

Identity and language of an Internet Football Forum

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The example of worum.org

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1. Introduction

Without a doubt, football is one of the most played, watched and commentated sports in the world and can look back at a long tradition.

But in an increasingly digitalized world where Internet and smartphones have almost become omnipresent, the way fans interact with each other and with the club they are supporting has also changed in recent years.

Apart from being just organized in normal fan clubs, Internet has given fans new opportunities to exchange ideas about football. One of those opportunities are fan forums, online boards on which fans can register and discuss about their club or the sport in general. Especially popular professional clubs, like for example Bundesliga or Premier League clubs, often have at least one of such online forums with a broad community actively using them.

One of the biggest fan forums in this context is the one of Bundesliga club Werder Bremen, called worum.org. This paper will try to explain some linguistic specialties the [worum](http://worum.org) and its user have produced. After giving some basic information about the forum itself, the focus of this work will lie on two aspects.

First, three major parts of the forum, the On-Topic, Off-Topic and the Match sections will be shortly analyzed. Especially with regard to the huge Off-Topic section, one has to conclude that the [worum](http://worum.org) is much more than just a forum about Werder Bremen or football in general and therefore it has created some kind of in-group identity for the users. The forum does not only have the capability to bring fans together to talk about their favorite club, but it has also become a place where people can talk about almost everything, analogous to a ‘classic’ social media platform.

In this context, the way of how posts can be made, including the possibility of using smileys to emphasize a statement and to improve the non-verbal language, will be approached in this context as well.

This characteristic has a huge impact on the second feature this paper will try to look at: word formation. Within the [worum](http://worum.org) community, special words and expressions have been created for different purposes and are only known within the forum.

In this chapter, major word formations will be classified and explained in terms of meaning and their linguistic background, as far it is possible.

As the analysis of forums, especially in football contexts, has not had much attention in linguistics yet, also due to the fact that forums are a rather new development, this paper will try to work example-oriented and combine it with works dealing with word formation or internet linguistic in general.

2. Basic data about the forum

Based on its online information statistics, retrieved March 30 2018, the forum worum.org has a total member number of 10.891 unique users and is therefore the biggest online board for fans of Werder Bremen.

Because of the freedom and anonymity the fans can maintain in comparison to the official forum where it is mandatory to register with your full address, worum.org has grown even faster than the official club forum in recent years.

The peak of the most users online at a time was made on February 02 2016, when 6.121 users were logged in.

Although that the official forum still has more users in terms of numbers, worum.org is the more active board. More than 5.8 million posts have been made since the launch on July 01 2008 compared to only 3.3 Million posts in the official fan forum.

These 5.8 million posts were made in 10.623 unique topics in the On- and Off-Topic section.

Wourm.org also contains a twitter account regularly giving updates about recent club activities like match data, new player signings or retweets articles from newspapers or other twitter accounts mostly dealing with Werder Bremen.

As well, the forum contains a chat-function, a small blog and a wiki containing information about both Werder Bremen and the forum itself.

3. Structure

3.1 On-Topic section

The On-Topic section of the forum covers all topics related to Werder Bremen in general. Along the Match-Thread, which will be analyzed later on, the On-Topic section also covers the team-board including a thread for every individual player and major Werder officials. Here, the fans can discuss about their match appearance or private life. One short example therefore is the discussion about Werder striker Ishak Belfodil who is on loan from Standard Liege until summer 2018. As Werder has the option to purchase the player, the worum users actively debate whether Werder should take this opportunity or not.

As an example, hugo0484 said:

Hätte nix dagegen, wenn er bleibt, aber das Paket muss stimmen, er wird öfters mal von der Bank kommen, dafür kann man keine 6-7 Mios hinblättern. / No objections from my side, but the overall package must me allright. And we can't pay 6-7 millions as he will probably stay on the bench form time to time.¹

FofftigMark disagreed by arguing:

Die Preise sind aber zurzeit so. So einen genauso guten Stürmer für weniger gibts wohl nicht. / But prices are like that these times. A striker with the some quality for less is not realistic.²

As seen, the forum users can directly quote and reply on other posts which often results in a pretty vivid and mainly objective pro and contra debate. But the tone within the player-threads also occasionally vary extremely depending on the actual club's situation and the performance of the player, trainer or manager. Especially the last two mentioned persons are often in the center of a far more emotional discussion.

An example therefore is the thread for Frank Baumann, the current sporting director of Werder Bremen.

¹ <http://worum.org/threads/16100-Ishak-Belfodil/page325?p=10862065#post10862065>

² <http://worum.org/threads/16100-Ishak-Belfodil?p=10862068&viewfull=1#post10862068>

Especially at the start of the Bundesliga season 2018/19, as the club was in a serious crisis and has struggled against being relegated for a long time, Baumann was blamed for the problems by many users.

Many posts have a far more personal and emotional tone and even insulted Baumann for his work: “*Totalversager / Total loser*”³, “*Totengräber / gravedigger*”⁴, “*Voll verkackt / totally messed up*”⁵. User Razza is also an example of how many fans were through with the club’s situation and Baumann as the one who was responsible for the crisis:

Das war's für mich für diese Saison. Eine Farce, was aus meinem, unserem Verein geworden ist. Baumann ist und bleibt eine Pfeife. / This season is over for me. What a farce that has happened to my, to our club. Baumann is a failure.

