

MODERN APPROACHES TO HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND TRAINING PROGRAMS IN THE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL BUSINESS

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Received: 26/02/2026

Accepted: 04/03/2026

Published: 06/03/2026

ABSTRACT

The study is dedicated to a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of modern human resources policies and employee training systems within the international hotel business. In the context of globalization, hotel chains operate in a multinational, multicultural, and highly competitive environment, making human resource management strategy a key factor in a company's success. The research provides a comparative analysis of the four main models of international human resources management - ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, and regiocentric approaches - and assesses their advantages and disadvantages based on practical indicators. The results indicate that the geocentric approach provides an optimal balance between global integration and local adaptation. Companies employing this model were found to have high employee retention rates, consistent guest satisfaction, and strong brand consistency. At the same time, the study substantiates that other approaches can also be effective depending on specific conditions and company scale. Furthermore, the role of modern technologies - such as virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), and gamification elements - in the training process is analyzed separately.

Keywords: International Personnel Policy, Corporate Universities, Hotel Business, Training Programs, Investment Income

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globalization is fundamentally transforming the hotel industry. Today, major hotel brands operate in over 100 countries and must implement specialized personnel policies and training programs to function effectively in diverse cultural environments (Baum, 2006). Marriott International has a presence in 139 countries with more than 8,100 hotels, while Hilton Worldwide operates in 122 countries with over 6,800 hotels (Smith & Darko, 2014).

40% of employees working in international hotels are specialists from other countries (Gröschl & Arcot, 2014). The average salary for expatriate's ranges from \$85,000 to \$120,000 per year, with assignment durations typically lasting 2-3 years. However, statistics indicate that only 65% of international assignments are successfully completed (Dowling et al., 2008).

Personnel training is also a matter of significant importance. Global hotel companies spend an average of \$1,500-\$2,500 per employee annually on training costs, with major brands exceeding this figure at over \$3,000 (Tracey & Tews, 2004). In 2023, Marriott International invested \$500 million in training and achieved a 320% return on investment (Marriott International, 2023).

Furthermore, in the hospitality industry, service quality is directly dependent on the professional competence and motivation of employees. Modern guests demand not only comfort but also a high level of personalized attention, prompt service, and innovative solutions. In this context, the systematic training and retraining of staff is regarded as a strategic investment. Leading hotel brands are allocating significant funds per employee, establishing corporate universities, online platforms, and certification programs. Practical experience demonstrates that well-organized training programs not only increase employee efficiency but also positively impact guest satisfaction and company revenue.

However, existing academic research indicates that the effectiveness of international human resources policy models in the hospitality industry has not yet been fully empirically substantiated. The return on investment for training programs is often analyzed at a theoretical level, while practical outcomes are not sufficiently systematized. Additionally, although the role of virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and other digital technologies is widely applied in the training process, their long-term effectiveness has not been thoroughly studied. The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current state of international human resources policy and training programs in the hotel business. To achieve this objective, international personnel management approaches will be comparatively studied, the practical outcomes of corporate universities and international certification programs will be analyzed, the economic efficiency of investments in training will be evaluated, and the impact of modern technologies on the training process will be determined.

The study proposes the following scientific hypotheses: first, that a geocentric staffing policy model yields higher employee retention and guest satisfaction rates compared to other approaches; second, that employees trained within corporate universities exhibit superior job performance than those who participate in external training programs; and third, that innovative training methods based on virtual and artificial intelligence significantly increase knowledge acquisition and retention levels compared to traditional methods. Thus, the research treats the issue of human resource management and development in the hospitality industry as a source of strategic competitive advantage and aims to develop conclusions that are both practically and theoretically substantiated.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of international human resource management is historically linked to the EPG model developed by Perlmutter (1969). This model divides human resource policy in multinational companies into three main approaches: ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric.

In the ethnocentric approach, the headquarters' priorities dominate, and leadership positions are primarily filled by representatives from the parent country. The polycentric model, in contrast, relies on local managers and stipulates that each subsidiary is managed by citizens of its host country. With the geocentric approach, the company utilizes the global talent market, selecting the most qualified specialists regardless of their nationality or origin.

