The Moderating Effects of Social Media Usage towards Fan Attachment in MotoGP

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Abstract--- The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between MotoGP fans' attachment with their favorite teams' Facebook pages. Data were collected through survey method. The questionnaires were completed by 384 fans. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Science. Sport fans who have formed strong connections to their favorite team may be termed loyal fans. One popular communication tool for such fans is Facebook, which has been found to be an important medium for sharing news and events, yet few studies have examined the moderating of Facebook use in a sport context. Adopting the relational approach examining the determinants of sport-fan attachment, this study examined how Facebook use moderates the building of fan attachment. All independent variables together explain 78 percent of the variance (R Square) in Team Attachment which is highly significant as indicates by the f values 336.845. Findings revealed the t values of team attraction, social media and team involvement are positively related to team attachment. Facebook use was found to significantly reinforce their attachment. Specific implications for both theory and practice are discussed. Overall, respondents indicated they preferred content related to players, including injury and movement, as well as race result, suggesting they might prefer using Facebook as another way to receive information instead of choosing to actively engage with their favorite team. However, because results from modeling suggest engaging individuals on Facebook has positive impacts on future behavioral intentions, sport marketers should consider engaging individuals on Facebook while still fulfilling their need for information about players and game results.

Keywords--- Relational Marketing, Team Attraction, Team Trust, Team Involvement and Team Attachment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media have been playing a significant role in sports marketing throughout the world and including in Malaysia. Both individuals and organizations use social media to communicate with their interested parties. In particular, social media has been use increasingly by sports organizations as a tool to communicate with consumers (1). Relationship marketing, which was launched as a new paradigm shift in the mid-1990s, has evolved into multiple business approaches (Gronroos, 2004, 2011). Relationship marketing as an integrative mechanism, according to Gronroos (2000), requires three primary elements: communication, value, and interaction. With this paradigmatic shift have also come changes in consumers' expectations and needs. Consumers, called the "Net generation," often use two-way communication and new technologies to engage in emerging and prospective businesses and to pursue relationships (Tapscott, 2009). The current study adopts a relational approach (Fournier, 1998) to examine the determinants of sport-fan attachment and thus represents the fan–team relationship in terms of cognitive and emotional bonding. Given this background, the purpose of this study was to extend the relationships

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among components affecting sport fans' attachment, including team attraction, team trust, team involvement, and team attachment, and to test the moderating effects of Facebook use—both on non-race days and during a race—as a brand-management tool on the formation of sport-fan attachment. We believe that this area of study is noteworthy as results could help sport marketers better communicate with their fans. The social media usage of sports organizations has drawn attention from both academia and the sports industry. According to Witkemper, Lim, and Waldburger(2), there are three primary social media forms most frequently employed by sports organization, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Facebook has been used to post and share articles, pictures, and videos. YouTube has been use to share videos with consumers about the team or organization. Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets.

1.1 Problem Statement

There many types of businesses trying to build a new brand through social media with the aim of conveying their products and services competitively (3). These type of businesses include sport team and organizations. The sports team and organizations hiring creative agencies and geared technologists, the businesses have invested billions to represent their brands and develop relationships with their consumers throughout the digital universe (4). For sponsorship there are only two parties involved and these are the sponsor which is the party that pays in order to be associated with a property and the sponsee which is the party that offers value through association (5). Despite their efforts, there is very little payoff (Holt, 2016). Audience of a sponsored property are inclined to discern the benefits of sponsorship investment and this situation leads them to perceive sponsorship less commercial than traditional advertising (6).

The effects of Social Media, especially, from the view of bolstering fan–team relationships, are less well understood and require further investigation. Sport managers are not completely aware of how Social Media can be effectively used in relationship marketing or to influence the development of fan attachment(7). Companies that seek to overcome this clutter have started to search for new promotion strategies such as sponsorship and integrate it in their marketing activities (8).