Also polemic occurs frequently: “*Danke das du uns zum Abstieg führst. / Thank you for bringing us into second division.*”⁶

As the situation of the club improved under the new coach Florian Kohfeldt, the tone in the Baumann thread and throughout the worum also noticeably calmed down:

*Das 1. Saisondrittel hatte mMn mehr mit Nouri und viel weniger mit Baumann und/oder unserer Kaderqualität zu tun. / The first third of the season has more to do with Nouri [former Werder trainer] less with Baumann's work.*⁷

Some users even joked about the former criticism in the thread:

³ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport\)?p=10689212&viewfull=1#post10689212](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport)?p=10689212&viewfull=1#post10689212)

⁴ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport\)?p=10689183&viewfull=1#post10689183](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport)?p=10689183&viewfull=1#post10689183)

⁵ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport\)?p=10689149&viewfull=1#post10689149](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport)?p=10689149&viewfull=1#post10689149)

⁶ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport\)?p=10689191&viewfull=1#post10689191](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport)?p=10689191&viewfull=1#post10689191)

⁷ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport\)/page1822?p=10847058#post10847058](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChrersport)/page1822?p=10847058#post10847058)

Geh wieder hin wo der Pfeffer wächst. So einen ROTZKADER, den Du hier hingestellt hast. KEIN Potential. Und überhaupt, wieso hast Du hier keinen Stürmer im Sommer geholt. Und überhaupt!!! KEIN STÜRMER!!!elf

P.S.: Danke. P.S.S.: Anzahl Fehleinkäufe: NULL. Danke. /

Go jump in a lake! What a CRAP TEAM you [Baumann] have created. NO potential. And why didn't you buy a striker last summer? And so on!!! NO STRIKER!!!elf P.S.: Thank you. P.S.S.: Number of bad player signings: ZERO. Thank you.⁸

User Lurchi also made a sarcastic reference to the mentioned “*gravedigger*”-insults as he re-posted it but also adding a dancing smiley⁹ to illustrate that in his opinion, Bauman’s critic were wrong. This example also illustrates well that within the fanbase, different opinions and sub-groups occur, which may result in these extreme views. Some fans do regret these situations during the discussions as user Charles Logan summarizes for the Baumann discussion:

Einfach eine halbwegs faire Diskussion wäre schon gut. Von den Extrempositionen „alles so gewollt“ und „alles versemelt“ darf man gerne abrücken, sonst ist es nur ein verbales Köpfe-Einhauen. / Just a more or less fair discussion would be great. One should turn away from the two extreme positions “everything as it should be” and “totally messed up.”¹⁰

AS mentioned, worum members can use a variety of smileys within discussions, which has become a commonly used feature in the forum.

According to Marx/Weidacher (2014: 148), the purpose smileys or emojis, as they are also called, is to specify the content and intention of a post and express the emotions of the poster. On the other hand, smileys can also be used to express that the very opposite of what was written was meant, e.g. to build up sarcasm, irony or happiness.

⁸ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChr-Sport\)?p=10852695&viewfull=1#post10852695](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChr-Sport)?p=10852695&viewfull=1#post10852695)

⁹ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChr-Sport\)?p=10852738&viewfull=1#post10852738](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChr-Sport)?p=10852738&viewfull=1#post10852738)

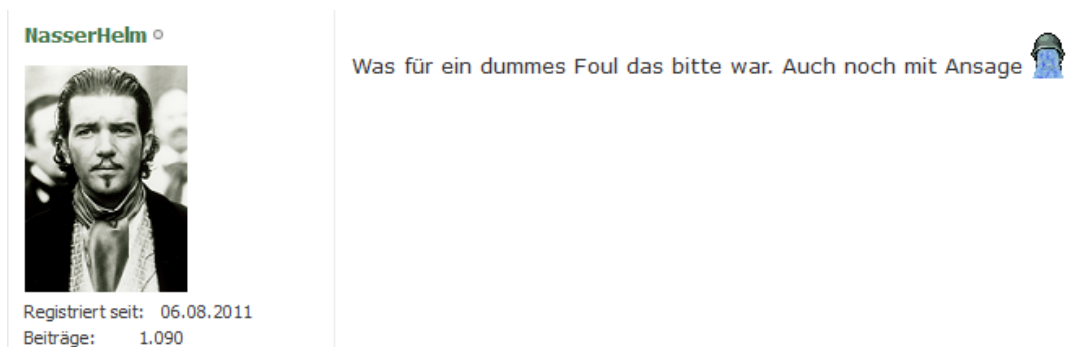
¹⁰ [http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-\(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChr-Sport\)?p=10846388&viewfull=1#post10846388](http://worum.org/threads/12620-Frank-Baumann-(Gesch%C3%A4fts%C3%BChr-Sport)?p=10846388&viewfull=1#post10846388)

Nevertheless, there is no existing hierarchy or specification of smileys yet, which means that there are always variations within the usage of smileys (Rinas/Uhrová 2016).

An example that was already mentioned is the dancing smiley which user Lurchi used after posting “*gravedigger*” as to make fun of Baumann’s critics.

A special and smiley that is only used in the worum is the so-called “helmet smiley”, a normal smiley with a helmet on its head with water streaming out when the smiley lifts up the helmet. This smiley takes reference to a statement of the former Werder Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf who once said in an interview: “*Hast du’n nassen Helm auf? / Are you wearing a wet helmet?*”¹¹

This statement made the community create this unique smiley to express one’s disagreement with something, e.g. with a statement of an official or another user.



In this example, user NasserHelm, whose nickname ironically can be translated as “wet helmet”, uses this type of smiley to express his opinion on how stupid a player’s foul was¹².

As a consequence, the wide range of smileys available in the worum helps the users to improve the limits of written communication by adding various flexible options to express emotions depending on the context (Marx/Weidacher 2014: 148).

