
Initiating Green Innovation: The Role of Green Transformational Leadership in Corporate Sustainability

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history :
submit :
24-06-2024
First Revision :
26-06-2024
Accept Submission :
28-06-2024

Keywords:
Green innovation, Green transformational leadership, Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the MYCL CEO's experiences and perspectives in leading the company, uncover effective leadership strategies towards sustainability, and identify key elements of green transformational leadership style that contribute to achieving environmental and social goals and green innovation performance in his company. The approach was qualitative with a narrative research design and an open-ended interview method. The green transformational leadership style implemented by Adi Reza Nugroho at MYCL positively impacts the company's sustainability by creating a collaborative work environment, achieving environmental and social goals, and improving green innovation performance. Key elements of the company's green transformational leadership style such as support, empathy, openness, and active participation of members can contribute significantly to MYCL's success in achieving its environmental vision and targets. The green transformational leadership of MYCL's CEO, Adi Reza Nugroho, successfully advanced the company's sustainability by developing team competencies, involving members in decision-making, and prioritizing well-being, significantly enhancing environmental goals and green innovation performance. Companies should implement continuous training programs, encourage member engagement, pay attention to member welfare, support collaboration and innovation, and allocate resources for green innovation development.

A. INTRODUCTION

In today's developing era, many companies are starting to focus on environmental sustainability. These companies do not only focus on business, but also prioritize environmental sustainability and existing local potential to be developed (Mittal & Dhar, 2016). Therefore, many companies have begun to emphasize the triple bottom line in their business sustainability, namely economic, social, and environmental issues as a parameter of the company's success. In addition to considering the triple bottom line as a pillar of the company's business strategy, the success of a sustainable business is also influenced by its leaders. Leaders have a big role in incorporating company values into their team members or creating an environmentally sustainable organizational culture (Huang et al., 2021).

Each leader certainly has his leadership style in leading his company. Leadership style is the way leaders interact with the team, provide direction, and motivate them, it also greatly affects the scope of success of sustainability practices in the company (Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, leaders must have a strong vision and commitment to sustainability. Different leadership styles in each leader are influenced by several things including the character of the leader, the type of company he leads, the state of the company, and several other things (Hadi et al., 2023).

In companies that focus on environmental sustainability, the preferred leadership style is usually the green transformational leadership style. This green transformational style leads to transformation and creation by emphasizing the achievement of sustainable, long-term sustainable goals (Zhao & Huang, 2022). Green transformational leaders make teams not only inspired and motivated, but also educated about the importance of sustainability (Zhang et al., 2020). The green transformational leadership style is chosen because it can build value, innovation, and competitive advantage (Sanusi et al., 2023).

Green transformational leaders act as change agents who drive innovation and continuous improvement within the organization (Begum et al., 2022). They encourage team members to think creatively and find innovative solutions that can support environmental sustainability (Ayandibu, 2019). In addition, green transformational leaders also focus on developing the capacity and skills of team members, so that they can contribute more effectively to achieving company goals (Pham et al., 2022). Green transformational leaders also strive to create a work environment conducive to collaboration and active participation from all team members (Sidney et al., 2022). They value input and ideas from the team and encourage open and transparent dialog. With this approach, leaders can build strong and trusting relationships with the team, which in turn will increase their passion and commitment to the company's sustainable vision and mission.

Green transformational leadership style has great potential in supporting the success of companies focused on environmental sustainability (Sun et al., 2022). By prioritizing the values of sustainability, innovation, and team building, green transformational leaders can create companies that are not only economically successful but also have a positive impact on the environment and society (Suparna et al., 2021). Therefore, companies need to select leaders who have a strong vision and commitment to sustainability, in order to achieve holistic long-term success.

In previous research, it was found that green transformational leadership style affects corporate sustainability (Özgül & Zehir, 2021) and sustainable performance in employees (Lin et al., 2022). In addition, leadership styles that can influence green behavior in employees are transformational and digital (Daud et al., 2023). These findings indicate that the role of leaders in directing and motivating employees is very important in achieving corporate sustainability goals. Differences in leadership styles in leaders can affect the performance of the company and its employees. Previous research has shown that green transformational leadership positively influences corporate sustainability and green employee performance. However, several gaps in this research need to be addressed further. First, the methodology used is more often quantitative with primary data, thus qualitative studies and in-depth case studies, as well as the use of secondary data, are needed to obtain research results that focus more on a single object. Second, research has mostly focused on the impact of green transformational leadership on green employee behavior rather than green performance and creativity, thus further research is needed on the influence of green transformational leadership on green innovation.