Subsequently, Heenan and Perlmutter (1979) expanded this classification by proposing the regiocentric model. This approach aims to ensure a regional balance between global and local interests, envisioning that personnel rotation occurs mainly within regional blocs. Modern scholarly research underscores the superiority of the geocentric model. Specifically, Evans et al. (2011) demonstrated that the optimal balance between global integration and local adaptation is achieved through the geocentric approach. Collings and Scullion (2012) note that a global talent management strategy has become a crucial factor for the success of modern transnational corporations. In their view, a global talent management system plays an important role not only in selecting leaders but also in creating a long-term competitive advantage.

For evaluating training effectiveness, the four-level model developed by Kirkpatrick (1994) is widely used. This model proposes assessing the training process through the stages of reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Phillips (1997) later enhanced this model from an economic standpoint by adding the return on investment (ROI) indicator as a fifth level. This enabled training to be evaluated based not only on pedagogical criteria but also on financial efficiency.

The concept of corporate universities was systemized by Meister (1998), who showed that, unlike traditional training centers, they are directly integrated into business strategy. As Meister emphasized, corporate universities serve as a means of fostering a culture of continuous learning and reinforcing corporate values.

The issue of human capital is particularly pertinent in the hospitality industry. Baum (2006) highlighted the problem of high employee turnover in this sector and substantiated the importance of employee development and retention strategies. Tracey and Tews (2004) empirically confirmed the positive correlation between training programs and service quality, proving that skills development directly impacts guest satisfaction.

In recent years, the integration of digital technologies into the training process has also been at the center of academic research. Radianti et al. (2020) found that virtual reality-based training increases knowledge retention by an average of 35% compared to traditional methods. These results indicate that modern technologies are an effective tool for developing and reinforcing employees' practical skills.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a comprehensive approach, employing a mixed-methods methodology. This approach enabled the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, facilitating a systematic and in-depth analysis of the issue rather than a one-sided one.

Quantitative data were assessed through statistical indicators, financial results, and investment efficiency, while the qualitative analysis focused on examining the substantive aspects of management models, corporate strategies, and training programs.

The research process was carried out sequentially in three stages. In the first stage, existing scientific literature, theoretical concepts, and best practices in the field were examined to establish a scientific foundation for international human resource management and training systems. In the second stage, secondary data - including open annual reports from major hotel brands, industry statistics, and official analytical materials - were studied. In the third stage, the activities of leading companies were thoroughly analyzed through case studies, and theoretical conclusions were compared with practical results.

The database comprised official reports from major international hotel chains (Marriott, Hilton, IHG, Accor, Hyatt, etc.) for the period 2020-2023, industry analytical data (STR Global, AHLA), scientific articles published between 2000 and 2024, and documents related to corporate universities and digital training platforms. This wide range of sources ensured the reliability of the research and strengthened the validity of its conclusions.

4.0 RESULTS

Analysis of Approaches to International Human Resource Policy

There are four main approaches to international human resource management in hotels, based on the EPG (Ethnocentric-Polycentric-Geocentric) model developed by Perlmutter (1969). Heenan and Perlmutter (1979) later expanded the model to include a regiocentric approach, making it a four-part framework. A visual representation of these approaches is provided in Figure 1 below.

