

Embracing multiplicity: Experimenting with outcome-based brand planning

Pete Buckley and Gareth Price

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Facebook's Pete Buckley and Gareth Price draw on new research from Oxford University and Kantar to highlight the power of multiplicity in brand building.

- Campaigns are often targeted at a much broader audience, a smaller percentage of whom will do something immediately after viewing the ad.
- As a result, the approach to briefing a brand building campaign can often be more nebulous, focusing on broader, more intangible effects like increased mental availability, which are harder to measure.
- However, new research from Saïd Business School at Oxford University and Kantar demonstrates that brand advertisers must also be more precise in the brand outcome they target too.

Why it matters

Multiple brand outcomes require multiple channels to deliver the right mix of attention levels in order to effectively build brands.

Takeaways

- The best media plan requires marketers to identify the precise brand outcome required and the optimal mix of attention levels to deliver it.
- To drive awareness, associations and consideration on Facebook's platforms, brands should aim to build visibility, connection and discovery respectively.
- Ultimately, each brand is unique, so – just as it's essential in performance marketing – continuous outcome testing is necessary to deliver effective brand advertising too.

While the definition and importance of brand purpose remains hotly contested within the industry, few would

argue with the notion that advertising ultimately exists to promote products or services. As such, effective advertising always starts with a clear business outcome.

Whether it's growing revenue by bringing in new customers or increasing profit by reducing price sensitivity, every aspect of the brief – from who you are targeting to what you need them to do – must connect back to that outcome.

In focusing on those in-market, and by seeking a direct response like conversions or online sales, performance marketers generally have an easier job of demonstrating the link between a campaign and the business outcome it's in service of. By targeting a clear, immediate behavioural response, the approach to advertising is also more single-minded in the outcome sought.

In contrast, brand advertisers have a more challenging job. Campaigns are often targeted at a much broader audience, a smaller percentage of whom will do something immediately after viewing the ad.

As a result, the approach to briefing a brand building campaign can often be more nebulous, focusing on broader, more intangible effects like increased mental availability, which are harder to measure and more difficult to clearly link back to the business outcome.

However, [new research](#) from Saïd Business School at Oxford University and Kantar demonstrates that brand advertisers must also be more precise in the brand outcome they target too.

Identifying precise brand outcomes

Their research is the largest ever academic study into brand effectiveness, examining over 1,100 campaigns with an average media spend of \$12 million. Spanning 12 years, 557 brands, 23 industries and 51 different countries, it's both a comprehensive and truly global study.

The authors aimed to identify how successful advertisers are at building brands with their current media mix. They identified nine broad media plans and looked at their ability to drive different brand outcomes.

In theory, the optimal media allocation should be easy. If it's simply about increasing mental availability, there should be one media plan that performs best at delivering each of the outcomes.

And, reflecting the wider industry narrative that video builds brands, the most common media plan was indeed TV and online video – appearing in more than one in four campaigns analysed. It was also the optimal plan for driving unaided awareness. However, there was a better media plan for every other brand outcome.

Indeed, their research suggests that the average campaign could have been 2.6x more effective with a different allocation of spend.

Brand isn't a single outcome

As Oxford and Kantar's study highlights, brand building constitutes multiple components and their work demonstrates that even a multimedia campaign can only ever affect one or two outcomes, they rarely all move together.

Different media recipes also work best for achieving different outcomes. Depending on the desired outcome, marketers need to dial up or down different channels. Their findings also demonstrate that:

- TV is an effective bedrock but shouldn't dominate allocation.
- Campaigns that under-deliver invest too heavily in just one or two channels.
- A mix of attention levels is essential to brand building.

In essence, the best media plan depends on the precise brand outcome desired and marketers need to find the optimal mix of attention levels to deliver it.

For an established CPG brand that might mean a campaign that aims to create new usage occasions, while a new D2C brand might focus on creating broader awareness beyond its core user base.

But to suggest the two are overlapping ambitions that can be wrapped into a singular outcome of 'brand' or the equally nebulous notion of fame as a creative strategy seems wilfully naive. Of course, every agency wants to create communications that gets noticed and talked about but the objective within any creative or media brief must be clearly tied to a business goal.