This research makes a new contribution to green transformational leadership style research by focusing on the leadership style of a leader in a biotechnology company located in Bandung called MYCL. MYCL (Mycotech Lab) is a biotechnology company founded in 2015, focusing on making

sustainable materials from mushroom mycelium. Aside from utilizing local community empowerment, MYCL also aims to revolutionize material production for the global market. The company's innovation is driven by a team committed to health, safety, and environmental sustainability. MYCL is led by CEO Adi Reza Nugroho and operates in product innovation, development, and implementation of sustainable practices.

This research aims to explore the MYCL CEO's experiences and perspectives on leadership, uncover effective leadership strategies in leading the company toward sustainability, and identify key elements of leadership style that contribute to the achievement of the company's environmental and social goals. Through in-depth interviews with MYCL's CEO, this research is expected to provide new insights that are useful for other business leaders in implementing an effective and sustainable leadership style that is not only concerned with profit but also with the environment and the welfare of its employees.

B. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a narrative research design focusing on the study of a single individual. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the individual's experiences and perspectives related to the leadership style applied. Data were collected through storytelling, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of these experiences (Creswell, 2014). The data collection method used was semi-structured and open-ended interviews to gather views and opinions from the research informant. Open-ended interviews were conducted with MYCL's CEO, Adi Reza Nugroho, via recorded Zoom meetings. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The main questions addressed topics such as leadership style, challenges faced in leadership, and the impact of the leadership style on the company's sustainability. The recorded interview results were then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process involved collecting and elaborating raw data in the form of researcher notes from interviews and interview recordings. The data were coded to identify key themes related to green transformational leadership. The elaborated results were then connected to the research theory to identify the leadership style before finally being interpreted. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, steps such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing were conducted. Triangulation was performed by comparing data from various sources, member checking was done by asking the informant to review the interview transcripts, and peer debriefing was carried out through discussions with other researchers

C. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research discusses the role of green transformational leadership in a biotechnology company named MYCL on corporate sustainability. Exploration of green transformational leadership information in the company was collected from the CEO of MYCL, Adi Reza Nugroho.

Identifying the Leadership Style of MYCL CEO

The identification of leadership styles used is based on the grouping of "Representative Leadership Styles" by Hassan et al., (2016). This grouping of leadership styles is based on its tendency, because a leader usually does not only have one particular leadership style, leadership styles tend to be a combination with one dominant leadership style. The measurements used to identify this leadership

style tendency are based on the leader's role, leader's concern, distance from followers, follower motivation, and focus on follower growth. The following is a grouping of these leadership styles

1. LS1 (Authoritarian) i.e. the leader pays no attention to the growth of the followers as the leader only emphasizes on the followers to follow his instructions.
2. LS2 (Participative) i.e. leaders tend to pay moderate attention to follower growth by providing training and development.
3. LS3 (Transformational) i.e. moderate-high leader attention with a focus on developing follower competencies
4. LS4 (Stewardship) i.e. high concern as the leader places top priority on helping followers achieve their goals
5. LS5 (Laissez-Faire) i.e. no attention as the leader remains uninvolved

a. The Leader's Role

The leader's role is defined as how the leader provides instructions and performance standards (LS1), encourages participation (LS2), seeks the highest standards of excellence (LS3), helps followers (LS4), or lets followers do their work (LS5) (Hassan et al., 2016). MYCL CEO defines the role of a leader in a team or organization, it is important to understand that leaders function as directors and guides at various levels. The monitor's responsibility usually extends to the director level. The leader directs team leaders but does not get involved in the details below the team leader level. Leaders focus on the big vision and long-term strategy and ensure that every decision made is aligned with the overall goals of the organization.

