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The Influence of Product Quality on Halal Cosmetics Purchase Decisions: Examining the Mediating Effects of Islamic Branding and Halal Awareness

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Abstract

This study examines how product quality influences halal cosmetics purchase decisions among religiously educated Muslim consumers and investigates the moderating roles of Islamic branding and halal awareness—a theoretical relationship underexplored in faith-based marketing literature. Using PLS-SEM analysis, data from 95 female Islamic boarding school students (santriwati) in East Java, Indonesia were analyzed through structured questionnaires measuring product quality, Islamic branding, halal awareness, and purchase decisions. Product quality significantly influences purchase decisions ($\beta=0.446$, $p<0.001$). Islamic branding functions as a significant mediator ($\beta=0.402$, $p=0.001$), amplifying quality's effect. Unexpectedly, halal awareness shows direct effects ($\beta=0.374$, $p=0.009$) but no mediation, suggesting

it operates as an independent driver rather than contextual enhancer. The model explains 66.0% of variance. This study challenges conventional assumptions by demonstrating that halal awareness operates independently rather than mediating quality evaluations, contributing novel insights to Islamic marketing theory and Muslim consumer behavior. Manufacturers should prioritize authentic quality while deploying Islamic branding strategically. Marketing to educated Muslim consumers requires demonstrable integration of functional excellence with sharia compliance.

Keywords: *halal cosmetics; Islamic branding; halal awareness; product quality; purchase decision; Muslim consumer behavior*

Introduction

The global halal cosmetics industry has experienced exponential growth in the last decade, with Indonesia occupying a strategic position as the world's second-largest market (State of the Global Islamic Economy Report, 2023). This phenomenon reflects the transformation of Muslim consumer behavior that is increasingly aware of the importance of product halal certification, not only in food and beverages but also in body care products and cosmetics. This awareness is triggered by a deep understanding that the principles of halal and haram in Islam encompass all aspects of life, including products that come into direct contact with human skin and body.

In the Indonesian context, the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) community represents a unique Muslim consumer segment with special characteristics. Female students (santriwati) at Islamic boarding schools represent young Muslim consumers who receive intensive Islamic education from morning to night. The pesantren environment, rich with Islamic values, shapes different thinking patterns and consumption behaviors compared to general consumers. Although living in a relatively isolated environment, santriwati still have needs for cosmetic products for skin care and confidence enhancement, like teenagers in general (Akbar & Djuniardi, 2024; Fachrurroji & Padmalia, 2023).

Product quality becomes the primary determinant influencing purchase decisions among santriwati. As rational consumers, santriwati desire products that are not only halal but also of superior quality in meeting their skin care needs

(Hidayat, 2023; Nadhiro' et al., 2023). Product quality includes multiple dimensions: safety (non-irritating formulations), effectiveness (delivering promised results), durability (product shelf-life), suitability with diverse skin types, and aesthetic appeal (texture, fragrance, packaging).

In the context of Muslim consumers, particularly those in pesantren environments, the evaluation of product quality extends beyond functional attributes. Santriwati assess quality through a dual lens: technical performance (does the product work effectively?) and sharia compliance (is the product halal and thayyib?). This holistic quality assessment makes product quality a critical factor in their purchase decision-making process.

However, in the context of Muslim consumers in pesantren environments, product quality toward purchase decisions is suspected not to be linear and direct. Islamic branding as a marketing strategy that integrates Islamic identity and values in products (Alserhan, 2010; Bukhari & Isa, 2020) is estimated to moderate this relationship. Cosmetic products using Islamic branding provide signals to Muslim consumers that the product is not only functionally quality but also compliant with sharia principles. Islamic branding creates emotional bonds between Muslim consumers and products, which can strengthen the influence of trust and product quality on purchase decisions.

Halal awareness as the level of understanding and concern of consumers toward product halal certification (Hanifasari et al., 2024; Vanany et al., 2020) is also estimated to have a significant moderating role. Santriwati with high levels of halal awareness are suspected to be more sensitive to Islamic branding and more critical in evaluating trust and product quality before deciding to purchase. High halal awareness can strengthen the relationship between trust and product quality with purchase decisions because consumers will be more confident that trusted and quality products also meet halal standards.

Previous research has explored the direct influence of Islamic branding and halal awareness on purchase decisions (Achmad & Fikriyah, 2021; Dari &

Fourqoniah, 2023; Pamungkas et al., 2021). However, research examining the moderating role of Islamic branding and halal awareness in strengthening or weakening the relationship between trust and product quality toward purchase decisions, especially in the context of pesantren santriwati, remains limited. Yet, understanding this moderation effect is very important for developing more effective and targeted marketing strategies for Muslim consumer segments in pesantren environments.

