Study on the Effectiveness and Strategies of Chinese Cultural Dissemination in Russia

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Abstract

The Belt and Road Initiative has emerged as a catalyst for the burgeoning cultural exchanges between China and Russia. Nevertheless, the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia has encountered a few obstacles, thus affecting its effectiveness. This paper examines the typical problems associated with the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia, as identified through a literature review and a questionnaire survey. The issues addressed include the image of Chinese culture, public engagement, the translation and Chinese cultural dissemination, and cultural identity. The paper proposes the adoption of diverse dissemination strategies to address these problems. These include enhancing cross-cultural communication competencies, leveraging information technology, organizing multi-level and multi-domain cultural exchanges, elevating the quality of the content disseminated, and employing a variety of dissemination channels. These strategic efforts are designed to enhance Chinese cultural confidence, amplify the impact of cultural dissemination, and foster a deeper affinity and appreciation for Chinese culture among the Russian people.

Key Words: Chinese Culture; Dissemination Effectiveness; Dissemination Strategy

1. Introduction

Culture is "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871: 1). Edward Burnett Tylor's definition of culture as a "complex whole" represents a pivotal moment in the modern understanding. In this context, Chinese culture can be understood as an extensive and intricate repository that encompasses a multitude of elements, including but not limited to faith, norms and social rules, arts, customs and rituals, and so forth. These elements collectively reflect the Chinese people's collective identity and shared values.

In essence, culture is "about shared meaning"(Hall, 1997: 1), encapsulating the fundamental functioning of culture within a society. Cultural dissemination is a complex and multi-dimensional process, whereby different cultures connect and interact with each other, people learn different knowledge and skills and broaden their horizons, as well as new ideas and advances being brought to the fields of art, science and technology. Consequently, the dissemination of culture contributes to the enhancement of mutual understanding and respect among different social groups and to the promotion of cultural diversity and innovation at the global level. "The essence of cultural dissemination abroad is the interactive exchange and creative expression of culture in different countries and socio-cultural contexts."(Yang, 2020: 112) The Chinese cultural dissemination is of paramount importance for the preservation and succession of cultural heritage. It enables culture to transcend temporal and geographical boundaries, thereby ensuring the ongoing continuity of human civilization. In the context of globalization, the Chinese cultural dissemination serves twofold purpose. Firstly, it reinforces the cultural self-confidence of the Chinese people, encouraging the preservation and celebration of traditional cultural practices. This, in turn, contributes to the construction and reinforcement of cultural identity and a heightened sense of belonging. Secondly, it serves to enhance the international recognition of Chinese culture.

In the 1990s, Joseph S. Nye, a renowned American scholar, initially introduced the concept of "soft power" in his book *Bound* to *Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. "Cultural soft power represents the primary component of a nation's soft power, which is fundamentally based on culture."(Zeng & Li, 2023: 74) Cultural dissemination represents a crucial instrument of cultural soft power. By investigating and utilizing Chinese cultural resources, a country can effectively disseminate the core ideas, traditional virtues and humanistic ethos that are inherent to Chinese culture. This process not only fosters cultural innovation but also serves to amplify a nation's cultural soft power. Consequently, it reinforces the country's international discourse, enhances its cultural competitiveness, and extends its global influence.

The roots of cultural exchange between China and Russia can be traced back to the time of Genghis Khan's western expeditions, particularly his victory over the Grand Duke of Kiev in 1223, which led to the establishment of Mongolian rule (Liu, 2012: 82). This event is regarded as a pivotal moment in the cultural history between the two nations, signifying a rich history of cultural exchange that has endured for over seven centuries. This extensive chronology has documented the

profound integration and dynamic interaction between the two nations across a multitude of domains, including politics, the economy, and culture.