International Human Resources Management in Hotels

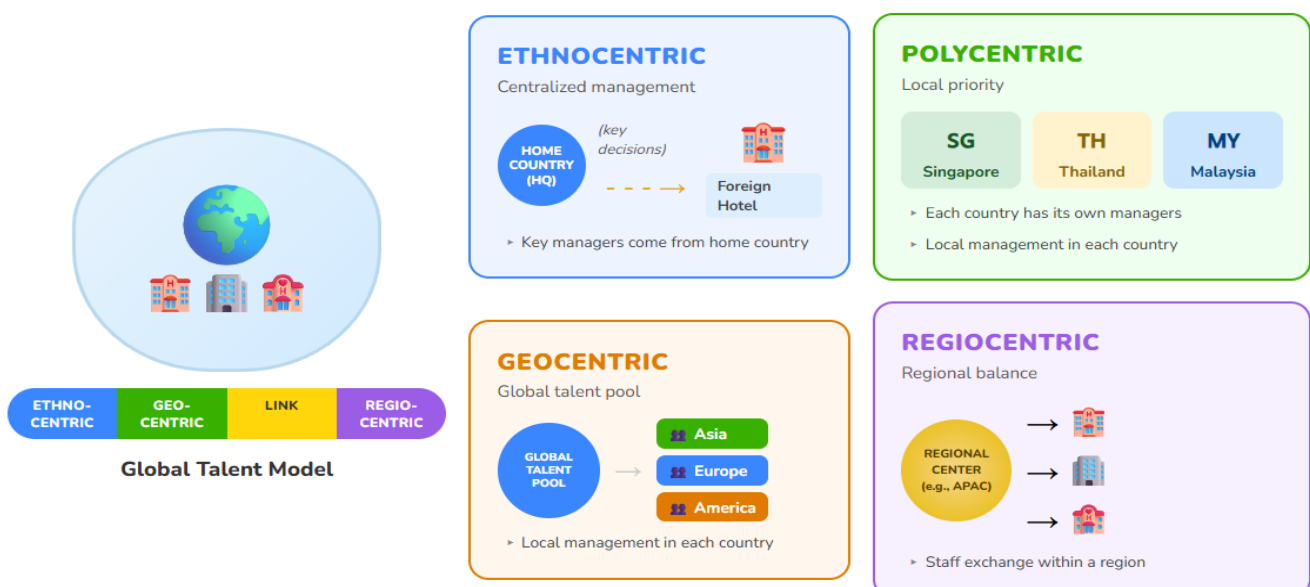


Figure 1: International Human Resource Management Model in Hotels

Note: The figure illustrates four main approaches: (1) Ethnocentric - a principle of centralized management where the home country (HQ) sends managers to foreign hotels; (2) Polycentric - localism is prioritized, with each country having its own managers (e.g., Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia); (3) Geocentric - a global talent pool, where the best specialists are selected regardless of nationality (Asia, Europe, America); (4) Regiocentric - regional balance, where personnel are mobile within a regional hub (e.g., APAC).

The selection of these four approaches depends on the international expansion strategy, organizational culture, and resource capabilities of hotel companies. Each approach has its own unique advantages, disadvantages, and areas of application.

The results of the analysis identified the following characteristics of the four main approaches:

Ethnocentric approach (centralized control)

This approach is based on the principle of centralized control in international human resource management, as illustrated in Figure 1. In this model, the head office (HQ) serves as the main strategic center, and managerial personnel are sent from the home country to subsidiary hotels abroad. Consequently, all major decisions, service standards, and management principles are determined by the central office and implemented uniformly across the subsidiaries. Organizationally, there is a strong vertical hierarchy, and senior management positions are predominantly held by citizens of the head office's country. This approach is considered particularly effective during the initial stages of a company's international expansion. It helps maintain brand identity, reinforces corporate culture, and ensures strict control over operational processes. It also facilitates the rapid and consistent transfer of knowledge and technology from the head office to its subsidiaries. However, the model also has its limitations. Insufficient consideration of local market and cultural specificities can reduce service flexibility. The costs of retaining expatriate managers are high, and limited career advancement opportunities for local employees can lead to motivational issues. The "glass ceiling" effect results in the underutilization of local talent. In practice, the ethnocentric model is more commonly applied in companies with a traditional management culture. For instance, in some Japanese hotel brands and family-owned hotel chains in Europe, the majority of leadership positions are held by representatives from the home country (Konopaske et al., 2005). This approach is especially effective in situations where it is necessary to preserve a company's unique service concept or strict corporate values.

Polycentric approach (local priority)

As illustrated in Figure 1, in international human resource management, this appears as a model that relies on local management. According to this model, a branch hotel in each country is managed by leaders who are citizens of that state, and operational decisions are primarily made at the local level. Although the head office sets the overall strategy, daily management and

service delivery processes are adapted to local market demands. Organizationally, this model is based on the principle of decentralization. Branches operate independently, taking into account the economic, legal, and cultural environment. Due to their deep knowledge of the market, local managers can respond to customer needs quickly and flexibly. This approach is particularly effective in improving service quality in countries with significant cultural differences.

