



Wardah's 'halal' marketing as a repurchase attraction: A phenomenological study on wardah users

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ABSTRACT

Background: Wardah is a cosmetic brand that employs “halal” branding as its primary marketing strategy. This approach contributes to the broader halal industry and ecosystem in Indonesia. The aim of this study is to explore how halal marketing strategies influence consumer repurchase decisions. **Methods:** This study applies a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods. Data were collected through in-depth interviews to understand consumer perceptions and experiences. **Findings:** The results indicate that halal branding helps position the brand as a preferred choice, particularly among Muslim consumers. However, the halal label alone is not a decisive factor in consumers' decisions to repurchase the product. **Conclusion:** Halal marketing plays a significant role in initial consumer attraction, but repurchase decisions are influenced by other factors such as product quality and user satisfaction. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This study highlights the nuanced role of halal branding in consumer behavior, offering new insights into the limits of religious-based marketing in fostering long-term customer loyalty.

KEYWORDS: branding; halal ecosystem; halal marketing; repurchase; wardah.

1. Introduction

The halal industry issue is currently becoming a global trend. In fact, it has become a lifestyle for the Muslim world. The 2019 Global Muslim Travel Index has released a statement that "The Republic of Indonesia is the global center of the halal industry," with halal tourism ranked first and Muslim fashion models ranked second. Their statement implies that the increasing awareness of Indonesian Muslims, particularly the Indonesian Muslim community, and Muslims around the world, is growing.

In general, the significance of the halal issue in their lives has been influenced by the booming halal industry across various sectors (CrescentRating, 2019). The halal industry has experienced rapid growth. The momentum of the halal industry is not limited to the food and beverage industry but has expanded into sectors such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, tourism and culture, logistics, finance, and others. According to Islamic law, halal means permissible, which implies that only what is good and clean can be consumed by Muslims. Here, Muslims as consumers play a crucial role, and due to their increased awareness, they have shown a rising preference for halal products. This aligns with the

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findings of a study titled "The Impact of Labeling and Packaging on Teenage Consumer Behavior with Brand Image Mediation". In relation to this, it is important to highlight that consumers are the most valuable asset in the trade industry, and they are the target for every industry. This is because they are the ones who will use and purchase these products. The profits are expected to be achieved by every business from the purchases made by consumers. Considering Indonesia's significant population, this offers a promising potential for the halal industry, both in the national and international markets. Census data quoted from BPS (Central Statistics Agency) shows that in 2018, the population of Indonesia was 237,641,326, with the majority being Muslim (around 87.18%). Therefore, there were approximately 207,176,162 Muslims in Indonesia. As their orientation shifts from quality-focused without considering halal to a lifestyle highly concerned with halal issues, the halal product market opens up widely on a global scale. The products in the market will follow the demands and preferences of consumers. In other words, the halal product market is growing along with the increasing number of customers.

On the other hand, if consumers are not aware or do not care about the halal status of a product, there will be no demand for halal products, and even non-halal products will continue to be consumed. The halal industry in Indonesia has experienced very rapid growth due to its enormous potential, especially within the Muslim market in Indonesia. However, awareness of halal products and the halal industry among the Indonesian public is still relatively insufficient.

The cosmetics industry is a highly profitable industry and will always be a giant industry worldwide. Ironically, cosmetic ingredients actually contain chemicals. Most commonly, these chemicals are synthetic and oils that produce harmful effects such as skin irritation and cancer. Therefore, women need to be selective in consuming cosmetics. Brands have been competing to claim that they provide healthy, natural products, and therefore the ingredients in their products are safe. In this regard, it is important to add halal value to cosmetics, which is essential for Muslims to maintain both health and piety at the same time. The halal label on Indonesian products can be recognized by the statement "Halal" on products certified by the Indonesian Ulama Council in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. To meet their needs, consumers will choose products that offer them maximum value. As consumers, they will choose the products that are most satisfying for them. In general, quality is one value that is highly prioritized and will always be considered by consumers. According to the American Society for Quality Control, quality is "The total of the features and characteristics of a product or service that have the ability to satisfy specific needs." Product quality becomes one of the factors that addresses consumer needs. A seller can be categorized as a quality seller if their product meets or even exceeds consumer expectations (Kotler & Lee, 2008).

In this context, Wardah tries to persuade consumers to choose its products using three brand messages: Pure and Safe, Beauty Experts, and Inspiring Beauty. One of the most important aspects or taglines of Wardah's branding is "Pure and Safe." The principle of pure and safe states and explains that the product is made from safe and halal ingredients according to Islam, so it can be used by Indonesian Muslims without worry.

