



RCTV Cirebon's Social Media Specialist's Strategy for Countering Misinformation on Instagram

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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.47134/converse.v3i1.6051>

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Received: 28-05-2026

Accepted: 19-06-2026

Published: 02-07-2026



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Media, Instagram.

Abstract: *The rapid and participatory development of social media as a digital communication space has increased the risk of misinformation dissemination within society. In this context, media institutions are required not only to function as information distributors but also as gatekeepers responsible for maintaining accuracy, validity, and credibility in the digital sphere. This study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by the Social media specialist of RCTV Cirebon in countering misinformation on Instagram and to examine how these strategies contribute to strengthening public trust, particularly within the local community. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation as data collection techniques. The informants consist of the Deputy Director and the social media management team of RCTV Cirebon. The findings indicate that the strategies include controlled management of audience participation, the implementation of multi-layered verification processes prior to publication, and consistency in maintaining the account's identity as an official and credible source of information. These strategies demonstrate the role of the Social media specialist as a bridge between professional journalistic practices and the dynamics of new media in preventing the spread of misinformation*

Keywords: Social Media Strategy, Misinformation, Social Media Specialist, Local

Introduction

Advances in digital technology have fundamentally transformed mass communication patterns and journalistic practices; the media no longer rely on a single channel for information distribution but have also adapted to various other digital platforms that enable the rapid, widespread, and interactive dissemination of messages. Instagram has become one of the primary platforms for information dissemination due to its real-time and participatory nature; however, these very characteristics also make social media a space vulnerable to hoaxes and disinformation.

According to [We Are Social \(2024\)](#), Instagram users in Indonesia reached 103 million in January 2025, reflecting the platform's dominant role in the national digital information ecosystem. This massive reach positions Instagram not merely as an entertainment medium, but as a strategic channel through which media institutions distribute news content to broad and diverse audiences.

Instagram has gained significant popularity due to its ease of access and its ability to present information in a visual and engaging way. News accounts, such as Radar Cirebon Television (RCTV Cirebon), utilize this platform as a means of disseminating national news more efficiently and effectively. In Indonesia, the number of Instagram users continues to rise, reaching 103 million in January 2025 ([A. Azzahra & Santoso, 2025](#)).

In the practice of digital journalism, the key characteristics of digital journalism are marked by faster information processing and real-time news distribution. These conditions place digital journalists in a strategic position regarding the quality of information, while also requiring them to maintain credibility and public trust, to ensure that every piece of information conveyed is not only visually appealing but also aligned with the fundamental principles of journalism, such as accuracy, objectivity, and balance.

Amid rapid technological advancements and changing patterns of information consumption in society, upholding these standards of professionalism has become increasingly important. Social media is open and participatory, meaning that audiences do not merely act as recipients of information, but also as active participants in producing and disseminating messages.

Pierre Lévy refers to this phenomenon as “collective intelligence,” which is the collective intelligence that emerges through user interaction and collaboration in cyberspace ([Stephen W. Littlejohn, 2017](#)). However, without proper management, such participation can devolve into a collective flow of disinformation that undermines the quality of public discourse. In this context, media institutions have a responsibility to guide audience participation so that it remains within the framework of accurate and accountable information. This role is carried out by the Social Media Specialist as a professional who manages content planning, message packaging, audience interaction, and the handling of potential disinformation on social media ([Putri & Sari, 2024](#); [Syafira et al., 2025](#)).

The challenges of social media management are becoming increasingly complex for local media outlets because they share geographical, social, and cultural ties with their audiences, resulting in relationships that tend to be more personal and based on trust ([Imawan, 2022](#)). This closeness is both a strength and a vulnerability to misinformation or disinformation, which can have a direct impact on local communities.

In managing this dynamic, media institutions rely on gatekeeping mechanisms as a primary defense against disinformation. [Welbers and Opgenhaffen \(2018\)](#) demonstrated that in the social media environment, gatekeeping is no longer confined to conventional editorial staff but extends to social media editors who actively shape the flow of information on digital platforms a finding directly relevant to the role of Social Media Specialists on Instagram. Furthermore, [Hermida \(2012\)](#) argued that in the era of networked journalism, verification has become a collective and ongoing discipline rather than a single editorial checkpoint, underscoring the need for structured, multi-layered verification practices within media institutions.

