

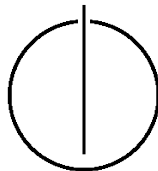


FAKULTÄT FÜR INFORMATIK
DER TECHNISCHEN UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN

Bachelor's Thesis in Informatics

**Analyzing Neurodegenerative
Diseases with Web Chatbot
Typing Behavior**

Nicolas Othmar Theodarus





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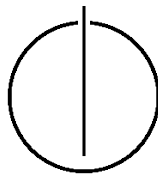
Analyse neurodegenerativer Krankheiten
anhand des Tippverhaltens von Web-Chatbots

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I assure the single handed composition of this bachelor thesis only supported
by declared resources,

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Nicolas Othmar Theodarus

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Thank you everyone :D!

Abstract

Neurodegenerative diseases are chronic conditions that destroy and damage part of nervous system of the sufferer over time, especially the brain. These diseases pose a significant challenge for general public health, since the damages are permanent and incurable. This condition happens mainly on elderly people, given that aging is the greatest risk factor. Moreover, early detection of these diseases are inefficient, impractical and only have minuscule success percentage. There is a need for better detection methods that are cost-effective, user-friendly and accurate.

This thesis aims to pave the way of developing the aforementioned better detection methods. This thesis proposes a solution that involves developing a mobile optimized web application to gather typing data from users of different age groups. A clean and robust architecture structure is utilised to guarantee reliability, scalability and maintainability. It should also be ensured that the application is able to effectively process and save the collected data, so that the data can be used for research purposes. The application can also then be developed further with more advanced features. An example of such additional feature would be an analysis section, where typing behaviour data of a person can instantly be analysed with a click of a button.

An analysis of the data will be performed with the goal to find statistical properties. These statistical properties can then be used to categorize each user into their corresponding age groups. Understanding whether certain biomarkers, e.g. typing pattern, can be used to differentiate characteristics of a person is the main focus of this thesis. The conclusion derived from this thesis could give insight into the feasibility of utilising biomarkers to effectively monitor health condition of the user. Specifically, the author hopes that these findings would be beneficial for research on detecting early signs of neurodegenerative disorders effectively with a simple method of collecting typing pattern data.

Zusammenfassung

Neurodegenerative Krankheiten sind chronische Erkrankungen, die im Laufe der Zeit Teile des Nervensystems der Betroffenen, insbesondere das Gehirn, zerstören und schädigen. Diese Krankheiten stellen eine große Herausforderung für die allgemeine öffentliche Gesundheit dar, da die Schäden dauerhaft und unheilbar sind. Sie treten vor allem bei älteren Menschen auf, da das Älterwerden der größte Risikofaktor ist. Darüber hinaus ist die Früherkennung dieser Krankheiten ineffizient, unpraktisch und hat nur einen verschwindend geringen Erfolgsanteil. Es besteht ein Bedarf an besseren Erkennungsmethoden, die kostengünstig, benutzerfreundlich und genau sind.

Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, den Weg für die Entwicklung besserer Erkennungsmethoden zu ebnen. In dieser Arbeit wird eine Lösung vorgeschlagen, die die Entwicklung einer für Mobilgeräte optimierten Webanwendung beinhaltet, um Tippdaten von Benutzern verschiedener Altersgruppen zu sammeln. Es wird eine saubere und robuste Architekturstruktur verwendet, um Zuverlässigkeit, Skalierbarkeit und Wartbarkeit zu gewährleisten. Es sollte auch sichergestellt werden, dass die Anwendung in der Lage ist, die gesammelten Daten effektiv zu verarbeiten und zu speichern, so dass die Daten für Forschungszwecke verwendet werden können. Die Anwendung kann dann auch mit erweiterten Funktionen weiterentwickelt werden. Ein Beispiel für eine solche zusätzliche Funktion wäre ein Analysebereich, in dem die Daten zum Tippverhalten einer Person mit einem Klick auf eine Schaltfläche sofort analysiert werden können.