¹¹ <https://www.11freunde.de/artikel/die-besten-schaaf-sprueche>

¹² <http://worum.org/threads/16100-Ishak-Belfodil?p=10801232&viewfull=1#post10801232>

3.2 Off-Topic section

3.2.1 Football besides Werder Bremen & other sports

Apart from the on-topic section, the worum also contains a very wide-ranging section called “Verschiedenes” (Miscellaneous). It can mainly be divided into four big groups: football besides Werder Bremen, other sports, non-sport topics and games.

In the first section, discussions concentrate on other leagues, national teams and clubs. Various other clubs have their own discussion thread like the other Bundesliga clubs, but also international top clubs like Barcelona, Real Madrid or clubs from the English Premier League.

The most frequented thread, according to the number of posts is the thread of the rival of Werder Bremen, Hamburger SV with 23.424 posts written since April 08 2015 (March 30 2018). The special relation of Bremen and Hamburg fans also finds expression in the title of the thread: “*Der HSV (+) – zwischen Lachnummer und Unbesiegbarkeit / The HSV (+) – between laughing stock and invincibility.*”¹³ Although a small number of HSV-fans are present in this thread, the discussion culture can be regarded as rather calm. The rivalry is more reflected in making jokes about the other, but it seldom gets to an aggressive tone.

Because of the financial mismanagement, user k33k for example compares the HSV with the disastrous and never-ending construction of the BER airport in Berlin:

Jahrelang Kühnes Millionen raushauen um im Saisonendspurt so einen Kader nominieren zu können. HSV, der BER des Vereinsfußballs. /

*Wasting millions and just having these players to be nominated for the first team – HSV, the BER of club football.*¹⁴

In this thread, the usage of smileys, especially to express one’s rejection or amusement over Hamburg, is even more common.

¹³ [http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-\(-\)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit](http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-(-)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit)

¹⁴ [http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-\(-\)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=10862282&viewfull=1#post10862282](http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-(-)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=10862282&viewfull=1#post10862282)

17.03.2018, 20:26

WerDerFrEaK1899 ◉

Registriert seit: 30.01.2009

Ort: Schwerin

Beiträge: 87

Viel Spass in Liga 2.



In this post, user WerDerFrEaK1899 expresses his glee that Hamburg might be relegated to the second league by using the aforementioned dancing smiley and a pair of smileys chinking glasses¹⁵. As to refer back to Marx/Weidacher (2014: 148), especially in this thread, smileys don't have to adopt their usual meaning, but can also be used to express the very opposite, e.g. in form of sarcasm or irony.

The pair of smileys chinking beer glasses, which is normally used to express one's approval or solidarity, can also be seen as rather ironic in this example as to joke about Hamburg and their current crisis.

3.2.2 Non-sport topics & Games

The large non-sport category "Off-topic" with over 433.00 posts emphasizes that the forum is more than just a board for talking about football or Werder Bremen in general. Here, topics about almost every aspect of life can be found.

For example, users can ask for advice for legal questions or what electronic devices they should buy. As well, threads dealing with politics, music, films and pets are part of the Off-Topic section¹⁶. Users can deepen their in-group identity and relationship with other forum members by not only talking about Werder or football in general, but also discussing about pretty much every topic imaginable which makes the forum a place where users stay for longer than just talking about football.

With these possibilities and for the members as a group, the forum might even be compared with one of the big social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter.

¹⁵ [http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-\(-\)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=10853313&viewfull=1#post10853313](http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-(-)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=10853313&viewfull=1#post10853313)

¹⁶ <http://worum.org/threads/10025-Der-Off-Topic-Wegweiser>

3.3 Match Thread

The third and last section of this paper will try to analyze is the match day thread.

Here, users discuss the Werder Bremen matches. In summary, the thread can be divided into a pre-, while- and post-match discussion.

In the following chapter, the thread concerning Werder Bremen vs. FC Augsburg (March 17 2018) will be analyzed. The match ended with a 3-1 away win for Werder.

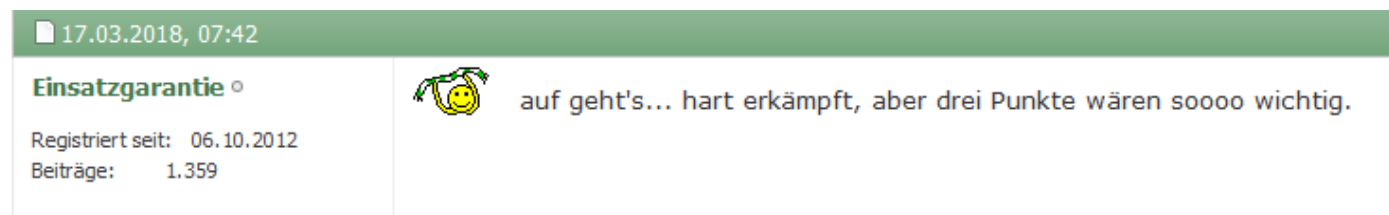
3.3.1 Pre-match

User “imLive” created the thread some hours before the match started. In his first post, he tried to summarize data and facts around the upcoming match like the results of previous matches against Augsburg or possible team lineups¹⁷.

User replied by hoping for a win:

Einsatzgarantie: *auf geht's... hart erkämpft, aber drei Punkte wären soooo wichtig. / Let's go... it's gonna be a hard fight, but 3 points would be sooooo important¹⁸.*

Like other users, “Einsatzgarantie” emphasized his post with a special smiley raising a green-white Werder scarf. This smiley is unique and only used in the worum, expressing one’s support for Werder Bremen:



Until kickoff, several users posted their feelings about the match and how they thought the match would end. Most of the tone was positive, although many users expected a close game. What can be repeatedly seen are smileys like the mentioned scarf smiley which express the emotional attachment to the club.