The main responsibility of a leader in achieving common goals is to be part of the company's success. Leaders have a very important role in directing the organization towards achieving targets and visions. By focusing on high-level strategies and policies, leaders ensure that the entire team works with synergy, efficiency, and the standards set by the company. This involves effective coordination, motivating, and creating a work environment conducive to innovation and productivity. A good leader is able to inspire his or her team to achieve outstanding results while ensuring that each team member feels valued and contributes maximally to the collective success.

This explanation is in line with research conducted by Sahid et al., (2023) which states that transformational leadership positively impacts organizational change by creating a vision, motivating, initiating innovation and leading to achieve high targets for organizational success. Therefore, the leadership role of the MYCL CEO is included in LS3 (transformational) because it sets measurable targets or standards for each member in the company.

b. Leader's Concern for Others

This aspect varies greatly among leadership styles. Some leaders show little concern for others (LS1 and LS5), with a primary focus on task completion and performance, while others show high (LS2 and LS3) to very high (LS4) concern for the well-being, development, and personal growth of their followers (Hassan et al., 2016). The approach used at MYCL is to first focus on the overall health of the company. A sustainable business is a top priority as business sustainability will affect the team's well-being in the long run. In this context, team well-being is seen as an outcome of a healthy and sustainable business. Hence, strategic decisions are taken by considering the sustainability of the company first, which will then positively impact the team's well-being gradually.

MYCL leaders showing care and empathy towards individuals in the team is a challenge for leaders in high-level positions. Due to time constraints and focus on larger strategies, detailed attention to each individual team member cannot always be done directly. Typically, attention and support is given up to the level of team leaders, who are then responsible for ensuring the well-being of their team

members. By distributing these responsibilities, leaders can still show empathy and care, despite not being directly involved in every detail of team member daily lives.

This is in line with research conducted by Pourbarkhordari et al., (2016) which states that transformational leadership style plays an important role in creating a healthy work environment that has a positive impact on employees, organizations, and society as a whole. Leaders also ensure that the business runs healthily and then has an impact on the welfare of their employees. Thus, leaders' concern for others in MYCL tends to be high so that it falls into the LS3 (transformational) category.

c. The Distance from Followers

This distance from followers refers to the level of interaction and closeness that a leader maintains with their followers. Authoritarian leaders tend to maintain high distances (LS1 and LS5), creating a formal and hierarchical environment, participative leaders maintain medium distances (LS2), while servant and transformational leaders maintain low distances (LS3 and LS4) encouraging closer and collaborative relationships (Hassan et al., 2016). Maintaining openness and connectedness with team members at MYCL is based on company values that emphasize honesty and empathy. In practice, when designing targets, the company makes sure to consider each team member's personal life. They are invited to share about their personal short-term goals and how MYCL can help accommodate those dreams, so that they are aligned with the achievement of company goals. In this way, MYCL creates a work environment that supports a balance between personal and professional needs, strengthening the connection between company and employee.

In addition, in terms of leadership approach, MYCL prefers an approach that is open and close to team members. This approach is chosen to engender a sense of caring for one another within the company, creating an environment that supports open and transparent communication. Leaders strive to build supportive and trusting relationships, so that each team member feels valued and listened to. With this approach, MYCL strives to create an inclusive and collaborative work culture, which drives productivity and overall team well-being.

This is in line with research conducted by Álvarez et al., (2014) which states that effective transformational leadership is influenced by the relationship or distance between leaders and their members. In this case, distance is able to represent how the internalization of the core values of the organization and how members can increase their confidence in their abilities. Therefore, based on this explanation, in MYCL leaders tend not to keep their distance from their members so that they fall into the transformational leadership category (LS3).

d. Leader's Decision-Making Style

Leadership styles determine different approaches to decision-making. Authoritarian leaders make decisions unilaterally (LS1), participative leaders share decision-making with followers (LS2), transformational leaders convince followers to align with their vision (LS3), and laissez-faire leaders have minimal or no role in decision-making (LS5) (Hassan et al., 2016). As a leader, the MYCL CEO's decision-making style can be described through two main steps. First, when developing ideas, the CEO engages directors, team leaders, and staff in team discussions. These discussions allow for the exchange of ideas and diverse perspectives, ensuring that decisions are based on a comprehensive understanding. Second, directors make suggestions based on data and current trends, and the CEO and directors make decisions together. The decisions that have been made are then communicated to the team members. This process is done with the consideration that not all team needs can be accommodated by the company, but the CEO tries to strike the best balance.