This study adopts and adapt a relational approach to marketing (9) to examine the determinants of sport-fan attachment and thus represents the fan–team relationship in terms of cognitive and emotional bonding. The purpose of this part of the study was to extend the relationships among components affecting sport fan including team attraction, team trust, team involvement, and team attachment, and to test the moderating effects of Social Media.

1.2 Research Question

This perspective will be used to analyze the relationship building of organizations in serving the public, such as information sharing, promotion, interactivity, etc. Thus, this issue will examine through the following research questions:

RQ1: How Social Media usage moderates the building of fan attachment?

1.3 Research Objective

The objectives for this study are:

1. To examine Team Trust, Team Attraction and Team Involvement influence building of fan attachment towards sports team.

2. To examine how Facebook moderates the building of Team Attachment.

1.4 Limitations

There are boundaries and constraints that influence the scope of this thesis. First, the study acknowledges that a large number of social media technologies, communications channels, and media vehicles have emerged during recent times. Important dynamics, relations and interrelations exist in a social media-sponsorship relationship across a variety of emerging communication technologies. However, the intricacies of all such relationships and effects are beyond the scope of this thesis, which concentrates on one particular and highly popular media vehicle. Facebook has been purposely chosen for this research because sponsors selected for the study (KTM Tech 3) operates their own channels within the Facebook environment.

The second limitation of this study is that it focuses on one segment of affiliates – those who are registered to either the KTM Tech 3 or the Hafizh Syahrin channel. It is recognized that there are other sponsorship segments worthy of analysis. However, to conduct the current study in appropriate depth and detail, it is necessary to limit research to a sample of individuals who are subscribed to either the KTM Tech 3 channel or the Hafizh Syahrin channel.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW & MODEL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter presents the literature review of all variables and discusses the theoretical framework of this research. Researcher has started to explore how sports organizations by Waters et al.(10); Wallace et al.(11); Pronschinske et al.,(12) , athletes (Kassing& Sanderson (13); Hambrick et al., (14); Pegoraro,(15); Hambrick& Mahoney,(16); Sanderson,(17) , and fans (18) use social media. Sport organizations, teams, and athletes have increasingly used social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to engage in dialogues and to establish relationships with their respective audiences (19). Social media have changed the traditional way athletes interact with their fans, and could help athlete users meet needs such as entertainment, diversion, and information gathering (Hambrick et al., 2010). Research has suggested that sports organizations and sporting-event organizers need to identify the needs and motivations of sports consumers and utilize this information to shape their marketing communication online (20) and develop relationships with supporters (21). The impact of social media on branding and marketing has been utilized by sports organizations (22)

Early researchers, who primarily focused on behavioral responses, failed to clarify why customers repeatedly purchased specific brands (23). Behavioral loyalty includes repurchase intentions toward a particular brand or product, whereas attitudinal loyalty consists of some extent of preference and commitment regarding a specific brand or product (24). In sport settings, fan loyalty has been viewed as a person's steadfast commitment to a specific team, which can influence that person's thoughts and behaviors (25). As we can see Hafizh Syahrin fan have grown. Many of the fan start to follow Hafizh Syahrin MotoGp Team. Meenaghan and et al. (26) suggested the need for researchers to extend studies of sponsorship into the social media environment, emphasizing the notions of buzz,

sentiment, and engagement as measures of sponsorship effectiveness. Given the growth of social media, sponsor companies and sport entities interested in measuring the ROI of sponsorship have a potential opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of sponsorship campaigns via social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

2.1 Research Hypothesis

In this chapter I will discusses the research assumptions and protocols that underpinned this research. This includes a conceptual framework and the hypotheses underlying data collection. According to Veal (2006), conceptual frameworks are used in research to give a systematic overview of the logical linkages between different areas of literature and concepts. He suggests the use of theoretical frameworks to demonstrate distinctive relationships between these areas of literature. The purpose of this study is to examine how social media moderates the building of team attachment.

Adopting a relational approach to sport marketing represents several advantages for. The relational perspective encourages consumer loyalty (Bolton, 1998) and, consequently, sport-fan loyalty by customizing its marketing strategies targeted to sport fans. First, it stimulates both constructs, attachment and trust, which help differentiate relational services from transactional services.

