

# Research on Influencing Factors of Public Opinion Information Forwarding Behavior of Generation Z Group

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**Abstract.** [Purpose/Significance] With the continuous development of network technology, the ways of information dissemination become more and more diversified, and the threshold of information dissemination becomes lower and lower. This not only facilitates people's life, but also brings information fog, information polarization and other problems, causing great harm to the network environment. Through the research on the forwarding behavior of Z generation group's public opinion information, this study finds out the influencing factors, so as to help relevant departments improve the network environment and put forward new ideas for the management and control of online public opinion information. [Method/Process] In this study, through questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview, a sample survey was conducted on the "group in Hefei, and the grounded theory was analyzed with the help of Nvivo12 software. A comprehensive research model of influencing factors of public opinion information forwarding behavior of Generation Z group was constructed, and the characteristics of Generation Z group were analyzed. [Result/Conclusion] The research shows that information content mediates the attributes of information receivers. The intermediary role of consumers' internal state in the process of e-commerce anchor attribute influencing consumers' online purchase intention; The external environment plays a regulatory role in the transmission chain of public opinion information.

**Keywords:** Public Opinion Information, Z generation Group, Grounded Theory.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the rapid development of social media, the way of public opinion information dissemination has also been innovated. Social groups have obtained information from traditional media and gradually dominated by the Internet. At the same time, social media users are not only the subject of receiving information but also the subject of actively disseminating information. People establish and maintain social relations through mutual attention, praise forwarding and other ways, and gradually form a new set of information forwarding mechanism. The Z generation group grew up in the Internet era, and its values were deeply influenced by this. Compared with other age groups, it has a strong willingness to express itself, a strong sense of social responsibility, and a high degree of attention to public opinion information. With the increasing heat of Z generation groups participating in public opinion discussions, they gradually master the right to speak on the Internet and their influence on the Internet world is gradually strengthened. New products promote the scope of information dissemination, and new groups accelerate the speed of information dissemination, which also makes it difficult to control network public opinion when network public opinion breaks out. To sum up, this project aims to conduct a sample survey of the 'Z generation' group in Hefei through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. With the help of qualitative analysis software Nvivo12 for grounded theoretical analysis, combined with SEM ( Structural Equation Model ) and FISM-MICMAC ( Fuzzy Interpretative Structural Model-Cross-Influence Matrix ), a comprehensive research model of the influencing factors of the public opinion information forwarding behavior of the Z generation group is constructed, and the characteristics of the Z generation group are analyzed to explore the influencing factors of the public opinion information forwarding behavior of the Z generation group. Based on grounded theory analysis, this paper preliminarily extracts the influencing

factors of public opinion information forwarding behavior of generation Z group, and clearly reveals the process of public opinion information transmission. The extraction of influencing factors and the construction of public opinion information forwarding behavior chain provide theoretical help for the development of related research, and can also help the country to establish a more orderly network communication environment to provide theoretical support.

## 2. Literature review and theoretical basis

With the rapid development of Internet technology, the Internet platform has become the main position for people to express their opinions on social events, and the presentation way of public opinion information on the Internet has also changed constantly. Therefore, in recent years, the academic research on public opinion information is mostly based on the background of network environment. Zhao Haixia [1] made an in-depth study on the factors influencing the forwarding behavior of college students' WeChat friends circle, and found that information text characteristics, population characteristics and other factors will have an impact on the forwarding behavior; Xing Yunfei [2] pointed out that social networks make the network awkward.

Emotion is characterized by suddenness, diversity, concealment and deviation, which will have an impact on social security and national stability. Wang Chuanli [3] put forward that under the background of new media, the spread of online public opinion has become a tool for the struggle in the ideological field, and put forward some countermeasures according to the characteristics of new media information dissemination.

At present, the research on public opinion information at home and abroad mostly focuses on the characteristics and influence factors of public opinion information dissemination. In terms of communication characteristics and laws, Yin Jue-li [4] and others focused on analyzing the strategies and countermeasures of netizens, online media and the government in the process of negative public opinion communication with the help of evolutionary game theory. In terms of influencing factors of public opinion information dissemination, Huang Wei [5] analyzed the types and attributes of public opinion information dissemination factors in multimedia network from multimedia and multi-perspectives. Hu Jiming [6], based on the theory of information ecology, constructed a model of influencing factors of public opinion popularity in public emergencies, identified the key factors of public opinion popularity with the help of DEMATEL method, and finally concluded that the influence, identity and activity of the subject, and the topic type, locality and novelty of the object were the key influencing factors.

