SYMBOLIC CONVERGENCE ANALYSIS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT2024 ELECTION CAMPAIGN PERIOD

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Abstract

This study analyzes the use of Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) in the digital campaign of the Democratic Party through Instagram during the 2024 election campaign. SCT, developed by Ernest Bormann, provides a framework for understanding how groups or communities create and share meaning through narratives and symbols. In this context, the study aims to identify dominant fantasy themes in the Democratic Party's Instagram content and explore how these themes are used to build group identity and solidarity. The methodology used is qualitative content analysis of the Democratic Party's Instagram posts, with primary data obtained from text, images, videos, and interactions (comments, likes, and shares) on the official Instagram account of the Democratic Party. In-depth interviews with relevant parties involved in the digital campaign, including party members and campaign staff, were also conducted to gain insights into the digital campaign strategies adopted. The results show that the Democratic Party effectively uses narratives and symbols through Instagram to build collective identity and emotional bonds with its followers. Fantasy themes such as "People First," "Gaspol," and efforts to reduce poverty are consistently presented in Instagram content, creating strong resonance among the audience. Additionally, the strategy of active interaction with followers through comments, live streaming, and relevant and engaging content successfully increases engagement and voter loyalty. The study also found that the Democratic Party's digital campaign faces significant challenges in the post-truth era, where misinformation and public opinion polarization are increasing. However, by adopting the principles of transparency, accountability, and integrity in their communication, the Democratic Party has been able to maintain public trust and strengthen support from millennial and Gen Z voters. In conclusion, the use of SCT in the Democratic Party's social media strategy has proven effective in building party identity and influencing public opinion. This study provides new insights into the dynamics of political communication in the digital age and offers practical recommendations for political parties in managing their communication on social media to build stronger relationships with voters and supporters.

Keywords: *Symbolic Convergence, Democratic Party, Fantasy, Symbol*

Introduction

In the current era of information disruption 4.0. The use of social media is very important for political parties, including the Democratic Party. Digital campaign governance is an integral part of modern political strategy which has now entered the "post-truth era" period where public opinion is often more influenced by emotions, narratives, and subjective impressions than objective facts (McIntyre, 2018). The presence of political parties in the digital space is no longer just an option, but a necessity. In a study conducted by Rutenberg et al. (2020), it was found that political parties that are able to utilize social media intelligently can have a significant impact on shaping public opinion and influencing the direction of general elections. On the other hand, political discourse related to the use of political language is an important aspect of political communication (Edison, 2020).

This then becomes a challenge for all elements that digital expansion does not only apply to the media business, but also applies to political campaigns (Widjanarko, 2022) Furthermore, according to Vergeer and Hermans (2013), digital political campaigns also provide opportunities for political parties to interact directly with potential voters, collect feedback in real-time, and adapt their campaign messages and strategies according to the needs and responses of the audience. According to the Digital Report 2024 Global Overview Report from Data Reportal, Melwater and We Are Social, the number of social media users in January 2024 increased by 5.6 percent compared to the previous year. Of the total 5.03 billion social media users in the world, around 2.7 percent are

from Indonesia, or equivalent to 139 million users which is around 49.9 percent of the total population. (We Are Social, 2024).

Instagram was chosen as the focus of this research because it is one of the most popular social media platforms in Indonesia, especially among young voters. With features such as photos, videos, and stories, Instagram offers a dynamic and visual way to convey political messages. The Democratic Party uses Instagram to reach a wider and more diverse audience, as well as to build closer relationships with voters.

Through content analysis of the Democratic Party's Instagram, this study will identify dominant fantasy themes and explore how these themes are used to build new identities and solidarity among their followers. This study will also evaluate how interactions between the Democratic Party's Instagram account and its followers contribute to the process of symbolic convergence, helping to shape positive public perceptions of their changing attitudes. This study limits the analysis of symbolic convergence on the Democratic Party's Instagram account during the 75-day campaign period for the 2024 Election, namely from November 28, 2023 to February 10, 2024 in accordance with KPU Regulation (PKPU) Number 15 of 2023.