¹⁷ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851063&viewfull=1#post10851063>

¹⁸ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851068&viewfull=1#post10851068>

The second feature of the pre-match discussion is the we-code several users use in their posts:

*Ich bin heute mit einem guten Gefühl aufgestanden, nachdem wir bei unserem Angstgegner Gladbach schon gut ausgesehen haben, werden wir das auch heute. Augsburg - WERDER 0:3 /
Today, I woke up with a good feeling, after that we played quite well against our bogey team Gladbach, we'll do that today as well.
Augsburg – WERDER 0-3.¹⁹*

As well, user “FloHB” emphasized his post by adding a scarf-smiley at the end. By using the we-code and non-verbal signs like the mentioned smiley, the worum users regard themselves as part of the club and the fans who went to the stadium to live support the team. Using “we” in order to speak of the own team is a feature that can be seen among pretty much every fan scene in football and other sports, although fans are of course no real part of their team. But the “we” is used to show the own emotional attachment to the club an part of an in-group identity (Simons 2015).

The first more fact-based discussion launched when the lineup of the teams was published. The users either agreed by saying something like “*Gute Aufstellung / Good lineup*²⁰.” Others explained what they would have changed:

Ich hätte auch Junu, Aron und Rashica gebracht. / I would have taken Junuzovic, Johanson and Rashica into the team²¹.

In contrast to before, the tone is more factual, less emotional, smileys are less used and if so, others than before.

Most smileys just nod or put their thumbs up to express that the users agree with the lineup²²:

¹⁹ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851137&viewfull=1#post10851137>

²⁰ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851314&viewfull=1#post10851314>

²¹ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851313&viewfull=1#post10851313>

²² worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851321&viewfull=1#post10851321

17.03.2018, 14:35

Weserwunder1899



Registriert seit: 17.02.2016
Ort: Göttingen
Beiträge: 7.771

Zitat von blockländer

Gute Aufstellung. Zudem können wir ordentlich Tempo von der Bank bringen und haben maximale Kopfballstärke auf dem Feld. Meiner Meinung nach ist das ein Grund für Belfo statt Aron oder Rashica.



Die Körperlichkeit braucht es heute.

Until the kickoff, the most posts can be assigned to either a) expectations or hopes concerning the gameplay or match result or b) discussions about the lineup.

3.3.2 While-match

The match started with an early goal for Werder. Several user just commentated the 1-0 with a long “JAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA / Yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeees!²³” emphasizing that it is meant to be like a loud cheer. After that, the usage of smileys rose again. Some users expressed their joy by adding a heart smiley to stress that they acclaim the scorer Ishak Belfodil²⁴:

17.03.2018, 15:36

sorb2005



Registriert seit: 06.05.2013
Ort: Nähe Heidelberg
Beiträge: 7.521

Belfo 😊❤️

„Es gibt nicht jung und alt, sondern nur
-Otto Rehhagel

Users also repeatedly used the scarf smiley in this context²⁵:


²³ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851506&viewfull=1#post10851506>

²⁴ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851518&viewfull=1#post10851518>


²⁵ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851565&viewfull=1#post10851565>

17.03.2018, 15:38

NOLU ◦



Registriert seit: 15.09.2012
Ort: New Orleans
Beiträge: 709



Alter, so eine gut Anfangsphase hatten wir schon lange nicht mehr!

After the lead goal, the thread calmed down again a bit. The users commentated the actions on the pitch with a less emotional and more analytical language, also using less smileys during this phase of the game:

Sehr starkes Spiel bislang von uns - von Beginn an wach, gut am Mann, lassen nichts zu und sind nach vorne gefährlich. Wichtig ist, jetzt nachzulegen, denn wir spielen immer nur eine gute Halbzeit. / Really good game of us – attentive from the beginning on, close to the opposing player, good defense, good offense. Would be important to make the second goal as we are always only able to play one good half time²⁶.

Again, “we” is used to emphasize the connection between the fans and the club.

With the 2-0 for Werder, the emotional language and usage of smileys rose up again analogous to the 1-0²⁷:

17.03.2018, 16:10

NieThePiet ◦



Registriert seit: 14.07.2012
Beiträge: 6.487

Jawooooooooooooohl, Belfo 😊

²⁶ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851650&viewfull=1#post10851650>

²⁷ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10851835&viewfull=1#post10851835>

The fans mostly reacted again by screaming “Jaaaaaaa! / Yeeees!” or “Toooooor / Goooooal!”.

After the break, the match changed a bit and Augsburg got stronger and scored 2-1 in this phase. Here, the reactions in the forum were different from the last goals in terms of language. Most users reacted upset, some even cursed.

Ryu: *Da ist es passiert. Mit Ansage, wie immer...meine Fresse*

Gurki: *Leck mich am Arsch, also wieder zittern. So eine Pferdescheiße. Jedes Mal das gleiche. /*

Ryu: *Now it happened, announced like always... bugger me!*

Gurki: *Kiss my ass, now we have to be terrified again. Bullshit. It's always the same!*²⁸

Although the language is clearly much more emotional and negative than during the calm phase before, the usage of smileys is less common than when the own team scored. As well, “we” is less used instead of “sie / they²⁹”, “die Jungs / the boys³⁰” or “Werder³¹”. Some fans seemed to distance themselves from their team’s performance during this phase of the match, but some others also directly addressed the team to improve their game again:

Aus grün den: *Nochmal alles reinhauen jetzt! /*

Aus grün den: *Keep giving everything!*³²

Until the final 3-1 goal for Werder, the tone within the match thread more or less stayed tense. But when Max Kruse scored, the positive emotional language returned together with the usage of smileys like the scarf-smiley or the dancing smiley³³:

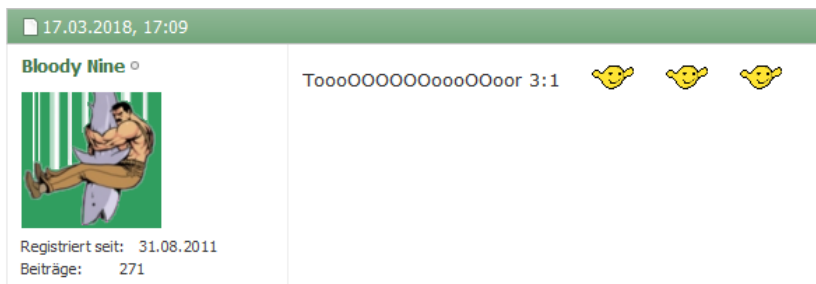
²⁸ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852150&viewfull=1#post10852150>

²⁹ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852305&viewfull=1#post10852305>

³⁰ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852186&viewfull=1#post10852186>

³¹ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852168&viewfull=1#post10852168>

³² <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852185&viewfull=1#post10852185>



Many users heaved a sigh of relief by simply commentating “Endlich! / Finally!” or “Geht doch!!! / There we go!”³⁴

3.3.1 Post-match

After the final whistle, most of the users either thanked the team for their performance or cheered:

Kruserino: *So ist eine Länderspielpause doch mal schön! Danke Jungs!*

Moreno: *Sahne Leistung.stolz*

Jadehai89: *Ganz ehrlich. Wir sind wieder wer!!! /*

Kuriserino: *Thanks, boys!*

Moreno: *Great performance. Proud.*

Jadehai89: *Seriously: we are back!!!*³⁵

Again, the usage of “we” and cheering smileys occurs frequently.

What follows is a more factual and calm analysis of the match and the current situation of the team, which is pretty similar to the pre-match discussion.

Some users also looked forward and started discussing about the next match against Frankfurt:

*Frankfurter sind schon sackstark diese Saison! / Frankfurt is really strong this season!*³⁶

³³ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852472&viewfull=1#post10852472>

³⁴ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852477&viewfull=1#post10852477>

³⁵ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr/page80>

³⁶ <http://worum.org/threads/16731-Spieltagsthread-FC-Augsburg-SV-Werder-Bremen-17-03-2018-15-30-Uhr?p=10852850&viewfull=1#post10852850>

4. Word formation

4.1 Non-person-related

4.1.1 General word creations

When entering the worum for the first time, one might come across various expressions or saying an out-group person might not understand.

Though the forum opened in July 2008, which means that it has existed for just about ten years, the worum community has been pretty active in creating a unique language. In consequence, word formation has become a special feature of the worum and has deepened the in-group identity along its members.

In order to understand how these terms originated and for what kind of reasons they are used, this paper tries to categorize and analyze some of the most frequently used expressions.

The first one is the name of the forum itself, worum. It is a typical example for the word formation process of blending, the combination of two words into one, “deleting material from one or both of the source words” (Plag 2003: 122).

Combining the words “forum” and “Werder” in order to create “worum”, a forum for Werder Bremen fans, makes the term a type 2 blend as it shares properties of the referents of both elements (Plag 2003: 122).


The second example of a frequently used word formation in the worum is the term of “Transe.” Although its linguistic similarity, the expression has no reference to transsexuality.

“Transe” is a truncation, which means that the derived word has a lack of phonetic material compared to its base. In this example, “Transe” derives from “Transferphase” which is the term for the time period in which players can be transferred from one club to another. “Transferphase” is therefore shortened to “Trans” plus adding the suffix –e (Plag 2003: 116-117). It has no change of meaning compared to its base word. The origin for this word formation is unclear, but as the transfer period is a time many users are looking forward to due to the many events taking place which lead to various active discussions like discussing about new players, the term is frequently used.

In the following example, user Weserwunder1899 uses the term to express his disappointment with the transfer phase as he thinks that this transfer phase is the worst ever:

24.01.2018, 17:29

Weserwunder1899 ◦



Registriert seit: 17.02.2016
Ort: Göttingen
Beiträge: 7.753

Diese Transe ist die schlimmste Transe ever. Was für Kandidaten 🤨

Frank Baumann muss die Dinge einfach besser ansprechen

In order to emphasize his opinion, he underlines the word “ever” and puts a smiley which is shaking its head at the end of his post. Other words that are linked with “Transe” are for example “boring³⁷” or “(un)successful³⁸” to express whether the user is satisfied with the new player signings or not.

Another word formation is “Küles”, deriving from “Kühles” which literally means “cold” or “a cold beer”. Here, the “h” in the middle of the word, which is not pronounced in the base, is clipped out. According to the worum-wiki³⁹, “Küles” only exists in the plural form, as one should always consume at least two beers.

16.12.2017, 17:56

Menelri ◦



Registriert seit: 17.11.2012
Ort: Oberpfalz
Beiträge: 7.549

Darauf ein Küles! 😊🍺😊

Jeder Mensch macht Fehler. Das Kunststück liegt darin, sie zu machen, wenn keiner zuschaut.
Don't worry what people think, they don't do it often.

In this example, user Menelri wants to celebrate a win of Werder Bremen by offering “Küles”. His post is supported by the aforementioned pair of smileys chinking beer glasses.

³⁷ <http://worum.org/threads/15542-Transfergossip-Sommer-2017-K-N-E-I-S/page269?p=10489378#post10489378>

³⁸ <http://wiki.worum.org/index.php?title=Transe>

³⁹ <http://wiki.worum.org/index.php?title=Worum-ABC>

The third example of a non-personal word formation that is not connected to another club is “WIP”. It is an acronym, a word “coined by taking the initial letters of the words in a title or phrase using them as a new word” (Bauer 1993: 237). “WIP” derives from “WorumInformationsPflicht”, which literally means “the duty to inform the worum”.

