

Pursuit of Decent and Natural Beauty in Accordance with Islamic Norms: The Boom of Halal Cosmetics in Indonesia

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Introduction

The remarkable economic growth and rise of consumerism since the late 2000s has led to a rapid increase in the consumption of cosmetics, as well as other goods, in Indonesia.¹ Television, magazines, and billboard advertisements in cities have led to the display of numerous cosmetics promotions, and most department stores and shopping centers feature vast cosmetics sections, similar to those in Tokyo and other major cities worldwide. The only difference in Indonesia is that the cosmetics advertisements and promotions often mention whether the products are halal. Halal is a term used to indicate what is “lawful” or “permitted” in Islam. The term “Halal cosmetics” is used to refer to legitimate Islamic cosmetics and is generally considered to include cosmetics that do not contain specific ingredients, such as swine, blood, or alcohol, which are prohibited for consumption in Islam. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, with nearly 90% of the total population of 270 million Muslims. With globalization, advancing IT technology, urbanization, and economic growth, the influence of Islam in society has increased, leading to changes in people's daily lives and behaviors. Greg Fealy stated that Islam has a significant presence in social, cultural, and political life, compared to the 1960s, and that Islam has penetrated far more deeply into people's lives than ever before (Fealy 2008: 15–16). People have become increasingly aware of Islamic teachings and have incorporated them into their daily lives. More Muslim people are choosing to consume products that are indicated to be halal, which is regarded as “legitimate” in Islam's teachings.

By analyzing discourses about the Islamic norms regarding beauty and makeup, marketing strategies and business expansion of the recognized halal cosmetic brands in Indonesia, and the opinions of halal cosmetics users, this chapter examines and clarifies



why halal cosmetics have gained attention and popularity among women.

In this chapter, the term “cosmetics” includes not only facial makeup products, but also personal care products, skin care products, and basic cosmetics. This is based on the definition of “kosmetika (cosmetics)” by the Indonesian Ministry of Health, which is used to describe materials intended for use on external parts of the body, such as the skin, hair, nails, lips, genital organs, or the teeth and mucous membranes of the mouth, to clean, spray perfume, change appearance, reduce body odor, or maintain the good condition of the body.²

1. Background

1.1. Muslim Makeup in Other Regions and Related Research

The consumption of cosmetics by Muslim people and the increased consumption of halal cosmetics has led to a worldwide trend. According to data from the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2020/21, spending on cosmetics by Muslim people worldwide reached \$66 billion in 2019, thereby indicating a growth of 3.4% from 2018, and it is expected to grow to \$76 billion by 2024.³ Moreover, the global halal cosmetics market size was estimated at \$23.03 billion in 2018 and is projected to reach \$52.02 billion by 2025, thereby registering a CAGR of 12.3%, according to a report by Grand View Research, Inc.⁴

Research has examined the widespread use of halal cosmetics in recent years, with some cases noted in different countries. Shirazi asserted that the cosmetics markets of Saudi Arabia and the UAE are among the best in the world, and that Muslim people, as well as vegan and vegetarian people, are choosing their cosmetics by considering the materials used (Shirazi 2016: 113). On the other hand, Toriyama revealed that cosmetics sales are growing significantly in Egypt, particularly among working women, despite the fact that wearing heavy makeup in public is typically avoided in Egypt (Toriyama 2012). In addition, while presenting an Islamic debate on cosmetics for decoration, Okawa asserted that the use of halal cosmetics eliminates the feeling of guilt when wearing cosmetics in public, which are not considered legitimate in traditional Islamic norms (Okawa 2021). According to Ünal, who examined the makeup used by young Turkish-Dutch Muslim women in several Dutch cities through ethnographic fieldwork, many of them own a make-up set that, in its most basic form, includes a lip gloss, eyeliner, and mascara. However, some others interpreted makeup

as an alternation of one's God-given appearance and thus strictly avoided it. The primary reasons for wearing makeup among those Muslim women are to be clean, healthy, and well-groomed, rather than becoming more beautiful or attractive. Muslim women have been considered to hide or cover their own beauty; however, their makeup behavior and explanations of their choices demonstrate their contemporary strategy for managing their beauty (Ünal 2019).

Research has noted that the use of cosmetics as facial decorations has been, and in some cases, is still negatively perceived by Muslim people because of the traditional norms or interpretations of Islam that women's beauty must be concealed. However, in recent years, the use of cosmetics by Muslim women has increased rapidly in various regions. The use of halal cosmetics considered legitimate under Islamic law has reduced the feeling of guilt caused by wearing makeup against Islamic norms, even in areas where women's beauty is considered an aspect that should not be concealed but should be managed by themselves.