The establishment of the Sino-Russian Commission for Cooperation in Education, Culture, Health, and Sports in 2000 marked the beginning of a period of fruitful collaboration between China and Russia in the humanities. This collaboration has yielded significant outcomes across various sectors, including trade and economy, education, culture, health, sports, tourism, media, film, archives, and youth engagement (Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding, 2022: 2). Since 2006, China and Russia have organized nine national theme years, namely, the Year of Russia in China and the Year of China in Russia (2006-2007), the Year of Russian-Chinese Language (2009-2010), the Year of China-Russia Tourism (2012-2013) and the Year of China-Russia Youth Friendly Exchange (2014-2015), the Year of China-Russia Media Exchange (2016-2017), the Year of China-Russia Local Cooperation and Exchange (2018-2019), the Year of China-Russia Scientific and Technological Innovation (2020-2021), the Year of China-Russia Sports Exchange (2022-2023), and the Year of China-Russia Culture (2024-2025), which have been pivotal in deepening Sino-Russian friendship and advancing humanistic exchanges in various fields. In conclusion, it can be stated that cultural exchanges between China and Russia have made a significant contribution to the development of bilateral relations, with the potential for further growth and dynamism in the future.

The objective of this research² is to examine the present state of Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia. The research aims to assess the responses and perceptions of Russian respondents, with a particular focus on the feedback from young, tertiary-educated individuals aged 18 to 25. This will enable the identification of the effectiveness of existing dissemination strategies and the development of strategic recommendations that could enhance the influence of Chinese culture.

2. Major Findings

This study considers four dimensions of Chinese cultural communication in Russia: dissemination awareness, content preferences, dissemination evaluation, and suggestions for dissemination, which allows for a more nuanced understanding of the needs and expectations of Russian audiences, thus providing a solid basis for developing more precise and attractive cultural dissemination strategies in the future.

2.1 Dissemination Awareness

The survey findings indicate that traditional media, encompassing mass media, books, and newspapers, continue to play a pivotal role in introducing Chinese culture to most Russian respondents. This highlights the continued importance of conventional media in the dissemination of culture. Nevertheless, it is notable that a considerable number of respondents discovered Chinese culture through non-traditional means, including social media platforms, word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, or firsthand experiences during travel. Furthermore, most respondents demonstrated an openness and keen interest in Chinese culture. This positive perception may be linked to a variety of factors, including age, educational background and an inherent curiosity to explore and understand novel cultural phenomena.

2.2 Content Preferences

The preferences of the Russian respondents for Chinese cultural content demonstrate a multifaceted interest in traditional and modern cultural elements. Elements of traditional culture, such as calligraphy and tea ceremonies, which are celebrated for their elegance and cultural depth, were particularly appealing. Furthermore, the respondents exhibited a profound interest in literature and art, as well as folk customs, which serves to illustrate the enduring allure of China's artistic heritage. Among modern cultural content, movies and TV dramas were the most popular, and an important way for respondents to learn about Chinese culture. In the realm of modern cultural content, movies and TV dramas emerge as the most favored categories, serving as a crucial medium for the respondents to provide insights into contemporary Chinese society, values, and lifestyles.

Furthermore, the Chinese New Year and the Dragon Boat Festival are identified as the most popular Chinese festivals among the respondents. This preference reflects universal acceptance of Chinese festival culture in cross-cultural communication and its potential to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and traditions.

2.3 Dissemination Evaluation

The survey results indicate that the Russian respondents rated the effectiveness of Chinese cultural dissemination on the international stage as moderately high. The respondents concur that China's current efforts in cultural dissemination have yielded tangible outcomes. However, they also highlight the existence of untapped potential for advancement. Language barriers and cultural differences are identified as the primary obstacles to cultural dissemination, underscoring the necessity for targeted solutions, such as more accessible language resources and cross-cultural educational collaboration. Furthermore, the respondents unanimously agree that Chinese culture plays a significant role in global cultural dialogues.

² This research uses partial data from a research project on Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia, which begun on June 12, 2024 and was conducted by a team of researchers from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

2.4 Suggestions for Dissemination

The survey results indicate that respondents have formulated strategic recommendations with a view to enhancing the Chinese cultural dissemination. Firstly, the interactivity of cultural content should be enhanced to enrich the content and forms, and to make full use of information technologies such as VR/AR and artificial intelligence. Secondly, it is recommended that localization strategies be implemented to adapt the content of Chinese cultural dissemination to the Russian people, and that cross-cultural exchanges and economic and trade exchanges be strengthened to facilitate an understanding of Chinese cultural content is easily accessible and attractive. Additionally, the use of multilingualism in the Chinese cultural dissemination is encouraged to surmount language barriers.

