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EMPOWERMENT OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH MARINE TOURISM: A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

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Abstract

This research examined the empowerment of coastal communities through the development of marine tourism, employing a functional approach. The coastal area of Taman Roya Village in Jeneponto Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, holds significant tourism potential, yet the local community has not fully capitalised on this opportunity. The study aims to identify the potential for marine tourism in Taman Roya Village and to design a comprehensive empowerment strategy grounded in functional sociology. Using a descriptive qualitative methodology, data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with 30 marine tourism stakeholders, and a relevant literature review. Thematic analysis was employed to explore the roles and functions of various stakeholders in marine tourism development and to assess the potential for community empowerment. The findings indicate that the development of marine tourism can be an effective tool for empowering coastal communities when implemented through an appropriate functional approach. Taman Roya Village has substantial marine resources, which, when developed, can significantly improve the quality of life for its residents. Key factors include active community participation, capacity building, collaboration among stakeholders, and supportive government policies, such as infrastructure improvements and community skills training in managing marine resources. The practical implications of this study suggest that a functional approach to marine tourism development can empower local communities, enhance economic welfare, foster stakeholder collaboration, and promote sustainable coastal management.

Keywords: Community empowerment, marine tourism, functional approach, coastal communities

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INTRODUCTION

Coastal communities in Indonesia frequently encounter various socio-economic challenges, including poverty, low levels of education, and limited access to resources. Empowering these communities through marine tourism development is crucial for improving their welfare and quality of life. Previous studies have explored community empowerment as a means to enhance the quality and welfare of coastal communities (Rocha & Pomeroy, 2023). Given the need for solutions for socio-economic issues, marine tourism can serve as a pathway for coastal communities to achieve development goals and leverage the opportunities provided by coastal areas and marine resources to improve their quality of life. Understanding the complexity of coastal community life requires various analytical approaches, with one effective method being functional theory (Parsons, 1951; Merton, 1968). In sociology, functional theory offers a practical framework for analysing the intricate dynamics of coastal communities and the potential for marine tourism development (Cinner & Barnes, 2019).

This approach views society as a system composed of interrelated elements, each serving a specific function in maintaining the stability and continuity of the whole system. In the context of coastal community empowerment, a functional approach identifies and analyses the roles played by social, economic, and environmental components in the development of sustainable marine tourism. Bramwell and Lane (1993) emphasised the importance of viewing coastal communities as a cohesive unit that requires strategies to address various socio-economic challenges. The relationship between maritime tourism and community empowerment has garnered significant academic attention (Lasso & Dahles, 2018). However, a gap remains in the tourism literature regarding the dynamics between marine tourism and community empowerment from a functional perspective. In this sense, the research addresses three key areas: first, the need for a functional approach to analyse the current conditions of coastal communities and their relationship to marine tourism (Yusof & Ibrahim 2019). Second, examining coastal areas using a functional approach; and third, analysing how different societal elements support one another in the process of marine tourism development, with a focus on the role of community elements and the social structures that facilitate community empowerment (Merton, 1968).

Taman Roya Village in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, was selected as the research setting due to its classification as a low-income community (Hamzah & Arifin, 2023). Located in Jeneponto Regency, this village is part of a region characterised by diverse topography. The northern part of the regency comprises highlands ranging from 500 to 1,400 meters above sea level, the central part includes areas with elevations of 100 to 500 meters, and the southern part features lowlands at 0 to 150 meters above sea level. Approximately 91 km from Makassar, Jeneponto Regency consists of 114 villages and sub-

districts, with Taman Roya being one such sub-district. Covering an area of 29.91 km², Taman Roya is divided into five hamlets: Tamanroya Kota, South, Ujung Tanah, East, and Alukka. Two of these hamlets, located in the southern coastal area of Jeneponto district, are classified as economically underdeveloped and face extreme poverty levels (BPS, 2023). Despite these challenges, the village's coastal area holds significant natural and cultural, carrying enormous potential for community welfare enhancement through marine tourism. However, the full realisation of this potential has been hindered by various obstacles. Therefore, empirically exploring and formulating holistic empowerment strategies to optimise marine tourism's potential while strengthening coastal communities' social structure is vital.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coastal Communities