Formulation of the problem

Political campaigns through social media have become an integral part of the strategy of modern political parties, including the Democratic Party. However, how can the narratives and symbols spread through the Democratic Party's Instagram account be analyzed using Symbolic Convergence Theory? This study aims to identify the dominant fantasy themes in the Democratic Party's Instagram content and explore how these themes are used to build group identity and solidarity among its followers during the 2024 Election campaign period.

Research methods

This study uses an exploratory descriptive qualitative method to deeply understand the Democratic Party's symbolic convergence strategy in the 2024 Election, especially on the Instagram platform. This approach refers to the tradition and paradigm of criticism to connect observed phenomena with the principles of political economy, as explained by Creswell (Raco, 2010) who defines qualitative research methods as an approach to exploring and understanding a central symptom. The main data for this study were obtained from posts, stories, and interactions (comments, likes, and shares) on the official Instagram account of the Democratic Party. This data includes text, images, videos, and other visual elements. In addition, the study also used an interview method with parties directly involved in the digital campaign process, including party members, to gain direct insight into the Democratic Party's digital campaign strategy. Then content analysis was carried out on the Democratic Party's digital campaign materials, including social media posts, campaign videos, and other promotional materials.

Theoretical basis

Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) is a theory in the field of communication developed by Ernest Bormann in the early 1970s. This theory explores how groups or communities form and share meaning through symbolic communication processes, which help them achieve a shared understanding or "convergence" of their social reality. The following is a description of a number of key concepts in Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) that will be used as an analytical tool in the study:

1. Fantasy

Fantasy in the context of SCT does not mean imagination or unreal things, but rather narratives or stories shared in group communication. Fantasy is a process in which experiences, ideas, and events are retold symbolically, thus forming a shared reality for group members.

2. Fantasy Theme

Fantasy themes are the basic elements of fantasy, including characters, plot, and setting. They help group members identify and understand key elements of the shared narrative, and provide structure to their shared reality.
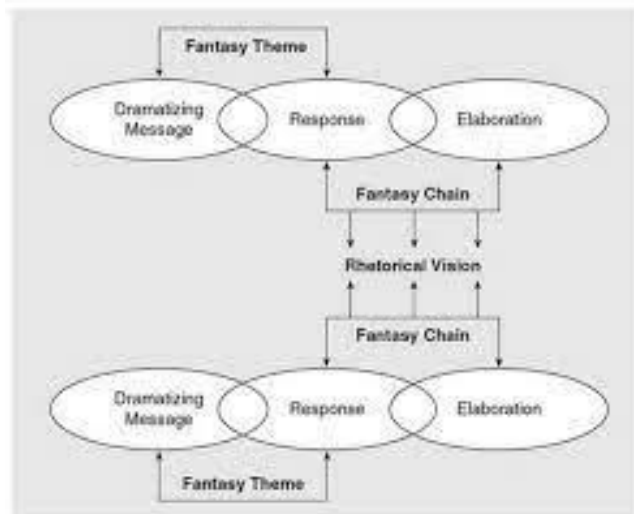
3. Fantasy Chain

Fantasy chain is the process by which fantasy themes are adopted and exchanged by group members. When a fantasy theme is shared and enthusiastically responded to by group members, it spreads and grows, creating a fantasy theme chain. This indicates the resonance and acceptance of the narrative within the group.

4. Symbolic Cue

Symbolic keywords are words, phrases, or images that trigger memories or associations with a particular fantasy theme. Symbolic keywords help speed up the symbolic convergence process because they quickly remind group members of the fantasy theme that has already been accepted.

5. *Rhetorical Vision (Rhetorical Vision)*

Rhetorical vision is a picture of the world or a broader social reality formed by a chain of fantasies. It is a group's collective view of the world and their place in it, reflecting the shared meanings they have created. Rhetorical vision helps groups to formulate their identity, shared goals, and motivations for collective action. In this study, these concepts will be used to analyze how the Democratic Party uses narratives and symbols on their Instagram account to build a collective identity, create emotional bonds with their followers, and influence public perception. Through this analysis, it is hoped that it can be revealed how the Democratic Party has succeeded in creating effective symbolic convergence in its digital communication strategy.