This style of decision-making tends to be democratic, where participation and collaboration from the entire team are highly valued. Nonetheless, there are times when some decisions must be made authoritatively, especially for important and urgent decisions. The democratic approach allows team members to feel included and valued, while the authoritarian approach is used to ensure that

critical decisions can be taken quickly and decisively. By combining these two approaches, the CEO strives to create an inclusive yet efficient work environment in dealing with situations that require immediate action.

This is in line with research conducted by Li (2023) which shows that a combination of top-down and bottom-up decision-making methods results in good decisions even though a hierarchical structure has been established, but is often crossed in the decision-making process. Based on all of these explanations, MYCL CEO's decision-making style is included in the transformational leadership style (SL3) because the leader convinces his members to follow the leader's vision and the company's vision that has been set, although it does not rule out the possibility of opening a net of opinions from members for some decisions taken.

e. Followers' Motivation

Followers' motivation can range from moderately motivated and unable to perform their own tasks under authoritarian leadership (LS1) to highly motivated in participative (SL2) and transformational settings. Transformational leaders (LS3), in particular, inspire their followers to reach their level of self-fulfillment and perform at their best. In servant leadership (SL4) followers strive to achieve their level of self-fulfillment on the motivation provided by their leader. Whereas in Laissez-Faire leadership (LS5) followers tend to be frustrated and unmotivated (Hassan et al., 2016). To motivate team members or subordinates to achieve the set targets, the approach used by the CEO of MYCL is to provide direct examples. For example, cleanliness in the workplace is very important because to prevent the growth of nuisance mold, a sterile environment is required. Therefore, as a leader, the CEO needs to show concern for such cleanliness by setting a concrete example. In addition, motivation is also tailored to the circumstances of the team members. When a team member is underperforming, MYCL's CEO motivates in the form of direction and support. Conversely, when team members are performing well, new challenges and discussions are given so that members continue to develop and the team can function optimally.

The motivation methods used also vary, although so far there has been no implementation of formal punishments or rewards. Instead, MYCL's CEO uses compensation such as bonuses. The motivation of the team can also vary; some members are motivated by money, some value the knowledge gained more, and some are inspired by the impact they make. Therefore, the form of reward is tailored to the motivation of each individual in the team. With this approach, MYCL's CEO strives to understand the personal needs and motivations of each team member, so that they feel valued and motivated to achieve the set goals.

This is in line with research conducted by Rawat (2015) which states that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and diverse employee motivations such as money, impact, and achievement to make the best possible contribution to the company. Based on the research findings and previous research, the leadership style of MYCL CEO is transformational (LS3) because leaders inspire their members to provide the best possible performance.

f. Focus on Follower Growth

Leadership styles with a focus on follower growth differ in their level of attention to the individual development of followers. Some leaders pay no attention to follower growth (LS5) and only emphasize followers following instructions (LS1). In contrast, some leaders pay great attention to developing their followers' competencies, provide moderate (LS2), moderate-high (LS3) to high (LS4) training and development, and place top priority on helping followers achieve their goals (Hassan et al., 2016). In detail, leaders with high attention to follower growth will focus on developing their followers' competencies, providing the necessary support and guidance for personal and professional growth. These leaders prioritize the achievement of followers' personal goals along with the achievement of organizational goals.

In supporting individual growth and development within the team, the approach used by MYCL's CEO is capacity building organized through new projects. These projects are designed in such a way that team members can develop naturally through their responsibilities. Compared to holding formal seminars or classes, MYCL CEO believes that hands-on experience in projects provides more in-depth and practical learning. However, if not enough, team members are also allowed to attend courses, mentoring, or other development activities that are relevant to the member's needs.