Die Analyse der Daten wird mit dem Ziel durchgeführt, mathematische Eigenschaften zu finden. Diese mathematischen Eigenschaften können dann verwendet werden, um jeden Nutzer in die entsprechenden Altersgruppen einzuteilen. Das Hauptaugenmerk dieser Arbeit liegt auf der Frage, ob bestimmte Biomarker, wie z.B. das Tippverhalten, zur Unterscheidung von Merkmalen einer Person verwendet werden können. Die aus dieser Arbeit abgeleiteten Schlussfolgerungen könnten Aufschluss darüber geben, inwieweit Biomarker zur effektiven Überwachung des Gesundheitszustands des Nutzers eingesetzt werden können. Insbesondere hofft der Autor, dass diese Erkenntnisse für die Forschung zur Erkennung früher Anzeichen von neurodegenerativen Erkrankungen mit einer einfachen Methode zur Erfassung von Tippmusterdaten von Nutzen sein könnten.

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AD Alzheimer's Disease

PD Parkinson's Disease

UI user interface

DAO Data Access Object

DTO Data Transfer Object

LLM large language model

Outline of the Thesis

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Text

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Text

CHAPTER 3: RELATED WORK

Text

CHAPTER 4: REQUIREMENTS ELICITATION

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CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) and Parkinson’s Disease (PD), are chronic and progressive neurodegenerative diseases that primarily affect the nervous system. These diseases lead to the degeneration of motor and cognitive abilities. These diseases are often irreversible and incurable, posing significant public health challenges. As populations age, the risk of such disorders increase substantially, making early detection crucial.

Historically, the diagnosis of neurodegenerative diseases has been done through clinical observations, imaging, and biomarkers. Even though medical technologies have improved significantly over the years, there are still many challenges for early diagnosis. One of the main reason for this is because neurodegenerative diseases develop gradually over time. Early symptoms of these diseases can easily be overlooked or mistaken as normal aging [VRW23]. As a result, these early symptoms are often ignored until the disease itself has reached a critical stage, where the chance of treatment declines significantly. Furthermore, current diagnostic methods are expensive, invasive, and often inaccessible to a large portion of the population.

A better method is obviously needed to battle these insidious diseases. The rise of technologies such as smartphones open up new possibilities for early detection of these conditions. One example of such possibility is to utilise a phone application as a mean to detect early neurodegenerative diseases. Studies have shown that one of the effect of these diseases, i.e. impairments of motoric functions, will be reflected on how a person types [MFQM18]. This changes in typing behaviors, such as typing speed, accuracy, and keystroke patterns can then be recorded by the application. The data acquired by this application might be able to be used to analyse early symptoms of AD and PD.

1.1 Problem

It is clear from the facts mentioned above, that neurodegenerative diseases are problems that need to be addressed. World Health Organisation estimates that there are approximately 50 million people worldwide affected by these disorders. Most of the sufferer are elderly, since age is one of the main risk factor. As the most common neurodegenerative disorder, AD still lacks an effective cure. It is even harder to treat the more progressive the disease progress. That is why the importance of an effective way to diagnose the disease early cannot be overstated. In the current state, however, misdiagnosis rates are still high, reaching up to 20%. Not only that, current diagnostic methods are either invasive, costly, or impractical for widespread use.

Similarly, PD, the second most common neurodegenerative disorder, has no cure and limited treatment options. For this disease too an effective mean for early diagnosis is of utmost importance. Since with a successful early detection, the progression of the disease can be slowed significantly, improving the quality of life of patients greatly. The current diagnostic methods for this disease, however, rely mostly on the observation of changes of motor symptoms. These methods, as previously discussed, are unreliable for many reasons.

In both conditions, early intervention can significantly improve patient outcomes, but existing diagnostic tools fail to provide a practical and accurate solution for early detection. There is a pressing need for non-invasive, cost-effective, and widely accessible methods to detect early signs of neurodegenerative diseases before the onset of significant symptoms.

1.2 Motivation

The motivation for this thesis comes from the urgent need to find better diagnostic methods for neurodegenerative diseases. Finding methods to effectively detect early these diseases would significantly improve general public health. Early detection allows for earlier interventions, which will then slow the progression of the diseases. This would improve treatment outcomes, and ultimately reduce the burden on healthcare systems.

