

**‘You Didn’t Ask for Reality, You Asked for More Teeth’:
Corporate Social Irresponsibility in *Jurassic World***

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Abstract

Practicing corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an expectation for modern organizations and can guide an organization in balancing the needs of diverse stakeholders. Despite its significant impact on communities and broad audiences, there is still much to learn about CSR in zoos and theme parks. To address this gap, stakeholder theory is applied in an analysis of the 2015 film *Jurassic World* to explore how the featured zoological theme park treats its stakeholders and, in turn, its overall CSR. Thematic analysis of the film revealed that the zoological theme park disregards its internal stakeholders (employees and dinosaurs) and external stakeholders (customers and society) in an unethical pursuit of financial gain. In doing so, *Jurassic World* fails to achieve its declared altruistic CSR goal of humbling society. Results suggest that failing to consider and value stakeholders render CSR goals impossible. Although fictional and extreme, examples from the film serve as a cautionary tale for real theme parks and zoos developing CSR practices to accommodate shifting public opinion about the industry. Theoretical implications include the consideration of a framework for organizations so unethical that they are socially irresponsible.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, zoos, theme parks, organizational ethics, *Jurassic World*

Corporate Social Irresponsibility in *Jurassic World*

As awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) increases, critics have expressed concern about zoological theme parks, specifically the ethical implications of their treatment of animals and broader societal impact (Diakolios, 2020; Kaufman, 2017). In response to growing criticisms, zoological theme parks, like SeaWorld and Disney's Animal Kingdom, have presented themselves as socially conscious beacons of conservation rather than avenues of entertainment (Lee Odinsky-Zec, 2010; Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005). Following continued shifts in public opinion about captive animals as entertainment (Parsons & Rose, 2018) and operational fluctuations following the pandemic (Weisberg, 2022; Whitten, 2022), many of these organizations are now strategically positioned to reassess their values and CSR practices.

Through thematic analysis, this paper examines the eponymous fictional zoological theme park in the film *Jurassic World (JW)* as an example of an organization that fails to consider stakeholders' needs and thus fails to live up to its declared CSR mission. Stakeholder theory will serve as the theoretical framework for this study. Stakeholder theory emphasizes the reciprocal relationships between a business and its stakeholders (Freeman, 1984) and asserts that an organization is morally responsible for creating value for all stakeholders, not just shareholders (Gibson, 2000). This moral emphasis aligns with CSR's focus on creating benefits for society, and the two concepts are deeply interrelated (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017).

This study may inform future directions for the tourism and entertainment industry as they redefine themselves following financial losses after the pandemic. In particular, it may serve as a cautionary tale for organizations that make empty CSR claims while prioritizing shareholders over other stakeholders. The findings discussed here may also assist zoological

theme parks in more fully considering animals as equal stakeholders. Theoretical implications include the consideration of a framework to define socially irresponsible organizations.

In this paper, I will summarize the film *JW* and its background and public reception. I will then present an overview of CSR, including literature on initiatives in theme parks and zoos. Then, I will introduce stakeholder theory as the theoretical framework and summarize relevant literature. An explanation of the method of analysis will follow. Finally, results will be discussed before practical and theoretical implications are presented.

The Film: *Jurassic World*

As the first installment of the rebooted *Jurassic Park (JP)* franchise, *JW* centers around the operation of an eponymous theme park featuring bioengineered dinosaurs on the fictional island of Isla Nublar 22 years after the catastrophic failure of a pilot project. To increase park attendance and please investors, operations manager Claire Dearing and park owner Simon Masrani authorize geneticist Henry Wu to bioengineer a new species with exaggerated predator features. Wu's creation, dubbed the Indominous rex (Irex), is built from a classified mix of genes and proves unpredictable and vicious. The Irex escapes, killing employees, customers, and dinosaurs. Staff disagrees on how to manage the crisis. Owen Grady, an animal behavior specialist who trains the park's Velociraptors, wants to kill the Irex and evacuate the park. Vic Hoskins, a security official eager to prove the viability of trained dinosaurs for military use, instead uses the Velociraptors to hunt the Irex. Hoskins' unsuccessful plan creates further chaos until Dearing ultimately lures the Tyrannosaurus rex into a battle royale against the Irex.

