FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR BASHIRU SALAWU





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SOCIOLOGY AND HUMAN CHALLENGES

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PROFESSOR BASHIRU SALAWU

SOCIOLOGY AND HUMAN CHALLENGES

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY,
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CHAPTER TEN
Sociology of Trading in Nigeria: A Critical Review

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Introduction

Trading is an important socio-economic activity in Nigeria, with a long history of commercial exchange dating back to pre-colonial times (Aderinto, 2018). Trading is often organised along ethnic and regional lines, with distinct trading practices and networks across the country (Adewale, 2017). The social organisation of trading in Nigeria is characterised by family-based enterprises (Oyekanmi& Akindele, 2018) and the involvement of women in the sector (Akindele & Oyekanmi, 2018).

Government policies and regulations, as well as the influence of multinational corporations and globalisation, have also shaped trading practices in Nigeria. For example, government policies and regulations have had a significant impact on trading practices in Nigeria, particularly in terms of taxation, licensing, and regulations (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2019). Multinational corporations have also played a role in shaping trading practices in Nigeria, particularly in terms of competition and market access (Adewale, 2017). Globalisation has also had an impact on trading practices in Nigeria, particularly through the growth of e-commerce and digital technologies (Adegboyega & Oyeniyi, 2020).

Despite the important role of trading in the Nigerian economy, traders in the country face numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, security concerns, and competition from multinational corporations (Ogunleye, 2021). However, there are also opportunities for innovation and improvement in trading practices in Nigeria, particularly through entrepreneurship and emerging trading practices (Adewale, 2017).

Understanding the sociology of trading in Nigeria is critical for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners seeking to promote economic development and social progress in the country. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the historical, social, economic, and political factors shaping trading practices in Nigeria, as well as the challenges and opportunities facing traders in the country.

Conceptual Clarifications to The Meaning of Sociology of Trading

The Sociology of Trading is a field of study that examines the social and cultural factors that shape trading practices and the behaviour of traders in a particular society or culture. It involves analysing the social organisation of trading, including the roles and relationships between traders and their clients, the norms and values that guide trading practices, and the social, economic, and political factors that shape these practices (Adewale, 2017).

As an interdisciplinary field, the Sociology of Trading draws on concepts and theories from sociology, anthropology, economics, and other social sciences to examine the ways in which social factors, such as ethnicity, gender, class, and religion, influence trading practices and relationships between traders (Adewale, 2017).

In the context of Nigeria, the Sociology of Trading would involve examining the social and cultural factors that shape trading practices in the country, including the historical, social, economic, and political factors that have influenced trading practices (Aderinto, 2018). It would also involve the study of the challenges and opportunities facing traders in Nigeria and how they are adapting to changing economic and social conditions (Ogunleye, 2021).

Overview of The Sociology of Trading in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country with a vibrant and diverse economy that is largely driven by trade. Trading has been a major aspect of Nigerian culture and society since pre-colonial times and has continued to play a significant role in the country's economic development. As such, the Sociology of Trading in Nigeria is a rich and complex field of study that has attracted the attention of scholars in various disciplines.

The Sociology of Trading in Nigeria is concerned with the social and cultural factors shaping trading practices and relationships between traders and their clients. It examines the social organisation of

trading, including the roles and relationships between traders, the norms and values that guide trading practices, and the social, economic, and political factors that shape these practices.

One of the key areas of study in the Sociology of Trading in Nigeria is the historical development of trading practices in the country. Pre-colonial trading practices were largely based on informal networks and relationships between traders and were driven by factors such as ethnic affiliations, family ties, and trust (Aderinto, 2018). With the arrival of colonial powers, trading practices in Nigeria underwent significant changes as new trade routes and markets were established, and new forms of trade, such as the export of agricultural produce, were introduced (Adewale, 2017).

Another area of study in the Sociology of Trading in Nigeria is the role of social factors, such as ethnicity, gender, and religion, in shaping trading practices and relationships between traders. Studies have shown that ethnic affiliations and family ties continue to play a significant role in trading practices in Nigeria, particularly in the informal sector (Ogunleye, 2021). Gender is also an important factor, as women play a significant role in trading in Nigeria, particularly in the informal sector, although they often face significant challenges such as discrimination and lack of access to credit (Babatunde, 2020).

