

The Role of Purchase Decisions in Mediating the Effect of Service Quality and Price Perception on Customer Loyalty

I Kadek Wira Adijaya¹, Luh Komang Candra Dewi², Saortua Marbun³
^{1,2,3}Triatma Mulya University, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the effect of service quality and price perception on customer loyalty, both directly and through purchase decision as a mediating variable, at Apotek Nusa Raya located in Kerobokan Kaja, Kuta Utara, Badung, Bali. **Method:** This research employs a quantitative approach, with the population consisting of all customers who had made at least one purchase within the past six months. The sample was determined using a non-probability sampling technique through the purposive sampling method, involving 100 respondents who met the criteria of having transacted directly at Apotek Nusa Raya. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the assistance of SmartPLS software. **Results:** The results show that service quality and price perception have a positive and significant effect on both purchase decision and customer loyalty. Purchase decision was also found to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, and to partially mediate the effects of service quality and price perception on customer loyalty. The R-square values show that 69.1% of the variance in purchase decision can be explained by service quality and price perception, while 78.4% of the variance in customer loyalty can be explained by these three variables combined, indicating that the research model has strong explanatory power. **Novelty:** These findings imply that improving service quality and shaping favorable price perceptions, together with strengthening the purchase decision process, are essential strategies for Apotek Nusa Raya in sustaining and enhancing customer loyalty amid increasingly competitive pharmaceutical business conditions.

INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of healthcare service business management, high-quality service not only influences customer satisfaction but also contributes to the development of customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is a crucial factor for the sustainability of pharmacy businesses, as loyal customers tend to make repeat purchases and provide positive recommendations to others. Service quality is one of the factors influencing customer loyalty. It serves as a key strategy for attracting new customers, retaining existing ones, reducing customer churn, and establishing a competitive advantage. Prior research suggests that service quality has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty, mediated by purchasing decisions. Other research indicates that service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6].

Apotek Nusa Raya serves as a relevant case study for examining the relationships among service quality, price perception, purchasing decisions, and customer loyalty. As a healthcare facility, Apotek Nusa Raya caters to the community's health needs by dispensing both prescription and non-prescription medications. The pharmacy is located at Jalan Perum Dalung Permai No. 43, Kerobokan Kaja, North Kuta, Badung, Bali. Its location within a residential area and proximity to educational facilities ensure easy

access for the public to obtain healthcare services. Operating under the Government of the Republic of Indonesia's operational license number 1221000202341, Apotek Nusa Raya functions as a provider of pharmaceutical services dedicated to meeting the community's needs.

Service quality is considered one of the factors influencing customer loyalty. To obtain an initial overview of the service at Apotek Nusa Raya, a preliminary survey was conducted with 30 respondents who had made purchases, assessing five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy [7].

Table 1. Preliminary Survey on Service Quality Assessment at Nusa Raya Pharmacy

Dimensi	Persentase (%)	Kriteria
<i>Tangibles</i>	81	Strongly agree
<i>Reliability</i>	79	Agree
<i>Responsiveness</i>	77	Agree
<i>Assurance</i>	80	Strongly agree
<i>Empathy</i>	83	Strongly agree
Total	80	Strongly agree

Source: Results of a survey conducted by the researcher(s)

Based on the preliminary survey results presented in the table above – involving 30 respondents at Nusa Raya Pharmacy – it is evident that customers generally rate the service provided by the pharmacy positively. The "empathy" dimension received the highest rating, with 83% of respondents indicating "strongly agree"; this suggests that customers perceive the staff as attentive, caring, and friendly during service delivery. Additionally, the "tangibles" dimension scored 81% and the "assurance" dimension 80%, indicating that respondents rated the pharmacy's physical condition, staff appearance, and the staff's ability to instill a sense of security and trust very highly.

