PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT CAMPAIGN IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS REGULATORY AND ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NESREA)

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Abstract
The study was conducted to investigate public relations strategies and social media platforms that NESREA could use in the campaign against indiscriminate disposal of waste in Nigeria. The study is underpinned by Two-way Symmetric Model and supported by Technological Determinism Theory and Frank Jefkins' Transfer Process Model. Library research method was employed. Findings revealed that, converting negative situations to positive situations, two-way communication, media relations, research and data collection were public relations strategies that NESREA could adopt in the campaign against indiscriminate waste disposal in Nigeria. NESREA could convert negative situations to positive situations by adopting the Transfer Process Model. Media relations on the on other hand can get NESREA free and positive coverage. It was further revealed that, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter(X) are social media platforms that NESREA could use in its waste management efforts. These social media platforms would make it easy for NESREA PR team to share messages with its publics in the form of text, videos and photos. It was concluded that, in the 21st century organizations like NESREA cannot make huge impact in her public relations efforts without embracing the 21st century media. It was recommended that, NESREA should use and continue to use social media in its public relations campaign, because the best way to achieve two-way communication is through the use of the social media.

Key words: *Social Media, Public Relations, Strategies, Waste, Management.*

Introduction

Public relations can play a fundamental role in the waste management efforts of organizations like National Environmental Standards Regulatory and Enforcement Agency (NESREA). This is true in that, public relations according to Black (1989) is a practice aimed at establishing a two-way communication seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest, and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and

full information. The foregoing connotes that; public relations is a two-way communication that is intended to win public support. As a two-way communication public relations serves as a veritable information and communication bridge between an organization and its various publics. In view of the above, it can be said that, NESREA's public relations team can bridge the communication gap between the organization and its publics. This simply means that, in her waste management efforts NESREA should always endeavor to listen to the publics, by getting feedback from the publics. NESREA can therefore, use public relations to build relationships with the publics. This kind of relationship will ensure compliance from members of the publics. This assertion holds true in that, Keghku (2005) avers that:

> *Sound relationships with the public are usually reflected in the performance that satisfies the public, and the communication of such satisfactory performance. It is the performance of those activities of public interest identified with any organization, as they carry out their organization's objectives that eventually culminate in acceptable public attitude towards the organization (P.7).*

Establishing and maintaining a cordial relationship between NESREA and its publics is a public relations strategy that will not only ensure compliance but will also serve as means of creating awareness on the dangers of improper disposal of waste. This is true in that, Onyilo et al (2025) state that, an agency in Nigeria saddled with the responsibility of enforcing environmental regulations and standards in the country is the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA). NESREA was established in 2007, and is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring compliance with environmental laws, regulations, and standards to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. (NESREA official website). The use of public relations strategies and the new media by NESREA, would create room for dialogical approach to communication between NESREA and its publics.

Statement of the Problem

Although, the National Environmental Standards Regulatory and Enforcement Agency (NESREA) plays a crucial role in regulating waste disposal practices in Nigeria. However, there seemed to be a lack of comprehensive assessment of the public relations strategies employed by NESREA in promoting proper waste disposal practices among the general public. There also seem to be inadequate literature on how NESREA could use the new media. This gap in knowledge hinders the agency's ability to effectively communicate its policies and regulations to stakeholders, leading to challenges in achieving its waste management goals. In the context of waste disposal, public relations plays a crucial role in managing the image and reputation of waste management

companies, regulatory bodies, and government agencies involved in waste disposal. It involves spreading information, addressing concerns, and engaging with stakeholders to encourage thoughtful and supportive waste management initiatives. In the light of the foregoing this study seeks to investigate public relations strategies and media (social media) that could be used by NESREA to enhance her waste management efforts.

Objectives

The study investigated public relations strategies and social media platforms that NESREA could use in the campaign against indiscriminate waste disposal in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Public Relations Strategies and Media that NESREA Can Adopt in Waste Management.

