

We have a problem: we can't control what tourist share about us...

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Abstract

For decades hospitality firms were used to domain the communication process. They share beautiful contents and messages about their offer. The evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT) transforms the tourism and hospitality industry in different manners[1]. The role and use of social media in tourists' decision making have been widely discussed in tourism and hospitality research, especially in the research phase of the tourist' travel planning process. With the wide adoption of social media the influence of customers' word-of-mouth increased and influences not only the research phase, but the repetition and overall customers' experiences. To answer these questions a model assessing e-wom was developed and data was gathering from TripAdvisor regarding customer's opinion in restaurant experiences. The results found establish the bases for restaurants' classification and also to understanding tourists' engagement level.

Introduction

The rapid development of modern communication technology, attached with the increasingly high penetration rate of Internet, wireless systems and mobile communication, is promoting a technological emphasis in both enterprises and consumers. Further, technology tends to bring up regularly new behavioral tendencies.

From a customer perspective the reality can be describe as: people search online; live virtually; shop online and execute commonplace actions; posts tweets, likes and become fans; and, explore millions of mobile apps. The benefits of using ICT such as efficiency, convenience, richer information, wider spectrum, broader selections, competitive pricing, cost reduction, and diversity are well known [1].

Social networks, have been present on the Internet for more than 15 years, with different formats and applications, and in the last five years has become a trend. There is a consensus among business and academia that social media has great impacts on firms-customers relationship development. Simultaneously, social networking sites (SNS) and online social networking (OSN) are shifting the methods of social communication and interaction. Firms are been challenge to explore and adopted a virtual presence in order to keep up with their present and potential clients. The advantages of using Internet and different SNS for business-to-consumer transactions are evident; however firms' behavior intention on OSN remains questionable.

In general, tourism literature reports that tourists follow a funnel-like procedure of narrowing down choices among alternate destinations. Since late nineties, the preferred source of information for travels changed and Internet become one of the main credible sources of info. After 2006, social networks sites became the ultimate source; where info

could be gathered, comments could be post; and complains can be heard. These changes impact the travelers buying behavior.

Discussion and hypothesis

Tourism and Search Information

In 2012 71% of Europeans spend at last one night out when they was in business or private trip. Those that made a private trip 69% stay in a rental establishment despite the increase of percentage of those who stay at friends or family house. For 2013 75% of Europeans plan to spend holidays away from home, where 51% plan to spend in your country, while the remaining plan to visit other European countries. However 34% of those who plan to go on holiday amended its plans for 2013 because of the financial situation in Europe[2].

Its expected tourism in Europe grow 2% to 3% in 2013, according the UN World Tourism Organization, these estimations are supported by key indicators that suggest a slower grow of tourism in firsts mouths of 2013[3]. In 2012 75% of Europeans are planning to go on holidays in 2013.

First, we move from the first concept of[4] to the latest project of [5]. We find it useful to clarify the evolution of the digital platforms' as communication vehicles and the impacts of social media and Web 2.0 on tourism marketing strategy. The sources of information used by consumers for planning they holidays and trips are recommendations are recommendations of friends and family (56%) and Internet (46%) [2]. On-line booking was expanded 3% in 2004 to 14% in 2008[3]. During 2012 53% of Europeans used Internet to arrange their holidays [2]. It was identifying two wide scopes in use of internet to planning holidays: (i) because tourism produces intensity information the consumers use search engines; (ii) social media websites, where customers can generate information about their experiences and expectations [6].

Social network sites are describe as web services that allow individuals to construct a profile and share opinions, photos, movies, recommendations, with a list of other users from that system[7]. These sites represent various forms of consumer generated content (CGC) such as blogs, virtual communities, wikis, social networks, collaborative tagging, and sites that allows shared media files[6]. Users of these social networks have two rules: (i) supply information to the network trough comments, photos and videos; (ii) at same time, consume information supplied by other users [7].

