

Value Co-Creation Strategy based on Five Gaps of Service Quality Identification: Case Study of a 3-Star Hotel in Jayapura

Kayleen Priscilia¹, Santi Novani²

¹(School of Business Management, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia)

²(School of Business Management, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia)

*Corresponding Author: Kayleen Priscilia¹

ABSTRACT : *The hospitality industry is highly dynamic and significantly impacted by external factors. Therefore, hotels must continuously innovate and adapt to the evolving environment. Acknowledging existing gaps is necessary to pinpoint the areas where repairment and innovation should be implemented. Incorporating value co-creation in strategy formulation is significantly beneficial due to its capability to foster innovation and continuous improvement. In this research, an independent 3-star hotel located in Jayapura, Papua, will be the subject of the study. A qualitative approach is employed, specifically through one-on-one interviews with a total of 10 participants, involving both internal stakeholders as service providers and external stakeholders as customers. To identify relevant gaps, the author integrates the five gaps of the service quality framework in determining themes and utilizes the four-phase value co-creation model to develop solutions. It was discovered that there are issues within the five gaps model of service quality, and it is advisable for YS Hotel to be actively collaborating with customers and offer unique and culturally immersive experiences.*

KEYWORDS – *Service quality gaps, Value Co-Creation, Innovation, Stakeholder Collaboration, Service Improvement*

I. INTRODUCTION

Hospitality industry is known for the intense and dynamic business nature that significantly affected by the external factors. Various factors contributed to the dynamics of the environment that hotels must co-evolve with, such as competitive intensity, market turbulence, and technological turbulence. External environmental factors are defined as the factors that change rapidly, are uncertain, and complex that could bring problems to the organizations [1]. Due to sensitivity of the industry with the rapidly changing environment, it is highly necessary for hotel business to have dynamic capability, the capacity to integrate, develop, and adapt to internal and external competences, enabling it to navigate rapidly changing environment and uncertain circumstances [2].

The performance of the hospitality industry in Papua, Indonesia, specifically concerning YS Hotel, a 3-star independent hotel located in Jayapura City, established since 1998, is significantly influenced by the emergence of new competitors and the prevailing political dynamics in the region. It is evidenced by the hotel's depreciating financial conditions, highlighting its difficulty to compete with the influx of new star-rated and chain hotels. In 2022 alone, there were 30 new star-hotel entrants compared to the previous year. There was no such dramatic increase observed in prior years. The emerging competition has led to intense price wars, with 4-star hotels, offering more amenities and facilities, reducing their prices to match those of 3-star hotels.

It is apparent that the business problem in YS Hotel lies in their difficulty is in keeping up with the market expectations for service. As the dynamic strategy adoption to address current challenges in meeting the needs and preferences of their target market, the cruciality took place in finding the area of improvement within the five service quality gaps [3]. After the gaps has been found, this paper will propose an innovation strategy for YS Hotel, recommending the adoption of the value co-creation solutions that will possibly support in closing the gap. The impact of value co-creation has previously covered by Chan et al., (2010), where the scholars stated that the creation of relational value is a significant factor that affects customer satisfaction. Value co-creation is particularly relevant due to the volatile nature of market demands, necessitating agile and adaptive responses that not only meet customer expectations but potentially exceed them. This strategy involves fostering collaborative interactions between customers and service providers to enhance value creation. Previous study by Rahmawati and Novani (2021) has demonstrated the evidence indicating that innovation alone does not have a significant impact on marketing performance to small-medium enterprise during critical and uncertain times. Their findings highlight that innovation combined with co-creation has positively improves marketing performance [4]. The relationship between dynamic capabilities and value co-creation is also crucial in enhancing marketing strategies and addressing competitive dynamics [5]. It indicates that dynamic capabilities,

which include the ability to reconfigure a firm's resources and operations, are essential for organizations seeking to maintain competitive advantages in fast-changing markets. When these capabilities are integrated with value co-creation, where service provider and customers collaborate to create mutually beneficial solutions, they significantly enhance the firm's dynamic capabilities. This approach enables firms to better meet and adapt to customer needs in a continuously evolving marketplace.