Radar Cirebon Television (RCTV Cirebon) is a local television channel that serves as the primary broadcaster in the Cirebon region and its surroundings. As a local media outlet, RCTV functions not only as an entertainment platform but also plays a vital role in

preserving local culture and identity through programs that highlight local wisdom and the regional language. The program “Wewara,” produced by RCTV, aims to preserve and disseminate Cirebon’s local wisdom within its community, reflecting the role of local television in preserving culture amidst the tide of media globalization ([Anggraini & Rohani, 2025](#); [Lanandie et al., 2024](#)).

The existence of local television content such as RCTV is also part of the media convergence phenomenon in the digital age, in which traditional media are striving to adapt to the trend of information digitization. Although this study does not focus specifically on social media, an examination of broadcast programs and local production approaches opens up a discussion on how local media utilize various communication channels to expand their audience reach, including through increasingly popular digital platforms such as Instagram ([Heriyawati et al., 2025](#)).

This transformation involves adjusting how information is conveyed to the public, including on social media platforms such as Instagram, which has now become an integral part of media communication strategies. This phenomenon is relevant to the focus of this study, which highlights how the strategies of social media specialists at RCTV Cirebon are implemented to counter disinformation while strengthening public engagement and trust in local media.

In this study, the concept of strategy is understood as a series of planned decisions and actions carried out systematically by Social Media Specialists to achieve specific communication objectives, particularly in maintaining the accuracy of information in the digital space. Referring to the framework of digital communication strategy, the strategy in question encompasses three main dimensions: first, content planning and selection, namely the process of determining which information is suitable for publication based on journalistic standards; second, audience interaction management, namely how media institutions respond to and filter public contributions in the digital space; and third, strengthening institutional credibility, in the form of consistency in maintaining the account’s identity as a trustworthy official source of information. These three dimensions are the focus of analysis in this study.

The term “disinformation” as used in this study refers to content or information that is factually incorrect and has the potential to mislead the public, whether disseminated intentionally or unintentionally. Based on the typology proposed by [Wardle \(2017\)](#), the forms of disinformation most relevant to the context of local media on Instagram include false context (original content presented with a false context, for example, an old video claimed to be a recent event), misleading content (content packaged in a misleading way even though some of the information is true), and fabricated content (information that is entirely made up with no factual basis). These three forms pose a real challenge for social media managers, especially when the information originates from unverified posts or initial reports from the public.

This study is based on a number of theoretical and empirical literature reviews regarding the dynamics of social media, digital journalism practices, communication

strategies, the role of social media specialists, and the challenges of disinformation in the digital public sphere.

Previous research has examined social media strategies across various institutional contexts. [Azzahra and Santoso \(2025\)](#) found that managing news content on Instagram requires careful planning, issue selection, and visual presentation to maintain credibility. [Utami and Paramita \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that Social Media Specialists play a crucial role in designing persuasive information distribution strategies via Instagram. [Yulianti et al. \(2023\)](#) identified that effective information management on Instagram involves content filtering, task allocation, and scheduling. The typology of disinformation proposed by [Wardle \(2017\)](#) encompassing false context, misleading content, and fabricated content provides a framework for understanding the specific threats faced by local media. [Tandoc, Lim, and Ling \(2018\)](#) further clarify that the boundaries between misinformation and disinformation are shaped by dimensions of facticity and intent to deceive. However, these studies tend to focus on engagement and content distribution, with limited attention to how media institutions specifically counter disinformation at the local level particularly in the Indonesian context.

This research gap the absence of in-depth studies on the strategies employed by Social Media Specialists in countering disinformation specifically at the local media level — forms the basis of this study. By focusing on RCTV Cirebon's Instagram management, this study aims to contribute to the theoretical development of digital gatekeeping, organizational media communication, and digital communication strategy. In particular, it extends the application of Gatekeeping Theory beyond its conventional editorial context into the realm of social media management within local broadcast institutions, demonstrating how classical gatekeeping functions are adapted and operationalized in a participatory digital environment.