Web evolution

Since early of 1990, when World Wide Web appeared, to nowadays web suffers natural evolutions. Early, web was characterized by links between hypertexts documents via Internet, with very little user interaction, because the main objective for firms was only a web present with information available to all. This stage was known as Web 1.0 or read only web [8]. To access to these pages users had to use search engines, where the products and services were discover[9]. The services evolution focus on users and their participation origin the development of applications that facilitate sharing information, interoperability and collaboration on web. Examples of these new services are social networking sites, blogs, wiki, video and photos sharing. This phase was called web 2.0 [8], and contains three effects: (i) switch focus from desktop to web; (ii) changed value centrality production from firm to customer; and, (iii) shift power to customer [5]. Web 2.0 is also known as Web of People [9]. The last stage of web evolution is Web 3.0 that refers to usage of interaction men machine[8] with the objective of deal with large quantity of information that was generate by web 2.0 technology[10], so the digital content can be processed by users and by advanced applications, too. Social networks can be seen as alternative or complementary sources of

information diffusion, changing search engines properties[9]. Web 3.0 has three distinct characteristics: (i) *intelligent* because any computer can automatically search network information and give to users the content in according the consumer preferences; (ii) *more compatible search platform* where each different computer server will be part of a great distributed database and answer or ask a standard query in other computer; and, (iii) availability *aggregation* of information integrating traveler's comment and make them more clear and convenient to search [10].

The evolution of the web was due not only to technological development, but also because digital literacy increased. From this perspective, users can be divided into two groups: (i) digital natives who are people who grew up using web; (ii) digital immigrants with increased digital literacy honed by higher engagement with web and Internet [9].

E-Word of Mouth

The ability to influence the purchasing decisions of consumers by passing information via word of mouth (wom) is well known by researchers [11]. The e-wom or electronic word of mouth, is defined as any positive or negative comments made by a potential customer, current or old, for a brand, product or service that is available to other clients and/or organizations via the Internet [12]. Besides the shared dimensions with wom, e-wom has: (i) great scalability and speed of diffusion; wom uses a synchronous mode to share information between small groups; and e-wom uses an asynchronous mode as discussion forum, newsgroups and social networks; (ii) more persistence and accessibility because the information are available during long periods and, even after it's archived it can be accessible; (iii) e-wom is more measurable because there are more information available than traditional wom; and, (iv) more difficult to check the credibility and trustworthiness of the comments' originator [11].

The exposure to e-wom changes customers buying processes, special concerning to services encounters, because clients becoming more aware about what they will find. Negative reviews have a lower impact in consumer's behavior, specially when they are familiarity with the service provider. If there are a small number of negative comments they can be inoffensive, but a continuous negative reviews will be a disaster [13].

Online reviews are associated with changes in sales, reducing the uncertainty and the transactions costs. The consumer's reactions to online reviews are strong to news and less exposed products or services which mean the first's comments are more informative, and clients paid attention to reviewer quality and exposure [14]. These reviews can be classified in: quantity, valence and attribute. Review quantity refers to the number of posts that a product/service had, which can indicate its popularity and the information became more credibility. Review valence deals with the type of comment, if it's positive or negative. Review attributes refers to the nature of information in the comment, if is objective or subjective, is attribute centric or benefit-centric [15].

Web 2.0 to Tourism 2.0

With today's digital tools the number of tourists whose the Internet to search for information about destinations and to make reservations online has increased. It appears that customers prefer to gather information about their destinations, through: (i) social networks, and (ii) search engines, instead of traditional resources [6].

This behavior and the development of the Web allow the emergence of a new model of tourism. Thus, before the advent of the Internet, tourism was seen as mass tourism or 0.0. With the development of information society, began to develop a different model, more flexible and more customer centric, moving to the so-called Tourism 1.0. Following the evolution of Web 2.0 emerged Tourism 2.0, and defined by William Perezas: "*is the business revolution in*

thetourismindustrydrivenbythetranslationtoanewplatform-thesocialweb-andtryingtounderstandtherulesforitssuccess.The mainruleis:theconstructionof businessanddestinationsthatusethe networkeffectto improvetheirproductivity, themorecompaniesandindividualsparticipateinthem”[16].

The social media is considered a more trustworthy source of holiday's information than other resources available [17]. Chatterjee & Wang (2012) referred to a 2008's study, where it is suggested that 46,5% of tourists search and select hotels and travel destinations via internet, 39.7% use web to explore and learn about his holiday destination, 34.4% search in internet attractions on his holidays place, 33,2% to decide which air company to choose and 31.8% use internet to know about culture, events and respective heritage.

