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Public Perception of the Implementation of the Corporate Mandate of NDDC in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated public perception of the implementation of the corporate mandate of NDDC in South-South Nigeria. The theory adopted for the study was Impression Management Theory, with researchers adopting a survey research method. The population of the study was 37,063,435, from which a sample size of 384 was determined using the Philip Meyer's Guide. The questionnaire was adopted as instrument for data collection, and data gathered were analysed in tables and percentages. Findings from the study revealed that: there is a moderate level (37%) of public awareness of the corporate mandate of the NDDC in South-South Nigeria; the perception of South-South residents (33%) of the NDDC's implementation of its corporate mandate is that it is politically influenced; and residents of the South-South Nigeria, as a behavioural response to NDDC's development-related activities, wait to see if projects will actually start (34%) and monitor the contractors' works informally (33%). Consequently, the researchers concluded that residents of the South-South Nigeria region perceived the delivery of NDDC's corporate mandate as politically motivated, affirming that corporations should discharge their mandates, bearing in mind that they have stakeholders to impress. The researchers recommended among other things, that the NDDC should increase awareness of its corporate mandate implementation among residents of South-South Nigeria.

Keywords: Corporate mandate, public, NDDC, perception, and implementation

Introduction

The corporate mandate of organisations spells out their basis of operation. It is management's focus by which companies discharge various aspects and consequences of their activities tailored towards set goals



and objectives, and guides the significant contributions of organisations to sustainable business relationships. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), an intervention agency established to cater for the welfare of the people of Niger Delta region, has, over the years increasingly responded to the challenges facing the region by adopting partnership strategies aimed at contributing to their developmental needs, building a mutually beneficial relationship with local communities and positioning themselves as a force for good in their host communities.

Companies' corporate mandates in time past were limited to economic ventures, including a broader set of responsibilities. However, nowadays, it has evolved with the latest belief that the primary responsibility of every organisation is to generate shared value (Agudelo & Jóhannsdóttir, 2019). This becomes particularly important because corporate mandates determine the primary roles of organisations and how they connect with the community around them. It is also a well-touted term in management disciplines that explains the connection between business goals and societal values (Baliet al., 2019).

Moreover, oil-producing organisation's existence in society has a massive effect on the environment or the host community. There are two effects, positive and negative, on the environment. The positive impact of their existence might improve the economic level of the surrounding host community. However, the presence of a company would equally endanger the environment as well. The Israel Ministry of Environmental Protection reveals that the industrial process can cause climate change, pollution of air, water and soil pollution, health issues, and species extinction.

In Nigeria, however, there have been several cases of negative environmental impact in the Niger Delta region resulting from the activities of multinationals, especially in the oil and gas sector following the discovery of oil in the late 1950s. While oil exploration and production were activated in the 1950s, operations were said to have been suspended in Ogoniland sometimes in the early 1990s due to disruptions from local public unrest. These issues led to the establishment of OMPADEC, which, according to Ebeku (2024), failed to deliver on its mandate. The author reports that the failure of OMPADEC led to the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), which began in 2000, and was perfected and enforced in 2001.

Therefore, the NDDC's corporate mandate, based on its establishment Act, becomes a vital issue of discourse. It covers socially responsible use of the environment in the region, and enforces remedial and compensatory obligations. This moves its mandate to an indispensable component in achieving its objectives and functions towards various stakeholders (Hamiduet al., 2015).

In recent years, the increased awareness of the commission's corporate mandate (Josiah and Akpuh(2022) resulted in changes in residents' ways of thinking. Members of the Niger Delta communities focus more on the commission's execution of its corporate mandate and regard it as the reference for accountability. Therefore, under this circumstance, the commission would be "punished" by residents if they perceive that it is losing focus of its corporate mandate, and allowing undue interferences to influence its operation; the commission's performance will be affected in the long run. Organisations' operation, therefore, turns into an exercise based on blueprints, goals and objectives, believed to serve certain stakeholders, who must be considered in decision-making and business activities.