The Sociology of Trading in Nigeria also examines the impact of economic and political factors on trading practices in the country. For example, government policies, such as import and export regulations, can have a significant impact on trading practices and relationships between traders (Adewale, 2017). Globalisation and technological advancements have also had a significant impact on trading practices in Nigeria, particularly in the formal sector (Ogunleye, 2021).

However, the Sociology of Trading in Nigeria is a rich and complex field of study that examines the social and cultural factors that shape trading practices and relationships between traders and their clients in the country. It draws on concepts and theories from sociology, anthropology, economics, and other social sciences to explore the historical development of trading practices in Nigeria, the role of social factors in shaping these practices, and the impact of economic and political factors on trading practices in the country.

Brief Historical Account of Trading in Nigeria

Pre-colonial trading practices: Pre-colonial trading practices in Nigeria were diverse and complex, as they varied by region and ethnic group. However, some common features of pre-colonial trading in Nigeria included informal networks and relationships between traders, trading based on factors such as ethnic affiliations, family ties, and trust, and the establishment of trade routes between different regions of Nigeria and with neighbouring countries. Goods traded included local agricultural products, crafts, and textiles. Examples of pre-colonial trading networks in Nigeria include the Trans-Saharan trade, which involved the trade of gold, salt, and textiles between West Africa and North Africa, and the Benin Empire's trade in palm oil and ivory with European traders in the 16th century.

Colonial influence on trading practices: British colonialism brought significant changes to trading practices in Nigeria. New trade routes and markets were established, and new forms of trade, such as the export of agricultural produce, were introduced. British colonialism also led to the emergence of a new class of Nigerian traders who were educated and had access to new markets and resources. However, colonialism also led to the exploitation of Nigeria's natural resources and the creation of a dependent relationship between Nigeria and Britain. The colonial government established trade policies that favoured British merchants, and Nigerian traders were largely excluded from formal trading networks. One example of colonial influence on trading practices in Nigeria is the establishment of the Nigerian Railway Corporation in 1898, which facilitated the transportation of goods between different regions of Nigeria.

Post-independence trading practices: Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960 and experienced rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s. The government played a significant role in regulating trade and established state-owned trading companies to facilitate trade. For example, the Nigerian National Supply Company (NNSC) was established in 1972 to import and distribute essential goods. However, corruption and mismanagement of resources led to the decline of these state-owned trading companies. The oil boom of the 1970s also had a significant impact on trading practices in Nigeria, as the country became heavily dependent on oil exports and neglected other sectors of the economy.

However, contemporary trading practices in Nigeria continue to be shaped by historical developments. Informal trading networks and relationships continue to play a significant role in trading practices in Nigeria. For example, the Alaba International Market in Lagos, one of the largest electronics markets in Africa, is built around informal networks of traders who import and distribute electronics. Government policies and economic factors, such as import and export regulations and Globalisation, have also had a significant impact on trading practices in Nigeria. The recent closure of Nigeria's land borders with neighbouring countries in 2019, for example, had a significant impact on cross-border trade. The impact of historical developments on contemporary trading practices in Nigeria underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the country's trading practices and the factors that shape them.

Social Organisation of Trading in Nigeria

Trading as a Family Business: In Nigeria, trading is often regarded as a family business, with most businesses being passed down from generation to generation within the family. This trend is particularly common in the southern part of the country, where family ties are highly valued (Osuntokun, 1974). Family businesses are typically small in scale and involve the sale of goods at local markets. The family members involved in trading often work together to manage the business, with the older members passing on their skills and knowledge to the younger ones (Lubeck, 1987).

Gender Roles in Trading: Gender roles play a significant role in trading practices in Nigeria. Women are typically involved in trading activities that are viewed as less profitable and less risky, such as the sale of food items, while men are more likely to be involved in the sale of higher-value items such as electronics and clothing (Adepoju, 2005). Women traders often face numerous challenges such as limited access to credit, poor infrastructure, and harassment from authorities and market touts (Ojo, 2007).