A large majority of recent sport teams and organizations have adopted social media as part of their marketing and public relations strategies (27). Social media have generally served as a powerful marketing communication tool (28) that allows athletic departments to take a step toward effective relationship marketing to forge a long-term connection directly with fans (29) . According to Jefferson (30) , there has been an 'explosion of touch points' in social media that in marketing terms offer seemingly unlimited opportunities for interactions between brand and customer. A frequently used theoretical and analytical approach into why consumers use different types of media vehicles is *uses and gratifications theory* (U & G) (Bronner&Neijens 2006; Cotte, Chowdhury &Ratneshwar 2006). Many different types of businesses to date have endeavored to build a new brand through social media with the aim of conveying their products and services competitively (3).

Team Involvement. Involvement has also been found to bolster motivation, heighten arousal, and increase cognitive elaborations (33). Tsiaotso and Alexandris(34) found a positive relationship between team involvement and team attachment. Overall, it is anticipate that team involvement will affect team attachment toward a particular team. Therefore is hypothesis that:

H1. Team involvement would positively influence team attachment.

Team Trust. Team Trust is avaluable ingredient in social-relationship building between consumers and brands (35). A fan's trust in a team or a player may affect his or her intention to attend future games or purchase merchandise (36). It is also may serve as a long-term connection between the fan and team (37). Thus, team trust is a necessary element in developing attachment in a sport context (38) along with loyalty in building sport-team equity (39). Therefore is hypothesis that:

H2. Team trust would positively influence team attachment.

Team Attraction. The attraction process has further been suggested to represent how personal, environmental, and psychological determinants interact with fans' awareness and influence volition and emotional responses (40). Funk and James (2006) examined whether attraction-stage associations affect team attachment. It is notable to consider factors that attract fans to a specific sport team. Attraction to a sport team may potentially lead a person to become a fan attached to a specific team (41). If the fan attract to the player in the team it may form loyalty towards certain teams. Therefore is hypothesis that:

H3. Team attraction would positively influence team attachment.

Facebook use as mediator variables. Pöyry et al. (2013) suggested, "Facebook will undoubtedly be one of the most prominent tools to conduct social commerce activities. Studying consumer behavior on Facebook reveals what behaviors connect to business outcomes and which types of behavior an organization should encourage to positively impact sales (Pöyry et al., 2013). Therefore is hypothesis that:

H4. Facebook usage would positively moderate the relationship between Team Attraction, Team Trust, and Team Involvement towards Team Attachment

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The previous chapters provided the theoretical background and conceptual framework for the thesis. This chapter describes the research approach, it's conceptual, and how it was designed to investigate the main research aim, the question and 4 hypotheses that are central to the research. It also discusses the rationale for data selection, data collection protocols, and the methods underpinning these aspects of the investigation. It is built upon two key interrelated parts: first, a critique of methodological theory and second, an explanation of the research methods that will use for this study. A cross sectional method will be use.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0. To test themeasurement model, data analysis consisted of three steps. First, descriptive analyseswere used to determine the demographic makeup of the sample. Second, using hierarchical confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 22.0 software, the study employed a maximum-likelihood estimation with robust standard errors toaddress the potential violation of multivariate normality (Arbuckle, 2006). Goodnessof fit for both the measurement and structural models was assessed with theratio of the chi-square ($\chi2$) to its degrees of freedom (*df*), comparative-fit-index(CFI), root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardizedroot-mean-square residual (SRMR). Values above .95 are considered an excellentfit for CFI, and a 3.0 value or less shows an excellent ratio for $\chi2$/*df* (Bentler&Bonett, 1980). In addition, both SRMR and RMSEA have been shown to have anexcellent fit when each is below .05, with a perfect fit indicated by an index of zero (Mac Callum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). Third, regression to seek moderating values of social media.

