# Is social media marketing worth it for luxury brands? The dual impact of brand page satisfaction and brand love on word-of-mouth and attitudinal loyalty intentions

 $Sanga\ Song$  School of Business and Economics, Indiana University East, Richmond, Indiana, USA, and  $Hye\text{-}Young\ Kim$  Retail Merchandising, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Minnesota, USA

#### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This study aims to investigate the relationships between customer perceptions of luxury companies' brand pages (i.e. brand page value and self-expressive brands) and customers' affective (i.e. brand page satisfaction and brand love) and behavioral (i.e. word-of-mouth [WOM] and attitudinal loyalty intentions) responses.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data of 290 social media users in the USA who followed at least one luxury brand on social media.

**Findings** – The results demonstrated that consumers' brand page satisfaction, influenced by the brand page's information and entertainment value, was related to brand love and WOM intentions. Meanwhile, brand love – defined as emotional devotion to a brand – was influenced by self-expressive brands and was positively related to both WOM and attitudinal loyalty intentions.

Originality/value — This study identifies a set of customer perceptions that drive consumers' affective and behavioral responses and that can be used to guide luxury brands to best use their brand pages on social media. By developing and testing a dual-impact model consisting of brand page satisfaction and brand love, this study provides practical directions for luxury brand managers and marketers who wish to transform their followers into both brand advocates who elevate the brand through WOM communications and loyal customers who are committed to affiliating with and supporting the brand.

Keywords Luxury brands, Social media, Brand love, Self-expressive brands, Word-of-mouth marketing

Paper type Research paper

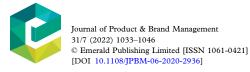
#### 1. Introduction

The growing popularity of social media has altered the fabric of a wide range of businesses, including luxury brands (Creevey et al., 2021). Luxury brands are identified as having excellent quality, high prices and exclusive distribution channels (Kapferer, 1997). While the number of studies focusing on luxury brand strategies on social media is growing, little attention has been paid to brand pages on social media (Ramadan et al., 2018), and the understanding of effective brand page strategies for luxury brands is still insufficient. Given the distinctive positioning of luxury brands (Bazi et al., 2020; Godey et al., 2016), social media marketing strategies used by non-luxury brands may not be applicable to luxury brands. Thus, empirical research that applies specialized theoretical considerations may be required to provide useful

insights into developing social media strategies specifically for luxury brands.

Brand pages on social media are effective at disseminating branded content, such as text, images, videos and links that facilitate customer experiences (Arrigo, 2018). Followers engage with branded content through likes, shares and comments and share their experience with other followers, thereby contributing to the exponential spread of said content (Tafesse and Wien, 2017; Coelho et al., 2019). Most of the limited number of studies dealing with social media communities or the social media pages of luxury brands have focused on qualitative inquiries (Bazi et al., 2020; Deprince and Geerts, 2019; Pentina et al., 2018; Ramadan et al., 2018), case studies (Ng, 2014; Phan et al., 2011) or brand-generated content analyses (Dhaoui, 2014; Liu et al., 2019). These studies have provided important insights for researchers regarding luxury brand followers' expectations of brand pages, as well as their cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement

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with luxury brands; however, the results of these studies are descriptive rather than exploratory and do not provide comprehensive explanations of the underlying mechanisms. A few empirical studies have focused on luxury brand followers on social media, but these studies did not consider customerperceived value toward brand pages but, rather, focused on branded content strategies (Godey et al., 2016; Kefi and Maar, 2018) or user expectations/motivations for social media engagement (Tsai and Men, 2013; Deprince and Geerts, 2019; Bazi et al., 2020; Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020).

Therefore, focusing on customer-perceived value (brand page value and self-expressive brands), this study investigated how such value perceptions are associated with luxury brand followers' attitudes (brand page satisfaction, brand love) and behavioral intentions (word-of-mouth [WOM] and attitudinal loyalty intentions). This study developed and tested a dual-impact model that includes both:

- brand page value-satisfaction; and
- self-expressive brand love paths as mechanisms to explain the relationship between customer value perceptions and behavioral intentions.

This is especially important considering that mere satisfaction resulting from brand page values or mere strong emotional attachment resulting from self-expressive brands are not sufficient to motivate strong customer responses. For example, it is possible that luxury brand followers may have a strong emotional attachment to a brand (i.e. brand love), regardless of their level of satisfaction with the brand page. The reverse is also possible, in which luxury brand followers may be satisfied with what the brand page offers them, regardless of their emotional devotion to the brand.

Moreover, considering both value constructs is particularly important in luxury brand research because the current understanding of consumers' comprehensive value perceptions achieved by following a brand on social media is still limited. Luxury brand followers have complex motivations to engage with luxury brands on social media, including social/ psychological or utilitarian motivations, such as status signaling, keeping up with trends and interacting with celebrities who endorse the luxury brands (Bazi et al., 2020), which can be related to gratifications derived from brand page use (De Vries and Carlson, 2014) rather than brand love. By delineating customer perceptions toward the brand page and the brand that lead to different behavioral intentions through the dual impact of brand page satisfaction and brand love, this study provides a fuller picture of the customer value-attitudebehavioral intention model and extends our understanding of customer value perceptions. The study also offers practical implications for luxury brand managers and marketers regarding how to transform their followers into both brand advocates who elevate the brand through communications and loyal customers who are committed to affiliating with and supporting the brand.