Moreover, a crucial aspect of achieving the NDDC's goal is the implementation of its corporate mandate aimed at addressing the region's environmental, social, and economic challenges (NDDC, 2000). Therefore, Caroll (2020) underscores that focus on organisations' mandates, especially government agencies, has become a vital conversation among organisations to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development and improve their public image.

In the context of the Niger Delta, where decades of oil exploration and exploitation have resulted in significant environmental degradation and social unrest, NDDC's corporate mandate play a critical role in



redeeming the image of organisations involved in the region's oil industry (Amaeshi et al., 2019). Effective discharge of their programmes and initiatives can enhance the reputation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), foster stakeholder engagement, and contribute in no small measure to the continuous development of the region (Freeman, 2021).

However, public perception of the implementation of the NDDC's corporate mandate can significantly influence the organisational success and improve stakeholder responses and engagements, if they were to be perceived as sincere. Any insincerity or inadequacies of implementation can generate tension instead of alleviating the needs of the people (Porter & Kramer, 2022). Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the public perception of NDDC's implementation of its corporate mandate, examining the factors that shape this perception and exploring ways to improve the effectiveness and credibility of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

In reality, though, despite its corporate mandate to foster sustainable development and improve the quality of life of the people of the Niger Delta region, the NDDC has faced a series of criticisms and controversies surrounding the delivery and implementation of its corporate mandate and selected programmes. There are reports of uncompleted projects scattered around the region, poor quality service delivery, lack of funding, lack of proper engagement with host communities, environmental degradation, and lack of transparency and accountability in its operations.

Thus, the Commission's programmes have been a subject of controversy and public scepticism despite their potential to address the socio-economic and environmental challenges plaguing the region. One of the fundamental problems confronting the NDDC's programmes is the widespread perception of ineffectiveness and inadequacy among stakeholders. This mismatch between the NDDC's efforts and stakeholder expectations has resulted in entrenched public distrust, exacerbating social unrest and conflict in the region.

The consequences of these challenges are far-reaching. Scholars have reported persistent public dissatisfaction with the NDDC's programmes, which has contributed to ongoing social unrest and conflict in the Niger Delta, stamping significant reputation implications, compromising its credibility and effectiveness. Yet, despite the significance of this issue, existing research primarily focuses on organisational perspectives or specific stakeholder groups, neglecting the broader public perception of the NDDC's mandate's implementation. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the public perception of the implementation of NDDC's corporate mandate, identifying factors that shape this perception.

Therefore, the primary problem this study was to identify and assess the understanding of the public's expectations and perceptions regarding the corporate mandate and programmes of the Niger Delta Development Commission, and then, examine the behavioural responses of South-South, Nigeria residents towards the corporate mandate and programmes of the Niger Delta Development Commission.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. determine the level of public awareness of the corporate mandate of the NDDC in South-South Nigeria;
2. investigate South-South residents' perception of the NDDC's implementation of its corporate mandate in the Niger Delta; and
3. investigate the behavioural responses of residents toward the NDDC's development-related activities.



Theoretical Framework

The impression management theory sufficed for this study. It is equally referred to as the self-presentation theory and was propounded in 1959 by Erving Goffman. Its major argument is that organisations, such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), work towards building a public perception. In other words, they build narratives that are aimed at controlling how they are seen by those directly and indirectly impacted by their activities. It finds expression in several areas of knowledge, albeit public relations. Its key points, according to Ensour and Sarhan (2024), include that companies attempt to influence people's perception of other people or a person. This is attained via the management of information in social interaction.

In their submission, Hernández-Serrano et al. (2022) opine that organisations have varied needs and reasons for which they want certain presentations of themselves to others. Furthermore, the impressions sought are based on organisational goals and objectives. Hence, people manage their impressions with the view to reach desired public image.

Similarly, the theory holds that this impression management influences how one is perceived and treated by other people, an important chunk of social interaction. Debus et al. (2024) thus identify five impression management strategies including, ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. These also become key performance indices for measuring self-presentation.

Meanwhile, Cherry et al. (2023) are of the opinion that the procedure of impression management takes one of three forms – emphasis on the characteristics of a personality, concealment of some traits, or misrepresentation of a personality. This implies that the narratives observed of several individuals and organisations may simply be concocted stories that present a personality in a certain acceptable way.