From a scientific point of view, the research on using digital biomarker, i.e. typing pattern, as a mean to detect neurodegenerative diseases is underexplored. This research could give insights into how effective common tools and activities can be used to improve public health. Typing has become a common daily activity for most modern human, especially with the widespread use of smartphones and chat applications. This means that it can

be a low-cost and non-invasive method to detect subtle motor or cognitive impairments. In the most ideal case, the subject would not even notice that they are being monitored for these diseases and can go on about enjoying their daily lives.

Taking advantage of these common daily activities could help reduce the risk of neurodegenerative diseases, by diagnosing them as early as possible. Furthermore, these methods would also be accessible to people that lives in less developed countries with less developed medical technologies. This would ensure equal chances to fight against these neurodegenerative diseases. By developing a mobile-optimized web application that can collect and analyze typing data in real time, it would also become easier to monitor people's condition. Especially the condition of those that are more prone to this diseasesm, i.e. the elderly.

1.3 Objectives

Developing a web-based chat application that can capture and analyze typing behavior for early detection of neurodegenerative diseases is an ambitious goal. That goal is unfortunately not in the scope of this thesis. The primary objective of this thesis is to explore whether it is possible to determine the age of a user based on their typing patterns. The author believe that this thesis will pave the way for a more advanced research on this matter. This thesis wants to show that typing pattern can be used to identify the characteristics of the user, in this case, the age group.

Specifically, this thesis aims to:

1. Develop mobile-optimized chat application that collects the users' typing data. The main focus is to collect samples from individuals across different age groups.
2. Practice clean architecture and secure coding practices to make sure the application is reliable, scalable, and maintainable. The chat application will be designed to be user-friendly for all age groups, specifically the elderly.
3. Analyze the gathered typing behavior data to identify patterns or statistical distributions that may correlate with the user's age. Metrics such as typing speed, keystroke intervals, and error rates will be examined to determine if they can give indication of the user's age group.
4. Evaluate the accuracy of using typing behavior as a predictor of age.

The identified patterns need to be consistent enough to be able to reliably be used to estimate the user's age group.

The goal of this thesis is to research the feasibility of using data of typing behavior gathered by the application to profile the user in an age group. If this is achieved, the author hopes that this could give insights that would be valuable for future research in user profiling or cognitive assessments. The application could also be further developed to be able to analyse more complex matters, such as early signs of neurodegenerative disorders. Another possible improvement would be adding real-time analysis of the typing pattern and integration with healthcare systems. This would be beneficial for patients and clinicians alike.

Chapter 2

Background

2.1 Mobile-Optimized Applications and Accessibility for Elderly Users

It is crucial that the application is both mobile-optimized and also accessible to elderly users. Since the author wants to use data of people typing on their smartphones, the application needs to be mobile-optimized. Mobile-optimized application ensures that the data gathered by this application captures typing pattern of its users correctly. Irregularities, such as typing mistakes or longer typing interval, should not be caused by the difficulty of using this application. Instead this irregularities should reflect human error, that most likely to happens more frequently with older subjects. Among other thigs, the user interface (UI) design of the application should be clean and minimalist, focusing on essential features and contents. Unnecessary elements and visual clutters should be removed to create an intuitive UI that is easy to navigate on smaller screens. Since there are many types and sizes of smartphones, it is also important to build a responsive web application that is able to adjust to common screen sizes.

The application also need to be accessible for elderly users. This is done to prevent a false positive condition, where significantly more typing errors happen on elderly subjects because of the difficulty of using the application. Designing an accessible UI for the elderly requires some considerations as suggested by Gomez-Hernandez et. al. in their research in 2023 [GHFMVM23]:

1. Bigger Interactive Elements: The size of interactive elements, such as buttons and forms, need to be bigger to make them more accessible. This improvement could help with possible vision or motoric impairments.

2. High contrast: Another method to help with vision impairment. This could help increase readability.
3. Font Selection: The font used should be easily readable, especially on smaller screens.
4. Spacing: Enough spacing should be added to improve readability and user experience.