# 2. Literature review and hypothesis development

#### 2.1 Brand pages and customer perceptions

Perceived value is the overall assessment of a product's or service's utility (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1988). Customer-perceived value is a multidimensional construct that comprises rational,

social and emotional/hedonic dimensions (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). As it is impossible to fulfill all customer needs and desires, companies focus on those dimensions of perceived value that are key for a specific context (Holbrook, 1996). Prior studies have identified various customer-perceived values and their impacts on customer responses that allow companies to maximize the effectiveness of brand pages on social media (Shi et al., 2016; Carlson et al., 2018; Simon and Tossan, 2018; Dessart and Veloutsou, 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). For example, applying the uses and gratifications theory, Kim et al. (2021) found that three gratification factors (i.e. information, convenience and self-expression) influenced user satisfaction with a hotel's Facebook page, whereas two factors (i.e. entertainment and social interaction) did not. Guided by the same theory, Dessart and Veloutsou (2021) found that the perceived human and information value of a brand's Facebook page increased brand community identification and loyalty. Wang et al. (2021) showed that hedonic and social values are positively related to trust in social media brand communities, based on a trust transfer perspective. Applying customer value theory, Shi et al. (2016) identified three key values driving customers' continued interaction intention with social media pages: information and economic benefits (functional value), interactivity and collaboration (social value) and entertainment and arousal (emotional value). The above-mentioned studies explored various sets of customer-perceived values in different contexts and demonstrated that, to develop desirable marketing outcomes, it is important to select the relevant dimensions of perceived value based on knowledge about what consumers value most. Although these studies did not focus on luxury brands, they provide valuable information about the various typologies of perceived value experienced by brand followers.

## 2.1.1 Brand page value and satisfaction

Based on Rust and Oliver's (1994) general definition of product and service satisfaction, brand page satisfaction can be defined as a customer's overall evaluation of brand page performance. Based on customer value theory (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Shi et al., 2019), this study explores three dimensions of customer perceived value: functional, social and emotional. Functional value refers to customers' perceived practical or utilitarian, benefits from following a brand page. Customer value theory identifies functional value as including two dimensions: quality and monetary utility (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Functional value is one of the most important factors in attracting social media users to brand pages (Ceyhan, 2019). Previous studies have investigated the information and economic dimensions of functional value in the context of social media (Chow and Shi, 2015; Shi et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2019). Information value can be defined as the benefits of acquiring useful and practical content by following a brand page (Chow and Shi, 2015). As companies mainly use brand pages to create and publish branded content directed at customers, high-quality information, such as exclusive content about a brand or product news, is key to raising perceived information value (Azar et al., 2016; Dessart and Veloutsou, 2021). For example, Louis Vuitton has broadcast its ready-towear live shows on its Facebook brand page (Godey et al., 2016).

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Such content can expand brand followers' knowledge and update them on the latest trends.

In addition, economic value can be defined as the economic benefits acquired by following a brand page, such as improved service, quick response time, promotions and/or rewards (Chow and Shi, 2015). While many non-luxury brands offer numerous promotions and coupons on social media to attract users, luxury brands use this tactic subtly, for example, through limited-time exclusive offers or promotions that focus on consumer experiences rather than on instant monetary incentives (Hansen, 2016).

When consumers find that branded content is useful and practical, they perceive greater functional utility and experience higher satisfaction (Carlson *et al.*, 2019a). Such content-oriented functional value is essential in customer evaluations, brand page participation and usage intensity (Carlson *et al.*, 2019a; De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Shi *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, functional value has been found to be one of the most important drivers in attracting users to brand pages (Jahn and Kunz, 2012), and both the information and economic aspects of functional value positively influence followers' satisfaction (Chow and Shi, 2015). Thus, it is hypothesized that both the information and economic value of luxury companies' brand pages will be effective in predicting followers' satisfaction with the brand pages:

- H1a. Information value is positively related to brand page satisfaction.
- H1b. Economic value is positively related to brand page satisfaction.

Next, social value refers to users' perceived social benefits from socializing and forming relationships with other users (i.e. social interaction value) or with the brand (i.e. brand interaction value) when following a brand page (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Brand pages on social media allow users to interact with one another, for example, by sharing their experiences, posting comments and even answering other users' questions on behalf of the brand, thus increasing user participation and the feeling of community (Joyce and Kraut, 2006; Simon and Tossan, 2018). Individuals derive value from discussions with like-minded individuals on the brand page who share similar interests or brand experience (Simon and Tossan, 2018; Piehler et al., 2019). For example, brand pages for luxury watches or cars have active discussions regarding new product features and services and how to best use them (Gilliland, 2020).

Brand followers also communicate with the brand by providing feedback, leaving comments and asking questions (Pentina et al., 2018); they expect that the brand will listen to them more on social media than via other means of communication (Jones, 2022). Although not many luxury brands interact with their followers on their brand pages (Aprilianty and Nasution, 2017; Strugatz, 2016), a few luxury brands use their social media pages to directly communicate with their followers. For example, in 2009, Burberry's chief creative officer, Christopher Bailey, posted a video on Burberry's Facebook page thanking followers and responding to their comments (Burberry, 2019).

The literature on users' motives for participating in social networking indicates that building, broadening and maintaining relationships are the main reasons why users engage with social media (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Social interactions, such as receiving responses from others, facilitate participation among online community members (Joyce and Kraut, 2006). In terms of brand interactions, brand pages can be used as a brand communication and interaction channel with brand followers (Azar et al., 2016; Tsimonis et al., 2020). Brand-customer interactions on a brand page can strengthen customers' engagement and relationships with the brand (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). The perception of feeling connected with other users or with the brand increases customer satisfaction with the brand page (Simon and Tossan, 2018). Brand pages that foster users' social interactions increase the users' social identity and satisfaction with the brand pages (Chow and Shi, 2015). Therefore, it is hypothesized that the social value of luxury companies' brand pages will be effective in predicting followers' satisfaction with the brand pages:

- H2a. Social interaction value is positively related to brand page satisfaction.
- *H2b.* Brand interaction value is positively related to brand page satisfaction.

