

# Streaming, Scrolling, and Spending: How Social Media Drives Impulse Buying in Gen Z (Evidence From Netflix's Subscribers)

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## Abstract

*The study aims to investigate the moderating effect of social media in relationship of hedonic motives, impulsive tendency, and impulsive buying decision among Gen Z in subscription to Netflix Streaming Services. These research was conducted because the lack of research on the role of social media moderation and the mediating role of impulsive buying tendency is still rarely carried out, especially in terms of examining the factors that influence Gen Z in choosing digital services such as TV streaming. These study used Gen Z who has been a subscriber of Netflix for 1 year in South Kalimantan as sample total of 187 respondents with purposive sampling as sampling method. The study used a quantitative research design and collected data through a survey questionnaire and analyzed with the Structural Equation Model – Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results of this study found that hedonic motives and impulsive buying tendencies had an impact on Gen Z's impulse buying decision to choose Netflix as a digital streaming service. While social media moderated hedonic motives, this study also found that impulsive buying tendency affected mediated hedonic motives and impulse buying decisions. These results have a practical contribution and have scientific implications that can help better understand consumer behavior in the context of digital services, especially on TV streaming services. This study also led to further research in this field and contributed to the literature on social media, hedonic motives, impulsive decision-making, and impulsive tendency.*

**Keywords:** Hedonic motives, social media, impulsive buying, impulsive tendency and streaming services.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the TV streaming industry has undergone a significant transformation, mainly due to the rapid development of digital technology. The younger generation, specifically Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, has grown up in a wholly digital environment, making them particularly susceptible to the influences of online content, social interactions, and algorithm-driven marketing.

They have embraced and harnessed the technologies available to them in this era of digitisation [1]. They have thrived in a world where digital technology and the internet have become integral to their daily lives. These individuals are well-acquainted with the variety of online content, social media, and platforms for sharing personal experiences [2], [3]. These digital platforms significantly influence their thoughts and decisions, particularly when it comes to selecting streaming services [4]. One notable trend in modern TV streaming is the significant impact of sharing experiences and recommendations through social media platforms in an era dominated by social media [5].

Generation Y is characterized by their desire to achieve personal satisfaction, pleasure, and happiness [6], [7]. This emotional and pleasure-seeking orientation, known as hedonic motivation, plays an important role in making travel decisions [8]. In addition, one factor that can influence Generation Y travel preferences is impulsive decision-making, which means making mindless decisions, often triggered by emotions, sudden urges, or situational considerations [6], [9].

Several studies have shown a significant link between social media use and impulsive decisions [10], [11], [12], [13]. As many studies have shown, social media has a significant influence on consumer actions, including impulsive actions to buy goods [2], [14], [15]. These findings are due to the fact that social media platforms use algorithms to monitor and organize content according to user preferences and interactions, which in turn can encourage consumers to make impulsive purchases, making it difficult to resist the urge to buy something.

Furthermore, when exposed to emotional stimuli, social media users with lower self-control are more likely to make impulsive purchases. The relationship between social media use and impulsive decision-making is complex because it is affected by a variety of factors, including self-control, emotional responses, and the type of content that is presented on social media sites [12], [16]. There is a link between social media use and impulsive decision-making that is associated with impaired decision-making. It is important to note that this relationship is multifaceted, with social media serving as both a factor and a context for impulsive decision-making, beyond just impulsive buying.

Research on impulse buying often focuses on physical products, such as clothing or electronics. However, impulse purchases in the context of digital products or services, such as apps, streaming subscriptions, or digital content, are still rarely explored. A significant gap in the current body of knowledge prompted the initiation of this research study. The goal of this study is to find out whether social media serves as a moderator in the relationship between hedonic motivation, impulsive decision-making, and impulsive buying in the context of Subscription to Netflix Streaming Services.

