage in methodology and implications with almost no reliable and/or trustworthy data. In addition, the proportion of children as tourists, and their autonomy and awareness of their choices are all topics that had not been studied enough in the literature, and the same applies to the history of tourism for children (Graburn, 1983).

Touristic awareness is an indispensable necessity for individuals as well as groups in any society. It is an effective means, and a driving force that can achieve the desired benefits from the tourism process and contributes to its development and the achievement of desired positive goals. Saudi Arabia encourages the development of tourism given that it is moving at a strong pace towards excellence and development due to its diverse tourist attractions represented by various beaches that extend for more than 2000 km, monuments, amusement cities and picturesque nature found in areas such as mountains, sand dunes, forests and parks. (Al-Rumaih, 2007).

Growing children to be proud of their identity, as well as with a sense of belonging, and the knowledge of the most important touristic, historical and religious landmarks in their community is the responsibility of family and kindergartens, since they are considered among the most important institutions involved in childcare in the early childhood stage. This stage is most suitable for learning concepts, and it is the first step in building their conscience and virtuous values (Hassouna, 2011).

The child must first be able to identify the places around him and distinguish between touristic and cultural places. The child is the nation's hope. Accordingly, it is highly necessary to prepare him, particularly regarding loyalty and sense of belonging toward their homeland and roots. The child is malleable and characterized by his tendency to know, learn and assimilate through tangible things. These abilities and preparations help to inculcate a lot of concepts and knowledge, foremost of which is to make him aware of his country's heritage, its glories, its pioneering civilizational role, and the immortal achievements of his ancestors. Heritage tourism monuments are a major responsibility that requires him to protect, maintain and preserve them. Few studies dealt with the importance of developing tourism awareness among children (e.g., Abdel Halim, 2016; Hassan, 2012; Hughes, 2013; Mahfouz, 2014; Tempel and ten Thije, 2012).

We may wonder whether pre-school institutions are currently trying to provide children with an appropriate amount of tourism awareness? So that they can contribute effectively to the tourism industry in the future. Many studies emphasized importance of the kindergarten role as well as teachers in promoting educational strategies aimed at educating children about their heritage in an awareness that goes along with their interests, tendencies and abilities, using all educational and cultural means, of which the story is the most important. Due to wide increasing in the use of digital technologies in all aspects of life, electronic stories are one of the most important written, visual and audio tools that work together and provide information in digital environment. The electronic stories allow children to learn through fun; and increase children's creative, critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Demirbas and Sahin, 2020).

Therefore, stories in general and electronic stories in particular are considered one of the most important

strategies that work to connect children with the cultural heritage of their society. [Abdel Rahim \(2012\)](#), [Alan \(2019\)](#), [Altun \(2021\)](#), [Ganle et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Pinto et al. \(2016\)](#) among others emphasized the importance of the role that stories play in the child education. Hence, the problem of the study is determined by the following question: “What is the impact and role of electronic stories on the development of touristic awareness for kindergarten children?”

The current contribution aims to highlight how the sense of belonging and loyalty to the homeland can be strengthened by electronic stories aimed at children, involving best practices related to intangible and intergenerational heritage, as part of a vision of social and cultural sustainability.

### 1.3 Significance of the study

This study is the first contribution on the effectiveness of developing the children’s touristic awareness by means of electronic stories, and the consequences on loyalty and sense of belonging to homeland, being applied on Saudi Arabia. It addresses the most important stage in a child’s life, the pre-school stage, which is of great significance, theoretically and practically.

#### 1.3.1 Theoretical significance

- Touristic awareness is an educational value that must be instilled and strengthened in children.
- Stories are important in developing creativity, innovation, problem-solving skills and criticism.
- Providing information to children through stories about important historical monuments and touristic places helps develop the children’s values of belonging, nationalism and loyalty to the homeland.

