



# Coastal Tourism in Cox's Bazar and its Socio-economic & Socio-cultural Impacts on *Rakhaine* Community, Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** Tourism plays a significant role in national economy of a country. Bangladesh has abundant opportunity to coastal tourism which impacts on greater livelihood at diversified pathways. The aimed of this study was to observe the nature of coastal tourism in Cox's Bazar Bay of Bengal and its impacts on the people of *Rakhaine* community who live adjacent to the offshore. Sample survey, in-depth interview and focus group discussion methods were applied to collect the quantitative and qualitative data. Due to the frequent visit by tourists, new avenues of scope and opportunities has been emerged in the Cox's Bazar coastal area and some of the *Rakhaine* people were engaged themselves in new occupations leaving their traditional ones behind. A significant number of *Rakhaine* people were involved in tourism related hotel business, handicraft production, and small business which help them to maintain a better livelihood. However, it was also observed that the rapid growth of tourism has been created opportunities for the *Rakhaine* people due to their traditional dance, music and other festivals that are becoming more popular to the tourists. Besides tourism, an increase a little bit threat existence in *Rakhaine*'s culture. It was concluded that socio-cultural linkage created between tourist and *Rakhaine* culture, and due to improved communication, transportation and other means of information technology, coastal tourism connected them globally with positive socio-economic development.

**Keywords:** Tourism, *Rakhaine* Community, Livelihood, Bay of Bengal, Cox's Bazar

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world. It has expanded to a greater extent over the last 50 years. The World Coast Conference (1993) recognized tourism as one of the world's largest single industry, and estimated that it constitutes about 5-6% of the combined gross national product of all nations [1]. Clean water, healthy

coastal habitats, and a safe, secure, and enjoyable environment are clearly fundamental to successful coastal tourism. Similarly, bountiful living marine resources (fish, shellfish, wetlands, coral reefs, etc.) are of critical importance to most recreational experiences. Thus, the term 'coastal tourism' embraces the full range of tourism, leisure, and recreationally oriented activities that take place in the coastal zone and the offshore coastal waters [2, 3]. Coastal areas are

transitional areas between the land and sea which is most visited by tourists and in many coastal areas tourism presents the most important economic activity. Massive influxes of tourists, often to a relatively small area, have a huge negative impacts and implications like pollution, waste, contaminates water and puts local infrastructure and habitats under enormous pressure. In many areas, massive developments have created uncongenial atmosphere, unplanned developments of airports, marine drive, resorts, and golf courses [4, 5].

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported in 2013 that the travel and tourism industry in Bangladesh directly generated 1,281,500 jobs in 2012 or 1.8 percent of the country's total employment [6]. According to the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) the national tourism organization of Bangladesh, enjoyed a 6.36 percent annual growth rate of tourist arrivals during the last decade [7].

Cox's Bazar is one of the most attractive tourist spots & the longest natural sea beach in the world (approx. 120 km. long) [7]. Miles of golden sands, towering cliffs, surfing waves, rare conch shells, colorful pagodas, Buddhist temples and tribes, delightful seafood-this is Cox's Bazar, the tourist capital of Bangladesh. Millions of foreigners and natives visit this coastal city every year and interacting with the people of minority ethnic community people socially, politically, economically and culturally.

Therefore, a number of hotel, guest house, and motel have been built and lots of people are involved in these hospitality and customer service type business. Some people engage in fishing and collecting sea-foods and sea products. A number of people are also involved in the transportation business for tourists. However, the potential socio-cultural stress produced by tourism affects the local identity and distinct cultural values of the local communities especially the *Rakhaine* people.

Bangladesh is the habitat of a number of ethnic communities. These ethnic communities have their own social patterns that are imparted with their special culture, traditions, belief and taboos. They perform dance and songs at the time of the feast [8]. Compared to the other ethnic communities, *Rakhaine* community is also determined by their special and distinct structural and functional characteristics of its own.

*Rakhaine* community is origin of South Western Burma. They were tortured and haunted by Muang pirates and compelled to set sail towards the land by boats crossing the vast north eastern Bay of Bengal. They landed over the coastal area and gradually built up shelters in south-eastern parts of Bangladesh. Particularly at Ramau, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, Taltali in Barguna and Golachipa and Khepupara in Patuakhali area in the southern region [9].