The research questions for this study are: What strategies does the Social Media Specialist at RCTV Cirebon employ to counter disinformation on Instagram, and how do these strategies contribute to managing audience participation and strengthening the trust of the local community?

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in depth understanding of the strategies used by the Social Media Specialist to counter disinformation on the RCTV Cirebon Instagram account. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on the processes, meanings, and communication practices of media actors in their natural context, rather than on the quantitative measurement of variables ([Sugiyono, 2019](#)). With this approach, researchers seek to interpret social reality from the perspective of those directly involved in social media management.

The object of this study is the RCTV Cirebon Instagram account as a medium for distributing digital information, while the subjects of the study are the deputy director and the Social Media Specialist team at RCTV Cirebon. The subjects were selected through purposive sampling, based on the consideration that these informants possess direct knowledge and experience regarding the planning, production, and management of

Instagram content in the context of information dissemination and the handling of potential disinformation.

Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore the perspectives, experiences, and strategies employed by the Social Media Specialist in managing content and audience interactions. Observations were made of RCTV Cirebon's Instagram content, covering the presentation of information, the use of interactive features, and audience responses to published content. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of screenshots of interactions, as well as other documents relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively, following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions ([Sugiyono, 2019](#)). The data were analyzed based on Pierre Lévy's New Media theory indicators interactive power, knowledge development, and strengthening of community trust to explain the disinformation countermeasures implemented.

Interventionary studies involving animals or humans, and other studies that require ethical approval, must list the authority that provided approval and the corresponding ethical approval code.

Result and Discussion

Based on research findings obtained through in-depth interviews with the Deputy Director and the social media management team at RCTV Cirebon, and supported by direct observation of the activities on the @rctvcirebon Instagram account and supporting documentation, the research findings can be categorized into three interrelated strategic dimensions: first, content planning and selection; second, audience interaction management; and third, strengthening institutional credibility. These three dimensions are implemented in an integrated manner as a response to the most relevant forms of disinformation in the context of local media on Instagram, namely false context, misleading content, and the potential for fabricated content entering through unverified user submissions ([Wardle, 2017](#)).

Content Planning and Selection

The first dimension identified in this study is content planning and selection, which refers to the process of determining which information is suitable for publication based on internal journalistic standards. In practice, RCTV Cirebon provides a platform for the public to contribute information, particularly regarding local events in the Cirebon area and its surroundings. These contributions typically take the form of visual documentation, initial reports of incidents, or brief updates sent via direct messages or comment sections.

However, according to an interview with the Deputy Director of RCTV Cirebon, not all information submitted by the audience is published immediately. All incoming content first undergoes a verification process with the editorial team to ensure its accuracy and the reliability of its sources. This selection process is specifically designed to mitigate the risk of "false context" a situation where visually authentic content could be misinterpreted if shared without adequate details regarding time, location, and source. Additionally, this

process filters out potentially misleading content information where some data is accurate but the presentation may create a misleading perception among the audience.

This finding is clearly illustrated in one of RCTV Cirebon's Instagram posts regarding the fire at Lemahabang Market.



Figure 1. RCTV Cirebon's Instagram post regarding the fire at Lemahabang Market
Source: Researcher's documentation from the Instagram account @rctvcirebon, accessed on January 27, 2026.

The post is visual documentation provided by the public, marked with the source label "exclusive." The inclusion of this label demonstrates transparency regarding the fact that the content comes from the public, while also confirming that the editorial team does not claim the documentation as an in-house production. Although sourced from the public, interviews revealed that this content first undergoes an internal verification process before being published.

In the context of disinformation typology, this post represents a potential risk of false context that has been successfully managed through content selection mechanisms: authentic visual information is presented in the proper context, complete with clear identification of the source, location, and time of the event. In addition to the selection process for user-submitted content, narrative construction is also part of this dimension.

The social media team noted that even when information has been verified as accurate, care is still taken in crafting the narrative to avoid causing misunderstandings among the audience. Captions are written in concise, clear, and contextually appropriate language without compromising the substance of the information. This narrative curation process directly addresses the threat of misleading content, where inappropriate word choice and framing can distort the meaning of factually accurate information into something misleading.