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

The target population of this study will be KTM Tech 3 fans and also ordinary people in Malaysia. KTM Tech 3 will be selected because of the impact of Hafizh Syahrin when competing in MotoGpClass. The survey have been collected at Sepang International Circuit, The Podium Sungai Pechala and workshop around Klang Valley. Fans were randomly approached and asked to voluntarily participate in the research survey.

After orally agreeing to participate, participants will be given survey by the researcher. On average, participants took approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey. A total of 458 questionnaires were completed. Of the forms 74 were deemed unusable due to invalid responses (e.g. blank, double answers, etc) and were therefore eliminated, leaving 384 usable surveys.

3.2 Measurement Scale

Keeping validity of questionnaire in view, measurement scale will be adapted from previous researches and will modify some items to fit better according to the current research context. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), will be used. Item for measuring team Attraction will be The Team Association Scale because the 13 attributes and benefits constructs have been shown to explain the concepts of attraction (43), Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (24) Team Trust Scale will be used to measure team trust. Their scale consist of four item. Similar to Chaudhuri and Holbrook's a 5 point agreement scale anchored by strongly disagree and strongly agree will be employed, Personal Involvement Inventory (44) will be used to measured team involvement and were scale by Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, Team attachment construct, which contains four items, was adapted from the scale used by (Alexandris and Tsiotsou, 2012).

IV. RESULT

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 4.1: Reliability Analysis (All Variables)

Variable	Item	Cronbach 's Alpha
Team Attachment	5	0.846
Social Media	21	0.954
Team Attraction	11	0.967
Team Trust	6	0.925
Team Involvement	8	0.750

The reliability of measure is an indication of the stability and consistency with which the instrument measure the concept and help assess the "goodness" of a measure (Sekaran&Bougie 2013). Table above show that all variables under study have Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of more than 0.7, which considered as the acceptable level of measure to be reliable. Therefore, all the measures used in examining the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable have a relatively high level of internal consistency.

4.2 Socio Demographic Characteristic

Overall there are 384 respondent that answered the questionnaire. Table 4.2 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. The overall response rate of this survey was 100%. Out of 384 respondents, 69.3% were male and 30.7 % were female. The result indicates that most of the respondent are between 15-20 years old (60.9%). In terms of ethnicity, the majority of participants were Malays (87.8%), followed by Chinese (6.8%),

Indians (4.9%) and others (indigenous people) were 0.5%. Education level, 77.3% of the respondents had a diploma, 11.5% of the respondents had a degree, 4.4% post graduates, and only 6 respondents (6.8%) had SPM.

Table 4.2: Socio-demographic characteristics (*N*=384).

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	266	69.3
	Female	118	30.7
Age	15-20	234	60.9
	21-25	89	23.2
	26-30	33	8.6
	31-35	20	5.2
	36 Above	8	2.1
Ethnicity	Malay	337	87.8
	Chinese	26	6.8
	Indian	19	4.9
	Others	2	0.5
Education	Diploma	297	77.3
	Degree	44	11.5
	Post Graduate	17	4.4
	Others	26	6.8
Marital Status	Single	341	88.8
	Married	42	10.9
	Others	1	0.3
Social Media Usage	Facebook	141	36.72
	Twitter	166	43.23
	Instagram	220	57.29

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

This study design to examine the relationship between the three independent variables, a moderator and Team Attachment. Overall result of which item determine to be the most significance factor for Team Attachment will be reveal. The result of the hypotheses testing are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

4.3.1 Team Involvement

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistic and Correlations for Team Involvement

Items		Mean	Std. Deviation
TI1	(V46) KTM Tech 3 Team is fun.	3.7767	.88486
TI2	(V47) KTM Tech 3 Team is appealing.	3.8350	.87556
TI3	(V48) KTM Tech 3 Team is interesting.	3.8544	.90106
TI4	(V49) KTM Tech 3 Team is exciting.	3.8350	.88669
TI5	(V50) KTM Tech 3 Team is fascinating.	3.8058	.85243
TI6	(V51) KTM Tech 3 Team is important.	3.8058	.86385
TI7	(V52) KTM Tech 3 Team is means a lot to me.	3.8252	.86803
TI8	(V53) KTM Tech 3 Team is matter to me.	3.7961	.90054