If a user of the worum ever has insider information about Werder that are not publicly known, like new players or negotiations with other clubs, the user has the duty to inform the forum by posting these information. Obviously, “WIP” also has similarities with the well-known acronym “VIP” for “very important person” in terms of pronunciation and spelling.

The worum has an own thread where all WIPs are compiled.

One small example of how a WIP often looks like:

Mini WIP ... Marvin Duksch war letzte Woche bzw letztes WE in Bremen zu Gesprächen... / Mini WIP ... Marvin Duksch was in Bremen for negotiations last week or last weekend...⁴⁰

Before user “PC” gives the core information, he emphasizes the importance of his post by placing “WIP” in front.

Often, wild discussions erupt after the posting of a “WIP”, debating whether it is true or simply contrived⁴¹.

4.1.2 Words referring rival / other clubs

Another category of word formations in the worum has a direct or indirect connection to the rival of Werder Bremen, the HSV, or other clubs.

The first and probably most frequently used is “dazke”, deriving from “danke” meaning “thank you.” Actually, it has no ‘classic’ word formation process as background and barely fit into any of these categories.

⁴⁰ <http://worum.org/threads/5696-WIP-Lounge-Sammelthread-KEINE-DISKUSSION!!-Regeln-im-Startpost-beachten!?p=10857915&viewfull=1#post10857915>

⁴¹ <http://www.worum.org/threads/2192-Die-Werder-Insider-Volltreffer-oder-voll-daneben>

“Dazke” originated from a choreography HSV-fans performed before the North derby between Hamburg and Werder in 2007. The HSV-fans wanted to thank one of their club legends, Hermann Rieger, who had died some days before the match, with a big banner. But accidentally, the fans carrying the poster with the “n” in “danke” held it shifted by 90 degrees, making the “n” look like a “z”.

Since then, Werder fans have used “dazke” as a dictum to express “thank you” in an ironic or sarcastic way, often in context with their rival HSV.

For example, user “Der Dude” thanked the HSV for fulfilling his bet on a HSV lose in a betting game:

*3 Punkte bei den Sonderfragen beim Kicktippspiel. Dazke HSV 🏆
Manche Dinge ändern sich zum Glück nie. / 3 points in the bet game.
Dazke HSV! Fortunately, some things never change.⁴²*

In this context, “dazke” is used to tease and make fun of the rival by reminding them of their choreography mistake.

But although its origin and its often sarcastic connotation, it is also used as a simple synonym for its base word “danke”, respectively “thank you”.

In the following post, user “hans koschnick” is searching for tickets and uses “dazke” to simply thank the one who could sell him some:

*Suche ebenfalls 2 Sitzter nebeneinander. Egal wo (außer Gästeblock und direkt darunter), Preis: relativ egal. Für einen verwitweten Bekannten und dessen 10jährigen Sohn. Bitte PN! DaZke. /
Also searching for 2 seats next to each other. No matter where (except for the away supporters' section or directly under it), price: doesn't matter. Please PM! Dazke⁴³.*

Hence, “dazke” has become part of the identity as a Werder fan and is also used as a way of thanking in-group.

⁴² [http://archiv.worum.org/threads/10665-Der-HSV-\(-\)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=8834511&viewfull=1#post8834511](http://archiv.worum.org/threads/10665-Der-HSV-(-)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=8834511&viewfull=1#post8834511)

⁴³ <http://worum.org/threads/16612-Tickets-WerderDortmund?p=10856642&viewfull=1#post10856642>

Another word that has its origin and connection with another club is “VWechslung.”

Here we can find a type 1 blending (Plag 2004: 122), combining the car brand “VW” and the German word for “mixing up”, “Verwechslung”. Literally, “VWechslung” means “mixing up with VW”. VW therefore is used as a synonym for the Bundesliga club VfL Wolfsburg, which is heavily sponsored by the VW concern.

Within a “VWechslung”, Werder Bremen is mixed up with the VfL Wolfsburg, example in media reports, which happens from time to time, especially due to the very similar club logos.

In the following example, user “paff” posted an online newspaper article saying that Werder has made a 7.5 million Euro offer for the player Thiago Mendes.

User “Riechtorer” just replied “*Klassischer Fall von VWechslung / Classic case of VWechslung*⁴⁴”, expressing that Werder couldn’t afford the player because of its financial restrictions and that it is more likely that the newspaper originally thought of the VfL Wolfsburg instead of Werder.

4.2 Person-related

The second large category from which worum expressions derived from are person-related word formations. They originated from either Werder officials like players, coaches or managers, officials from other clubs, especially from rival club Hamburg, or even from members of the worum itself.

4.2.1 Werder-Officials

Only a few players “got” an own expression. Although one might think of club legends like Claudio Pizarro or Thorsten Frings, one player who really ‘managed’ to do so is the Austrian central defender of Werder Sebastian Prödl who was under contract for Werder from 2008 until 2015.

Fans verbalized his last name to create “prödl’n” which is either just with the prefix “Rein-“ or “Weg-”. “Reinprödl’n” is used if Werder scores a goal in the last minute of extra time, normally by a header.

⁴⁴ <http://worum.org/threads/15542-Transfergossip-Sommer-2017-K-N-E-I-S?p=10491411&viewfull=1#post10491411>

In the match thread, fans sometimes use the term shortly before the match ends to express their hope that Werder scores the match-winning goal in the last seconds:

*Jetzt noch irgendwie einen reinprödln / And now somehow reinprödeln!*⁴⁵

The second word formation containing “prödeln” is used with the prefix “weg-” or sometimes “um-“, creating “wegprödeln” or “umprödeln”. Both have the same meaning which is completely different from “reinprödln”.