Audience Interaction Management

The second dimension identified is audience interaction management, which refers to how media institutions actively and systematically filter and respond to public contributions in the digital space. The RCTV Cirebon social media management team

emphasizes that any comment or post that potentially contains elements of misinformation or information with an unclear source will not be used as news material until further confirmation is obtained. Monitoring of digital interactions is conducted actively, both through monitoring comment sections and private messages.

In the context of disinformation typology, this dimension primarily serves to counter two forms that are most likely to enter through public interaction channels. First, fabricated content information that is entirely baseless and typically enters through user-generated posts without verifiable sources. Second, misleading content originating from audience comments or narratives that indirectly foster erroneous interpretations of an event. Thus, the interactions fostered on the @rctvcirebon Instagram account are participatory yet controlled: the audience is given space to share information and opinions, but the process of selection and validation remains the responsibility of the media institution.

If the editorial team deems the information to be inconsistent, they conduct on-site reporting to verify the accuracy of the facts. This demonstrates that Instagram is not used as the primary source for news production, but rather as a distribution channel for information that has undergone a thorough journalistic vetting process.

Strengthening Institutional Credibility

The third dimension is the strengthening of institutional credibility, which refers to efforts to build and sustain the account's legitimacy as an official source of information that the public can consistently trust. The research findings indicate that consistency in maintaining the identity and standards of the @rctvcirebon account serves as the primary foundation for this dimension. This is reflected in the completeness of the profile information, contact details, and the account's integration with the institution's other digital platforms.



Figure 2. The Instagram profile of @rctvcirebon as of February 11, 2026

Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026.

According to the data listed in the profile, the Instagram account @rctvcirebon has 14,400 posts and 70,400 followers. The profile information includes complete institutional identity details, such as the institution's name, official logo, digital broadcast channels, office address, promotional contact number, and a link to the official website. The

completeness of this identity indicates that the account is managed as an official institutional representation not a personal account which strategically distinguishes it from unofficial information sources that are prone to becoming channels for the spread of disinformation. Credibility is further strengthened through the integration of Instagram with the official website as the central hub for information distribution. This is supported by analytical data from the website performance report covering the period from November 28, 2025, to December 27, 2025.

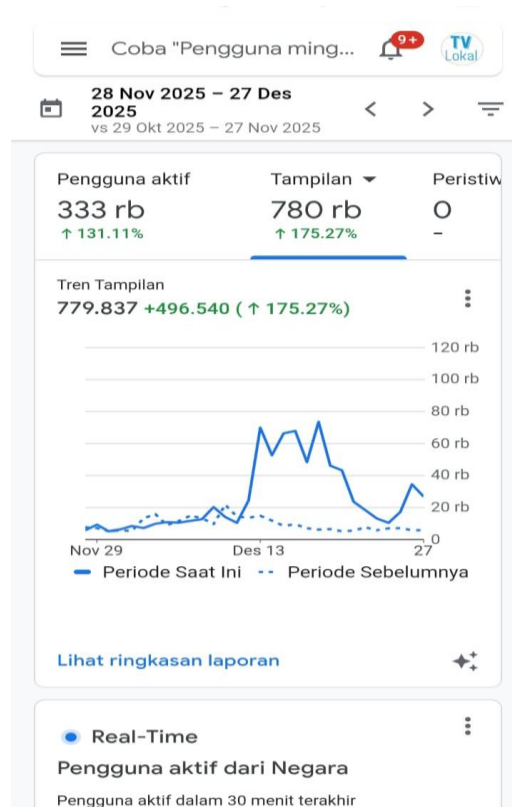


Figure 3. Website performance analytics for RCTV Cirebon for the period November 28, 2025 – December 27, 2025

Source: Screenshot of a website analytics report provided by the Deputy Director of RCTV Cirebon, January 27, 2026.