In a nutshell, the Russian respondents demonstrated a receptive attitude towards Chinese culture and a strong interest in engaging with it through information technologies and in relation to specific cultural fields. Nevertheless, the continued existence of language and cultural differences represents a significant obstacle to the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia. To address these challenges, the respondents identified leveraging information technology and enhancing interactivity as critical strategies. Furthermore, the use of targeted approaches and multilingualism are considered effective strategies for enhancing the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia and on a global scale.

3. Discussion

Based on the above findings, typical problems in Chinese Cultural Dissemination in Russia are identified and dissemination strategies are offered accordingly.

3.1 Typical Problems in Chinese Cultural Dissemination in Russia

Cultural exchanges between China and Russia, as significant neighboring countries, contribute to mutual recognition and appreciation of their respective cultures. In the context of China's growing influence on the global stage as a representative of emerging and developing economies, it is becoming increasingly clear that a national image is indispensable for the dissemination of culture. A comprehensive examination of survey data on the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia has identified several key issues, as outlined below:

3.1.1 Stereotypical Image of Chinese Culture in Traditional Media

A nation's cultural image can be defined as a complex 'representation system' that contains its culture, formed through a process of self-shaping and external recognition from others. It is a narrative constructed from the threads of history and reality, which is then recombined and edited to create a representation that can be leveraged as a significant resource for cultural evolution and plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's collective memory (Qin & Yang, 2021: 68). The Chinese civilization, with its fluctuating fortunes over the past five thousand years, provides a compelling illustration of the rich and dynamic cultural development that has characterized it. The formation of Chinese culture is a testament to its own self-shaping as well as the cognition and reception by others, embodying a unique cultural narrative. China's cultural image is both a symbol and a cultural capital that can stimulate development and innovation and is conducive to the construction of a collective identity for the Chinese people. The formation of a cultural image is a complex and comprehensive process that necessitates a thorough examination and contemporary interpretation of cultural traditions, ensuring that they possess both profound historical roots and a contemporary relevance. The dissemination and exchange of cultural images can facilitate the transcending of regional and linguistic boundaries, thereby establishing them as a shared cultural heritage and spiritual wealth for all humankind.

However, the image of China among the Russian people is frequently distorted by the subjective lens through which traditional media such as newspapers and radio are viewed. It is evident that these media outlets tend to prioritize the dissemination of positive news about the United States and Western countries, while offering relatively limited coverage of China. This imbalance has led to instances of inaccurate information being disseminated, which has the potential to negatively impact China's image (Yang, 2021: 57). The prevalence of biased reporting has a direct impact on public perception. Given that traditional media represent the primary source of information for many older Russians, coupled with the limitations of information sources, the possibility exists that some one-sided reports may lead them to hold stereotypical negative views of China. This not only affects their attitudes towards China and Chinese culture, but also impedes the Chinese cultural dissemination and the depth of cultural exchanges between Russia and China.

3.1.2 Low Participation of the Russian People in Sino-Russian Cultural Exchanges

Since 2006, China and Russia have jointly organized nine national theme years, reflecting an escalation in the frequency and depth of cultural exchanges between the two nations. Nevertheless, such cultural exchanges are primarily driven by governmental initiatives. The role of the two governments should be to act as a mobilizer of resources and a catalyst for

diplomatic activities, rather than to be the primary agents of cultural dissemination. It is the masses of both China and Russia who are the true agents of cultural exchange. Their participation is the core force of cultural exchange.

At present, the current non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that facilitate Chinese-Russian cultural exchange face significant challenges. Firstly, folk organizations frequently encounter limitations in terms of funding and resources, which impedes their ability to disseminate Chinese culture on a comparable scale and in a comparable quantity to government-led organizations. Secondly, the limited resources available can dampen the enthusiasm of these organizations to effectively disseminate Chinese culture. Consequently, the means of cultural dissemination adopted tend to be uniform and repetitive, lacking the innovation and diversity necessary to capture widespread interest and participation.