Tourist's choices and decisions regarding their travel to a country depends some repelling factors [10]. Hossain (1999) found that Bangladesh tourism industry and its market have failed to grow properly due to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient facilities at destinations, and inaccessibility to

some destinations [11, 12].

Rapid growth of tourism in Cox's Bazar coastal areas creates opportunities for the *Rakhaine* people to come in contact with the tourists and serve them in different ways to make their short stay enjoyable. It is true that tourism is a threat to the existence of the *Rakhaine* and at the same time the *Rakhaine* culture, their traditional dance, music and other festivals are becoming more popular to the tourists. Tourism can also improve the preservation and transmission of cultural and historical traditions. Contributing to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources can bring usually the chance to protect local heritage or to revitalize native cultures, for instance by regenerating traditional arts and crafts.

The sub-culture of the *Rakhaine* community living in the country's southern coastal region is now on the verge of extinction for multifarious reasons [10]. The present study thus focuses on exploring the socio-economic and socio-cultural impacts of coastal tourism on the people of *Rakhaine* community who live adjacent to Cox's Bazar town on the shore of the Bay of Bengal.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design

The study has followed a two-fold design for gathering both the quantitative and qualitative data based on sociological perspectives. Quantitative approach is descriptive and analytical in nature, therefore, a sample survey with related inferential statistics was used. In this research the social condition, belief systems, standard of living, family structure, capitalistic formation, changing pattern etc. were taken under consideration of the qualitative analysis.

### 2.2. Selection of the Study Area

*Rakhaine* people have concentrated in different parts of coastal areas of Cox's Bazar. Some *Rakhaine* people live very close to urban area includes Tekpara, Borobazar, Kangpara and Zadipahar and some are live in the remote villages of Uttar *Rakhaine* para, Daksin *Rakhaine* para, Maiddyia *Rakhaine* para of Chowphaldandi Union.

### 2.3. Unit of Study and Study Population

The unit of study is the *Rakhaine* household. There are about 800 households and 6,000 people in *Rakhaine* community of which about 410 households live in Chowphaldandi Union and about 390 households in Pourashava area. The total number of males is about 2,880 and females are about 3,120. The ratio of male and female is 100:106 [13].

### 2.4. Sample Population

The study has selected 200 *Rakhaine* households as sample

which represented about 25% of the total. These are taken as purposive sampling i.e. 100 households are taken from Chowphaldandi Union (rural) whereas 100 households from Pourashava (urban).

### 2.5. Data Collection

In this study, mixed methods have been used in data collection. In the survey phase, the unit of study is *Rakhaine* households, which are the basic and fundamental aggregate units of ownership of fishing, consumption, and property holding and mutual support.

### 2.6. Household Survey

The survey schedule is used to collect information about the household composition and occupation, economic status, land ownership, type of houses and roof, possession of luxury items such as gold jewelry, watches, television, refrigerator, bike and children's education.

### 2.7. Interviewing Key Informants

Besides household survey, group discussions are held with persons of different social and economic strata included fishermen, fish traders, "nappi" producers, local grocers, *mahajans*, *panchayat* members, and service holders, beauticians of the beauty parlor and tourist guides.

### 2.8. Researcher's Observation

The researcher has participated and observed the detailed activities of people including the physical, cultural, social, economic, political, religious characteristics of the community. The fieldwork was completed over a period of March 2010 to February 2011, covering all the seasons. In order to fill up the gaps and check inconsistencies, study was conducted during the last part of November 2011 and again in January 2012.

### 2.9. The Control Group and Experimental Group

The control group (rural) constitutes the households of Chowphaldandi union, where apparently there is no influence of tourists because of its remote location and difficult terrain. The experimental group (urban) represents the sample households of Cox's Bazar Pourashava where there is an impact of tourism in the livelihoods of *Rakhaine* people.