Value co-creation has been applied in tourism or service industry in the previous research with variety of methodology in the area of system thinking and service science. For instance, Novani, S, et al., (2014) has implement soft system methodology (SSM) in Batik Industrial Cluster in Solo to do an exploration on the value exchange of stakeholders and customers through value co-creation [6]. Specifically in hotel business, previous research has covered topic about value co creation in hospitality industry, where they found that the interactive co-creative experience has positive correlation to increase satisfaction and generate positive emotion for hotel guest, thus improving the business performance [7].

The objective of this research is to discover issues within the five gaps of service quality and proposing value co-creation strategy in addressing the gaps. Furthermore, this paper will give contribution to the application of value co-creation in formulating strategies for MSMEs in Indonesia, particularly in Papua, where the region itself is prioritized for development as stated by the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo [8]. Introducing value co-creation as strategies that could be applied in businesses in Papua, especially in tourism sector could be highly beneficial to support business growth to be more agile and resilience that eventually impact the national growth. Furthermore, there seems to be a limitation in the previous research that apply value co-creation in these regions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 YS Hotel

YS Hotel, is an independent hotel, located in Jayapura, Papua. It has been operated since 1998, making it as one of longest established star-rated hotels. It has maintained a strong presence over the years and is well-known within the local community, particularly from a time when there were fewer star-rated hotels in the area. As of 2024, YS Hotel continues to hold its 3-star status, featuring 82 rooms and offering range of complimentary amenities, including 24-hour front desk service, free Wi-Fi, a sauna, a spa, breakfast service, and various other services. Their primary target customers are government agencies and corporations, often offering promotions like meeting packages.

In terms of the organizational structure, it is structured in a functional manner, where its roles are divided according to business functions. Although this type of organizational structure prone to collaboration and coordination issues between departments, it is not the case for YS Hotel [9,10]. Stakeholders report that having a small number of employees makes it easy to communicate and collaborate with each other. It is enhanced by the hotel's friendly culture and closeness between top-management and the staffs. This type of culture increases employee confidence, encouraging them to reach out and give assistance across departments. The challenge that significantly affects performance is the hotel's lack of attractiveness to customers because of new entrants in the industry. Additionally, due to financial constraints, management decided to implement cost-cutting measures, forcing employees to hold multiple functions simultaneously to save costs.

2.2 Five gaps of service quality

Service quality is defined as a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations. Delivering quality service means conforming to customer expectations on a consistent basis [11]. Parasuraman, et al., (1985) have identified five gaps that affect service quality. The first gap is between customer expectation and management perspective, known as knowledge gap. It occurs when service firm has low or no understanding regarding features that customer needs. The second gap refers to the gap between the management perception and service quality. It happens when the provider has clear knowledge regarding what the customer wants but find it difficult to achieve standard aligned with their needs. The third gap occurs between service quality specifications and service delivery. There were certain guidelines exist to provide necessary services needed for customers, but there were challenges in complying with the guidelines. The fourth gap is the service delivery and external communication gap due to expectations from customers do not align with the communicated services from the providers. The final gap, which is the fifth gap is between the expected service and perceived service, representing the discrepancy between what customers expect from the service and what they received [3].

2.3 Value Co-Creation

The concept of value co-creation formulated from service-dominant logic theory, that has been comprehensively covered by Vargo and Lusch (2004). It is defined as an exchange of knowledge and practical skills in the process of co-creating of value. It has been further developed and supported by the trend in internet use. Scholars has continuously implemented practical implementation of value co-creation concept. Sphorer &

Maglio (2010) have formulated ten foundational service science concepts to enhance the understanding of value co-creation [12]. Furthermore, Kijima et al., (2012) has also developed four-phases of value co-creation model where they defined value co-creation as an “active, creative and social process based on collaboration between provider and customers that is initiated by the provider to generate value for customers”. The scholars introduced 4 phases of dynamic collaboration and co-creation of value between providers and customers, consisting short-range process (co-experience and co-definition) and long-range process (co-elevation and co-development) (Fig 1.1). Co-experience of service occurs when both the provider and customers share a mutual understanding of the service. Co-definition happens when there is continuous learning regarding each other’s preferences, abilities, and expectations. In a system, provider must elevate customers’ expectations and continuously co-developed to improve its service system, referring to co-elevation and co-elevation [13].