3.1.3 Low Dissemination Effectiveness of Chinese Cultural Translation Projects in Russia

In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, the international dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture has ushered in unprecedented convenience and broad opportunities. The Chinese cultural translation constitutes a significant component of the "going out" strategy of Chinese culture and plays a pivotal role in the establishment of an open, inclusive, and balanced international cultural relationship. The translation of Chinese culture is not merely a matter of converting language and words; it also involves the transmission of cultural spirit and values.

The differences of China and Russia in terms of culture, language and religious belief have presented considerable challenges to the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture and have even resulted in the distortion of cultural information. For instance, the act of translation may result in discrepancies between the translated text and the source text, particularly in terms of style, linguistic features and implied meaning. Such translation challenges not only affect the original flavor of the work, but also the Russian readers' accurate understanding of Chinese culture. To illustrate, the term "layoff" (xià găng) was employed in specific historical periods of China, such as during the reform of state-owned enterprises from the late 1990s to the beginning of the 21st century. This term denotes the termination of employment contracts because of enterprise reorganization, restructuring, or economic restructuring. However, it does not imply the complete termination of employment. Rather, it suggests that workers may still be on the roster of the enterprise, awaiting reemployment or compensation. Nevertheless, in Russian, the term may be misinterpreted as a general concept of "unemployment", which refers to the state of being actively seeking employment in the labor market but not yet having found one (Yang, 2021: 57). The discrepancies between Chinese and Russian cultures present a challenge to the international Chinese cultural dissemination, as they limit the role of Chinese culture in international communication.

In contrast, Tao Youlan highlighted deficiencies in the current state of Chinese cultural translation in her interview. She noted that there is a lack of publicity and promotion, research on dissemination effectiveness, and reflection and improvement. Additionally, she stated that there is a need for an overarching compilation of cultural contents and fields that are worthy of dissemination. A notable deficiency is the absence of consultation with overseas scholars and surveys on the needs of professional readers overseas. This has resulted in a lack of targeting in the selection of cultural works for foreign translation, which has in turn affected the international influence and acceptance of translated works of culture (Tao & Zhao, 2023: 4-5). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to promote the international dissemination of translated works from the perspective of dissemination content, which is conducive to promoting mutual respect, learning, and integration among different cultures. Otherwise, the translated works of Chinese culture have not achieved the anticipated effectiveness of dissemination, and the dissemination of exemplary traditional Chinese culture has been impeded, thereby influencing international audiences' cognition and understanding of Chinese culture.

3.1.4 Low Identification with Chinese culture by the Russian people

"In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation."(Hall & du Gay, 1996: 2) China and Russia, as two countries representing Eastern and Western civilizations respectively, have their own unique cultural traditions and values. Chinese culture is rooted in Confucianism, which prioritizes harmony and moral cultivation. In contrast, Russian culture is profoundly shaped by Orthodox Christianity, which places a strong emphasis on belief or spiritual life. These fundamental cultural and religious differences may result in discrepancies in the values of the two peoples and even give rise to misperceptions, which in turn may restrict cultural exchanges and mutual understanding to a certain extent. After all, "values' are the cornerstone of culture, representing the essential difference between different cultures, and constitute the most challenging aspect for integrating heterogeneous cultures, thus creating the most stubborn obstacles in cross-cultural exchange and interpretation."(Chen, 2023: 192) Consequently, in the Chinese culture and in empathizing with the spiritual essence of Chinese culture. The strengthening of Chinese cultural identity can facilitate the enhancement of the international influence of Chinese culture and the promotion of the understanding and identification of Chinese culture among people from all over the world.