Wardah has created a variety of products and always strives to introduce innovations to meet consumer needs. Furthermore, Wardah also attempts to evaluate and improve quality to create new and more diverse variations of products with better quality. This article will discuss Wardah's marketing strategy and the buying interest trends of Indonesian Muslim consumers. The article begins by exploring the management of the halal industry and is followed by a discussion of the halal industry in Indonesia. After that, the focus of the paper is on Wardah Cosmetics as a case study of the halal industry and its dynamics related to the buying intention and interest of Indonesian Muslim women.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. As quoted from Neubauer et al. (2019), phenomenology simply aims to explore experiences from the

perspective of those who experience it. The phenomenological method is deemed suitable for use in this study to gather detailed information about experiences. In the process of data collection from informants, this research uses in-depth interviews with two informants to gather information about the appeal of halal marketing conducted by Wardah, which supports the repurchase motivation of its consumers. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with a duration of 60-70 minutes for each informant. There were additional follow-up questions through a messaging application to ensure more detailed and in-depth information.

The location used in this research is Bandung, West Java. As cited from the website (Kementerian Agama RI 2022), West Java is the province with the highest number of Muslims in Indonesia. The choice of Bandung was based on the fact that Bandung is the capital of West Java, which has the largest Muslim population in Indonesia. With supporting facts obtained, the researcher decided that Bandung is a suitable location for this study.



Fig. 1. Research Location

The primary data used in this study was obtained from interviews with Muslim women users of Wardah from Bandung who have special experience in repurchasing Wardah products. Meanwhile, the secondary data used to strengthen the researcher's argument was obtained from similar studies conducted by previous researchers.

The data obtained was then processed by the researcher through three stages: transcription, coding, and data interpretation. The interviews obtained will be processed in the first stage through transcription. The results of the transcription are then further processed in the second stage, which is coding. The researcher used a mixed coding technique that combines several coding techniques. This was done to identify information patterns in the transcription results that can answer the research questions. Next, the results of the data from the coding process will be categorized and interpreted by the researcher in a descriptive manner to ensure that it is understandable to the reader.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results of consumer experience exploration in repurchasing wardah cosmetic products

Wardah Cosmetic is a beauty and cosmetic product under PT. Paragon Technology and Innovation. This cosmetic product, known for its tagline "Inspiring Beauty," was established in 1995 (Hartono, 2020). As a cosmetic product backed by a prominent company, Wardah Cosmetic is committed to being an Indonesian cosmetic and skincare brand that caters not only to Muslim women but also to all individuals seeking safe products with halal certification. Consistent with its product or brand objective, Wardah aims to benefit its surroundings, not only for its users but also for its partners, fostering social awareness, encouraging a spirit of sharing, and empowering society to create equitable social welfare. Wardah's brand image as a Beauty Expert is demonstrated by its pioneering role in introducing halal-labeled cosmetics. The Indonesian Ulama Council provides halal

certification for Wardah, which continues to shine among its consumers, particularly Muslim women.

The increased sales of Wardah Cosmetic, due to its innovative concept as the icon of Indonesian halal cosmetics, led it to receive the "Fastest Growing Brand" award from the World Halal Council in 2014-2015. Wardah has successfully surged as an authentic Indonesian halal beauty product. It turns out that the concept of 'Halal' has become innovative and has attached itself to Wardah as the top-of-mind product for 'Halal Cosmetics.'

Brand image, or what is known as brand perception, refers to an individual's concept or belief about a product. Consumer views about a product being sold can be contagious. This means that brand image becomes important because the image associated with the product will be one of the values offered during sales promotions, which will eventually influence consumer purchasing decisions. Therefore, it is necessary to review the image we build or branding for our product. According to Ayuniah (Amin & Rachmawati, 2020), the image attached to the product has a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions. Especially if the product's brand image is positive, consumers will feel much safer purchasing and using it.

The halal cosmetic branding carried out by Wardah over the decades is an interesting subject to study. The results of this study are derived from semi-structured interviews with three productive-age informants who have made a call-to-action purchase and repurchase behavior regarding Wardah Cosmetic products, one of whom is a micro-influencer who had previously collaborated to build a community with Wardah-Paragon during the 2024 period. This experience exploration only involves users who have repurchased Wardah Cosmetic products to gain rationalized experiences relevant to the research. The interview data was then reduced to extract themes of experience that were validated through triangulation.

3.2. Discussion

Based on the results of data triangulation, the author organized the responses of three informants into three thematic behaviors for repurchase.