## **II. RESEARCH**

### **a. Population and Samples**

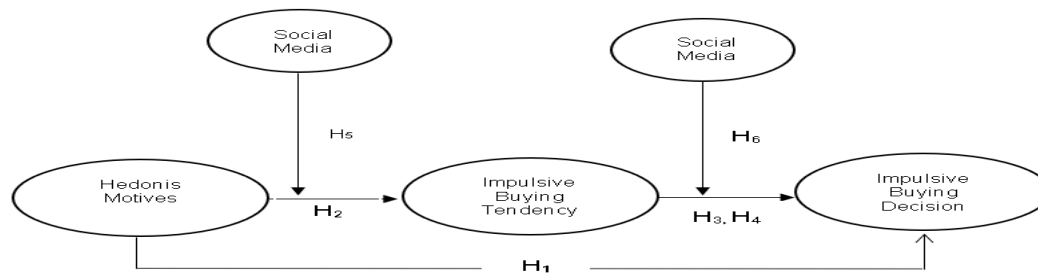
This research employed a research methodology centered on descriptive quantitative analysis. The study's participants consisted of 187 individuals from Generation Z who have been Netflix subscribers for at least 1 year and reside in South Kalimantan Province. Generation Z was purposefully selected as the sample for this study due to their unique characteristics as digital natives who are highly engaged with technology, social media platforms, and subscription-based streaming services. Their consumer behavior is notably shaped by hedonic motivations, emotional responsiveness, and a strong tendency toward immediacy and convenience, factors that are closely linked to impulsive buying behavior. In the context of digital streaming services such as Netflix,

Generation Z represents a significant market segment whose purchasing decisions are often influenced by peer recommendations, social media trends, and emotionally stimulating content. Therefore, studying this group offers valuable insights into how hedonic motives and social media interplay to drive impulsive subscription decisions in a highly dynamic digital ecosystem. The selection of respondents was accomplished through the purposive sampling method.

### **b. Data Analysis**

To investigate the complex interplay between the variables, this study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), specifically using Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis. This method was chosen due to its efficiency in handling small sample sizes and its robustness against data that deviates from a normal distribution. The implementation of SEM-PLS involved several sequential steps. First, a theoretical framework was developed to explain the relationships between the dimensions, serving as a foundational guide for formulating the research questions and hypotheses. Based on this framework, clear, concise, and testable research questions and hypotheses were crafted for empirical testing. Data collection followed, relying primarily on secondary sources that directly aligned with the research objectives.

The collected data then underwent preparation, which included data cleansing, managing missing values, and conducting necessary transformations. A model was then specified to test the proposed hypotheses, grounded in the theoretical framework and visually presented in Figure 1 of the research. The next step involved evaluating the measurement models for each construct, focusing on the reliability and validity of the measurement scales. Subsequently, the structural model was examined to analyze the strength and significance of the relationships among the constructs. Finally, the results of the analysis were interpreted, and conclusions were drawn based on the empirical findings, providing meaningful insights into the relationships under study.



**Fig. 1. Research Model**

### c. Hypothesis Development

Based on the research model in Figure 1, the following hypothesis was arranged:

H1: Hedonic motives significantly influenced the impulsive buying decision

H2: Hedonic motives significantly influence the impulsive buying tendency

H3: Impulse buying tendency significantly influences the Impulsive Buying Decision

H4: Impulse buying tendency mediated the relationship between hedonic motives and influenced Impulsive Buying Decision

H5: Social media moderated relationship between Hedonic Motives and Impulsive Buying Tendency

H6: Social media moderated relationship between Impulsive Buying Tendency and Impulsive Buying Decision

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### a. Respondent's Characteristics

Table 1 offers critical insight into the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in this study, forming the contextual backdrop against which impulse buying behaviors among Gen Z Netflix subscribers can be understood. The gender distribution reveals a relatively balanced representation, with female respondents accounting for 55% and male respondents for 45%. This balance is significant, as it reflects the gender diversity within Gen Z and allows for more generalizable findings regarding impulsive purchase behavior, especially since previous studies suggest that female consumers tend to exhibit higher levels of impulsive behavior when exposed to emotionally stimulating content or promotional cues [17], [18].