These findings resonate with, and extend beyond, international scholarship on digital gatekeeping and social media strategy. [Welbers and Opgenhaffen \(2018\)](#), in their study of Dutch and Belgian newspapers' Facebook pages, demonstrated that social media editors function as active gatekeepers who shape information diffusion beyond the traditional newsroom — a pattern confirmed in this study, where the Social Media Specialist at RCTV Cirebon performs an equivalent role on Instagram. However, a key distinction emerges: whereas [Welbers and Opgenhaffen \(2018\)](#) found that audience engagement metrics partially override editorial judgment in the Western context, RCTV Cirebon prioritizes verification and credibility over virality, reflecting the accountability demands of a trust-based local media institution. This suggests that digital gatekeeping models require contextual adaptation rather than universal application. [Hermida \(2012\)](#) further argued that

verification in networked journalism must be understood as a collective and ongoing discipline — a principle that aligns with the multi-layered verification process observed in this study, where no content is published without cross-checking by the editorial team regardless of its origin. [Tandoc, Lim, and Ling \(2018\)](#) underscore that facticity — the degree to which content is grounded in verifiable fact — is the primary axis along which disinformation risks are assessed, precisely the axis on which RCTV Cirebon's three strategic dimensions operate. Taken together, these international comparisons confirm that the multi-layered defense model identified in this study is not an idiosyncratic local practice but a context-adapted operationalization of globally recognized principles of digital gatekeeping, with the significant contribution that this study provides empirical evidence of how such principles are enacted within the specific constraints of Indonesian local broadcast media.

During that period, the number of active users reached 333,000, representing a 131.11% increase compared to the previous period, while page views totaled 780,000, marking a 175.27% increase. This trend indicates that the integrated content distribution strategy between Instagram and the website has successfully expanded reach while directing the audience to a more comprehensive and reliable source of information.

Instagram serves as an initial entry point that directs the audience to the official platform, thereby reducing the likelihood that the audience will rely on unverified sources of information. Furthermore, if there are errors or new developments, the team does not shy away from clarifying or updating the content. This openness to corrections reflects professional responsibility, which in turn strengthens the audience's trust in the account as a source of honest and accountable information.

The findings of this study indicate that the disinformation prevention strategies implemented by the Social Media Specialist at RCTV Cirebon do not rely on a single mechanism, but are carried out through three mutually reinforcing dimensions. The content planning and selection dimension counters false context and misleading content as early as the pre-publication stage; the audience interaction management dimension filters out potential fabricated and misleading content entering through public participation channels; while the institutional credibility enhancement dimension works over the long term to build public trust, which serves as a structural bulwark against disinformation

Discussion

Based on the research findings, the strategy employed by RCTV Cirebon's Social Media Specialist to counter disinformation via Instagram can be understood as a multi-layered defense system formed by the integration of three dimensions: content planning and selection, audience interaction management, and the strengthening of institutional credibility. This system demonstrates that media institutions' use of social media is not only focused on the speed of information distribution but also on accuracy, accountability, and public responsibility. The following discussion analyzes each dimension theoretically while illustrating how each dimension addresses specific types of disinformation.

The dimensions of content planning and selection identified in this study reflect the characteristics of new media described by [Lévy \(1997\)](#) in Littlejohn and Foss (2017), namely

the granting of interactive power to the audience. Public participation in conveying information through Instagram is a tangible manifestation of a decentralized and participatory cyberspace. However, as Lévy argues, without proper management, the potential for collective intelligence can shift into a stream of collective disinformation.

In this context, the content selection process carried out by RCTV Cirebon's Social Media Specialist serves to guide audience participation so that it remains productive. More specifically, this selection addresses the two most relevant types of disinformation. First, false context, where authentic visual content such as footage of a fire recorded by a resident can be misinterpreted if shared without adequate time, location, and source identification ([Wardle, 2017](#)). The process of verification and the inclusion of "special" sources by the editorial team serves as a concrete mechanism to manage this risk. Second, misleading content, which is addressed through the curation of captions and the creation of concise, clear, and contextual narratives. This narrative curation reflects an awareness that even factually accurate information can still become a source of disinformation if presented disproportionately.