3.2.1. Halal branding is no longer a reason

Based on the interviews, the respondents stated that they were aware and well-informed about the use of the halal logo and certification in Wardah cosmetics and skincare products. The halal logo alongside the National Agency of Drug and Food Control/*Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan* (BPOM) logo on the product packaging and the mention of halal branding across all Wardah products was also fully acknowledged by the informants as users. However, in reality, all the informants said that the use of labels, the halal logo, and halal branding were not the primary reasons for using Wardah cosmetics.

The use of halal branding was not the main reason for them to choose, use, and even repurchase the product. The users actually set aside the halal aspect of the Wardah product. They mentioned that when a product has the BPOM label and is proven, that's enough information for them. They trust that products that pass safety tests and obtain BPOM certification are suitable for use. They do not seek product safety or cosmetics and skincare assurance through halal branding.

"Maybe for the halal label, no, personally, I think if it already has BPOM, that's enough. If there's an issue about boycotting products, maybe they could turn to Wardah. But for halal branding, I think it only plays a role as the top of mind for products, because now we're looking for something that relates to us, according to our age, even though I agree that halal branding is used by Wardah for almost all product categories, especially skincare." (Interview quote with B, June 2, 2024). The widespread boycotting issue that is trending in Indonesia has made new customers choose Wardah cosmetics as an

alternative due to clear product affiliation and safety. Unfortunately, in reality, the use of branding and halal labels is not enough to encourage long-time users to repurchase.

3.2.2. Rebranding, product quality, and repurchase decision

The informants acknowledged that the main issue with Wardah cosmetics branding is the perception that it is used by older women. The branding associated with Wardah cosmetics, as perceived by users, is that it is "not related to Gen Z users." They believe that the typical Wardah product user is older than them. This becomes an issue because the largest consumer base for beauty products in Indonesia is in the teenage to early adult age group. Therefore, Wardah has struggled to rebrand itself as a cosmetic and skincare product that can also be used by teenagers. This effort can also be seen through the use of Brand Ambassadors (BAs) and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) who are in their teenage to early adult years. The decision to repurchase actually comes from the quality of the Wardah cosmetics and skincare products. The informants admitted that they sought out and decided to buy the products after proving that the quality of Wardah products is good. Therefore, the informants continued purchasing Wardah products due to their quality and suitability, which they would use daily.

3.2.3. Attraction of the 'muslimah' influencer community

The rise of social media use, along with the proliferation of KOLs and influencers providing reviews of cosmetic and skincare products, has influenced buyer decisions to engage in purchasing activities. This has become one of the marketing opportunities and product branding recognition that is considered more effective and costless, using a community approach. Aside from being closer to product users as part of the brand image, cosmetic and skincare products also compete to empower their potential product users to spread influence through community building. This community consists of 12 micro-influencers aged teenage to young adult, selected from 1000 influencers in Bandung. The majority of their character as influencers includes being female, dressing modestly, frequently posting beauty lifestyle content, and being active university students with more than 10,000 followers on their social media accounts. This community was formed for rebranding Wardah to be closer to their younger users.

Influencers within this community are fully supported by Wardah to organize activities involving participants from the younger generation. The goal of this community is to help spread the message that Wardah can be used by young beauty enthusiasts. Influencers are seen as capable of providing quick exposure for Wardah. Wardah uses a strategy that effectively minimizes promotional marketing costs while still empowering and benefiting both the community members and Wardah.

This micro-influencer community has become one of the reasons for the informants to use Wardah cosmetics and skincare products. By joining the community, they are often given rewards such as free products to review and post on their social media. Through this, they start using and experiencing the quality of the products. The informants, whether they follow the community or not, agree that the influence from people around them or reviews from those who have used Wardah products tend to make them buy and repurchase.

4. Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the marketing strategy using halal branding indeed helps the brand become a product choice for purchase. However, nowadays, the halal label on the packaging or the branding associated with the brand image is no longer the primary reason for users to make a purchase or repurchase decision. The largest group of cosmetic and skincare users, mostly from the teenage to young adult age group, are more enthusiastic and influenced by the reviews or opinions they see from social media influencers, especially when the KOLs are of a similar age to the target market.

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method and data collection techniques through interviews to closely examine and understand the reasons why Wardah product users engage in purchasing behavior and repurchase. This article has many gaps and limitations that can be explored further in future research, particularly by delving deeper into the reasons behind beauty product users' decisions in order to provide marketing strategy recommendations, especially regarding brand image.

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