While there is no formalized program or initiative to support the professional or personal development of team members, the approach of having projects assigned to each team member has been a key method at MYCL. Each project is designed to challenge and develop individual skills, so that members can grow and develop in their roles. By assigning appropriate responsibilities and supporting individual initiatives to learn and develop, MYCL's CEO strives to create an environment conducive to team members' professional and personal growth.

This is in line with research conducted by Kim & Park (2020) which explains that transformational leaders will promote an environment conducive to knowledge sharing within their company. Based on this explanation, it can be identified that the leadership style of the MYCL CEO is included in the transformational leadership style because leaders tend to pay attention to the self-development of their members even though there are still several member self-development facilities that can be developed and improved to support their performance in the company.

MYCL CEO's Green Transformational Leadership Style

Green transformational leadership is the behavior of leaders who motivate their followers to achieve environmental goals and inspire them to achieve expected environmental performance. Green transformational leaders play an important role in enhancing green creativity in organizations, which can influence green product development performance. This green transformational leadership includes six main dimensions in its measurement including inspiring members with environmental plans, providing a clear environmental vision, inviting members to work together for environmental goals, encouraging members to achieve environmental goals, considering members' environmental beliefs, and stimulating members to think of green ideas. All of these together contribute to the development and implementation of innovative green ideas (Chen & Chang, 2013).

a. Green product development leader inspires members with environmental plan

Inspiring the project team to care about the environmental plan in green product development is done with a "lead by example" approach. As a leader, MYCL's CEO demonstrates commitment to green practices in every aspect of his work. In addition, capacitating is done during the on boarding process, to ensure that every team member understands and accepts the company's environmental values from the start. During the company's annual reporting, MYCL's CEO also emphasizes environmental achievements and plans, inspiring the team through transparency and continued commitment.

b. Green product development leader provides a clear environmental vision for members to follow

Explaining the environmental vision to project teams is done through assigning specific projects to team members. In this way, team members learn about green product development in a hands-on and practical way. In addition, during the idea generation process, team members were engaged in discussions to ensure they understood the company's environmental vision. These discussions provide an opportunity to explore innovative ideas that support the development of greener and more sustainable products.

c. The green product development leader encourages members to work together towards a common environmental goal.

To ensure that all team members are working together towards the same environmental goals, supervision is done through the team leader. The team leader is responsible for overseeing daily work and ensuring that each team member follows the established environmental plan. As a leader, the CEO of MYCL also monitors the progress of the members through reports submitted by the team leaders at MYCL. This oversight ensures that every step taken is aligned with the company's environmental vision and goals.

d. Green product development leader encourages members to achieve environmental goals

Encouraging project teams to achieve environmental goals is done using impact measurement. This method allows the MYCL CEO to measure the environmental impact of each project and communicate the results internally. By keeping the team updated on the company's progress and the impact of their work, this creates greater awareness and motivation to continue working towards the environmental goals set.

e. Green product development leader acts by considering the environmental beliefs of members

In making decisions related to green product development projects, the environmental beliefs of team members are also considered. On several occasions, team members are invited to be involved in the idea-generating process or directly involved in the project. This involvement ensures that green perspectives and ideas from all team members are integrated in decision-making.

f. The green product development leader stimulates members to think of green ideas.

Encouraging project teams to think of green ideas in the context of green product development is done by providing direction through the team leader/director. The director then helps direct each team member at MYCL. This approach ensures that green ideas are seriously considered and implemented in product development, creating a culture of continuous innovation throughout the company.

The Impact of Green Transformational Leadership Style on Corporate Sustainability

The green transformational leadership style implemented by MYCL CEO, Adi Reza Nugroho, has had a significant impact on the sustainability of the company. The sustainability-oriented leadership style can be seen from the main focus on the stability of the company. This is the first step towards a sustainable business. MYCL has continued to survive since its establishment in 2015 and has experienced many performance improvisations in the company. MYCL's CEO emphasizes that ensuring the company can run well can have an impact on the well-being of the team. MYCL is a company that pays attention to the health and safety of its workers. In addition to COVID-19 vaccinations, it conducts safety inductions for all teams to reduce the incidence of injuries. Other attention to team welfare is also seen from the moral and material aspects provided by MYCL. This reflects a strategy that is in line with the principle of sustainability where team welfare and company sustainability go hand in hand. This is in line with the opinion of Sobaih et al., (2022) and Elshaer et al., (2022) that transformational leadership can significantly affect the overall sustainability of the organization.

