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## Destination Management Approach for Sustainable Tourism Development in Kazakhstan

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### Abstract

The research objectives include a review of international and national organizations in the field of tourism destination management; analyzes of cluster policy and public-private partnerships (PPPs), national tourism agencies and administrations of Kazakhstan; key factors identification of the DMOs effectiveness for the domestic and inbound tourism development in Kazakhstan. The article discusses the industry management system through DMOs, which at various levels play a key role in tourism destinations development. The author considers three levels of DMOs: national, regional and local; their goals, objectives, activities, legal status and budget, possible forms of management, role and authority. Cluster policy and PPPs as a form of management and development of tourism in Kazakhstan are new approaches. The author researched the principles of DMO management in the scientific and business environment. Based on the analysis, the affiliation of Kazakhstani DMOs by the level of destination management were identified, and the relevancy of implementation the DMO management model for sustainable tourism development in Kazakhstan was also justified.

**Keywords:** tourism destination, destination management organization (DMO), tourism management, public-private partnership.

## Introduction

Before we consider the system of tourism destination management, implemented through certain mechanisms and practices for planning, developing and ensuring the competitiveness of tourism destinations (Goncharova, 2010), which are institutionalized in the form of organizations for the management of tourist destinations (Destination Management Organizations), we briefly outline the meaning of tourism destinations.

World Tourism Organization (2019) noted the concept definition “tourism destination” is a “physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness” (p.14).

Another dominant modern approach to the destination is that places get meaning through the processes of production and consumption, which bring together people from all over the world, contextualizing their experience. Concerning the tourism destination and its development, this thesis means a unified planning approach, involving various stakeholders (tourists, representatives of the tourism industry, residents, authorities, science and education institutions) in this process. Buhalis (2000) considered the tourism destination as a system primary role assigned to the tourism market stakeholders, their business activity and interaction among themselves (p. 99). Saraniemi and Kylanen (2011, p. 135) define tourism destination as “a set of institutions and actors located in space physically or virtually, and the changing products of social, political and economic practices”.

According to the World Tourism Organization (2007) destination management is “the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourism destination (attractions, amenities, access, marketing and pricing)”.

Responsible and sustainable destination management should entail a process that effectively and harmoniously addresses the interactions between the visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them and the environment in a broad sense (natural and cultural resources).

In the *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, Anderson (2000) considers that the term *destination management organization* (DMO) refers “to either a convention and visitor bureau, a state/provincial/regional tourism office or a national tourist organization/ administration. These organizations are the entities mandated to undertake the process of tourism destination management. DMOs have become the principal organizations responsible for leading, coordinating, stimulating and monitoring tourism development and marketing for a destination area.”

UNWTO (2019) describes the definition “destination management organization” (DMO) as “the leading organizational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders and professionals and facilitates partnerships towards a collective destination vision” (p.16).

The abbreviation DMO, in foreign literature has two options:

- 1) Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), citing Pike (2004) is “an organization of all levels (national, regional, local), responsible for marketing the destination, except for government departments responsible for tourism policy and planning”.
- 2) Destination Management Organization.

As the role, expansion of powers and functions of these tourism organizations increased, the last option began to be used, which reflects the current understanding of DMO as the organization responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism destinations. DMO is an organization that is a strategic leader and coordinator of the destinations development by strengthening partnerships and cooperation of all stakeholders (tourism industry, universities,

authorities and the local community), and is a platform for e-business travel destinations. The main goal of DMO is life cycle management and ensuring the long-term competitiveness of tourism destinations (Goncharova & Kiryanova, 2011).

Previous studies provide only general characteristics of destination management organizations. The implementation of destination management tools, including national characteristics of mentality, public policy and the business climate within the country have not been researched. And also the mechanisms of interaction between organizations for DMO at various levels have not been studied. These objects are very important for the tourism development in Kazakhstan.

