

# Political PR Management in Government Press Conference

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Abstract— Government public relations institutions in the regions are required to carry out the function of information to the public as well as the interests of the political image of institutions and regional heads. This process is then referred to as Political PR. This study aims to determine the political PR work process carried out by the West Java Provincial Government Public Relations in a press conference program called "Jabar Punya Informasi" (JAPRI). Not only the process that occurs internally in West Java Public Relations, but also the dialectics of journalism which occurred in the mass media as participants. Through qualitative methods, case study approaches, and constructivist paradigms, this research was conducted with data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews with West Java Public Relations Structural Officials and journalists participating in the JAPRI Program. The results were obtained that West Java Public Relations manages the JAPRI program which is the result of direct instruction from the Governor of West Java in the hope of being able to answer negative news in the community as well as a venue for publishing the governor's political promises. The social construction process is decorated with a number of media relations penetration in the hope that information can be distributed to the public. But the process of social media construction as a participant is still ongoing. So the reduction of information from what journalists receive from the JAPRI program cannot be denied. This result shows that information received by the public is the result of information reduction from government public relations institutions and mass media institutions.

Keywords—public relations politics, government public relations, social construction

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the keys to public relations in fostering and developing good relations with the mass media is through media relations. Lesly [1] explains that media relations deals with communication media to do publicity or respond to media interests in the organization. One of the products of media relations is a press conference. The press conference is a meeting place for the public relations of an institution with journalists representing the mass media. Where public relations has an interest in terms of publication, and journalists also have

an interest, namely information that will become news material.

The need for the importance of access to information and publications is also felt by local government agencies, especially the West Java Provincial Government. West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil through the West Java Provincial Government's Public Relations and Protocol Bureau (Humas Jabar) scheduled a new program that had never been implemented in the previous governorship period. The program is called "JAPRI (West Java Has Information)" and has been running since November 2018. Uniquely, this program is based on a press conference that is held regularly and periodically with a duration of one week once. Where ideally the press conference is held only at a certain time and at certain momentum. Jefkin [2] defines "a press conference as an event that is held suddenly and discusses information that is currently being discussed". Seeing the duration that cannot be made periodically and routinely, the JAPRI program is a unique program. The JAPRI program every week raises a specific theme that has been prepared by the West Java Public Relations Team.

In managing the press conference as part of the media relations programmed by West Java Public Relations, there are participants who are routinely invited to participate in the JAPRI press conference. They are journalists who are members of the Indonesian Journalists Association Working Group (PWI Pokja) Gedung Sate. A forum for journalists assigned to cover government desks, especially in the West Java Provincial Government. This organization is an inseparable part of the various media relations programs launched by West Java Public Relations.

Media relations which is managed by West Java Public Relations by establishing relationships with journalists through the JAPRI program is a dialectical process between fellow political communicators. Where Heriyanto and Zarkasy [3] classify the typology of political communicators, both institutions and individuals who are in government institutions and bureaucrats, heads of government, journalists, and mass media institutions. From the roles of the two political communicators, the public response in a government structure



in the form of feedback, criticism, and public appreciation of a policy is indispensable as a material to determine the success or failure of a healthy government process. The information tap has been opened since the preparation of a program plan, implementation, to the evaluation of a government program that will be, is being, and has been implemented. Feedback and public participation in a government policy is a form of political participation facilitated by the mass media. Intellectual dynamics and public participatory awareness to take part in the running of government are one of the responsibilities of the mass media.

The series of political communication within the government structure and the mass media mentioned above ultimately leads to the public. Behind the dialectic of political interests and messages contained in it, there is information management carried out by political public relations (PR Politics) in Government agencies, in this case the West Java Provincial Government. Media relations carried out by West Java Public Relations is part of the political PR strategy in a political institution. As the definition expressed by Froehilch and Rudiger [3] that "Political PR is the use of media channels to communicate interpretations of specific political issues in an effort to gather public support". JAPRI's press conference program, which is a product of the management of PR Political information, then reprocessed by journalists to become news is the context that underlies this research. So that the research questions that will be examined in this research are; (1) the political PR work process in the JAPRI program held by the West Java Public Relations program, (2) the role and function of journalism carried out by journalists participating in the JAPRI program, and (3) the social construction of Political PR managed by the West Java PR.