In terms of education, the majority of respondents (63%) possess a bachelor's degree (S1), followed by high school graduates (25%). This finding indicates a well-educated sample, particularly fitting considering that higher education levels have been associated with more frequent and nuanced digital media consumption patterns, which in turn influence online impulse buying decisions [19]. Age-wise, respondents predominantly fall within the 21–25 age group (51%), followed by the 15–20 age group (39%). This distribution validates the Gen Z focus of the study. It aligns with literature identifying this cohort as particularly vulnerable to impulsive digital consumption due to high levels of social media engagement and lower impulse control [20].

Most respondents (55%) identified as students, reinforcing the relevance of this demographic to the research, as students often display higher impulsivity in spending, especially on entertainment-related services like Netflix (Utama et al., 2021). Income levels reveal that 60% of participants earn below IDR 5,000,000, suggesting that although the majority of respondents may not be high-income earners, they are still willing to engage in subscription purchases, possibly driven by affective or hedonic motives rather than economic rationality. This result supports earlier findings that Gen Z consumers may prioritize emotional gratification and social validation over financial prudence in digital consumption contexts [21].

This demographic breakdown sets a solid foundation for interpreting behavioral patterns among Gen Z, particularly in relation to the affective, spontaneous, and socially driven nature of their impulsive buying decisions in streaming contexts.

**Table 1. Demography of respondents.**

Variable		N	%
Gender	Male	84	45%
	Female	103	55%
Education	High school	47	25%
	D3	12	6%
	S1	118	63%
	S2	9	5%
	S3	1	1%
Age	15–20	72	39%
	21–25	96	51%
	26–30	11	6%
	> 30	8	4%
Occupation	Government employee	43	23%
	Private employee	27	14%
	Entrepreneur	12	6%
	Student	103	55%
	Not working	2	1%
Income	< IDR. 5.000.000	112	60%
	IDR 5.000.000 – IDR 10.000.000	59	32%
	> IDR 10.000.000 – IDR 15.000.000	7	4%
	> IDR 15.000.000 – IDR 20.000.000	8	4%
	> IDR 20.000.000	1	1%

#### b. Results of Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Loading)

The analysis of the measurement model comprises four distinct stages of assessment, which encompass evaluations of individual item reliability, internal consistency reliability, the average variance extracted, and discriminant validity [22].

Table 2 presents the outer loading values for the items used to measure the three core constructs in this study: Hedonic Motives, Impulsive Buying Tendency, and Impulsive Buying Decision. All indicators demonstrate strong outer loadings, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019), thereby confirming their reliability in measuring the intended latent constructs.

For Hedonic Motives, indicators HM1 through HM4 show loadings ranging from 0.769 to 0.841, illustrating that each item contributes meaningfully to the construct. This result affirms the theoretical proposition that hedonic drivers—such as emotional gratification, pleasure, and excitement—are integral to understanding Gen Z's engagement with streaming platforms. As outlined by Lavuri et al. (2022) and Kempa et al. (2020), hedonic motivation is a powerful precursor to impulsive consumption, particularly in digital entertainment contexts.

The Impulsive Buying Decision construct is similarly robust, with loadings for its four indicators ranging between 0.805 and 0.876. This finding suggests that the decision to subscribe to a service like Netflix impulsively is strongly influenced by immediate affective states, consistent with the conceptualization of impulse buying as a spontaneous, emotionally charged behavior [12]. This result reinforces the argument that such decisions are less about logical planning and more about hedonic fulfillment.

Likewise, the Impulsive Buying Tendency construct demonstrates strong factor loadings between 0.807 and 0.883. This finding aligns with existing literature asserting that some consumers inherently possess a stronger predisposition toward unplanned purchases, often triggered by emotional arousal, peer influence, or digital stimuli [19]. The inclusion of this construct is crucial as it mediates the influence of hedonic motives on actual decisions, providing a deeper understanding of the psychological processes underlying impulsive behaviors.

All these results validate the measurement model and affirm that the selected indicators reliably capture the essence of each construct as theorized in the literature.