### Literature review

Cooper and Hall (2008) bring up the impossibility of governments to continue to coordinate and control all activities, including those related to hospitality and tourism, and the substantial shift from government to governance. This transformation has at its core the change of the relative role of governmental and public institutions related to: governmental agencies, welfare and public economic support systems, including sponsoring and subsidies, environmental, social and cultural projects, etc. Today, states tend to pull back and direct interventions tend to be replaced in this respect by the cooperation with the private sector enterprises and/or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such cooperation can imply the government or its departments and offices, state/public agencies and institutions, entirely/partially state-owned enterprises, the private sector, and NGOs. The assessment of the destination management system effectiveness achievement and acting model for incoming and domestic tourism development is still not enough studied.

The role of the state is that of encouraging the development of networks and partnerships and of steering them in the desired direction. Rhodes (1996, 1997) as quoted by Cooper and Hall (2008), presents the characteristics of governance:

organizations are interdependent; governance, as a concept, is wider than government, implying roles for non-state actors (such as: the private sector, NGOs, and stakeholders); consequently, the delimiting between the public sectors and all the other ones is rather unclear; network members interact continuously, needing to exchange resources and to negotiate shared purposes; network relations are based on mutual trust and preserved by the established interaction rules; many networks are self-organised and are significantly autonomous in relation with the government; governments can steer networks imperfectly and indirectly, although they do not occupy privileged positions within them. There is no mention of the differences in interaction between DMOs of all levels in different countries, taking into account their national and mental features.

Given the complexity of the networks and their heterogeneous structures, Jessop (1997), as cited by Cooper and Hall (2008), refers to *meta-governance*; this implies “the steering of multiple agencies and organizations, which although operating autonomously of one another, remain linked together through their involvement in common policy issues and associated funding and benefits”. Obviously, DMOs fit perfectly in such a context, as:

- DMOs are very often partially or fully funded by the states;
- DMOs can even belong to the formal governmental structure (as state agencies);
- DMOs play a key role in bringing together other public agencies, tourism producers and even destination communities for purposes closely related to tourist destination development and/or marketing;
- DMOs do not own the tourist products they develop, promote and sell (Cooper & Hall, 2008).

But there is no recommended PPPs model in which it will be possible to effectively involve all stakeholders. The benefits for entrepreneurs and local communities in implementing PPPs are not clearly described.

Shkira and Qirici (2013) point out at destination/local level “tourism stakeholders have gradually shifted focus from the traditional marketing and promotional functions to the more coordinated strategic approach of destination management.”

Citing Goeldner and Ritchie (2003), Minguzzi (2006) explains that “destination management consists of the integrated management of those processes necessary in establishing an exchange between a destination and its visiting tourists. Therefore, on one hand, it involves the management of services offered and tourist attraction factors, while, on the other hand, managing demand, dependent on tourist flow and customer satisfaction”. Further, given that more and more researchers argue the importance of the relationships between the different actors of the tourism destination, quoting Gunn (1994), Minguzzi (2006) shows that “the implementation and success of a tourism development plan is often based on the support of the stakeholders in the community, which include the citizens, entrepreneurs and community, leaders, guests”. How to evaluate the effectiveness and contribution of stakeholders to the destination management and how to attract the business community to more active participation, these questions are still open and not researched yet.

### **Methodology**

The author analyzed secondary sources, such as reports on destination management of the World Tourism Organization, as well as statistics, national reports and state programs of tourism development in Kazakhstan.

Over the past 10 years, the author has been monitoring the tourism development in Kazakhstan, according to the research there has been a dynamic growth in the international tourism development. This is due to the needs of tourists in leisure and recreation. One of the popular types of tourism for citizens of Kazakhstan is a beach tourism. The lack of seaside resorts, undeveloped infrastructure, transport inaccessibility and the huge distances between tourism destinations and cities, as well as the insufficient marketing promotion of Kazakhstan as a tourism destination and the absence of an authentic tourism product determine the prevalence of outbound tourism over domestic and incoming tourism. But over the past 3-4 years, the tendency has been changed, and incoming and domestic tourism has

begun to gain momentum. We believe this happened not only due to major MICE events in Kazakhstan, primarily due to state support for tourism development, simplification of administrative barriers to doing business, simplification of visa procedures for entry of foreign citizens, as well as a marketing policy to promote Kazakhstan on the international market and within country. In 2019 after devaluation in Kazakhstan, the national currency depreciated almost twice. The consequences of the influence of Covid-19 on the economy of Kazakhstan and tourism enterprises caused the citizens priorities displacement towards safety and health. Author is mentioning those reasons for the change in tourism trends development, and increasing the interest of the Kazakhstan citizens in the rest inside of the country.

