Tourist Perception of Service Quality at Ngurah Rai Airport Post-Eruption 2018

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Abstract: Infrastructure development plays a vital role in Indonesia’s economic growth, especially for tourism and tourist accessibility. The country’s central government renovated Bali’s Ngurah Rai Airport; unfortunately, the renovations absorbed trillions in the country’s financial budget. The renovation will not immediately positively impact tourist’s satisfaction without the support of quality services. Thus, this study identifies tourist behaviors and perspectives related to their satisfaction of service quality after the renovation of Ngurah Rai Airport due to the 2018 Mount Agung volcano eruption disaster. This research was conducted via focus interviews with PT Angkasa Pura I and validated with in-depth interviews with the ten foreign tourists that used the airport facilities. The results show that visitors’ perceptions of Ngurah Rai Airport were positive. In addition, cultural dimensions play an essential role in tourist perception of Ngurah Rai Airport. It includes trademark, effective communication, behavioral intention, sincerity, morals, and mannerism. Services provided by airport staff give meaning to the culture of service owned by Balinese people.

Keywords: infrastructure development, tourist perception, service quality, organizational culture

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Introduction

Infrastructure development is critical for economic growth in Indonesia, including the tourism sector. To meet the target of 20 million foreign tourists in 2019, the government began to renovate the main entrance to Bali, namely Ngurah Rai Airport. This airport has become the main entrance, especially for the arrival of tourists visiting the country. Data from the Ministry of Tourism suggested that more than 50 percent of tourists visiting Indonesia enter through this gate (Wiranatha et al., 2019). Ngurah Rai Airport’s position in the Indonesian tourism industry is indeed crucial. In addition to the high volume of flights per day, the airport is a brand ambassador to the country’s tourism industry. The airport typically leaves positive impressions of Indonesia’s tourism industry (Nugraha, 2017). Besides, in Indonesia, the cities or district governments various destination place printing and electronic advertisements around the airport area.

The Ministry of Tourism hopes that the existence of Ngurah Rai Airport will give a positive impression on the initial entrance and increases the level of confidence for international tourism stakeholders. The function of Ngurah Rai Airport is only meant for arrival and departure airports, and short-distance transit would be upgraded.

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Tourism stakeholders highly demand that the Ngurah Rai Airport is in the same status as other international transit airports such as Singapore’s Changi Airport, Malaysia’s Kuala Lumpur International Airport, and Thailand’s Suvarnabhumi Airport. Moreover, Bali is considered a popular destination both in Indonesia and Asia. The Balinese tourism industry is known for its rich culture. The impression of airports will somehow affect the quality of services provided to foreign tourists. Sutama (2017) mentioned that most frequent travelers had a solid bonding for Bali, mainly by the friendliness and charms of its people, the uniqueness of culture, and the warm hospitality services.

Ngurah Rai Airport underwent significant renovations in 2018 to increase the capacity of arrivals. According to representatives of PT Angkasa Pura, as summarized during the Indonesia Tourism Outlook 2018, funds for the renovation of the Ngurah Rai Airport reached USD155 million in 2018. The Ngurah Rai Airport renovation project took place in stages, starting from the construction of parking lots at international terminals, construction of international terminals, terminal parking domestic, to the expansion of the runway, which is supported by reclamation plans. The director of Angkasa Pura I said that, in the first phase, 47 hectares of reclamation had been carried out to achieve the target of accommodating 21 million passengers per year. In the next phase, which is expected to be completed in 2023, 70 hectares of land will be reclaimed. The airport management authority predicts that the airport expansion will be able to accommodate up to 37 million passengers per year.

