



Optimising interactions between the PCR and road users in Lubumbashi: economic and cultural aspects

BWANGA ZANZINGWE Rahan¹

¹Lecturer, Faculty of Letters, Department of Languages and Business (Languages and Computer Applications for Business and Commerce), University of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, rahanbwanga@gmail.com, +243 992 236 994



ABSTRACT

This article aims to address the shortcomings in road safety communication in Lubumbashi, with a view to optimising it for the benefit of the entire road user community. The author demonstrates that, through an anthropological approach to communication, it is possible to closely examine various linguistic practices and identify all the associated problems by

closely observing the target audience and integrating into their community. To address these problems, he proposes the use of preventive, dissuasive and engaging communication, through awareness-raising campaigns and other measures, with a view to bringing about a positive change in road users' behaviour.

Keywords: road harassment; Highway Code; road safety communication.

Part One: General Introduction

The importance of road safety communication in Lubumbashi and the challenges faced in this area are well established.

Road safety communication is a complex form of communication involving several elements and various forms of communication, such as human-machine communication, graphic or visual communication, gestural communication and interpersonal communication, all of which interact in a complex manner.

Consequently, optimising this form of communication is a complex undertaking requiring human, material and infrastructural resources.

In other words, road communication in an urban context consists of activities that relate not only to modernity but also to all the cohesive and interactive aspects of city life.

Furthermore, for this communication to be successful, it places people at the centre of all its activities. This makes traffic flow through the city's streets smooth and organised for the benefit of all road users.

The diverse nature of road users may or may not make this task easy. This is why information, education and communication act as key factors in optimising interactions between these different road users.

In light of all the aforementioned issues, we have chosen to focus our study on the following theme: optimising interactions between the PCR and road users in Lubumbashi. An approach based on the anthropology of communication.

This study on road safety communication falls within the field of languages and business, a discipline that emphasises the benefits offered by a specific area of business through the integration of languages and cultures. It is clear that taking communication and culture into account within the road transport system can enhance the value of this sector, but requires the necessary resources to make it viable. Road safety communication is therefore a matter of productivity and social welfare.

The aim of this article:

- To identify all the weaknesses associated with this communication (road safety communication) and to propose appropriate solutions,
- To contribute to the full optimisation of interactions between the two parties; through our proposed amendments;

Ultimately, our research aims to analyse current interactions and propose recommendations for optimisation that will benefit all parties concerned.

Methodological approach

As regards our methodological approach, we have chosen to base it on a specific framework: the anthropology of communication. The choice of this approach stems from the fact that our subject deals with issues relating to interpersonal interactions that also involve intercultural contact.

Indeed, the anthropology of communication focuses on the diversity of ways of living, of shaping society, of conceiving of nature and the universe, and of acting in the world. (JEAN COPANS: 2019).

Furthermore, it is simply concerned with human practices and behaviours from a specific cultural perspective.

However, this approach to the anthropology of communication will be essential for us to analyse the cultural dimension of interactions between the two stakeholders, to better understand the socio-cultural dynamics influencing these interactions, and to identify the weaknesses surrounding these interactions in order to propose improvements.

It is within this context that we will be able to fully understand the course of these interactions and highlight their specific problems in order to propose well-suited solutions, taking into account the cultural and communicative context.

Furthermore, in order to implement our approach based on the anthropology of communication, it is essential to consider the following methods, which will guide us throughout our methodological process;

Indeed, a method is a course of action or a path to be followed in order to achieve a goal. There are several methods. To carry out our scientific work successfully, we have opted for four methods, which will be preceded by the following techniques:

- The documentary method, to ensure we gather all the information essential to our research project;
- Direct and participant observation: the anthropological approach does not disregard direct and participant observation, as it requires fieldwork. By employing this method, we will be able to closely observe how this communication unfolds and identify all its weaknesses; we will also be able to understand the interactions between the police and road users by actively participating within the road user community.

- The interview technique: this technique, using an interview guide and active participation, will help us to interview both sets of stakeholders and obtain reliable and relevant information on the challenges faced by the various stakeholders, namely: the PCR, road users, local authority officers and other actors involved in road traffic planning and management.
- The qualitative or non-probabilistic sampling technique: this will enable us to conduct thoughtful, qualitative field research and subsequently select respondents based on specific criteria linked to the objectives of our study, in order to obtain relevant and reliable data from which we can draw useful and well-considered conclusions.