Converting negative situations to positive situation is a public relations strategy that NESREA can adopt in the campaign against indiscriminate disposal of waste in Nigeria. This true in that, the thrust of Transfer Process Model according to Jefkins (1992) cited in Osho (2004) is that public relations in any organization is to convert four negative attitudes into four positive ones and that such knowledge brings understanding for the organization. This strategy can be used to manage the perception that people have about NESREA. This means that if people have negative perception about NESREA the first thing to do will be to convert that negative perception to a positive one. The Transfer Process Model of Frank Jefkins, can be used as an effective public relations strategy in converting negative perception to positive one. Using the Model, the public relations team of NESREA can convert: hostility to sympathy, prejudice to acceptance, apathy to interest and ignorance to knowledge. Prejudice simply means that, at a particular point in time, NESREA will have publics who do not want to hear or agree with the programs and activities of NESREA. Using the Model as a strategy, NESREA can convert such prejudice to acceptance. This is so because, if such prejudice is allowed to linger it may have negative impact on the relationship between NESREA its publics.

Apathy suggests that, NESREA may have worse enemies of understanding that do not want to have anything to do with NESREA as an organization. Such persons may lack any feeling or desire to act in any way towards NESREA. It is the responsibility of the public relations team of NESREA to inspire or arouse the interest of such publics towards the organization, such apathy may be a product of selfishness, laziness, lack of imagination or a result of the subject not having been presented in an interesting and convincing way (Osho 2004).In view of the above it can be said that, Transfer Process Model is an effective strategy for managing image and building relationships between an organization and its publics.

Effective communication is another public relations strategy that NESEREA can use in her waste management efforts. For NESREA to achieve desired result, there is need to ensure that, there is constant interaction between NESREA and its publics. Effective communication can be achieved through the use of two-way communication. This is true in that, two- way communication is a dialogical model that ensures exchange of information between the sender and the receiver. Better still, with two-way communication feedback is guaranteed. The use of two-way communication by organizations' managers who function at the strategic management level also allows for audience to have a voice at the executive table (Omula & Ogbole 2024). This implies that, two-way communication provides an organization with a means that creates a level playing ground for negotiation between an organization and its employees, customers and other stakeholders. The importance of two-way communication according to Pierre (2025) is that, organizations like NESREA can use two-way communication to better engage the publics and build positive relationship with such publics. It is important to stress here that; two-way communication should be based on truth. NESREA public relations team must therefore ensure that, they do not lie to the publics.

Media relations is another public relations strategy that can be used to achieve a successful campaign on waste management. Media relations entails organizations like, NESREA establishing and maintaining a good rapport with media outlets. One-way NESREA can have a successful public relations campaign is through media relations. This relationship will help a great deal in the coverage and reportage of the public relations activities of NESERA that are geared towards creating awareness. Chile & Chiakaan (2015), cited Nwosu (1997), who argues that, media relations is efficient in handling relationship between an organization (business or non-business) and one of its 'most significant public, which is the media institution or the press. Media relations ensures a strong relationship between an organization and media outlets, this will earn the organization positive coverage from the media. Effective media relations is an important component of effective public relations strategies. Media relations is an important aspect of public relations, it assists organizations to reach their target audience. For media relations to yield positive results the PR team needs a deep understanding of the media landscape.

Research and Data Collection is an important public relations strategy that can assist NESREA a great deal in her public relations efforts towards waste management. Giving credence to the preceding point Usuala (2005) according to Elijah (2021) opines that, research is a process of arriving at dependable revelations and findings through planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The foregoing connotes that; research is vital in the attainment of set objectives of an organization like NESREA. This is true in that; it is through research and data collection that an

organization like NESREA can collect relevant information that will assist it carry out a campaign that will yield positive result. This means that, every public relations campaign should commence with research. It is through research that you can tell the merits and demerits of particular public communication approaches for particular purposes. Research creates room for effective allocation of resources; it also helps in the choice of media and message placement. In view of the above it can be said that, with research and data collection NESREA can reach out to the right audience with the right message at the right time and through the right media. Research is an important public relations strategy in that, research expands knowledge and understanding, which can contribute to the attainment of organizational objective.