Unfortunately, airport renovations have absorbed millions of dollars and will not result in an immediate positive impact on tourists if not match the quality services that reach or exceed tourist expectations. As the forefront in developing the host’s first impressions, Ngurah Rai Airport still faces several challenges. Problems of cleanliness, security, public transportation, parking, and human resources remain a scourge for tourism stakeholders in Bali and Indonesia. Every time the development of a public facility was completed, the government fixed on physical development, ignoring social development and services. These challenges usually required significant renovations, and in the Ngurah Rai Airport case, it was carried out in stages and ended in 2018. The improvements emphasized the international departure gate, domestic departure gate, and airport parking. Indeed, until now, the Ngurah Rai Airport continues to improve with the hope of matching leading international airports in other tourist destinations in Southeast Asia.

Infrastructure development is one of the main factors of economic growth (Calderen & Servén, 2010; Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2008; Mottaeva & Vasilyeva, 2018). The position of Ngurah Rai Airport in the tourism sector of Indonesia is indeed crucial. Besides the high volume of flights per day, this airport acts as a brand ambassador for Indonesia’s tourism industry. Positive impressions from this industry start from the airport. Airport renovation is a factor in increasing tourist arrivals and recovering from disruptions in Indonesia’s economic growth (Panuju, 2018; Putri, 2018). Renovations carried out by the government change the tourist’s perception of visiting Bali. Most of them feel comfortable with the new public facilities provided. However, the 2018 eruption of Mount Agung affected tourist arrivals and resulted in losses of up to USD775 issues faced by Ngurah Rai Airport, where airport taxi facilities could not operate efficiently due to the eruption (Manullang, 2015; Sumarda et al., 2019). Furthermore, the Trans Sarbagita bus is still constrained by a small fleet and long waiting times. Conventional taxis at the airport also charge varied rates and are quite often reluctant to use the taximeter. Not to mention the problems passengers must face because online transportation is not permitted to seek passengers along the airport area. Kratudnak (2018) mentioned that check-in, security, convenience, airport facilities, and mobility are five key factors affecting airport service quality. The government carried out efforts to further monitor success rates, monitoring tourists’ perception and expectations against actual performance after enjoying airport services. Perception and service quality will be the focal point of the study and the essential variables of this research.

**Literature Review**

In this theoretical foundation chapter, several theories, e.g., theory of tourist perception, service quality, and the development of tourist destinations, will be discussed, which will help carry out the research process.
Tourist Perceptions

The theory of perception is related to a person’s activity in giving an impression, reference, judgment, opinion, and interpreting something based on the information displayed. Through perception, we can recognize the symptoms and aspects and directly respond to their presence (Meliou, 2010: 36). Individual differences result in different perceptions, i.e., humans have different likes and dislike. Ariani (2009) believes that perception is an activity that assesses physical and nonphysical objects, which depends on the environment’s physical stimulus and nonphysical or social stimulus. Therefore, perception offers a broad scope concerning the internal and external. Experts have provided diverse definitions of perception, although, in principle, these definitions contain the same meaning. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, perception is a direct response (acceptance) to something, i.e., the process of a person knowing things through the five senses. As such, tourist perception is considered an essential dimension (Abd El Jalil, 2010).

A study in the 1990s showed that perception is an essential element that can influence tourist destinations (Kamenidou et al., 2009). The impression of hotel service and travel agency can be the basis of tourism development in certain regions (Meliou & Maroudas, 2010). The process of creating drawings, brochures, tour operators, and travel agents also plays an important role (Abd El Jalil, 2010). In studies related to tourism, the perception of visitors or tourists of a particular attraction is more focused than a description of the tourist attraction itself (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000). An impression of a tourist attraction can be defined as environmental characteristics that affect tourist behavior and choices (Kamenidou et al., 2009). In tourism, the impression of a tourist destination object plays a vital role in branding strategy and brand development (Arieta, 2010). The same impression applies to research related to the hotel industry.