The main advantages of the polycentric model are high local adaptability, relatively low costs, and broad career opportunities for local employees. The absence of high relocation costs associated with expatriate managers increases financial efficiency. Additionally, a strong understanding of local legislation and market characteristics ensures operational stability. However, this model can present certain difficulties in maintaining global coordination and brand consistency. It is possible that the exchange of experience between branches may slow down and service standards may not be applied uniformly. As a result, forming a global corporate culture becomes more complex, and the ability to rapidly implement innovations is limited. In practice, a number of large hotel chains employ a polycentric approach. Specifically, the Accor Group grants broad authority to regional and local management, with the majority of leadership positions in some regions held by local managers (Litteljohn & Roper, 2012). Local management elements are also strongly developed in European chains such as Melia Hotels and NH Hotel Group. This approach is especially suitable for markets with high cultural differences.

Geocentric approach (Global Personnel Pool)

As shown in Figure 1, the geocentric model is considered the most integrated approach in international personnel management. In this model, the company views the entire world as a single talent market and selects candidates for leadership positions based on professional competence, regardless of their nationality or origin. This approach, formed on the principle of a "global talent pool," allows for the unification of qualified specialists from different regions into a single management system. Organizationally, the geocentric model involves global mobility: managers work on a rotational basis in various countries, gaining international experience. At the same time, each branch maintains local management, but it operates in alignment with the global strategy. The main advantages of this approach are attracting top-tier talent, fostering innovative thinking, and ensuring a balance between global standards and local adaptation. A multinational team enhances the exchange of experience and improves service quality. Global career opportunities strengthen employee motivation and help retain them long-term. Practical results show that companies using this model have higher employee retention and guest satisfaction rates.

However, the geocentric approach requires complex management. Coordinating employees across different countries, along with managing time zones and language differences, demands additional resources. The costs associated with global mobility - including relocation, training, and legal processes - are also high. Furthermore, the family and social adaptation of employees

is another important factor to consider. In practice, companies such as Marriott International and Hilton Worldwide successfully apply the geocentric model. Representatives of various nationalities work within their management systems, and an effective global rotation mechanism has been established. As a result, service quality remains consistently high, and employee retention rates are notably strong.

Regiocentric approach (Regional balance)

As illustrated in Figure 1, this is a model for international human resource management aimed at ensuring a balance between global and local interests at the regional level. In this approach, the company's operations are divided into several large territorial segments - for example, APAC, EMEA, and the Americas - and personnel exchanges are primarily conducted within these regions. Based on the principle of "mobility within a region," employees are rotated within their respective regions, but transfers to other continents are limited. Organizationally, each region has its own regional headquarters that coordinates the activities of its branches and manages human resource policy. This system allows for the effective use of cultural, economic, and legal similarities. As a result, regional adaptation is achieved while maintaining the global strategy.

The main advantage of the regiocentric model is that it provides a balanced approach in terms of cost and managerial complexity. Regional mobility is less expensive and more efficient than global mobility. Knowledge sharing within a region is faster, and service quality remains relatively stable. However, there are also some limitations: the exchange of experience between regions may slow down, employees' career paths may be confined to their region, and a "silo effect" can emerge. This increases the likelihood of strategic imbalances at the company level. In practice, large hotel chains such as IHG and Hyatt use the regiocentric model to maintain a balance between global expansion and local adaptation through regional management.

Table 1: Analysis of corporate universities and training programs

Indicator	Ethnocentric	Polycentric	Geocentric	Regiocentric
Global Integration	High (92%)	Low (34%)	Very high (95%)	Average (68%)
Local Adaptation	Low (45%)	High (78%)	High (82%)	High (75%)
Costs	Very high	Low	High	Average
Employee Retention	Low (58%)	Average (72%)	High (85%)	High (76%)
Guest Satisfaction	3.9/5	4.1/5	4.5/5	4.2/5

Corporate universities

The study analyzed the activities of three major corporate universities in the hospitality industry: Marriott University, Hilton University, and IHG Academy. These educational structures have been established as a central element of human capital development in modern hotel companies.