Research Findings

Symbolic convergence theory, developed by Ernest Bormann, provides an analytical framework for understanding how symbols and narratives are used to create social realities within groups. The quoted Instagram posts from the Democratic Party, for example, contain concrete promises regarding reducing poverty and unemployment rates, increasing welfare, equalizing education, and improving health services. These narratives not only convey the party's vision, but also build a shared imagination of a better future if the party wins the election. Symbols such as the hashtags #DemokratS14P, #PartaiDemokrat, and #AHY serve to strengthen collective identity and connect supporters in a broader symbolic community. In this context, symbolic convergence theory helps us understand how these narratives and symbols work to build and maintain support among constituents. The selection of sample posts on Instagram to be studied using Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) was carried out by considering several important criteria to ensure representative and relevant analysis results. The following is a detailed description of the criteria and steps for selecting samples carried out in this study, namely relevance to the topic, time variation, interaction and engagement, type of content, keywords and hashtags, narratives and symbols, and audience responses. Based on these criteria, the posts that will be dissected are:

No	Posts	Caption
1.		"The development orientation adopted by the Democratic Party is People First. The people must not be in trouble, they must be more prosperous." Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono General Chairman of the Democratic Party #DemocratS14P #DemocraticParty #democrats #Democrats #AHY
2.		"Let's go all out. Don't be half-hearted, or the results will be mixed. Use all your energy, thoughts, resources, use them as best you can and on target. If this spirit is maintained, God willing, our seats will increase, not just our votes." Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono General Chairman of the Democratic Party #DemocratS14P #DemocraticParty #democrats #Democrats #AHY

3.

The Democratic Party is committed to continue development infrastructure, including rural infrastructure, as has been done by previous governments.

The way, we will ensure that infrastructure development has mature and rational priorities, planning and stages. Infrastructure development must also have a balance between sectors; between national and regional; and between rural and urban, including prioritizing disadvantaged, outermost, and innermost areas.

Infrastructure financing must also be adjusted to the country's financial capabilities; including

proportionality between debt and APBN. Not may Big stake from the pole. not can be big expenditure than the income country.

Prevent excessive use of debt, so as not to trap the country in a "Debt Trap."

Repost @agusyudhoyono

#DemocratS14P

#DemocraticParty #democrats

"We want to reduce the numbers poverty And unemployment(opening up job opportunities), increasing welfare,equalizing education, and improving health services. If we win the election, we can make those improvements and refinements."
Sjarifuddin Hasan Deputy Chairman of the MPR RI
Candidate No. 1 DPR RI West Java III

#DemokratS14P #Democratic Party #pdemokrat #Democrat #AHY

Symbolic Convergence Analysis

The first post in the table shows a photo of Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (AHY) in a Democrat Party uniform speaking at a podium emphasizing the narrative that "The development orientation adopted by the Democrat Party is People First. The people should not be in trouble, they should be more prosperous." Using the hashtags #DemokratS14P, #DemocraticParty, #pdemokrat, #Demokrat, #AHY. The analysis that can be obtained is

Fantasy	Fantasy in this context is a narrative about a better and more prosperous future promoted by the Democratic Party with a "People First" orientation. This narrative describes the party's vision to prioritize the welfare of the people and ensure that no citizen experiences difficulties.
Theme Fantasy (Fantasy Theme)	Development Orientation: Emphasizing that the Democratic Party's development policies and programs focus on the welfare of the people. People First: This theme emphasizes that the people are the top priority in every policy taken by the party. Prosperity Without Hardship: This theme describes the party's vision that every citizen must be prosperous and not experience hardship in life.
Chain Theme Fantasy(Fantasy Chain)	The fantasy theme chain occurs when this narrative is accepted and spread by party members, supporters, and the wider audience. When people comment, like, and share this post, they help spread and strengthen the narrative. Every positive interaction with this post indicates that this fantasy theme is accepted and resonated by the audience. This post has 300 likes and 26 comments
Say Key Symbolic(Symbolic Cue)	"People First": Becomes a keyword that triggers memories about the priority of people's welfare. Party Uniform and Logo: Remind the audience of the Democratic Party's identity and branding. Picture AHY: Become symbol leadership Andcommitment to the party's vision.
Vision Rhetorical(Rhetorical Vision)	The rhetorical vision formed from these fantasy themes is a big picture of a better future under the leadership of the Democratic Party and AHY. This vision includes a prosperous society, where public policies are designed to prioritize the welfare of the people and eliminate the hardships of life. This vision creates the image of the Democratic Party as a pioneer of positive change and focused on the interests of the people.