Empirical observations at Nusa Raya Pharmacy suggest that customer loyalty has not yet been optimally established, as evidenced by fluctuating repurchase rates, varied perceptions of service quality, and price differences compared to nearby pharmacies. However, the relationships between these variables require scientific validation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the impact of service quality and price perception on customer loyalty, with purchasing decisions serving as a mediating variable at Nusa Raya Pharmacy. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the study of service marketing and provide practical insights for pharmacy management in formulating strategies to enhance customer loyalty [8], [9], [10].

RESEARCH METHOD

Customer loyalty is a state in which consumers are committed to consistently using, repurchasing, and recommending a product or service over the long term. Previous research reports that service quality has a positive and significant impact on

customer loyalty, as good service enhances customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment to maintaining a long-term relationship with the company [11], [12], [13].

Based on the conducted study, service quality (X1) and price perception (X2) are assumed to have both direct and indirect effects on customer loyalty (Y). Purchase decision (Z) acts as a mediating variable that bridges this relationship.

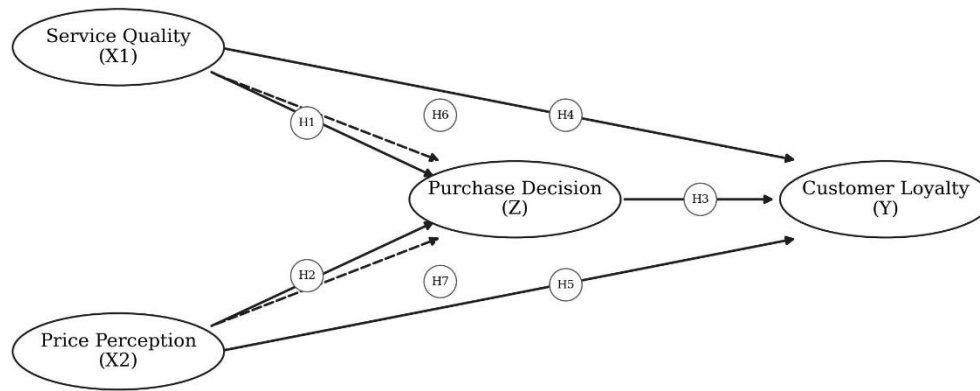


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

H1: Service quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

H2: Price perception has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

H3: Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty.

H4: Price perception has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty.

H5: Purchase decisions have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty.

H6: Purchase decisions mediate the effect of service quality on customer loyalty.

H7: Purchase decisions mediate the effect of price perception on customer loyalty.

The population for this study consists of all customers who have made a purchase at Apotek Nusa Raya – located at Jl. Perum Dalung Permai No. 43, Kerobokan Kaja, Kuta Utara, Badung, Bali – at least once during the past six months.

The sampling technique employed was non-probability sampling using the purposive sampling method – a technique where the sample is selected based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. Respondents were selected based on the following criteria: customers who had conducted at least one in-person transaction at Apotek Nusa Raya and were willing to complete an online questionnaire [14].

The sample size was determined based on the minimum requirement for PLS-SEM analysis – specifically, 5 to 10 times the number of indicators in the largest construct within the research model (a common rule of thumb). Consequently, given a total of 17 indicators across the variables, the recommended minimum sample size ranged from 85 to 170 respondents; this study utilized a sample of 100 respondents [15].

The data analysis technique employed in this study is Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is suitable for explanatory research

involving mediation models and complex indicators. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software [15].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Apotek Nusa Raya is a rapidly growing local pharmacy chain in Bali. It is a trusted provider of pharmaceutical services, catering to needs for medications, medical supplies, and pharmaceutical product management in the Badung and Gianyar areas. The chain operates two main branches: Dalung and Batubulan. The Dalung branch is located at Jalan Perum Dalung Permai No. 43, Kerobokan Kaja, Badung. Apotek Nusa Raya is also known for its active participation in pharmacy education, frequently serving as a site for field training or internships for pharmacy students from local universities, such as Udayana University.

The respondent characteristics presented in Table 5 indicate that, among the customers demonstrating loyalty to Nusa Raya Pharmacy, 44 (44%) were male and 56 (56%) were female. This signifies that the majority of customers who have transacted at Nusa Raya Pharmacy are female.