The film debuted on June 12, 2015, and was a blockbuster success. Directed by Colin Trevorrow and starring Bryce Dallas Howard and Chris Pratt, *JW* grossed over \$500 million worldwide in its opening weekend (Acuna, 2015) and \$1.6 billion during its theatrical run,

making it the second-highest-grossing film of 2015 (IMDb, 2015). *JW* has two sequels, *Fallen Kingdom* (Bayona, 2018) and *Dominion* (Trevorrow, 2022). Fans and critics praised the film's action sequences, computer-generated dinosaurs, and nostalgic homages to previous films (Rotten Tomatoes, n. d.). In promoting the film, Trevorrow described his intent to create “*Blackfish* vibes” (Yar, 2015), referencing the documentary that chronicled a captive whale at SeaWorld responsible for three deaths. Trevorrow also described the *Indominus rex* as the embodiment of humanity's worst tendencies, particularly greed and excess (McGovern, 2015).

JW builds on themes established in *JP* (Spielberg, 1993) and the science fiction novel on which it was based (Crichton, 1990). Scholars have found pop culture artifacts useful research subjects because of their ability to inform and shape organization-society relationships in broader culture (Mitra & Fyke, 2017). Science fiction, in particular, offers a mirror to society through its creation of limitless alternate realities and typically reflects the current state of the world (Parker et al., 1999). The *JP* franchise is widely considered an allegory for capitalist greed (Castree, 2001), the risks of unchecked, for-profit technological innovation (Briggs & Kelber-Kaye, 2000), and the exploitation of the natural world (Hamscha, 2014; Newsome & Hughes, 2016). These themes remain relevant, particularly in organizational CSR discussions.

Literature Review: Corporate Social Responsibility

Although CSR has numerous, evolving definitions (Dahsrud, 2008), conducting business while considering a triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental stewardship is now viewed by many as an expectation (May et al., 2019). CSR implies voluntary and ongoing efforts to operate with a commitment to developing society and a constant assessment of an organization's ability to create shared value for all stakeholders (May et al., 2019). Although philanthropy is one of the most widely recognized examples of CSR, other practices include

reducing environmental impacts, improving health and safety, supporting communities, or influencing policy (Bowen, 1953; May & Roper, 2014). Measuring CSR is often complex (Lee et al., 2018), but one approach includes assessing the value created for stakeholders with diverse, and occasionally conflicting, needs and interests (Peloza & Shang, 2011). Different CSR models and dimensions have developed (Geva, 2008), including Carroll's (1979) CSR pyramid. Mele (2008) distinguished four general strands of CSR research: shareholder value theory, corporate social performance, corporate citizenship, and stakeholder theory.

In recent years, awareness of the importance of CSR has increased in the tourism and hospitality industry (Coles et al., 2013; Holcomb et al., 2010). However, CSR activities in theme parks and zoos have not yet been fully explored (Wong et al., 2022). Most theme parks and zoos are operated by private entities (Holcomb et al., 2007), making CSR a natural extension of existing financial goals that could legitimize their practices while contributing positively to stakeholders (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Kaur et al. (2022) argued that the tourism industry unites broad audiences around a shared interest and is uniquely positioned to play a societal role in developing culture and community. Much of the existing CSR-related scholarship within the industry is focused on environmental sustainability (Abdelli et al., 2022), although scholars have called for more balanced efforts that also consider an organization's economic and social impact (Luiten, 2020; Serra-Cantalops et al., 2017).

Theme Parks & Zoos

Holcomb and Smith (2017) argued that theme parks must embrace CSR focused on a strong relationship between stakeholders and the organization. Scholars have found that organizational commitment to CSR within the industry enhances employer-employee

relationships (Supanti et al., 2015) and is perceived favorably by customers (Contreiras et al., 2016) and surrounding communities alike (Li et al., 2018).