The theory is flawed by its one-sidedness. It considers only the entity who is presenting their self-image. It nearly regurgitates the propositions of the early theories of communication, such as the magic bullet theory, and does not take into consideration, intervening factors that may make the stakeholders think in such way as intended, or otherwise. However, this theory is important to the realisation of the results of this study, owing to its possible explanation for the engagements of the Niger Delta Development Commission in communities where they operate.

Method

The research design that was adopted for this study is a survey. The design allows for studying a group of people or items by collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered representative of the entire group. The population of the study comprised residents of South-South Nigeria states, including Akwa Ibom (6,888,868), Bayelsa (3,723,322), Cross River (5,200,000), Delta (6,000,120), Edo State (7,250,000), and Rivers (8,001,125), according to statistics from the National Population Commission (2006) with a 3.4% population growth over a 20-year period. This represents the South-South block where the commission has its presence. The projected population of this study was, therefore, 37,063,435.

Since the population of the study was too large to be studied as a whole, the researchers drew a representative sample from the population. Given this, the sample for the study was determined using Philip Meyer's Guide for sample selection.



Population	Sample
500,000 and more	384
100,000	383
10,000	381
5,000	370
3,000	341
2,000	322
1,000	278

Based on Meyer's Guide, a sample of 384 was selected for the study. Furthermore, a multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to access the respondents. Using the multi-stage sampling procedure, the researcher adopted three sampling methods: proportionate, purposive, and availability sampling at different stages.

In the first stage, the proportionate sampling method was adopted to ensure that each of the states yielded the number of respondents or participants based on its percentage to the entire population. Consequently, this determined the number of research instrument that was administered in each of the states. Thus, the proportion is detailed in the table below:

States	Population	Sample	%
Akwa-Cross Region	12,088,868	131	34
Rivers/Bayelsa Region	11,724,447	111	29
Delta/Edo Region	13,250,120	142	37
TOTAL	37,063,435	384	100

Purposive sampling was used in the second stage to select only local government areas where oil exploration takes place in each of the states. Also, it was adopted to ensure that respondents were of responsible age, that is, they were up to the age of 18. In the third stage, to reach the final sample and most appropriate respondents for the study, the researchers adopted the availability sampling method. Thus, available residents willing to participate in the study, and satisfied the criteria of being respondents, participated in the study.

The questionnaire was adopted for the data collection. The instrument had several items designed to elicit answers for the research objectives. It was validated by drafting the questions to meet the objectives of the study, and copies evaluated by communication experts, whose suggestions were effected in the final copy. Similarly, the test-retest method of computing reliability using a correlation coefficient was adopted in this study, with a score of 0.8. Consequently, with data collected through the administration of the questionnaire to the respondents at their homes, offices, and other workplaces, the data collected were analysed using simple percentages and presented in frequency tables with a brief textual explanation. Respondents were informed of the objective of the study and their consent sought before the instruments were administered. This was to ensure that the study conformed to ethical considerations. Moreover, out of the 384 copies of the questionnaire administered, 380 of them were returned valid for data presentation and analysis, representing 98.06% return.



Findings

Table 4.1 Respondents' Frequency of Encountering Information Related to the NDDC's corporate mandate

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Almost every week	71	19
Several times a month	99	25
Occasionally during the year	111	30
Rarely during the year	64	17
I cannot recall	36	9
Total	380	100

Table 4.1 above shows that a greater number of the respondents, 111 (30%) of the respondents indicated encountering information related to the NDDC's corporate mandate occasionally during the year.

Table 4.2 Respondents' classification of overall exposure to information explaining NDDC's corporate mandate

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Extensive exposure	72	21
Moderate exposure	127	37
Limited exposure	93	27
Minimal exposure	52	15
Total	344	100

According to Table 4.2, a total of 127(37%) respondents indicated moderate exposure to information explaining NDDC's corporate mandate.