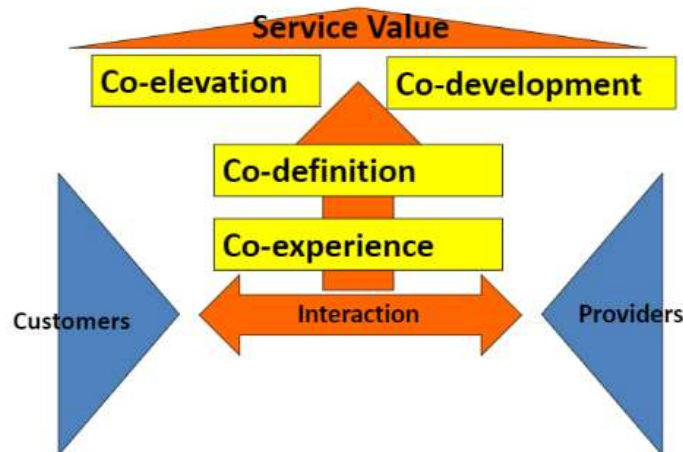


Fig. 0.1 Four-phase of value co-creation [13]

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection

The data collection involves 1-on-1 semi-structured interviews with the total of 10 stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to have wide insights to have in-depth information regarding the business situations and perspectives of each participant [14]. The timeframe of the data collection was from March until May 2024. All interviews were conducted in the online environment using Zoom Meeting as tools to communicate with the participants.

Six internal stakeholders are from the organization, working at the top-management level. The objective is to explore the current situation in YS Hotel, and to have insights regarding how they provide service to their guests, and experience in engaging with the market. Other stakeholders that were interviewed are from external individuals. Two of them being the previous YS Hotel guests that had used and purchased the service at YS Hotel. The primary goals are to uncover the experiences felt by the guests and deciphering any existing gaps during their time as the guest in YS Hotel. The other two are classified as non-guests, who have never stayed in YS Hotel but have used services at other hotels in Jayapura. Further details regarding the interview participants encompassing specific roles in the company are attached at Tabel 3.1.

Table 1 Interview participants

Stakeholders	Department	Number of participants	Method
Internal	Hotel Manager	1	1-on-1 online semi-structured interview
	Front Office	1	
	Sales & Marketing	1	
	Accounting & Finance	1	
	Human Resource Management	1	
	Food & Beverage Product	1	
External	Previous YS Hotel’s guest	2	
	Non-guest	2	
Total participants		10	

3.2 Data analysis

The data derived from the interview sessions with all participants were analysed using thematic content analysis. It has 3 primary steps that needed to be followed, such as: data reduction, data display, and drawing of conclusions. Data reduction includes these sub-steps: choosing, coding, and categorizing data. In the data display step, there are various methods to visually present the insights gained from the previous step, such as quotes, matrices, graphs, or charts, aiming to assist researchers and readers in identifying patterns in qualitative data. Drawing of conclusions involves utilizing this visualization to identify trends within a smaller dataset created in the second phase [15].

Furthermore, the thematic analysis is adopting deductive approach with five gaps of service quality model as the foundational theory and benchmark to classify the interview coding of analysis [3]. Following the model, the sub-themes formulated by the group of coding will be classified into 5 major themes: Knowledge gap, policy gap, delivery gap, communication gap, and perception gap. The objective of the data analysis is to find specifically current condition of YS Hotel that significantly contribute to the five gaps, that possibly have implications for the decline in occupancy rate performance amidst the entry of new competitors. The tool utilized to support the thematic analysis process is NVivo 14.0.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Identification in five gaps of service quality

The thematic analysis conducted reveals the presence of the five gaps of service quality within the current business operations with the guests of YS Hotel, as attached in Table 4.1. These findings, termed as ‘as-is’ conditions, were synthesized from data derived through analysis of interview transcript with both internal stakeholders, as the participants that have the in-depth understanding regarding the business process of the hotel and how the service was delivered to the customers. In addition, external stakeholders, specifically previous guests who have experience YS Hotel’s service also included in defining the ‘as-is’ elements. The desired outcomes, defined as ‘should-be’ states, represent a synthesis of the needs and expectations articulated by both internal and external stakeholders.

The underlying reasons of why both classified stakeholders needed to be included in determining the expected service of YS Hotel are to achieve the desired synergy between market demands and operational capabilities. This approach is driven by the objective to achieve mutual benefits for each side, which are the service providers and customers. Internal stakeholders are the party that has the resources and capabilities to provide services, while external stakeholders, namely the previous guests and non-guests, representing the customers, bring certain needs and preference regarding hotel services. By integrating these perspectives, YS Hotel aims to develop a service framework that not only leverages its strengths but also resonates with and meets the expectations of its guests, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction and competitive positioning.