“Weg-/Umprödeln” is used to express that if a player, usually a Werder player, commits a foul so cleverly that the referee does not notice the foul as such and does not whistle although that he should⁴⁶. Sometimes, fans demand to “wegprödeln” the other team:

*Am liebsten wegprödln die Pfeifen. / The best would be to wegprödeln these losers.*⁴⁷

The own team should fight the other even if it might not be allowed. Interestingly, these expressions are still used though Sebastian Prödl does no longer play for the club.

Another player who managed to get an own expression is midfielder Philipp Bargfrede, who has been part of the club for over 14 years and is therefore already seen as a club legend. For him, fans created an anagram out of his last name: “Graf Derbe” which literally means “Lord Coarse”, which has also a perfect reference to his rough style of play⁴⁸.

This nickname is especially used to praise Bargfrede’s performance.

When user “ech0-sj” posted “*Einfach derbe unser Graf / Just coarse, our Lord*”, user “bobbelebob” replied “*Graf Derbe halt / It’s Lord Coarse*⁴⁹” to emphasize that there is nothing left to be added in terms of Bargfrede’s importance for the team.

⁴⁵ <http://worum.org/threads/14998-Spieltagsthread-SV-Darmstadt-98-Werder-Bremen?p=10119917&viewfull=1#post10119917>

⁴⁶ <http://wiki.worum.org/index.php?title=Pr%C3%B6deln>

⁴⁷ <http://worum.org/threads/16525-Spieltagsthread-SV-Werder-Bremen-Hertha-BSC-27-01-2018-18-30?p=10777840&viewfull=1#post10777840>

⁴⁸ <https://www.11freunde.de/interview/was-geht-noch-fuer-den-svw-philipp-bargfrede>

⁴⁹ <http://worum.org/threads/13039-Philipp-Bargfrede?p=10211690&viewfull=1#post10211690>

In connection with players' or officials' names, the usage of acronyms has also become quite common in some cases, especially if the name is rather long or frequently used.

A name that is often replaced by an acronym is the one of right defender Theodor Gebre Selassie, which is shortened to "TGS". When talking about Gebre Selassie's competitor for the right defender slot, Robert Bauer, user Polizeinautovic is just using the acronym for Gebre Selassie:

Fand ihn defensiv besser als TGS. Bauer ist einfach immer näher am Gegenspieler... wenn TGS auf dem Platz ist haben die meistens ohne Ende Freiraum... dafür ist Offensiv TGS klar besser. / In my opinion, Bauer was better than TGS in defense. Bauer is always closer to the opposing player... if TGS is on the pitch, they have much more space... on the other hand, TGS's attacking game is clearly better.⁵⁰

Also frequently used acronyms are the ones of the current coach and of the team manager: "TS" for Thomas Schaaf, "AN" for Alexander Nouri, "FK" for Florian Kohfeldt, "KA" for Klaus Allofs, "TE" for Thomas Eichin, "FB" for Frank Baumann and so on. These acronyms are not as often used as the one of Gebre Selassie, but also serve as a way of shortening a post.

4.2.2 Officials from other clubs

As mentioned, most of the person-related word formations have to do with Werder players or officials. Only a few persons with no Werder reference managed to get an own expression within the Werder fan scene.

The probably most common and frequently used expression is "Hoffmann-Scouting", deriving from Bernd Hoffmann, the former manager of Werder rival HSV. Scouting, according to Psotta, means to observe a player and to evaluate his strengths and weaknesses in terms of for example pace, dribbling, passing or tackling. The aim is to analyze whether it is worth to sign the player.

⁵⁰ <http://worum.org/threads/14726-Robert-Bauer?p=10769538&viewfull=1#post10769538>

Usually, the top clubs have own staff, scouts, to scout players around the world (2015: 13).

However, worum users created an own expression for the way Bernd Hoffmann used to scout players as he once admitted in an interview: he scouted players by just watching their YouTube clips⁵¹. Therefore, “Hoffmann-Scouting” has become a term to express that someone is watching a Youtube clip of a player in order to get to know his style of play. The worum users often do “Hoffmann-Scouting” themselves if Werder signs a new player or if there are at least rumors of a possible new signing:

*Ich kenne ihn nur vom Hoffmann Scouting und sehe ein gewisses Holzfußpotential bei ihm. / I just know him through some Hoffmann-Scouting.*⁵²

*Hoffmannscouting sieht definitiv vielversprechend aus. / Hoffmann-Scouting looks really promising*⁵³

*Ich bin nach ausführlichen Hoffmann Scouting schon ein bisschen verliebt. Da sind ein paar ganz geile Pässe dabei. / After doing some extensive Hoffmann-Scouting, I'm a bit in love. That passing is great. [...] Looks pretty promising*⁵⁴

As it is not really a professional way of scouting, it has often an ironic or pejorative connotation and is, similar as “dazke”, used to make fun of the HSV and in the eyes of the Werder fans, the lack of professionalism in Hamburg.

As Bernd Hoffmann returned to the HSV in 2018, user “Marci” just commentated:

*Endlich wieder gutes altes Hoffmann-Scouting Finally good old Hoffmann-Scouting is back.*⁵⁵

⁵¹ <http://www.wiki.worum.org/index.php?title=Worum-ABC>

⁵² <http://worum.org/threads/15542-Transfergossip-Sommer-2017-K-N-E-I-S?p=10567150&viewfull=1#post10567150>

⁵³ <http://archiv.worum.org/threads/14365-Diskussion-Florian-Kainz?p=9918545&viewfull=1#post9918545>

⁵⁴ <http://worum.org/threads/15542-Transfergossip-Sommer-2017-K-N-E-I-S?p=10463879&viewfull=1#post10463879>

⁵⁵ [http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-\(-\)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=10816301&viewfull=1#post10816301](http://worum.org/threads/13035-Der-HSV-(-)-zwischen-Lachnummer-und-Unbesiegbarkeit?p=10816301&viewfull=1#post10816301)

4.2.3 Worum-members

The last group of person-related word formations in the worum directly derives from some forum users. Although or because of the huge number of active users, only a minority of users really ‘managed’ to receive an commonly used expression that is connected with them because of some reason.