According to Giddens, in pre-modern culture, the appearance was primarily standardized in terms of traditional criteria and primarily designated social identity, rather than personal identity (Giddens 1991: 99); however, it can now be selected or created based on the will of individuals. Muslims are also cultivating their bodies by adorning and transforming them to form and maintain their self-identities, because the visible appearance of the body is directly connected to self-identity in modern society. Makeup provides a means for them to get closer to who they want to be.

1.2. Cosmetic Culture and Changes in Indonesia and Related Research

According to Hiroshi Yamashita, a cultural anthropologist, women's cosmetics are often connected to supernatural beings. More specifically, it is connected to the image of a "goddess" in South and Southeast Asia, where Hindu-related beliefs and outlook were once widespread. Makeup was used to help women become a figure resembling a goddess to become closer to her identity and power. This type of makeup was not intended to highlight the unique beauty of a woman that contemporary makeup aims to accentuate. In addition, the intention was not for makeup to be "natural-looking" either, unlike the style of makeup often seen in contemporary Japan, which attempts to eliminate "unnaturalness" and highlight the woman's own beauty. Rather, makeup was used to conceal individuality, achieve transformation, and become



Figure 1. Sales counter of the halal cosmetic brand, Wardah, in a shopping mall in Makassar, Indonesia. Photo taken by the author in February 2018.

an ideal mystical being (Yamashita 2010: 87).

Traditionally, gorgeous makeup culture also exists in various parts of Indonesia.⁵ Even in the present day, women wear vivid makeup according to the traditions of their ethnic group, particularly at wedding ceremonies (Niehof 1992: 171–173). Moreover, makeup, or facial adornment, has been considered a representation of the social identity of ethnic groups in Indonesia and can have ritual and magical significance. Furthermore, under the authoritarian regime that continued for more than 30 years since the late 1960s, the culture of ethnic groups in various places was “created” and “regulated” by the state as a means of national integration. This “official” ethnicity was regulated by “traditional” wedding costumes and marriage rituals, including characteristic makeup, music, and dancing. The visual representation was presented through museum displays and the media and was accepted by the public (Kato 1993: 182–187). Even in this context, cosmetics were presented as enhancing the social identity of ethnic groups.

The Muslim-majority society in Indonesia has changed drastically over the past 30–40 years. Until the early 1990s, political Islamic movements were severely oppressed and some daily religious practices, such as hijab wearing by women, were restricted in public schools by the authoritarian regime between the early 1980s and the early 1990s because it was suspected to be connected with radical Islamic movements. Even outside public schools, most women did not wear hijab because they did not care much

about Islamic norms in this regard. However, through the progress in democratization and economic growth after the regime collapsed in 1998, Islam became notably visible within various societal aspects, and Islamic values became widely accepted and practiced. The style of women in society has changed drastically. Wearing hijabs, which had rarely been seen, as well as loose-fitting clothes covering the skin and the whole body, in accordance with Islamic teachings, are rapidly becoming popular. Due to these changes in attire, women's magazines featuring and targeted toward women wearing hijab as the primary readers started to be sold. Movies and TV dramas featuring hijab-wearing heroines were produced and became popular since the mid-2000s. Under these circumstances, halal cosmetics have become widely recognized and gained popularity.

In terms of makeup culture, the makeup traditions of various regions and the influence of cultural policies under the authoritarian regime have persisted to some extent even after democratization, and ethnicity-related makeup continues to exist in rituals and traditional performing arts. Meanwhile, although some people prefer to wear glamorous makeup in their daily lives, others began to avoid showy makeup as their Islamic awareness increased.

Studies have described the situation where Islam has become prominent in people's life as the "commodification of Islam" (Fealy 2008, Miichi 2014) and the identification with Islam in terms of behavior, lifestyle, consumption, personal choices, and political attitudes (Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018: 99). Greg Fealy (2008) discussed the commodification of Islam, thereby noting the influence of Islam on various goods and services in some areas, such as finance, publishing, fashion, tourism, and traditional medicine; however, he did not refer to beauty care and cosmetics. On the other hand, several studies have been published to discuss halal cosmetics since the mid-2010s, indicating that the spread of halal cosmetics is a new phenomenon over approximately the past 10 years. Most studies that examined influences on the purchase of halal cosmetics have revealed that factors such as a person's religious beliefs, product knowledge, and the presence or absence of the halal mark influence the purchase of halal cosmetics (Aisyah 2017; Brilliana and Mursito 2017; Haro 2018; Putri, Mursitama, Furinto, and Abdinagro 2019; Divianjella, Muslichah, and Ariff 2020; Aufi and Aji 2021). However, these assertions are based on the premise that Muslim people naturally follow God's orders and demand for halal products. There is a lack of consideration of Islamic norms regarding women's beauty and makeup and Muslim

peoples' understanding of them, as has been discussed in studies about cases in the Middle East, as well as that of Muslim immigrants in Europe.