### 2.10. Analysis of Data

The collected data is processed and analyzed in the statistical process with the help of computer program i.e. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

## 3. Results and Discussion

Cox's Bazar, the tourist capital of Bangladesh is one of the most attractive tourist spot & the longest sea beach in the world. The major source of economy of Cox's Bazar district

is tourism. Millions of foreigners and Bangladeshi natives visit this coastal city every year. Therefore, a number of hotels, guest houses, and motels have been built in the city and coastal region. Lots of people are involved in these hospitality and customer service type business. The potential socio-cultural and distinct ethnic community the *Rakhaines* of the coastal areas of Cox's Bazar are observed in various activities.

### 3.1. Socio-demographic Information

The age structure of the *Rakhaines* showed that about 13.75% of the total population are below 10 years of age, about 74.21% belong to the age group of 10-59 years and about 12.04% are 60 years and above. This also shows the nature of demographic dependency in the area. About 25.8% of the population are found to be demographically dependent (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographic dependency in the urban and rural areas in *Rakhaine* Community.

Age in Years	Urban (n=636)		Rural (n=651)		Total (n=1287)	
	N	%	N	%	n	%
0-9*	83	13.05	94	14.44	177	13.75
10-17	96	15.09	113	17.36	209	16.24
18-39	207	32.55	225	34.56	432	33.57
40-59	166	26.10	148	22.73	314	24.40
>60*	84	13.21	71	10.91	155	12.04
Total	636	100	651	100	1287	100

\* indicates dependency

Most of the *Rakhaine* women are engaged in domestic activities. Some women are engaged in gainful activities (Table 2). The livelihood of the family members is primarily dependent on the incomes of the male members. Some belong below 10 and above 60 years of age use to participate in gainful activities.

**Table 2.** Earning members in the urban and rural areas in *Rakhaine* Community.

Earning member's sex	Urban (n=439)		Rural (n=447)		Total (n=886)	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Male	243	55.35	254	56.82	497	56.08
Female	196	44.65	193	43.18	389	43.92
Total	439	100	447	100	886	100

Table 2 also showed that total 886 (Male-497, Female-389) out of 1287 members of the household are engaged in gainful activities. Most of the *Rakhaine* women are engaged in supporting occupation such as, helping in *nappi* production and fishing related activities, making crafts, helping in small business, tailoring and others.

### 3.2. Impact on Economy

Tourism at Cox's Bazar has become a significant or even an essential part of the local economy. The rapid expansion of tourism generates jobs directly through hotels, restaurants, taxis, souvenir sales, street vendor, tourist guides, entertaining activities and indirectly through the

supply of goods and services needed by tourism-related businesses conducted by tour operators. The rich *Rakhaines* are observed to establish shops, beauty parlor, restaurants and residential hotels in the area. The landless and destitute people work in fish processing.

Table 3 showed that most of the respondents (44%) are small businessmen. The percentage of *Nappi* businessmen and service holders are 22.5% and 8% respectively. The fishermen constitute about 15% of the households of

*Rakhaine* community. Some are engaged in weaving and tailoring. Coastal tourism has widely expanded in the urban area of Cox's Bazar. But in the rural area it is not expanding in the same pace as it is observed in the urban area of Cox's Bazar. As a result of frequent visit by tourists from other areas of the country as well as from abroad new avenues of work are emerging in the Cox's Bazar coastal area and some of the *Rakhaine* people are observed to engage themselves in new occupations leaving their traditional ones.

Table 3. Occupation of the respondents and their wife.

Occupations	Respondent Own			Respondent's Wife		
	Urban% (n=100)	Rural% (n=100)	Total% (n=200)	Urban% (n=100)	Rural% (n=100)	Total% (n=200)
Small business	71	17	44.0	21	6	13.5
<i>Nappi</i> production/ <i>Nappi</i> business	1	44	22.5	0	34	17
Service holders	14	2	8.0	28	2	15
Fishing	0	30	15.0	0	6	3
Tailor	2	1	1.5	-	-	-
Handicraft	2	2	2.0	4	2	3
Tea stall/small shop	3	2	2.5	4	2	3
Others	7	2	4.5	7	2	4.5
Housewife	-	-	-	36	46	41
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Occupation of the respondent's wife showed that about 41% of the wife of the respondents are house wives. Of them 46% are rural and 36% are from urban areas. However, comparatively wives of urban respondents have a tendency of being engaged in various types of gainful activities. Most of the rural respondent's wives are engaged in traditional *nappi* production and fishing related activities (Table 3).