#### 1.3.2 Practical significance

- In the framework of using educational methods that consider the psychological structure of the child, the stories arouse the interest and passion of the child, develop his perceptions and increase his information.
- The child gets acquainted with the services provided by his homeland and the interest in the touristic and historical places, which enhances his feeling and sense of the importance of the homeland role, the rooting of his belonging. As well as how to preserve the homeland’s achievements, wealth, antiquities and civilization.
- This study reveals the requirements for the development of touristic awareness of pre-school children, and then informs us of how to develop and take care of them.

### 1.4 Terms and definitions

**Stories:** are a group of events that are described and narrated in a convincing and interesting manner to achieve a desired goal (e.g., [Altun, 2021](#); [Hussein and Abdel-Latif, 2016](#)). On the other hand, electronic stories (E-stories) are defined as a new way of telling stories in a digital way using music, other audio, images, situations and experiences ([Nazuk et al., 2015](#)). E-stories are thus defined procedurally as a group of stories that are prepared and presented by computer through multiple media represented in images, sound and sound effects to develop some values and information to children.” **Touristic awareness for children:** can be defined as increasing the children’s level of awareness and information about their homeland touristic potentials and archaeological elements; types of touristic activities; behavior in touristic and archaeological places; as well as the preservation of the touristic environment (e.g., [Abu Darb, 2015](#); [Al-Amr and Bahazek, 2019](#); [El-Shennawy, 2015](#); [Naimi and Brahimi, 2017](#); [Odeh, 2015](#)). Eventually, the touristic awareness can be defined by the children’s awareness of touristic issues according to their age and interests. Touristic awareness requires children’s coherence of the cognitive and emotional aspects, which includes knowledge of information and building emotional values towards tourist attractions. Lack of touristic awareness is due to children’s lack of clear perception regarding tourism and its importance in consolidating the values of loyalty and the sense of belonging to the homeland.

**Procedural definition:** it is to increase the child's touristic awareness and introduce him to the most important touristic potentials/elements in the homeland. As well, to provide information, experiences and skills in order to develop the general culture of the child and develop the values of belonging and loyalty to the homeland.

## 2. Stages of developing kindergarten children touristic awareness

Each stage has a distinct method of communication, directly or indirectly, being as follows:

- Perception stage:** this can be achieved through various activities. The children’s constant interaction with their community, environment and heritage requires them to know their environment and heritage so that they can adapt to it and participate in its activities. The first condition for this knowledge is to focus on what concerns them from this environment and this heritage and their perception so that they can influence and interact with it.
- Interest stage:** In this stage, the children contribute to knowing more information and knowledge about touristic awareness, which leads to providing the children with detailed information and facts about tourism and its importance. This can be achieved through visits, trips and holding interviews with specialists.

## 2.1 Consequences of developing touristic awareness on children

The development of touristic awareness contributes to providing the children with skills that make them realize the importance of tourism and the value of the homeland; [Bazazo \(2012\)](#) mentioned those skills as follows:

- Developing the sense of love, belonging and pride in one's homeland and history.
- Avoiding and confronting the negative effects of tourism, and interact with the positive ones in accordance with the cultural environment and society.

## 2.2 Obstacles that limit developing of touristic awareness for children

Although efforts to develop touristic awareness for children, some obstacles can be observed as follow:

- The weak role of various educational institutions.
- Lack of specialized programs.
- Shortage of qualified specialists capable of preparing the necessary training programs.
- Absence of a good system of information and guidance services that highlight the touristic potentials and their consequences in various fields.
- Lack of kindergarten teachers' interest.
- Lack of kindergartens interest in preparing adequate plans for their students during holidays and/or vacations to increase children's touristic awareness.

From the foregoing, many obstacles prevent the development of touristic awareness among kindergarten children. The most important of those obstacles include: the general low awareness of kindergarten teachers with touristic awareness; the lack of specific programs that increasing the touristic awareness of the child; and the lack of kindergartens interest in educational trips with the aim of developing touristic awareness and limiting them to recreational trips only (e.g., [Bakr, 2013; Farag, 2021](#)).