How to deliver stronger brand effects on Facebook's apps

Three of the most important metrics emerging from the analysis are awareness, association and consideration. They're also three of the most commonly measured, so it's these we will focus on now, exploring how to best deliver them on our own platforms, specifically Facebook, Instagram and Messenger.

To reach these findings, we've drawn on the Oxford and Kantar study, as well as an Ekimetrics market mix modelling analysis of over 16,000 campaigns on our platforms, plus 3,000 test and control studies from across our advertiser base.

While these studies combine to provide a comprehensive brand evidence base, it's worth emphasising that the whole point of a brand is to be different and the approach to building one should reflect its unique circumstances.

We believe that these principles broadly apply to every category but we'd encourage marketers to always experiment with what works for them. Indeed, we find those that do adopt continuous outcome testing outperform their competitors.

1. Awareness: Build visibility

Advertising has always been very good at shifting awareness – taking someone from nothing to something is much easier than changing existing attitudes – and whether it's in recruiting light buyers to a more established brand, launching a new product, or growing a start-up from scratch, it remains an important and fundamental job of advertising.

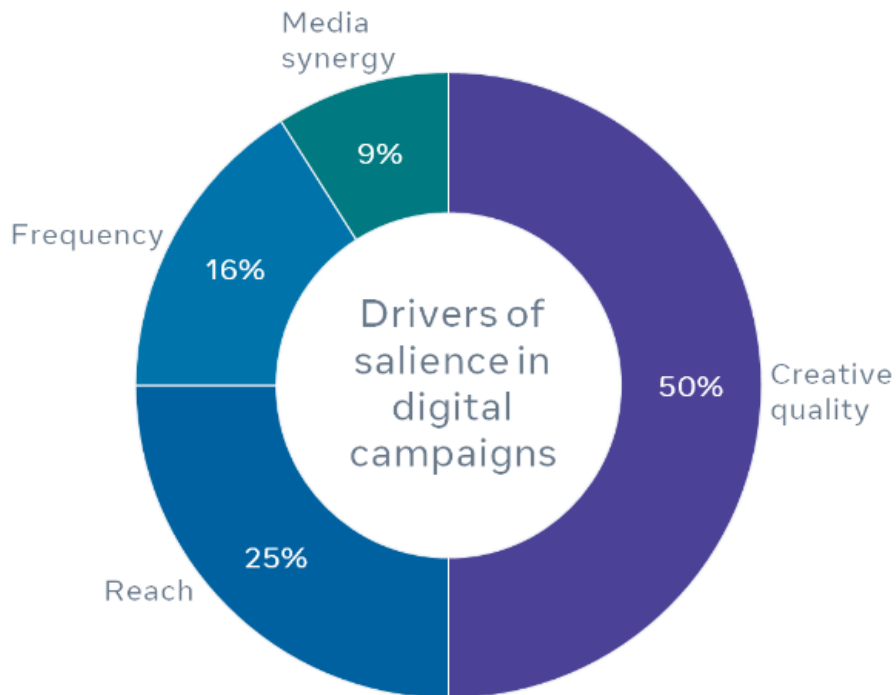


Figure 1: Drivers of salience (aided and unaided awareness) in digital campaigns (Kantar)

A recent examination of the greatest drivers of salience (defined here as a combination of aided and unaided awareness) for digital campaigns by Kantar, identified creative quality, reach and frequency as the three most important. And we find similar drivers of awareness on our platforms.

This requires advertisers to optimise their plans to build visibility in three ways.

Effective creative

Creative is the most important element of any campaign and there are two steps you can take to make it more effective on our apps. Firstly, get the basics right. Using mobile-first creative doubles your return, which – within Feed – means videos should be under 15 seconds, vertical and designed for sound off.