The income distribution indicates an overview of the economic structure of the studied area (Table 4). It was found that 50% of the rural households annual per capita income was less than Tk. 50,000.00 whereas in urban areas it was only 10%. On the basis of the reported family incomes, about 30 percent of the households are found to be poor, about 61 percent moderately solvent and only 9 percent are classified as solvent.

Table 4. Annual Per Capita family income.

Income (Tk.)	Urban (n=100)	Rural (n=100)	Total% (n=200)
<50,000	10	50	30
50,001-100,000	23	31	27
100,001- 150,000	30	14	22
150,001-200,000	20	04	12
200,001-250,000	9	01	5
250,001-300,000	6	0	3
>3,00,000	2	0	1
Total	100	100	100

It is observed that part of the tourism income comes from the informal employment. As of other local inhabitants the *Rakhaine* boys and girls are found to be engaged in such activities leaving their paternal occupations. However, there occurs some sort of job level friction in the newly created job market. Due to a lack of professional training, many low-paid tourism related jobs go to local people while higher-paying and more prestigious managerial jobs go to trained personnel

from outside the locality. Local people increase their influence on tourism development, as well as improve their jobs and earning prospects through tourism-related professional training and development of business and organizational skills.

### 3.3. Socio-cultural Impacts

There are potential socio-cultural stresses produced by tourism in the coastal areas of Cox's Bazar. Due to flourishing of coastal tourism, various market forces and the era of consumerism, the *Rakhaine* community has been slowly changing their attitude towards modernity in respect to their housing, dress habits and other material as well as non-material elements of culture that clearly shows a clear cut departure from self-producing economy to market economy. Again, the expansion of tourism activities, tourist visiting and sociocultural exchanges triggers economic growth, while it causes environmental degradation and socio-cultural problems [14].

### 3.4. Housing and Living Status

*Rakhaines* followed their traditional architectural design to build up their houses and specially emphasize on the health aspect in the construction of the dwelling rooms. They make different habitable rooms according to age and sex group. Houses with brick built walls and sanitation system within the houses are observed to be built by some of the wealthy *Rakhaines* especially who have the ability to multiply their income by involving them in tourism related economy.

Coastal tourism is flourishing and it has been impacting the life style of *Rakhaine* community and members. It was observed that there is a relationship between pattern of living status and household's yearly income (Table 5).

Table 5. Living status and family income in the urban and rural areas.

Annual Income (Tk)		Living Status*									
		Color TV	Radio/CD Player	Bi-Cycle	Motor Cycle	Wrist watch	Ornaments	Sofa Set	Freeze	Computer	Mobile Phone
<50,000.00	U(n=10)	2	6	7	1	8	2	-	-	-	2
	R(n=50)	12	38	34	-	27	3	-	-	1	115
50,001.00-	U(n=23)	13	18	17	2	20	3	-	7	6	8
	R(n=31)	14	24	23	1	28	6	1	-	2	6
100,000.00	U(n=30)	25	28	19	4	30	6	2	13	12	13
	R(n=14)	8	9	12	3	14	5	2	3	3	14
150,001.00-	U(n=20)	14	18	18	5	20	8	5	16	14	38
	R(n=4)	4	4	3	2	4	4	2	2	2	7
200,001.00-	U(n=9)	7	8	4	3	7	5	3	4	4	17
	R(n=1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
250,001.00-	U(n=6)	6	5	4	5	6	6	5	6	5	7
	R(n=0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
300,000.00	U(n=2)	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
	R(n=0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total	U(n=100)	69	85	70	22	93	32	17	48	43	90
	R(n=100)	39	76	73	7	74	19	6	6	9	38

\*Calculated value of Lambda ( $\lambda$ ) = 0.79 [U = Urban and R = Rural]

Examining through cross tabulation, it has analyzed the association of income and using modern amenities by following the measurement through Lambda with value of 0.79. It is found that the association between patterns of living status of the various households and the household incomes was high. Therefore, it can be said that household living status largely depends on available modern amenities and household's yearly income.