As for the methods, we specifically employed:

Analysis (discourse and semiological):

To conduct an in-depth study of the PCR's discourse or messages regarding road users and to ascertain whether the two stakeholder groups understand one another and are proficient in the language relating to road safety, and to successfully decode the information conveyed by road traffic signs.

- The survey method: to collect data from a sample of individuals, bearing in mind that the survey is one of the keys, indispensable methods for a researcher,
- The ethnographic method: as a quantitative method that is fundamental to the anthropological approach to communication, this will help us to make direct observations in the field of investigation from the perspective of the target group's social interactions and behaviours.

Research question and hypotheses

A. Research question

Any scientific research that aims to be fruitful must be based on the specific problems that arise, in order to find a solution. Thus, as all research revolves around a specific research question, here is ours.

Indeed, this study stems from the observation regarding the failure of road users to comply with the Highway Code and the increase in road traffic accidents observed almost ly across the entire city of Lubumbashi. We record cases of road traffic accidents on a daily basis, which are in fact linked to several significant causes.

Furthermore, to tackle this deplorable phenomenon, the Congolese government has set up a body commonly known as the Traffic Police (P.C.R.) to serve road users: to facilitate the movement of passengers, ensure their safety, and keep them informed of all matters relating to road traffic, etc. Despite the deployment of this force, we continue to see a rise in road traffic accidents and unacceptable behaviour on the part of the PCR and road users in general.

Furthermore, the traffic police in the Democratic Republic of the Congo do not appear to be up to the task of countering this phenomenon due to their failure to perform in certain aspects related to their noble mission, which is, above all, to ensure the safety of all road users by making effective use of road safety communication in its entirety (languages, forms of expression, images) to persuade road users: pedestrians, motorists and many others. These road users constantly complain about the conduct of road safety officers, and vice versa.

As this service fails to utilise communication appropriately, we tend to become accustomed to this phenomenon. It is common to see these police officers using such communication for their own benefit – a practice contrary to the optimal aim of road safety communication – or to witness, on a daily basis, road users failing to observe the highway code or showing no interest in it whatsoever.

During our observation, we also noted that road users do not appear to be sufficiently informed about the Highway Code and that the key stakeholders in this communication demonstrate shortcomings in terms of information dissemination and road traffic management. Thus, road safety communication must be properly understood by both stakeholders: road users and the traffic police – and not the other way round. This amply demonstrates that road safety communication in Lubumbashi needs to be improved so that effective interaction between the two parties can be established. If we are to address this highly topical issue, we must first and foremost teach politicians, journalists and road safety officers how to communicate: how to convey messages in a tactful and manner to road users, taking into account their backgrounds or cultures, in order to better convey the message regarding road safety; and to help them fully understand the Highway Code and the system relating to road safety communication: road signs, and many other elements that support road safety communication.

Furthermore, we have also observed that not only do these officers neglect road safety communication – an essential means of ensuring passenger safety – but they also display a lack of linguistic proficiency when it comes to effectively

disseminating information relating to road safety. This information does not concern only those travelling in vehicles; for, according to our observations and based on reports received from the pedestrians interviewed, the officers appear to be more interested in this particular group of people. On the contrary, this information also concerns pedestrians. In short, all road users are affected.

As for the Congolese government, no large-scale initiatives have been highlighted so far. No practical measures have been taken to promote highly effective training for traffic police officers, particularly in terms of communication. These officers are gradually drifting away from their noble mission, which is, first and foremost, to ensure the safety of road users and to improve the flow of traffic through the implementation of an effective communication strategy; but also, to enable the province or city to increase its revenue through road traffic taxes or the collection of fees for vehicle registration documents, which allow motorists to travel freely within the city.

It should be noted that road safety communication is everyone's responsibility. All sections of the public must be informed of all measures relating to it. Even road users can use it to support the traffic police. But to achieve this, they must, first and foremost, be familiar with the rules of the road; which, unfortunately, is not the case.

In terms of communication, it is imperative to note that simply speaking Lingala, Swahili or French beforehand would not be sufficient to carry out this noble profession with complete peace of mind. During our brief observation, we identified a significant number of issues that pose a major obstacle to the effective optimisation of interactions between the PCR and road users.