The research scholars on users' information forwarding behavior mostly focus on influencing factors and behavior prediction analysis. In terms of influencing factors, based on the theory of planned behavior, Celina [7] considered the influence of emotion conveyed by Weibo and the timeline mechanism of Weibo platform on users' forwarding behavior, and finally came to the conclusion that the similarity between users' emotion and Weibo's emotion, and the amount of powder and silk have significant influence on users' forwarding behavior in Weibo. Regarding the prediction of forwarding behavior, Tian Lei [8], Wang Wei [9], Zhang Xiaowei [10] etc. predicted and analyzed Weibo users' forwarding behavior based on integrated learning, energy optimization and reading promotion, which improved the accuracy of behavior prediction.

The above research success mainly analyzes the propagation law, influencing factors and behavior prediction of public opinion information and user forwarding behavior from macro and micro perspectives, and summarizes the influencing factors and propagation mechanism of public opinion information propagation and user forwarding behavior. However, the research of Chinese scholars mostly focuses on the motivation and influencing factors of social information forwarding on some specific media platforms, but there is no targeted research in the field of public opinion information, and most of its research models are based on technology acceptance model and media richness theory. Based on the above research methods and results, this project starts from a new perspective, pays attention to the cognition and forwarding behavior of specific groups on public opinion information,

and takes this as a starting point, uses grounded theory to explore the influencing factors of Z generation group 's forwarding behavior of public opinion information, examines the influencing factors on the forwarding behavior of Z generation public opinion information, and analyzes whether there is interference between various factors and the degree of influence of various factors on forwarding behavior.

### 3. Analysis procedure

Because the Z-generation public opinion information forwarding behavior involves various abstract factors, such factors often have complex characteristics that are difficult to quantify. At the same time, qualitative research focuses on the use of open and flexible methods in the research process, which is more conducive to in-depth exploration and research of abstract and complex factors. Therefore, this paper uses the grounded theory in qualitative research methods to explore the influencing factors that affect the forwarding behavior of public opinion information in China 's Z generation. Personal in-depth interviews are used to collect qualitative data, which are gradually coded from top to bottom, and finally form a substantive theory through induction.

#### 3.1. Research methods

Grounded theory, put forward by American scholars Glaser and Strauss (1967), is a qualitative research method to collect data and generate new theories through analysis and summary. Researchers need to adopt the standard of "theoretical sampling", purposefully select the research objects, sort out and analyze the acquired original data, and finally generate and test the theory [11].

The general analysis of the grounded theory is divided into three parts: first, collect and analyze the empirical data; second, encode the data (open coding-axial coding-selective coding); finally, extract the new theory according to the coding. This paper aims to explore the factors that affect the public opinion information forwarding behavior of the Z generation group, so it is an exploratory study. Compared with the empirical paradigm and the presupposition theory model, the grounded theory has the "stylized" limitation of the scope of the data and conclusions used. With the application of grounded theory in the field of social science becoming more and more common, scholars have gradually introduced this method into the research on the dissemination of public opinion information. However, after literature review, it can be seen that grounded theory is mainly applied to the study of netizens emotional communication and the generation of network public opinion. However, in the field of public opinion information forwarding, there is still a lack of mature and comprehensive variable categories, measurement tools and theoretical assumptions of influence paths. Therefore, this paper uses the grounded theory analysis method to construct a theoretical model that affects the mechanism of public opinion information forwarding behavior factors of the Z generation group.

