

## INFORMATION NEEDS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED NIGERIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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### Abstract

*This paper is based on a study that examined information needs of graduate students in selected Nigeria Universities. A survey method was used as the research design to facilitate the collection of data from graduate students. A random sampling technique was used to select respondents, comprising graduate students at all level. Empirical data for the study was collected using a questionnaire survey. Out of the 378 questionnaires distributed, 344 were completed and returned representing 91% response rate. The study revealed that graduate students information needs were mostly for academic purpose even though majority of them preferred the use of electronic resources in meeting their needs. Further finding also shows that graduate students were not satisfy with the content of electronic resources and currency of print . Based on the findings , the study concluded that graduate students information sources preference was mainly electronic resources which could deny them access to local resources that are not available online. This means that graduate students information needs are not adequately fulfill . Hence, the study recommend that libraries should also provide adequate information resources in order to encourage hybrid usage by graduate students. Library management should also endeavour to use acquisition method such as PDA that advocate for the provision of information resources that meet immediate needs of users. Once the recommendations is implemented, information needs of graduates students will be fulfilled in the selected Nigeria Universities.*

**Keywords:** Information needs, Information sources, Satisfaction, Graduate student , Users

### Background

Information need is a real-world situation in which "information" and "need" are inextricably linked. Information needs can thus be defined as the amount of positive information that an individual or group of users requires for work, recreation, and other purposes. It is also an indicator that students require to complete their academic program (Singh and Satija, 2006: Adeniyi, 2007). Needs such as information for completing coursework tasks/assignments, writing a research paper, and information on bibliographical sources will assist students, especially at the postgraduate level, where research is undeniably time-consuming, and as a result, students must constantly stay current in their field of study. (Asogwa, *et al.*, 2021). Hence, students require adequate information resources to meet their needs.

Academic libraries need to understand the information needs of their patrons to adequately plan and provide top-quality library resources that are likely to meet the exact needs of the patrons (Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005). Information sources such as print textbooks, journals, and theses acquire among libraries around the world and have continued to change in recent times due to the innovative patrons to include electronic resources such as e-journals, e-theses, and e-books which are now critical instruments for learning and research work among students of all categories (Yusuf *et al.*, 2020). For academic libraries to successfully acquire resources, they must mainstream acquisition processes into the collection development policies of their respective libraries (Abdullah *et al.*, 2013).

Patrons are best positioned to determine the type of information sources that meet their learning and research needs (Sanjay, 2016). This is because, as users of these sources, they are very much conversant with a wide range of resources in their field of study that could satisfy the information needs of the students. The available information sources in the libraries serve as the major source of meeting the information needs of the patrons. Hence, the information needs satisfaction of patrons is strongly determined by the currency and content of

the information sources available in the libraries. Information needs satisfaction is that sense of fulfillment that stems from locating the information that contributes to understanding and meaning. University library has always served as a major source for meeting the information needs of undergraduates and all other categories of patrons (Fatima & Ahmad, 2008).

Information needs satisfaction is also a process that entails getting the right answers by an inquirer from an information system, by performing such processes consciously or unconsciously. The amount of information available to students at any given point in time may not be satisfying even though the information is abundant. Therefore, the right information must be made available on time, accessible at the right location, and in the most appropriate format to meet the patrons' needs (Ogungbeni and Nwosu, 2021). Therefore, the usage of information resources among students is important for them to fulfill their needs despite their diversity.

In South Africa, a study conducted on the usage of information sources by students shows a high level of dissatisfaction with the internet and electronic databases, availability of photocopy machines, time frame for borrowing books, availability of textbooks, library fines, and print journals (Motiang, Wallis, & Karodia, 2019). However, the study failed to identify the challenges that might likely lead to dissatisfaction with the usage of the information sources. A similar study in Tanzania also found that, despite the moderate level of satisfaction, some users were dissatisfied with the speed with which information was downloaded, meeting users' needs, and the friendliness of library management (Bea, Musabila, & Deogratus, 2018). However, the study could not specify the level of satisfaction regarding the usage of the available print sources in the studied library.