In several previous studies, not a few raised research related to Government Public Relations. However, there are two studies related to this study. First, Agus Rahmat and Iriana Bakti [4], who examined the educational background of local government public relations employees. Based on this research, the educational background of government public relations employees is largely incompatible with their field of work, namely the science of communication. So that not a few planning, or execution of public relations programs do not run optimally in accordance with the objective targets achieved. Second, Muchsin al-Fikri [5], who examined Ridwan Kamil's campaign communication strategy in the 2013 Bandung City Election. Where the results of the study concluded that the Ridwan Kamil Team had succeeded in exploring the aspects of creativity in marketing its vision, mission, ideas and programs. The marketing of the vision mingles in anti-political communication messages to all levels by developing a political image through social media. Third, Yan Yi [6], who successfully dissected the dramaturgical arrangement scheme of a press conference program of the Chinese Premier's Press Conference (CPPC) in China. A mass media stage that is regulated "democratically" even though there is control of information behind the scenes. Where journalists, the topics raised, and the question and answer session were arranged and

prepared behind the scenes before the press conference was held

From several previous studies, there are some similarities both in terms of research subjects, namely Government Public Relations, in terms of political communicators, namely Ridwan Kamil, who is now the Governor of West Java, and in terms of research objects, namely control of information on the press conference program. It's just that in this study the author focuses on the social construction of political PR that West Java Public Relations is trying to build and the social construction of the mass media of its participants. Therefore, the theory used is the social construction theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Berger and Luckmann [7] see social reality as daily knowledge that lives and develops in society, such as concepts, general awareness, public discourse, as a result of social construction. Social reality is constructed through a process of externalization, objectivation and internalization. In addition, social construction does not take place in a vacuum, but is full of interests. In the context of postmodernism, Nugroho [7] also said, according to Lash, that such a symptom is nothing but a product of the regime of significance which tends to dominate and hegemony the meaning of various events, knowledge, awareness, and discourse. The regime in question is a group of people who have formal power as representatives of the state rulers. Bungin [8] then added elements of mass media in the theory of social reality construction from Berger and Luckman. His criticism of social construction theory is that the theory introduced by Peter L. Berger does not include mass media as an important element in the social construction process. The substance of "mass social media construction" is in the fast and wide circulation of information so that social construction takes place very quickly and evenly.

### II. METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods, with a case study approach, and a constructivist paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln [9] assess that qualitative researchers usually study things in their natural environment, try to understand and interpret phenomena based on the meanings that people give to these things. Regarding the case study approach, Robert K. Yin [10] sees it as an empirical inquiry that investigates phenomena in the context of real life when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly visible and where multisources are used. Meanwhile, epistemologically, according to Creswell [11] the constructivist paradigm sees reality as something that is jointly built by the researcher and being researched, and shaped by various individual experiences.

The object of this research is the management of political public relations carried out by the Public Relations of the West Java Provincial Government in the West Java Information Got Information (JAPRI) press conference program. While the subjects in this study were divided into two types, namely primary and secondary subjects. First, the primary subject informant is the organizer of the JAPRI press conference program that manages the political public relations function.



They are structural officers of the Regional Secretariat of West Java Province's Public Relations and Protocol Bureau which consists of: (1) Head of Public Relations and Protocol Bureau. (2) Head of Media and Information Services Section, (3) and Head of Sub Division of Media Services. Then, secondary subject informants who are participants of the JAPRI press conference program with two criteria; (1) the participant has attended JAPRI since it was first launched on September 27 2018, (2) The informant who attended was a journalist who is part of the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI) Working Group (Pokja) Gedung Sate. Based on these two criteria, there are six journalists who became informants in this study, they are mass media journalists of the Media Indonesia Daily Newspaper, Antara National News Agency, vivanews.com News Portal, Republika Daily Newspaper, Pikiran Rakyat Daily Newspaper, and Tribun Jabar Daily Newspaper.