#### 3.2. Data sources

In order to go deep into the contemporary generation Z group, this paper adopts the way of personal in-depth interview to dig out the most authentic materials. A total of 28 people were interviewed in depth, and each interview lasted about 40 minutes. When conducting in-depth interviews with interviewees, the interviewees conduct flexible interviews according to the prepared interview scripts, give the interviewees sufficient time to think, record the interviewees' statements comprehensively and truly, and carefully observe the fluency and potential emotions of the interviewees' statements, so as to fully understand the interviewees' views and opinions on the forwarding behavior of public opinion and information. With the consent of the interviewee, the interview will be recorded and archived as the interview record. In this paper, the 28 interview records are coded and analyzed, and the model is constructed. The statistics of respondents are shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Statistics of respondents

Project	Attribute	Sample number
Gender	Male	14
	Female	14
Age	13-15	5
	16-18	5
	19-22	10
	23-25	8
Educational level	Junior school	5
	Senior high school	5
	Undergraduate course	10
	Postgraduate	8

In the actual interview process, personalized interviews are conducted according to different interviewees' personalities, ages, educational levels and other characteristics, so as to obtain more real information.

### 3.3. Category refinement and model building

Open coding is the initial processing of word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph coding, labeling and recording of the original data, from which valuable phenomena or events are identified, and the initial concepts are sorted out to find out the conceptual categories. Then through the axial coding, the main category is extracted on the basis of sub-categories, and the similar categories are classified according to their interrelation and logical order. Finally, selective coding is used to encode the core categories, and a basic theoretical framework is formed through systematic analysis, which clearly defines the logical relationship between the core categories. Before the start of coding, always around the 'public opinion information forwarding behavior' of the core research issues, read the relevant literature to clarify its definition, and refer to its characteristics related to the concept of mining, in order to enhance the professional coding.

This paper holds that public opinion information is a form of public opinion, and it is the opinions and opinions of the public with strong influence and inclination on some hot issues in real life, which are spread through the Internet. With the development of the Internet, it gradually becomes free, interactive, sudden, emotional and hyped. Forwarding is an efficient information dissemination mechanism, which refers to the process of users' second dissemination of the generated content by clicking "Forwarding" or "Sharing" button [12]. It is found that demographic characteristics such as gender and age are different in forwarding behavior. The forms of forwarding behavior are mainly "pictures+words" and links. The content of forwarding behavior mainly includes hobbies, opinions and attitudes, hot events, etc. The motivation of forwarding behavior is mainly entertainment, sociality and information needs [13].

In order to ensure the authenticity of open coding, this study uses the original words of interviewees as the data of initial concept mining. The interview records of 28 interviewees are summarized, and the tags including conformity effect, empathy and self-interest are condensed. The tags that appear three times or more are called high-frequency tags, and 37 initial concepts and 15 initial categories are sorted and merged from the high-frequency tags, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** category refinement table

Initial category	Concept
Professionality	In a specific field, it is necessary to learn relevant professional knowledge in depth, and have the characteristics of a certain exclusive profession.
Scientificity	The characteristics of objective reality that can judge whether things have relevant standards and are full of scientific basis.
Authority	The ability to convince others and the quality of prestige.
Disguised	Information about accounts can be disclosed or not.
Communication platform	It is divided into text platform, community platform, short video platform, live broadcast platform, social platform and other network information media.
Recognition degree	Mainly through the number of fans, browsing times, forwarding times and other indicators to measure the size of its spread.
Personality characteristics	Psychological characteristics gradually formed due to individual environment, education, society and genetics.
Know-how	The amount of knowledge and ability, including education level, etc.
Psychologic factor	People have psychological processes that will change, including feelings, intuition, etc.
Interest level	People's mental bias towards things and phenomena.
Social relations	Including static and dynamic aspects, including social structure and social interaction.
Influence spread	The scope of what happens covers itself.
Information value	Measuring and ranking the importance of personal information
Information utility	Information has the attribute of meeting people's needs.
Form of expression	Mainly biased towards the expression of words.
Narrative	Mainly favors the presentation of information content, including punctuation, etc.
Emotional involvement	The subjective color of information
Morality	Customs and habits and moral concepts generally recognized and maintained in society
Natural disaster	Phenomena and events caused by nature that do harm to human society.
Public safety	The environment necessary for the society and the public to maintain a normal life.
Public health	Technical means for the public to prevent diseases, prolong life and protect health.