Coastal communities live in transition areas between land and sea, highly dependent on coastal and marine resources. Jahan et al. (2021) described that coastal communities have unique socio-economic characteristics, where most of the population work as fishermen, pond farmers, or are involved in the marine tourism industry. This uniqueness forms a distinctive local culture and wisdom, often becoming a unique attraction for developing marine tourism in their region (Pham, 2020). However, coastal communities also face various challenges in sustainable development. Climate change and coastal environmental degradation pose severe threats to their livelihoods. Islam et al. (2023) explained that rising sea levels and coastal erosion have caused the loss of productive land and increased the risk of natural disasters in most coastal areas. Thus, adaptation and mitigation strategies that involve the active participation of coastal communities in managing coastal and marine resources must be taken immediately (Abdullah & Rahman, 2023).

Marine Tourism

Marine tourism presents economic opportunities and simultaneously enhances the capacity of local communities to manage natural resources sustainably. This rapidly growing segment of tourism encompasses various sea and coastal activities, offering not only recreational and adventurous experiences but also contributing positively to local economies and environmental conservation. Menhat et al. (2021) described that marine tourism includes activities such as snorkelling, diving, beach tourism, sailing, and coastal ecotourism. The growth of this sector is fueled not only by the natural beauty of marine environments but also by a rising global awareness of the importance of conserving marine ecosystems. Cahyanto et al. (2021) emphasised that sustainable marine tourism can effectively increase environmental awareness and support conservation efforts while providing economic benefits to local communities. However,

developing marine tourism requires careful balancing of economic interests with environmental sustainability. Alves et al. (2022) identified several negative impacts of poorly managed marine tourism, such as coral reef damage, pollution, and disruption of marine wildlife habitats. Therefore, adaptive and participatory management approaches are essential for the sustainable development of marine tourism.

Community Empowerment Through Functional Approach

Community empowerment through a sociological functional theory approach is a strategy designed to enhance community welfare and independence by strengthening social functions. This approach increases the capacity of individuals and groups within society to achieve prosperity and self-sufficiency by developing the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to overcome challenges and seize opportunities (Pratama et al., 2021). Empowerment, in this context, involves transferring power and building the community's ability to effectively fulfil its social and economic roles, which, in turn, fosters greater participation and ownership of development programs (Helling et al., 2005). Effective implementation of this approach requires identifying and developing local potential, as Rahman et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of understanding society's assets and capacities. Strengthening local institutions is also critical, as robust and well-functioning institutions can drive sustainable social and economic change. Additionally, building networks and partnerships are essential, and there is a need for collaborative relationships among the community, government, private sector, and civil society organisations to support the empowerment process (see Azinuddin et al., 2023; 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative method that is well-suited for studying the empowerment of coastal communities through marine tourism, as it enables a deep understanding of the social, cultural, and economic contexts of local communities. To collect data, observations and in-depth interviews were carried out with ten key individuals. This group comprised community leaders, tourism enthusiasts, and government officials, each offering valuable insights into the economic contributions within Taman Roya Village, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. Furthermore, a focus group discussion was organised to understand the community's collective viewpoint on empowerment via marine tourism. The thirty participants consisted of seven fishermen, seven seaweed farmers, seven salt farmers, four representatives from local government (including the hamlet head), two members from mass organisations, a boat owner, a salt pond owner, and the head of the village. As Krueger and Casey (2015) observed, focus group discussions can reveal social norms and group dynamics that may not emerge in individual interviews, helping to identify challenges, opportunities, and potential

strategies for empowerment by examining the maritime potential of Taman Roya Village, Indonesia.

This research used a thematic analysis, which allows for identifying patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022), subsequently enabling the interpretation of the meaning of texts and interviews (Bengtsson, 2020).