The data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews from each informant, participant observation of the JAPRI program planning process before it was held, implementation and evaluation at the West Java Public Relations level, as well as the process of journalists writing and reporting their coverage. The data analysis in this study consisted of a "detailed description" of the cases and their settings. Stake in Creswell [11] reveals four forms of data analysis and their interpretations in case study research; (1) Collecting categories, (2) Direct interpretation, (3) Researchers form patterns and try to find correspondences between two or more categories, (4) Researchers develop naturalistic generalizations from the data analysis. This study used a triangulation data validity test technique. Triangulation with sources means comparing and cross-checking the degree of trustworthiness of information obtained through different time and tools in qualitative research. Triangulation of data sources was carried out by checking other data obtained from research informants in the form of interviews, observations, and documents. In this case, interviews will be conducted from informants with the lowest organizational structure, namely program implementers to informants who are higher positions in the research subject. So that the data obtained from informants will be confirmed with other informants who are higher in organizational structure than him.

#### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. West Java Public Relations Political Work Process Through the JAPRI Program

Political PR for West Java Public Relations is an inseparable part of the main tasks of public relations that it carries out, as well as managing the political image of the leadership, in this case the governor and deputy governor, as well as the government institutions they lead. This of course becomes a complete unit because the issues brought up by West Java Public Relations are public issues. So that the entire communication process that West Java Public Relations is trying to build is constructed in such a way with the hope of being able to provide a positive impact and feedback for

institutions and regional heads. This is fully realized by the Public Relations and Protocol Bureau of the Regional Secretariat of West Java Province. That the formation of the image of the governor and the institution is the work of government public relations politics by forming positive public opinion through the role of the mass media. Of course, this information goes through a series of selection and reduction processes before entering the mass media publication room.

Regarding image, Jefkins [2] defines it as an impression, image, or impression that is right (in accordance with reality) on the existence of various policies of an organization. So that image is an ideal pure perception and is judged by the public as the audience of the government institution itself. Departing from the objective basis of West Java Public Relations in holding the JAPRI program as a step to form a positive image of the government in front of the public through mass media, the process of managing good media relations must be carried out. However, what is interesting here is the perception and image of society towards the government that West Java Public Relations tries to construct through the political PR activity in the form of JAPRI. Instructions for constructing information through the JAPRI program came directly from West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil. West Java Public Relations classified the two main objectives of the JAPRI program, namely anticipating negative issues related to regional heads and institutions, as well as a space for socialization and publication of program execution according to the governor's political promise.

The stages of the political PR work process in the JAPRI program for the first time were to create a JAPRI concept in accordance with the direction of the Governor of West Java to be held regularly once a week, relaxed and humanist. The press conference described by Jefkins [2] is usually held suddenly, and the place is modest, different from the concept of JAPRI's program which is held regularly with a predetermined intensity. The event has the concept of a garden party at Gedung Sate, combined with snacks, live music, door prizes, and of course an incentive scheme for journalists who report on what is published through the JAPRI program. This incentive scheme is budgetary very efficient compared to advertorial advertising in the mass media. And the exposure reached is far more than advertorials. This incentive scheme for journalists is provided as a substitute for transportation for journalists who report their news related to topics raised in the JAPRI program to the West Java Public Relations team.

The next stage is the selection and reduction of information. The information selection strategy in order to summarize the issues and news carried out by West Java Public Relations is the media monitoring method that is arguably capable in terms of systems and technology. An application called "Intelligence Media Monitoring" which is ordered by subscription from the survey institute "Indonesian Indicator" has been used for more than two years to monitor news in print, online and television news throughout the world. This is the only statistical-based research method used by West Java Public Relations in introducing the situation to issues developing in the mass



media. At least every day, West Java PR makes a list of news based on topic, number, distribution, and news sentiment. This method is the main reference in determining the topics to be raised in the JAPRI program. As for the political promises to be published, the developments are sorted based on programs that are published in content ready to "publish". Of course, with Ridwan Kamil's distinctive strategy by providing unique program names, such as Sekolah Perempuan Capai Impian dan Cita-Cita (Sekoper Cinta), Kotak Literasi Cerdas (Kolecer) and Maca Dina Digital Library (Candil). The list of topics is sometimes chosen directly by Ridwan Kamil, the Assistant Governor, and the Head of the Protocol Public Relations Bureau. To then prepare materials, and find sources who since the JAPRI program was held in 2018 and until February 2020, they still select sources from government circles and a small part of academics.