National Environmental Standards Regulatory and Enforcement Agency (NESREA) can and should adopt the new media in the dissemination of information to its target audience. In the 21st century the new media have become popular and are commonly used by various segment of the audience or publics. The need to use the new media is hinged on the believe that, technology determines the way people communicate, this was the basic assumption of Technological Determinism Theory. Equally important is the fact that, Omula (2021) states that, Technology (social media) has now provided the publics of an organization the liberty, to make comments or express their dissatisfaction about a product or service at any time they choose to. The public relations team can also respond immediately to the complaints of its publics. Little wonder, Hendrix (2004) asserts that, the multiple uses of the internet and computer technology have impacted the practice of public relations in an ever-expanding way. In view of the foregoing, Omula (2021) notes that, social media are 21st century phenomena that have transformed the way organizations communicate with their publics. Public relations team of NESREA can therefore employ social media in her interactions with the various publics of her organization. This is so because social media are interactive media that ensure constant interaction between the organization and the publics. Again, social media create room for immediate feedback.

Social media eliminate the walls between members of the public and a brand, shorten the time a company has to react to relevant stories, and blur the line between marketing and public relations. Often, public relations and marketing professionals' role overlap on social media (Boitnott, 2017). In view of the foregoing, it can be said that, social media can help the public relations team perform its jobs easier and faster compared to what was obtained before now.

Below are some social media platforms that public relations team of NESREA can use in disseminating information to the publics:

a. **Facebook:** wherever you go, you are sure to find people using Facebook as if they were addicted to it. It is extremely popular among the masses, and allows

you to engage your audience through high-quality content in form of posts, images, videos, info graphics and links (Patel 2016). In order to succeed on Facebook, you will need to become a conversational brand. Only then will you be able to build a strong base of audience. The foregoing connotes that, NESREA can use this social media platform in its campaign against indiscriminate disposal of waste. This is so because many of the publics use this social media platform.

b. **Twitter (X):** another platform that is widely used by public relations professionals in modern times according to Patel (2016) is Twitter(X). 'Short and Sweet' should be your mantra on this platform as you are limited to 140 characters, which is why it can get challenging to get your message across and ensure that it is thoroughly understood. It is important to point out here that in the use of Twitter(X) economy of word is a requirement. This implies that in using Twitter (X) the public relations team of NESREA must choose their words carefully. This is so because, in the use of Twitter(X) you are limited to 140 characters. This means that messages in Twitter(X) must be brief and to the point.
c. **Instagram:** Patel (2016) notes that, all you need to do is clicking a photo and post it. Pictures he maintained speak better than text. The motive of Instagram is to offer interesting accounts, photos and places to consumers. Public relations professionals can use visuals to create and raise awareness about issues and causes, take followers behind the scenes to make a personal connection, and promote events before, and while they are in progress to entice, and keep tongues wagging for a long time. In using Instagram, the public relations team of NESREA can post pictures depicting the devastating effects of indiscriminate disposal of waste to the environment and human health.
d. **Google +:** the ability of Google + to build enthusiastic communities of fans who support a cause or a person is tremendous. Public relations professionals can explore this platform and find several communities related to varied causes, interest and people. Google + ensures that everything that is posted is out there for the world to see (Patel 2016). This makes it an ideal platform to post media releases, announcements, podcasts and articles. The foregoing connotes that, NESREA can post announcements and press releases on this platform.
e. **WhatsApp:** this is another social media platform that NESREA can use in the campaign against indiscriminate disposal of waste in Nigeria. WhatsApp is mainly used for instant messaging, voice calls and video calls. WhatsApp is a free messaging platform service that allows users exchange text, photo and video messages with others across the globe (Barney 2022). With WhatsApp NESREA can organize group chats with various publics, NESREA can also send text messages and multimedia messages such as, photos, videos and other documents using WhatsApp.
f. **Tik Tok:** this is a social media platform that can be used to disseminate messages

to the audience in the form of short videos**.** This means that NESREA can use TikTok as a media through which short videos of the negative impact of indiscriminate waste disposal could be sent to various audience members. Stewart (2024) posits that, TikTok has over one billion subscribers globally and is quickly catching up with big time social media platforms like Facebook and Instagaram. Stewart (2024) continued that, TikTok continues to gain popularity as more and more people get hooked to its short video format and algorithm content feed. This goes to show that, TikTok is a worthy social media platform that can come in handy in the campaign against indiscriminate disposal of waste

g. Snapchat: this is another social media platform that organization like NESREA can use in the campaign against indiscriminate disposal of waste in Nigeria. Snapchat is a social media platform that is mainly used for sharing videos and photographs. It is important to point out here that, Snapchat also offers users the opportunity to share text messages, voice notes, photos and videos within a chat conversation.