Figure 1. Research Location
Source: Google Maps (2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The coastal communities of Taman Roya exhibit distinctive characteristics, largely shaped by their dependence on marine and coastal resources. The primary sources of income for the residents of Taman Roya are fishing, seaweed farming, and salt production. These occupations are seasonal and vulnerable to weather fluctuations, which can lead to fluctuations in income and, consequently, economic instability. According to the 2023 data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS), approximately 701 household heads in this region of Taman Roya village are classified as economically vulnerable, with relatively high poverty rates compared to other communities in the Jeneponto district. In the context of economic challenges, most coastal communities have been unable to implement diversified livelihood strategies, which entail a combination of sea-based activities (fisheries, seaweed cultivation, and salt production) and land-based activities (such as small-scale agriculture, trade, or tourism). In general, the residents of Taman Roya Village rely on income to meet their daily needs. Consequently, global environmental changes, such as environmental degradation, climate change, and the increasing demands of modern life, present

a significant challenge to the economic and social sustainability of the community, particularly the coastal community of Taman Roya Village.

The social structure of coastal communities in Taman Roya Village is generally characterised by cooperation, with strong kinship ties and a high sense of community. This is reflected in various community practices, such as *gotong royong* (a traditional Indonesian communal work system) during wedding parties and a profit-sharing system generally found in fisheries activities and management of other marine products, such as seaweed harvests and fish catches. In some instances, these activities are seen to share each other's results, especially those intended for daily consumption. The coastal areas of Taman Roya Village are geographically distant from urban areas, which often results in limited access to education, health services, and other basic infrastructure. The government's attention and involvement as an institution responsible for the community's welfare have been lacking, which limits opportunities for mobilisation in the economic mobility

Furthermore, the community's capabilities in terms of skills and creativity remain severely limited. This is evidenced by the fact that most of the community's members have only completed elementary school or have not completed it, indicating that a significant proportion of the population has dropped out of school (see **Table 1**). Consequently, the community's creativity and skills are still nascent, constraining their capacity to engage in activities that could enhance their economic prospects. This is because they have not been exposed to training opportunities that could enhance their skills. Furthermore, a disparity exists between communities that play a pivotal role in sustainable development and those situated in coastal areas.

Table 1: Data on Educational Classification of Tamanroya Village Population in 2022-2023

Number	Level of education	Tamanroya Environment					Amount
		Kota	Selatan	Ujung Tanah	Timur	Alluka	
1	Not yet in school	243	107	140	52	120	662
2	Not completed in primary school	58	72	122	30	33	315
3	Elementary School Graduated	69	321	341	25	87	843
4	Graduated from junior high school	34	83	62	33	39	251
5	Graduated from high school	25	45	47	75	48	240
6	Graduated from college/academy	60	35	55	94	56	300
	Amount	489	663	767	309	383	2.611

Source: Tamanroya Village Data 2023

Nexus between Natural Resources Potential and Community Attributes

The natural resources owned by the coastal community of Taman Roya Village represent a largely untapped potential, serving as the foundation for the livelihoods and economic activities of coastal communities. However, this potential remains largely overlooked. The marine resources, salt ponds, natural charm, and social behaviour of coastal communities are assets that can be developed. The diversity of natural resources in this region not only supports ecological balance but also provides a source of livelihood that can be diversified for local communities through marine tourism, representing an alternative income source for the community.

However, the community's natural resources, including beaches, seascapes, and community activities, are not fully utilised due to a lack of knowledge and skills beyond the daily professions in which they are engaged. Furthermore, the community faces various challenges and threats, including climate change, garbage pollution, and coastal ecosystem degradation, exacerbated by environmental pollution. These challenges and threats are particularly evident in Taman Roya Village. This phenomenon frequently occurs from September to December, when the sea breeze blows ashore, endangering the sustainability of natural resources that directly impact the welfare of seaweed and salt farmers. Therefore, sustainable and adaptive coastal resource management is vital to ensuring the continuity of the ecological and socio-economic functions of coastal areas.

The human resources of coastal communities in Taman Roya Village exhibit distinctive characteristics shaped by their interaction with the marine and coastal environment. These distinctive characteristics of coastal communities are exemplified by the diverse professions that contribute to the livelihoods of Taman Roya Village. These include traditional fishermen with a depth of knowledge and expertise in navigating natural conditions at sea that rivals that of professional fisheries experts. The fishermen can discern the direction of the wind and the optimal times for fishing, which allows them to maximise their profits. Coastal communities typically possess a wealth of local knowledge regarding marine ecosystems, weather patterns, and navigation techniques. This knowledge is typically transmitted from generation to generation and is a valuable asset in the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources. However, the challenges of modernisation and climate change necessitate that coastal communities adapt and enhance their capacity to respond to environmental and socio-economic changes.