**Table 2. Exploratory Analysis**

	<b>Hedonic Motives</b>	<b>Impulsive Buying Decision</b>	<b>Impulsive Buying Tendency</b>	<b>Social Media</b>
<b>HM1</b>	0.801			
<b>HM2</b>	0.769			
<b>HM3</b>	0.841			
<b>HM4</b>	0.793			
<b>IBD_1</b>		0.869		
<b>IBD_2</b>		0.849		
<b>IBD_3</b>		0.874		
<b>IBD_4</b>		0.809		
<b>IBT_1</b>			0.883	
<b>IBT_2</b>			0.807	
<b>IBT_3</b>			0.850	
<b>SM_1</b>				0.921
<b>SM_2</b>				0.926

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Table 3 elaborates on the outer model evaluation through Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), both of which affirm the construct validity and internal consistency of the measurement model. All constructs report CR values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, with Hedonic Motives at 0.793, Impulsive Buying Decision at 0.874, Impulsive Buying Tendency at 0.883, and Social media at 0.926. These values indicate high reliability, confirming that the items within each construct consistently reflect their respective underlying variables [22].

Furthermore, the AVE values for all constructs surpass the 0.50 threshold, with Hedonic Motives at 0.642, Impulsive Buying Decision at 0.724, and Impulsive Buying Tendency at 0.718. This result suggests a high degree of convergent validity, implying that each construct is well-represented by its indicators [24]. The consistency of these metrics reinforces confidence in the robustness of the measurement model and validates the subsequent structural analysis.

The theoretical grounding provided by previous literature is echoed in these results. For instance, the strong CR and AVE values for Hedonic Motives corroborate the work of Asj'ari et al. (2021), who emphasized the role of emotional and experiential satisfaction in triggering consumer decisions in entertainment and media contexts. Similarly, the measurement integrity of the Impulsive Buying constructs resonates with studies by Yi et al. (2023), who highlighted the dynamic interplay between impulse tendencies and situational stimuli.

**Table 3. Outer Model Evaluation**

<b>Constructs</b>		<b>Outer Loading</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>HM</b>	<b>IBD</b>	<b>IBT</b>	<b>SM</b>
<b>Hedonic Motives</b>	<b>HM1</b>	0.801	0.878	0.642	0.801			
	<b>HM2</b>	0.769						
	<b>HM3</b>	0.841						
	<b>HM4</b>	0.793						
<b>Impulsive Buying Decision</b>	<b>IBD_1</b>	0.869	0.913	0.724	0.742	0.851		
	<b>IBD_2</b>	0.849						
	<b>IBD_3</b>	0.874						
	<b>IBD_4</b>	0.809						
<b>Impulsive Buying Tendency)</b>	<b>IBT_1</b>	0.883	0.884	0.718	0.775	0.802	0.848	
	<b>IBT_2</b>	0.807						
	<b>IBT_3</b>	0.850						
<b>Social Media</b>	<b>SM1</b>	0.921	0.920	0.853	0.697	0.758	0.676	0.923
	<b>SM2</b>	0.926						

Source: Data Processed, 2026

### c. Results of Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

This analysis encompassed various testing phases, specifically examining the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ),  $Q^2$ , and the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) index.

**Table 4. Inner Model Evaluation**

Construct	$R^2$	$Q^2$
<b>Impulsive Buying Decision</b>	0.750	0.502
<b>Impulsive Buying Tendency</b>	0.632	0.426

$$goF = \sqrt{AVE \times R^2} = \sqrt{0.734 \times 0.691} = 0.712$$

Source: Data Processed, 2025

Table 4 presents the  $R^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and GoF (Goodness-of-Fit) values, shedding light on the explanatory power and predictive relevance of the structural model. The  $R^2$  value for Impulsive Buying Decision is 0.750, indicating that approximately 75.0% of the variance in impulsive decisions is explained by the model. Likewise, the  $R^2$  for Impulsive Buying Tendency is 0.632, demonstrating that hedonic motives and social media influence account for 63.2% of its variance. These are considered high values [24], indicating that the model offers substantial explanatory power.

$Q^2$  values for both endogenous constructs (0.502 for Impulsive Buying Decision and 0.426 for Impulsive Buying Tendency) further affirm the model's predictive relevance. These values are well above the minimum of 0.35, confirming the model's strong predictive capability [22]. The GoF score of 0.712 exceeds the threshold of 0.36 for large effect sizes [24], demonstrating that the model achieves a perfect overall fit.