Before JAPRI was held, West Java Public Relations scheduled a "uniformity" mechanism of exposure, language, and information carried out by West Java Public Relations with JAPRI sources the day before the program was held. Of course, this briefing was carried out not only to synchronize data, but also to reduce information. This means which information deserves to be "broadcast", which should then be written off, and which should be highlighted. The selected sources are those within the government. Is the head of the department who carries out the task according to the selected topic. In addition, academics were also selected by the West Java Public Relations team as additional resource persons if needed. Of course, this briefing process is very important, especially so that there are no "different voices" in the presentation of information.

Once the topic has been determined, another important task is to manage media relations with journalists. This stage is carried out by building a partnership with the Gedung Sate Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI Pokja) journalist organization, which has long been established to become a loyal participant of the JAPRI program, as well as a "magnet" to attract other journalists outside of the Gedung Sate PWI Pokja to participate as participants. The concept of serving snacks, live music, door prizes, and incentive schemes for journalists that have been formulated in advance is part of the media relations managed by West Java Public Relations. Of course with the hope that the information disseminated through the JAPRI program can be distributed smoothly by the mass media to the public. This is the reason why, in quantity, the JAPRI program participants are attended by at least 30 people in each edition. Meanwhile, if an advertorial advertisement appeared in 30 mass media for the JAPRI program, it would certainly cost more. Although JAPRI's press conference with advertisements are two different things in concept, where the output of the press conference is news while advertorial is advertisements, and both are limited by a standard fire fence by the mass media, for West Java Public Relations they are an integral part of the publication strategy.

Of the entire political PR work process carried out by West Java Public Relations above, there is one work process that does not run optimally. Where Jefkins [3] details the measurement of results as an integral part of the PR work process. From this point of view, West Java Public Relations does not yet have a research method or technique capable of measuring the success of the JAPRI program. Evaluation and measurement of results are only measured by how much news is broadcast or printed after the JAPRI program takes place. The evaluation is not measured by how many impressions are achieved. The impression here is mass media segmentation, print media circulation, viewers on online news pages, and other mass media indicators. Overall, the political PR work process carried out by West Java PR in the JAPRI program can be described in the following model:

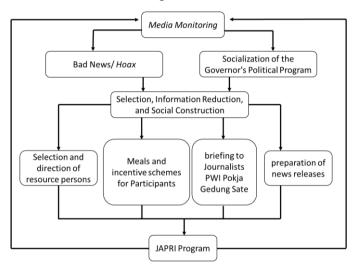


Fig. 1. JAPRI's Political PR Work Process Model.

# B. The Role and Function of Journalism Participants in the JAPRI Program

The function of journalism is a guide as well as values that are ideally owned by every journalist or journalist. Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel [12] formulate nine elements of journalism which form the ideal basis for carrying out their roles and functions. Where in the next development, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel [13] added it to 10 elements of journalism. These various elements are the key so that the media is able to carry out its function and can be trusted by the public. This is a benchmark for how the media is able to pass on what public aspirations to the government, and at the same time are able to monitor government power. This element of journalism then becomes the basis for measuring JAPRI program participants, namely journalists in carrying out their roles and functions as journalists.

In the midst of various West Java PR strategies in building media relations and good partnerships with journalists participating in the JAPRI program, elements of journalism that are believed to be implemented by journalists are of course at stake. Of the 10 elements of journalism above, the researchers focused on only 5 elements that are directly related to the independence and obligations of the mass media towards



media institutions and the public. This of course is directly related to a number of media relations strategies that West Java PR is trying to build in carrying out its political PR functions. The five elements, namely; (1) Having loyalty to the community, (2) Having discipline to carry out verification, (3) Having independence from the parties they cover, (4) Having independence to monitor power, and (5) Making news comprehensively and proportionally.