The use of social media networks by tourists can be divided in three different temporal stages: (i) Pre-trip where the search information is to get ideas about destinations and to see if is a good choice which means a pre destination choice, and a post destination choice where the user seek for ideas and information about the destination; (ii) During Trip the Social Networks are used to seek additional information about the place, events in the tourist local and also to contact friends and comment the holiday experience; (iii) in Post Trip the social media is used with two purposes, one is called dreaming stage where the user beginning planning future holidays and also to comment his past experience, the other phase called sharing him shared photos with friends [17].

Restaurants are key elements in the hospitality and tourism value chain. Most of the times in a certain destiny three distinctive restaurants ownership types can be found: (i) restaurants inside hotels facilities; (ii) restaurants belonging to national or international restaurant chains; and, (iii) local and private owned restaurant. This last category of entrepreneurial initiatives can enhance travelers' experience and foster the destination marketing, offering a taste of the local culture. Usually these are smaller companies showing lag-problems related to resources availability and digital know-how, to whom the main characteristics of a SNS could be of great interest. So the first hypothesis is:

H1: Restaurants can be grouped according to the experience level offered.

TripAdvisor reviewers

TripAdvisor is a popular travel web with more than 100 million travel reviews and opinions from tourists around the world, where 1 100 000 are about restaurants. In each reviewer profile have information about total of reviews made, number of restaurants reviews, number of cities reviews and total of helpful votes that his comments had from other tourists [19].

User generated content sites, like TripAdvisor, become so important that 60% of responders of a study told that use UGC sites to checked online reviews before buying a new product or a service, and 80% of them are influenced by this reviews or electronic word of mouth [20].

Literature suggest two kind of search costs in the information searching process: (i) searching costs like monetary and time costs, that decrease in digital world and increase the amount of information available; (ii) exactly the amount of information available will increase the cognitive cost specialty in users with time constraints. One way to reduce cognitive costs is defining and identifying reputable of the reviewers, considered as expertise and trustworthiness. But, for most travelers this isn't an easy way to reduce cognitive costs [21].

More recent studies show user generated content popularity in tourism sector, and a development on online travel sales. With the increment on number of visitors in TripAdvisor it's clear that reviews are consulted by others tourists [20]. If a traveler is recognized by his

pairs as experienced and reliable, then his opinions can have a significant influence on purchase decisions in other tourist destination travelers [22].

While trustworthiness is considered an important issue in online consumer's behavior isn't yet clear his importance compared with others sources. Although it's considered that reviewers don't have nothing to lose during the process of sharing personal experiences, which can be considered a better level of perceived trustworthiness and reliability than traditional information's sources. The increased number of visits to sites like TripAdvisor also is considered a credible source of travel information [23]. With these concepts the second hypothesis is:

H2a: The customers' engagement with TripAdvisor reflects on their number of comments.

H2b: The customers' engagement with TripAdvisor reflects on their expertise levels.

Helpful review, in TripAdvisor, can be considered one source of credibility of online reviews. According to Lee et al (2011), helpful reviewers tend to travel to many destinations, post reviews actively, don't give higher ratings compared to others reviewers, the gender and age didn't are distinguish factor.

Hotel occupancy rate increases significantly: (i) with the number of hotel's reviews; (ii) the rating average given to hotel; (iii) the percentage of user reviews to the hotel. Surprisingly the TripAdvisor ranking, which defines the popularity of tourism business, hadn't influence in hotel occupancy rate [24]. The exposure to online reviews improves the probability of news bookings, when the travel didn't have any familiarity with the hotel, while frequent clients are more resilient to reviews' nature [13]. This led us to question if this also applies to restaurants and to the third hypothesis:

H3: TripAdvisor engagement influences customers' choice of restaurants.

Procedures for Data Collection and Results

The focus of the study was on island destinations to keep the information search context constant. To test the developed model were chosen two regions with similar natural conditions, although they have a very distinct tourist experience: Azores and Hawaii. Within each archipelago the main town were chosen in Kailua Island and in S. Miguel Island, and analyzed the 10 top-ranked restaurants in "rating" TripAdvisor. Data was collected, in each of the cities, in the period comprised between April 24 and 30 of 2013. These two cities were selected to test the hypotheses in different cultural and economic environment and in different stages of tourism life cycle. This selection of cities was deemed appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study.