3.5. Education System

Rakhaines in the rural areas did not have any elementary and secondary level educational institutions. Now-a-days, there are different educational institutions in the rural and urban areas. They are giving more importance to education than previous time. Now they are sending their children to educational institutions. They were well educated in their own Rakhaine language besides that they were learning Bangali and English.

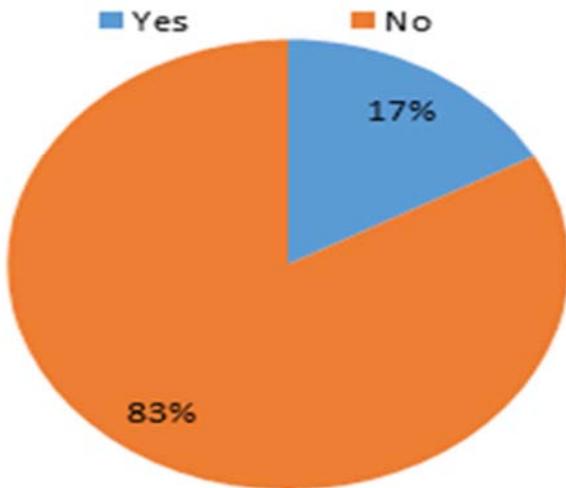


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by sending children to schools.

3.6. Marital System

Rakhaines of Cox's Bazar coastal area followed some established form of existing marital system. Usually, they followed some customs and traditions in the selection process of bride and they also follow rituals relating to the marriage ceremony. Traditionally Rakhaines have been following *saleoplo* (systematic marriage) and *Aisia* (love marriage) in their community life. There is no dowry system in the community, but at the time of marriage the bridegroom has to present gold (ornaments) to the bride according to his ability. Rakhaines have a long tradition to forbid marrying outside the community. If anyone marries outside the community he or she is supposed to be excommunicated from the community. It was found that a very insignificant percentage (1.40%) has marital relations with other community or religion (Table 6) and it is gradually changing as a result of coastal tourism. Moreover, compared to the rural Rakhaines, urban Rakhaines have a tendency towards outside-community marriage.

Table 6. Pattern of marriage in urban and rural families.

Pattern of marriage	Urban community		Rural community		Total* (n=446)	
	n	%	N	%	n	%
Marriage within same community	216	98.18	224	99.12	440	98.65
Marriage in a different community	4	1.82	2	0.98	6	1.40
Marriage within same village/para	113	51.36	187	82.74	300	67.05
Marriage within the town (within same district)	96	43.64	35	15.49	131	29.57
Marriage in other district	11	5.00	4	1.77	15	3.39

\*\* Total No. of marriage = 446 (urban= 220, rural = 226)

### 3.7. Dress

*Rakhaines* have their traditional dresses. For the men and women there are different types of dresses. *Thbing* (cloth/loongi for women) is for women covering lower part of the body. Men use *angee* (shirt) and women use *maangee* (blouse). Now-a-days the *Rakhaine* boys wear pant-shirt, loongis, T-shirt etc. like the Bengalees and some girls wear T-shirt with thami. The educated girls put on salwar, Kamiz and orna like the Bangali girls.

### 3.8. Food Habits

The *Rakhaines* have no taboo about food. They are used to all kinds of food. The *Rakhaines* of Cox's Bazar have become more accustomed to taking rice, fish, beef, mutton etc. There have some special foods such as *Nappi* (Pest of dried fish), *Holza* (Made from various roots of plants), *Moonde* (rice noodles), *Crnpie* (made of dry shrimp), *Hmoo* (mushroom and a type of curry), *Khowswel* (egg noodles), *Kythemu* (made from rice powder) etc. The other important foods of *Rakhaines* are pork, shark flesh, crabs, frog, beef, buffalo meat, hare etc. Most of the *Rakhaines* smoke, and drink locally made wine (rice juice). But they are not addicted to opium, hashish, heroin etc. Besides, in the process of working with the tourists some of the *Rakhaines* especially in the urban areas are getting accustomed to fast food and drinks.