Based on the situation in Indonesia, compared with the other regions, and the limitations of previous studies, this chapter focuses on discourses that have supported the rapid spread of halal cosmetics, and addresses three research questions; the discussion is presented as follows. First, how are Islamic discourses on women's beauty and the use of cosmetics understood in Indonesia? To answer this question, two Islamic books written by well-known Islamic scholars in Indonesia and statements from the official website of the Indonesian *Ulama* Council (MUI) will be analyzed. Second, how has the industry used these discourses to attract Muslim women? To examine this question, the marketing strategies and business development of a major halal cosmetic brand, *Wardah*, will be examined. Third, have women accepted these discourses? What is the actual use of cosmetics among women? To address these questions, the author conducted interviews with users of halal cosmetics in Jakarta and Makassar in February 2018. Based on these results, this chapter will clarify why and how cosmetics have come to be recognized and popular among Muslim women in Indonesia.

2. Islamic Discourse on Beauty and Makeup

In modern Indonesia, people have become more conscious of Islamic norms in their daily lives. In many cases, halal cosmetics users (as well as potential users) are younger women in urban areas, and they follow the traditions of their ethnic groups in certain events and ceremonies, such as weddings, but continue to enjoy modern life on a daily basis, thereby using cosmetics to form and maintain self-identity and create their "ideal" self. In such cases, what does the Islamic theory of beauty and makeup for women who recognize themselves as self-conscious Muslim people refer to?

Speaking of Islamic discourses, it is noteworthy that there are variations in the interpretation of certain things in modern Indonesia. Islamic scholars and preachers called *ulamas* and *ustads*, who come from various backgrounds, have freely conveyed their perspectives, and the development of the Internet in recent years has also provided momentum to their free dissemination. While considering these perspectives, people select and discard them in accordance with their religious beliefs and preferences to decide their daily conduct guidelines. The following perspectives of different religious intellectuals and an organization regarding the beauty of women

and the use of cosmetics that are often referred to by the Indonesian Muslim population are as follows. The first two perspectives are those of two scholars representing different groups, each positioned as either progressive or conservative. The third perspective is derived from the statements of the MUI. Although the MUI is considered to lean toward a conservative position in recent years, their perspectives continue to significantly influence people's daily lives as the official Islamic perspectives expressed by authoritative scholars. By comparing the perspectives of these three authorities, the diversity of Islamic perspectives on women's beauty and cosmetic use will be confirmed, as well as the points that are widely shared among them.

2.1. Quraish Shihab: Maintaining Beauty and Prohibiting Physical Modifications

The first reference is *Perempuan* (Women), written by Quraish Shihab (1944–), who is known as a progressive and moderate Islamic scholar. After studying and earning a Ph.D. from Al-Azhar University in Egypt, Quraish Shihab has been vigorously writing many Islamic books, and has continued to hold socially and politically significant positions, such as the president of the *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (State Islamic Institute) in Jakarta, representative of MUI, minister of religion, and ambassador for Egypt. After the first edition was published in 2005, *Perempuan* has been reprinted frequently. The ninth edition, published in 2014, particularly the chapter titled “*Perempuan dan Kecantikan* (Women and Beauty),” is examined here.

First, Quraish Shihab highlighted that the Qur'an includes many descriptions of the beauty of Allah's creations, such as the heaven, stars, and livestock.⁶ He then quoted a Hadith, collected by a prominent classical hadith scholar, Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj,⁷ and conveyed it as follows:

Allah is Beautiful and He loves beauty. (Shihab 2005: 61–62)

Shihab also pointed out that women are more beautiful than men and have a tendency to be interested in beauty and want to show themselves, arguing that this is the instinct Allah had conferred upon them (*ibid.*: 63). He also suggested that people are encouraged to wear beautiful dresses and makeup because Islam recommends pursuing beauty of appearance, as well as inner beauty. Here, the following verse is cited (*ibid.*: 71–72):

Children of Adam, dress well whenever you are at worship, and eat and drink but do not be extravagant. God does not like extravagant people. [7:31]

In this verse, “dress well” is commanded in worship where humans face God. Simultaneously, this verse warns against extravagance, calling for decent attire.

On the other hand, according to Shihab, many *ulamas* interpret plastic or cosmetic surgeries as being prohibited. He introduced the following two verses as the basis for this prohibition:

This is the natural disposition God instilled in mankind – there is no altering God's creation – and this is the right religion, though most people do not realize it [30:30].