Pearson Correlations Coefficient	Team Attachment
Team Involvement	.915**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Base on the table 4.3, it is found the overall mean value of 5 items stays above 3. The highest mean value is 3.8544 which represent TI3 (KTM Tech 3 is exciting). Therefore it can be concluded that all the respondent agree

they feel that they feel excited when involve in KTM Tech 3 race journey.Therefor H1 will be accepted that Team Involvement would positively influence team attachment.

4.3.2 Team Trust

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistic for Team Trust

Items		Mean	Std. Deviation
TT1	I totally trust KTM Tech 3 Team.	3.8447	.87175
TT2	I count on KTM Tech 3 Team.	3.8155	.82542
TT3	KTM Tech 3 Team is reliable.	3.8447	.84896
TT4	KTM Tech 3 Team is trustworthy.	3.8155	.88282
TT5	KTM Tech 3 Team worth to trust.	3.8155	.87164
TT6	KTM Tech 3 machine is reliable.	3.7961	.91136
Pearson Correlations Coefficient		Team Attachment	
Team Trust		.824**	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Referring the table above. The figure show that mean value of overall item between are 3.7 to 3.8. The highest mean value is TT1 and TT3 with 3.8447. The lowest are TT6 with 3.7961.Therefore it can been conclude the respondent think that they trust the capabilities of the KTM Tech 3 team despite their machine are not quite reliable at this time. H2 will be accepted, team trust would positively influence team attachment.

4.3.3 Team Attraction

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistic for Team Attraction

Items		Mean	Std. Deviation
TAC1	KTM Tech 3 have the rider that I like to watch.	3.9223	.90412
TAC2	I like to watch KTM Tech 3 Star rider.	3.8350	.88669
TAC3	I like the colors of KTM Tech 3.	3.8641	.89715
TAC4	I like the logo of KTM Tech 3.	3.8350	.88669
TAC5	KTM Tech 3 official attire are attractive.	3.7961	.86726
TAC6	KTM Tech 3 team crew member always do the best in race.	3.7767	.85097
TAC7	KTM Tech 3 staff does good job running their team.	3.7379	.87404
TAC8	KTM Tech 3 staff make wise player personnel decisions.	3.7282	.84243
TAC9	It is important to me that KTM Tech 3 team reaches highest position in the season.	3.7767	.89587
TAC10	It is important to me that KTM Tech 3 competes in the MotoGp.	3.8252	.93334
TAC11	It is important to me KTM Tech 3 rider win the pole position.	3.8252	.94378
Pearson Correlations Coefficient		Team Attachment	
Team Attraction		.886**	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table 4.5 show all the means to show sincerity are in range above than 3.0. TAC1 show the highest mean, therefore it the respondent agree that the like to watch their prefer rider in the team. While TAC7 and TAC8 show that respondent also think that the staff are not very well trusted on setting up their machine for the player. H3 have been accepted by team attraction would positively influence team attachment.

4.3.4 Team Attachment

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistic for Team Attachment		Mean	Std.Deviation
TA1	Being a fan of KTM Tech 3 is important to me.	3.7476	.84851
TA2	Compared to other team, KTM Tech 3 is very important to me.	3.8058	.85243
TA3	I possess a great deal of knowledge about the KTM Tech 3 team.	3.7767	.87371
TA4	If I were to list everything about the KTM Tech 3 team the list will be long.	3.7476	.82508
TA5	Compared to others sport team, I consider an expert about the KTM Tech 3.	3.6505	.91511

Items header: | Items | | Mean | Std.Deviation |

Referring the table above, the respondent feel that KTM Tech 3 team are important to them despite the team are the newest team in MotoGP in this season. The feel important might be the help of the rider that they want to follow.