Table 4.3 NDDC initiative that first comes to respondents' mind when thinking about the Commission's corporate mandate

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Road or drainage construction	114	33
Youth training or empowerment	65	19
Scholarship or educational support	45	13
Water or electrification projects	76	22
Medical outreach or health services	23	7
Livelihood enhancement programmes	21	6
Total	344	100

From Table 4.3, it is observed that 114(33%) of the respondents listed road and drainage construction as the NDDC initiative that first comes to mind when thinking about the commission's corporate mandate.



Table 4.4 **How respondents would describe the NDDC's approach to implementing its corporate mandate**

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Project-driven	65	19
Politically influenced	120	33
Community-responsive	48	14
Bureaucratically slow	79	23
Unclear or difficult to identify	38	11
Total	344	100

The majority of the respondents, 120(33%), following data in Table 4.4, described the NDDC's approach to implementing its corporate mandate as politically driven.

Table 4.5 **How respondents best describe their impression of NDDC project execution**

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Well-planned and strategic	62	18
Patchy and inconsistent	110	32
Mostly symbolic with limited impact	65	19
Largely absent	38	11
Visible but poorly managed	69	20
Total	344	100

Data in Table 4.5 show that most respondents, 110(32%) describe their impression of the NDDC project execution as patchy and inconsistent.

Table 4.6 **Respondents' view of the characteristics of NDDC's responsiveness to issues affecting its mandate**

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Quick engagement with communities	52	15
Responses only after complaints escalate	89	26
Selective attention depending on location	79	23
Slow interactions with communities	76	22
Little or no direct engagement	45	13
Total	344	100

Data in Table 4.6 suggest that more respondents, 89(26%), view the characteristics of NDDC's responsiveness as reactive rather than proactive, reporting that the Commission responds only after complaints escalate.



Table 4.7 Respondents' perception of NDDC's decision-making process

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Guided by community consultations	69	20
Influenced by internal politics	89	26
Driven by federal priorities	38	11
Driven by state priorities	48	14
Dominated by contractors and external actors	62	18
Not transparent enough to understand	41	12
Total	344	100

Most respondents perceive the NDDC's decision-making process as influenced by internal politics, 89(26%). This is evident in Table 4.7 above.

Table 4.8 Respondents' characterisation of the NDDC's accountability regarding its mandate's implementation

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Publicly open about project details	65	19
Provides information only when questioned	100	29
Shares selective information	89	26
Protects information from public scrutiny	62	18
Difficult to assess due to limited disclosures	28	8
Total	344	100

From Table 4.8 above, 100(29%) of the respondents characterised the NDDC's accountability regarding its mandate's implementation as selective in information sharing.

Table 4.9 Respondents' description of long-term influence of the NDDC's mandate implementation

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Encourages community development	65	19
Produces short-term improvements only	79	23
Creates mixed outcomes across the region	107	31
Leaves communities with incomplete benefits	55	16
Does not produce noticeable changes	38	11
Total	344	100



Table 4.9 shows that 107(31%) of the respondents believed that the long-term implementation of the NDDC's mandate has yielded mixed outcomes across the region.

Table 4.10 How respondents typically react when new NDDC projects are announced

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Show enthusiasm and curiosity	48	14
Wait to see if the project will actually start	117	34
React with scepticism based on past experiences	98	29
Ignore such announcements	34	10
Discuss concerns or doubts within the community	45	13
Total	344	100

From the Table above, the most common reaction to new NDDC project announcements is a cautious “wait and see” stance 117(34%), reflecting uncertainty about actual project commencement.

Table 4.11 Behaviour that best reflects response when NDDC contractors begin work in respondents' areas

Response	Nos of Respondents	Percentage
Providing voluntary support	38	11
Monitoring the contractors' work informally	114	33
Keeping distance but observing progress occasionally	103	30
Challenging the contractors over concerns	48	14
Showing little or no interest in the process	41	12
Total	344	100

According to data in Table 4.11, the dominant behaviour when NDDC contractors begin work is informal monitoring, 114(33%).