I will mislead them and incite vain desires in them; I will command them to slit the ears of cattle; I will command them to tamper with God's creation. Whoever chooses Satan as a patron instead of God is utterly ruined [4:119]. (*Ibid.*: 75–59)

According to Shihab, based on the Islamic understanding that Allah himself is beautiful and that Allah likes beauty, the pursuit of proper dressing and decent beauty without extravagance is recommended and even commanded. On the other hand, he warns that plastic or cosmetic surgeries are forbidden in Islam because they intend to deform God's creations.

2.2. Felix Y. Siau: Ban on Displaying Beauty (*tabarruj*)

The second reference is *Yuk, Berhijab!* (Let's put on hijab!) by Felix Siau (1984–), a Chinese-Indonesian and a Muslim person who converted from Catholicism. Felix Siau is also known as an ideologue of *Hizbut Tahrir* (Party of Liberation), an international Islamic group with a pan-Islamic ideology aimed at establishing a caliph system, and has become famous for actively disseminating Islamic views, including the ideas of *Hizbut Tahrir*, on Instagram, Twitter, and other online platforms and events. Siau can be positioned as a conservative, in contrast to Shihab, who is known as a progressive Muslim person. This book admonishes the hijabs and Muslim women's attire that has become drastically fashionable since the late 2000s and reiterates the

original meaning of hijabs and how to wear them correctly. In this context, hijab is defined as a fabric that covers women's bodies to avoid attracting men's gazes and clothing for Muslim women in public, which also protects their identity. The book also discusses the prohibition of *tabarruj* or excessive decoration. Felix Siau based these perspectives on the following two verses of the Qur'an:

(Believing women should) not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal [24:31].

Stay at home, and do not flaunt your finery as they used to in the pagan past [33:33].

According to Siau, *tabarruj* refers to the demonstration of a woman's beauty, including facial makeup, use of perfumes, showy clothing, words and behaviors, and wearing imperfect hijabs, which would attract men's attention and mislead them, deliberately or not (Siau 2013: 96–100). Felix supported the position that wearing prominent makeup on a woman's face must be prohibited because it leads to *tabarruj*, or a show of excessive beauty. In this case, the *tabarruj* that Siau referred to can be considered a similar act to what Shihab described as extravagant and admonished against. Although there are various judgements and interpretations regarding the extent to which this action is regarded as *tabarruj* or extravagant, the assertion that *tabarruj* actions themselves must be avoided is consistent in both parties and can be considered to be shared by many Muslim women in Indonesia.

2.3. Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI): *Fatwa* for Makeup

MUI is a semi-official institution of Indonesian *ulama* established by President Soeharto in 1975. After Soeharto's authoritarian regime collapsed, MUI started to change its role from serving as the servant of the government to that of the *ummah*, thereby defending more conservative Muslim interests and aspirations (Ichwan 2013: 60–61). One of the main tasks of the present MUI is to issue a religious perspective (*fatwa*) on various topics related to the political, social, or daily lives of people. A *fatwa* is not legally binding, but in modern Indonesian society, MUI's *fatwa* and its message significantly influence public opinion and are what people refer to. At the same time, MUI is also an agency that manages Indonesian Halal Certification through LPPOM

established within the agency, thereby issuing certification marks for products recognized as halal. Among the cosmetics currently distributed in Indonesia, many products are marked with Halal Certification.⁸

MUI issued a *fatwa* in 2013 on the “Halal Standards for Cosmetics and Their Use,” which can be viewed on the official MUI website.⁹ This *fatwa* acknowledges that cosmetics are a necessity for people and concludes that decorative cosmetics are acceptable in Islam under the following three conditions: 1) the ingredients used are halal; 2) the intention of the use of cosmetics is permitted in Islamic teachings; and 3) the user would not be harmed in any way. Beyond that, Muslims are urged to avoid *haram*¹⁰ or *najis* (ritual unclean) raw materials and to choose halal cosmetics. MUI advises the government to manage and guarantee the provision of halal cosmetics using this *fatwa* as its guideline. Moreover, MUI advises LPPOM to suspend the issuing of halal certificates for cosmetics using *haram* or *najis* raw materials, or raw materials of unknown halal characteristics.