### **Findings and Discussion**

As, the state program “Development of incoming and domestic tourism in Kazakhstan for 2019-2025” was adopted, a structure for promoting tourism in Kazakhstan was created, and visit centers in some regions of the country began to be created. Tourism development in Kazakhstan is still in developing process, therefore, government pay attention to studying successful international experience in the tourism development and promotion at different levels.

UNWTO (2007) highlighted three levels of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs):

1. *National Tourism Office or National Tourism Organization (NTO).*

In 1979, the World Tourism Organization (2007) introduced the term “national tourism administration” (NTA): a government, government agency or official organization responsible for tourism development at the national level. This term was used to distinguish between NTA and NTO: to reflect the new concept of tourism management at the national level and to emphasize the departure of most countries from the traditional system, where NTO is the natural and main body for promoting the destination, towards the new concept of NTA that marketing sees and promotion as one of many of its functions.

The NTO has two marketing tasks: to develop and form a tourist product or products of this destination and promote them in target markets. The approach to the development and promotion of a tourism destination should be based on marketing research, so a market-product pair is formed. Carrying out such work, the NTO acts on behalf of the entire destination and complements the development and efforts to promote tourist products of private tourism companies. In Kazakhstan the DMO at national level is National company Kazakh Tourism, a general coordinator and brand manager, responsible for promotion and institutional development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan. Activities of Kazakh Tourism are funded by the government.

## *2. Regional tourism organization (RTO).*

An organization whose responsibilities include the management and / or marketing of a region as a destination. The term “region” is used to mean a concentrated tourist space, such as a district, state, province, region, territory.

At the regional level, DMO should actively involve various stakeholders in solving the problems of the destination. The private sector is attracted by the opportunity to promote its product through DMO. In fulfilling its marketing role, DMO has its budget and is also a “bridge” between national organizations and the tourism industry. This is an important role since as long as the national tourism authorities are the single most visible player (subject) of the tourism market, the collective spending of the industry will be much larger. If the regional DMO can combine the resources of the private and public sectors, then they will mutually strengthen the strategic approach and can achieve great results with the same funding. When a regional DMO fully involves business in its programs, it plays the coordinating role of tourism activities at the state, oblast, and region levels. To do this, develop the mechanism of local tourist executive groups. Such groups should bring together a wide range of organizations (hotels, tour operators and travel agents, transport companies, restaurants and cafes, museums, professional associations, unions, clubs, etc.) to fulfill the role of DMO in managing and ensuring a high perceived



quality of the destination. The regional DMO should coordinate and stimulate the work of partners through the development of a joint Destination Management Plan and monitor the implementation of the tourism action plan at the regional level. In realizing this, DMO should listen to the opinion of local businesses and involve them in the process of planning and accomplishing tasks (World Tourism Organization, 2007).

In Kazakhstan, this function is performed by the Kazakhstan Tourism Association (KTA). KTA was created in 1999 in order to coordinate entrepreneur activity of commercial organizations, presentation and protection of mutual proprietary and other interests. The Association organizes protection of interests of its members under the state authorities, promotes the interests of its members and gives opportunity to participate in changes and supplementing the sectoral legal framework. The Association is accredited by the NCE RK Union «Atameken», also association presents sectoral project appraisal of normative legal acts, involving the interests of sectoral private entrepreneurship. KTA is nongovernment organization, funded by membership fees from local tour operators and travel agents (Kazakhstan Tourism Association, 2016).

### *3. Local Tourism Administration and Local Tourism Association.*

An organization providing management and / or marketing of a city or tourist center. There are several organizations in Kazakhstan, such as Turkestan Tourism Center, Visit Aqmola, Visit Almaty, etc.