Table 2 Five gaps of service quality exist in YS Hotel (Author, 2024)

Gaps of service quality	Definition [3]	AS IS	SHOULD BE
Gap 1: Knowledge gap	Gap between customers’ expectations and management perspective as a result in insufficient market research.	Inward-looking approach in innovation Monitoring guest feedback	Outward-looking approach in innovation Engaging guest feedback
Gap 2: Policy gap	Gap between management perceptions and service specifications due to lack of commitment to service quality.	Ill-defined objective and value	Co-defined objective and value
Gap 3: Delivery gap	Gap between service specification and service delivery due to internal conflict.	Cost-cutting measurement to deliver service at low cost	Allocation of resources aligned with value, competitive advantage, and expectation of customers
Gap 4: Communication gap	Gap between service delivery and external communications, due to misalignment in providers’ communication with the reality	Communication of vintage and heritage value using existing infrastructure	Enhanced storytelling that highlights the unique features and experiences
Gap 5: Perception gap	Gap between service delivered and what is perceived by the customers	Generic service	Unique service

4.1.1 Gap 1 – Knowledge Gap

It is identified that YS Hotel has this gap concerning its understanding of customer needs, related to management of guest feedback and innovation strategy. According to the statement by several stakeholders on the process of innovation in YS hotel, their decisions on new products or services are based on the employee insights. They conducted initiative like brainstorming that involve all employees, meaning that all employees have freedom to give ideas. They have tendency to reusing the previous innovations instead of generating new services or products. This strategy results in a lack of attractiveness and unsatisfactory performance which hinder the hotel's competitiveness. Therefore, it is highly recommended for YS Hotel to consider outward-looking approach in its innovation process, where internal knowledge is also integrated with external knowledge that could bring fresh insights and ideas. The external knowledge meant are knowledge from the customers or locals in generating ideas. Previous research indicates that fast-paced firms in highly innovative industries can benefit from an outward-looking orientation [16]. As observed from the current hospitality industry in Papua, the industry is fast paced, necessitating continuous innovation in their services.

Another identified knowledge gap is the management of guest feedback, where employees tend to be solely expecting and monitoring guest comments rather than taking a proactive approach. This leads to a lack of comprehensive feedback data, contributing to the challenges in understanding customers' needs. Engaging customers to provide feedback by offering rewards or creating engaging posts on social media could support the collection of more detailed insights, thereby enhancing the understanding of customer preferences and improving service delivery. By doing so, mutual benefit and value co-creation can be achieved, as customers feel valued and directly contribute to the improvement of services, while the hotel gains actionable insights to refine its offerings and enhance guest experiences.

4.1.2 Gap 2 – Policy gap

The existence of policy gap was identified, signified by objective or purpose conflict occurs in the internal organization, due to the lack of clarity in the organization's identity and objectives in their policy. This ambiguity leads to confusion among employees regarding the direction of their efforts, leading to inconsistent commitment to service quality. A specific example of this issue at YS Hotel occurs in the pricing of products. The department responsible for determining the price might view a product as high-value and price it accordingly, while the sales and marketing department, tasked with promoting the product, might believe it should be priced lower to attract the targeted customers. This discrepancy highlights the challenges arising from unclear policy directives and misaligned departmental goals.

Therefore, agreement on the main objectives and identity of YS Hotel that would like to be captured to the customers should be determined in mutual agreement between the internal stakeholders and the desirability of the customers. The clarity in organizational goals, whether it is a short-term, medium-term, or long-term, could be a benchmark in determining strategy in respect of all departments in YS Hotel.

4.1.3 Gap 3 – Delivery gap

The delivery gap at YS Hotel lies in how costs are managed, with a focus on cost-cutting and employee layoffs. Human resources are crucial in the hospitality industry, as they are responsible for providing guest services. YS Hotel has been known for its personalized service, fostered by a positive and friendly environment, and close relationships between guests and staff. Previous guests have cited this close network with staff as a key reason for choosing YS Hotel over other options. However, due to recent layoffs, remaining employees are required to perform multiple roles, reducing their ability to provide the personalized service that guests value.

It is recommended that YS Hotel better manage its resources, focusing on enhancing rather than depreciating its competitive advantages. For instance, YS Hotel could collaborate with event management services to offer end-to-end event solutions, from planning to execution. This strategy would not only diversify the hotel's service offerings but also relieve some of the workload from the staff, allowing them to focus on providing exceptional, personalized guest services.