Much of the existing scholarship about CSR in theme parks explores an attraction's impact on the local economy through tourism revenue and job creation and the success of surrounding hotels and restaurants ((Milman et al., 2010). However, theme parks also have negative impacts, including traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, and excessive demand for public facilities (Anthonisz & Heap, 2018). As such, major organizations like The Walt Disney Company have embarked on CSR activities focused on offsetting the harmful effects of the theme park on local communities (Luiten, 2020). An emerging trend in theme park research includes an interest in CSR related to animal welfare and occupational safety – largely prompted by SeaWorld's *Blackfish* public relations crisis (Boissat et al., 2021; Maynard, 2018; Parsons & Rose, 2018). Scholars have also begun to explore the financial and reputational risk associated with CSR, which has intensified around divisive political and social issues (Farmaki, 2022).

CSR-related scholarship about zoos has primarily focused on conservation and sustainability efforts, although an ongoing ethical debate questions their mere existence (Thacker, 2020; Lee Odinsky-Zec, 2010). Generally, there has been minimal exploration of how CSR activities impact stakeholders (Motel, 2016), although Safina (2018) argued that future zoos must be places of public engagement to survive. Scholars have chronicled the industry's shifting emphasis from entertainment to altruism as public opinion on animal welfare changed in the 1970s (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 2008). Scholars have also explored zoos' strategic attempts to build reputation through captive breeding programs for endangered species, noting a primary concern with the perceptions of external stakeholders (Bayma, 2012; Keulartz, 2015) and inconsistent reporting about the efficacy of extinction prevention (Rimmel,

2018). Research results are mixed about customers' perceptions of CSR practices at zoos, with some reporting positive views (Contreiras et al., 2016) and others indicating skepticism (van Heerden & de Beer, 2016). Reiser et al. (2019) studied CSR expectations of tourists and argued that future zoos should adopt a more humanistic management style that is applied equitably for both human and animal stakeholders. Scholars are beginning to explore the role zoos play in education around climate change and view it as an opportunity for societal impact (Taylor & Duram, 2021; Clayton et al., 2014).

Stakeholder Theory

Posited by business scholar R. Edward Freeman (1984), stakeholder theory addresses the morals and values in managing an organization by emphasizing the interconnected nature of a business and its stakeholders. Crafted in opposition to a traditional shareholder view, stakeholder theory asserts that an organization must create value for anyone affected by its operation, including customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and investors, among many others (Freeman, 1984). Donaldson and Preston (1995) argued that stakeholder theory has distinct aspects that are mutually supportive—including normative, instrumental, and descriptive approaches—which, along with Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typology, have become foundational in subsequent research. The theory is complementary to CSR because companies need various stakeholders' expertise, participation, loyalty, and know-how to achieve CSR goals (Freeman & Dmytriyev, 2017; Dmytrivey et al., 2021). Stakeholder theory is often applied as a managerial, pragmatic approach to CSR's ethical framework (Dmytriyev et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2019). It is also frequently cited as a basis of ethical communications in crisis management (Martin & Boynton, 2005; Ulmer, 2001; Xu & Li, 2013) and in studies exploring ethics-based organizational failures like Enron (Culpan & Trussel, 2005; Tse, 2011).

Freeman (1984) defined stakeholders as “those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist” (p. 31). While many scholars have focused on external stakeholders, others have explored internal stakeholders, including employees. Hansen et al. (2011) argued that mutual trust between employees and their organizations is key to CSR. Shafer et al. (2005) argued that employees’ knowledge capabilities are critical aspects of organizational value creation. A plethora of research exists around an organization’s relationship with customers (Perez et al., 2016), and Morakabit et al. (2016) argued that basic health and safety should be prioritized, especially during a crisis where stakeholders may be tourists. In an increasingly global society, scholars have argued that society is a primary, universal stakeholder, and organizations are responsible for using their influence to address societal issues and minimize negative impact (Henriksson & Grunewald, 2020; Kujala et al., 2022).

While some scholars have criticized the theory’s somewhat ambiguous definition of stakeholder (Miles, 2012; Phillips et al., 2015), others have embraced its fluidity. Ortis and Strudler (2002) argued that although Freeman did not explicitly designate the natural world as a stakeholder, organizations should take it upon themselves to do so. To that end, Driscoll and Starik (2004) argued that the salience of the natural environment makes it the primary and primordial stakeholder of all organizations. This idea has gained traction, especially around climate change (Laine, 2010; Haigh & Griffiths, 2007). Tallberg et al. (2022) argued that animals are stakeholders whose rights should be considered an ethical priority.