Other studies that show user dissatisfaction with library resources and services include the study conducted by Ezeala and Yusuf (2011) at the Nigerian Agricultural Research Institute, which showed that users were dissatisfied with the resources and services. However, the study only shows the level of satisfaction of users with the available services not with the information sources. A similar study by Ikolo (2015) examined user satisfaction with library services at Delta State University and discovered that users were not satisfied with library services and collections. In a study carried out by Omotunde, Onasote, & Aluko-Arowolo (2014) on the utilization of information resources and services of postgraduate students, the majority of the users frequently visit the library almost daily and it was further found that books, newspapers, and periodicals are the most used by the user. However, the study could not determine graduate students' satisfaction level. Therefore, the study tends to investigate the satisfaction level of graduate students with the available information resources in fulfilling users' immediate needs.

### **The objective of the study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the information needs of graduate students in selected Nigerian Universities. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the information needs of graduate students in the selected Nigeria Universities
2. To determine the level of usage of the available information sources in the selected Nigerian Universities
3. To find out the level of satisfaction with the available information sources in the selected Nigerian Universities

### **Research Questions**

This study will provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the information needs of graduate students in the selected Nigerian Universities?
2. What are the available information sources in the selected Nigerian University libraries?
3. Do the available information sources satisfy the needs of the graduate students in the selected Nigerian Universities?

**Methodology**

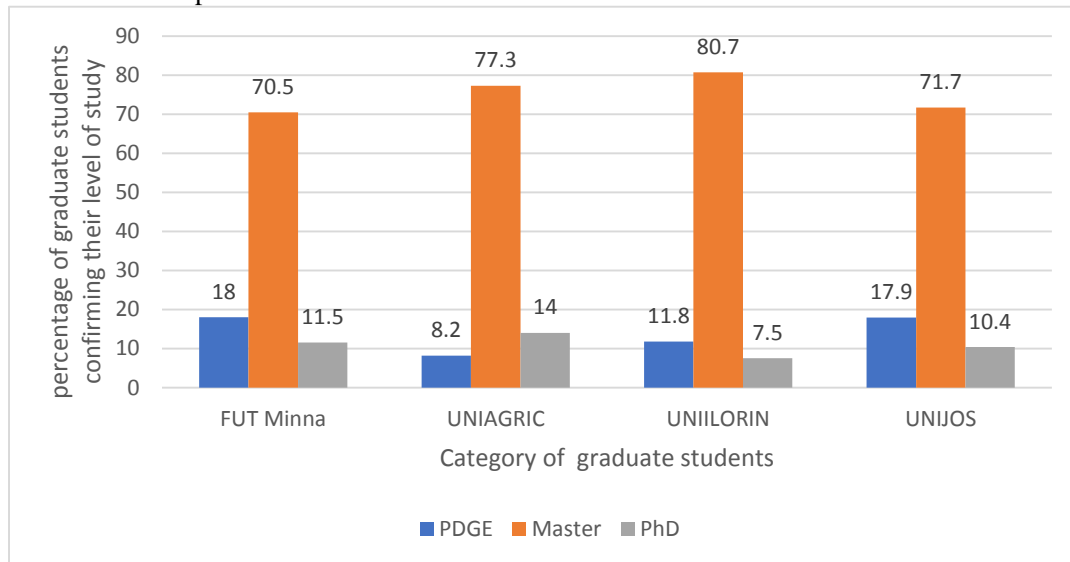
The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design. The target population for this study was 13841 postgraduate students in the three universities under study. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table was used to arrive at 378 sample size which was apportioned among postgraduate students in the three universities under study. Therefore, a total of 378 questionnaire was administered of which 344 was filled and returned representing 91% response rate. The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21). This helped to generate percentage and frequency distribution.

**Results**

**Category of Graduate Students**

Emmanuel and Jagede (2011) stated that Graduate students are mainly concerned with course work and research writing. Their needs include information for coursework tasks, bibliographical sources, and guidelines on citation management, among others (Adeyalo and Ogunniyi, 2020).