Service Quality

Quality has many definitions and meanings, e.g., compliance with requirements or demands, suitability for the use of continuous improvement, free of damage or defects, and fulfillment of customer needs. However, in total quality management (TQM), quality is seen in a broader paradigm, which is the aspect of emphasized results (oriented result) and includes processes, the environment, and humans. This concept appears in the formulation of the definition described by Goeth and Davis, as quoted by Tjiptono (2012), i.e., that quality is a dynamic condition associated with products, services, people, processes, and the environment that meets or exceeds expectations. Service can be defined as all forms of activities/activities provided by one or more parties to other parties with a relationship to provide satisfaction to the second party concerned for the goods and services provided. The service industry must understand that there are two elements or groups of people through which each meets the needs of each other; therefore, the roles and functions inherent in each of these elements are different. Matters relating to services are:

- the human factors that serve,
- the tools or facilities used to provide services,
- the mechanism of work used, and
- even the attitudes of each person who provides services and those served.

In principle, the concept of service has various definitions according to the experts; in essence, it still refers to the same basic concept. According to Sutedja (2007), service can be interpreted as an activity or profit offered by one party to another party. These services include the speed of service, comfort provided, ease of location, and reasonable and competitive prices (Sunarto, 2007).

Organizational Culture

Service quality has become a primary driver of the global economy due to its focus on addressing unpredictable needs among customers, as it determines organizational success (Gittell et al., 2010; Vogus & McClelland, 2016). In addition, the development of technology in communication and information in service sectors created a more competitive market (Cho et al., 2013). Nowak (2019) stated that stressing the importance
of organizational culture among frontline employees could improve their service behaviors (Liden et al., 2014). Companies that applied the serving culture within their organization will have stakeholders who prioritize others as their priority.

Previous studies investigated the relationship between organizational culture and service quality (Anderson & Fornell, 1994; Collier, 1994; Horovitz, 1987; 1990) on how the cultural dimensions affect customer satisfaction and service quality (Donthu & Yoo, 1998; Mattila, 1999; Winsted, 1997). Mattila (1999) proved that customers with Western backgrounds are more likely to rely on tangible cues from a physical environment to evaluate service quality than their Asian counterparts. An estimation of the effects of the cultural factors would provide valuable input for international market segmentation and resource allocation across the service quality dimensions. If the relative importance of the service quality dimensions to customers is likely to vary depending on their culture, resource allocation on different service quality dimensions should be contingent on the importance attached to them by customers (Furrer et al., 2000).

This argument is also supported by Heskett, Sasser, and Hart (1990), who stresses the importance of emphasizing psychographics in understanding service quality, that is, the way people think, feel, and behave. In a multicultural environment, psychographics is dependent on cultural elements. Engel and Blackwell (1982) provide a clear pictorial representation of the relationship between culture and subculture and buyer behavior. They discuss how culture shapes social interaction and the values, lifestyles, and personalities (which are measured as psychographics) of individuals in a society. More recently, differences between cultures have been shown to limit the ability of service multinationals to expand their activities internationally (Kogut & Singh, 1988; Li 1994; Li & Guisinger, 1991, 1992). These studies explain these expansion problems in terms of managerial, cultural differences. People believe that these problems also arise from differences in customer cultures. Thus, understanding the relationship between culture and perceived service quality is likely to be fruitful.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to reveal tourist perceptions of the quality of services performed at Bali’s Ngurah Rai International Airport, especially after the 2018 volcano eruption. The design of this study was carried out via a qualitative approach, namely, by conducting semi-structural interviews with ten foreign tourists from various countries who arrived at the airport for approximately 20–40 minutes. The interview was also conducted with airport management to reconfirm the information. All interviews were conducted until researchers had obtained sufficient and significant information. This study used a qualitative approach; a sample of the total population was selected until the information generated was saturated. The selection of informants was carried out purposively through required research elements. Informants are recruited by looking at the diversity of the backgrounds, gender, and occupation.

Researchers considered the surroundings to be a pleasant situation before approaching foreign tourists. Researchers asked the foreign tourists nicely by showing the approval letter to collect the data and the purpose of the research. The majority of the participants agreed to participate and share their overall experience of their stay in Bali. Some of them had unforgettable moments on vacation to Bali because they enjoy the beauty of the Island of the Gods. This research paradigm is not to generalize to the research population but to solicit more profound information. Data were analyzed inductively by establishing a rigorous and valid connection between statements made by informants to the previous literature.