ROI Index

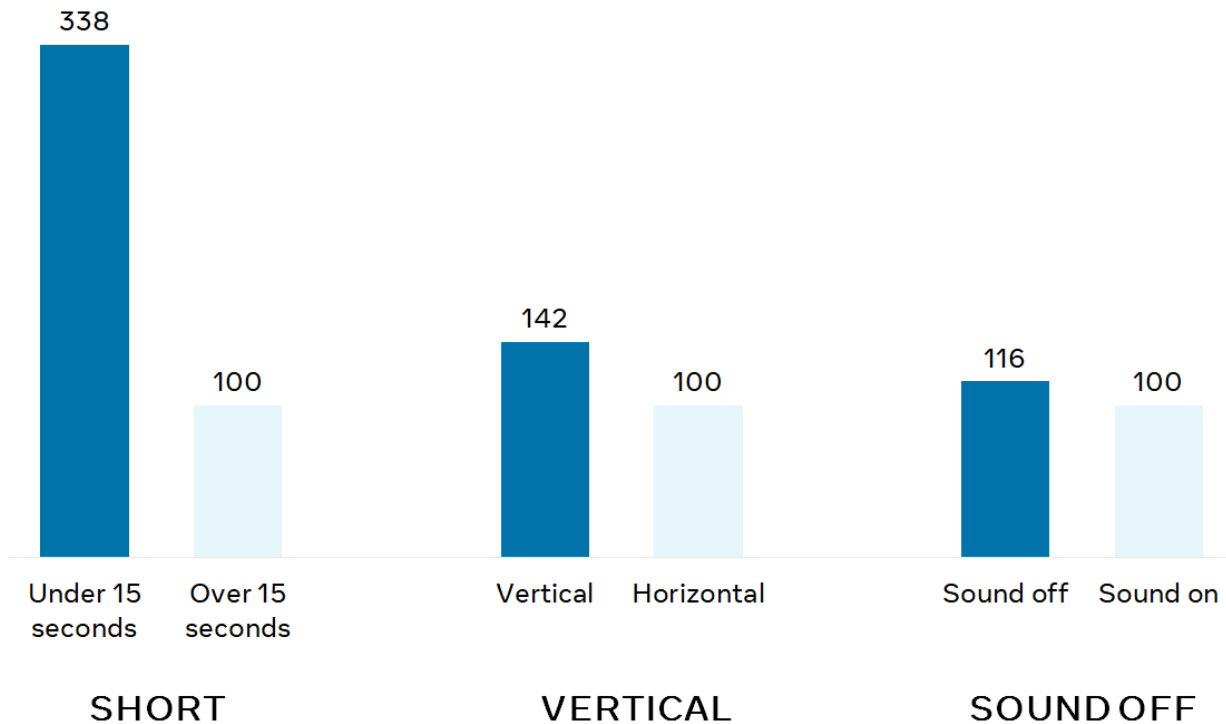


Figure 2: Ekimetrics ROI analysis also highlights the importance of made for mobile creative to drive return

You've probably heard us tell you this many times now but it's important to emphasise that the approach to creating the advertising can't exist in isolation of the media channel it will appear on, it must reflect how the media is being consumed. With 71% of media time now spent on digital channels globally, advertisers can't ignore the fact that consumption habits are changing and so creative approaches must evolve with them.

Secondly, use real world testing to determine creative quality. It's incredibly easy to test creative for brand impact on our platform and to do so at scale. The advantages are enormous, with an average 11x difference in the top and bottom performing creative in a campaign on our apps. So, test and adapt accordingly.

Prioritise reach and frequency

Secondly, prioritise reach and frequency. Nielsen, the IPA and the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute all agree that reach is the most important media driver of brand growth. And yet with digital channels like Facebook impressions rather than reach are often reported. However, figures like 432 million impressions simply aren't that helpful.

Just as with offline channels, planners must focus on the reach and frequency of the campaign, and clients should ensure it's included on any brand plan they see. To give a sense of weights, if your reach is less than 50% of your audience or your frequency is below twice a week, we'd generally consider that a lighter weight campaign, so you can expect less brand impact.

We find the optimum for driving brand outcomes is 50-70% reach of a target audience at 2-5x weekly frequency. Above 70% reach, CPMs start to increase significantly. That frequency might feel high but the mobile experience is often closer to digital OOH rather than TV, which is why we see higher frequency often driving greater

outcomes.