### 3.9. Festivals

The *Rakhaines* observe many social and religious festivals like *Shang-Greng Utshob* (New-year celebration), *Maha Thon Gran Powe'* (Water Festival), *Waso-labray* (Ashari purnima), *Kasum Phoea* (Buddha purnima), *Katling phoea* (presentation ceremony), *Waso Phoea* (meditation festival) and *Rus purnima* (Sea bath festival) etc. *Rakhaines* used to observe their traditional festivals mainly with the participation of the members of their own community. But now they are found to be enthusiastic not only to observe various community festivals of their own but also the festivals like Bengali and English New year.

### 3.10. Community Entertainment

The study finds a significant change (like enjoy modern songs through radio, cassette player and television) in the tradition of community entertainment of the *Rakhaines*. It was found that 49% of the respondents have color TV and 56% of the respondents have cassette player. It is found that most of the respondents (64%) have mobile phone (Table 5). Thus the access to the modern mass media is available among the *Rakhaines* and it has helped bring about changes in their traditional outlook and way of life.

**Cultural clash:** As is observed, tourism at Cox's Bazar does not go all even. There are arises some sort of cultural clashes between the tourists and the locals.

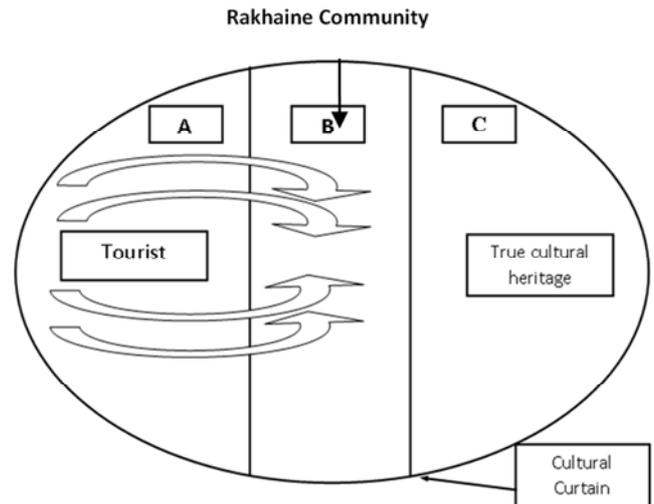


Figure 2. The level of cultural clashes.

Figure 2 showed the arena is divided into three distinct areas (A) is the previous level of tourist penetration into the host culture (*Rakhaine*); (B) is the new level of cultural penetration that is considered to be authentic by the tourist but is, in fact, staged authenticity and (C) the true cultural heritage of *Rakhaine* society that maintains its integrity by keeping tourists on the other side of the firewall curtain. Tourists are found to spend more for getting things which they usually do not have at home. Tourist's tendency towards overpayment for services they need and product they want to purchase usually go against the interest of the local people. Sometimes it becomes unaffordable to the local people to spend in the same way as a tourist is ready to pay for getting the thing. Moreover, tourists often fail to respect customs and moral values of the local people.

## 4. Conclusions

The potential socio-cultural stress produced by tourism affects the local identity and distinct cultural values of the *Rakhaine* people. Due to growth of coastal tourism in Cox's Bazar coastal area, the *Rakhaine* community has been changing in a slower pace. They have a tendency to defend their value system such as religion, customs, mores and folkways against the intervention of modern culture. There are a few among them who are found to adopt occupations, such as fish trading and shop keeping, as the principal means of livelihood. Both in the urban and rural area, the small businessmen and service holders are relatively better off than fishermen. Festivals of *Rakhaines* are becoming more popular to the tourists which leads the *Rakhaines* to make on-payment display of their local cultural traditions for the tourist's pleasure and thus turn local culture into commodities. Now, population of the *Rakhaine* community become increasingly literate. Due to the impact of modern technology, communication, media and development program interventions for the expansion of tourism in Cox's Bazar coastal region, many changes have been occurring in the recent time and the *Rakhaines* are trying to assimilate

them with their social, cultural and economic life. As a result of promotion of tourism, they have lost many of their community traits and have adopted many of the elements of global culture.

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