Furthermore, previous research findings showed interesting results that halal awareness did not significantly influence the purchase decisions of Islamic boarding school students on halal cosmetics, while Islamic branding, trust, and product quality had significant influences (Sumita & Maksum, 2024). This finding raises a theoretical question: will halal awareness and Islamic branding provide different effects when positioned as moderating variables rather than as independent variables? This question becomes one of the main motivations for this research.

This research uses an Islamic economics perspective in analyzing santriwati consumer behavior. In Islamic economics, consumption decisions are not only based on utility and material satisfaction (*masalah*) but must also consider halal-haram aspects, justice, and social welfare (Rahmawaty & Rakhmawati, 2022; Sara et al., 2022). Therefore, research models integrating sharia-based variables such as Islamic branding and halal awareness become very relevant to understanding Muslim consumption behavior holistically.

Based on the background described above, this research aims to: (1) Analyze the influence of product quality on cosmetic product purchase decisions among santriwati at Islamic boarding schools. (2) Examine whether Islamic branding moderates (strengthens or weakens) the relationship between product quality and purchase decisions. (3) Examine whether halal awareness moderates (strengthens or weakens) the relationship between product quality and purchase decisions

Literature review

Purchase decision

Purchase decision is a complex cognitive and affective process where consumers choose one alternative from various available product or brand choices to meet specific needs or desires. Purchase decision define as a stage in the decision-making process where consumers actually make product purchases (Kotler & Keller, 2009). This process involves evaluation of various product attributes, consideration of benefits and risks, as well as the influence of internal factors (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs) and external factors (culture, social class, reference groups).

In the Islamic economics perspective, purchase decisions are not only based on the principle of individual utility maximization but must also consider broader *maslahah* (benefit) aspects. Muslim consumers are expected to make purchase decisions that not only provide personal benefits but also do not harm others and the environment, and comply with sharia principles (halal, fair, and moderate). Therefore, Muslim consumer purchase decisions reflect a balance between fulfilling material and spiritual needs.

Several purchase decision indicators commonly used in literature include: (1) firmness in choosing products; (2) consideration in buying products; (3) product suitability with needs; (4) confidence in purchased products; and (5) recommendations to others (Dari & Fourqoniah, 2023; Pamungkas et al., 2021).

Product Quality

Product quality is defined as a product's ability to meet or exceed consumer expectations in terms of function, reliability, durability, and other relevant attributes (Kotler & Keller, 2009). In the cosmetics context, product quality includes aspects of safety (not causing irritation or side effects), effectiveness (delivering results as promised), consistency (stable quality over time), and aesthetics (aroma, texture, attractive packaging).

Product quality is a strategic weapon to compete and even defeat competitors (Widjaja & Nurdiyana, 2018). Companies that can provide high-quality products will have faster growth in the long term. Desired product quality by consumers correlates with the product's ability to meet their needs and safety, so consumers feel safe both physically and psychologically when using the product (Hidayat, 2023).

In the Islamic economics perspective, product quality is not only related to material and functional aspects but also halal and *thayyiban* (good and quality) aspects. Halal products that are not quality do not fully meet Islamic consumption criteria. Conversely, high-quality products that are not halal clearly cannot be consumed by Muslims. Therefore, the concept of quality in Islamic economics is holistic, encompassing material, health, and spiritual dimensions.

Empirical research shows that product quality has positive and significant influence on cosmetic purchase decisions (Anwar & Satrio, 2015; Nadhiro' et al., 2023; Octavia, 2021; Oktavenia & Ardani, 2019). Consumers, including *santriwati*, will evaluate product quality before deciding to purchase, and high-quality products will be more chosen even though possibly at higher prices.

Recent studies emphasize that product quality has emerged as the most influential factor in halal cosmetics purchase decisions, particularly among educated Muslim consumers (Nadhiro' et al., 2023; Octavia, 2021). Unlike general consumers who may prioritize price or brand image, *santriwati* demonstrate more critical evaluation of actual product performance, ingredient composition, and safety certifications. This heightened quality consciousness stems from their Islamic education, which teaches them to seek not only halal but also *thayyib* (wholesome, excellent quality) products.

The integration of product quality with Islamic values creates a unique consumption pattern. *Santriwati* will reject low-quality products even if they carry halal certification, because Islamic teachings emphasize excellence (*ihsan*) in all aspects of life. Conversely, high-quality products without clear halal credentials

may also be rejected. Therefore, product quality serves as a necessary but not sufficient condition for purchase decisions among this segment.

Islamic branding

Islamic branding is a branding strategy that integrates Islamic values, principles, and identity into product or service brands. Islamic branding define as brands that combine religious elements with materialistic things as well as worldly and hereafter matters (Alserhan, 2010). This combination can be understood as an effort to incorporate religious values into brands in the lives of adherents with hope of receiving rewards. Islam views all actions based on intention, so that all work, if properly intended, will definitely receive rewards.