Municipal state institutions include the Tourist Information Center, Turkestan Tourism Center (2020) for Management of Entrepreneurship, and Industrial and Innovative Development and Tourism of the South Kazakhstan Region. The main goals of the Tourist Information Center are general tourism of the region, comprehensive support of tourists, development of tourism entrepreneurship, creation of conditions for the regional tourism development, increasing the attractiveness of the region as a popular tourism destination in Kazakhstan and abroad, promoting the progress of the tourism industry and monitoring industry growth, search for new forms of tourism cooperation in the Kazakhstan and

international context, identifying the main players interested in the development of this industry, developing joint the action aimed at creating a modern and competitive tourism industry in Turkestan region, enhancing the tourist image of the region of its territory, as a significant factor contributing to the stability and socio-economic development of the region.

To achieve the above goals, the center performs the following tasks. Such as providing accessible and reliable information and marketing to improve regional tourism. Analysis of regional services, including those integrated with international experience.

Support for tourists through the Call-center makes it possible to uninterruptedly provide information at any time. This tool has advantages, as it allows tourists to receive information, as well as with the support of visa processing. It assists in obtaining legal and other types of assistance to foreign tourists. It also provides information on the selection of tourist routes and locations.

The tourist center “Visit Aqmola” is engaged in the formation and dissemination of information about the unique tourism potential; promotion, support of new business entities and their further information support of tourism activities in Akmola region and beyond.

Tourist hub “Visit Almaty” created for development of a comfortable information environment for tourists and guests of the city of Almaty and implementation of projects to promote the tourist potential of the city in the international and domestic markets. The functional features of tourism destination management in Kazakhstan are illustrated in table 1.

Table 1. Destination Management Organizations in Kazakhstan

<b>Kazakh Tourism</b>	<b>Kazakhstan tourism association</b>	<b>Tourist information centers</b> <b>Visit Almaty, Visit Aqmola</b>
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<p>1) tourism brand management of Kazakhstan.</p> <p>2) promotion of Kazakhstan as an international tourism destination.</p> <p>3) development and implementation of marketing strategies.</p> <p>4) the organization of anchor events that attract tourists.</p> <p>5) creating tourism portal of Kazakhstan.</p> <p>6) monitoring the quality of the travel services provided and preparing proposals for their improvement.</p> <p>7) data analytics to achieve compliance with the tourist experience obtained by the destination visitors.</p> <p>8) analysis of the entire spectrum of tourism activities.</p> <p>9) monitoring the existing structure and the number</p>	<p>1) promotion of Kazakhstan</p> <p>2) legislative framework formation</p> <p>3) legislative projects expert assessment</p> <p>4) support for small and medium-sized businesses development</p> <p>5) formation of the concept of Kazakhstan as a tourism destination</p> <p>6) promoting tourism security</p> <p>7) facilitating tourism formalities</p> <p>8) marketing research</p> <p>9) bridge between government and entrepreneurs</p> <p>10) quality standards development</p> <p>11) training, advanced training, certification of travel services</p> <p>12) event organization</p>	<p>1) Innovative management of the growth and development of the tourism industry. Definition and development of a tourism industry development strategy for the region.</p> <p>2) Ensuring a high-quality profile and highly effective online presence (capable of inducing a visitor to purchase services at the planning stage of a trip and during a stay) of tourism destinations on the Internet, designed for both local and foreign tourists.</p> <p>3) Maintenance work visit center.</p> <p>4) Coordination of international marketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attraction support</li> <li>• Promotion of the region/city as an exciting tourist destination for the long-distance flight destination market, together with the International Airport.</li> </ul> <p>5) Promotion of a region/city as a leading MICE destination in target markets.</p> <p>6) Promotion of a region/city in the B2B and B2C sectors.</p> <p>7) Internal marketing. Development of marketing programs and conducting marketing campaigns in the target market.</p>
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<p>of offers of tourism products.</p> <p>10) trends monitoring in tourism, timely reaction to changes.</p> <p>11) attracting investors for the implementation of tourism projects.</p> <p>12) ensuring the quality improvement of the tourism services.</p> <p>13) analysis of proposals for the development of quality standards for tourism products.</p> <p>14) the international organization of tourism and support.</p>		<p>8) Conducting campaigns aimed at maintaining the image of the center as a “lively, energetic” place attractive for visiting by residents and visitors. Informing the audience about the news and interesting events of the center.</p> <p>9) Implementation of event management.</p> <p>10) Development of a communication strategy for the destination.</p> <p>11) Providing a system of marketing information. Conducting market research and creating a database.</p> <p>12) Tourism product development. The development of tourist attractions.</p> <p>13) Ensuring and supporting public-private partnerships. Representation of the interests of partners in the public and commercial sectors through the implementation of most activities in collaboration with strategic partners: NTO, International Airport, airlines and local business.</p>
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*Source: Designed by author*