As a result, from the aspect of loyalty to the community, all informants agreed that the JAPRI program was a means of informing news material that was normative and contained positive news from the government. However, it does not mean that what the government has informed through the JAPRI program is not important to be appointed. For journalists, the topic and how important the topic is needed by the community is the main value. So that the media relations process in the political PR series managed by West Java Public Relations in the form of incentive schemes, live music, to door prizes is not the main thing. If then the topic has high informative value for the community (readers), and of course the institution where they work also sees the same thing, then the topic of JAPRI's program will be raised as news. So that the JAPRI program becomes a "storefront" of information that journalists will sort and re-select to then be reported, archived, and / or ignored.

What is interesting lies in the disciplinary aspect of verification. At the verification level, journalists participating in the JAPRI program continue to verify by collecting news materials in the editorial room. All data obtained from the JAPRI program will be adjusted to a number of data and findings in the field. The data verification process can be in the form of top down, meaning that information obtained from the JAPRI program is in the form of government policies and its achievements will be confirmed and checked according to the reality in the field, or verification can be carried out bottom up, where before the JAPRI program begins, journalists have brought a number of data and facts which are then confirmed directly to the government during the JAPRI program. Even uniquely, journalists make the JAPRI program a momentum for door-stop interviews, especially for resource persons who are difficult to find. The TOR (Term Of Reference) which has been determined by the editorial staff is the main reference in framing as well as the topic of news. If the TOR is in accordance with the topic of JAPRI, then journalists will take part in the JAPRI program and process the data submitted by the West Java Public Relations. However, if the TOR is not in accordance with JAPRI's topic but the required resource persons according to the TOR are in the JAPRI program, then this is where journalists take advantage of to conduct door stop interviews behind the stage.

Meanwhile, the independence of journalists from what they cover as well as monitoring power, in this case the West Java Provincial Government, still has a limiting line of independence. Nothing can affect the newsroom. All informants saw that the incentive scheme was not a motivating factor for themselves in writing and reporting. Instructions from the editor and his editorial team who have the authority to

sort and determine the news. All informants realized that the incentive scheme was controversial for their profession. So they see that this will in fact make the JAPRI program inefficient. Incentive schemes become a battlefield for idealism within journalists to accept or not. However, they regretted that the incentive scheme did not affect the information published in the mass media at all. The policies of media institutions, the feasibility of news, available column space, to media ideology and news frames, are the main determinants of whether or not a news was published.

Finally, from this point related to proportional and comprehensive reporting, all informants admit that every mass media has its own ideology, style, frame, and perspective in seeing an issue. So that the proportion of an issue that is raised by these influenced things. As comprehensiveness of an issue raised, it is influenced by the saturation standard of a data, the number of columns, and the newsroom policy to measure the extent to which an issue is considered proportional to be published as news. Aspects of selecting sources, a list of questions, and the required data are part of the editorial policy in determining the proportional level of coverage. Overall, the following is the role model and function of journalism for JAPRI program participants:

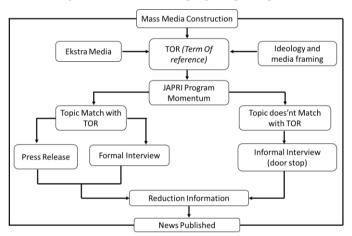


Fig. 2. Journalism Function Model for JAPRI Program Participants.

### C. Social Construction of PR Politic managed by West Java Public Relations

The JAPRI program is a program that was born from the direct instruction of the Governor of West Java to West Java Public Relations, by managing the mass media in the context of publicity, socialization, as well as information control over political promises and the positive image of the government. This is a concept with elite political theory. Where this theory divides the elite into two types, namely the ruling elite and the community elite. The ruling elite always maintains communication with the community elite in the hope of gaining legitimacy from the community while strengthening the status quo. And the community then gives values, both supporting and rejecting the policies carried out by the ruling elite [14].



The goal of legitimacy from the community as well as a positive image and opinion from the public is then the main objective of holding the JAPRI program. Of course, with their power in managing communication messages, the ruling elite is able to provide interpretations of the symbols of society into symbols of power, even able to form new symbols that can legitimize their role. This is what Nurudin [15] calls a planned formation of public opinion. What is carried out by West Java Public Relations is a strategic step from the so-called cooperation and partnership between political infrastructure communicators, in this case the government, and superstructure political communicators, in this case the mass media. This process is then very difficult to carry out if there is no good management of media relations.