The literature review reveals limited knowledge of CSR activities and related stakeholder input at theme parks and zoos. The current study focuses on closing this gap by exploring a fictional worse-case-scenario example of a theme park by posing the following research question: Does *JW* operate with ethical consideration for its stakeholders?

Method

This qualitative research values the human elements of organizational communication, and holds that truth is reflected in experiences and interpretations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). A phronetic-iterative analysis approach was used because of its flexible nature (Tracy, 2018). The process included a blend of grounded analysis of the film considered in the context of existing literature (Tracy, 2018). After a cursory review of literature related to CSR and stakeholder theory, I viewed the film four times. Upon each viewing, I focused on one stakeholder group, taking extensive notes. I then organized the notes to search for themes within each stakeholder category. Themes were coded to explore overlaps and gaps. I then revisited the literature with a more specific focus on themes drawn from my notes. Although the categories were developed inductively using stakeholder theory, theme searching was deductive. While multiple themes resulted, I selected the most dominant code for each stakeholder category for further analysis.

Findings

Thematic analysis of the film resulted in four stakeholder categories, broken into internal and external subcategories: employees, dinosaurs, customers, and society. Four subthemes were found, including undermine, exploit, endanger, and ignore. While there was a crossover between the subthemes across categories, the most salient in each served as a focal point. As an organization, JW claims a reverence for dinosaurs and an altruistic role in humbling society, noted in the value statement expressed by Masrani that “Jurassic World exists to remind us how very small we are.” However, the organization undermines employees’ expertise, exploits dinosaurs, endangers customers, and ignores its societal impact.

Internal Stakeholders

Employees

As stakeholders, JW's employees should be respected and supported in their roles (Hansen et al., 2011), and their knowledge should be valued (Shafer et al., 2005). Instead, JW's culture routinely undermines employees' expertise and authority. The scene where Masrani confronts Wu about the Irex exemplifies JW's culture of disrespect for expertise. Masrani authorizes Wu to create the Irex to be "bigger" and "scarier" with "more teeth" and then admonishes him for following directions after the Irex's aggression creates a crisis. In his admonishment, Masrani fails to ask Wu—an accomplished geneticist surrounded by research files and in the lab where the Irex was designed—for his input on subduing the creature. He instead declares, "I never asked for a monster," insulting Wu's work and squandering a learning opportunity. Similarly, Masrani hired Grady for his expertise as an animal behavioral specialist, but after consultation, promptly dismissed his recommendations to neutralize the Irex because "we have \$26 million invested in that asset, we can't just kill it."

JW's culture also routinely undermines employees' authority. This is most notable in the staff's treatment of Dearing, who is the operations manager and second in command. Dearing's leadership is established in scenes where she secures a sponsorship while leading a tour of JW's lab and again when she provides directions and detailed metrics standing above her staff in the command center. Despite her clear competency, Dearing struggles to be respected. For example, in the scene where she directs Grady to help with the Irex, he treats her request as an ask instead of an assignment, commenting with condescension that "you people will never learn." He makes no effort to focus on their conversation, remaining distracted by his motorcycle, and openly mocks her even though she is his superior. Similarly, in the scene where staff meets in the control room to discuss crisis management, Dearing is spoken over by her subordinates until she ultimately screams, "you're not in control here." Hoskins displays a similar disregard for

authority when he secretly enacts his plan to employ the Velociraptors against the Irex even after Masrani—the park’s owner—flatly rejects the idea.

Dinosaurs

As living creatures at the organization's center, JW should consider dinosaurs as valued stakeholders whose rights must be ethically protected ((Driscoll & Starik, 2004; Tallberg et al., 2022). Instead, JW exploits dinosaurs for profit and disregards their well-being. JW personnel routinely refer to the dinosaurs as “assets” and their exhibits as “attractions,” indicating the organization views them as possessions meant to entertain. For example, the Mosasaurus performs in aquatic feeding shows with a splash zone, visually reminiscent of SeaWorld’s orca shows that have become emblematic of animal exploitation. Further, baby dinosaurs are corralled into a petting zoo where children ride them. An open field is part of a safari-like tour where vans of customers with cameras interrupt dinosaurs’ grazing.