The dimensions of audience interaction management identified in this study demonstrate the relevance of gatekeeping theory within the digital media ecosystem. The concept of gatekeeping, originally introduced by Kurt Lewin and later developed in mass communication studies ([Krisnawan & Annas](#)), remains applicable in the era of social media, albeit in an adapted form. In the context of Instagram, the gatekeeper function no longer resides solely at the level of conventional editorial staff but is directly carried out by Social Media Specialists who monitor, filter, and respond to the flow of interactions in real-time.

When considered in relation to Wardle's (2017) typology of disinformation, this dimension specifically serves to counteract the potential for fabricated content to enter through user submissions or comments that is, information that is entirely baseless and typically lacks verifiable sources. The mechanism of confirmation with relevant parties, and if necessary, on-site reporting, constitutes the operational manifestation of the digital gatekeeping function, ensuring that no information is published before undergoing a verification process. This finding aligns with the argument by [Fardiah et al. \(2022\)](#) that fact-checking practices are an indispensable element in information management within digital spaces. It is important to emphasize that interaction management at RCTV Cirebon is not closed-off. The audience is still given space to participate, in line with the characteristics of new media as outlined by Lévy. However, this participation is directed and structured: interactions containing the potential for disinformation are filtered at the pre-publication stage, so that the comment section does not develop into a channel for the reproduction of misleading information. This management model demonstrates that gatekeeping functions and participatory openness are not mutually exclusive; rather, they can be carried out in tandem through appropriate strategies.

The third dimension strengthening institutional credibility operates at a different level from the previous two dimensions. While content planning and interaction management take place during the pre-publication phase, credibility building works cumulatively and over the long term to shape public perception of the @rctvcirebon account

as a trustworthy source of information. Within Lévy's framework, this dimension is directly linked to indicators of community trust building specifically, how social relationships in cyberspace are formed through sustained and credible interactions.

Website analytics data for November–December 2025, showing a 131.11% increase in active users and a 175.27% increase in page views, indicates that the integration strategy between Instagram and the official website has successfully built a cohesive information distribution ecosystem. Instagram does not stand alone as a single channel but functions as an entry point that directs the audience toward more comprehensive and accountable sources of information. This situation indirectly reduces the audience's reliance on unverified sources of information, which is one of the primary channels for the spread of disinformation on social media.

In line with [Imawan's \(2022\)](#) perspective, local media share geographical, social, and cultural proximity with their audience, making the relationship more personal and trust-based. This closeness also becomes a vulnerability if not managed properly, as disinformation circulating at the local community level can have a direct and tangible impact on people's lives. Therefore, strategies to strengthen credibility through consistent account identity, openness to corrections, and transparency of information sources are not merely efforts to build an image, but rather preventive mechanisms that reduce the space for disinformation to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the local audience.

Overall, the three strategic dimensions identified in this study do not operate in isolation but rather form a layered defense system that complements one another. The content planning and selection dimension counters disinformation at the pre-publication stage by addressing the risks of false context and misleading content. The audience interaction management dimension filters out potential fabricated and misleading content entering through public participation channels in real time. Meanwhile, the institutional credibility-building dimension works structurally and over the long term to build public trust, leading audiences to prefer accessing information from official sources.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, the strategy employed by RCTV Cirebon's Social Media Specialist to counter disinformation via Instagram is implemented through three mutually integrated dimensions: content planning and selection, audience interaction management, and strengthening institutional credibility. These three dimensions address the forms of disinformation most relevant in the context of local media, namely false context, misleading content, and fabricated content. All user-generated content undergoes verification and confirmation before publication; audience interactions are actively managed through digital gatekeeping mechanisms; and the account's credibility is consistently built through integration with the official website and transparency regarding institutional identity.

These findings confirm that countering disinformation in local media cannot be reduced to a single mechanism. Effective strategies require a multi-layered defense system that operates prior to publication, during distribution, and structurally over the long term. This also demonstrates that the journalistic gatekeeping function remains relevant in the era

of social media, but requires adaptation to the participatory and real-time nature of digital platforms.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that other local media organizations develop written and structured procedures for managing digital content, particularly those covering the verification process for user-generated content and mechanisms for responding to potential disinformation. In addition, regularly enhancing the capabilities of social media specialists through typology-based disinformation literacy training should be considered a long-term investment in maintaining the accuracy of information in the digital public sphere.

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