Finally, entertainment value is defined as the intrinsic enjoyment, fun or relaxation experienced by users while following a brand page (Chow and Shi, 2015). Previous research on social media communities has addressed the importance of the emotional elements that drive fun, excitement and entertainment, which are important motivators for consumers to engage with brand pages (Tsai and Men, 2013) and enhance brand relationship performance (Carlson et al., 2019). Luxury brands have provided enjoyable and entertaining branded content, such as visually appealing photos, videos and music (Jahn et al., 2012). For example, Louis Vuitton's visual storytelling of the brand's history on Twitter and Chanel's exclusive behind-the-scenes Instagram content provide their followers with awe and excitement (Ramakrishnan, 2019). Interesting and entertaining content provides users with hedonic gratification (Cvijikj et al., 2013), encourages them to form an emotional attachment to the brand and increases positive feelings and intentions to visit the brand page in the future (Shi et al., 2016; Tafesse and Wien, 2017). Branded content that instils excitement and emotional reactions can enforce brand values (Carlson et al., 2019a) and increase consumers' brand page satisfaction (Chow and Shi, 2015). Therefore, it is hypothesized that the entertainment value of luxury companies' brand pages will be effective in predicting followers' satisfaction with the brand pages:

H3. Entertainment value is positively related to brand page satisfaction.

## 2.1.2 Brand self-expressiveness and brand love

Previous studies have indicated that some consumers form a strong self-brand connection and perceive the brand as a vehicle for their self-expression (Wallace *et al.*, 2014, 2021). In this relationship, brands support the individual's self-image and help the individual construct an aspirational self-image

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(Escalas and Bettman, 2005). This is especially true of luxury brands, which help satisfy self-presentation goals, for example, by enhancing self-image, expressing difference from others, or gaining others' recognition by virtue of luxury brands' superior characteristics (e.g. quality, expense, reputation, scarcity, craftsmanship) (Hwang and Kandampully, 2012; Wallace et al., 2014).

Social media makes forming this brand-self connection easier than ever, as users can affiliate with a luxury brand or desired reference group without necessarily owning the product in question (Harmon-Kizer et al., 2013; Choi and Burnham, 2020) by visually consuming and engaging with aspirational brands as a means of self-expression and self-presentation (Liu et al., 2012; Bazi et al., 2020). Following a brand page that is publicly displayed online requires a certain level of consideration about whether affiliating with the brand on social media can support one's inner and social identity (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Choi and Burnham, 2020). Liking or publicly commenting on a brand's social media page also impacts the follower's virtual identity by appearing on the user's profile, which can be seen by others (Song and Kim, 2020; Pentina et al., 2018). This demands a certain level of psychological attachment to the brand and a belief in the value of one's relationship with it (Kim et al., 2008). Such beliefs relate closely to whether customers perceive a brand as reflecting their sense of self and enhancing their identity in social exchanges (Burnasheva et al., 2019; Wallace, 2014).

Self-expressive brands are defined as "the customers' perception of the degree to which the specific brand enhances one's social self and/or reflects one's inner self" (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006, p. 82). Such brand perceptions create a strong emotional connection to the brand and encourage consumers to maintain a relationship with the brand (Wallace et al., 2014, 2021). Previous studies have investigated the inner self and the social self as two dimensions of self-expressive brands (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006): an inner self-expressive element (i.e. whether the brand mirrors or symbolizes the kind of person one is) and a social self-expressive element (i.e. social status or relationships with others in a social network and whether the brand improves or impacts what others think of them). A match between one's inner or social self-expressive values and a brand prompts a strong emotional response to the brand (Wallace et al., 2021).

Previous research suggests that both the inner-self and socialself dimensions of self-expressive brands are positively associated with brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wallace et al., 2014). For example, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) found that customers felt greater love for brands that played a significant role in shaping their inner and social identities. Wallace et al. (2014) reported a strong association between brand love and self-expressive brands on Facebook. Han and Kwon (2022) found that consumers' self-expressive and selfpresentation motivations were positively associated with brand love and subsequently led to brand loyalty on the brand's Facebook page. Similarly, Hwang and Kandampully (2012) confirmed that self-expressive luxury fashion brands elicit strong consumer emotions, including brand love and brand attachment, because wearing these brands signals success and social status by establishing a shared identity between brand and wearer. In short, consumers develop an emotional connection to a luxury brand if its superior characteristics and performance serve to reflect their inner self or enhance their social self (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Hwang and Kandampully, 2012). On this basis, it is hypothesized that luxury brand followers are more likely to love a brand if they perceive that it reflects their inner self or enhances their social self:

H4a. Inner self-expressive brands are positively related to brand love.

H4b. Social self-expressive brands are positively related to brand love.

While no previous study has directly measured the influence of brand page satisfaction on brand love, a few studies have provided some valuable clues. For example, cumulative satisfaction with a brand's performance over a period of time leads to the development of a strong emotional bond with the brand, although satisfaction alone is not a good predictor of brand love (Roy et al., 2013). Customer satisfaction can be derived from fulfilled promises by a brand through high-quality products, excellent service or overall brand experience (Dagger and David, 2012; Huang, 2017). Consumer satisfaction allow consumers to develop a bond with the brand, which deters them from switching their preference to other brands (Dagger and David, 2012). Brand experience evoked by brand-related stimuli is positively related to brand love; such stimuli include brand design, packaging, marketing communications and environments (Huang, 2017) as well as brand pages in which high-quality branded content is created and shared (Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020). In the context of online communities, Coelho et al. (2019) claim that brand communities encourage consumers to nourish their love for the brand and that the social identity experienced by a group member reinforces customerbrand affective relationships. Thus, it is hypothesized that if luxury brand followers are satisfied with the brand page, they are more likely to love the brand:

H5. Brand page satisfaction is positively related to brand love.

# 2.2 Affective response and behavioral responses

Prior research has found that WOM and brand loyalty, two dimensions of customer behavioral responses, are influenced by customer affective responses, such as positive attitudes and feelings of satisfaction (Chiou et al., 2002; de Matos and Rossi, 2008). WOM refers to the flow of communication among consumers about products or services (Westbrook, 1987). The role of WOM is increasingly important in marketing because of the growing popularity of social media, which consumers use to share their opinions and experiences (Donthu et al., 2021). WOM is considered more credible and persuasive in the consumer's mind than advertising because WOM communications are believed to take place between people who have little to gain from recommending the product or service to others (Coelho et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2021).