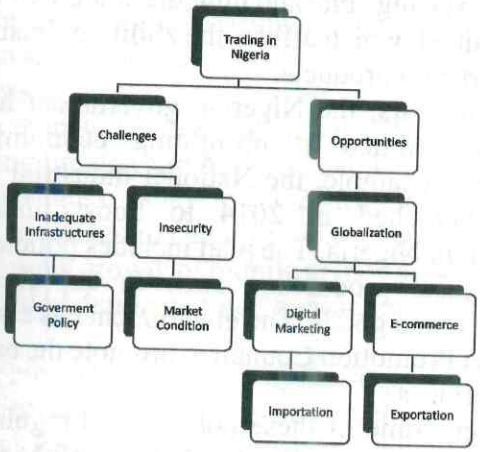
Ethnic and Regional Differences in Trading Practices: Nigeria's diverse ethnic and regional groups have different trading practices that are shaped by their cultural, historical, and economic contexts. In the northern part of the country, for example, trade is dominated by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, who are known for their long-distance

trading networks (Ibrahim, 2010). In the south, trading is more localized, with traders often focusing on the sale of goods produced in their immediate surroundings (Aiyede, 2012). Differences in trading practices have also been observed between the coastal and inland regions of the country, with coastal traders engaging more in international trade while inland traders focus on domestic trade (Osuntokun, 1974).

The Role of Social Networks in Trading: Social networks play an important role in trading activities in Nigeria. Traders often rely on informal networks of family, friends, and acquaintances to access credit, obtain market information, and negotiate with suppliers and customers (Adepoju, 2005). These networks are particularly important for small-scale traders who may not have the resources to access formal financial services. The use of social networks in trading also contributes to the formation of social capital, which can be leveraged to promote business growth and development (Lubeck, 1987).

Overall, the social Organisation of trading in Nigeria is shaped by a complex interplay of factors such as culture, history, gender, and social networks. Understanding these factors is crucial for policymakers and business owners seeking to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the country.

Model for Sociology of Trading



Source: Authors Construct 2023

Overview of Government Policies and Regulations Affecting Trading Practices

Government policies and regulations have a significant impact on trading practices in Nigeria. These policies and regulations are often put in place to protect consumers, maintain fair competition, and promote economic growth. In this section, we will explore the various policies and regulations that have affected trading practices in Nigeria.

One of the earliest government policies affecting trading practices in Nigeria was the colonial ordinance of 1891, which established a system of licensing and taxation for traders. This ordinance allowed the British colonial authorities to control and regulate trading activities, and it continued to be enforced after independence in 1960. In addition to licensing and taxation, the Nigerian government has implemented various other regulations that have affected trading practices. For example, the Nigerian Standards Organisation was established in 1971 to regulate the quality of goods and services produced and traded in Nigeria. The Organisation sets standards for products and services, and it also carries out inspections to ensure that businesses comply with these standards.

Another important policy affecting trading practices in Nigeria is the Foreign Exchange Act of 1995. This act allows the Nigerian government to regulate the foreign exchange market, which has a significant impact on import and export businesses. The government can control the exchange rate and limit the amount of foreign currency that can be obtained, which affects the ability of businesses to import goods and export their products.

In recent years, the Nigerian government has implemented various policies aimed at promoting economic growth and development. For example, the National Industrial Revolution Plan (NIRP) was launched in 2014 to boost manufacturing and industrialization in Nigeria. The plan includes policies and incentives to encourage local production, such as tax breaks and import restrictions on certain goods. The government has also established the Nigerian Export Promotion Council to promote the export of Nigerian products and services.

However, some of these policies and regulations have been criticized for being ineffective or even harmful to businesses. For example, import restrictions can limit access to necessary raw

materials, while excessive taxation can make it difficult for businesses to remain profitable. In addition, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies can undermine the effectiveness of government policies and regulations.