3.2 Strategies for Disseminating Chinese Culture in Russia

3.2.1 Cultivating Intercultural Competence of Russian Language Professionals

In this context, the cultivation of intercultural competence of Russian language professionals is of paramount importance for the promotion of cultural exchanges and collaboration between China and Russia. It is imperative that these professionals possess not only proficiency in Russian but also an in-depth comprehension of Russian culture, history, and social context. This ensures the accurate conveyance of the essence of Chinese culture in Russia. In order to achieve this objective, it is essential that the educational system assigns equal importance to language proficiency, cultural understanding, and cultural adaptability. In other words, the development of cross-cultural communication skills can be facilitated through education and practice. Consequently, it is of paramount importance to intensify research on Chinese and Russian cultures and to reinforce the accumulation of field experience. For instance, studying abroad and internships can facilitate the communication and collaboration among Russian language professionals in Sino-Russian culture.

Furthermore, Russian language professionals are encouraged to learn another foreign language, to improve communication efficiency by utilizing information technologies, and to enhance their international vision, thus promoting Chinese culture on the international stage. The application of innovative thinking is conducive to the exploration of novel dissemination strategies. The strengthening of cultural confidence can ensure the active display of China's development and cultural achievements in Sino-Russian cultural exchanges. These comprehensive measures will not only strengthen cultural exchanges between China and Russia, but also enhance the international influence and attractiveness of Chinese culture on a global scale.

3.2.2 Utilizing Information Technologies

Information technology represents a powerful means of communication in the process of disseminating Chinese culture in Russia. According to research, the language barrier represents the most significant obstacle to the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia. The application of information technology, including artificial intelligence translation tools, can assist in reducing this barrier. These tools facilitate personalized recommendations, language translation, and voice recognition, among other functions. This technology can enhance the efficiency and quality of translation, making it easier for the Russian people to access and understand Chinese culture. Furthermore, the integration of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) and other cutting-edge technological tools can enhance the depth and innovation of Chinese cultural content, providing immersive and interactive experiences for the Russian public. This approach can enrich the means of Chinese cultural dissemination, strengthen the sense of participation, and enhance interactivity and interest. For instance, virtual reality (VR) technology enables users to "travel" to ancient Chinese palaces and temples.

The implementation of interactive cultural experiences, such as online Chinese learning platforms, virtual museum tours, and digitized tours of Chinese cultural heritage, enables Russian users to interact with cultural content through a range of digital interactions, including clicking, touching, and speaking. Furthermore, the integration of education and entertainment in Chinese culture-themed online games or virtual reality experiences has the potential to resonate with young Russians, while simultaneously imparting cultural and educational values. The use of social media platforms to disseminate information and engage users in interactive activities has the potential to facilitate the spread of Chinese culture through social networks. This, in turn, could lead to an expansion of the influence of Chinese culture.

3.2.3 Implementing Multi-level and Multi-domain China-Russia Cultural Exchanges

It is recommended that China-Russia cultural exchanges be expanded beyond the government level to include activities at the level of non-governmental organizations, youth exchanges, local cooperation, and public diplomacy. In response to the dearth of cultural exchanges between the Chinese and Russian people, civic groups, associations, and other unofficial organizations should organize and carry out a plethora of cultural exchanges, including art exhibitions and on-site creations, cultural festivals, tourism and sports activities, exhibitions, performances, and so forth. Furthermore, community cultural activities are organized to facilitate the experience of each other's cultures in daily life, thereby creating more opportunities for the presentation of Chinese culture to the Russian public. In this way, the Russian people have greater opportunities to directly experience Chinese culture, which in turn promotes cultural exchanges and interactions between China and Russia.

Furthermore, online Chinese-Russian cultural exchanges are conducted, exemplified by the utilization of a novel approach of "Procedural Narrative Generation" (Meng & Zhou, 2019: 44) to construct cultural narratives. Moreover, the platform allows users to participate in the secondary dissemination of content through behaviors such as liking and sharing. Additionally, it considers the preferences of the audience at the early stage of content creation. The use of artificial intelligence enables the customization of stories according to audience interests, thereby facilitating a novel form of interaction and engagement with cultural content. Identification is defined as "a construction, a process never completed – always 'in process'."(Hall & du Gay, 1996: 2) Online interactive cultural exchanges permit Russian audiences to cease being passive receivers and become active participants, capable of influencing the direction of the narrative. The application of this cultural narrative mode can facilitate personalization and interactivity in traditional communication, thereby ushering in a new era in which the two

peoples can co-create content. Meanwhile, these online and offline cross-cultural exchanges can facilitate the effective dissemination and widespread recognition of Chinese culture in Russia.