As regards the optimal approach to these interactions, as a graduate of Languages and Business, what drew our attention to this aspect is that, in optimising these interactions, there are several dimensions that must be taken into account, such as: the profit or benefit to be gained, the image to be maintained, well-being, information and communication, and many other factors that contribute to achieving the optimisation of these interactions.

Thus, to conclude, we wished to summarise our research question by means of a general question, which in turn gave rise to three sub-questions, namely:

1. General Question:

- Is road safety communication in Lubumbashi operating at its optimal level?

2. The three sub-questions:

- How does optimising interactions between the two parties contribute to the economic, social or cultural development of the city of Lubumbashi?
- What communication strategies would be appropriate for educating and reaching a large number of road users at the same time?
- What are the main causes of road accidents and traffic congestion in Lubumbashi?

B. Hypotheses

To provide a provisional answer to our research question, with regard to the main question, as a hypothesis, we find that the communication in question is not yet operating at its optimal level due to the various shortcomings it contains.

Furthermore, to answer the first sub-question, we believe that the full optimisation of interactions between the PCR and road users would contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the city of Lubumbashi, insofar as it would, firstly, improve the flow of road traffic, thereby enabling various businesses and organisations to operate smoothly within their sectors and generate greater profits; and, secondly, it would help to better persuade the public to comply with the Highway Code and to pay their vehicle registration fees, to name but a few.

Furthermore, regarding the second sub-question raised earlier, we believe that, in terms of communication strategies, we should focus, on the one hand, on education through schools, universities and training centres; and, on the other hand, to emphasise the professional training of traffic police officers, particularly in terms of communication and professional ethics, the strengthening of road surveillance, and the imposition of severe penalties on those who refuse to comply. And to reach a large number of road users in record time, we should make use of the internet, multimedia or ICT.

Finally, regarding our very last sub-question, we assume that the main causes underlying road traffic accidents are, on the one hand, the poor behaviour of road users, the lack of adequate information on road safety, and, on the other hand, the lack of maintenance of our roads, the poor dissemination of information by those responsible for such communication, the difficulty most road users have in interpreting the information displayed on road signs, the lack of proficiency in

this communication on the part of the officers themselves, as well as the harassment by the PCR: the unprofessional behaviour displayed by most of these officers. Furthermore, we also believe that this harassment on the roads can be explained by the low pay that the Congolese government pays to civil servants in general.

Part Two: Presentation and interpretation of results

In this section, we shall discuss the findings of our research using tables that highlight our various concerns. Furthermore, our main targets were the CPR and road users in general.

In total, we surveyed 100 people, either orally or in writing, namely: 20 university students, 20 school pupils, 15 drivers, 15 motorcyclists, 15 CPR officers, and 15 other individuals (including some prominent figures).

In the context of this chapter, it is worth noting that, given the complexity of our methodological approach, we focused primarily on non-probability sampling with the aim of obtaining qualitative results, and we have also drawn on the ethnographic method, which emphasises fieldwork and direct, participatory observation in the field, whilst not neglecting the questionnaire and interview methods to obtain sufficient data ly from respondents, whilst integrating ourselves into the community in which our respondents are situated (the road user community).

However, whilst conducting fieldwork, apart from our direct and reflective participant observation carried out in the field — taking into account the principles of the anthropology of communication, through the lens of ethnomethodology — several questions contributed to the achievement of our objective, as set out in the tables below:

Table 1: Breakdown of respondents by the number of languages spoken on a daily basis.

Question	Frequency	%
How many languages do you speak fluently?		
2 languages	70	70
3 languages	20	20
More than three languages	10	10

Comment: Indeed, with regard to the number of languages spoken by our respondents, we found that 70 per cent of people in Lubumbashi speak at least two languages, namely: French and Swahili, Swahili and Tshiluba, and Lingala and Swahili.

Furthermore, only 20 people speak at least three languages, namely: French–Swahili–Lingala; French, Tshiluba – Swahili; French–English–Kibemba; and Kimbemba – Swahili – Lingala.

Furthermore, we also found that the remaining 10 per cent speak more than three languages. It appears that this category comprises people who are better educated or have a good level of education (students, pupils, teachers and other prominent figures).

Table 2: Breakdown of respondents according to their criticisms of the PCR.