In addition to issuing *fatwa*, MUI actively disseminates information through its website. On October 13, 2020, an article stating “Why Cosmetics Must Be *Halal*” was published, stating that:

When you put on the cosmetics containing ingredients of *najis*, your prayer may be invalid. Not all parts of the body can be rinsed by water when you do *wudu* (ablution before prayers). There are several types of *najis*, and one type of *najis* cannot be rinsed only by water.¹¹

In this section, Islamic discourses on beauty and cosmetics, which are mainstream in Indonesia, are discussed based on the books by Quraish Shihab and Felix Siauw, as well as the *fatwa* and statement posted on the MUI website. Quraish Shihab is a moderate *ulama*, whereas Felix Siauw follows the ideology of *Hizbut Tahrir*; thus, the emphasis of both perspectives on makeup and beauty differs. Shihab recommends women to pursue decent beauty on the grounds that Allah loves beauty and that Allah himself is beauty; however, Siauw admonishes *tabarruj*, thereby suggesting that women showing their beauty through makeup on their faces are included in this *tabarruj*. However, Shihab also stated that extravagant cosmetics and going too far with makeup should be avoided, thereby indicating that there are points where the perspectives of the two parties coincide. In addition, MUI, which has a major

impact on the everyday practices of modern Muslim people, has announced in its *fatwa* that cosmetics have become indispensable in people's daily lives and their use itself is considered acceptable. At the same time, based on the perspectives of MUI, cosmetics for Muslim people must be halal, and cosmetics that contain *najis* or *haram* materials, or those with unknown halal properties, are to be strongly avoided.

3. Pioneer Halal Cosmetic Brand: Wardah

Following the analysis of several Islamic discourses on women's beauty and cosmetics use in Indonesia in Section 2, this section focuses on the cosmetics industry to market its halal products against the background of the spread of such discourses. Specifically, the case of Wardah, a pioneering halal cosmetic brand that has led the industry, is examined to clarify its history and the characteristics of its products and marketing.

3.1. History of Wardah

Wardah was created by Nurhayati Subakat, the founder and CEO of PT Paragon Technology and Innovation, which is a cosmetics company that owns the brand Wardah. After graduating from the Department of Pharmacy, *Institut Teknologi Bandung* (Bandung Institute of Technology), the most prestigious science university in Indonesia, Nurhayati worked as a pharmacist at a long-established cosmetics company for several years before getting married and retiring to focus on raising her children. She founded a new cosmetics firm, *PT Pusaka Tradisi Ibu*, in 1985 and became its CEO. Immediately after its founding, the company started manufacturing original shampoos and expanded its sales channels through direct sales to beauty salons. In 1995, it launched Wardah, the first brand in Indonesia that specialized in halal cosmetics. Originally, the company sold products through direct sales targeting schools, such as Islamic boarding schools, and its reputation gradually spread through word-of-mouth. Since the mid-2000s, the company has recruited young staff focused on marketing, reviewed packaging and sales strategies, and targeted young women in urban areas who were aware of Islamic teachings. This coincided with a period when hijab wearing increased nationwide, and even television and movies experienced a rapid increase in exposure for artists wearing hijabs (Nonaka 2015: 163–166). Wardah became a must-have cosmetic product for young women wearing hijabs, and the company also

sponsored TV dramas and movies with products used in the artists' makeup. During this period, as the Indonesian economy grew, the purchasing power of the people increased, and Indonesian society became more conscious of Islamic teachings in their daily lives. Wardah sales also soared around this time, and in 2011, the company changed its name to PT Paragon Technology and Innovation. PT Paragon Technology and Innovation currently has approximately 10,000 employees, making it one of the largest cosmetics companies in Indonesia, with distribution centers in more than 30 locations in the country, as well as a branch in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Nurhayati Subaket was elected as one of the Emergent 25 Latest Star Businesswomen in Asia in 2018 by the well-known economic magazine *Forbes Asia*.

3.2. Characteristics of Wardah

Wardah is a brand that obtains MUI Halal Certification for all their products, from makeup to basic cosmetics and skin care, and has several characteristics, as follows: First, despite using halal products as their primary selling point, the brand targets all women, including non-Muslim women. The brand's concept is "Inspiring Beauty," and Islamic terminology is not used in the branding. This is based on the understanding that their products comply with the concept of halal, in accordance with Islamic teachings, are comfortable, safe, and good for both the body and the inner beauty of all consumers, including both Muslim and non-Muslim women. Wardah ads include models who are Muslim women with hijabs, women without hijabs, and women of Chinese descent, who are primarily non-Muslim women.

At the same time, the company combines major and grassroots marketing to effectively reach their core customer base—that is, relatively young urban Muslim women who are aware of Islamic norms. The brand has rolled out large-scale promotional campaigns featuring prominent celebrities and influencers wearing hijabs as ambassadors, with a strong influence on young Muslim people. In addition, since the late 2000s, the company has been strategically conducting nationwide marketing, including publishing ads in women's Muslim fashion magazines and Muslim lifestyle magazines, providing products and sponsoring TV dramas and movies that have quickly become popular in society. Wardah has also actively supported small-scale Islamic events planned by women in rural areas and fashion events conducted on campuses by university students. As a sponsor, Wardah provided funding and made

every effort to extend its customer base by providing Wardah samples as novelties to participants at those events.