Discussion

There is a moderate level of public awareness of the corporate mandate of the NDDC in South-South Nigeria. The answer is tied to the question asked to determine how the respondents classified their overall exposure to pieces of information that explain the NDDC's corporate mandate. Consequently, the majority of the respondents, 135 (37%), indicated that they had moderate exposure, and was closely followed by 104 (27%), who indicated having limited exposure, thus, the answer relies on the most significant indication.

Furthermore, while 72(21%) of the respondents indicated an extensive exposure to information that explains NDDC's corporate mandate, 52(15%) indicated that they had only a minimal exposure. Consequently, it aligns with the findings in the study of Bode-Obanla and Ajisebiyawo (2025), who reported respondents' ability to identify several projects of the NDDC, showing awareness. Furthermore, Igazeuma (2020), in their study, highlighted that Niger delta development commission addressed



environmental challenges to sustainable development in the Niger delta region. The author highlighted the presence of NDDC projects in the region.

Similarly, Isidiho and Sabran (2015) highlight findings that are in consonance with the finding to this research question, revealing that that far more than an average, precisely (100% of the participants) in their study, were familiar with the delivery of NDDC's corporate mandate. In addition, they were able to identify the programmes and projects.

In light of the above, Ebeku (2024), whose study peered into the performance of the NDDC nearly 20 years since it started operations, showed a non-aligning finding. The researcher did not exactly report on awareness, especially because it was a qualitative study that did not involve the survey of respondents. Also, Okonedo (2024) assessed the Niger Delta Development Commission and the Development Administration in Delta State. Findings showed a good awareness of the implementation of NDDC's corporate mandate. This spells a substantiated level of awareness, and aligns with the moderate-level awareness recorded in the present study. Again, this engrains the idea that the public is aware of the NDDC's corporate mandate; it also shows an understanding of the commission's objectives.

Moreover, weighed against the postulations of the theoretical framework adopted for this study, it proves the position of the impression management theory, which postulates that that organisations work towards building a public perception, show that the public is largely aware of happenings around them based on the activities and operations of the NDDC.

Furthermore, the findings from Tables 4.5 to 4.18 collectively reveal as politically influenced, the perception of South-South residents of the NDDC's implementation of its corporate mandate in the Niger Delta region. This is the dominant perception, among others, raising deep-seated apprehension regarding the alignment of the Commission's activities with community needs, expectations, and transparency standards.

Precisely, 120 (33%) of respondents described the NDDC's approach as politically influenced, the single largest perception. Only 65 (19%) viewed it as project-driven, while 48 (14%) saw it as community-responsive, suggesting a dominant interpretation: the Commission operates through a political lens, possibly because visible interventions appeared tied to partisan cycles, political patronage, or shifting governmental priorities. This was also reiterated in Table 4.7, where 89 (26%) believed the decision-making process was influenced by internal politics. In Table 4.6, data revealed that 110 (32%) of respondents saw project execution as patchy and inconsistent. Only 45 (18%) considered it well-planned and strategic, further strengthening the impression that implementation lacked coherence and long-term development logic.

The findings resonate strongly with the broader submissions in literature, including Wilson (2021), who established that the Niger Delta Development Commission activities for sustainable development of Niger Delta region are good, but not adequate to achieve the desired development in the region. This was the sentiment of residents in the region, who held the belief that the patchy execution and selective information-sharing reflected in the present study was a function of political influence.

Moreover, Bode-Obanla and Ajisebiyawo (2025) report in their analysis that the NDDC is like an automatic teller machine (ATM), used by politicians to further their political interests and those of their masters. The researchers highlighted that this, in addition to a lack of inter-agency coordination, insufficient stakeholder participation, and financial mismanagement, frequently hindered efforts of the commission. This is in consonance with the available data in the various tables in the present study, who,



together, believe that the Niger Delta Development Commission largely embarks on activities that are largely influenced by political interests, raising questions on the genuineness of the commission's implementation of its corporate mandate.