Man has been known since ancient times for his great fondness, passion and interest for the story, particularly in the childhood stage. E-stories are considered an e-learning model that emerged recently due to rapid developments, revolution and information technology. Many countries have encouraged the production of children's e-stories due to their movement, sound and colors through animation. These types of stories have been significantly popular, specifically in the kindergarten stage, where children are eager to watch and listen, and absorb its educational contents. Therefore, these stories help stimulate children's motivation in a realistic atmosphere close to their sensory perceptions ([Dahlan, 2016](#)). According to [Rahimi and Yadollahi \(2017\)](#), recent technology prevalence has led to the emergence of a new generation of stories. Digital storytelling combines techniques based on the use of computer programs with drama to develop different concepts in the context of the story.

[Frazel \(2011\)](#) defined the e-story as "one that integrates various educational media to enrich written and spoken texts with musical effects, animation, and artistic skills to reach an educational goal with features of suspense and excitement that suits the development of skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century". In addition, [Arslan et al. \(2016\)](#) define electronic stories as "the expression of the ancient art of storytelling using digital media to create media-rich stories from images, music, and sound".

[Bernard \(2016\)](#) mentioned that over the past twenty years, many teachers worldwide have used e-stories to support teaching and learning processes. This was confirmed by many studies on e-stories and their importance to the educational process, including [Robin \(2016\)](#), and [Chan and Sage \(2021\)](#) who used digital storytelling (DST) widely with digital images, text, sounds and other interactive elements. Such stories have been increasingly used for social purposes until the term "digital storytelling" became popular in early childhood.

[Undheim and Jernes \(2020\)](#) aimed to explore the educational strategies of some teachers regarding developing and designing digital stories and how teachers involve a group of children in using technology. [Irwin \(2019\)](#) aimed to identify the digital stories' impact on enhancing community awareness. [Hussain \(2019\)](#) aimed to determine tourism types in Saudi Arabia appropriate to kindergarten children's interests, and propose a technical educational guide based on the use of educational and artistic activities and other various activities. The importance of using digital stories to provide kindergarten children with some health concepts had been stressed and proved by [Al-Shennawy \(2018\)](#). The study was performed on 40 children in the third level of kindergarten in Al-Muzahmiya Governorate, Saudi Arabia, using pictorial health concepts scale and some digital stories.

[Al-Harbi \(2016\)](#) revealed that digital stories offer many advantages to the educational process, as they help in understanding difficult materials and retain new concepts learned through the story's context. [Ribeiro \(2016\)](#) emphasized the importance of mastering cultural awareness and communication skills through technology-enhanced learning being represented by digital stories use. Moreover, the effectiveness of e-stories in developing the speaking and listening skills of kindergarten children had been emphasized by [Al-Orinan \(2015\)](#).

[Mahdi et al. \(2016\)](#) identified the following standards that should be considered when designing digital stories:

- The content should be described clearly.

- Behavioral goals should be defined clearly.
- The content should be derived from objectives and characterized by integration and sequence.
- The activities should be commensurate with the educational objectives.
- Stories should follow an appropriate design model.
- Follow the story proper structure.
- Text should be written in an appropriate form.
- The relevant animated and static images should be included.
- Video scenes should be properly and clearly employed.
- Appropriate voices should be included.
- Suitable artistic design should be used for the presentation.
- A clear scenario should be adopted and followed.

Porter (2005) added other elements on which a good e-story must be based, such as experiencing the events related to the story, clarifying the learned lessons and developing the performance skill.

Hence, teachers must choose meaningful and appropriate stories for children at this stage, which are concerned with presenting and addressing situations expressing touristic knowledge, as stories are an important way to instill knowledge in children and confirm the desired trends by provoking the child's participation of behavior patterns presented in the story. In this study, e-stories were presented for the most prominent touristic, historical, heritage and modern landmarks of Saudi Arabia.

The selected heritage landmarks were: Al-Musmak Palace (Palace of Government), Wadi Hanifa in Riyadh, Bait Nassif Museum and Souq Qabil, a popular market in Jeddah, Tuwaiq mountain in Al-Ahsa, subterranean hot springs of Jizan, Ottoman Castle on Farasan Island, Rijal Almaa Museum, Saleh's cities in the Al-Ula, and Tarut Castle. The most prominent modern tourist monuments chosen were Kingdom Tower, Al Faisaliyah Tower, TV Tower, Water Tower, National Museum, Central Library of Princess Nourah bint Abdul Rahman University in Riyadh, and the Jeddah Fountain, the highest fountain in Saudi Arabia and a touristic attraction for many visitors.