TripAdvisor was selected as the main information source for Customer Generated Content. The idea was to first collect all possible review-related data from TripAdvisor, including: (1) the content and amount of reviews written per restaurant; (2) the average of ratings given to the restaurant; (3) percentage of recommendations (4) the TripAdvisor popularity index of the restaurant; (5) the content of the most popular/credible comments on those restaurants.

It was chosen all the restaurants that were in the top 10 of each of the cities, were selected the last 50 reviews, if there otherwise we used the maximum possible comments. Considering above conditions we get data from 20 restaurants and 813 reviews from 686 customers.

Firstly, a syntactic index was created based in number of reviews, number of restaurants reviews, number of cities' reviewed a helpful votes. The Cronbach Alpha obtained supports the procedure (0,877).

Afterwards, some variables were categorized as described in table 1.

Table 1: Structure of categorized variables

Old Variable	New variable	Categories	Old Variable	New variable	Categories
Number of reviews	Group Number of reviews	1- From 1 to 4 Reviews	Average Excellent	Group Average Excellent	1 - From 1 to 30 votes
		2-From 5 to 15 Reviews			2 - From 31 to 75 votes
		3-More or equal than 16 Reviews			3 - 76 or more votes
Helpfull Votes	Group of Helpfull Votes	1 - From 0 to 1 votes	Average Very Good	Group Average Very Good	1 - From 1 to 15 votes
		2 - From 2 to 4 votes			2 - From 16 to 40 votes
		3 - From 5 to 10 votes			3 - 41 or more votes
		4 - More than 10 votes			
Index Expertise	Expertise Level	1 - Index between 0 and 1,9	Average Average	Group Average Average	1 - From 0 to 3 votes
		2 - Index between 2 and 10,9			2 - From 4 to 10 votes
		3 - 11 or more			3 - 11 or more votes
Recommend Percentage	Group of Recommend Percentage	1 - Until 85%	Average Poor	Group Average Poor	1 - From 0 to 1 votes
		2 - From 86% until 90%			2 - From 2 to 3 votes
		3 - More than 91%			3 - 4 or more votes
Total reviews of restaurant	Group of restaurant's reviews	1 - From 1 to 50 Reviews	Average Terrible	Group Average Terrible	1 - 0 votes
		2 - From 51 to 124 reviews			2 - From 1 to 3 votes
		3 - 125 or more reviews			3 - 4 or more votes

With new variables (Expertise Level, Group of Number of Reviews, Group of Helpful Votes) a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (ACM) was performed which gave as output two variables that were used to perform a hierarchical clustering of the clients. As a result three clusters were obtained. The first cluster (n=159) evidence less experience in TripAdvisor and therefore reviewers in these group were called Newbie. The second cluster (n=337) was denominated Specialist, due to their historical path in TripAdvisor and their high rate of helpful votes. The last cluster was named of Beginner (n= 317), since the tourists show evidences of a higher interaction than the newbies, but still are in a medium level of engagement in TripAdvisor (see, Figure 1).

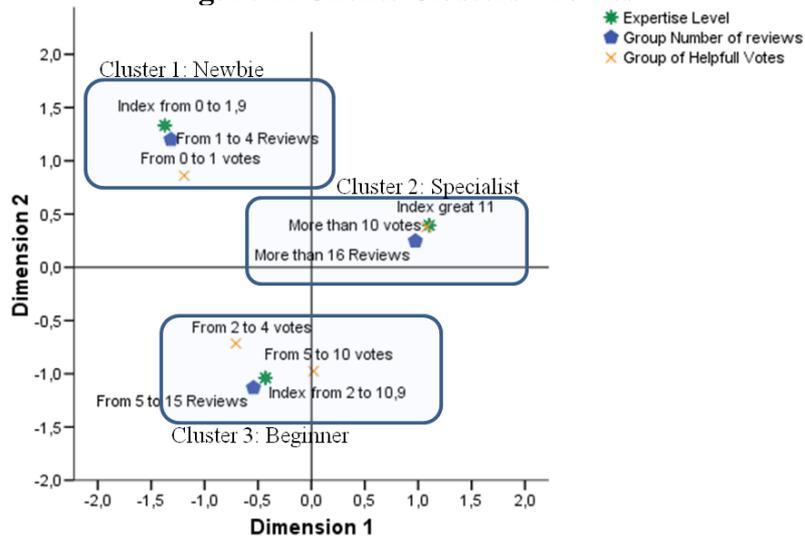
Figure 1 plots the various categories permitting identify the clusters' characteristics. One of the categories is the number of reviews that have different level for each cluster which suggests that clusters obtained are well separate according to the number of reviews performed, as proposed in H2a (*The customers' engagement with TripAdvisor reflects on their number of comments*).