While Isidiho and Sabran (2015) did not directly assess whether perception of the quality of NDDC's projects in communities in Imo State was political influenced, they report that (90.6%) of the respondents in their study were dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction could have been for any reason, including over perceived political interference, influence or interests among government functionaries and staff of the NDDC. In addition, Ebeku (2024) reported findings that correlate with the findings of this research. Particularly, the author reported that community development projects executed by the NDDC and IOCs were largely motivated by self-interest, a development that could be translated to political influence. This correlates with the findings for this research question three in the present study. Moreover, Okonedo et al. (2024) reported similar findings, reporting that the disparities in projects delivery across senatorial zones in Delta State were based on political patronage.

The findings, however, strongly reinforce the Impression Management Theory, which argues that organisations actively shape how they are perceived. The perception that NDDC communicated only when challenged, and selectively at best, suggests that its communication strategy is interpreted as image-defensive rather than genuinely informative. This undermines the NDDC's public image and fuels doubts about sincerity and performance.

In response to the third research objective, residents of the Niger Delta, as a behavioural response to NDDC's development-related activities, waited to see if projects would actually start and monitor the contractors' works informally. These answers are embedded in Tables 4.10 and 4.11, which respectively sought to understand the reaction of respondents as well as what reflects their behaviours when contractors begin work on NDDC-assigned contracts in respondents' local communities.

More respondents, 117(34%) indicated that they typically waited to see if contractors would actually commence projects when they were assigned and commissioned. This was closely followed by 98(29%) that reacted with scepticism based on past experiences. In a similar vein, although at a different extreme, respondents who ignored such announcements were in the tune of 34(10%), indicating a significant distrust-kind of disposition by South-South residents, who believed only when NDDC's projects are being executed.

Similarly, 120(33%) of the respondents indicated informally monitoring contractors' work as the behaviour that best described their response when NDDC contractors began work in their areas. This portends a non-passive assumption of an informal oversight role among the majority of the respondents. One hundred and sixteen respondents (30%), who kept their distance, but observed progress occasionally, closely followed it.

Compared with findings and submissions advanced by Isidiho and Sabran (2015), there is a correlation. The researchers submitted that their respondents showed dissatisfaction with the commission's discharge of its duties; this could be interpreted to have stemmed from their monitoring of the commission's activities and delivery of projects, which aligns with the findings to the present study. Okonedo et al., (2024) copiously agrees with this finding, reporting that surveys in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States showed a statistically significant effect of NDDC road interventions on local economies, although the contrast of uniform underperformance existed in Delta State. These were a result of monitoring by members of the community. The impression management theory offers some instructive depth: the



NDDC's attempts to project an image of development progress are filtered through residents' lived experiences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The overarching inference from this study is that residents of the South-South Nigeria region perceived the delivery of NDDC's corporate mandate as politically motivated. This is unmistakable, given the overwhelming percentage of respondents who indicated this option. It is also backed by reasons for which they hold this impression, suggesting that the NDDC's projects in communities appeared to have political undertones, perhaps, being influenced by political affinities with top officers in the Commission. Respondents in this study, therefore, showed scepticism with the work of the NDDC, and how it goes about the implementation of its corporate mandate, showing that the respondents were not only passive watchers, but also active in monitoring the activities of the commission. This explains why they may hold such opinions. The findings, therefore, align with the theory adopted for the study, affirming that corporations work, bearing in mind that they are to ensure they have a good image among the stakeholders, thereby, concurring with the postulations of the impression management theory. As a limitation, findings from this study, given the selection of communities, may not have fully captured the perceptions of all residents across the South-South region of Nigeria. Furthermore, information about organisations mentioned in the paper is based on details available on their public domain, such as websites and others. This may not be considered wholesome, but they served for the purpose of the study regardless. In addition, while the study, focused on perception, finds answers, these responses may have been influenced by several intervening factors, thus perceived effectiveness may not correspond with actual reality of NDDC's implementation of its corporate mandate. However, based on findings and the conclusion from the study, the following recommendations sufficed:

1. the NDDC should work harder towards increasing awareness of its corporate mandate implementation among residents of South-South Nigeria through massive publicity of its activities;
2. the NDDC must live up to its corporate mandate and not let politics shroud its implementation; this way, its image is improved among residents of South-South Nigeria; and
3. residents of the South-South Nigeria should continue to play informal monitoring role over NDDC projects in their communities.

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