All the aforementioned social media platforms provide NESREA the opportunity to reach various audience members in the 21st century. Today many people have access to the various social media platforms mentioned above. Besides, research has shown that in the 21st century the best way to achieve two-way communication which is fundamental to the success of a public relations campaign is through the use of social media. It is glaring that the various social media platforms can assist the public relations team of, NESREA to achieve desired result in her public relations campaign.

Theoretical Review

Two-Way Symmetric Model

Two-way Symmetric Model according to Otuekere-Ubani (1996) is one of the four models propounded by Grunig & Hunt in 1984. Two-way Symmetric Model is a particular model of public relations that provides PR professional a new role, no longer is the professional a persuader and a one- way communicator. Rather the professional has now become the mediator between an organization and its publics. The foregoing suggests that, the thrust of Two-way Symmetric Model is to ensure that, there exists a two-way communication between an organization and its various publics. This connotes that, the public relations professional is expected to ensure flow of information from an organization to its publics and also from the publics to the organization. This implies that one of the core objectives of Two-way Symmetric Model is allowing feedback from the publics.

Two-way Symmetric Model of public relations argues that, the public relations team, should serve as a liaison between an organization and key publics, rather than as a persuader. Here, public relations executives are negotiators and use communication to

ensure that all involved parties benefit, not just the organization that employs them. The term "Symmetrical" is used because the model attempts to create mutual beneficial situation. The Two-way Symmetric Model is deemed the most ethical model, one that public relations professionals should aspire to use in their everyday tactics and strategies. The relevance of this theory to this study lies in the fact that with two-way communication the public relations team of NESREA would be able to ensure that, not only does the organization always gets feedback from the publics; but also works with such feedback. This will give members of the public a sense of belonging. This will in the long run win public support and goodwill.

Technological Determinism Theory

The term technological determinism was coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857 – 1929) and this theory revolves around the proposition that, technology in any given society defines it nature. Technology is viewed as the driving force of culture in a society and it determines it course of history. The thrust of Technological Determinism Theory is that, introduction of newer technologies introduces various changes and at times these changes can also lead to a loss of existing knowledge as well. Karl Marx believes that, technological progress can lead to newer ways of production in a society which can ultimately influence the culture, political and economic aspects of society thereby inevitably changing society itself. With the advent of social media, it can be argued that, technology has greatly altered our communication culture. Today technology has made it possible for public relations executives to interact and chat with their publics on virtual space. Social media have made it possible for customers to sometimes get instant feedback to their queries or complaints.

Communication technology has exceedingly changed the way we send out messages and receive them; and communication barriers are eliminated and the forms of communication have been transformed significantly. This is true in that, the postulation of Marshal Mcluhan, according to Ekhareafo & Omale (2017) is that, technology causes social change. They theory postulates that technology is the force which shapes society or the main force for change in human society. The accelerating paces of technological inventions witnessed over the years have advanced social changes in culture and communication (Mc Quail 2005).. The theory asserts that technology especially the new media technology decisively shapes how individuals think, feel and act and how societies organize themselves and operate (Asogwa & Samuel 2017).

Langdon Winner according to Asemah, Nwammuo, & Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017) provided two hypotheses for this theory: The technology of a given society has a fundamental influence on the various ways in which a society exists and changes in technology are the primary and most important source that can lead to changes in the