The predominance of respondents in the 24–29 age group indicates that this demographic constitutes the customer segment that most frequently makes purchases at Apotek Nusa Raya. Young adults generally possess high mobility, greater health awareness, and relatively stable financial standing, making them more active in purchasing pharmaceutical products and health-related items. Furthermore, customers in this age range tend to place greater emphasis on service quality and are more sensitive to the balance between price and the benefits received. These factors influence purchasing decisions, which in turn play a role in fostering customer loyalty.

The fact that the respondent pool is dominated by individuals of working age suggests that the study's findings—regarding the impact of service quality and price perception on customer loyalty via purchasing decisions—largely reflect the perspectives of young adults, who serve as Apotek Nusa Raya's primary consumer group. Consequently, consistently improving service quality and setting prices perceived as fair and competitive are expected to drive stronger purchasing decisions and, ultimately, enhance customer loyalty.

In the context of this study, the frequency of repeat purchases can also serve as an early indicator of customer loyalty. Customers who make more than one purchase have generally experienced the benefits of the service provided and perceive the offered price as commensurate with the value received. Therefore, the higher the service quality and the more positive the customer's perception of the price, the greater the likelihood that the customer will decide to make a repeat purchase and ultimately become a loyal customer.

The prevalence of non-prescription medication purchases indicates that the majority of customers visit Apotek Nusa Raya to address minor health needs—such as buying vitamins, supplements, cold and fever remedies, or other over-the-counter health

products. This suggests that customer purchasing decisions are largely driven by their direct experiences during interactions with the pharmacy, including staff friendliness, service speed, product availability, shopping convenience, and the suitability of the prices offered.

In contrast, customers purchasing prescription medications—or a combination of prescription and non-prescription drugs—tend to have more specific health requirements. This group generally places greater emphasis on service precision, the accuracy of medication information, and the professionalism of the pharmacy staff. Consequently, service quality is a crucial factor in building customer trust, while a perception of reasonable pricing can reinforce purchasing decisions.

Discussion

The Influence of Service Quality on Purchase Decisions

The analysis results indicate that service quality has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions. This implies that higher service quality at Apotek Nusa Raya leads to an increase in purchasing decisions; conversely, lower service quality results in a decline in purchasing decisions [16], [17], [18].

These findings suggest that the values inherent in the service quality are effectively perceived and have a tangible impact on purchasing decisions at Apotek Nusa Raya. Service quality was measured using five indicators: tangibles (physical evidence), reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Collectively, these five indicators shape customer perceptions of the service quality provided by Apotek Nusa Raya, thereby demonstrating their ability to boost purchasing decisions [19], [20], [21].

Based on the descriptive analysis, the empathy indicator received the highest mean score of 4.06, indicating that customers feel Apotek Nusa Raya staff provide personal attention, understand customer needs, and deliver service in a friendly and caring manner. Furthermore, the assurance indicator obtained a mean score of 3.98, reflecting customer confidence in the staff's competence, knowledge, and ability to provide services and information regarding medications. The responsiveness indicator also received a positive rating with a mean of 3.91, indicating that staff are perceived as quick and responsive in addressing customer needs.

Meanwhile, the reliability indicator achieved an average score of 3.83, indicating that customers perceived the service provided as consistent, accurate, and aligned with their expectations. Conversely, the tangibles indicator recorded the lowest average score at 3.45. Although still within the "good" category, this result suggests that customers desire improvements regarding physical facilities—such as the comfort of the service area, pharmacy cleanliness, product display, and the adequacy of supporting amenities.

These findings indicate that customers of Apotek Nusa Raya evaluate service quality not only based on physical aspects but also place great importance on the staff's attitude and behavior during service delivery. Friendly, fast, and professional service that instills a sense of security fosters a positive shopping experience. Such positive experiences encourage repeat purchases and recommendations to others, thereby driving an increase in purchasing decisions.

These results align with the SERVQUAL framework, which posits that service quality is a customer's assessment of a service's excellence based on the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Higher perceived service quality leads to greater customer satisfaction and loyalty [7].