World Tourism Organization (2019) mentioned that many factors account for the increased focus on effective destination management, all of them urging destination management organizations (DMOs) to face and adapt to new challenges. From traditional marketing and promotion boards the trend is for these

entities to increasingly enlarge their scope to become all embracing DMOs, aiming to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of destinations within a harmonious relationship between the residents and visitors (p.32).

UNWTO (2019) has identified three areas of key performance in destination management at DMO level: Strategic Leadership, Effective Execution and Efficient Governance. To assess each of these three key performance areas UNWTO through has developed a set of criteria and indicators. The criteria summarized in the table 2 are the basis of the detailed set of 23 criteria that form the UNWTO.QUEST destination management organization Certification process (p.21).

Table 2. Criteria for effective destination management organizations according to UNWTO (2019, p.22-24).

Key performance areas of DMOs	Success criteria
1. Strategic leadership	7 Success criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tourism policy and/or strategic development plan</li> <li>- strategic vision</li> <li>- tourism knowledge and information</li> <li>- coordination during crisis</li> <li>- sustainable management programme</li> <li>- stakeholder partnerships</li> <li>- tourism culture promotion</li> </ul>
2. Effective Execution	11 Success criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regulation</li> <li>- destination leisure tourism</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- business tourism</li> <li>- information and communications technologies (ICTs)</li> <li>- tourism investment</li> <li>- competitiveness</li> <li>- entrepreneurship and innovation</li> <li>- promotional material</li> <li>- information services</li> <li>- human resources development</li> <li>- tourism quality</li> </ul>
3. Efficient Governance	<p>5 Success criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Plan</li> <li>- governance principles</li> <li>- finances</li> <li>- human resources management</li> <li>- using technology effectively</li> </ul>

### ***Legal Status, Financing, and Structure of DMOs***

There are a lot of DMOs and there is no universally recognized model. Historically, DMOs have emerged either as a state department or as an association of industry representatives. Recently, there has been a shift towards combining the efforts of the public and private sectors and creating partnerships to ensure the implementation of marketing programs and the development of the tourism industry. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) of any level (from national to local) are usually governed by a council of business representatives approved and accountable

to the authorities. As for the legal form of DMO, it can be different, the most common is a non-profit organization. Various options for private sector participation in the management and marketing of tourism destinations are presented in table 3.

Most DMOs, especially NTOs, rely heavily on government support and funding. Government funding is usually expressed in the form of grants. In addition to state allocations, the DMO budget can be replenished by contributions of members/partners to conduct marketing campaigns; cooperation with tourism industry enterprises in the field of research; membership fees of industry representatives; percent of tourist services; taxes paid by hotel guests and etc.