4.3.5 Social media

Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistic for Social Media			Mean	Std. Deviation
Items			Mean	Std. Deviation
Often Following Social Media	SM4	Visit KTM Tech 3 Team Facebook page	3.7767	1.82538
	SM5	Read content posted by KTM Tech 3 on Facebook	3.4175	1.72936
	SM6	Like content posted by KTM Tech 3 in Facebook	3.2621	1.80935
	SM7	Share content posted by KTM Tech 3 on Facebook	2.4272	1.78007
	SM8	Comment on content posted by KTM Tech 3	2.5631	1.80234
Important of Information posted in Facebook	SM9	Posts about a sponsor of the team	3.6602	1.00541
	SM10	Fan contests	3.6893	1.04815
	SM11	Merchandise giveaways	3.7573	1.03342
	SM12	Fan polls	3.4951	1.13650
	SM13	Questions posted by the team	3.2718	1.08641
	SM14	Posts by the team requesting a like	3.7864	1.06320
	SM15	Posts about the mascot	3.3689	1.11135
	SM16	Posts about personnel (such as coaches, technical person, general manager, etc.	3.5631	1.13474
	SM17	Posts about an upcoming race	4.0000	1.12894
	SM18	Posts about players	4.0583	1.15322
	SM19	Behind-the-scenes information (such as interviews, videos, or articles about practice)	3.9806	1.17974
	SM20	Posts about racer movement (including signings, trades, and cuts)	4.0097	1.11580
	SM21	Race-related posts (in-race and post-race)	4.0777	1.08184

Referring the table above, the result also show that, respondent visit the Facebook page quite frequent, but the most of the respondent did not share or comment the Facebook page. The respondent also think that race related post are the most important to follow in the Facebook page compare to other information.

4.4 Regression

Table 4.7: Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.867[a]	.752	.750	4.72958	
2	.883[b]	.780	.778	4.45569	1.648
a. Predictors: (Constant), Team Involvement, Team Attraction, Team Trust					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Team Involvement, Team Attraction, TeamTrust, SocialMedia					
c. Dependent Variable: Team Attachment					

Regression analysis is conducted to examine the relationship of the variables and Team Attachment. Table 4.8 summarizes the analysis result, which produce R^2 = 0.752, F = 384.073. R square equal to 0.752 means that in overall term, the independent variable characteristic explained the 75.2 percent of variance of Team Attachment. When Social Media include as moderator the result of R^2 increased from 0.752 to 0.780, F=336.845. Its show that social media play major role for sport team to attach with their fan. H04 will be accepted because there is positive relationship between variable.

V. CONCLUSION

The primary purposes of this study were twofold. First, we hoped to find something on not only ways to assist sport fan–team relationship marketing but also the hierarchical process in explaining how sport-fan attachment toward a favorite team can be built. To do this, the relationships among elements influencing fan attachment, including team attraction, team trust, team involvement, and team attachment, were examined. Results confirmed that three determinants—team attraction, team trust, and team involvement—positively influenced team attachment. Differently stated, team attachment was found to be a key antecedent to sport-fan loyalty. This finding is supported by the argument drawn by Funk and James (2001, 2006) that team attachment, as the consumer's psychological connection to a sport team, is positively associated with an individual's loyalty toward a team. Thus, the more fans feel attached to their favorite team, the more likely they will be to identify with the team and become loyal.

Second, this study examined a moderating effect of Facebook on the developmental process of sport-fan attachment. Furthermore, it investigated if and how fans' Facebook use—both during a race and on non-race days—played a moderating role.The findings revealed that the use of Facebook for a team, both in the person's daily life and during a game, enhanced the positive effects of perceived team attraction and team involvement on team attachment. In addition to the moderating effects, the analysis represented direct effects of Facebook use on fan attachment. That is, the sport-specific use of Facebook during a race and also on non-race days was positively related to loyalty toward the team. The present study provides significant contributions from both theoretical and practical standpoints through a mechanism by which the principal constructs of relationship marketing contribute to the formation process of sport-fan attachment and is an initial step in understanding the moderating effect of Facebook on the development of fan attachment.

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