The findings are consistent with research indicating that service quality has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions in the health retail sector. Additional research suggests that fast, friendly, and trustworthy service boosts purchasing decisions by creating a satisfying shopping experience and encouraging repeat purchases [22], [23], [24].

Thus, these findings reinforce the conclusion that enhancing service quality is a crucial strategy for Apotek Nusa Raya in driving purchasing decisions. Consequently, the pharmacy should maintain its strengths in empathy, assurance, and responsiveness while improving the tangibles aspect—through more comfortable facilities, attractive layout, and comprehensive service amenities—to further enhance the customer experience and continue increasing purchasing decisions.

The Influence of Price Perceptions on Purchasing Decisions

The analysis results indicate that price perception has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions. This implies that a more favorable perception of Apotek Nusa Raya's pricing leads to a higher likelihood of purchasing decisions being made at the pharmacy. Conversely, a less favorable perception results in fewer purchasing decisions [25], [26], [27].

These findings suggest that the values inherent in price perception are effectively perceived and have a tangible impact on purchasing decisions at Apotek Nusa Raya. Price perception—measured by four indicators: price affordability, price competitiveness, the alignment of price with product quality, and the alignment of price with benefits received—was proven to drive purchasing decisions at the pharmacy. Collectively, these four indicators shape customer assessments regarding the fairness of the prices set by Apotek Nusa Raya [28], [29], [30].

Based on the descriptive analysis, the indicator for the alignment of price with benefits received achieved the highest mean score of 3.97. This indicates that customers perceive the price paid as commensurate with the benefits received, regarding both product quality and the service provided. Furthermore, the indicator for the alignment of price with product quality obtained a mean score of 3.91, showing that customers consider the offered prices to be in line with the quality of the medicines and health products available at Apotek Nusa Raya.

Meanwhile, the price competitiveness indicator scored an average of 3.82, and the price affordability indicator scored 3.81. Although both remain within the "good" category, these results suggest that customers still compare Apotek Nusa Raya's prices with those of other pharmacies before making a purchase. Therefore, maintaining competitive pricing without compromising service quality is crucial for sustaining purchasing decisions.

These findings demonstrate that purchasing decisions are not driven merely by low prices, but rather by the perception that the price paid is fair, reasonable, and commensurate with the quality of the products and services received. When customers feel they are receiving value commensurate with the cost incurred, they experience satisfaction, are willing to make repeat purchases, and are likely to recommend Nusa Raya Pharmacy to others. Conversely, if customers perceive the price as too high and not commensurate with the benefits received, their inclination to shop there again diminishes, thereby reducing the likelihood of a purchase decision [31], [32].

The results of this study align with the perceived value perspective, which posits that a customer's perception of price is formed by comparing the benefits received against the costs incurred. The higher the value perceived by the customer, the greater the likelihood that they will remain loyal to the products or services offered [33], [34].

Furthermore, these findings are consistent with research indicating that positive price perception significantly influences purchasing decisions; customers tend to maintain relationships with companies that offer prices perceived as fair and providing appropriate value. Other studies suggest that a favorable price perception enhances customer satisfaction, ultimately driving purchasing decisions [35], [36].

Thus, the study confirms that price perception is a crucial factor in shaping purchasing decisions at Apotek Nusa Raya. Consequently, the pharmacy needs to maintain a pricing policy that is competitive, transparent, and commensurate with the quality of products and services provided. Additionally, Apotek Nusa Raya should offer added value through professional service, comprehensive product availability, and attractive promotional programs to reinforce the customer's belief that the price paid is commensurate with the benefits received, thereby fostering continued growth in purchasing decisions.

The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty

The analysis results indicate that service quality has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty. This implies that higher service quality at Apotek Nusa Raya leads to increased customer loyalty; conversely, lower service quality results in decreased customer loyalty [37], [38], [39].