The characteristics of their products are represented as “reasonable price” and “unique product development.” Looking at the online sales page on Wardah’s official website, foundations are sold at around 60,000–80,000 rupiah (approx. US\$4–5), lipsticks at around 30,000–40,000 rupiah (approx. US\$2), and shampoos at around 20,000 rupiah (approx. US\$1.5). At this price level, products can be purchased not only by wealthy people but also by middle-class women. Meanwhile, their product development is unique and adapts to the needs of the times. For example, the “Pilgrimage Skincare Set (*Wardah Paket Haji dan Umroh*)” is a packaged product that has been a hit for many years. With the enhancement of social Islamic consciousness, the number of people going to the Mecca pilgrimage is increasing. Haji, a major pilgrimage occurring once a year, for which the Saudi Arabian government only issues a specific number of visas per year, is currently an event that one can participate in after waiting for several years (Fealy 2008: 24; Nonaka 2021: 426). In addition, more people now participate in *umroh*, a minor pilgrimage that does not have a fixed date and time like haji and can be held at any time throughout the year. The Pilgrimage Skincare Set includes sunscreen, beauty creams, body soaps, and antiperspirants, and helps to maintain healthy skin during pilgrimage trips in the hot and dry Saudi Arabian weather. Moreover, the Hydra Rose skincare series became a hot topic after being put on sale in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. This product series was primarily aimed at women whose skin became more sensitive than usual, with dryness and dullness, due to staying at home for longer periods. The series includes numerous products, such as moisture lotions and beauty creams. Television commercials and a variety of advertising have also been used effectively.

Wardah, which has been presented as a halal cosmetics brand since the mid-1990s, rapidly increased its recognition with the spread of hijab wearing among young women in urban areas since the mid-2000s, thus expanding its sales channels with women in this group as the primary users. Combining large-scale and grassroots marketing, as well as having unique product development strategies, also proved to be successful.¹²

In recent years, PT Paragon Technology and Innovation, which owns Wardah, has created new brands, such as Make Over, which specializes in professional women's makeup products, and Emina, a cheaper option targeting a younger customer base.

Following the success of Wardah, existing domestic cosmetics companies have launched their own halal brands, and Muslim fashion brands have begun selling halal cosmetics as well. As a result of the growth and diversification of the industry as a whole, halal cosmetics for various age groups and social classes are now available on the market.

4. User Opinions on Halal Cosmetics

In Sections 2 and 3, several discourses on women's beauty and cosmetics in Indonesia were analyzed, and the strategies used by the industry to supply halal cosmetics to parts of society where these discourses are prevalent have also been identified. This section examines how Muslim women have accepted these discourses and how they have used cosmetics based on the results of the interviews conducted by the author. The interviews were conducted during the author's fieldwork in Jakarta and Makassar in February 2018. Since the mid-2000s, the author has conducted ongoing ethnographic research on women's veiling, changes in dressing styles, and religious practices. The three women introduced here have all been known to the author for approximately ten years. They lead their daily lives in compliance with Islamic teachings to some extent, and all three women wear the veil on a daily basis. The author has met with them once every one to two years and listened to their stories. The author has already established a rapport with them and can ask them for information and personal opinions that are difficult to discuss at a first meeting. During the fieldwork, the author interviewed nearly a dozen individuals in their twenties and thirties, including these women, and among them, the stories of these three women were the most detailed.

The first, Nabila (pseudonym), is a female in her mid-30s, who is a lawyer in Jakarta, having studied abroad in Australia and wearing a hijab for about 10 years. According to her, she began to focus on halal when buying or using cosmetics a few years ago. "I didn't care much about *halal* until two or three years ago, but I'm now checking for a mark, non-alcohol, or pork-derived ingredients." She also says that Wardah is selling well and that many people around her use it, but she herself often uses cosmetics other than Wardah. At this time, she does not mind whether the halal mark is included, but it helps to check whether alcohol or pork-derived ingredients are contained. "If it suits my skin, I'll buy it even without a *halal* mark. Of course, it has to

be shown that alcohol and pork are not included in the ingredients. I would also use overseas products that I know are organic.” In Indonesia, the number of people benefitting from urban life is increasing due to the economic growth of the country, and lifestyle-related illnesses are becoming a social problem due to lack of exercise and excessive caloric intake. Against this background, people are rapidly becoming conscious of their health. An increasing number of people are regularly engaging in cycling, yoga, etc., or consume products that are promoted as healthy for the body. Moreover, the need for foods and cosmetics of plant and natural origin, known as organic, is also increasing.¹³ Many people, including Nadia, believe that organic products made only from natural ingredients are free of pork and alcohol, which are forbidden in Islam.