2.2 Backend Architecture: Java Spring Boot

On the backend side of the application, Java Spring Boot framework is utilised to manage and process data that are sent by the frontend of the application. The Spring Framework is an application framework and inversion of control container for the Java programming language. Spring Boot is an open-source Java framework for applications based on Spring to help project startup and management easier. This framework provides libraries that help to develop a scalable, maintainable and secure web applications. It is important to develop the application in this manner so that new features and improvement could easily be added during or after the writing of this thesis. If the occasion arises, this application would also be ready to be reused for a possible follow-up research on this topic.

Spring Boot provides functionalities that help to ensure clean architecture and adherence to coding principles, such as DRY (Don't Repeat Yourself). Another important feature provided by Spring Boot is RESTful services, that support separation of the client and the server. Other than aiding on building a clean architecture, RESTful services also further ensure the possibility of reusing the code for further researches. This application uses Data Access Object (DAO) and Data Transfer Object (DTO) patterns to manage data efficiently. This separation of concerns between DAO and DTO adheres to clean architecture principles, improving maintainability and testability.

2.3 Database Management: PostgreSQL

PostgreSQL is an open-source, object-relational database system known for its scalability, reliability and support for complex queries. These attributes make PostgreSQL ideal for storing a huge amount of typing data and keystroke logs. Features such as JSONB data type that is offered by PostgreSQL also help to simplify data processing and storing, especially data of keystroke logs. Another reason why PostgreSQL is used in this project is its indexing and

search capabilities. This will be crucial for fast retrieval of user data, allowing efficient typing pattern analysis that would be useful if instant analysis feature is ever built.

2.4 Large Language Models: Llama3

The Llama3 is the latest large language model (LLM) develop by Meta inc. In addition to Llama3's impressive performance compared to other LLMs, Llama3 is multilingual and can support both english and german language well. This makes Llama3 the perfect language model to use for this thesis. In this thesis, Llama3 will be used to chat with the users in real-time. The language model is prompted to try to get as much response from the users as possible, so that the typing data can be collected.

It is interesting to see whether LLMs such as Llama3 would be able to also analyze the users' typing data. It can potentially help identify changes and irregularities in typing pattern that might indicate the age of the user. If this is possible, a real-time analysis of the typing pattern might be able to be implemented with the help of language models. This topic is, however, not in the scope of this thesis and is only a possible future research.

2.5 Containerization: Docker

To further promotes the scalability of the application, the author utilizes Docker. Docker is a platform for delivering software in packages called containers. Containerization is an important part of deploying a scalable application across various environments. Docker allows applications to be deployed separately (frontend, backend, database and LLM) in their own separated containers. This makes it easier for the application to be reused and rebuild in other environments, such as on the university servers.

2.6 Pattern Recognition and Analysis of Typing Pattern

To recognize typing pattern of users from different age groups, a statistical analysis of the typing pattern will be carried out.

TODO: find and explain statistical analysis correlation methods

Metrics such as keystroke intervals, typing speed, and error rates will be analyzed to distinguish typing patterns between each age groups.

TODO: find correlation between typing metrics and age group based on the statistical analysis.

TODO: find pattern recognition method or algo such as Hidden Markov Models (HMM), Dynamic Time Warping (DTW), or Neural Networks

2.7 Security and Privacy in Data Collection

TODO: do we need this part? Privacy is not as important since the data is not from patients.

Chapter 3

Related Work

*Note: Describe related work regarding your topic and emphasize your (scientific) contribution in **contrast** to existing approaches / concepts / workflows. Related work is usually current research by others and you defend yourself against the statement: “Why is your thesis relevant? The problem was already solved by XYZ.” If you have multiple related works, use subsections to separate them.*

Similar research has been done in the work of Kapsecker et al [KOJ22]. In this research, data of typing behaviors are also accumulated, such as typing speed and variation in character usage. Kapsecker’s research, however, used a modified version of the iOS default keyboard to able to gather these data. This modified version of the iOS keyboard brings forwards a limitation in this research, specifically that it shows deviation from the standard keyboard which cause more frequent use of backspace due to typos and different typing behaviors in general. It is because the default keyboard of iOS devices is highly optimized. Differences in structure and layout from this default keyboard, however minor, could cause noticeable changes in the behavior of the users and thus the gathered data

Chapter 4

Requirements Elicitation

*Note: This chapter follows the Requirements Analysis Document Template in [BD09]. **Important:** Make sure that the whole chapter is independent of the chosen technology and development platform. The idea is that you illustrate concepts, taxonomies and relationships of the application domain independent of the solution domain! Cite [BD09] several times in this chapter.*

4.1 Overview

Note: Provide a short overview about the purpose, scope, objectives and success criteria of the system that you like to develop.