In order to determine the category of graduate students, 378 graduate students were asked to indicate their type of study in terms of PGDE, Masters and PhD. Figure 4.2 indicates the responses of the 344 graduate students who responded to the issues



**Figure 4.2: Graduate students by level of study**

*Source: Field Data 2022*

Figure 4.2 shows that students offering PDGE are between 5% to 15%, those offering Masters are between 65% to 80%, and those offering PhD are between 5% to 10% in the selected universities. This shows that the majority of graduate students are offering Masters in various fields of studies in the studied universities. This finding agrees with the study conducted on the information needs of postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, by Nwagwu (2012), which revealed that the majority (75%) of respondents in the University were registered Master's students in the faculty of art and engineering.

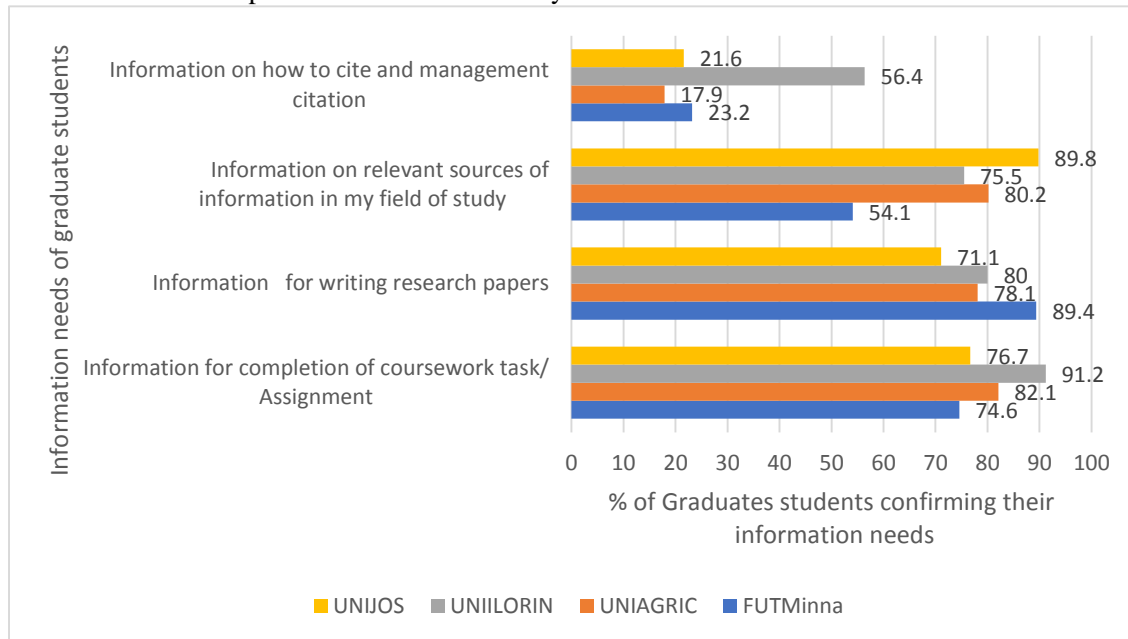
This implies that graduate students, especially those registered for Masters programs, could have specific information needed to enable them to complete significant tasks in their graduate program. Similarly, Asogwa and Daniel (2021) revealed that postgraduate students have various needs, but top on the list is the need for academic purposes such as writing assignments, preparing for examinations and research writing.

**Information Needs of Graduate Students**

Graduate students undergo in-depth training through study and learning to specialize in a specific field (Adeniyi, 2007). On the other hand, information needs are demands that students require to complete their program (Obasi and Ibegwam, 2020). Hence, information needs for students need to be known to satisfy

their demands. In trying to identify the graduate students' information needs, specific data necessary for completing coursework tasks/assignments, writing research papers and bibliographical sources were captured using the questionnaire.

In order to ascertain the information need of graduate students in the studied libraries, a total of 378 questionnaires were distributed to graduate students in the study area, while 344 was filled and returned. Of these, 119, 97, 67, and 61 were from Unillorin, Uniagric, Unijos, and Futminna, respectively. To compare the trends on how graduate students identified their information needs in the respective selected university. Analysis was done in figure 4.4 below to show the percentage of graduate students identifying their information needs as per each selected University.