Hence, government policies and regulations have a significant impact on trading practices in Nigeria. While some policies have been successful in promoting economic growth and protecting consumers, others have been criticized for being ineffective or harmful to businesses. It is important for policymakers to consider the needs of businesses and consumers when implementing regulations, and to address issues such as corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies that can undermine the effectiveness of these policies.

The Role of Technology in Trading Practices in Nigeria

The role of technology in enhancing trading practices in Nigeria has become increasingly important in recent years, as digital advancements have revolutionized the way business is conducted. Technology has provided new avenues for trading, increased efficiency, and facilitated access to larger markets.

One area where technology has had a significant impact is in the area of e-commerce. According to a report by the Nigerian Communications Commission, e-commerce has grown rapidly in Nigeria, with an estimated value of $13 billion in 2018. This growth has been facilitated by the increasing availability of mobile devices and internet access, which has allowed for easier online transactions and market access.

Mobile money services have also played a key role in enhancing trading practices in Nigeria. The Central Bank of Nigeria introduced the cashless policy in 2012, which aimed to reduce the amount of cash in circulation and promote electronic payments. This policy led to the rapid growth of mobile money services in the country, which has allowed traders to conduct transactions more efficiently and securely.

Another area where technology has impacted trading practices is in the area of supply chain management. The use of digital technologies such as radio-frequency identification (RFID) and global positioning systems (GPS) has enabled traders to track the movement of goods from the point of origin to the point of sale. This has facilitated

better inventory management and reduced losses due to theft or spoilage.

The role of social media in trading practices cannot be overlooked. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have provided a new avenue for traders to market their products and reach a wider audience. Many traders in Nigeria have taken advantage of these platforms to showcase their products and attract new customers.

However, there are still challenges to the adoption of technology in trading practices in Nigeria. The cost of acquiring and maintaining technology can be prohibitive for small-scale traders, and there are still issues with internet access and connectivity in some parts of the country. Furthermore, there are concerns about cybersecurity and the protection of sensitive financial information.

Indeed, technology has had a significant impact on trading practices in Nigeria, providing new opportunities for growth and efficiency. The continued adoption and integration of digital technologies in the trading sector will be crucial for the development of the Nigerian economy.

Challenges Facing Traders in Nigeria

Traders in Nigeria face a number of challenges that impact their ability to conduct business and achieve profitability. These challenges include infrastructure deficits, security issues, competition, and the impact of environmental factors.

Infrastructure challenges are a major concern for traders in Nigeria. The country's infrastructure deficit is well-documented, and traders are particularly affected by inadequate transportation systems, poor roads, and lack of access to electricity. These challenges increase the cost of doing business, reduce the efficiency of operations, and make it difficult to transport goods to market. The impact of infrastructure deficits on trading practices in Nigeria is well documented in academic literature. For instance, Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2019) highlighted the impact of inadequate transportation systems on traders in Nigeria, which leads to high logistics costs and negatively affects the profitability of traders.

Security is another major challenge facing traders in Nigeria. The country has been grappling with insecurity issues for many years,

including kidnapping, terrorism, and robbery. These issues affect traders' ability to move goods to market and to conduct transactions safely. The impact of insecurity on trading practices in Nigeria is widely reported in academic literature. For instance, Akinlo and Afolabi (2018) noted that insecurity negatively affects the profitability of traders in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern regions of the country.

Competition is also a significant challenge for traders in Nigeria. Traders face stiff competition from both local and international traders, which impacts their ability to achieve profitability. The impact of competition on trading practices in Nigeria is well documented in academic literature. For instance, Okorie and Okoye (2018) noted that competition leads to reduced profit margins for traders in Nigeria, particularly for those in the retail sector.

Environmental factors such as climate change, natural disasters, and weather patterns also impact trading practices in Nigeria. These factors can lead to loss of goods, damage to infrastructure, and disruptions to supply chains. The impact of environmental factors on trading practices in Nigeria is widely reported in academic literature. For instance, Oluwole and Akinleye (2020) highlighted the impact of flooding on traders in Nigeria, which leads to the loss of goods and damage to infrastructure.