The educational attainment of coastal communities in Taman Roya Village remains comparatively low compared to urban communities, which impacts access to employment and economic opportunities. Consequently, coastal community empowerment programs must prioritise enhancing access to formal and non-formal education and skills training aligned with local economic

potential, including marine tourism management, aquaculture, and seafood processing. Another crucial element in developing the human resources of coastal communities in Taman Roya Village is the need to reinforce the capacity of local institutions. This underscores the significance of establishing and strengthening integrated coastal community institutions such as fishing groups, cooperatives, and tourism management organisations.

Supporting Provision of Marine Tourism Infrastructure

The provision of adequate supporting infrastructure for coastal communities is of paramount importance in the development of coastal areas and the improvement of the welfare of their communities. The availability of suitable infrastructure can catalyse local economic growth and encourage community participation in sustainable development. The development of infrastructure in Taman Roya Village is relatively slow, with the construction of roads, bridges, and educational and health facilities lagging. This has resulted in relatively slow population mobility and the economic distribution of goods and services. Furthermore, the provision of clean water represents a crucial aspect that needs to be considered to enhance the quality of life of coastal communities. In the context of community empowerment through marine tourism, supporting infrastructure serves a dual role. The significance of infrastructure in fulfilling the necessities of a community needs to be underscored while simultaneously serving as a crucial element in attracting and catering to tourists. The development of tourist facilities, such as docks, inns, restaurants, and tourist information centres, should be encouraged. This is because the government of Taman Roya Village has not yet considered the potential for the area to become a sustainable tourist destination. Instead, the government is still focused on assistance programs, such as offering assistance in procuring boats, fishing gear, and additional funds for seaweed cultivation. However, these programs are not sustainable and cannot improve the community's economic welfare. This is illustrated by the head of Taman Roya hamlet in Ujung Tanah, who has received assistance on numerous occasions but lacks the financial resources to support his children's education beyond secondary school. However, balancing infrastructure development and coastal environmental preservation must be underscored to ensure the ecosystems' sustainability and tourism's long-term viability.

Analysis of Holistic Community Empowerment with a Functional Approach to the Sociology of the Taman Roya Village Community

The AGIL functions, developed by Parsons (1951), offer a valuable framework for analysing how coastal communities maintain stability and meet their needs, particularly in the context of marine tourism development. The analysis begins with *adaptation*, which in Taman Roya's coastal community is exemplified by their ability to adjust to the dynamic and often challenging marine environment.

This adaptation involves the development of new skills necessary for engaging in marine tourism, such as guiding, homestay management, or producing coastal handicrafts. Marine tourism, as suggested by Putra and Cottrell (2021), can thus serve as a dual-income source, complementing traditional occupations like fishing, seaweed farming, and salt production. These occupations, far from being merely subsistence activities, can be transformed into attractive and lucrative endeavours that also serve educational and informational purposes. For instance, the use of traditional fishing techniques, the cultivation and processing of seaweed, and the artisanal production of salt can all be showcased as unique and engaging tourist experiences. Tourists can be invited to observe or even participate in these activities, gaining firsthand insight into the local fishing community's way of life. Additionally, cultural practices such as the Selamatan ceremony before fishing can be featured as part of the tourist experience, enhancing the appeal of the destination.

Goal attainment in this context is closely linked to the diversification of livelihoods through marine tourism, aiming to improve the standard of living for coastal communities. Establishing shared objectives in developing coastal ecotourism can strengthen social cohesion and encourage broader community participation. By diversifying income sources and creating new opportunities in marine tourism, the community can achieve its goals of economic upliftment and sustainable development. *Integration* plays a crucial role in aligning the various interests within the community and fostering cooperation among different social institutions. This includes cooperatives, local businesses, academic institutions, tourism industry actors, and regional governments. Mustika et al. (2020) emphasises the importance of collaborative management approaches in marine tourism to ensure that benefits are distributed equitably and sustainably. By integrating these diverse elements, the community can work together towards common goals, enhancing overall development and resilience.