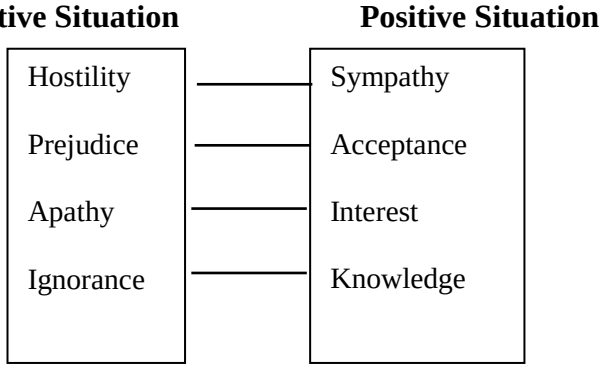
society. Winner believes that, changes in technology sometimes had unintended or unexpected results and effects as well. Asemah, et al (2017) posit that, Winner believes that, technology is not the slave of the human being, but rather humans are slaves to technology as they are forced to adapt to the technological environment that surrounds them. An alternative weaker view of technological determinism says that, technology is serving a mediating function because despite its leading role to the changes in culture, it is actually controlled by human beings.

Frank Jefkins' Public Relations Transfer Process Model

Public Relation Transfer Process Model according to Asemah (2011) was propounded by Frank Jefkins in 1988. The Transfer Process Model was to make up for the short comings of other public relations models. The thrust of Transfer Process Model according to Jefkins (1992) cited in Osho (2004) is that public relations in any organization is to convert four negative attitudes into four positive ones and that such knowledge brings understanding for the organization.

The Transfer Process Model in the diagram below is depicting the change public relations can bring about when an organization is confronted by a disturbing situation.

Jefkins' Public Relations Transfer Process Model



Source: Osho, S. (20004, p. 66)

The diagram above depicts four negative situations and four positive situations, that the negative situations can be converted to the positive situations. This diagram shows that a public relations executive can change hostility to sympathy. The negative attitudes which public relations seek to change according to Osho (2004,) are:

a. **Hostility:** this suggests that every organization has hostile publics who at one time or the other will be hostile towards the programs and activities of the organization. It is the role of public relations executives in this situation to arouse the sympathy of such publics towards the organization.
b. **Prejudice:** at a particular point in time every organization has publics who do

not want to hear or agree with the programs and activities of the organization. Such prejudice may be borne out of educational backgrounds, parental care, religion, social or class influences, environmental or societal factors. At least people naturally show some level of conservation towards new products or ideas, which may account for negative attitude. It is the duty of public relations executives to change such prejudice to acceptance of the organization by the publics.

c. **Apathy:** This suggests that we have worse enemy of understanding that does not want to have anything to do with the products, services and even the corporate organization and therefore lack any feeling or desire to act in any way towards the organization. It is the responsibility of public relations team to inspire or arouse the interest of such publics towards the organization such apathy may be a product of selfishness, laziness, lack of imagination or a result of subject not having been presented in an interesting and convincing way (Osho 2004).

d. **Ignorance:** This is regarded as the common failing of most corporate organizations which refused to make themselves known to the public (Osho 2004). Some organizations believe they don't need to reach out to the internal and external publics once they are making sales or have improved profits. Such financial success will dwindle when the publics are not getting the required and sustained information, this may change their positive attitudes. It is important for the public relations executives of any organization to link up with its publics through universe of discourse in either the micro or external media (Boulding in Osho 2004). The achievement here will be knowledge, which is crucial for sustainable understanding.

Empirical Studies

In the study "public relations and waste management in Nigeria: A study of National Environmental standards Regulatory and Enforcement Agency" The researchers Onyilo, Hope, Omula, Chinanuife &Nda-John (2025) wanted to find out public relations strategies that National Environmental Standards Regulatory and Enforcement Agency (NESREA) could use in the promotion of waste disposal in Nigeria. And the consequences of indiscriminate disposal of waste. The study was anchored on Two-way Symmetric Model. Survey Research Method was employed and the instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Findings revealed that, the use of phone in program, press release and media relations were public relations strategies that NESREA could use in her public relations efforts. It was further revealed that disease and death of plant, loss of habitat, water and air pollution were negatives effects of indiscriminate disposal of waste. It was concluded that, waste management is a sine qua non to healthy living and people at various levels should be educated on the dangers of indiscriminate waste disposal. It was recommended that, NESREA should intensify her