### 3. Study methods/procedure

#### *Approach*

The current study used the experimental approach; and the sample comprised two groups, experimental and control, from the Kindergarten of Princess Nourah bint Abdul Rahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

#### *Hypotheses*

- The experimental group will obtain higher mean scores than the control group after the application of electronic stories.
- There is a significant difference between the mean of pre-and post-test of touristic awareness scale of the experimental group with post-test means being higher.

#### 3.1 Sample of study

The study sample comprised 60 children (boys and girls) aged 5–6 years old ( $M=5.4$  years,  $SD=1.3$ ). The sample comprised two groups experimental and control each of 30 children.

#### 3.2 Tools of study

1) Pictorial touristic awareness scale for children aged (5–6 years) had been developed by the researchers. This scale was designed as photo cards of the most famous touristic, historical, heritage and modern landmarks of Saudi Arabia. It was divided into two parts: part I (heritage, touristic and landmarks - comprising 11 items), and part II (modern touristic attractions - comprising 11 items).

2) A set of e-stories of the most famous landmarks of Saudi Arabia was used to develop the children's touristic awareness. It comprised: a teacher's role; a group of children; the journey of a mother and her son by car in the Saudi Arabia with standing in each station that divided into 22 stations representing the most prominent/famous landmarks. As an e-story with cartoon characters representing the events and then an educational application representing models of the most important of this world after presenting the stories.

#### 3.3 Statistical methods

##### *Touristic awareness scale validity*

Cronbach's alpha for the pilot sample was found to be 0.89, which is a high value.

##### *Touristic awareness scale reliability*

Criterion reliability was estimated, and the value of the correlation coefficient between pilot sample scores on the touristic awareness scale by the researchers and their scores on the current scale was 0.69, which is a high and significant value at the significance level (0.01).



The correlation coefficient between each item score and scale total score was estimated and ranged from 0.442 to 0.734 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Correlation coefficient between each item score and the total score of the touristic awareness scale

Item No.	Correlation coefficient with total score	Item No.	Correlation coefficient with total score	Item No.	Correlation coefficient with total score
1	0.442	7	0.700	13	0.578
2	0.590	8	0.683	14	0.649
3	0.669	9	0.443	15	0.536
4	0.531	10	0.487	16	0.734
5	0.642	11	0.511	17	0.482
6	0.544	12	0.632	18	0.511

Hence, it is clear that the touristic awareness scale has appropriate reliability and validity coefficients.

*Verifying the research groups equivalence in touristic awareness pre-test:*

Table 2 shows the t-test results of differences in significance between the experimental and control groups in the touristic awareness pre-test.

**Table 2.** Results of t-test for the significance of the differences between the experimental and control groups in touristic awareness before e-stories application.

Group	Sample size	mean	SD	t	Sig. level
Control	30	0.900	0.632	1.035	Not sig.
Experimental	30	0.730	0.583		

Table 2 does not show a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the touristic awareness before e-stories, which shows the equivalence between them.

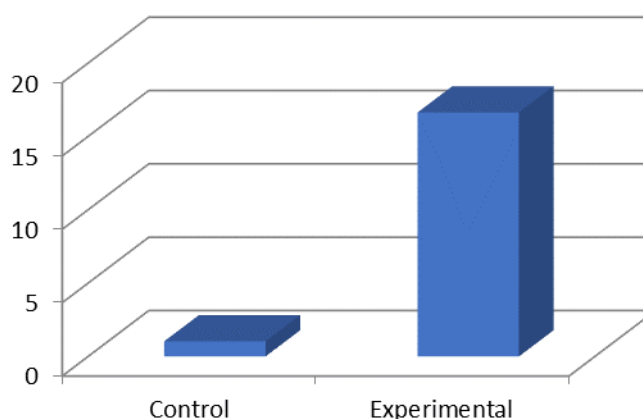
#### 4. Results and discussion

1) The results reveal a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups after e-stories on touristic awareness in favor of the former, thus hypothesis one is accepted. Table 3 shows the results of the t-test for the difference between the two groups.