**Figure 4.4: Information Needs of Graduate Students**  
*Source: Field Data 2022*

Figure 4.4 shows that at least three-quarters of all the graduate students (74.6% - 91.2%) in the studied universities agreed to demand information on completing coursework tasks/Assignments. Following these, 80.2% to 89.8% of respondents in Unijos and Uniagric indicated that they would request information on relevant sources in their study area. While three-quarters (75.5%) of respondents in Unilorin and slightly more than half (54.1%) of respondents in Futminna agreed to demand information about relevant sources in their field. Most respondents in Uniagric, Futminna and Unilorin (78.1% - 89.4%) agreed to demand information for writing research papers. However, only about three-quarters (71.1%) of respondents in Unijos believed that information on producing research articles was necessary. In response to the need for information on citing and citation management, 56.4% of the respondent in Unilorin indicated their demand for citation sources. While in Uniagric, Unijos, and Futminna, the citing and citation management need is not of priority to the graduate students as less than half of the respondents (17.9% - 23.2%) agreed with its demand.

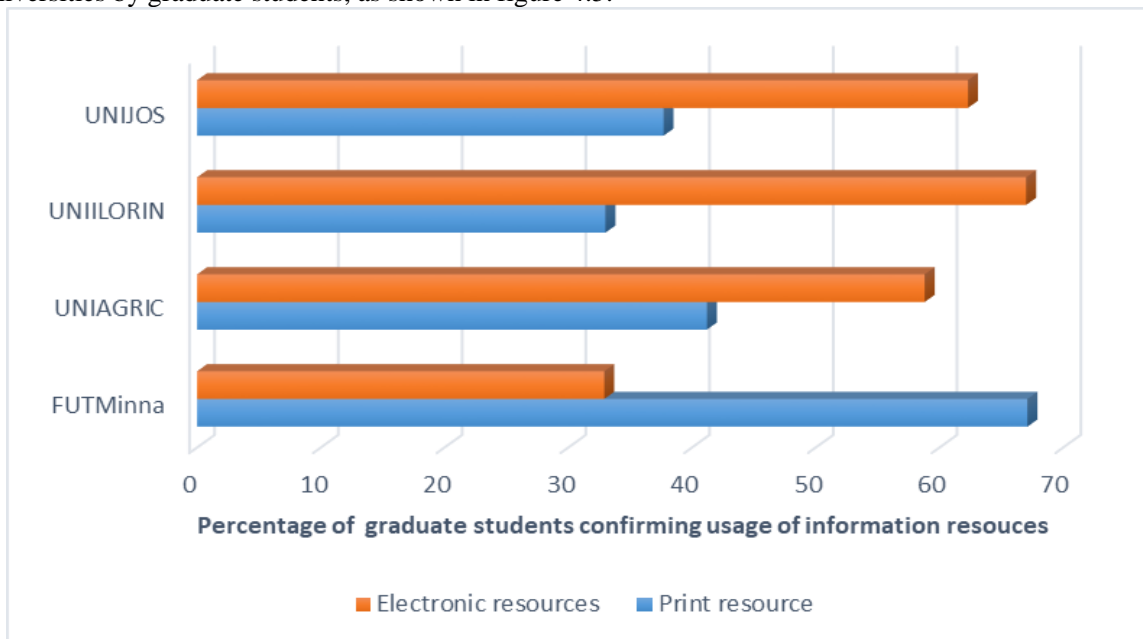
The result shows that most graduate students demand information in the areas of relevant sources in their field, writing research papers and completing assignments/course work. However, apart from the respondents in Unilorin, whose demands for information on citing and citation management were high, students in Unijos, Uniagric, and Futminna demands in that area were low which could be attributed to the absence of citing and citation management component in the user education programs of the studied institutions (particularly Unijos, Uniagric, and Futminna) as earlier stated in the background to the study.

The lack of citing and citation management component is likely to impact negatively on graduate students who are mainly concern with research and are expected to follow the standard citation in order to reduce the level of error and inconsistency in citing during research. Jomaa & Bidin (2017) confirmed that creating awareness to postgraduate students on citing and citation management will address issues such as credibility of information in published sources, taking a stance on citations, insufficient knowledge about using citations, and second language difficulties. Therefore, there is need for the studied libraries to create awareness in order to avoid issues related to errors and consistency in the citation and management of references during research. Lamptey & Atta-Obeng (2012) suggested that Librarians should play a wider role in the arena of academic integrity, faculty and librarians should collaborate in teaching students about reference citation formats used in academia. College librarians should also advocate for the standardization of reference styles in their various colleges and library orientation given by librarians should be replaced with Information Literacy skills to be offered to students in the first and final years.