Good media relations management in the study of the political PR strategy approach is included in what Heryanto and Zarkasy [3] call Political Hype. Political Hype is a PR work that takes a publicity approach. The formula is "to make noise" to reach the audience's attention. Thus, much persuasion is done through media relations. The use of press releases and building personal relationships with journalists is a prominent part of this approach. The JAPRI program is a strategy that is formed to generate this political hype, so that it has an impact on the onslaught of media relations which is carried out continuously.

While on the other hand, journalists as participants of the JAPRI program, watch this as something that does not affect the publication of a report. This is because the mass media as an institution as well as an "independent" institution (apart from the interests of the owners of capital and other aspects) have their own patterns and processes in processing and determining the publication of a report. So that media institutions have their own constructs in interpreting reality. As stated in Berger and Luckmann's social construction, the JAPRI program is the result of externalization, objectivation, and internalization dialectics.

According to Yuningsih [16], image as a social reality has cognitive and normative dimensions, and is a product of society itself (social constructions of reality). So that the image and public opinion becomes an objective reality in society. As for praise, legitimacy, support, and even public judgment, become a symbolic reality. Therefore, of course this is important for the government as an institution that directly manages its public interests. And for regional heads who lead, public legitimacy is important for the continuation of their power. The dialectic that is in the body of West Java Public Relations which is part of a government organization, of course there is also a habitualization process by building effective communication patterns. This is what Nugroho [7] explains that according to Marcus the discourse reality created by the state is called "repressive desublimation". A situation where the public is satisfied with the discourse created by the government even though the implications of the discourse are oppressive to the intellectual and cultural community.

The social construction process that is built by West Java Public Relations through the work process of Political PR in the JAPRI program is basically a public relations program that is commonly run side by side with the political interests of the leader and the institution he leads. However, this process became ineffective because the image and opinion that wanted to be formed as part of the externalization of reality for West Java Public Relations, then institutionalized through the JAPRI program by involving journalists as participants, could not be properly internalized by the journalists themselves. Because in reality, the media have their own mechanism in constructing the news. Of course, the story will be different when this case is changed that what is managed is not the relationship with the journalists, but the relationship with the owner of the media institution. If this is deemed difficult, then the advertorial channel is the best formal route to "smoothen" the construction of information that the government is trying to build as a whole for the public, without reconstructing media organizations. So that the social construction model that West Java PR is trying to build and at the same time is built by mass social media construction can be described as follows:

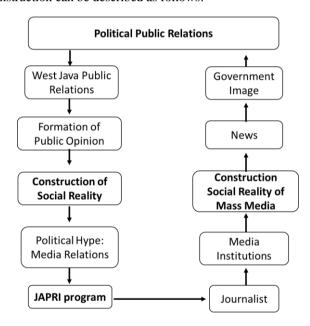


Fig. 3. Social Construction Model and Social Construction of Mass Media PR Political.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The JAPRI program, which is a product of West Java Public Relations Politics PR in managing information and publishing it to the public through the mass media, is part of the formation of positive public opinion. The political hype approach which is carried out through the management of massive media relations such as incentive schemes for journalists, the concept of events fused with entertainment and door prizes is part of the effort to channel information to the public. Information that has been "cooked" by means of being selected, reduced, and delivered by sources who are also



selected by the West Java Public Relations is a series of social reality constructs that are trying to build.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the information is completely distributed to the public. The social construction process of mass media and all the aspects that influence it, such as ideology, framing, to the selection of the mass media's point of view are stages that cannot be denied. The public opinion that is trying to be formed is no longer in accordance with the work plan of Political PR which has been carefully conceptualized. The two construction processes in two public institutions, namely the government and the mass media, both carry out the social construction of reality. So that what is accepted by the public is the result of two dialectical processes between the government and the mass media. This further shows that the information received by the public is no longer complete. Where various interests have tried to influence the public in thinking and acting.

This research basically needs to be followed up with text analysis and discourse analysis from the news published by the mass media of JAPRI program participants. So that it can be known in depth to what extent information on the results of the JAPRI program is reduced by the mass media. As well as discourse analysis is also needed to explore further how much reality and facts are reduced to a news release from the JAPRI program exposure material by West Java Public Relations.

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