In what follows, two word formations will be dealt with.

The first one is the verb “hobschen”, which is also often used in its passive form “gehobscht”. It derives from the user “hobsch” who has been an active member of the worum since the very beginning⁵⁶. “Hobschen” is used if a user posts an online article without noticing that it has already been posted by another user before. Because the user “hobsch” did so frequently, the term “hobschen” or “gehobscht” has become a unique dictum in the worum.

In the following passage, user “Hosenmatz” posted a link to an online article about a Werder player:

Hosenmatz: *<http://www.transfermarkt.de/bremens-...ew/news/271511>*

Oldenburgerbremer: *Guten Morgen.*

Hosenmatz: *habe ich etwas falsch gemacht?*

BartS: *Nö, nur gehobscht. /*

Hosenmatz: *<http://www.transfermarkt.de/bremens-...ew/news/271511>*

Oldenburgerbremer: *Good morning.*

Hosenmatz: *Have I done something wrong?*

BartS: *No, just gehobscht.⁵⁷*

It is also used if a user is not sure if an article has already been posted in the worum:

*Bei sport1 ist es schon n eigenen Artikel wert. Sorry, falls gehobscht. /
Sport1 has an own article about that. Sorry if gehobscht.⁵⁸*

⁵⁶ <http://worum.org/members/10003-Hobsch>

⁵⁷ <http://worum.org/threads/8855-Santiago-Garcia?p=10391797&viewfull=1#post10391797>

⁵⁸ <http://worum.org/threads/13539-Vorschl%C3%A4ge>

The second word formation deriving from a user that can be frequently found in the worum is “bratsava” which derives from the user “brat-set”, who has been registered in the worum since the launch of the forum as well as user “hobsch”.

“Bratsava” is a compound containing two stems (Bauer 1998 66-67), “Brats”, the genitive form of user “Brat-set’s” nickname and “ava”, a truncation deriving from the word “avatar” (Plag 2003: 116-117). “Bratsava” therefore is linked to user “Brat-set’s” profile picture, an animated smiley jumping around in panic, which easily catches one’s eye within the forum⁵⁹:

brat-set ◦



Registriert seit: 01.07.2008

Beiträge: 11.701

As a result, the term “bratsava” has developed to express a user’s opinion if something is horrifying or shocking.

In the first example, during the match against the VfL Wolfsburg, the fans were anxious about a possible injury of Werder keeper Jiri Pavlenka, who had to be treated by the medical staff:

Y!M-Dude: *Bitte nicht Pavlenka!*

Cenoxx: *Bitte nicht.*

FloHB: *Jetzt bitte nicht Pavlas verletzt, das können wir wirklich nicht gebrauchen*

Doctor Peppschmier: *bratsava /*

Y!M-Dude: *Please not Pavlenka!*

Cenoxx: *Please don't.*

FloHB: *Hopefully, Pavlenka is not injured, we can't afford that.*

Doctor Peppschmier: *bratsava*⁶⁰

Trainer?p=10103366&viewfull=1#post10103366

⁵⁹ <http://worum.org/members/9797-brat-set>

⁶⁰ <http://worum.org/threads/16618-Spieltagsthread-SV-Werder-Bremen-VfL-Wolfsburg-11-02-2018-18-00-Uhr?p=10807592&viewfull=1#post10807592>

Nevertheless, “bratsava” can sometimes also contain an ironic connotation and can be used to exaggerate as a form of making jokes about something.

In the following post, user “HairLich” uses “bratsava” after Werder’s top player, Max Kruse, had been seen in Hamburg by another user:

Wechselt er zu Pauli ? :bratsava: /

Will he be transferred to St. Pauli? Bratsava!⁶¹

To emphasize that he isn’t serious about his own post, he added a smiley carrying a banner with the word “Spam” after “bratsava”.

⁶¹ <http://worum.org/threads/14619-Max-Kruse?p=10494638&viewfull=1#post10494638>

6. Conclusion

For many fans, the worum is more than just an online board about Werder or football in general. Especially as seen in the Off-Topic section, the forum contains much more options and discussions for fans. Talking about politics, music and films or asking for help in daily problems has also become an important and frequently used part of the worum for many users, creating a special in-group identity.

This also lead to the wide range of word formations in the worum, although the forum has just existed for around ten years until now. As seen, the major influences that lead to these word formations were either persons or events concerning Werder, the rival club Hamburger SV or in some cases also other clubs, or even worum users.

The possibility and importance of using smileys to improve the non-verbal communication and emphasizing the emotional connotation of a post shall be recalled to mind at this point. For example in the match thread, smileys are frequently used to express the user's feelings during the match – anger, joy, cheer, pride or emotional attachment to the club or the fanbase.

As the analysis of online forums, especially in the football context, has not been done yet particularly, further research would be interesting to clarify if the mentioned linguistic features of the worum can be also found in other football forums of other clubs, whether from the Bundesliga, Premier League or else.

Especially a comparison of how and to which extend word formation processes occur in other fan forum would be surely worth further research, since, as this paper tried to emphasize, the creativity of football fans, also in terms of language and communication, has barely got any limits.

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