### **Information Sources Used by Graduate Students**

Information sources are different formats of resources such as textbooks, print journals, and electronic databases that serve as information mainly used by patrons such as graduate students to meet their immediate needs (Iwara, 2015). Information sources could provide relevant, useful, specific and accurate information that could help users solve their problems and are bound to be efficient (Lawal, 2021). These sources provide students with adequate content for their coursework tasks and research writing (Saeed et al., 2022).

In determining the level of information sources used by graduate students, 378 questionnaires were distributed to graduate students in the selected Universities, but 248 students responded to the issues. Of which 92, 62, 52, and 42 were from Unillorin, Uniagric, Futminna, and Unijos, respectively. A further analysis was done to compare trends in the usage of available information sources in the respective selected universities by graduate students, as shown in figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5: Information sources used by graduate students**

*Source: Field Data 2022*

Figure 4.5 demonstrates that nearly two-thirds (64.2% - 69.6%) of graduate students in Unilorin, Unijos, and Uniagric, consented to the use of electronic materials. In contrast, Futminna had more than two-thirds (67.3%) of graduate students that agreed to use print resources. Students from Unilorin, Unijos, and Uniagric

indicated less interest (less than half) in the demands for print media as information sources. Furthermore, only 32.7% (less than half) of respondents from Futminna showed interest in using electronic resources.

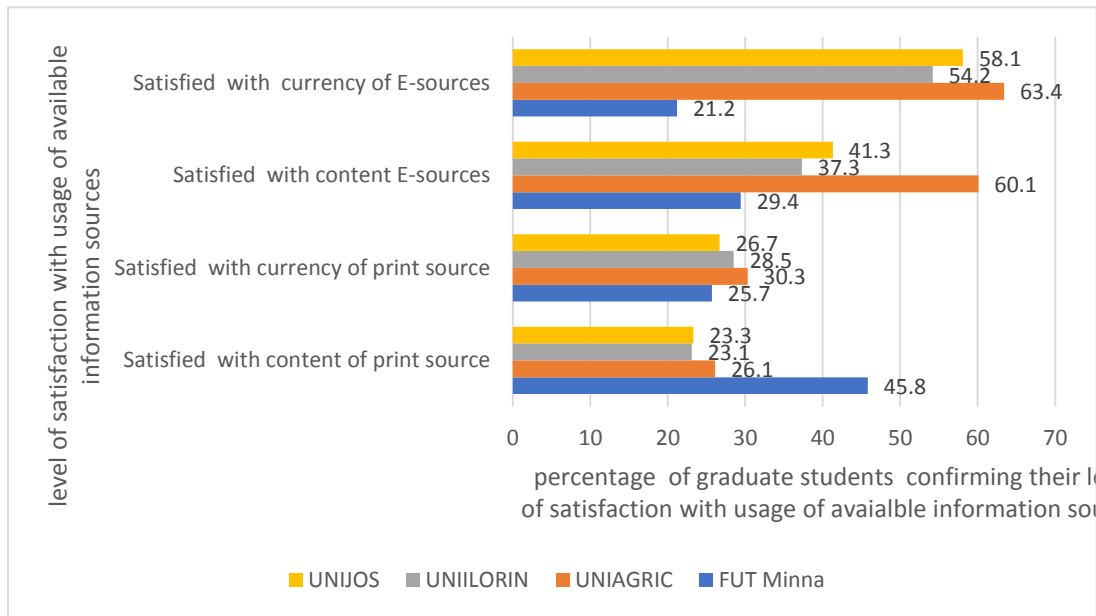
The results indicated that electronic resources are the preferred information sources in all the studied institutions except Futminna. In contrast to the popular assumption that electronic sources of information are preferred among graduate students due to their ease of use, accessibility, convenience, and currency, respondents from Futminna preferred print media compared to electronic sources. Anunobi and Emezie (2020) report that graduate students at the Federal University of Technology Owerri preferred electronic sources of information to print sources for their research. However, Agyeiku and Odei (2022) found that print media are the preferred sources of information among the academic fraternity (undergraduate, graduate, and academic staff) at the University of Education Winneba Ghana.