Previous studies have shown that both brand page satisfaction and brand love are important factors when it comes to consumers advocating the brand to other consumers

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(Wallace et al., 2014). First, satisfied consumers tend to become brand advocates and to provide positive WOM communication to new customers (Drennan et al., 2015; Palazon et al., 2019). For example, researchers have found that consumer satisfaction with online group chats increased positive WOM (Van Dolen et al., 2007). Chow and Shi (2015) found that satisfied brand followers tended to become loyal to the brand, and they were likely to share their positive experiences with others and recommend the brand to other customers. This may also be true for luxury brands. If luxury companies' brand pages successfully deliver a positive customer experience, followers are willing to talk about the brand and pass along branded content (Godey et al., 2016).

Second, in terms of the relationship between brand love and WOM, recommending or endorsing a brand can be part of constructing and expressing an identity (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) and requires a certain amount of time, energy and resources (Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2016); thus, a strong emotional devotion to the brand may be required for consumers to spread WOM. People with a high degree of brand love speak favorably about the brand (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Coelho *et al.*, 2019; Rahman *et al.*, 2021). For example, Coelho *et al.* (2019) found that brand love was positively associated with WOM among brand community members. Therefore, it is hypothesized that if followers are satisfied with a brand page or have a strong emotional attachment to a luxury brand, they are more willing to generate WOM communication:

H6a. Brand page satisfaction is positively related to WOM intentions.

*H6b.* Brand love is positively related to WOM intentions.

As a core dimension of brand equity, brand loyalty encourages consumers to remain loyal to a brand, regardless of changes in product features or price (Aaker, 1991). While brand loyalty behavior correlates with consumers' actual behavior in the marketplace (e.g. repeated purchases), the construct of attitudinal loyalty reflects emotional or psychological attachment to a certain brand (De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Verma, 2021). The importance of attitudinal loyalty measurements has been documented in previous studies that incorporated psychological variables related to long-term commitment (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). The importance of satisfaction for consumers is that their experiences, emotions and relationship with the brand may be strengthened so that they may become truly loyal to the brand (Coelho et al., 2019). This is especially true of consumer behavior among social media users (De Vries and Carlson, 2014), who can publicly display affinity to a brand even when unable to demonstrate behavioral loyalty (Risius and Beck, 2015).

There is also evidence that customer satisfaction based on perceived performance that exceeds expectations produces both transactional (e.g. purchasing, loyalty) and nontransactional (e.g. giving and receiving recommendations, helping other customers) behaviors (Carlson et al., 2019). Carlson et al. (2019) found that customer satisfaction with a brand page increased engagement behavior, including the intention to recommend the brand to others and future purchase intention. According to Jahn and Kunz (2012), brand

fan pages on Facebook that satisfied particular user needs promoted strong engagement and participation and increased brand loyalty. This can be explained by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), as satisfied customers who enjoy the benefits of brand pages may reciprocate and remain loyal to the brand.

The brand–consumer relationship literature also identifies feeling bonded with and emotionally connected to a brand as an important aspect of brand love. When an individual is emotionally attached to a brand, maintaining proximity to that brand becomes important to them. When consumers had not used a brand for a while, they reported feeling that "something was missing" (Fournier, 1998, p. 364). This "separation anxiety" reflected a desire to engage with the brand and to remain loyal to it. In other words, brand love leads to attitudinal loyalty, centered on the consumer's level of commitment to the brand and their intention to stay with it (De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Zhang et al., 2020; Coelho et al., 2019). On that basis, it is hypothesized that followers are more willing to maintain their brand loyalty if they are satisfied with a brand page or have a strong emotional attachment to a luxury brand:

H7a. Brand page satisfaction is positively related to brand attitudinal loyalty intentions.

H7b. Brand love is positively related to brand attitudinal loyalty intentions.

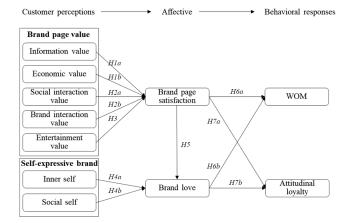
Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships among the research constructs.

#### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Sample and procedure

Data were collected from the Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. After providing informed consent, volunteers were asked to read brief definitions of social media and luxury brands. Examples of luxury brands consisted of high-quality and high-value brands, such as Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Rolex. Before proceeding with the questionnaire, participants were asked to respond to two screening questions: whether they were currently living in the USA and had followed luxury brand social media pages. Participants were requested to answer how many luxury companies' brand pages they had followed. Next, they were directed to a self-administered

Figure 1 Conceptual model



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questionnaire available online. Two attention-check questions were employed throughout the survey. Participants were compensated for participation. The MTurk platform is effective for producing reliable data that are equivalent to data sampled using traditional methods (Song and Kim, 2020). Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used to examine the construct validity of scales and to test the proposed model with the significance level of p < 0.05.

#### 3.2 Measures

The research questionnaire consisted of six major sections that assessed WOM and brand attitudinal loyalty intentions, brand page value, self-expressive brands, brand page satisfaction and brand love. Validated scales from previous studies were used to measure the constructs. See the Appendix 1 for more information about detailed measurements. First, each WOM and brand attitudinal loyalty intention via three items from De Vries and Carlson (2014) were measured. Each of the five brand page values, adapting the scales from Jahn and Kunz (2012) and Chow and Shi (2015) and using three items for each construct, were measured. Each of the two self-expressive brand dimensions, using three items from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), were measured. Brand page satisfaction using three items from Chow and Shi (2015) were measured. Brand love using seven items from Vernuccio et al. (2015) were measured. All items are self-rated on seven-point Likert scales from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strong agree." Additionally, participants responded to questions concerning their social media usage and demographic characteristics.

# 4. Results

#### 4.1 Sample characteristics

Among the 423 MTurk users who were willing to participate in this study and who started the survey, 109 participants did not meet the survey eligibility criteria (i.e. social media users who had followed at least one luxury brand on social media and who live in the USA) and were automatically eliminated from the

survey. Participants who did not complete the full survey or who did not pass the attention check questions were also excluded (n = 24). Thus, a total of 290 responses were used for analysis. See the Appendix 2 for more information about the basic characteristics of the participants.