The informants came from various countries, i.e., Australia, UAE, Sri Lanka, USA, Switzerland, New Zealand. The informants were chosen randomly and asked about their perceptions toward the airport’s service quality. The two main semi-structured interview questions are:

- What do you think of good infrastructure and factors that can support and influence airport facilities?
- Based on your experience, what should be the cultural factor supporting the quality of service at this airport?

The questions are adjusted based on experiences upon setting foot in Bali and experiences while traveling or living in Bali. Each interview session took about 20 to 40 minutes. Interviews were conducted with foreign
tourists coming to Bali via Ngurah Rai International Airport, which was also recommended by Yin (2003), where participants were identified based on their roles and referred to hierarchical level structures. Informants were selected based on foreign tourists who had just come to Bali through Ngurah Rai airport.

Findings

All informants agreed that the five elements, i.e., trademark, effective communication, behavioral intention, sincerity, morals, and mannerism, are part of the cultural dimension in service quality. Besides that, Balinese culture is entertained and warmly welcomed are other positive factors that enrich tourists’ experience.

Table 1. Description on Cultural Dimension: Service Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trademark</td>
<td>• Ngurah Rai Airport displays Balinese characteristics for its airplane passengers, e.g., Balinese musical instruments.</td>
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<td>• Bali Airport is unique and displays thick cultural characteristics for those arriving at the airport.</td>
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<td>• The airport staff aware of the right way to wear costumes or traditional clothes from Bali.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ornament and building interiors at the airport are adapted to the custom design in Bali so that, when tourists arrive at the airport, they can feel the atmosphere in Bali.</td>
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<td>2. Effective communication</td>
<td>• Effective communication occurs when the sender and recipient of a message can mutually understand the message content.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The message’s quality is adequate compared to how the message is conveyed, even in a different language.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• To provide quality services, staff must understand the wishes of foreign tourists.</td>
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<td>3. Behavioural Intention</td>
<td>• The professionalism of staff in the airport area determines the quality of their services to foreign tourists.</td>
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<td>• Must not use hidden agendas in carrying out obligations in providing quality services.</td>
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<td>• Busy and interactive airport areas are vulnerable to opportunities for abuse by irresponsible people.</td>
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<td>4. Sincerity</td>
<td>• Fair and equitable services are needed in serving passengers and foreign tourists at Ngurah Rai Airport.</td>
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<td>• All staff must be fully committed to sincerely serving foreign tourists, which will determine the impression given to foreign tourists.</td>
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<td>5. Moral and Mannerism</td>
<td>• Staff should pay attention to how to greet tourists when arriving at the airport</td>
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<td>• Required routine personality training and monitoring of service methods for passengers and foreign tourists in the Ngurah Rai Airport area.</td>
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<td>• There are still many airport staff who use foreign tourists for personal gain or additional income. For example, wild brokers who offer services to foreign tourists that more exclusive services can pollute the quality of service in the Ngurah Rai Airport area.</td>
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</table>

Trademark

Ngurah Rai Airport is able to show its characteristics in creating a good image of foreign passengers who become tourists. Various kinds of banners are used until an ambassador welcomes foreign tourists.
“I was amazed by the music I heard when I arrived here. Very relaxing!”

The impression of Ngurah Rai Airport will be determined by the trademarks that strengthen tourism destination image. In addition, the trademarks, complemented with advertising budgets, can turn into valuable brands (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). The concept of brand equity captures the notion that companies derive several benefits from having a recognizable brand, including customer satisfaction and reputation (Keller, 1993). The information conveyed by trademarks reduces uncertainty over the quality of the market offer and its provider (Ramello & Silva, 2006). At the same time, it provides incentives for companies to continuously improve the quality of their offerings and thereby build a reputation projected on the individual’s cultural experience. Thus, a trademark is a company’s advertising logo aimed at consumers. For the consumer, the trademark creates a marketing communication experience (Reshetnikova, 2017).