These findings suggest that the values inherent in the service quality are well-perceived and have a tangible impact on customer loyalty at Apotek Nusa Raya. Service quality was measured using five indicators: tangibles (physical evidence), reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Collectively, these five indicators shape customer perceptions of the service quality provided by Apotek Nusa Raya and have been proven to enhance customer loyalty [40], [41], [42].

Based on the descriptive analysis, the empathy indicator received the highest average score of 4.06, indicating that customers feel Apotek Nusa Raya staff provide personal attention, understand customer needs, and serve with friendliness and care. Next, the assurance indicator obtained an average score of 3.98, reflecting customer confidence in the staff's competence, knowledge, and ability to provide services and information regarding medications. The responsiveness indicator also received a positive

rating with an average of 3.91, indicating that staff are perceived as quick and responsive in addressing customer needs.

Meanwhile, the reliability indicator achieved an average of 3.83, showing that customers perceive the service provided as consistent, accurate, and aligned with expectations. The tangibles indicator received the lowest average score of 3.45. Although still within the "good" category, this result indicates that customers desire improvements in physical facilities—such as the comfort of the service area, the cleanliness of the pharmacy environment, product layout, and the adequacy of supporting facilities.

These findings demonstrate that Apotek Nusa Raya customers evaluate service quality not only based on physical aspects but also place great importance on the staff's attitude and behavior during service delivery. Service that is friendly, fast, and professional—and that instills a sense of security in customers—creates a positive shopping experience. Such positive experiences encourage customers to make repeat purchases and recommend Apotek Nusa Raya to others, thereby fostering greater customer loyalty.

These research findings align with the SERVQUAL framework, which posits that service quality is a customer's assessment of a service's excellence based on the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The higher the service quality perceived by the customer, the greater the resulting satisfaction and loyalty [7].

The Influence of Price Perception on Customer Loyalty

The analysis results indicate that price perception has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. This implies that a more favorable perception of the prices at Apotek Nusa Raya leads to higher customer loyalty; conversely, a less favorable price perception results in diminished customer loyalty [43], [44], [45].

These findings suggest that the values inherent in price perception are effectively perceived and have a tangible impact on customer loyalty at Apotek Nusa Raya. Price perception—measured by four indicators: price affordability, price competitiveness, the alignment of price with product quality, and the alignment of price with benefits received—was proven to enhance customer loyalty at Apotek Nusa Raya. Collectively, these four indicators shape the customer's assessment of the fairness of the prices set by the pharmacy [46], [47], [48].

Based on the descriptive analysis, the indicator regarding the alignment of price with benefits received achieved the highest mean score of 3.97. This result indicates that customers perceive the price paid as commensurate with the benefits received, considering both product quality and the service provided. Furthermore, the indicator regarding the alignment of price with product quality obtained a mean score of 3.91, indicating that customers consider the offered prices to be in line with the quality of the medicines and health products available at Apotek Nusa Raya.

Meanwhile, the price competitiveness indicator obtained an average value of 3.82, while the price affordability indicator obtained an average value of 3.81. Even though both are still in the good category, these results show that customers still compare Nusa

Raya Pharmacy prices with other pharmacies before making a purchase. Therefore, keeping prices competitive without reducing service quality is an important aspect in maintaining customer loyalty.

These findings show that customer loyalty is not only influenced by cheap prices, but is more influenced by the perception that the price paid is fair, reasonable and commensurate with the quality of the product and service received. When customers feel they have received value for the sacrifices they have made, they will feel satisfied, are willing to make repeat purchases, and tend to recommend Nusa Raya Pharmacy to others. On the other hand, if customers feel that the price set is too high and not commensurate with the benefits obtained, then their desire to shop again will decrease so that customer loyalty will also decrease [49], [50].

The Influence of Purchase Decisions on Customer Loyalty

The analysis results indicate that purchase decisions have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. This implies that a higher level of customer purchase decisions at Apotek Nusa Raya corresponds to a higher level of customer loyalty to the pharmacy. Conversely, lower levels of purchase decisions result in reduced customer loyalty [7], [51], [52].