The mean age of the sample was 33.44 years (SD = 9.92) and there were slightly more female respondents (54.5%) than male respondents. A large portion of the respondents was white/ Caucasian (79.3%). In terms of household income, 27.9% of participants fell between \$40,000 and \$59,999, 27.6% were between \$20,000 and \$39,999 and 15.2% were between \$60,000 and \$79,999 [1]. Most respondents reported that they were following 3-4 luxury brands on social media (65.6%). In terms of hours spent on social media, 31% of them spent 1-2 ha day and 21.4% of them spent 2-3 h a day. Almost 30% of them had used social media for 5-7 years. Facebook was the most frequently used social media platform (73.4%).

# 4.2 Preliminary analysis of the measurement model

A Harman's single-factor test was used to address the issue of common method bias. The total variance explained by singlefactor was found to be 44.96%, which is lower than the 50% criterion suggested by Harman (1976), indicating the common method bias is acceptable. Next, principal component analysis with varimax rotation showed that factor loadings ranged from 0.782 to 0.952, indicating good construct validity. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients ranged from 0.836 to 0.968, confirming good internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) values and the composite reliability coefficients (CR) were greater than 0.60, thereby confirming convergent validity. According to Table 1, all diagonal elements representing the square root of the AVEs were larger than any other corresponding row or column entry, indicating that each construct was sufficiently different from other constructs. Thus, discriminant validity was also achieved. Then, confirmatory factor analysis on the measurement model using maximum likelihood estimation was performed. The model

Table 1 Correlations among variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. WOM	0.941			·	:	:	·			·	
2. LOY	0.739**	0.908									
3. IV	0.475**	0.536**	0.881								
4. ECV	0.316**	0.432**	0.559**	0.844							
5. SIV	0.249**	0.323**	0.476**	0.631**	0.931						
6. BIV	0.324**	0.488**	0.511**	0.603**	0.616**	0.931					
7. ETV	0.455**	0.423**	0.519**	0.366**	0.443**	0.567**	0.868				
8. ISV	0.355**	0.524**	0.490**	0.499**	0.510**	0.737**	0.514**	0.925			
9. SSV	0.394**	0.490**	0.504**	0.497**	0.527**	0.702**	0.511**	0.760**	0.9		
10. BPS	0.517**	0.413**	0.473**	0.311**	0.284**	0.382**	0.534**	0.424**	0.480**	0.902	
11. BL	0.594**	0.613**	0.559**	0.401**	0.305**	0.524**	0.571**	0.584**	0.595**	0.679**	0.828
Mean	5.78	5.44	5.19	4.28	4.34	4.29	5.22	4.32	4.51	5.66	5.78
SD	1.13	1.19	1.09	1.46	1.44	1.63	1.12	1.52	1.50	1.03	1.13

**Notes:** 1. WOM: word-of-mouth intentions, LOY: brand attitudinal loyalty intentions, IV: information value, ECV: economic value, SIV: social interaction value, BIV: brand interaction value, ETV: entertainment value, ISV: inner self-expressive brands, SSV: social self-expressive brands, BPS: brand page satisfaction, BL: brand love. 2. \*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). 3. Diagonal elements are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE)

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showed satisfactory fit indices:  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.082$ , RMSEA = 0.061, CFI = 0.931, TLI = 0.921 and SRMR = 0.052.

#### 4.3 Hypothesis testing

Structural equation modeling using maximum likelihood estimation was utilized to test the proposed hypotheses. The fit indices were within acceptable ranges, indicating a good fit of the hypothesized model to the data:  $\chi^2/df = 2.111$ , RMSEA = 0.067, CFI = 0.927, TLI = 0.919 and SRMR = 0.06. Table 2 summarizes the results.

The results of structural equation modeling revealed that information value ( $\beta = 0.278$ , t = 4.04, p < 0.001) and entertainment value ( $\beta = 0.369$ , t = 5.257, p < 0.001) were positively related to brand page satisfaction while economic value ( $\beta = 0.034$ , t = 0.471, p > 0.05), brand interaction value  $(\beta = 0.034, t = 0.66, p > 0.05)$  and social interaction value  $(\beta = -0.092, t = -1.524, p > 0.05)$  were not. Therefore, *H1a* and H3 were supported but H1b, H2a and H2b were not. In addition, inner self-expressive brands ( $\beta = 0.081$ , t = 2.257, p < 0.05) and social self-expressive brands ( $\beta = 0.146$ , t =3.556, p < 0.001) were positively related to brand love. Satisfaction with the brand page was positively related to brand love ( $\beta = 0.45$ , t = 9.294, p < 0.001) and WOM intentions  $(\beta = 0.374, t = 2.942, p < 0.01)$  but was not related to attitudinal loyalty intentions ( $\beta = -0.194$ , t = -1.602, p > 0.000.05). Finally, brand love was positively related to both WOM intentions ( $\beta = 0.601$ , t = 3.674, p < 0.001) and attitudinal loyalty intentions ( $\beta = 1.295$ , t = 7.323, p < 0.001). Therefore, H5, H6a, H6b and H7b were supported but H7a was not.

# 5. Discussions

In the context of luxury companies' brand pages on social media, this study investigated the relationships among customer-perceived values (i.e. brand page value and self-expressive brands) and customers' affective (i.e. brand page satisfaction and brand love) and behavioral responses (i.e. WOM and attitudinal loyalty intentions).

First, the results showed that information value was positively related to brand page satisfaction. Social media

provides a plethora of information on companies from a variety of sources (Azar et al., 2016; Dessart and Veloutsou, 2021). Many social media users expect to meet their cognitive and aesthetic needs by browsing and reading content on brand pages (Chow and Shi, 2015). Valuable information found on brand pages, such as extensive and frequently updated information by the luxury company itself and the information provided by peers in the form of opinion sharing (Joyce and Kraut, 2006; Simon and Tossan, 2018), is key to increasing followers' satisfaction with brand pages.