4.2 Current System

Note: This section is only required if the proposed system (i.e. the system that you develop in the thesis) should replace an existing system.

4.3 Proposed System

Note: If you leave out the section “Current system”, you can rename this section into “Requirements”.

4.3.1 Functional Requirements

Note: List and describe all functional requirements of your system. Also mention requirements that you were not able to realize. The short title should be in the form “verb objective”

FR1 **Short Title:** Short Description.

FR2 **Short Title:** Short Description.

FR3 **Short Title:** Short Description.

4.3.2 Nonfunctional Requirements

*Note: List and describe all nonfunctional requirements of your system. Also mention requirements that you were not able to realize. Categorize them using the FURPS+ model described in [BD09] without the category **functionality** that was already covered with the functional requirements.*

NFR1 **Category:** Short Description.

NFR2 **Category:** Short Description.

NFR3 **Category:** Short Description.

4.4 System Models

Note: This section includes important system models for the requirements analysis.

4.4.1 Scenarios

Note: If you do not distinguish between visionary and demo scenarios, you can remove the two subsections below and list all scenarios here.

Visionary Scenarios

Note: Describe 1-2 visionary scenario here, i.e. a scenario that would perfectly solve your problem, even if it might not be realizable. use our scenario description template in form of a table.

Demo Scenarios

Note: Describe 1-2 demo scenario here, i.e. a scenario that you can implement and demonstrate until the end of your thesis. use our scenario description template in form of a table.

4.4.2 Use Case Model

*Note: This subsection should contain a UML Use Case Diagram including roles and their use cases. You can use colors to indicate priorities. Think about splitting the diagram into multiple ones if you have more than 10 use cases. **Important:** Make sure to describe the most important use cases using the use case table template. Also describe the rationale of the use case model, i.e. why you modeled it like you show it in the diagram.*

4.4.3 Analysis Object Model

*Note: This subsection should contain a UML Class Diagram showing the most important objects, attributes, methods and relations of your application domain including taxonomies using specification inheritance (see [BD09]). Do not insert objects, attributes or methods of the solution domain. **Important:** Make sure to describe the analysis object model thoroughly in the text so that readers are able to understand the diagram. Also write about the rationale how and why you modeled the concepts like this.*

4.4.4 Dynamic Model

*Note: This subsection should contain dynamic UML diagrams. These can be a UML state diagrams, UML communication diagrams or UML activity diagrams. **Important:** Make sure to describe the diagram and its rationale in the text. **Do not use UML sequence diagrams.***

4.4.5 User Interface

*Note: Show mockups of the user interface of the software you develop and their connections / transitions. You can also create a storyboard. **Important:** Describe the mockups and their rationale in the text.*

Chapter 5

System Design

Note: This chapter follows the System Design Document Template in [BD09]. You describe in this chapter how you map the concepts of the application domain to the solution domain. Some sections are optional, if they do not apply to your problem. Cite [BD09] several times in this chapter.

5.1 Overview

Note: Provide a brief overview of the software architecture and references to other chapters (e.g. requirements analysis), references to existing systems, constraints impacting the software architecture.

5.2 Design Goals

Note: Derive design goals from your nonfunctional requirements, prioritize them (as they might conflict with each other) and describe the rationale of your prioritization. Any trade-offs between design goals (e.g., build vs. buy, memory space vs. response time), and the rationale behind the specific solution should be described in this section

5.3 Subsystem Decomposition

Note: Describe the architecture of your system by decomposing it into subsystems and the services provided by each subsystem. Use UML class diagrams including packages / components for each subsystem.