3.2.4 Enhancing the Quality of Dissemination Content

"In the current era, where the value of content is paramount, it is essential to generate high-quality narrative content with the objective of achieving efficient and high-quality dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. The primary means of promoting the dissemination of traditional culture is to encourage social participation in the content creation process." (Meng & Zhou, 2019: 44) The enhancement of the content quality of the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia represents the core of the realization of effective cross-cultural communication and the improvement of dissemination effectiveness. Firstly, the focus of the dissemination strategy should be on the depth of cultural exchange. In the dissemination process, it is crucial to avoid superficiality and one-sidedness. Instead, a focus on the depth of content is essential to ensure the comprehensiveness and authenticity of cultural exchange. This entails delving into the depth and connotations of culture. In addition, it is essential to provide comprehensive background information, conduct in-depth research, and employ multi-perspective analysis to ensure the accuracy and authority of the information. Furthermore, the incorporation of emotional input and professional interpretation can enhance the appeal and credibility of the content, facilitating an emotional connection with the audience.

Secondly, the selection of content for cultural exchange is of paramount importance. In order to effectively disseminate Chinese culture in Russia, it is essential to first understand the needs and interests of the Russian audience. This understanding should then be used to select timely content that is positive in values, and diverse. By doing so, it is possible to attract Russian audiences and promote cross-cultural communication and understanding. Hence, content that is compatible with Russian culture can facilitate the acceptance and influence of Chinese culture.

The Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia can be enhanced through careful, in-depth content excavation and selection, combined with storytelling and audience interaction. This approach can effectively improve the quality of dissemination content and enhance the power and influence of information dissemination. Moreover, Russian audiences are encouraged to engage in discourse and provide feedback on the content, with the objective of enhancing its interactivity and participation. The content is subject to rigorous quality control and regular updates to ensure its continued relevance in the context of evolving social and audience dynamics.

3.2.5 Utilizing Multiple Dissemination Channels

The acceptance of Chinese culture in Russia is contingent upon the cognitive channels of the Russian people. The choice of dissemination channels for Chinese culture in Russia is influenced by age, educational background, and professional experience. Consequently, the effectiveness of dissemination is also affected. Young Russian students may be more likely to encounter cultural information through the Internet and social media, whereas professionals may prefer to learn about it through books, academic articles, or professional training. Consequently, to develop an effective cultural dissemination strategy, it is essential to consider a range of dissemination channels in order to align with the habits of the Russian public at all levels. In other words, it is recommended that various dissemination channels, especially social media, be fully utilized to attract young audiences. Concurrently, traditional media should be consistently employed, and the role of educational and tourism channels should be reinforced. Although a variety of dissemination channels have been employed by the Russian population to learn about Chinese culture, there is still room for improvement. For instance, the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia could be further enhanced by increasing the proportion of cultural courses in the education system such as in Confucius Institutes in Russia and the frequency of cultural content on the media.

4. Conclusion

This research project aims to investigate the current state of the Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia, identify the most prevalent challenges, assess the efficacy of current strategies, and propose potential avenues for improvement. However, it has its limitations. Firstly, the sample is limited in its representativeness and therefore cannot fully reflect the real situation in different regions and populations across Russia. Secondly, the research is based predominantly on quantitative data, with a paucity of in-depth interviews to explore the deeper perceptions and emotions of the audience. Thirdly, cultural differences and language barriers are identified, but a comprehensive analysis of the specific details is lacking. Moreover, it is essential to consider the long-term attitudes and behaviors of Russian audiences. With the deepening of globalization and the continuous progress of information technology, the breadth and depth of Chinese cultural dissemination in Russia, improve the effectiveness of dissemination, and promote in-depth cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between the two countries. This will increase the role of Chinese culture in global cultural exchanges and realize its wider international recognition.

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