The Index created during this work allows identifying the level of engagement and credibility of the reviewer, which is different between and characterized the clusters, and supports H2b (*The customers' engagement with TripAdvisor reflects on their expertise levels*).

Following the same statistical processes describe above, three clusters of restaurants were found, using as grouping initial variables: Group of restaurants reviews, Group Average Excellent, Group Average Very Good and Group Average.

The clusters found were denominated as Diamond Experience (n=250), Gold Experience (n=299), and Silver Experience (n=264) based on the decreasing level of overall experience offer by these restaurants in customers opinion express online (e-wom). For instance, diamond experience cluster has the highest incidences of excellent and very good rates. Figure 2 characterized the three clusters. From figure 2 it's possible identify groups of

Figure 1: Clients Clusters Profiles



restaurants based in number of votes they received from reviewers especially when they considered the service excellent, very good or average supporting H1 (*Restaurants can be group according to the experience level offered*).

Figure 2: Restaurants Clusters Profiles

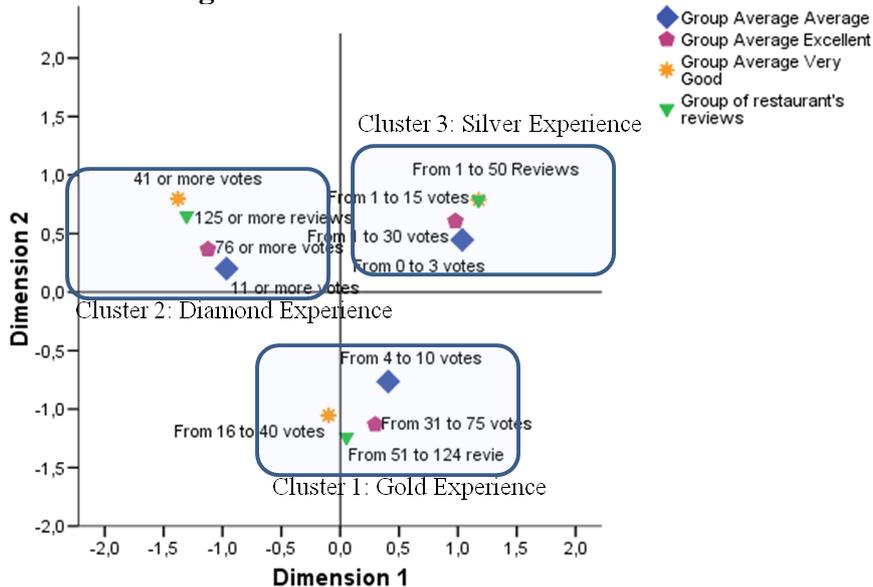
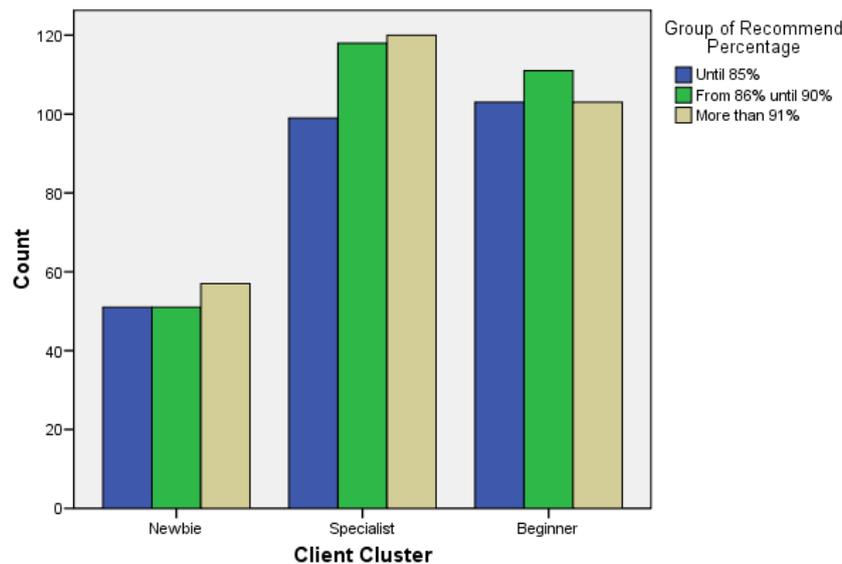