4.1.4 Gap 4 – Communication gap

The most highlighted aspect of the gaps that has been stated by the service provider and customers are regarding the tangibility aspect of YS Hotel, specifically in terms of the quality of facilities and amenities. Because of the long history of establishment, there were furniture that has not been replaced. Management might perceive this approach as reflection of a vintage hotel that holds nostalgic memories to guests. In the reality, guest did not feel the expected value as communicated by the YS Hotel during their stay. As the matter of fact, the guests think that rather than vintage, the facilities are outdated and old.

Therefore, YS Hotel should revamp its communication strategy. Instead of relying on their vintage furniture, they could enhance their storytelling to highlight the hotel's history and Papua culture. Notably, compared to other hotels, they have a competitive advantage as the longest star-rated hotel establishment in

Jayapura, witnessing the development of Jayapura prior to competitors started to entry the market. They could leverage this advantage in their storytelling to enrich guests' experiences, adding philosophical elements to their interiors and tangible aspects.

4.1.5 Gap 5 – Perception gap

The hospitality industry in Papua currently faces a significant perception gap, particularly regarding the uniqueness of its offerings. The hospitality industry in Papua currently faces a significant perception gap, particularly regarding the uniqueness of its offerings. While customers have no issues with cleanliness, hospitality, and the quality of food and beverages, which meet the standard or bare minimum expected in most hotels, they seek differentiation and uniqueness in the service. The most common reaction when participants were asked about how they perceived YS Hotel was, "YS Hotel is like any other hotel in Jayapura".

There is in fact, a growing desire among customers for hotels that can integrate the ethnic culture of Papua into their services, providing an immersive cultural experience. Participants also aspire to engage in unique events in Jayapura that could enhance their awareness of Papuan culture and tourist spots, as they claim to have limited knowledge of these despite having lived in Papua for a long time. To address this gap, YS Hotel need to incorporate transformation and innovation in its service offerings focusing on unique experience that is not provided by other competitors. This includes incorporating traditional Papuan art, music, and culinary practices into the hotel's ambiance and activities. Additionally, YS Hotel plans to offer personalized recommendations for local tourism spots, further promoting the region's attractions and enhancing guests' overall experience. By doing so, YS Hotel can bridge the perception gap, meeting the expectations of modern travellers who seek authentic cultural engagements and positioning itself as a leader in culturally immersive hospitality in Papua.

4.2 Four-phase of value co-creation in addressing the gaps

Kijima et al., (2012) has proposed a four-phase of value co-creation that highlights the dynamic, active, and creative nature of value co-creation interactions. In other words, effective collaboration between providers and customers requires a sense of mutual trust. Customers have specific expectation and preferences that provides need to identify and manage. Therefore, continuous mutual learning between both sides is important. In accordance with the discovered issues in the five gaps of service quality, value co-creation solutions are proposed using the 4-phase of value co-creation process, starting with co-experience and co-definition, which is the learning phase collaboratively between providers and customers; co-development and co-elevation sees customers as an entity that could have elevated expectations or ability that provider have that could increase customers expectation. Therefore, providers that develop continuously by utilizing the feedback from customers [13]. Using this model will provide strategy for YS Hotel capable to be sustain in the long run.

For YS Hotel, it is apparent based on the analysis that the challenges lie in determining the hotel's objectives and the way of communication and collaboration with customers. Therefore, the four phase of value co-creation must be formulated among internal stakeholders within the organization, as well as between internal stakeholders and external stakeholders, namely the customers.

The first service system proposed to strengthen the objectives and identity of YS Hotel, which is crucial as a benchmark for formulating strategies across departments, involves the co-definition of identities and values by engaging all departments. The strategy for co-experience and co-definition will include holding specialized workshops aimed at conducting brainstorming sessions to determine the primary values and identity of the hotel. Additionally, it is important to note that company values and identity should be developed continuously, adapting to both internal and external conditions. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct regular training sessions and invite external experts to stay updated with market trends as the co-elevation and co-development strategies.