The lack of preference in the use of print sources by graduate students in Unilorin, Unijos, and Uniagric could be attributed to the fact that most of the print sources are not relevant to graduates students information needs. It also could be due to lack of access to print sources especially for graduates student that are staying off-campus. Furthermore, the preference for print media over electronic sources in Futminna (an Engineering and Technological based institution) could be due to the subscription to ProQuest database (which is not a rich engineering database compared to other databases such as IEEE Xplore) by the institution, as evident in the background to the study. It is important to note that using a single information source (be it print or electronic) will lead to the lack of broader access to knowledge and understanding by graduate students, especially with limited resources. Hence, graduate students need to use print and electronic resources to complement each other, particularly in this era of limited resources in most university libraries due to constant budget cuts.

#### **Graduate student's satisfaction with the used information sources**

Graduate student satisfaction is the level at which sources of information used by graduate students meet their immediate information needs. It is also an evaluation of sources (either print or/and electronic) in meeting the expectation of graduate students' needs in terms of content and currency (Motiang et al., 2014). Students' satisfaction could also be considered as satisfying students' drive to use the various types of information sources rich in content and currency to fulfil their information needs for their various academic activities (Wagwu and Obuezie, 2018). Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu (2012) admit that only the user can tell if the acquired information sources meet their expectation. Therefore, the acquisition of updated print collections and sufficient electronic content by academic libraries will provide patrons with high level of satisfaction ( Wanyonyi *et al.*,2018).

In view of the above, 378 graduate students were asked to indicate their satisfaction with using the available information sources in the selected University libraries. Of the 248 graduate students that responded to the questions, 92, 62, 52, and 42 were from Unillorin, Uniagric, Futminna, and Unijos, respectively. Figure 4.6 shows the percentage of students' satisfaction with the available information sources.



**Figure 4.6: Graduate student’s level of satisfaction with the used information sources**  
*Source: Field Data 2022*

Figure 4.6 indicated that more than half of the respondents (54.2% - 63.4%) of graduate students in Unilorin, Unijos, and Uniagric were satisfied with the currency of e-resources. In contrast, in Futminna, only 21.2% of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the currency of e-resources. However, low satisfaction with the content of e-resources was observed among all the respondents in the studied universities (29.4% - 41.3%), except for students at Uniagric, where their level of satisfaction was above half (60.1%). Furthermore, Futminna registered the highest number of respondents (45.8%) satisfied with the content of print sources among all the studied institutions. The satisfaction level of respondents from Unilorin, Unijos, and Uniagric range from 23.1% to 26.1%. All the graduate students in the studied institutions expressed dissatisfaction (25.7% - 30.3%) with the currency of the print resources in their respective libraries.

The results revealed that all the graduate students were not satisfied with the contents of the print and e-resources except those from Uniagric, which expressed satisfaction with the e-resources content. The print sources' currency was equally unsatisfactory to all the studied institutions' respondents (graduate students) which means that the print sources are not updated. Even though all the studied institutions have a subscription to one database or the other, the research finds that the users' demands were not met. The reason might be that the subscribed databases by the institutions do not have sufficient content that meets the users (graduate students') needs.

**Conclusion**

Graduate students demand for information in the selected Nigeria Universities were mainly for academic purpose, even though most of the students were not demanding for information on citing and citation management which is key in carrying out research at the postgraduate level. This means that students are likely to have citing and reference issues during writing of thesis in the selected Nigeria Universities. Furthermore, the graduate students information sources preference was mainly electronic resources which could deny them access to local resources that are not available online. The study further concluded that the lack of access to local resources by majority of students who preference was on electronic resources lead to low satisfaction among graduate students in the selected Nigeria Universities.

### **Recommendations**

1. The under-study libraries should ensure that citing and citation management component is part of their information literacy program.
2. The libraries should also provide adequate information resources in order to encourage hybrid usage by graduate students
3. The library management should endeavour to use acquisition method such as PDA that advocate for the provision of information resources that meet immediate needs of users

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