### 3.3.1 Spindle coding

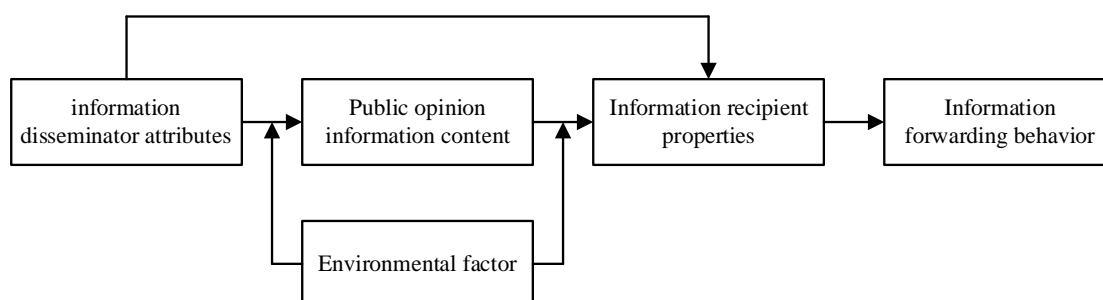
According to the attributes of each category, this paper makes logical analysis and correlation degree analysis, and obtains four main categories and nine sub-categories by merging similar items. The four main categories are: public opinion information attribute, audience's reaction mechanism to information; Nine sub-categories are: rational thinking, perceptual thinking, degree of external interference, degree of identity demand, authenticity of public opinion information, degree of influence of public opinion information, and degree of relevance of public opinion information. As shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Summary of data codes

Main category	Subcategory	Initial category
Information disseminator	Information credibility	Professionalism
		Scientificity
		Authority
	Communicator account characteristics	Account concealment
		Communication platform
		Recognition degree
Information receiver	Self-characteristics	Personality characteristics
		Know-how
		Psychological factor
	Audience relations	Interest level
		Social relations
		Interest association
Information content	Information titer	Influence spread
		Information value
		Information utility
	Information expression	Form of expression
		Narrative
		Emotional involvement
External environment	Social environment	Stage of development
		Morality
		Natural disaster
	Special situation	Public safety
		National conditions and current affairs

**3.3.2 Selective coding**

The core categories of this paper are: information disseminator, information receiver, information content and external environment. The information of public opinion is transmitted from the disseminator to the receiver, and then the receiver forwards it. In this process, when it is transmitted from the communicator to the receiver, the receiver will be influenced by the information content and the external environment at the same time, and finally, the judgment of whether to forward it will be formed through the catalysis of the relationship between its own characteristics and its audience. Thus, the behavioral phenomena and context conditions are described, and finally the required theoretical framework is formed. The typical relationship structure of subject category in this paper, as shown in Fig 1.



**Fig 1.** The typical structure diagram of the main category

From the theoretical framework of the core category, it can be summarized that the information disseminator has a significant influence on the information receiver; At the same time, the information content also has a significant influence on the information receiver, and plays an intermediary role in

the influence of the information disseminator on the information receiver; Environmental factors play a regulatory role in the influence of information disseminators on information receivers and information disseminators. Based on this "story line", this study constructs a complete theoretical framework of influencing factors of group information forwarding behavior.

#### **4. Explanation of action mechanism**

Based on the above analysis, the attribute of information disseminator and the attribute of information receiver are the main categories that affect public opinion information and the forwarding behavior of generation Z public opinion information. The content of public opinion directly affects the recipient's attribution and state; At the same time, information disseminators mainly influence the attribution and status of information receivers through the content of intermediary public opinion information, thus affecting the forwarding behavior of Generation Z groups; In the whole process from the information disseminator to the receiver through the information content, it is always regulated by environmental factors.

##### **4.1. Information content mediates the attributes of information receivers.**

Through the analysis of 28 original interview data, it can be concluded that the content of public opinion information has a direct impact on the attributes of information recipients. Respondents repeatedly mentioned that the value of information has an impact on their final forwarding behavior, such as "... It is hoped that this thing will ferment, and then let this public opinion to guide a more authoritative, more objective, more capable of this official, and then to give a more fair and equitable results..." At the same time, some respondents mentioned that the utility of information plays an important role in the influence of public opinion information forwarding behavior. The above arguments have also been confirmed in the research on information forwarding behavior. Utility can meet the various needs of the audience, such as entertainment needs, social needs, etc. and articles that have great practical effects and can meet the needs of information recipients are more likely to be concerned by information recipients and can stimulate forwarding behavior [14]. At the same time, studies have shown that articles with novel attributes are likely to cause the recipient's curiosity to gain more attention, which in turn leads to more forwarding behavior [15].