The second service system proposed to enhance communication and collaboration with customers involves utilizing social media as a value orchestration platform to gather insights, feedback, and ideas from customers. Value orchestration entails active collaboration between providers and customers, making it crucial for YS Hotel to create engaging posts that encourage customer interaction. Giving rewards for customers in return for their comprehensive feedback is one of the strategies of encouragement. Directly engaging with customers can also be beneficial, such as conducting weekly chat sessions to maintain an open line of communication and foster a stronger relationship with the customer base. It is advisable for YS Hotel to enhance storytelling of their vintage features to guests instead of expecting direct understanding from guests. Following the recommendation on previous journal, hotel staff should perceive themselves as storytellers in addition to their conventional roles [17].

As co-elevation and co-development strategy, it is recommended for allocate resources in providing unique experiences for customers, such as integrating Papua culture in the service. For instance, conducting cultural workshop: weaving art, *noken* crocheting, or wood carving. Collaboration with external stakeholders,

such as artists, or *Himpunan Parawisata Indonesia* (HPI) to do exploration on new tourism spots to have innovative service, such as tour package could differentiate YS Hotel from competitors. It is stated in the interviews that their target market, namely the government entities and corporations often seek for leisure activities in the hotels, which makes the proposed solution relevant.

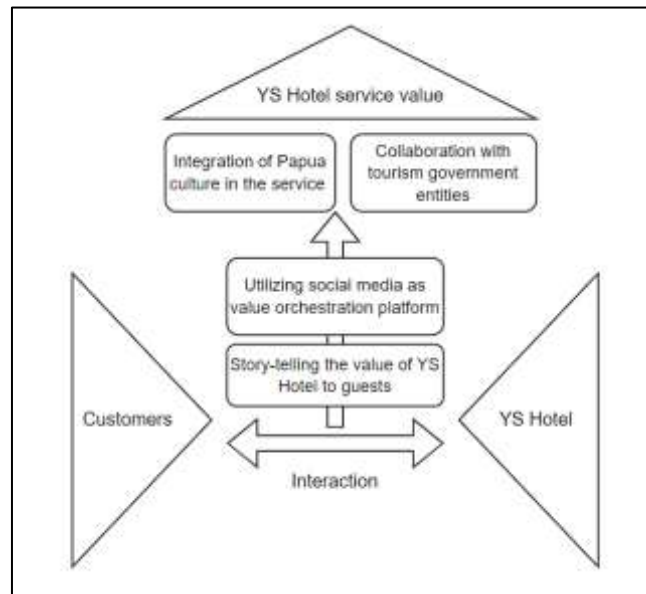


Fig. 2 Four-phase of value co-creation of YS Hotel according to the identified service quality gaps (Author, 2024)

V. CONCLUSION

This study revealed the issues in YS Hotel that hinders their ability to satisfy or perhaps, attract the market. Using the five gaps model of service quality as a benchmark in identifying the existing gaps. It has found that there are issues in each stage of service quality. In addressing the gap, value co-creation strategies are formulated because its ability to provide an adaptive solution in the dynamic nature of hospitality industry in Jayapura. It is notable that social entities perceived as dynamic, active, and creative according to Kijima, et.al., (2014), so, solutions to address this gap must be continual and involves continuous learning by providers and customers.

In conclusion, addressing the unique challenges faced by the hospitality industry in Papua, particularly the YS Hotel, requires a strategic implementation of Kijima et al.'s (2012) four-phase value co-creation model, emphasizing co-experience, co-definition, co-development, and co-elevation. It is highly recommended for YS Hotel to enhance internal and external stakeholder collaboration through co-defined identities, values, and innovative service systems. Furthermore, YS Hotel must offer unique and distinctive experiences as customer expectations heighten. To achieve this, there must be active collaboration between providers and customers. This strategic approach will enable YS Hotel to sustain long-term growth and differentiate itself in the competitive market, ultimately contributing to the advancement of Papua's tourism and cultural heritage.

There are several limitations to this study, such as the scope of the research, where it is conducted in a single hotel in Jayapura, therefore, might not represent all 3-star hotels or independent hotels in Jayapura. In terms of the method of this research, which is qualitative study, specifically in-depth interviews, may be impacted by participants' background because it is based on personal perceptions and experiences, although it is able to provide rich insights. Additionally, due to time constraints, the study primarily involved internal stakeholders. It is advisable to include larger sample size of external stakeholders, with a broader background to enhance the understanding of perspectives.

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***Corresponding Author: Kayleen Priscilia¹**
¹(School of Business Management/Institut Teknologi Bandung,Indonesia)