Therefore, traders in Nigeria face significant challenges that impact their ability to conduct business and achieve profitability. Infrastructure deficits, security issues, competition, and the impact of environmental factors all pose significant challenges for traders. These challenges have been extensively studied and reported on in academic literature and will require concerted efforts by both the government and traders themselves to address.

Opportunities for Improving Trading Practices in Nigeria

Despite the challenges facing traders in Nigeria, there are also significant opportunities for improving trading practices and achieving greater profitability. Some of the opportunities for improvement include the following:

Leveraging technology: Technology offers significant opportunities for improving trading practices in Nigeria. The use of e-commerce platforms, mobile money, and digital payment systems can

including kidnapping, terrorism, and robbery. These issues affect traders' ability to move goods to market and to conduct transactions safely. The impact of insecurity on trading practices in Nigeria is widely reported in academic literature. For instance, Akinlo and Afolabi (2018) noted that insecurity negatively affects the profitability of traders in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern regions of the country.

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Leveraging technology: Technology offers significant opportunities for improving trading practices in Nigeria. The use of e-commerce platforms, mobile money, and digital payment systems can

streamline operations, reduce costs, and expand market reach. The potential of technology to transform trading practices in Nigeria has been documented in several studies. For instance, Adekunle and Adeleke (2020) highlighted the potential of e-commerce platforms to improve market access for small traders in Nigeria.

Improving infrastructure: Addressing infrastructure deficits is critical for improving trading practices in Nigeria. Investments in transportation systems, electricity, and other forms of infrastructure can reduce the cost of doing business, increase efficiency, and expand market reach. The impact of infrastructure investments on trading practices in Nigeria has been documented in several studies. For instance, Alao and Oketola (2020) noted that improvements in transportation infrastructure can significantly reduce logistics costs for traders in Nigeria.

Strengthening market linkages: Improved market linkages can help traders in Nigeria to access new markets and expand their customer base. This can be achieved through partnerships, collaborations, and networking. The importance of market linkages for trading practices in Nigeria has been highlighted in several studies. For instance, Adekunle and Adeleke (2020) noted that partnerships between traders and e-commerce platforms can help traders to access new markets and expand their customer base.

Enhancing skills and knowledge: Improving the skills and knowledge of traders can help to enhance trading practices in Nigeria. This can be achieved through training, capacity building, and education. The impact of skills and knowledge on trading practices in Nigeria has been documented in several studies. For instance, Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2019) noted that training and capacity-building programs can help traders to improve their marketing skills and enhance their profitability.

Government support: The Nigerian government can also play a critical role in improving trading practices by providing support in the form of policies, regulations, and incentives. This can include investments in infrastructure, provision of credit facilities, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises. The impact of government support on trading practices in Nigeria has been documented in several studies. For instance, Onyeka and Anyanwu (2021) noted that

government policies and programs can help to improve the competitiveness of traders in Nigeria.

In this regard, there are several opportunities for improving trading practices in Nigeria. Leveraging technology, improving infrastructure, strengthening market linkages, enhancing skills and knowledge, and government support are all critical for achieving greater profitability and expanding market reach. These opportunities have been widely studied and documented in academic literature, and require concerted efforts by both the government and traders themselves to realize their potential.

Recommendations for Improving Trading Practices in Nigeria

Based on the challenges and opportunities outlined earlier, there are several recommendations for improving trading practices in Nigeria. These include the following:

Encouraging the adoption of technology: There is a need for increased adoption of technology by traders in Nigeria to improve their competitiveness and profitability. Government and private sector initiatives can promote the use of e-commerce platforms, digital payment systems, and mobile money to streamline operations and improve market access. Adekunle and Adeleke (2020) recommended that the Nigerian government should provide incentives for small traders to adopt e-commerce platforms and other digital technologies.

Addressing infrastructure deficits: Infrastructure deficits in Nigeria pose significant challenges for traders. Addressing these deficits requires increased investment in transportation systems, electricity, and other forms of infrastructure. The Nigerian government can play a key role in addressing these deficits through investments in critical infrastructure. Alao and Oketola (2020) recommended that the Nigerian government should prioritize investment in transportation infrastructure to reduce logistics costs for traders.