Finally, *latency* (or Pattern Maintenance) is vital in preserving the cultural identity and social cohesion of the Taman Roya coastal community amidst rapid modernisation. The continued practice of cooperation and collective action helps maintain local traditions and intellectual heritage. Vitasurya (2023) highlights the importance of preserving these cultural elements not only as tourist attractions but also as mechanisms for social-ecological protection. By maintaining these patterns, the community can ensure that its cultural values remain intact while navigating the challenges of modern development.

Coastal Community Empowerment with a Functional Theory Approach

The concept of manifest and latent functions in society's social structure is a fundamental tenet of sociological theory. In coastal communities, manifest functions are evident in the primary economic activities, such as fishing and seafood cultivation, which are explicitly oriented towards fulfilling basic needs

(Ferrol-Schulte et al., 2015). However, there are latent functions that remain unfulfilled beyond these manifest functions. One such latent function is the formation of robust social cohesion among fishermen through a profit-sharing system and cooperation in their fishing activities. The manifest function is described in the profession of most coastal communities that are routinely carried out every day as fishermen, seaweed farmers and salt pond farmers who constitute the livelihood of coastal communities in Taman Roya Village in meeting their daily needs without realising the activities of working hand in hand, working together and sharing catches in fishing and sharing catches for daily consumption to form a strong sense of solidarity and kinship. This creates a strong capital that can be developed in setting a common goal for goal attainment in coastal communities related to efforts to improve community welfare.

Merton's (1968) concept of functional alternatives can also be applied in the analysis of coastal communities. In the context of community-based marine tourism development, the adaptability of fishermen, seaweed farmers, and salt farmers in maintaining their livelihoods during periods of famine can be regarded as a functional alternative that not only provides a new source of income for the Taman Roya Village community but also contributes to the conservation of the coastal environment. This illustrates that the coastal communities of Taman Roya Village possess the capacity to identify innovative solutions for meeting their functional requirements despite the constraints of limited resources and the challenges posed by climate change. Coastal communities can develop a range of functional alternatives to sustain their social and economic structures, a process that aligns with Merton's (1968) perspectives on social dynamics and structural adaptation.

The empowerment of communities with regard to the marine potential in the coastal area of Taman Roya represents a pivotal stage in the advancement of sustainable coastal development. It is anticipated that empowerment programs will enhance the capacity and participation of local communities in the responsible management of marine resources. Such activities may include the provision of training in relevant skills, such as the cultivation of seaweed, the processing of seafood into value-added products, or the management of marine ecotourism. The formation of fishing groups or cooperatives has the potential to enhance the community's bargaining position within the fisheries value chain. Educating the public on marine environmental conservation and sustainable fishing practices is crucial to maintaining ecosystem balance. Furthermore, community involvement in the planning and decision-making processes related to coastal area development can foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the development programs. With effective empowerment, the coastal communities of Taman Roya Village can not only improve their economic welfare but also play an active role in preserving marine wealth for future generations.

Coastal Community Empowerment Program through Marine Tourism *Entrepreneurship Training*

Entrepreneurship training for coastal communities in Taman Roya Village represents a potential avenue for enhancing skills, welfare, and economic independence in this coastal region. The program generally encompasses developing business skills, financial management, and product innovation based on local resources, such as marine products and tourism. The coastal and marine potential of these resources offers significant opportunities for business diversification, including establishing seafood restaurants and producing handicrafts from marine products and handicrafts from coconut tree materials. The coastal region is characterised by a proliferation of coconut trees, providing a rich source of raw materials for these potential businesses (Anggoro et al., 2018). The participatory and contextual approach to this training is designed to enhance program effectiveness, cultivate entrepreneurial motivation within the community, and empower coastal communities. Furthermore, technology integration and digital market access, such as social media, are crucial elements in preparing coastal entrepreneurs for the era of digital economy (Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2023; Mohd Salim et al., 2024).