The second is Sarah (pseudonym), who lives in Makassar and is in her late 30s. She earned her degree in the United States, spent most of her twenties living there, returned to Indonesia before she turned thirty, and married an Indonesian man. Currently, while raising children, she supports her husband, a photographer, and works in management. She is a very health-conscious woman and is quite busy with housework and work, attending yoga classes when she has free time, and trying to prepare home-cooked meals with more vegetables to ensure the healthy growth of her young children. She stated that, “Not only make-up products but also [for] skin-care products, I choose all *halal* ones. I often buy Wardah products.” Until the year before the interview, she liked and bought skincare and anti-aging products from a famous Japanese cosmetics brand. However, Japanese products were very expensive in Indonesia. “One of the attractions of Wardah’s products is that they are cheap. Compared to Japanese products, they are so cheap that they have fewer digits in the price” she stated. Her standard for purchasing cosmetics is “*Halalan wa Thoyyiban*,” which translates to “halal and good for the body.” “Even if it’s *halal*, if it contains a lot of synthetic substances and chemical products, it’s not good for the body. I think the current organic boom in Indonesia is strongly related to the heightened awareness of *halal*,” she stated. Some of the cosmetics she uses do not have a halal certification, but all of them are made from 100% natural materials, and she believes her purchasing choices are embodying the concept of “*halal* and good for the body.”

The last interviewee, Asma, is a female in Jakarta in her late 20s. When she was a college student, she was part of an Islamic *dakwah* (proselytization) group in school and worked on campus to spread Islam. She graduated from university and is currently

engaged in Islamic magazine editing. When she attended college, she wore a plain, pale, and big hijab with no makeup. However, she began to wear thin makeup after she got a job and began to wear hijabs with pastel colors and patterns. When she was asked what type of changes in mentality had occurred, she said that she had spent her days in college among friends and seniors who participated in Islamic *dakwah* activities, and thus did not have the opportunity to study Islam herself outside that group. She attributes her change in mentality to having a job and being out of this group. "When I was in college everyone around me had no makeup, and that was the norm among the group, but now I started learning Islam by myself, and I learned that if I didn't become too showy, fashion is allowed. Being properly dressed is recommended in Islam," she says. Moreover, she now feels that wearing lipstick makes the whole face look brighter and gives a favorable impression when she meets someone for the first time. "I like natural-looking makeup," she says. "Even if a product doesn't have a *halal* certification, I check raw ingredients and buy them. It's convenient because I can get information on the Internet." In response to the question about what group of people prefers to use halal cosmetics, she answered, "Of course, young women who have come wear *hijabs*. From university students to working adults." However, she also said that "there are many people who buy *halal* cosmetics, even if they aren't wearing *hijabs*. We are in an age where everyone wants something safe and conform to Islamic teachings."

A common factor among the three participants is that they only recently started using halal cosmetic products. Until recently, Nabila was not worried about whether the cosmetics she bought and used were halal, and Sarah had purchased Japanese brands up to a year ago. Asma also did not wear makeup when she was in college. However, it has now become clear that all three women choose their own cosmetics based on information gathered by themselves, considering the Islamic norms they have learned and understood. The presence or absence of the halal certification mark does not seem to have a significant impact on women's choices thus far. On the other hand, however, the raw materials used are of great concern to them, and all three women have chosen cosmetics that do not contain *najis* and *haram* materials. While flashy cosmetics are avoided, natural-looking makeup and the use of naturally derived cosmetics that present a favorable impression and help to maintain healthy skin are favored by many women. Moreover, it is believed that these goals can be achieved using halal cosmetics.

Conclusion

There have been showy cosmetic traditions with perceived magical meanings that “changed” the face of women in different regions in Indonesia. In an era of authoritarianism, under the banner of national integration, such traditions were propped up by the regime as one of the symbols representing the characteristics of different ethnic groups. Consequently, as discussed in the research, aversion to cosmetics, as noted in other Muslim countries, particularly the Middle East, have not been observed in Indonesia. Instead, even in the present day, fancy facial decorations with cosmetics have been popular for indicating one’s social identity and ethnic group, particularly at ceremonies. However, after democratization, the national ideology was no longer imposed as it used to be, and the number of people who chose to live in line with Islamic norms increased. Many of these people have contributed to the social understanding that it is preferable to live in accordance with Islamic norms, and at the same time, the life outside those norms is not good. The appearance, which was once an indication of social identity, is now created and improved by individual choices and efforts and has become an indication of personal identity. Currently, many women express their piety in appearance and are sometimes under social pressure to do so.