Strengthening market linkages: Traders in Nigeria need to have access to new markets to expand their customer base and increase profitability. Partnerships, collaborations, and networking can help traders to achieve this. The Nigerian government can support these efforts through the establishment of trade promotion programs and platforms. Adekunle and Adeleke (2020) recommended that the

Nigerian government should establish partnerships with e-commerce platforms to provide small traders with access to new markets.

Providing training and capacity building: Traders in Nigeria need to improve their skills and knowledge to compete effectively in the market. Training and capacity-building programs can help traders to improve their marketing skills, financial management, and other critical competencies. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2019) recommended that the Nigerian government should provide training and capacity-building programs for traders to enhance their profitability and competitiveness.

Promoting government support: The Nigerian government can provide critical support for traders through policies, regulations, and incentives. Government policies can reduce the cost of doing business, provide credit facilities, and support small and medium-sized enterprises. Onyeka and Anyanwu (2021) recommended that the Nigerian government should provide credit facilities and tax incentives to traders to improve their competitiveness.

However, improving trading practices in Nigeria requires a concerted effort by traders and the government. Encouraging the adoption of technology, addressing infrastructure deficits, strengthening market linkages, providing training and capacity building, and promoting government support is critical for achieving this goal. These recommendations have been widely documented in academic literature and require sustained efforts by all stakeholders to achieve meaningful impact.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the sociology of trading in Nigeria is a multifaceted and complex topic that requires a deep understanding of the historical, social, economic, and political context within which trading practices take place. This paper has examined various aspects of the sociology of trading in Nigeria, including historical practices, social Organisation, government policies, challenges facing traders, opportunities for improvement, and recommendations for enhancing trading practices.

The paper has highlighted the critical role of trading in Nigeria's economy, its importance for the livelihoods of millions of Nigerians, and the challenges facing traders in Nigeria. These challenges range from infrastructure deficits, security issues,

competition, and the impact of environmental factors on trading practices. However, there are also numerous opportunities for improving trading practices in Nigeria, including the adoption of technology, strengthening market linkages, and providing training and capacity building.

Overall, this paper underscores the importance of collaboration between traders, the government, and other stakeholders in improving trading practices in Nigeria. The recommendations provided in this paper can serve as a guide for policymakers, traders, and other stakeholders in enhancing the efficiency, competitiveness, and profitability of trading practices in Nigeria.

Implications for Future Research

The study of the sociology of trading in Nigeria presents a vast area for future research. This paper has highlighted various aspects of trading practices in Nigeria, including historical practices, social Organisation, government policies, challenges, and opportunities. However, there are still gaps in knowledge that require further investigation to enhance our understanding of the topic.

One area for future research is to examine the role of culture and religion in shaping trading practices in Nigeria. Cultural and religious beliefs have a significant influence on social Organisation, gender roles, and trading practices. Understanding how cultural and religious factors affect trading practices could provide insights into why certain practices are more prevalent in some regions than others.

Another area for future research is the impact of Globalisation on trading practices in Nigeria. The advent of Globalisation has brought about new opportunities and challenges for trading practices. An investigation into how Globalisation affects trading practices could provide insights into the adaptation strategies of traders in response to global trends.

Furthermore, research into the potential impact of emerging technologies, such as blockchain, on trading practices could provide insights into how technology can enhance trading practices in Nigeria. This could include examining the feasibility of blockchain for improving supply chain transparency, reducing transaction costs, and enhancing trust between traders.

Finally, research into the impact of government policies and regulations on trading practices in Nigeria could provide insights into how policymakers can improve the business environment for traders. This could include examining the impact of policies on market competition, infrastructure development, and the ease of doing business in Nigeria.

In conclusion, the sociology of trading in Nigeria presents a vast area for future research. Investigating the areas highlighted in this paper could provide insights into how trading practices can be improved, how traders can be supported, and how policymakers can create an enabling environment for trading practices in Nigeria.

Model of Sociology of Trading

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