These results indicate that the values inherent in purchase decisions are well-perceived and have a tangible impact on customer loyalty at Apotek Nusa Raya. The purchase decision – measured by four indicators: the need for the product, the desire to seek information, confidence in the purchase, and the act of purchasing itself – was proven to enhance customer loyalty at Apotek Nusa Raya [53], [54].

Based on the descriptive analysis, the purchase decision indicator (Z4) achieved the highest mean score of 3.92, demonstrating that customers possess strong confidence in choosing and purchasing from Apotek Nusa Raya. Furthermore, the indicator for confidence in the purchase (Z3) obtained a mean of 3.90, indicating that customers feel assured in their purchasing choices and are unlikely to switch to other providers.

The product need indicator (Z1) obtained a mean of 3.89, showing that the products available at Apotek Nusa Raya effectively meet customers' health needs. Meanwhile, the information-seeking desire indicator (Z2) obtained the lowest mean score of 3.85, although it still fell within the "good" category. This result suggests that some customers do not extensively seek additional information before purchasing because they already trust the products and services offered by Apotek Nusa Raya.

These findings demonstrate that customers who are confident in the products, prices, and services provided find it easier to make purchasing decisions. Strong purchase decisions subsequently encourage customers to make repeat purchases consistently. In other words, customers who feel their purchase decision was the right one tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction and, ultimately, become more loyal to Apotek Nusa Raya [12].

The Role of Purchase Decisions in Mediating the Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty

The analysis results indicate that purchase decisions positively mediate the indirect effect of service quality on customer loyalty, acting as a partial mediator in this study. These findings imply that higher service quality at Apotek Nusa Raya boosts customer purchase decisions, ultimately leading to increased customer loyalty. These findings are consistent with earlier research on service quality and loyalty. The findings also confirm that purchase decisions mediate the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. Other research has suggested that service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty through purchase decisions. The results of this study show a t-statistic of 8.108, exceeding the t-table value of 1.659; in other words, purchase decisions mediate the impact of service quality on customer loyalty. Higher service quality leads to higher consumer purchase decisions and, consequently, higher customer loyalty. Consumers who trust the quality of service are more likely to make a purchase [2], [11].

The Role of Price Perception in Mediating the Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty

The analysis results indicate that purchase decisions positively mediate the indirect effect of price perception on customer loyalty, acting as a partial mediator in this study. These results imply that higher price perception can boost purchase decisions, ultimately leading to increased customer loyalty at Apotek Nusa Raya. Previous research has considered purchase decisions as a mediating variable between price perception and customer loyalty. Other findings suggest that price perception positively influences customer loyalty through purchase decisions; that study demonstrated that customers who perceive prices as fair and commensurate with product quality are more confident in making purchase decisions, thereby enhancing loyalty. Furthermore, earlier research suggests that positive price perception drives purchase decisions, which in turn contribute to building customer loyalty [2], [27], [28].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : Service quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions at Nusa Raya Pharmacy. Price perception has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions at Nusa Raya Pharmacy. Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at Nusa Raya Pharmacy. Price perception has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at Nusa Raya Pharmacy. Purchasing decisions have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at Nusa Raya Pharmacy. Purchasing decisions partially mediate the effect of service quality on customer loyalty. Purchasing decisions partially mediate the effect of price perception on customer loyalty. **Implication :** This indicates that quality service boosts customer confidence when deciding to purchase products at Nusa Raya Pharmacy. This indicates that service quality can enhance customer loyalty both directly

and by influencing purchasing decisions. This indicates that a favorable price perception boosts purchasing decisions, which in turn strengthens customer loyalty toward Nusa Raya Pharmacy. **Limitation** : The conclusions concern customers of Nusa Raya Pharmacy; their applicability to other pharmacies has not been established. **Future Research** : Future studies could examine whether these relationships also hold across other pharmacies and customer groups.

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I Kadek Wira Adijaya

Triatma Mulya University, Indonesia

Luh Komang Candra Dewi

Triatma Mulya University, Indonesia

Saortua Marbun

Triatma Mulya University, Indonesia