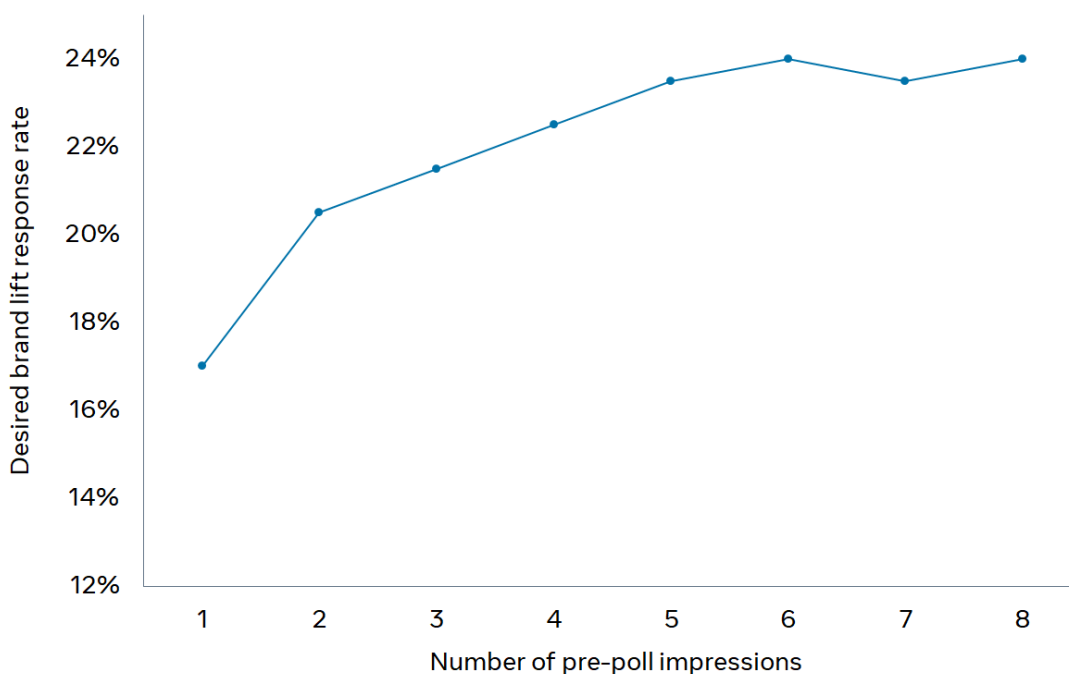


Figure 3: Greater frequency drives greater brand lift results up to a point, with results plateauing at a frequency of 5

Where on this range is optimal for your campaign will depend on the size of your brand, your creative and your audience. So, use frequency capping to control and test the optimal frequency for your brand.

Widen the net

Lastly, you can significantly lower your reach costs and increase return on our apps by widening the net in two ways. Firstly, use multiple placements: campaigns that use four or more placements drive double the return of those using a single placement.

And secondly, avoid tight audience targeting. It's tempting to use narrow targeting given the platform's capabilities but campaigns using broad audiences significantly out-perform those with tighter targeting. Both these steps reduce reach costs and are proven to increase ROI too.

2. Association: Build connection

Associations tend to be harder to create or shift than awareness but we're finding newer approaches are working, like connecting people to different voices and creating virtual experiences.

As the Oxford study attests to, the most effective campaigns use a mix of attention levels, especially when moving deeper brand metrics.

So, what are these deeper experiences we're increasingly finding are working well to shift associations on our platforms?

Deeper stories

Video viewing has exploded on Facebook over the last couple of years, with 1.25 billion people visiting Watch each month. This has been driven by quality content from leading publishers such as BBC Earth, Channel 4 and MTV.

The advertising opportunity in this content is what we call 'in-stream', a mid-roll ad one minute into the content. We're seeing over 70% of impressions are viewed to completion with sound on in this format. This is a very different experience to Feed, so mixing in-stream into a campaign can increase view duration and allow brands to tell deeper stories.

Connected experiences

The second approach we'd recommend testing is mixing in depth through interactive ad formats to create a more connected experience. For example, poll ads, which pose a simple question for users to interact with.

Unlike a campaign designed to encourage people to click through to a website, this is a quick, seamless behaviour that happens in-platform, so can still deliver the scale of response that traditional DR often lacks. It allows advertisers to take advantage of the more lean-in type of attention mobile provides versus the more passive media consumption often found in other channels.

Hellmann's recently used this format to encourage people to vote for which lockdown meal they preferred from two famous chefs. The campaign saw a 12pt increase in brand associations which is almost 5x the industry benchmark. 90% of campaigns using poll ads also see an increased view duration versus those without one too.