Question	Frequency	%
What do you criticise the Traffic Police in Lubumbashi for?		
Those who made a complaint	85	85
Declined to comment	15	15

Comment: This table shows that, out of 100 people surveyed, 85 deigned to comment on this issue. In doing so, here is a summary of their various arguments:

- The PCR focuses primarily on causing hassle on the roads, thereby neglecting or forgetting its noble mission, which is to ensure the safety of road users;
- The PCR is at the root of certain road accidents and is always heavy-handed when it intervenes;
- The PCR is always looking for a way to stop drivers, even if they have all their documents in order, by fabricating false charges;
- The PCR is only interested in money and not in what really matters;
- The PCR displays a lack of professional ethics and competence;

- The PCR itself does not even have a proper grasp of the Highway Code;
- The PCR is not sufficiently trained and goes too far in terms of extortion on the roads, which gives our country a bad reputation;
- The PCR is only concerned with drivers and sometimes overlooks us when we want to cross the road;
- The PCR is always rough with people, and that is why we, too, refuse to put up with it;
- Blaming the PCR is not at all fair, but we must first and foremost blame ourselves and, above all, blame the authorities who govern us, because the PCR is viewed negatively primarily because of the government.

That, in a nutshell, is a summary of the criticisms levelled at the PCR.

Furthermore, we noted that 15 per cent of those surveyed did not wish to comment. Indeed, the majority of those who refrained from expressing a view on this matter are PCR officers and a few other groups, notably pupils and schoolchildren.

As for the PCR, we understand this to be because they wish to set an example, given that they are fully dedicated to serving the public in terms of road safety and the regulation of road traffic.

Table 3: Breakdown of respondents regarding the reasons for refusing to comply with the PCR.

Question	Frequency	%
In your opinion, why do drivers often refuse to stop when approached by the PCR?		
They argued	_90	90
No response	10	10

Comment: With regard to the table shown above, we note that 90 people gave reasons explaining why drivers refused to comply, stating that:

- It is because they already know what will happen next;
- It is because they are simply afraid of the PCR;
- It is because they know they do not have all the required vehicle documents;
- It is for fear of being arrested;
- It is for fear that they will puncture the vehicle's tyres or tamper with the ignition key;
- It's because they don't have any money to hand over to the PCR.

Furthermore, this table shows that 10 per cent of respondents chose to abstain from answering this.

Table 4: Breakdown of respondents by strategic suggestions aimed at improving road safety communication.

Question	Frequency	%
In your opinion, what road safety communication strategies can we implement to better convey the message, ensure compliance with the Highway Code, increase the city's revenue, and reduce the rise in road accidents?	100	100
responded to the question	100	100
	Total	100%

Comment: As we can see from this table, all 100 people deigned to reply, presenting the following arguments by grouping their differing responses as follows:

- Targeted and emotive awareness campaigns are the first measures to be implemented: it is important to create awareness campaigns that do not merely inform, but also appeal to drivers' emotions;
- Partnerships should be formed with influencers and key communicators; utilising sports personalities, politicians or established community figures to convey the road safety message can help reach a wider and more diverse audience;

- A system of continuous education must be put in place from an early age.
- Strengthen enforcement and penalties for road users as well as for the PCR.

The traffic police presence on the roads must be strengthened:

- Make road signs more visible and modernise them;
- Reduce the cost of vehicle registration documents;
- Expand, upgrade and improve road infrastructure, and also provide widespread education for road users.

Table 5: Respondents' views on road accidents caused by young people or older people.

Question	Frequency	%
In your opinion, which group – young people or older people – causes the most road accidents, and why?		
Respondents	100	
Young people	95	95
It is the older generation	5	95 per cent

Comment: To interpret the data, we can say that out of 100 people surveyed, 95 deigned to answer our question, stating that it is mainly young people who cause road accidents, whilst only 5 per cent of people believe that it is rather the elderly or older people;

In terms of the arguments put forward to support their views, we have summarised them by grouping them as follows:

- Young people display impulsive and reckless behaviour on the road
- Such as misjudging distances, speeds or traffic conditions, thereby increasing the risk of an accident;
- Distractions whilst driving: using a mobile phone, listening to music at excessive volume, or consuming alcohol or any other drink whilst driving – all these factors contribute to reduced attention on the road;

- Group behaviour: young drivers may be influenced by peer pressure, particularly when in a group, which can lead to risky behaviour such as street racing or taking unnecessary risks.