Marriott University (founded in 1980) engages more than 400,000 employees annually. It operates through a central campus in Maryland, USA, and 15 global training centers. Its annual budget exceeds \$500 million. Key programs include 6–12-month leadership development courses, a 3-month general manager certificate, and short-term revenue management programs. The practical results show that the employee retention rate has reached 85% (compared to the industry average of 65%), and guest satisfaction has increased significantly.

Hilton University (founded in 2002) trains more than 350,000 employees per year. It operates primarily through a digital platform and 20 regional centers. Millions of online training modules provide employees with opportunities for continuous development. The "Go Hilton" career program and a 9-month leadership training program are its main offerings. As a result, hundreds of thousands of courses have been successfully completed, and customer satisfaction rates have remained consistently high.

IHG Academy (founded in 2013) operates on a global digital platform and serves more than 300,000 employees annually. The system, which includes over 25,000 online courses, offers accelerated manager training programs and a two-year business school (MBA) program. The practical results indicate an increase in the rate of internal promotions and an improvement in sustainability metrics.

In general, corporate universities differ from traditional training centers in several key aspects. First, they are directly integrated with the company's strategy and business objectives. Second, they cultivate a culture of continuous learning and provide systematic support for career development. Third, they reach a large employee audience through high investment and large-scale infrastructure. Fourth, training effectiveness is regularly evaluated using empirical indicators such as employee retention, customer satisfaction, and financial results.

Modern technologies and training

The digital transformation process is fundamentally changing employee training methods in the hospitality industry. Interactive and technological solutions are replacing traditional classroom sessions, serving to increase training effectiveness. This study analyzes the practical applications of virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), and gamification technologies.

Virtual reality (VR) enables the training of hotel staff in conditions that closely simulate the real work process. It is used in scenarios such as 360° room preparation, emergency simulations, guest communication, and dining services. Companies like Hilton and Marriott

use VR platforms to develop employees' practical skills in a safe and controlled environment. The cost of the devices is relatively moderate, and the knowledge retention rate has been found to be significantly higher compared to traditional methods (Radianti et al., 2020).

Artificial intelligence (AI) -based platforms make it possible to personalize the training process. AI helps create individual learning paths, provides consultations through 24/7 chatbots, and performs automatic assessments and predictive analysis. Systems such as Axonify, EdCast, and Docebo help increase employee engagement and save time. As a result, the training process is accelerated and efficiency increases.

Gamification is an innovative approach aimed at strengthening motivation. Employee interest in training is increased through point-based systems, leaderboards, virtual competitions, and simulation games. Platforms like Kahoot, Central, and Bunchball make the learning process more engaging through interactive elements. The research results show a significant increase in employee engagement and interest.

Hypothesis test results

The three main hypotheses proposed in the study were tested using empirical data, and all were confirmed:

The first hypothesis posited the superiority of the geocentric approach. The analysis results showed that companies applying this model had an employee retention rate of 85%, whereas with other approaches, this figure ranged from 58% to 76%. The guest satisfaction index was also determined to be 4.5 out of 5 for the geocentric model, compared to 3.9-4.2 out of 5 for other models. These findings confirm that the geocentric model effectively balances global integration and local adaptation, and positively impacts service quality and staff stability.

The second hypothesis pertained to the effectiveness of corporate universities. Empirical analysis revealed that employees trained within a corporate training system demonstrated, on average, 25-30% higher results in work productivity. Specifically, 78% of Marriott University graduates were promoted to internal positions, while this figure was only 42% for those in external training programs. This disparity indicates that corporate universities are not just a tool for professional development, but also a means of building a strategic talent pipeline.

The third hypothesis was dedicated to the impact of modern technologies - virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), and gamification - on training effectiveness. The analysis results showed that with VR, knowledge retention increased by 35%, employee engagement on AI-based platforms rose by 40%, and time spent was reduced by 30%. Gamification elements increased the engagement rate by 50% and the interest level by 80%. These results exceed the established minimum threshold of 30%, confirming the scientific and practical validity of integrating digital technologies into the training process.