**Effective Communication**

To achieve effective communication, airport staff must be able to send messages to passengers and tourists, some of whom may have difficulty with the language. The quality of communication can be determined via a mutual understanding’s message itself rather than how the message was delivered (Park et al., 2014). Language barriers may be a factor in the lack of positive communication.

“I found difficulties when I needed help from the staff. Sometimes, they pretend to be busy and not look at me when I approach them.”

Based on interviews, language barriers are not a problem for tourists; however, tourists are concerned with how airport staff communicates with them, regardless of foreign language skills. Effective communication has been proved to affect service quality, which increases trust among customers (Park et al., 2014). When we raise the issue pertaining to service quality, it means we talked about the customer experience. Hence, the quality of communication also determined the quality of customer experience, as per Kim and Choi (2016). Through effective communication, the customers or passengers ensured they receive excellent service quality. This is due to their expectations and perceptions associated with effective communication (Patterson, 2016).

**Behavioral Intention**

Having trained and qualified employees who are equipped with the required behavior is necessary for any organization. Unfortunately, services in organizations usually find themselves operating in an environment characterized by chaos due to the uncertainty of behavior needed to satisfy customers (Aryee et al., 2013), especially in the busy environment typical of an airport. Regardless of the technological, managerial, and communication advancements possessed by organizations, service organizations usually depend on their employees to provide excellent service (Gavino et al., 2012).

“When I arrived here, especially when I took my queue, a staff approached me and offered me to pay him so that I can get the fastest way to finish my line.”

There is a link between service quality and behavioural intention (Biscaia, 2013; Clemes et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2018; Shahzadi et al., 2018; Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008). Employees with positive behavioral intentions give positive contributions to companies. Employees who served the customers or passengers with the professional protocol in the airport give good service quality to their customers. It can be seen from the favourable behavior intentions to their customers, such as showing loyalty, not saying negative things, and not complaining about their works (Biscaia, 2013), and not deceiving the customers.

**Sincerity**

Good service at an airport can be seen, as it has been integrated with technological advancements that make it easier for passengers or foreign tourists to self-service. The role of airport staff is influential and can help passengers to enjoy this e-service. The quality of service coupled with digital or technology facilities strongly influences customer or passenger satisfaction (Ayo et al., 2016).
“I like to move fast; technology actually really helped me to do everything myself. Sometimes, you still need help from the staff when you are overseas.”

The previous study by Perepelkin and Di Zhang (2014) found a positive relationship between sincerity and service quality. The quality of services given by employees to customers was determined by the relationship of the employees toward their employers. If employers are trustworthy and sincere, employees tend to be more open and give the best service to the customers (Paswan et al., 2005). In the CARTER model, a service quality measurement based on Sharia principles by Othman and Owen (2001), employees demonstrated sincerity through assurance and empathy. Assurance is the behavior to give trust and confidence, whereas empathy and responsiveness can give care, attention, and willingness to help customers (Ratnawati & Kholis, 2019).

Moral and Mannerism

The interview results obtained from foreign tourists reveal that most of them do not like the unprofessional behavior carried out by most airport staff. Although staff may not realize it, behaviors such as gossiping, lack of eye contact, and lack of smile leave an unfavorable impact on the quality of service in the Ngurah Rai Airport area.

“I was so kind to ask their help. I don’t mind about the language barrier, but I am just quite mad when they are gossiping in front of me.”