During the interview, respondents mentioned that the form of information has an impact on the forwarding behavior of public opinion information, such as "... In order to attract the public's attention, some self-media can turn into a very oriented one with a few pictures and a piece of music..." In addition, the way the interviewee mentions the narrative of the information will also affect the behavior of the public to forward information, such as "... For example, I saw a news before, really scared me. Because his title is what, 'shocked, a woman because the shampoo did not blow dry on the way to work stroke'..." At the same time, Li Biao, Yu Guoming [16] and other scholars put forward that the emotions revealed in the information, such as clear clues and tortuous plots, will affect the attributes of the information receiver when receiving the information, such as "... Then to verify what this fact is like, don't start on the network above the evaluation, and then the tendency of the kind of particularly obvious..."

From the interview data and the research of relevant scholars, it is found that the influence of information content on the forwarding behavior of public opinion information is mainly manifested in two aspects: information valence and information expression, and information valence mainly includes information value and information utility. Information expression is embodied in three aspects: information expression form, narrative mode and emotional input, all of which will affect the forwarding behavior of Z generation group public opinion information.

#### **4.2. Analysis of the role of information disseminator's attribute in forwarding public opinion information**

After analyzing the interview data, it is found that from the perspective of information disseminators, the impact on public opinion information forwarding behavior mainly comes from two aspects, namely, public opinion information credibility and disseminator account characteristics. Firstly, from the perspective of the credibility of public opinion information, the professionalism of information will affect the attributes of information recipients, such as "... For example, the knowledge that drinking wolfberry can preserve health is that most of the views are more credible..." Secondly, respondents also mentioned that the scientific nature of information will have an impact on the attributes of information recipients, such as "... Such as these two food mutual restraint. These things, in fact, I am more disgusted..." Finally, the authority of the information plays a great role in the influence of the attributes of the information receiver, such as "... because first of all, his like People 's Daily is a national nature, some of his words, logic, and his recruitment of those personnel must be very professional, very excellent..." Song Y[17]and other scholars put forward that when the information disseminator is a news media government organization, because of its certain authority, it can make people have a sense of dependence and trust, so it can improve the probability of people forwarding information.

The characteristics of the communicator 's account are also factors affecting the forwarding behavior of public opinion information, in which the concealment of the account constrains the forwarding behavior of public opinion information. Such as "... if the publisher is anonymous release, or the publisher is a trumpet is less fans of the trumpet, then, you think he can India is relatively low..." the choice of communication platform will also affect the forwarding behavior of public opinion information, such as "... as a high school student, I usually look at the B station, and then look at the WeChat, public number and so on..." at the same time, the degree of recognition of the communication platform also affects the occurrence of public opinion information forwarding behavior, such as "... is to see the spread of the situation, so the scope of the spread, the number of clicks, the number of forwarding these things..." The number of fans, the number of retweets, and the number of browsing can all reflect the degree of recognition of this information. Suh and other scholars [18] have shown that the number of fans, the number of tweets and the proportion of replies received by the author will affect the forwarding behavior.

In summary, the attributes of the information disseminator itself, such as the credibility of public opinion information and the characteristics of the disseminator 's account, will affect the generation of public opinion information forwarding behavior. The credibility of public opinion information is measured from three aspects: professionalism, scientificity and authority. Disseminator account characteristics include account concealment, degree of recognition, and the properties of the communication platform.

#### **4.3. Analysis of the role of information receiver's attributes on public opinion information forwarding behavior**

The interview content shows that the information receiver 's own attributes will deeply affect the forwarding behavior of public opinion information, in which the attributes of the information receiver are divided into two aspects: its own characteristics and audience relationship, which play an important role in the process. For example, in terms of its own characteristics, respondents mentioned that their own personality characteristics will affect the forwarding behavior of public opinion information, such as "... Get this information, we judge reasonably is certainly based on our personal values, and social socialism core values to link..." Its own characteristics include personal life values, personality characteristics, etc. Different characteristics determine what kind of information the receiver will respond to, and also determine the type of receiver corresponding to the information. The Z generation group includes the educational level and age level of each stage from junior high school to postgraduate. It is obvious from the respondents that different levels of knowledge will affect the forwarding behavior of public opinion information; in addition to the above two angles,

psychological factors are also aspects that cannot be ignored, such as "... After all, there are many such negative news. Although these may be false, but if there is particularly much, I can think it is right..." Among the psychological factors, conformity psychology and self-interest psychology will affect the choice of information receivers.