This sustainability-focused green transformational leadership not only encourages the company to be more environmentally friendly but also creates a collaborative and innovative work environment. Through an approach that emphasizes openness, collaboration, and green innovation, Adi Reza Nugroho has successfully led MYCL to achieve visionary environmental and social goals. The following is a further explanation of the positive impact that the implementation of green transformational leadership style has on the company's sustainability through the 3 aspects below

1. Collaborative and Innovative Work Environment

Adi Reza Nugroho emphasizes the importance of openness and collaboration within the team. He uses an approach that involves democratic discussion and decision-making, where every team member, from directors to members, is involved in the idea-generating process. This creates a collaborative work environment and encourages innovation, especially in the development of environmentally friendly products. A collaborative work environment can be achieved by involving members in the creative process, encouraging collaborative problem-solving, and building organizational culture (Begum et al., 2022).

MYCL encourages a collaborative work environment by involving various stakeholders, including local farmers, designers, and artists, to create more sustainable products. This collaboration not only improves product quality but also strengthens local and global community relationships. MYCL also collaborates with other business partners including Hijack Sandals, Doublet Strangest Comfort, APAKABAR Atelier, Space Available Studio, PALA Nusantara, OD Architecture Studio, and other partners. The form of cooperation carried out is not only B2B cooperation but also with local suppliers and local mushroom farmer partnerships (MYCL, 2022).

2. Achievement of Corporate Environmental and Social Objectives

To achieve its environmental and social goals, MYCL implements a monitoring strategy through regular reports. Adi Reza Nugroho ensures that each team member clearly understands the company's environmental vision through assigned projects and various discussions. This approach helps the company achieve its environmental and social goals. MYCL successfully achieved its environmental and social goals by obtaining a B Corp certification that demonstrates a positive impact on workers, consumers, partners, and the environment. MYCL also recorded a 26% decrease in electricity usage per m² of product compared to the 2019 base year, and 98% of their solid waste was kept out of landfills by utilizing the 3R (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) principle (MYCL, 2022). This is certainly due to the role of leaders in adopting a green transformational approach, ensuring that the team is aligned with the organization's sustainability vision, promoting green sourcing practices, and building a culture of environmental responsibility (Sun et al., 2022).

3. Improve Green Innovation Performance

MYCL successfully improved its green innovation performance through the leadership of Adi Reza Nugroho who inspired the team through lead by example and capacity building during onboarding and annual reporting. This approach enabled the team to continuously innovate in the context of green product development. Effective green transformational leadership involves inspiring the team through direct engagement and capacity-building activities, thereby continuously improving green product and process innovation (Singh et al., 2020).

MYCL has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability by developing mycelium-based materials such as Mylea™ that are environmentally friendly and free from animal exploitation. MYCL's policy of using agroforestry waste as feedstock can help reduce solid waste that typically ends up in landfills. In 2021-2022, MYCL successfully reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 72.4% compared to 2019-2020 (MYCL, 2022).

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

1. Conclusion

The green transformational leadership applied by MYCL's CEO, Adi Reza Nugroho, successfully drives the company towards sustainability through a combination of implementation of his leadership style that focuses on developing team competencies, involvement in decision-making, and attention to member well-being and motivation. By inspiring the team through real-life examples and a clear environmental vision, MYCL's CEO creates a collaborative and innovative work environment. This approach helps achieve the company's environmental and social goals and

improves overall green innovation performance. The results of this study reveal that key elements of the company's green transformational leadership style such as support, empathy, openness, and active participation of members can significantly contribute to MYCL's success in achieving its environmental vision and targets

2. Recommendation

The practical implications of this research suggest that companies should focus on several key areas. First, they should implement ongoing training programs to ensure continuous development. Second, it is essential to encourage active involvement from all members in decision-making processes. Third, companies should prioritize the welfare and well-being of their members. Additionally, fostering a collaborative and innovative work environment is crucial. Finally, dedicating resources to the development of green innovations will help companies achieve their sustainability goals.

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