Development of Tourism Skills

Developing tourism skills for coastal communities represents a strategic step towards enhancing well-being and community empowerment (Nugroho & Numata, 2022). By utilising focused training and education, coastal communities can obtain the requisite knowledge and abilities to participate actively in the tourism industry, including homestay management, tour guiding, and regional food processing. In addition to its picturesque coastal setting, the village of Taman Roya boasts a distinctive house model and a range of activities. Furthermore, developing these skills can also facilitate the preservation of local culture and the environment, which serve as tourist attractions. With increased tourism skills, coastal communities can optimally utilise their natural and cultural resources, create new employment opportunities, and enhance local income.

Environmental Education

Environmental education for coastal communities is essential to increase awareness and participation in preserving coastal and marine ecosystems. An influential environmental education program must consider the socio-cultural characteristics of local communities and involve local wisdom in managing coastal resources. Therefore, it is important to have a participatory approach in developing learning materials and methods relevant to the needs of coastal communities. Furthermore, Widiastuti and Purwanto (2020) show that integrating traditional knowledge with the latest scientific information can

increase the effectiveness of environmental education programs in encouraging sustainable coastal resource use practices.

Community-based Business Development

Community-based business development represents a pivotal strategy for empowering coastal communities and leveraging their distinctive and sustainable local resources. The construction of homestays enables local communities to provide authentic accommodation experiences that allow tourists to immerse themselves in the coastal lifestyle. The distinctive coastal cuisine, comprising fresh seafood and traditional dishes, is a significant promotional factor for the region's rich culinary heritage. Furthermore, developing handicrafts and souvenirs made from marine-based materials or coastal resources, such as coconut wood, preserves traditional skills and generates additional income sources. Integrating these three elements—homestay, culinary, and handicrafts—forms a creative economic ecosystem that empowers coastal communities, enhances well-being, and strengthens local cultural identity. It also provides visitors to Taman Roya with a comprehensive and memorable tourism experience.

Community Involvement in Planning and Management

Empowerment of coastal communities can start with forming tourism awareness groups (POKDARWIS), which involve residents in developing sustainable tourism. This group plays a role in tourism promotion and becomes a forum for active community participation in decision-making regarding coastal area management. Through forums held by POKDARWIS, residents can voice their aspirations and be directly involved in planning the development of tourist areas. Furthermore, this group can advocate for implementing a fair profit-sharing system in managing coastal natural resources, ensuring that profits from tourism activities and the use of marine resources are distributed evenly to all levels of society, not just the elite or external investors. In this context, POKDARWIS becomes a crucial tool for achieving participatory and equitable coastal development.

Role of Stakeholders

Empowering coastal communities requires synergy from various parties to achieve optimal and sustainable results. The central government plays a role in formulating supporting policies and regulations, while local governments are responsible for implementing programs and providing basic infrastructure. The private sector and investors can contribute through investment, technology transfer, and by opening market access to local products. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are essential in mentoring, capacity building, and policy advocacy that favours coastal communities. Furthermore, scholars and research institutions provide scientific support through applied research, appropriate

technological innovation, and training that meets community needs. Close collaboration between all stakeholders will create an ecosystem that supports the comprehensive empowerment of coastal communities, from human resource development to improving the local economy and preserving the environment (Azinuddin et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The research findings suggest that empowering coastal communities through marine tourism, guided by a functional approach, is a viable strategy. Taman Roya Village, with its rich marine resources, presents substantial development opportunities to improve local well-being. The primary economic activities—capture fisheries, seaweed cultivation, and salt pond farming—are supported by the region's natural assets, including mangroves and coconut trees. Maritime tourism, driven by the area's beaches and local maritime culture, holds promising prospects. The development of high-value marine products and marine-based renewable energy could further generate new economic opportunities. Success in coastal community empowerment through marine tourism will depend on optimising the roles and functions of all stakeholders, including local communities, government, and the private sector. Enhancing the capacity of local communities through targeted training and mentoring is crucial for the effectiveness of these programs. By leveraging these insights, the functional approach can help maximise the impact of marine tourism on community empowerment in Taman Roya Village.

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