Table 6: Breakdown of respondents according to their criticisms of road users in general (pedestrians, motorcyclists, cyclists, taxi drivers, etc.)

Questions	Frequencies	%
What do you criticise road users for? (pedestrians, motorcyclists, drivers)		
Respondents	100	%
	Total	100%

Comment: In interpreting the table, we note that of the 100 people surveyed, all put forward a brief argument along the lines set out in the following grouping of responses:

- Inadequate training: many motorcyclists, minibus drivers and taxi drivers have not received adequate training in safe driving and knowledge of the Highway Code. This shortcoming makes them more likely to make mistakes that could lead to accidents. To address this, the provincial government has introduced compulsory refresher courses for drivers, particularly those of three-wheelers and motorbikes.
- Failure to comply with the Highway Code: many motorbike taxi drivers are unaware of or disregard basic road safety rules. They commit offences such as speeding, carrying multiple passengers on a single motorbike, failing to wear a helmet and drink-driving. Such behaviour significantly increases the risk of accidents.

Table 7: Breakdown of respondents by understanding of the PCR's verbal and gestural language.

Questions	Frequency	%
Do you understand the PCR's verbal and hand signals?		
Yes	90	90%
Not at all	10	5 %

Comment: This table shows that, out of the 100 people surveyed, 90 per cent agree that they fully understand the verbal and gestural language of the PCR, whilst only 5 per cent understand it partially. Indeed, the reason these two types of language are so easy to understand is that they are simpler and the message can be decoded without much thought. We are not necessarily obliged to attend a training centre to learn how to communicate with others through gestures or by speaking in everyday language.

Table 8: Breakdown of respondents according to the cause of recurring road accidents.

Question	Frequency	%
In your opinion, why do road accidents keep happening?		
Gave relevant reasons	80	80
Gave reasons that were more or less relevant	10	10
Did not give any reasons	10	10 per cent

Comment: Table 9 above shows that 80 out of the 100 people who deigned to take part in our survey gave reasons that we considered relevant, 10 people gave a more or less acceptable argument, and 10 others simply did not wish to give any reason at all.

With regard to relevant and more or less relevant reasons, we note that:

- The increase in road traffic and failure to observe the highway code – on the one hand by pedestrians and, on the other, by drivers – are among the major causes contributing to the continuing occurrence of road accidents;
- The city's major roads, which are steadily deteriorating;
- The lack of road maintenance, as evidenced by the presence of potholes;
- The lack of regular road safety awareness campaigns;
- The shortage of designated personnel to better manage traffic flow and prevent road accidents;
- Drink-driving by drivers who, moreover, have not received adequate training and the majority of whom do not hold a driving licence;

Table 9: Breakdown of respondents regarding drivers' reluctance or refusal to pay taxes and provide vehicle documents.

Question	Frequency	%
In your opinion, what are the reasons behind drivers' reluctance or refusal to pay road taxes and provide vehicle documentation?		
Reasons given	90	
Did not give any reasons	10	

Comment: Table 9 shows that 90 people gave reasons, whilst the remaining 10 did not.

With regard to the reasons given, we note that drivers' refusal or reluctance to pay taxes or provide vehicle documentation stems from the fact that these have acquired a certain negative connotation due to the government's mismanagement of these funds. This mismanagement raises issues relating to both governance and civic responsibility.

- **Some further questions addressed exclusively to the P.C.R.**

Apart from the previous questions, which could be answered by both parties, a few other questions were addressed specifically to the PCR, namely:

Survey table based on complaints from road users accusing the PCR of being the main cause of corruption.

Do you agree that you are the primary facilitators of corruption on the roads, as alleged by road users in Lubumbashi?	Frequency	%
Yes	0	0
NO	10	2
Yes and no	5	2

Comment: Of the 15 P.C.R.s surveyed, 10 P.C.R.s agree on the one hand and disagree on the other, whilst 5 both agree and disagree, noting that the problem of corruption starts at the top. If those in power themselves display corrupt behaviour and are unwilling to improve their living conditions, the same applies to them. Furthermore, it is rather road users who are the primary drivers of corruption, as they constantly seek to negotiate, knowing that their vehicle documents are not in order, or because they have committed a traffic offence.