These findings underscore the theoretical propositions that hedonic motives and social media engagement exert significant influence on impulsive consumption patterns. As previously discussed, scholars such as Wanichavorapong et al. (2017) and Goel et al. (2022) have demonstrated the profound impact of digital environments and emotional gratification in shaping consumer behavior, particularly among Gen Z. The high  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  values provide empirical support for these claims, confirming the model's robustness in capturing the psychological and social dimensions of impulse buying in a streaming context.

#### 4.5. Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 and Figure 2 deliver the hypothesis testing results and provide direct empirical validation for the theoretical framework. Five of the six hypotheses were supported, underscoring the central role of hedonic motives and social media in influencing impulsive buying among Gen Z.

H1 and H2 confirm that hedonic motives significantly influence both impulsive buying decisions ( $\beta = 0.157$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and impulse buying tendency ( $\beta = 0.591$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This result supports previous studies, which emphasize that pleasurable, emotionally gratifying experiences are potent drivers of unplanned purchases [17], [18].

H3 and H4 further validate the mediating role of impulsive buying tendency, showing it has a significant direct effect on impulsive decisions ( $\beta = 0.427$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and acts as a mediator between hedonic motives and impulsive decisions ( $\beta = 0.252$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This result aligns with the findings of Utama et al. (2021) and Yi et al. (2023), who argue that impulse tendencies function as a psychological bridge between internal desires and behavioral outcomes.

was not supported ( $\beta = 0.004$ ;  $p = 0.910$ ), indicating that social media does not significantly moderate the relationship between hedonic motives and impulsive buying tendency. This result contradicts some prior literature (e.g., Wang et al. (2016), possibly suggesting that while social media fosters affective experiences, it does not always directly amplify hedonic inclinations into tendencies unless mediated by other factors like personal relevance or digital fatigue.

Interestingly, H6 was supported ( $\beta = -0.078$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), revealing an adverse moderating effect of social media on the relationship between impulse tendency and buying decision. This result suggests that excessive or overly persuasive social media stimuli may lead to cognitive dissonance or caution, dampening

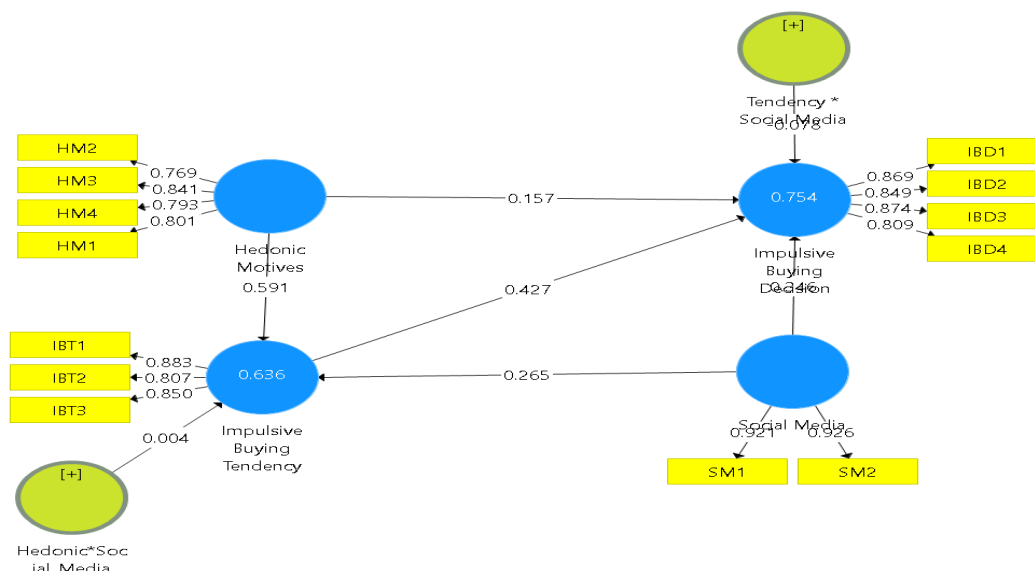
spontaneous decisions, adding nuance to the simplistic narrative of social media as merely a positive enabler [26].