This study also confirmed the positive influence of entertainment value on brand page satisfaction. Entertainment value can fulfill individuals' needs for "escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment or emotional release" (McQuail, 1987, p. 83). Luxury brands have communicated their visible (e.g. quality, originality, beauty, personality and art) and invisible details (e.g. dreams, expectations, aspirations and intelligentsia) through visually gratifying, aesthetic aspects (Escobar, 2016), and providing such an extraordinary customer experience on social media is important for luxury brands.

Contrary to the hypothesis, economic value was not significantly related to brand page satisfaction, despite the fact that previous studies found financial/utilitarian benefits, such as monetary rewards, time-saving, deals or incentives, merchandising and prizes, are to be key motivations for user participation in online communities (Azar et al., 2016). It is possible that luxury brand followers may not always seek promotions or sales offers on brand pages but instead desire useful and entertaining information and connectedness with highly prominent luxury brands.

This study also showed that brand and social interaction values were not related to brand page satisfaction. A likely explanation for these insignificant findings is that following a brand might not guarantee user participation on the brand page per se (Creamer, 2012) and could constitute a significantly less active form of behavior than participating in brand communities or blogs because consumers simply want to receive branded content instantly (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Another plausible explanation is that the large followership of

Table 2 Results of the structural equation modeling

	Paths	Standardized coefficient	SE	CR	р	Hypothesis testing
H1a	IV  o BPS	0.278	0.069	4.04	***	Supported
H1b	$ECV \to BPS$	0.034	0.072	0.471	0.637	Not supported
H2a	$SIV \rightarrow BPS$	-0.092	0.06	-1.524	0.128	Not supported
H2b	$BIV \to BPS$	0.034	0.052	0.66	0.509	Not supported
Н3	$ETV \to BPS$	0.369	0.07	5.257	***	Supported
H4a	$ISV \to BL$	0.081	0.036	2.257	*	Supported
H4b	$SSV \to BL$	0.146	0.041	3.556	***	Supported
H5	$BPS \to BL$	0.45	0.048	9.294	***	Supported
H6a	$BPS \to WOM$	0.374	0.127	2.942	**	Supported
H6b	$BL \to WOM$	0.601	0.163	3.674	***	Supported
H7a	$BPS \to LOY$	-0.194	0.121	-1.602	0.109	Not supported
H7b	$BL \to LOY$	1.295	0.177	7.323	***	Supported

**Notes:** 1. WOM: word-of-mouth intentions, LOY: brand attitudinal loyalty intentions, IV: information value, ECV: economic value, SIV: social interaction value, BIV: brand interaction value, ETV: entertainment value, ISV: inner self-expressive brands, SSV: social self-expressive brands, BPS: brand page satisfaction, BL: brand love. 2.\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

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luxury brands composed of unrelated individuals who may not have much in common could be another factor weakening the motivation to interact with other followers (Casaló *et al.*, 2013). Although social media has changed old-fashioned one-way communication to interactive two-way direct communication (Deprince and Geerts, 2019), luxury brands have prided themselves on being exclusive and hard to access. Less followers may have experienced a personal relationship with the luxury brand via the brand page.

This study demonstrated that individuals have strong emotional attachment to a luxury brand when the brand reflects the individual's true sense of self or enhance the person's image in a positive manner. Such inner self and social self-expressive brands were positively related to brand love and led to WOM and brand attitudinal loyalty intentions. This finding supports prior studies that demonstrated the influence of self-expressive brands on brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Hwang and Kandampully, 2012; Wallace *et al.*, 2014). In line with these studies, this study suggests that the luxury brands that fit consumers' sense of self or social identity create strong emotional attachment to the brand.

Finally, this study showed that brand page satisfaction influenced brand love and WOM intentions, which was consistent with previous studies (Dagger and David, 2012; Chow and Shi, 2015; Huang, 2017), but did not lead to brand attitudinal loyalty intentions. Previous studies have found that online brand communities increase brand loyalty by establishing an emotional connection between consumers and the brand (Barnet and Ferris, 2016). Thus, brand loyalty may not originate merely from brand page satisfaction without strong emotional attachment to the brand.

It is worth noting that although the relationship between brand page satisfaction and brand attitudinal loyalty was not significant, it was negative. This may be an indication that brand love suppresses irrelevant variance in brand page satisfaction when predicting brand attitudinal loyalty intentions. A hypothetical scenario producing such an effect might be that brand page satisfaction is related to and may to some extent be subsumed within high order personality traits such as openness or agreeableness (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). In this scenario, brand love might be considered an enhancer that suppresses common personality-related variance in brand page satisfaction that is unrelated to brand attitudinal loyalty intentions. In this way, the remaining personality-related variance in brand love that predicts brand attitudinal loyalty intentions gains predictive power. From a theoretical perspective, brand love could:

- · function as a consistent and stable suppressor;
- enhance prediction of brand attitudinal loyalty intentions; and
- improve the understanding of the brand page satisfaction construct by explaining the content of the invalid variance components that are partitioned out (Maassen and Bakker, 2001).

It is also possible that this suppressor phenomenon can be masked by sample fluctuations and measurement errors.

# 6. Theoretical contribution

First, this study bridges a gap in the literature on luxury brand social media strategies that use brand pages as tools for disseminating branded content and facilitating customer experiences (Arrigo, 2018). Despite the practical implications, few studies have investigated these pages as key elements in luxury brands' social media strategies. As few previous studies of brand pages have focused on luxury brands, existing frameworks tend to overlook their particularities (Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020). By demonstrating how consumers' affective and behavioral responses are driven by a set of values, the present study increases the understanding of such strategies and contributes to existing scholarship on luxury branding.