Connected voices

The third approach is to test adding connected voices through branded content. Many brands are now using partnerships with influencers and publishers in social media but one of the challenges with this type of activity has been guaranteeing the reach of your target audience. Brands have historically been dependent on the organic reach and often struggled to identify the exact overlap with their own target audience.

However, influencer posts can now be amplified to any desired audience using branded content ads. Rather than using proxies like engagement metrics, this also allows advertisers to apply the same consistent measurement rigor to compare the activity to other aspects of the campaign.

We've found that mixing brand ads and branded content ads significantly outperforms those campaigns that just use the former specifically for growing mid and lower funnel brand metrics. This isn't about additional spend either, the mixed campaigns drove a greater brand impact at a reduced cost.

3. Consideration: Build discovery

Consideration has historically been one of the most difficult metrics to lift. A meta-analysis of over 400 brands across four years by Kantar found that the average campaign grew consideration by just 1 percentage point each year.

With today's difficult economic environment, most businesses simply can't afford to wait years to increase it that slowly though and one solution we're seeing many turn to is what we'd broadly classify as 'precision'. On our platforms, this means using automation to precisely serve the right message to those more receptive to the category.

Unlike traditional approaches to identifying those in-category at the moment the advertising is served, this enables brands to find a broader audience and also isolate the effect of the advertising by identifying the incremental lift.

Elevate product messaging

The first way to do this is what we call rolling reasons. This approach uses ad sequencing to maximise the number of people seeing multiple reasons to believe and generally works better in higher value, lower purchase frequency categories.

One tech brand recently saw a 4x lift in consideration using sequenced rolling reasons versus a single message. We increasingly see brands adopting rolling reasons over a sustained period deliver an incremental lift in consideration.

The second way to achieve this is through product-led messaging, which suits lower value, higher purchase frequency categories like FMCG. This might entail using in-stream video to communicate the unique benefits of your product; AR filters to help people trial it; or partnering with category experts to convey product benefits through branded content ads.

Mixing branded content ads with brand advertising is also significantly more likely to drive cost-effective action intent than using either alone.

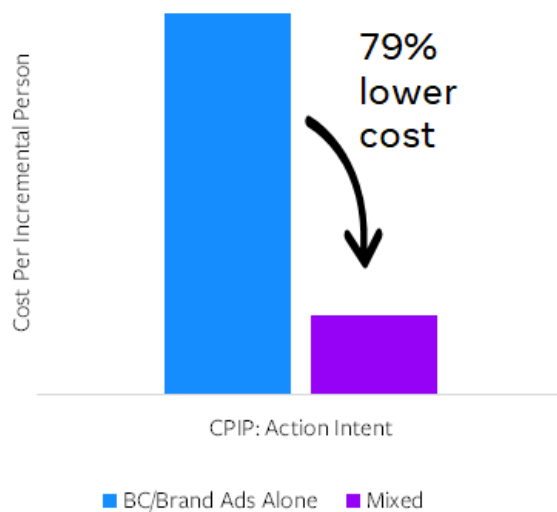


Figure 4: Mixed campaigns (branded content and brand ads) build action intent at a lower cost

Receptive audiences

To incrementally move consideration at scale, and to do so quickly, you need to find those receptive to the category who don't yet consider your brand. One way to do this is to add an action-related buying objective to your brand campaign.

As the name implies, action-related buying objectives optimise towards those who are most likely to take action. Mixing these into your campaign helps in two ways. Firstly, it broadens the audience you reach, and secondly, it

allows you to reach more engaged people who are closer to market without sacrificing scale.

Adopting this approach while excluding existing customers can drive significantly higher incremental consideration.

This approach is especially effective when advertisers make the action easy. This could be in the form of using AR ads to allow people to discover more about your product without having to leave the app, or simply bringing your website content on to the platform to reduce drop off.

Dynamic prospecting

This approach uses automation to further help you find those in-market who haven't considered your brand.

Advertising is generally divided into performance or brand. The former often entails retargeting people who have interacted with the brand, while the latter targets broader demographic audiences. Both approaches can miss those in-market for a product who don't fit the demographic targeting or haven't yet interacted with the brand online.

Dynamic ads for broad audiences allows you to instead serve your most relevant products to people in-market who haven't yet interacted with the brand. While traditionally this has been seen as a sales-focused approach, more experimental advertisers are now using it to build incremental consideration with their most valuable audience, those closer to buying.