The dinosaurs are also exploited as weapons. This is most notable in Hoskins’ plan to sell the trained Velociraptors, which he describes as a “gold mine,” for military use. Scenes featuring the Velociraptors often include guns and ammunition, tanks, and staff dressed for combat, furthering the notion that JW views the dinosaurs as a tool. Even Grady, who names the Velociraptors and argues that they are “more than numbers on a spreadsheet,” ultimately participates in Hoskins’ plan to weaponize them by exploiting his bond with the dinosaurs to lead the mission. In the scene where Hoskins’ mission fails, staff shoots at the Irex while the Velociraptors are still in the line of fire, exemplifying that they were viewed merely as weapons and were no longer of value after their failure. After Hoskins’ plan fails, Dearing similarly exploits the Tyrannosaurus rex when she releases it from its holding pen and lures it to fight and kill the Irex.

Beyond their exploitation as entertainment and weapons, JW also fails to consider dinosaurs' general safety and welfare. Masrani, who encourages Dearing to assess the dinosaurs' happiness by "looking them in the eyes," fails to consider the risk the escaped Irex poses to other dinosaurs. This hypocrisy is exemplified in a scene where Dearing and Grady look a mauled Brachiosaurus in the eyes as it dies in agony, lying in a field among the dead bodies of its herd killed by the Irex. The safety of the Velociraptors and Tyrannosaurus rex is also disregarded when staff intentionally introduce them to the Irex. The disregard for dinosaur safety precedes the crisis, apparent in the scene in which Dearing learns that a Pachycephalosaurus is unconscious after running into a fence and, without emotion or inquiry about its health, asks, "how long until we get it out of there" to continue park operations.

External Stakeholders

Customers

JW fails its customers, a key stakeholder group, by endangering them through its haphazard crisis response (Morakabati et al., 2016). JW withholds crucial information from customers and prioritizes reputation and finances above their lives. Most notably, Masrani interrupts operations staff as they move to alert customers of the crisis, screaming, "hang up the damn phone and let asset containment handle this quietly." Customers near the escaped Irex are subsequently told that portion of the park is closed because of "technical difficulties" and are not informed about the roaming, aggressive dinosaur. JW's dangerous withholding of information is financially motivated. For example, upon the Irex's violent escape, Masrani refuses to kill it because of the significant financial investment shareholders have made to create the hybrid dinosaur. Then, when Grady demands an evacuation after the entire asset containment team is killed by the Irex, Dearing expresses concern over reputational damage, commenting, "we'd

never reopen.” Finally, as customers are running wildly and trampling over one another, Hoskins—the lead security official—is in JW’s lab securing the most valuable dinosaur embryos after claiming “this park will be Chapter 11 by morning,” signifying a concern to protect financial assets in a potential post-crisis bankruptcy over customers who are actively in danger.

JW’s failure to develop or enact a coordinated crisis response plan demonstrates the organization’s disregard for customer safety. Masrani’s description of the escaped Irex as an “eventuality” and the mere existence of an asset containment unit suggests JW was aware of the inherent risks of its operation but failed to take necessary precautions. The general chaos in the control room during the crisis response scene suggests that JW lacked a clear plan, even after the failure of JP 20 years prior because of a similar incident. This lack of planning endangers customers and is evident in the scene where the Irex inadvertently releases airborne Pterodactyls that begin swooping down from the sky and eating customers. The customers are aimlessly running when a simple message instructing them to find shelter could have prevented unnecessary deaths. Instead of communicating basic safety information, the park’s speaker system plays automated messaging about the gift shop on a loop as people die. Further, when a total evacuation is eventually ordered, there is a lack of resources dedicated to saving people. For example, a single ferry is available to take people off the island, although numerous boats and airplanes supporting Hoskins’ military trial arrive instantly.