Second, this study contributes to the existing literature on customer-perceived value and customer value theory. Previous research based on customer value theory (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) incorporated the three pertinent dimensions of customer value (i.e. functional, social and emotional) demonstrated the significant influence of such value on customer social media behavior (Chow and Shi, 2015; Shi et al., 2019). As well as extending the theory to the relatively new context of luxury social media, this study shows that information value and entertainment value are positively related to brand page satisfaction. This confirms the importance of providing useful and entertaining content on brand pages (Azar et al., 2016; Dessart and Veloutsou, 2021), and these values are central to increasing luxury brand followers' WOM intentions.

In particular, previous studies of brand pages on social media have provided limited insights into page values (Chow and Shi, 2015; Jahn and Kunz, 2012) or self-expressive brands (Wallace et al., 2014; Vernuccio et al., 2015). The present study proposes a comprehensive set of customer-perceived values that include self-expressive brands leading to a strong emotional attachment to the brand (Wallace et al., 2014), and these merit consideration in seeking to enhance the effectiveness of brand pages. By exploring customer-perceived value from both brand and brand page perspectives, the present study contributes to customer value theory and sheds light on the self-expressive use of brands to increase the affective and behavioral intentions of social media followers. The proposed model identifies brand page values and brand perceptions as key factors that influence customers' attitudes and behaviors on social media, offering useful guidance for future research.

Finally, the study investigated brand page satisfaction and brand love as two types of consumer affective response on social media and showed that customers' satisfaction with brand pages influences WOM intentions but does not influence brand attitudinal loyalty. Brand love, influenced by self-expressive brands, influences both WOM and attitudinal loyalty intentions. This dual impact model of brand page satisfaction and brand love explains the relationship between customerperceived value and behavioral intentions and provides a more holistic understanding of social media consumer behavior.

# 7. Managerial contribution

This study suggested several guidelines that luxury brands could use to design their brand page strategies to increase WOM and attitudinal loyalty intentions. Although many luxury brands have shifted to digital platforms to connect to wider audiences, it is doubtful that luxury brands satisfy or fully engage their followers (Aprilianty and Nasution, 2017; Strugatz, 2016). This study showed that among the five

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identified brand page values, only information and entertainment values were positively related to brand page satisfaction, which led to followers' WOM intentions. Regular updates with informative and entertaining brand-related content, such as behind-the-scenes videos and photos taken at shows or events, exclusive stories of new product lines or interviews with celebrities or sponsored players (Ramakrishnan, 2019), would be an effective means to increase brand page satisfaction and encourage followers to further spread branded content on social media. This is true for both types of luxury followers, luxury consumers who are actual owners of a branded product and non-luxury consumers who are unable to afford luxury products but still want to construct digital collages of symbols and signs as markers of their identity in digital spaces (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Luxury brands should engage their followers with visually appealing, highquality branded content showcasing aesthetic imagery and lifestyles (Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020). Such visual communication is particularly important for aspirational luxury brands that emphasize the elements of beauty, inspiration and desire (Pentina et al., 2018).

This study showed that luxury brands can improve psychological bonds with their followers by creating selfexpressive appeals. Luxury brands should focus not only on increasing customer satisfaction of the brand pages by using informative and entertaining brand-related content but also should consider creating strong emotional bonds by encouraging customers to share and express their identity on brand pages. This is particularly important given that brand page satisfaction does not guarantee brand attitudinal loyalty. When a brand contributes to the constructing of an individual's identity, either by reflecting an individual's inner self or enhancing their social self, the consumer develops strong emotional devotion (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) that motivates them to become a brand advocate and stay loval to the brand. For example, after one of the Omega fans first coined the hashtag #SPEEDYTUESDAY back in 2012, its customers still love to post their Speed Master watch photos online on Tuesdays using this hashtag (Bani, 2017). This example shows how brand fans express their identity via brand associations and can be a source of inspiration that increases product desirability for other consumers who see the hashtag and the photos. Luxury brand activities on brand pages, such as encouraging customers to express themselves via brand associations and emphasizing the brand's self-expressive nature, would be an effective means to achieve desirable outcomes, including WOM effects and customer loyalty.

## 8. Limitations and directions for future research

There are limitations associated with this study. First, this study used non-probability purposive sampling and survey responses were collected from MTurk users who identified themselves as luxury brand followers. Thus, generalizations regarding social media users should be made with caution. To enhance validity, future researchers may consider recruiting survey participants directly from luxury brand pages.

Second, due to the cross-sectional nature of this study, causal relations among study variables cannot be drawn. Future experimental studies will provide a causal understanding of the role of customer-perceived value in social media consumer behavior. Future researchers may also consider conducting longitudinal studies to assess changes in customer-perceived value over time.

Third, the study investigated the relationships between:

- · brand page values and brand page satisfaction; and
- self-expressive brands and brand love.

Future researchers may examine how various values relate to one another (e.g. social value and self-expressive brands) to gain additional insights. In addition, the two value constructs of this study – brand page value and self-expressive brands – represent different value categories that constitute different value frameworks; these may be sequential rather than parallel. Future research may consider evaluating the plausibility of competing models.

In addition, to obtain further proof for the insignificant influences of economic, brand and social interaction values on brand page satisfaction, future research may focus on identifying the boundary conditions of the relationship between brand page values and brand page satisfaction in a luxury brand context. Future researchers may also explore whether findings are replicated in different contexts and settings, including different luxury categories (fashion vs hospitality), luxury brand levels (high-end vs affordable), or followership size (small vs large scale). In addition, while explaining unexpected insignificant negative relationship brand page satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty intentions, there is a possibility that the suppressor phenomenon may be attributed to sample fluctuations or measurement errors. Replicating the model in different contexts and settings will further clarify the suppression effects.

Next, entertainment value can be derived not only from entertaining and eye-catching content on brand pages but also from perceiving following as being part of a network of followers, as previous studies have indicated that social identity is an important determination of individual behaviors in online brand communities (Lee *et al.*, 2011). Such an emotional attachment or sense of belonging to a social group does not require active interactions or engagement with the brand or other brand followers. Therefore, future research may further examine how followers identify themselves as members of brand pages and satisfy their fundamental social needs by being members of brand pages.