Previous scholars have investigated the association between moral value and service quality (Prokop, 2013; Setiawan, 2015; Yagil & Shultz, 2017). The moral values of employees could have displayed their service quality to their customers. The employees’ performance was determined by their moral decisions as well as their behaviors, which significantly influence their service quality. Service employees’ amoral behavior may occur contrary to organizational norms and for the benefit of employee interests (Schepers et al., 2012; Vardaman et al., 2014); such unethical behaviors are sometimes the direct outcome of organizational pressure (Bush, Smith, & Bush, 2013). Therefore, the moral issues among employees should be taken more seriously in order to increase the service quality in any organization.

Discussion

The quality of service conditions at Ngurah Rai Airport is quite good and primarily determined by Balinese and Indonesian culture. The satisfaction of foreign tourists who have visited Ngurah Rai can be seen from the customer satisfaction index released by the Indonesia National Air Carriers Association (INACA). Survey results in the INACA secondary data show an increase in the satisfaction index graph from 2016 to 2019, from 4.26 to 4.81 (data taken from the opinion of passengers, cockpit crew, station manager, cargo, and concessionary), respectively. Passenger satisfaction also increased from 2016 to 2019, from 4.29 to 4.85, respectively.

The results of this index can be harmonized with the matrix compiled by the INACA in secondary data. The secondary data states that most of the points that can satisfy foreign tourists are more on the side of facilities, such as lounges, toilets, check-in facilities, parking areas, baggage lounges, information centers, immigration, customs, and charging stations. Cultural dimensions in the service quality delivered can also be seen in the high index number of services for tourists.

Unfortunately, essential points related to the findings through field surveys and the secondary data must be considered. Foreign tourists have a crucial perception that there is one crucial point, which is considered unsatisfactory, i.e., Wi-Fi (Internet connection), particularly in the waiting and lounge areas. Unclear flight calls, officer staff friendliness, and price information for each product offered are also considered as being unsatisfactory. Toilet cleanliness is also a critical point observed by the perception of foreign tourists, which is still considered not an important concern for the airport authority.

Airport Council International (ACI), in a report titled “Airport Service Quality (ASQ) in 2019,” placed Ngurah Rai International Airport as the most improved airport in the Asia Pacific, citing it as the best international airport with premium service in Indonesia. Regarding its infrastructure, readiness, and development, Ngurah Rai International Airport could win the competition to be one of the leading international airport hubs. Nevertheless,
the management is faced with several problems, according to the findings of the study, which should be considered further. Tangible and intangible services must be considered to support the rich cultural dimensions as demonstrated by the appearance of an international airport. Further, this airport has many advantages considering its location, which is indeed one of the most populous tourism points in the world. Thus, the potential to become an international transit airport over the next few years is indeed significant.

This study will positively impact the quality of Ngurah Rai airport services, along with renovations being carried out. Improving service quality will provide a positive image of a destination. The services provided by airport staff will give meaning to the culture of service that Balinese people own. Service quality of the airport will affect passengers’ mood, representing the image of city, and could affect passengers’ choice of destination (Miquel, 2020). The inclusion of technological interventions at airports must be balanced and accompanied by the quality of service from its personnel.

Conclusion and Implications

The cultural dimension plays an important role in determining the quality of service at Ngurah Rai International Airport. Most tourists feel that the quality of service at Ngurah Rai Airport is determined by Indonesian culture. Strong culture in Indonesia has influenced perceptions of tourists at Ngurah Rai Airport. Cultural dimensions, both tangible and intangible, affect tourists’ perceptions of service quality at the Ngurah Rai Airport. Communication also plays a vital role in improving the airport’s service quality.

Renewal of technology and physical infrastructure will undoubtedly increase the supporting capability of airport performance to make it more optimal. However, social dimensions and cultural wealth will always affect the performance of management in public service facilities, especially for tourist destinations. Combining new technology and modern facilities along with culture-based services and friendly communication will bring a more positive perception of foreign tourists to service quality at the airport.

In theory, this research expands the service quality model by discovering the importance of communication as a factor affecting airport service quality. On the contrary, in practice, Indonesia’s government can implement this research in the tourism ministry to improve the quality of service at Ngurah Rai Airport.

References