public relations efforts so as to be able to create enough sensitization on the dangers of indiscriminate waste disposal and the need for proper disposal of waste. This study is similar to the current study. The identified gap in this study is that, the study did not identify public relations media that NESREA could use in the 21st century. The current study bridged this gap in knowledge by providing 21st century media that NESREA can use in its public relations campaign.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative approach and Library Research Method was used to gather relevant information for the study. Library Research Method entails the use of library documentary materials. This implies that secondary data was used all through the study. Library Research according to IGI Global (nd) cited in Omula & Agu (2024) is the act of using either in print or online materials to find information which satisfies or answers a question. The implication is that; the study is based on consultation of theoretically related studies carried out by other scholars. Conclusion and recommendations were based on consultation of journal articles, textbooks and online materials.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective was to investigate public relations strategies that NESREA could adopt in her waste management efforts. Findings revealed that, converting negative situations to positive situations is a public relations strategy that NESREA could adopt in her waste management effort. This is in line with the assumptions of Jefkins' Transfer Process Model. Osho (2004) posits that the negative attitudes which public relations seek to change are: hostility to sympathy, apathy to interest and ignorance to knowledge. This strategy can be used to ensure that, the publics have better understanding of NESREA and also manage relationship. It was further revealed that, media relations is another public relations strategy that NESREA could use in her waste management efforts. Media relations could be used to ensure that there is a good rapport between NESREA and media organizations particularly the traditional media. This relationship will ensure that NESREA gets positive media coverage and free publicity. Effective communication it was discovered, to be another public relations strategy that NESREA could use in the campaign against indiscriminate disposal of waste. It was revealed that two-way communication is one way of achieving effective communication. In the 21st century social media serve as the best platforms through which two-way communication can be achieved. Research and data collection it was revealed is another public relations strategy that NESREA could use in her waste management effort. This implies that, NESREA should always do her research and gather enough data before embarking on a public relations campaign. This position is echoed in Usuala (2005) who according to Elijah (2021), believes that, research is a process of arriving at dependable revelations and findings through planned and

systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data.

The second objective of this study was to ascertain public relations media that NESREA can use in creating awareness about the dangers and negative effects of indiscriminate waste disposal in the 21st century. Findings revealed that in the 21st century NESREA can reach more and more audience through the use of the 21st century media. This is in tandem with the submission of Boitnott (2017) who asserts that, social media eliminate the walls between members of the public and a brand, shorten the time a company has to react to relevant stories, and blur the line between marketing and public relations. Often, public relations and marketing professionals' role overlap on social media (Boitnott, 2017). There are various social media platforms that NESREA could use in the campaign against the danger of improper disposal of waste. TikTok, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Google+ were identified as some of the social media platforms that NESREA could use in the dissemination of information or interaction with its various publics. The need to use these platforms in the 21st century is espoused in Technological Determinism Theory. This is true in that, the postulation of the Theory according to Marshal Mcluhan cited in Ekhareafo & Omale (2017) is that, technology causes social change. They theory postulates that technology is the force which shapes society or the main force for change in human society. In the same vein McQuail (2005) opines that, the accelerating paces of technological inventions witnessed over the years have advanced social changes in culture and communication. The need for NESREA to use social media in her waste management efforts is also echoed in Technological Acceptance Model. The model according to Okoro & Omosotomhe (2017) attempts to explain acceptance of a technology from three perspectives: (i) Perceived ease of use (ii) Perceived usefulness (iii) Attitude towards technology.

The foregoing suggests that, organization like NESREA could use technology for three reasons. The first reason may be because the technology is easy to use. The second reason is that, the technology is useful in the attainment of set objectives or task. It is obvious that, in the 21st century, social media platforms are not only easy to use but are useful media through which to reach out to various audience members of an organization.

Conclusion

In the 21st century organizations like NESREA cannot make huge impact in her public relations efforts without embracing the 21st century media. This is so because, the social media or the new media have become 21st century public relations media.

Recommendations

a. NESREA should use and continue to use social media in her public relations campaign, this is so because the best way to achieve two-way communication is to use the social media.
b. NESREA needs to continuously use the traditional media in the era of social media. This means that radio, television and newspapers are still relevant and should not be relegated to the oblivion in the era of social media

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