- **Our critical argument**

In light of the views gathered from our two target groups, namely the PCR and road users in the broadest sense, and taking into account our field observations — using the anthropological approach to communication as our working tool, which requires going out into the field to observe and study the phenomenon at close quarters through the lens of ethnomethodology — as a critical argument, we present our viewpoint as follows:

Optimising interactions between the PCR and road users involves several aspects. For road safety communication to reach its optimal level, it will be necessary for:

- Communication must focus on prevention, raising awareness of the dangers, and education, so as to

encourage individuals to change their mindset, driving habits or behaviour;

- The complexity of the communication approach must be taken into account by combining it with various measures to reinforce it (implementing an effective communication policy through ongoing road safety campaigns, the use of multimedia, the computerisation of the road system, etc.).

- In Lubumbashi, based on our observations, there is no doubt that road users are completely unaware of the Highway Code, which leads to an increase in road accidents on the one hand, and to traffic congestion on the other. Consequently, as we have previously stated, the awareness campaign must be ongoing, and educational communication must begin at home, at school, and even at university level.

- Road safety communication, in order to achieve its full potential – aimed not only at ensuring road safety or saving lives, but also at contributing to the economic and social development of a city, a province or a country as a whole – must be constantly expanded. It is in this sense that it remains complex, cross-cutting and highly demanding.

- Effective implementation of this communication requires the expertise of the traffic officer (the PCR), who must not only be well-trained but also, and above all, highly motivated to counter all the accusations levelled against them, which remain both valid and varied.

- Road infrastructure remains a significant factor in facilitating the implementation of optimal road safety communication. The rise in the number of accidents is also due to a lack of road infrastructure, and this also hinders the free flow of traffic, having a negative impact on the country's economic growth.

- The establishment of a security operation involving law enforcement officers has proved effective in deterring all those who resist or hesitate to comply with, or enforce, the Highway Code.

- Penalties imposed on police officers who promote anti-social behaviour on the roads and on road users who display poor behaviour remain a key factor in promoting 'good behaviour on the roads'.

- Rewarding road users and officers who stand out from the rest is essential to encourage good practices on the road. It is another way of communicating and creating a positive shift, whether for the PCR or for all road users.

- We propose that policymakers allocate sufficient resources to address or circumvent all the shortcomings inherent in the communication strategy for road safety in Lubumbashi.

- To enable direct, ongoing interaction between the PCR and road users, the creation or implementation of an interactive channel or platform is essential to allow the PCR to be instantly informed of any problems encountered by road users and to address them immediately. Hence, the computerisation of the communication system in the field of road safety remains essential.

Ultimately, this is the essence of our critical argument, based on our observations of the investigation settings and drawing on highly relevant data and information made available to us, on the one hand, by the PCR and, on the other, by road users in the copper-rich city of Lubumbashi.

• Some difficulties encountered

Any meticulous research faces certain difficulties which the diligent researcher must know how to overcome. Throughout the preparation of our scientific work, we encountered difficulties such as:

- In the field, our two main target groups displaying mistrust or resistance towards us;
- For the PCR to grant us a few minutes to talk, they should first and foremost be given a tip, without which we would not dare to approach them with complete peace of mind;
- Some PCR officers were not honest with us regarding the protection of personal information or matters relating to their internal organisation, such as ‘the reporting phenomenon’;
- Road users, when questioned, give the impression of being people who follow good driving practices, contrary to reality, based on our observations at the survey site.

- We needed to have sufficient resources whenever we went out into the field, particularly to locate and interact with the PCRs.

General conclusion

This article is based on the observation that road accidents remain a pressing issue in the city of Lubumbashi, and that non-compliance with the Highway Code by road users continues to rise, whilst the crisis of communication and trust between the PCR and road users persists, the misuse of road safety communications by the PCR for financial and personal gain, whilst increasingly straying from its noble mission of ensuring the safety of road users in the broadest sense – which tarnishes the country’s image – as well as problems with road infrastructure and many other issues. Thus, to better underpin our research, we have drawn upon the anthropology of communication not only to study the behaviour and interactions of the target group, but also to better identify all the problems plaguing the road user community and propose relevant solutions.

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