The findings show that in Indonesia, halal cosmetics are a broad concept that covers not only makeup products but also skin care and personal care products, and are used by a wide age range of people, from university students to working adults. Section 2 examined the perspectives of the two *ulamas* representing the progressive and conservative groups, respectively, as well as the *fatwa* and the statement of MUI, which has been very influential in shaping public opinion. Section 2’s findings show that although the details of their perspectives differ, they all share similar views that using *najis* materials and being excessive (*tabarruj*) must be avoided, but that dressing up in clothing and using cosmetics in a proper way is acceptable and encouraged. Halal cosmetics are considered and accepted by women as a tool for realizing these views.

Section 3 analyzed business expansion, marketing strategy, and product features of Wardah, a leading brand in the industry, and confirmed that it has been a key player in the halal cosmetics boom. After the mid-2000s, along with an increase in the number of hijab-wearers, Wardah gained popularity through effective marketing and product development, as well as a reasonable price range, making its products accessible to many people.

In Section 4, women answered interview questions about why they prefer halal cosmetics with various reasons, such as preferring the products that use natural materials and are gentle on the body, offer natural-looking makeup. They also offered Islamic explanations, including avoiding *najis* and *haram* products. They believed that avoiding *najis* and *haram* was consistent with focusing on the ingredients and incorporating natural materials into the body. Some of them also connected avoiding *tabarruj* and extravagance with using natural-looking makeup. Halal cosmetics are becoming increasingly popular due to the synergistic effect of recent health consciousness and the spread of natural-looking makeup, particularly among women who are sensitive to Islamic teachings, beauty, and health-related information, as well as those who are trying to be pious. Halal cosmetics are now accepted by many women, including those who purchased overseas cosmetics and hesitated to apply makeup, believing that it was not in accordance with Islamic norms.

Notes

- * This chapter is adapted from a research paper that was supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) KAKENHI (grant number 19K20550).
- 1 The market scale of cosmetics in Indonesia was \$6.03 billion in 2013, and is expected to reach \$8.46 billion in 2022, based on data from the Indonesian Ministry of Industry in 2020 (<https://kemenperin.go.id/artikel/21460/Perubahan-Gaya-Hidup-Dorong-Industri-Kosmetik>).
- 2 Peraturan Menteri Kesehatan Republik Indonesia Nomor 1176/MENKES/PER/VIII/2010 Tentang Notifikasi Kosmetika (https://bikinpabrik.id/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/PERMENKES_NO.1176-2010_Notifikasi-Kosmetika.pdf).
- 3 State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2020/21. According to this data, in 2019, Indonesia was the second largest consumer of cosmetics after India (<https://cdn.salaamgateway.com/reports/pdf/456642acf95a783db590e5b104cae94046047101.pdf>).
- 4 <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/halal-cosmetics-market>
- 5 In Java, for example, as the word *mangling* suggests, the traditionally strong awareness that makeup should be used to create a “different” face has persisted. Regarding the makeup described above by Yamashita, the intention of “transforming” seems applicable to Java, as well.
- 6 This is in reference to the Qur’anic verses [50:6], [36:6], [16:6], etc.
- 7 Hadith refers to reports of the words and actions of Prophet Muhammad. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj was a well-known 9th-century hadith scholar who collected the reports considered to be authentic and assembled them in the book *Sahih Muslim*. *Sahih Muslim* is one of the six major hadith collections in Sunni Islam.

- 8 In Indonesia, the Halal Product Assurance Law (No.33/2014) was enforced in 2019. Under this law, halal products sold in Indonesia are obliged to acquire halal certification (currently, acquisition is voluntary). Halal cosmetics are required to acquire certification starting October 2026, after a seven-year grace period from the enactment of the Law in 2019.
- 9 Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor 26 tahun 2013 tentang Standar Kehalalan Produk Kosmetika dan Penggunaannya (<http://mui.or.id/wp-content/uploads/files/fatwa/No.-26-Standar-Kehalalan-Produk-dan-Penggunaan-Kosmetika.pdf>).
- 10 *Haram* is the antonym of halal and is known as a thing or behavior that is prohibited in Islam.
- 11 <https://www.halalmui.org/mui14/main/detail/mengapa-kosmetik-harus-halal>.
- 12 The characteristics and marketing strategies of Wardah products are based on an interview conducted by the author with Wardah's Art Team Coordinator, Carolina Septerita, on February 27, 2014, as well as information from Wardah's official site (<https://www.wardahbeauty.com/>).
- 13 In Indonesia, a law on organic farming systems was enacted in 2014, and now the organic certification mark is issued to the products certified by the National Accreditation Committee. However, food, cosmetics, cafes, and restaurants that claim to be organic without the certification are also popular among health-conscious consumers.

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