Individual differences, such as whether users are currently loyal customers of the brand, dedicated followers, influential users, or lurkers, may also influence the results. Investigating the differences between luxury customers (who actually own or have intentions to purchase a branded product) and non-luxury customers (who may not afford luxury goods but are interested in branded content) in terms of the different expectations and needs to follow brand pages would be an interesting topic. Age differences may also act as a moderator of the relationships between customer-perceived value and behavioral intentions, as previous studies have shown that the millennial generation (who were born between 1982 and 2004) and older generations exhibit different social media behavior and brand commitment patterns. Thus, future studies may consider comparing millennials and older generations to determine how their value perceptions influence attitudes and behavior on brand pages.

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Finally, this study did not specify which social media platforms were used by the participants. As luxury brands offer different content aligned with different audiences' needs across different platforms (Killian and McManus, 2015), it is worth investigating how luxury followers behave differently across different social media platforms. In addition, luxury brands create and share high-quality branded content through various forms of communication (e.g. video, image, text and audio). Researchers could also consider different characteristics of social media posts (e.g. vividness, novelty and content type).

#### Note

1 The relationships between income (control variable) and the endogenous variables (i.e. brand page satisfaction, brand love, WOM and attitudinal loyalty intentions) were tested but none of these relationships were significant (*ps* > 0.05). Thus, income was not included in our final analysis.

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## **Appendix 1. Survey items**

- Word-of-mouth intentions (CR = 0.959, AVE = 0.886):
  - I would recommend this brand to other people.
  - I would introduce this brand to other people.
  - I would say positive things about this brand to other people.
- Brand attitudinal loyalty intentions (CR = 0.934, AVE = 0.825):
  - I intend to remain loyal to this brand in the future.
  - I would not stop supporting this brand.
  - I think of myself as a loyal supporter of this brand.

- Information value (CR = 0.913, AVE = 0.777):
  - Following this brand page helps me to find valuable information.
  - I think this brand page is a valuable information resource.
  - There are a lot of information on this brand page.
- Economic value (CR = 0.909, AVE = 0.713):
  - Following this brand page helps me to get better services.
  - Following this brand page helps me to get fast responses.
  - Following this brand page helps me to get promotions.
  - Following this brand page helps me to get gifts or rewards.
- Social interaction value (CR = 0.951, AVE = 0.866):
  - Other members are responsive to my posts and replies on this brand page.
  - I can always count on getting a lot of responses to my posts and replies on this brand page.
  - I can always count on getting responses to my posts and replies on this page fairly quickly.
- Brand interaction value (CR = 0.951, AVE = 0.866):
  - When I follow this brand, I feel like I have an emotional connection with the brand.
  - When I follow this brand, I feel like have a personal relationship with the brand.
  - Following this brand offers me a sense of comfort.
- Entertainment value (CR = 0.902, AVE = 0.753):
  - This brand page is very entertaining.

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- The content of this brand page is eye-catching and picks me up.
- Following this page entertains me.
- Inner self-expressive brands (CR = 0.960, AVE = 0.856):
  - This brand symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside.
  - This brand reflects my personality.
  - This brand is an extension of my inner self.
  - This brand mirrors the real me.
- Social self-expressive brands (CR = 0.945, AVE = 0.810):
  - This brand contributes to my image.
  - This brand has a positive impact on what others think of me.
  - This brand adds to a social 'role' I play.
  - This brand improves the way society views me.
- Brand page satisfaction (CR = 0.929, AVE = 0.813):
  - I am satisfied with my decision to follow this brand on social media.
  - My choice to follow this brand on social media was a wise one.
  - I am happy with my decision to follow this brand on social media.
- Brand love (CR = 0.939, AVE = 0.686):
  - This is a wonderful brand.
  - This brand makes me feel good.
  - This brand is totally awesome.
  - This brand makes me very happy.
  - This brand is a pure delight.
  - I am passionate about this brand.
  - I am very attached to this brand.

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# **Appendix 2**

 Table A1 Characteristics of the study participants

Measure	Item	Frequency	(%)
Age	Less than 20	4	1.4
	21–30	136	46.9
	31–40	94	32.4
	41–50	32	11.0
	51–60	18	6.2
	More than 61	6	2.1
Gender	Male	132	45.5
	Female	158	54.5
Race/ethnic group	White/Caucasian	230	79.3
3 1	Hispanic/Latino	12	4.1
	African American	26	9.0
	Native American	2	0.7
	Asian	17	5.9
	Pacific Islander	1	0.3
	Other	2	0.7
Family annual income	Under \$20,000	28	9.7
•	\$20,000-\$39,999	80	27.6
	\$40,000-\$59,999	81	27.9
	\$60,000-\$79,999	44	15.2
	\$80,000-\$99,999	29	100
	\$100,000 or more	28	9.7
Hours spend on social media	Under 1 h a day	49	16.6
	1–2 h a day	92	31.7
	2–3 h a day	62	21.4
	3–4 h a day	37	12.8
	4–5 h a day	21	7.2
	5–6 h a day	11	3.8
	More than 5 h a day	19	6.6
Years have been used social media	Less than 1 year	5	1.7
reary have been used social media	1–3 years	16	5.5
	3–5 years	43	14.8
	5–7 years	83	28.6
	7–9 years	66	22.8
	9–11 years	34	11.7
	More than 11 years	43	14.8
Most often use social media	Facebook	213	73.4
	Twitter	22	7.6
	YouTube	16	5.5
	Instagram	27	9.3
	Snapchat	3	1.0
	Pinterest	7	2.4
	Other	2	0.7

# **About the authors**

**Sanga Song** is an assistant professor of marketing at Indiana University East. Her research focuses on consumer behavior in digital environments, consumer-brand relationships and transformative consumer research.

**Hye-Young Kim** is an professor in the Retail Merchandising Program at the University of Minnesota. Kim's research interests revolve around consumer behavior and strategic retail management. Hye-Young Kim is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: hykim@umn.edu

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