5.4 Hardware Software Mapping

Note: This section describes how the subsystems are mapped onto existing hardware and software components. The description is accompanied by a UML deployment diagram. The existing components are often off-the-shelf components. If the components are distributed on different nodes, the network infrastructure and the protocols are also described.

5.5 Persistent Data Management

Note: Optional section that describes how data is saved over the lifetime of the system and which data. Usually this is either done by saving data in structured files or in databases. If this is applicable for the thesis, describe the approach for persisting data here and show a UML class diagram how the entity objects are mapped to persistent storage. It contains a rationale of the selected storage scheme, file system or database, a description of the selected database and database administration issues.

5.6 Access Control

Note: Optional section describing the access control and security issues based on the nonfunctional requirements in the requirements analysis. It also describes the implementation of the access matrix based on capabilities or access control lists, the selection of authentication mechanisms and the use of encryption algorithms.

5.7 Global Software Control

Note: Optional section describing describing the control flow of the system, in particular, whether a monolithic, event-driven control flow or concurrent processes have been selected, how requests are initiated and specific synchronization issues

5.8 Boundary Conditions

Note: Optional section describing the use cases how to start up the separate components of the system, how to shut them down, and what to do if a component or the system fails.

Chapter 6

Case Study / Evaluation

Note: If you did an evaluation / case study, describe it here.

6.1 Design

Note: Describe the design / methodology of the evaluation and why you did it like that. E.g. what kind of evaluation have you done (e.g. questionnaire, personal interviews, simulation, quantitative analysis of metrics, what kind of participants, what kind of questions, what was the procedure?

6.2 Objectives

Note: Derive concrete objectives / hypotheses for this evaluation from the general ones in the introduction.

6.3 Results

Note: Summarize the most interesting results of your evaluation (without interpretation). Additional results can be put into the appendix.

6.4 Findings

Note: Interpret the results and conclude interesting findings

6.5 Discussion

Note: Discuss the findings in more detail and also review possible disadvantages that you found

6.6 Limitations

Note: Describe limitations and threats to validity of your evaluation, e.g. reliability, generalizability, selection bias, researcher bias

Chapter 7

Summary

Note: This chapter includes the status of your thesis, a conclusion and an outlook about future work.

7.1 Status

Note: Describe honestly the achieved goals (e.g. the well implemented and tested use cases) and the open goals here. if you only have achieved goals, you did something wrong in your analysis.

7.1.1 Realized Goals

Note: Summarize the achieved goals by repeating the realized requirements or use cases stating how you realized them.

7.1.2 Open Goals

*Note: Summarize the open goals by repeating the open requirements or use cases and explaining why you were not able to achieve them. **Important:** It might be suspicious, if you do not have open goals. This usually indicates that you did not thoroughly analyze your problems.*

7.2 Conclusion

*Note: Recap shortly which problem you solved in your thesis and discuss your **contributions** here.*

7.3 Future Work

Note: Tell us the next steps (that you would do if you have more time. be creative, visionary and open-minded here.

Appendix A

e.g. Questionnaire

Note: If you have large models, additional evaluation data like questionnaires or non summarized results, put them into the appendix.

Appendix B

Tips for writing a thesis in TeX

B.1 using this template

This template tries to achieve a separation of the template itself and the parts that are specific to the thesis. Ideally, the template does not have to be edited.

The content of the thesis shall be added to the following files and folders:

- the `.tex`-files in the `chapters`-folder shall contain the description of your scientific work.
- the `.tex`-files in the `resources`-folder contain templates and examples, into which metadata, settings and organisational information about the thesis can be entered.
- the `thesis.bib`-file shall contain a list of the literature, that you cite in your thesis.

B.2 General tips

Track your work on this thesis with a version control system such as git.

In your TeX source code, use one line per sentence. This facilitates spotting excessively long sentences. Also, it makes the tracking of changes by the version control system more useful. If you add line breaks after a fixed number of columns instead, a change affects all subsequent lines of the paragraph, even though the actual content has not been changed.

It is recommended to create a folder, in which all images, that are included in this document are stored. See the `resources/settings.tex`-file, on how to add this folder to the default graphics path, so only the filenames have to be entered, when including an image.

List of Figures

List of Tables

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