Table 3. Public-private relations in the form of managing tourism destinations defined by World Tourism Organization (2007, p.137)

Tourism Destination Management	Private sector involvement in DMO activities							
	Expert council	Management Board	Industry link groups	Joint activities with private professional organizations	Membership	Registering	Outsourcing	Customers
Separate department of authority	+		+	+		+		+
Partner Governance Partnership	+		+	+		+		+
Collaborative Governance Partnership	+	+	+	+		+		+
Authority outsourcing work					+		+	+
PPPs with specific functions (nonprofit organizations)		+	+	+	+			+
An association or private business fully funded by the private sector		+		+				+

### ***Role and Responsibilities of DMOs***

All three categories of DMOs have similar roles and responsibilities. In some cases, local or regional DMOs coordinate their activities and obey the decisions of regional or national DMOs, respectively. As presented in Table 4, national-level DMOs are more responsible for a general strategy for the tourism development in the country, while local DMOs are mainly responsible for the functioning of the industry and the implementation of decisions.

Table 4. Roles and responsibilities of DMOs - national, regional, local levels according to World Tourism Organization (2007, p.147).

<b>Activities</b>	<b>National level</b>	<b>Regional level</b>	<b>Local level</b>
Destination promotion, including branding and image	+	+	
Campaigns to drive business, particularly (SMMEs)	+	+	+
Providing objective and reliable information	+	+	+
Service reservation management			+
Destination coordination and management			+
Visitor information and reservations			+
Education and training		+	+
Business consulting		+	+
Product launching		+	+



Event development and management			+
Attractions development and management			+
Strategy, research and development	+	+	+

DMOs are government agencies, regional or city travel agencies, non-profit organizations and private companies that are involved in the management and/or marketing of appropriate travel destinations (manage the creation of a competitive travel destination product, check its quality, find markets and promote it, monitor implementation, etc.) and are a catalyst and facilitator of their development (Goncharova, 2011). Destination management organizations play a key role in representing the often disparate, sometimes conflicting interests of tourism market stakeholders.

Successful destinations result from successful and sustainable destination management, and, obviously, depend on the success of DMOs. Wray et al. (2010) quoted by Klimek (2013) characterize effective DMOs; these should have: a long-term vision of destination development; the capacity to clearly designate responsibilities to stakeholders and to develop appropriate operational structures; and a transparent and responsible decision-making process, which involves all stakeholders.

Public policies are instruments of governance and as such the importance of tourism policy relies on the fact that they provide the framework conditions for the tourism sector to thrive within a certain governance context. All public and private sector stakeholders (tourism industries and suppliers in the tourism value chain, DMOs, etc.) operate within a given regulatory framework and a business environment which are valid not only for tourism stakeholders but common to all other actors in the economy. The tourism policy thus needs to be fully integrated

within the existing regulatory framework in the country and be comprehensive of all the elements that build up a planned tourism vision to ensure a sustainable and competitive sector in the short, medium and long run.

### Conclusions

UNWTO defines competitiveness of a tourism destination as “the ability of the destination to use its natural, cultural, human, man-made and capital resources efficiently to develop and deliver quality, innovative, ethical and attractive tourism products and services in order to achieve a sustainable growth within its overall vision and strategic goals, increase the added value of the tourism sector, improve and diversify its market components and optimize its attractiveness and benefits both for visitors and the local community in a sustainable perspective” (Buhalis, 2000). When considering the key factors of tourism competitiveness, unarguably appropriate tourism policies and strategic planning are top of mind.

The development and further formation of the tourism management system with the outcomes of destination management organizations has led to the conclusion that a complex of such as DMO and others provide versatile functions aimed at achieving such a common goal for the systematic and sustainable tourism development. The proposed structuring of tourism destination management organizations will make it possible to correctly determine the strategic priorities for tourism development and to understand the organization’s responsibility in the framework of its activities.

Each organization, performing certain functions, allows to create a systematic approach to launch a tourism development strategy in Kazakhstan and increase the value of managerial decisions. So, the Tourist information centers provide information to support tourists, create a comfortable information environment and promote tourist products of Kazakhstan, the created PPP organizations ensure the full development of tourism and the implementation of marketing programs, contribute to strengthening partnerships.

According to the analysis, we can conclude the strategy formation for the tourism destinations development is necessary to distribute roles between stakeholders for managing tourism destinations, according to their capabilities and goals. This integrated approach will allow us to implement all the variety of questions raised in the development and formation of a tourism development strategy in Kazakhstan.

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