This Instagram post effectively uses symbolic elements to construct and disseminate a narrative of a better and more prosperous future under the leadership of the Democratic Party. Using SCT, we can see how the fantasy of people's well-being is adopted and reinforced through fantasy themes, fantasy theme chains, symbolic keywords, and rhetorical visions. This narrative resonates with the audience, creating a collective view that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party. In the second post in the table, the General Chair of

the Democratic Party, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (AHY), is depicted in a Democratic Party uniform, speaking at a podium, in the background are pictures of other party members. The post says "Let's go all out. Don't be half-hearted, or the results will be mixed. Use all your energy, thoughts, resources, use them as best you can and on target. If this spirit is maintained, God willing, our seats will increase, not just votes." using the hashtags #DemokratS14P, #DemokratParty, #pdemokrat, #Demokrat, #AHY. The symbolic convergence analysis that can be obtained is

Fantasy		Fantasy in this context is a narrative about the maximum effort and high spirit required to win the 2024 Election. This narrative describes the party's vision to fight tirelessly and optimize all resources to achieve a significant victory.
Theme Fantasy (Fantasy Theme)		"Gaspol": Underlines the importance of maximum action and no half measures in political struggle. Spirit and Sacrifice: Emphasizes the importance of high spirits, maximum use of energy, mind, and resources to achieve goals. Real Victory: A vision to increase not only the number of votes but also the number of seats in parliament.
Chain Theme Fantasy(Fantasy Chain)		The fantasy theme chain occurs when this narrative is accepted and spread by party members, supporters, and the wider audience. Every time someone likes, comments, or shares this post, they are spreading and reinforcing the narrative. Positive interactions indicate that this fantasy theme is accepted and resonated with the audience. The post received 603 likes and 11 comments
Say Key Symbolic(Symbolic Cue)		"Gaspol": A keyword that triggers memories of maximum effort and fighting spirit. Party Uniform and Logo: Remind the audience of the Democratic Party's identity and branding. Picture AHY: Become symbol leadership Andcommitment to the party's vision.
Vision Rhetorical(Rhetorical Vision)		The rhetorical vision formed from these fantasy themes is a big picture of significant victory and an increase in the number of seats in parliament under the leadership of the Democratic Party and AHY. This vision includes maximum struggle, high fighting spirit, and optimism that hard work will produce real results.

This Instagram post effectively uses symbolic elements to build and spread a narrative about maximum effort and high spirits in the political struggle for the 2024 Election. Using SCT, we can see how the fantasy of the struggle to win the election to the maximum and the fighting spirit is adopted and reinforced through fantasy themes, fantasy theme chains, symbolic keywords, and rhetorical visions. This narrative resonates with the audience, creating a collective view that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party. The third post in the table depicts a video uploaded by placing General Chair Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono as the icon displayed in the campaign. The narrative contained in the post is the Democratic Party's commitment to continuing infrastructure development, including rural infrastructure, as has been done by previous governments.

Through a rational approach, a strategy is described to ensure that infrastructure development has mature and rational priorities, planning and stages. Infrastructure development must also have a balance between sectors; between national and regional; and between rural and urban, including prioritizing disadvantaged, outermost, and innermost areas. Furthermore, infrastructure financing must also be adjusted to the state's financial capabilities; including proportionality between debt and the APBN. The pegs should not be bigger than the income. The expenditure should not be bigger than the state income. In addition, the Democratic Party also encourages the prevention of excessive use of debt, so as not to trap the country in a 'Debt Trap.' The post also contains the hashtags #DemokratS14P, #PartaiDemokrat, #pdemokrat, #Demokrat, #AHY. The symbolic convergence analysis that can be obtained is:

Fantasy	Fantasy in this context is a narrative about the Democratic Party's commitment to continuing and improving infrastructure development with a mature, rational, and balanced approach. This narrative also includes the desire to prevent the country from getting trapped in excessive debt.
Theme Fantasy (Fantasy Theme)	Ongoing Commitment: Emphasizes that the Democratic Party is committed to continuing the infrastructure development undertaken by the previous administration. Rational and Mature Approach: Highlights the importance of mature and rational planning and stages in infrastructure development. Balance Between Sectors and Regions: Emphasizing balance between national and regional sectors, as well as between rural and urban areas, with priority given to disadvantaged, outermost, and innermost regions. Wise Financial Management: Underlines the importance of infrastructure financing that is in accordance with the state's financial capabilities and the proportionality between debt and the state budget. Debt Trap Prevention: A reminder of the dangers of excessive debt and a commitment to avoid it.
Chain Theme Fantasy(Fantasy Chain)	The fantasy theme chain occurs when this narrative is accepted and spread by party members, supporters, and the wider audience. Every time someone likes, comments, or shares this post, they are spreading and reinforcing the narrative. The positive interaction shows that this fantasy theme received and resonated by the audience. This post received 239 likes and 10 comments

Say	Key Symbolic(Symbolic Cue)	"Ongoing Commitment": Becomes a keyword that triggers memories of the Democratic Party's continuity and dedication to infrastructure development. "Rational Approach": Remind the audience of the importance of careful and rational planning. "Debt Trap": A symbol of the dangers that must be avoided in managing state finances. Hashtags: #DemocratS14P, #Democrat Party, #pdemokrat, #Democrat, #AHY connects this post with the Democratic Party's campaign and identity.
Vision Rhetorical(Rhetorical Vision)		The rhetorical vision formed from these fantasy themes is a grand picture of a better future with a thriving and balanced infrastructure under Democratic leadership. This vision includes well-planned development, wise fiscal management, and a commitment to avoiding the debt trap, creating a collective view that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party.

This Instagram post effectively uses symbolic elements to construct and disseminate a narrative about the Democratic Party's commitment to continuing and improving infrastructure development with a mature and rational approach. Using SCT, we can see how fantasies about sustainable development and wise financial management are adopted and reinforced through fantasy themes, fantasy theme chains, symbolic keywords, and rhetorical visions. This narrative resonates with the audience, creating a collective view that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party. The fourth post of the table shows Sjarifuddin Hasan, as Deputy Chairman of the MPR RI with a background that depicts elements of the Democratic Party. The narrative text that is expressed is the Democratic Party's commitment to reducing poverty and increasing welfare. The hashtags used are #DemokratS14P, #DemocraticParty, #pdemokrat, #Demokrat, #AHY. The symbolic convergence analysis that can be obtained is:

Fantasy	Fantasy in this context is a narrative about the Democratic Party's commitment to reducing poverty, reducing unemployment, and improving people's welfare. This narrative includes a vision of a better future where education and health services are equitable and of high quality.

Theme Fantasy (Fantasy Theme)	Poverty and Unemployment Reduction: Emphasizing the Democratic Party's commitment to creating jobs and reducing poverty and unemployment rates. Improving Welfare: Focus on efforts to improve the welfare of society as a whole.
	Equity in Education: Highlighting the importance of equitable education for all levels of society. Improvement of Health Services: Emphasizing the importance of better and more equitable health services. Improvement and Refinement: Describes the party's desire to make improvements and refinements in various sectors if it wins the election.

Chain	Theme Fantasy(Fantasy Chain)	The fantasy theme chain occurs when this narrative is accepted and spread by party members, supporters, and the wider audience. Every time someone likes, comments, or shares this post, they help spread and strengthen the narrative. Positive interactions indicate that this fantasy theme is accepted and resonated with the audience. The post received 209 likes and 9 comments.
Say Cue)	Key Symbolic(Symbolic	"Reduce Poverty": Becomes a keyword that triggers memories of the commitment to reduce poverty. "Improve Well-Being": Remind the audience of the goal of improving people's well-being. "Equality in Education": Emphasizing the importance of equal education. "Improving Health Services": Reminding of the need for better health services. Hashtags: #DemokratS14P, #DemocraticParty, #pdemokrat, #Democrat, #AHY connect this post to the campaign and identity of the Democratic Party.
Vision Vision)	Rhetorical(Rhetorical	The rhetorical vision formed from these fantasy themes is a grand picture of a better future with reduced poverty and unemployment, increased welfare, equal education, and improved health services under the leadership of the Democratic Party. This vision includes a desire to make improvements and enhancements in various sectors if they win the election, creating a collective view that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party.