Figure 3 shows restaurants visited by different kind of clients according the percentage recommendation given by TripAdvisor. According to this, Newbies attend more often restaurants with greater recommendation rate. Specialists went more to restaurants with smallest percentage of recommendations. These results support hypothesis 3 (*TripAdvisor engagement influences customers' choice of restaurants*).

Figure 3: Clients restaurants reviews in the clusters



The above results unveil different reviewers' profiles and preferences, and consequently it influences restaurants e-wom and digital brand awareness, which reflects on newbies buying decisions.

Conclusions

Literature review show that travelers buying process has undergone substantial changes. Tourist tend more to buy experiences and to minimize their cognitive cost by listening to peers comments and reviews on digital social networks. In these, e-wom appears as a vehicle for tourist share experiences and opinions about restaurants encounters. This process of sharing experiences online permitted amass communication generate not by brand owners, but by clients and a ubiquity accessibility to comments.

This paper shows that there has been only limited hospitality research within social media marketing to date, focusing mostly in hotels and neglecting restaurant activity. The results enlarge the scope and generated some interesting findings. First, data support in general the conceptual framework presented. Second, with found that some evidences already acknowledge in other hospitality activities are also true in the restaurant context: helpful reviewers post actively and are more parsimonious in rating compared to others reviewers[21]; and peers' opinions can have a significant influence on restaurant decision choice[22].

The Expertise Index proposed in this work was construct with TripAdvisor indicators and permits to easily calculate trustworthiness and credibility levels of tourists. Beside the trustworthiness of restaurants' clients, it was possible to determinate the engagement level of clients in TripAdvisor and which dimensions influence it. The analysis reveals three different type of reviewers, according to their expertise level: *Newbies*, *Beginners* and *Specialist*. Newbies experiment more restaurants with higher recommendations level; while the other kind of tourist gradually search restaurants with less level of recommendation, indicating the importance of specialists as opinion maker.

The analysis also points to the existence of three types of restaurants, according to the level of experience offered to clients (*Silver*, *Gold* and *Diamond* experiences). Two interesting conclusions came out from this component: (i) the negative reviews and lower average rate shows not influence on restaurant experience offer; and, (ii) the newbies group is the one that values the most the e-wom, since they clearly preferred restaurants with upper

experiences reports. The relative low number of votes for poor and terrible averages and the results inconclusive found in cluster definition using these two types of averages suggest that this kind of negative information must have a different type of approach. Thus, this work contributes to the theory by adding knowledge to the e-wom research stream, enlarging the analysis performed on restaurants' encounters and reinforcing the findings in other hospitality studies. Based on the current exploratory research, further research will be conducted in order to unveil more info regarding those customers who are likely to engage in online wom and spreading positive wom. This will led to develop theory regarding to e-wom applications and innovative online strategy. Certainly, there is ample scope for further research in this area.

International and managerial implications

The findings reported here shed light on relevant aspects associate to social media marketing applied to restaurants. Marketers in this field can explore the online interpersonal influence phenomenon, one characteristic of digital social networks and confirmed in this work. Since, there are different active reviewers type, restaurant should acknowledge this differences and pay attention to the interactions with this particular type of customers. As notice above, customers with a higher level of engagement play an important role in restaurants' promotion. For instance, since they are more opened to new experiences, they tend to visit newer and lower percentage of recommendation restaurants. These restaurants should take in account their comments and promote interaction, because they will influence other tourists' trough e-wom and can help to improve the experience level offer. The results also, led us to conclude that no matter the international geographic location, e-wom is critical to the promotion of a restaurant and reduces uncertainty in the travelers' decision choice of restaurants to visit in a trip.

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