**Table 3.** Results of the t-test of differences the significance between the experimental and control groups on touristic awareness after e-stories implementation

Group	Sample size	mean	SD	t	Sig. level	Impact Size
Control	30	1.030	0.718	62.655	0.01	0.985
Experimental	30	16.630	1.159			

Table 3 shows a significant difference between the experimental and control groups after electronic stories in favor of the former. This was a significant difference as the value of the effect size was (0.985), indicating a strong impact of e-stories presented to children.



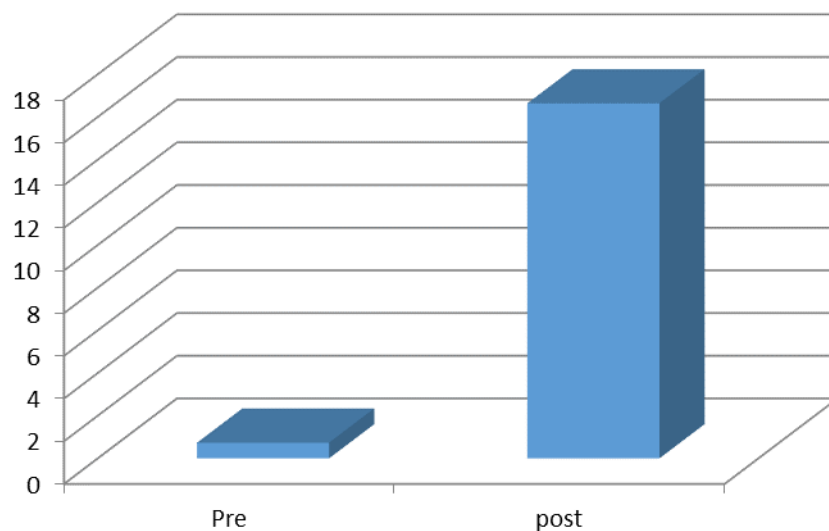
**Figure 1.** Means of the two research groups in touristic awareness post-tests.

2) The second hypothesis' results reveal a significant difference between means of pre-and post-test of touristic awareness among the experimental group in favor of the post-test. Table 4 shows the results of the t-test for the difference between the pre and post-test of the experimental group.

**Table 4.** Results of t-test difference significance between touristic awareness pre and post-test of the experimental group

Test	Mean	SD	Differences mean	Differences SD	t	Impact Size
Pre	0.730	0.583				
post	16.630	1.159	15.900	1.373	63.411	0.992

Table 4 shows a significant difference in the touristic awareness before and after application of electronic stories in favor of the post-test of the experimental group. The value of the effect size was 0.992, indicating a strong impact of the electronic stories and the extent of their importance for the children as mentioned by Hussein (2019) and Zaki (2019).



**Figure 2.** Experimental group averages in touristic awareness pre-and post-test.

## 5. Conclusions

- The study examined the impact of electronic stories on developing touristic awareness among kindergarten children.
- The sample of study comprised 60 children in two groups, experimental and control, each of 30 children (5-6 years old).
- Statistical results indicate the strong impact of electronic stories and the extent of their importance for the children.
- The proposed electronic stories are of great effectiveness on developing the children's touristic awareness and in turn sense of belonging and loyalty to their homeland.

## 6. Recommendations

- Touristic awareness for kindergarten children is a neglected subject in early childhood research and needs to be widely considered.
- The importance of touristic awareness among teachers as well as children through various activities should be highlighted, published and/or expanded.
- Training for teachers to design e-stories for various touristic elements should be well provided.
- Software through intensive programming workshops to provide educational content in a way that meets the needs of the children and develops their skills, awareness and abilities should be applied.
- Technical, human and material support should be well provided for the preparation of a project to develop children's touristic awareness based on scientific foundations to design, produce and offer a suitable content for early childhood through the media.

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