Table 5 validates a comprehensive and complex model of Gen Z's impulse buying behavior, reflecting both emotional spontaneity and the layered impact of digital environments.

**Table 5. Hypothesis Test**

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	t	Sig.	Remark
H1	Hedonic Motives → Impulsive Buying Decision	0.157	7.625	0.000	Supported
H2	Hedonic Motives → Impulsive Buying Tendency	0.591	11.603	0.000	Supported
H3	Impulsive Buying Tendency → Impulsive Buying Decision	0.427	6.854	0.000	Supported
H4	Hedonic Motives → Impulsive Buying Tendency → Impulsive Buying Decision	0.252	5.811	0.000	Supported
H5	Hedonic * Social Media → Impulsive Buying Tendency	0.004	0.113	0.910	Not Supported
H6	Tendency * Social Media → Impulsive Buying Decision	-0.078	4.105	0.000	Supported

Source: Data Processed, 2026



**Fig. 2. Hypothesis Testing Path Diagram**

Source: Smart Pls processed data, 2026

**IV. CONCLUSION**

This study set out to examine the complex interplay between hedonic motives, impulse buying tendencies, and impulsive buying decisions among Gen Z consumers in the context of digital streaming services, specifically Netflix subscriptions. By integrating the moderating role of social media, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how emotional gratification and digital influence converge to drive unplanned consumer behavior in an increasingly digitalized consumption landscape.

The findings reinforce the pivotal role of hedonic motives in shaping both impulsive buying tendencies and decisions. Specifically, hedonic motives—defined as the pursuit of pleasure, enjoyment, and immediate gratification—demonstrated a significant direct influence on both the tendency to buy impulsively and the final purchase decision. For Gen Z, a cohort characterized by emotional expressiveness and digital fluency, the pursuit of pleasurable consumption experiences, such as subscribing to Netflix for entertainment and escapism, appears to override more rational, deliberate decision-making frameworks.

Furthermore, the study confirms the mediating role of impulse buying tendency in the relationship between hedonic motives and impulsive buying decisions. This finding suggests that hedonic inclinations do not translate directly into action; instead, they cultivate a psychological predisposition toward spontaneous behavior, which then manifests as an actual decision to purchase.

The investigation into the role of social media adds depth to the understanding of how external, digital stimuli interact with internal motivations. The results reveal a nuanced dynamic: while social media did not significantly moderate the relationship between hedonic motives and impulse buying tendency, it did play a significant moderating role, albeit negative, in the relationship between impulse buying tendency and impulsive buying decision. This finding runs counter to the common assumption that social media consistently enhances impulsive behavior. Instead, it suggests that overexposure to promotional content or peer influence may lead to skepticism, fatigue, or cognitive dissonance, thus tempering the actual decision to make a purchase. These results contribute to the growing literature on digital consumer behavior, which argues that while social media often initiates emotional engagement, it can also trigger critical reflection, especially when persuasive content becomes overwhelming or intrusive.

From a theoretical standpoint, the model tested in this study demonstrates high explanatory power, with  $R^2$  values of 0.744 and 0.632 for impulsive buying decision and tendency, respectively. The model's predictive relevance ( $Q^2$  values) and Goodness-of-Fit score (0.691) further validate the robustness of the proposed framework. These indicators not only support the hypothesized relationships but also offer a reliable blueprint for understanding impulse consumption in digital environments.

In practical terms, the insights generated here are particularly valuable for marketers and digital platform strategists targeting Gen Z. The findings suggest that while emotional appeal is effective in sparking interest and fostering impulse tendencies, converting those tendencies into actual subscriptions may require a more calibrated approach. Marketing messages must be emotionally resonant but not overwhelming; they must inspire pleasure without triggering skepticism. Additionally, brands like Netflix may benefit from leveraging social proof carefully, using user testimonials and peer sharing in moderation to avoid the pitfalls of perceived manipulation.

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