From the interviewee's narrative, it can also be reflected that the level of interest is an important factor in the perspective of audience relationship, such as "...Those keywords, if not interested, I am sure I will not see..." social relations connect individuals and society. Each link will affect the information receiver's view and judgment of information and even affect the final public opinion information forwarding, such as "... After I send, they will tell me, let me see what to do, let me find let me see their public opinion. Then I see I am not good to refuse..." respondents also pay attention to information that affects them, such as "...Generally speaking, for example, some major cases may just look at their own ideas, but if it happens to them, they may be forwarded..."

From the interview data and the research of relevant scholars, it is found that the influence of the information receiver on the forwarding behavior of public opinion information is mainly manifested in two aspects: the receiver's own characteristics and the audience relationship.

#### **4.4. The external environment plays a regulatory role in the information transmission chain of public opinion.**

According to the original interview content, the interviewee's narrative shows that the social environment plays a regulating role in the whole process of receiving and forwarding information. For example, "... there are two very distinct opposing positions, and one party thinks that this teacher is an animal, and he actually tricked this very ignorant and naive female student; Then the other side is the two of them, but the interests have not been achieved. Actually, there is a kind of, uh, victim is the kind of, uh, victim guilt ... "The social and moral trends have an invisible influence on the propagator, content and receiver of information. In this study, most of the respondents' public opinions are related to socially sensitive topics, and they also admit that they are easily influenced by the emotions and psychology of the general public, which also transmits this emotion from the communicator to the final receiver and makes corresponding public opinion information forwarding behavior.

However, from the cases given by the interviewees, their public opinions are mostly focused on natural disasters, public safety, national conditions and current politics, etc. especially for the Z-era group, because this kind of information has great uncertainty, it is easy to cause their panic and then make corresponding public opinion information forwarding. During the period when Song and other scholars studied the epidemic situation, online rumors about the epidemic situation were forwarded more and more, which shows that in special situations, forwarding behaviors were mostly concentrated on specific topics.

Through the correlation analysis of the external environment, it can be concluded that the external environment plays a regulatory role in the public opinion information transmission chain. The external environment is composed of social environment and special situation. The two environments regulate the dissemination of public opinion information at the same time. The social environment includes the development stage and moral fashion, and the special situation includes natural disasters, public safety and national conditions.

## **5. Conclusion and discussion**

### **5.1. Research conclusion**

In this paper, the interview method is used to collect samples from all levels of Z-era groups, and based on grounded theory, the process of information transmission from information disseminators to information receivers is constructed, and finally the information receivers complete the forwarding behavior. The whole process is influenced by the external environment, thus forming a complete chain of public opinion information forwarding, and finally the following points are drawn: (1)

Information content serves as an intermediary for the attributes of information receivers; (2) Analysis of the effect of information receiver attributes on public opinion information forwarding behavior; (3) The mediating role of consumers' intrinsic state in the process of e-commerce anchor attribute influencing consumers' online purchase intention; (4) The external environment plays a regulatory role in the public opinion information transmission chain.

## 5.2. Theoretical Contributions and Deficiencies

This paper constructs a public opinion information transmission path from information disseminator to information receiver, and summarizes the influence of information content and external environmental factors on public opinion information transmission. Through mechanism analysis, it extracts the transmission influencing factors, and sums up the extracted concepts and integrates them into a new theory. This article focuses on the factors that affect information forwarding, and only stays on the problem of "knowing why", but does not solve the problem of "knowing why". The next part will discuss how these factors affect audience forwarding. Only by thoroughly grasping the internal mechanism of each influencing factor and the interaction between factors can we improve the information forwarding theory and provide help for predicting information forwarding. The next part will further study the relationship and interaction between factors by using SEM (Structural Equation Model) and FISM -MICMAC (Fuzzy Interpretation Structural Model-Cross Influence Matrix) theory.

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