Society

As a technological leader with influence, JW should consider its responsibility in addressing societal issues (Henriksson & Grunewald, 2020; Kujala et al., 2022). Instead, JW fails society as a stakeholder by failing to consider the impact a bioengineered hybrid species may have within a global ecosystem. For example, Wu’s proud description of the Irex as “designed,

not bred” without concern for the obvious dangers of introducing a new alpha-predator capable of mass destruction suggests a disregard for the laws of nature. It also sets a potentially dangerous precedent for other organizations that may try to compete. Further proving a lack of concern, JW did not consider the developmental needs of the Irex—an entirely new species—until after it was grown and displayed significant behavioral issues. Wu further defends his manipulation of nature when confronted about the Irex’s untenable behavior, claiming, “all of this exists because of me. If I don’t innovate, someone else will,” suggesting an awareness of JW’s potential influence in genetic engineering and a level of arrogance and apathy toward that responsibility.

Instead of positioning itself as a leader in education about extinction and the role science can play in conserving—and, in the case of dinosaurs, reviving species—JW focuses on monetizing its advances. Although Dearing brags to sponsors that “our advances in gene splicing have opened up new frontiers” while surrounded by educational displays, the park does not consider practical or philanthropic applications for its technology and instead squanders its advances for profit. This disinterest in education is exemplified in Dearing’s explanation that the Irex was given an “unscientific” name so “we wouldn’t have to teach children how to pronounce it.” Additionally, it is demonstrated in a scene where Dearing unceremoniously throws an employee’s dinosaur desk toys in the trash, dismissing them as “clutter” as he expresses admiration for the scientific advances that created living dinosaurs after extinction. JW disregards potential educational opportunities concurrent with a focus on profit. Although operations staff tease Dearing about the commodification of dinosaurs through jokes about a possible “Pepsisaurus” or “Tostitodon,” they celebrate the announcement of a corporate sponsor. This apparent disconnect suggests that JW has created a culture of excess that operates in an

uphill battle against increasingly unrealistic demands to remain profitable without seeing the value in education or conservation efforts. This is apparent in Wu's criticisms of Masrani that "nothing in Jurassic World is natural, but you don't think about that" before declaring, "you didn't ask for reality, you asked for more teeth."

Discussion

As an organization, JW fails to balance the needs of its stakeholders and consistently considers its financial standing ahead of its employees, dinosaurs, customers, and broader societal role. In doing so, JW proves that its claimed reverence for dinosaurs and goal of humbling society is little more than window-dressing CSR. In reality, JW creates little to no value for most stakeholders, and its organizational relationships are one-sided. In failing to create value for its stakeholders, JW creates, exacerbates, and mismanages a crisis while falling woefully short of its CSR goal. In undermining employees and exploiting dinosaurs, JW creates a financially motivated culture with a lack of respect. This culture, in turn, results in a lack of concern for customers' safety and the park's potential impact on society. The carryover of themes across stakeholder groups—notably safety—suggests a systemic, cultural level of irresponsibility.

This paper offers insight into the hazards created when an organization simultaneously disregards most of its stakeholder groups to focus on its financial bottom line. This analysis suggests cultures of respect to create mutual value for an organization and its stakeholders and to achieve CSR goals. Further, this paper highlights CSR as an opportunity for an organization to check itself against purely profit-driven growth. It also provides insights for organizations working with animals, particularly theme parks and zoos, to consider all living creatures as stakeholders and recognize the inherent danger they may present. Theoretically, this paper

contributes to scholarship focused on ethical failures and questions the need for a framework for corporate social irresponsibility. Future studies might also consider lessons from *JW* related to crisis management.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this paper is the fictional and extreme nature of the *JW* example. In reality, issues of organizational ethics are not as clear-cut. However, exaggerations in pop culture artifacts can help audiences think critically about complex problems and allow an organization to consider consequences without risk.

Conclusion

With a stark, worst-case scenario, *JW* addresses the moral question at the heart of the *JP* franchise about whether humans should manipulate nature simply because they can — and may profit from doing so. CSR and stakeholder theory provide a lens to critique lessons from the film, which can provide insight into real-world theme parks and zoos. As an organization, *JW* fails its stakeholders in an unchecked pursuit of profit. In doing so, it operates in a socially irresponsible manner. This example is a cautionary tale about the threat greed, excess, and unregulated growth pose to an organization and broader societal order. Progress without an ethical compass can be dangerous. As the film suggests, in instances where an organization operates without consideration for stakeholders, “maybe progress should lose for once.”

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