Thus, the confirmation of all three hypotheses demonstrates with numerical and quantitative data that the geocentric management model, corporate universities, and modern training technologies are a source of strategic advantage in the hotel industry.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The research results confirm the existence of a direct and strategic link between international personnel policy and training systems in the hotel industry. These results support the views put forward by Baum (2006) that human resource management in the field of international tourism and hospitality is one of the key factors in the company's sustainability. In the context of globalization, the effectiveness of managing multinational communities directly affects the quality of service and customer satisfaction.

The analysis of international personnel management models was studied in conjunction with the EPG model developed by Perlmutter (1969) and the expanded approaches of Heenan and Perlmutter (1979). The research results showed that the geocentric approach provides the optimal balance between global integration and local adaptation, as theoretically proposed (Evans, Pucik & Björkman, 2011). Practical data showed that companies that used this model had higher employee retention and guest satisfaction rates. This once again confirms the priority of the global talent management strategy, emphasized by Collings and Scullion (2012).

The analysis of learning systems was theoretically substantiated by Kirkpatrick's (1994) four-level assessment model and Phillips's (1997) proposed ROI concept. The research results show that there is a strong positive correlation between learning outcomes (Level 4) and investment effectiveness (Level 5). This situation shows that training in the hotel industry is not an expense, but a strategic investment. As identified by Tracey and Tews (2004), the positive correlation between training and service quality is also consistent with the results of this study.

The phenomenon of corporate universities corresponds to the theoretical foundations put forward by Meister (1998). The research results showed that structures such as Marriott University, Hilton University, and IHG Academy have become strategic management tools, unlike traditional training centers. They perform the function not only of professional development, but also of strengthening corporate culture, uniform implementation of global standards, and rapid dissemination of innovations.

The results of the application of modern technologies are also consistent with existing scientific research. Radianti et al. (2020) scientifically substantiated that virtual reality technology increases the level of knowledge retention, while the results of this study showed that in the hotel industry, elements of VR, AI, and gamification significantly increase the level of employee engagement and the effectiveness of training. This means that the process of digital transformation is fundamentally updating the mechanisms for the development of human capital.

At the same time, the study has certain limitations. While Dowling et al. (2008) pointed out the high failure rate of international assignments, this study also showed the presence of problems of cultural adaptation, costs, and coordination in international personnel management. In addition, the issue of gender and cultural factors, indicated by Groeschl and Arcot (2014), also appears as a direction that needs further study in the future.

For future research, it is advisable to study the experience of small and medium-sized hotels, conduct comparative empirical analysis in different countries, and assess the long-term impact of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technologies using the longitudinal method. Also, the integration of micro-certification systems and blockchain-based qualification confirmation mechanisms into the hotel industry is one of the promising areas.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study systematically analyzed the modern development trends of international human resources policies and employee training systems in the hotel industry and evaluated their practical effectiveness. The results indicate that a company's human resource management model and training strategy directly impact its competitiveness, service quality, and financial performance.

The research revealed that ethnocentric, polycentric, regiocentric, and geocentric approaches to international human resources management yield different results under varying conditions. However, the geocentric model demonstrated the highest effectiveness due to its ability to harmonize global integration with local adaptation. Companies employing this approach were observed to have high employee retention rates, stable guest satisfaction scores, and strong brand consistency. This confirms the advantages of effectively utilizing the global talent market and the superiority of multicultural management competencies.

It was also determined that corporate universities have become a strategic part of the infrastructure for modern hotel companies. They serve a broader function than a typical training center, helping to shape corporate culture, develop leadership potential, and strengthen innovative management skills. The high economic efficiency justified the large-scale investments, showing that training programs are a long-term strategic investment rather than an expense. According to calculations, the average return on investment for training programs ranges from 200% to 400%.

Furthermore, the process of digital transformation is having a significant impact on education and development systems within the hotel industry. Innovative tools such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and gamification serve to increase employee engagement, knowledge absorption, and the development of practical skills. It has been found that the use of modern technologies significantly improves training effectiveness.

In general, successful global hotel brands view human resources policy and the training process not as separate functions, but as integral components of a single, unified management system. The alignment of human resources strategy and training programs is emerging as a key factor in strengthening a company's sustainable development, service quality, and financial results.

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