This Instagram post effectively uses symbolic elements to construct and spread a narrative about the Democratic Party's commitment to reducing poverty, reducing unemployment, and improving public welfare. Using SCT, we can see how fantasies about reducing poverty, increasing welfare, equalizing education, and improving health services are adopted and reinforced through fantasy themes, fantasy theme chains, symbolic keywords, and rhetorical visions. This narrative resonates with the audience, creating a collective view that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party. The analysis was validated by the Secretary of the Strategic Communication Agency (BAKOMSTRA DPP Partai Demokrat) Hendri Teja who stated that the Democratic Party focuses on using information technology to convey political messages that are consistent with the fantasy themes found. in analyzing Instagram content to be able to attract new voter segments. In formulating this content, it is always monitored by General Chairman Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono.

" *He sees the details and in the process of forming the content we have to discuss with him.*
and he also gave input that basically there was no agreement but when the party had made a certain template from the DPP then it became a reference for other institutions, both the DPD DPC and also the factions, including him, to make his content in that direction,"(Interview with Secretary of BAKOMSTRA DPP Demokrat Party, Hendro Teja)

According to Hendri Teja, BAKOMSTRA (Democratic Party DPP Strategic Communication Agency) plays a key role in coordinating digital campaigns from the center to the regions, ensuring that the party's message is delivered consistently. BAKOMSTRA ensures that these fantasy themes are adopted and disseminated in a tiered manner from the center to the regions. This means that the narrative built at the central level is adopted by the party structure at the provincial, district, and city levels, thus creating a strong chain of fantasy themes. Every social

media content posted, both by the center and the regions, will strengthen this narrative and create wider engagement among the audience. In the context of publicity types, the use of Instagram by the Democratic Party mainly falls into the category of pure publicity and free ride publicity, because their digital campaigns are mostly carried out organically with contributions from cadres and volunteers. This is stated in the findings of the researcher's interview with Hendri Teja as follows,

"Yes, so Democrats until now we do not have a budget so everything we do, all the digital campaign actions are done by our cadres and volunteers who happen to be able to help, especially in BAKOMSTRA both at the center and in the regions. Including content creation too, so friends who have creativity and skills in that direction contribute their time and creativity to build the party,"(Interview with Secretary of BAKOMSTRA DPP Demokrat Party, Hendro Teja)

However, if the party decides to use paid advertising on the platform, then that would be considered paid publicity. Additionally, any collaborations with other relevant entities or events promoted on Instagram could be considered tie-in publicity. The combination of these different types of publicity helps the Democratic Party amplify their message and reach a wider audience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion of this study shows that the Democratic Party effectively utilized Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) to build and spread a strong and coherent narrative through the Instagram platform. Through the analysis of four Instagram contents, it was revealed that the party used fantasy themes such as people's welfare, fighting spirit, sustainable development, and poverty reduction to create a collective vision that resonated with its audience. The consistent use of visual and verbal symbols, such as the slogan "People First," party uniforms, and calls for "gaspol," successfully triggered a chain of fantasy themes that strengthened and spread the party's narrative among supporters and the wider community.

The results of this study indicate that SCT is a powerful analytical framework for understanding how political parties can build support and influence public perception through social media, creating a collective view that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party. Symbolic Convergence Theory helps researchers understand how these narratives are adopted, reinforced, and spread, creating a strong rhetorical vision that is consistent with the values and goals of the Democratic Party. Thus, this analysis provides in-depth insight into the political communication strategies used by the Democratic Party in building support and influencing public perception through social media platforms. The researchers recommend further research that can explore how these narratives influence voter behavior and shape public opinion, as well as how similar strategies can be applied by other political parties or in different organizational communication contexts.

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