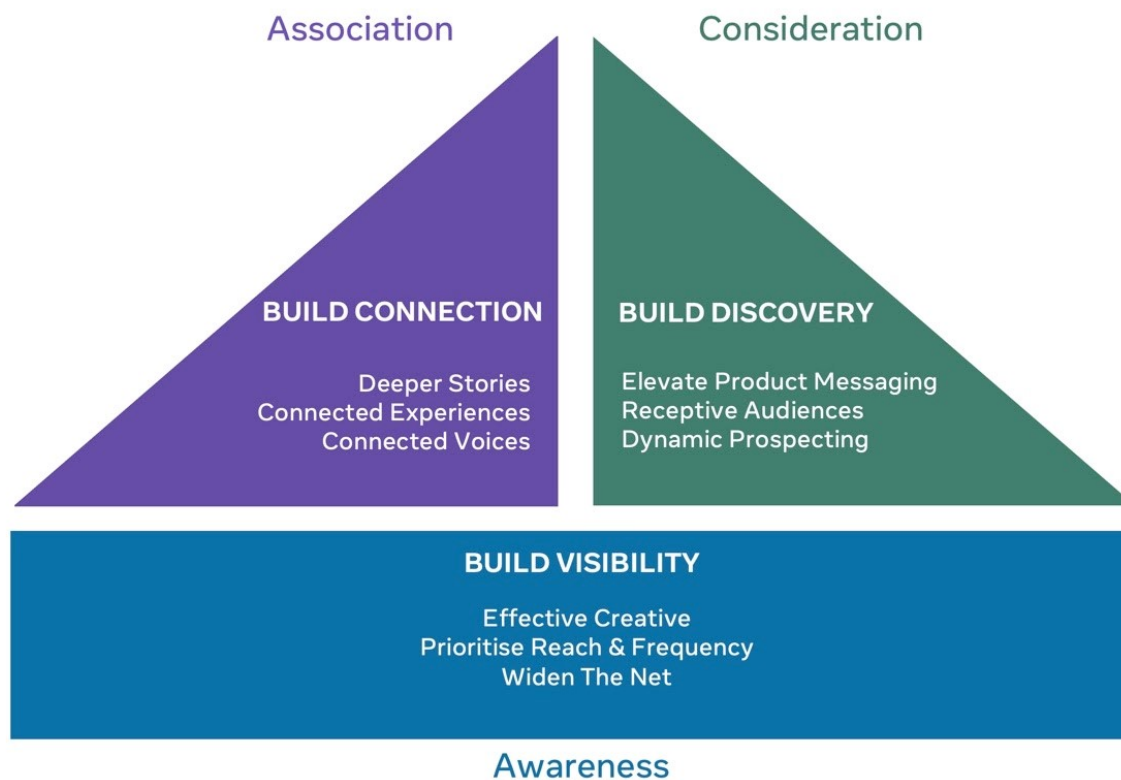


Figure 5: How to deliver stronger brand effects on Facebook's apps

Conclusion: We're 1% done

At Facebook, we have a mantra of always being '1% done' and we remain on a journey to discover how best to support marketers in growing their brands. This means continuously testing which approaches work best in delivering different outcomes and sharing that knowledge with the industry.

As the Oxford and Kantar study highlights, there is a need for marketers to be more precise in the brand outcome they're targeting and there's also a real need to identify the precise media mix that best delivers it.

Our own research highlights the fact that the approaches to effectively delivering those outcomes are evolving too, particularly when it comes to moving deeper brand metrics like consideration.

Collectively, these findings point to the power of multiplicity: multiple brand outcomes require multiple channels and advertising formats to deliver multiple attention levels in order to build – what adam&eveDDB's Claire Strickett so aptly describes as – multidimensionally memorable brands.

Ultimately, effective outcome-based planning requires marketers to identify what works best for their brand. As Mark Ritson has stated, "the whole point of a brand is to not be like other things. To not be generic."

Pete is a connection planning director at Facebook. Gareth is a strategist for global accounts at Facebook. Both were awarded distinctions in the IPA Excellence Diploma in Brands, and are both former winners of the IPA President's Prize, IPA Effectiveness Awards and WPP Atticus Awards.

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