Islamic branding is not merely using the name of Islam or placing halal logos on packaging but also guarantees that production processes and raw materials used comply with Islam (containing no haram elements in either materials or manufacturing processes) (Bukhari & Isa, 2020). Islamic branding creates emotional bonds between Muslim consumers and products because consumers feel that by using these products, they not only fulfill worldly needs but also carry out religious commands.

Products using halal branding are more easily accepted by Muslim consumers than products with cheaper prices but without halal branding (Hosain, 2021). This shows that Islamic branding has high strategic value in Muslim market segmentation. In the Indonesian context, Islamic branding is increasingly popular alongside increasing religious awareness and growth of the Muslim middle class with high purchasing power.

Empirical research shows that Islamic branding has positive influence on cosmetic purchase decisions (Ainiah, 2021; Dari & Fourqoniah, 2023; Pamungkas et al., 2021). However, research on the moderating role of Islamic branding in strengthening the relationship between trust and product quality toward purchase decisions remains limited. This research proposes that Islamic branding can function as a moderator strengthening the influence of trust and product quality

on purchase decisions because Islamic branding provides additional assurance about product halal certification and compliance with sharia principles.

Halal awareness

Halal awareness refers to the level of knowledge, understanding, and concern of Muslim consumers about halal and haram concepts, methods of producing products according to sharia, and the importance of prioritizing halal products in their consumption (M et al., 2020; Vanany et al., 2020). When someone understands the importance of consuming halal food and products, this increases the desire to buy products with halal labels. The better Muslim consumers' understanding of halal products, the better their consumption behavior toward the halal status of every product they consume.

Several dimensions of halal brand awareness, namely: (1) recall (the extent to which consumers can name specific halal brands when asked); (2) recognition (the extent to which consumers can identify specific halal brands across different product categories); (3) purchase (the extent to which consumers choose halal brands compared to many similar goods); and (4) consumption (the extent to which consumers can remember halal brands when using competing products) (Vanany et al., 2020).

In the context of pesantren santriwati, halal awareness is expected to be higher compared to Muslim consumers in general, considering they receive intensive Islamic education and live in environments rich with Islamic values. However, previous research found interesting results that halal awareness did not significantly influence santriwati purchase decisions. This finding raises the question: will halal awareness provide different effects when positioned as a moderating variable?

This research proposes that halal awareness can function as a moderator strengthening the influence of trust and product quality on purchase decisions. Santriwati with high halal awareness will be more critical in evaluating trust and product quality, so the influence of these two variables on purchase decisions will

become stronger. Conversely, among santriwati with low halal awareness, the influence of trust and product quality may not be as strong as in groups with high halal awareness.

Hypothesis development

Based on theoretical and empirical foundations, this research develops three hypotheses:

Product quality represents a critical determinant of purchase decisions in the halal cosmetics market. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that superior product quality—encompassing safety, effectiveness, durability, and aesthetic attributes—significantly influences Muslim consumers' purchase decisions (Anwar & Satrio, 2015; Hidayat, 2023; Nadhiro' et al., 2023). In the pesantren context, santriwati are exposed to Islamic teachings that emphasize seeking excellence (ihsan) and avoiding waste (israf), which translates into careful evaluation of product quality before purchase. Therefore:

H1: Product quality has a positive and significant influence on cosmetic product purchase decisions among santriwati at Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic branding functions as a contextual amplifier that enhances the relationship between product quality and purchase decisions. When consumers perceive strong Islamic branding, their evaluation of product quality becomes more salient in driving purchase decisions. This occurs because Islamic branding provides symbolic assurance that high-quality products also align with religious values and sharia compliance (Alserhan, 2010; Bukhari & Isa, 2020).

For santriwati with strong Islamic identity, products displaying Islamic branding create emotional resonance and value congruence. When such products also demonstrate superior quality, the convergence of functional excellence and religious symbolism creates a powerful purchase motivation. Conversely, without Islamic branding, product quality alone may not fully activate purchase decisions because the spiritual dimension remains unaddressed. Therefore:.

H2: *Islamic branding moderates (strengthens) the influence of product quality on cosmetic product purchase decisions among santriwati at Islamic boarding schools.*

Halal awareness represents consumers' knowledge and consciousness about halal-haram distinctions and their importance in consumption (Muslichah et al., 2020; Vanany et al., 2020). This study proposes that halal awareness moderates the product quality-purchase decision relationship by heightening consumers' sensitivity to quality signals.

Santriwati with high halal awareness possess deeper understanding that halal certification extends beyond ingredient permissibility to encompass product quality, manufacturing hygiene, and ethical production practices. For these informed consumers, product quality serves as evidence of comprehensive halal compliance. They recognize that truly halal products must also be *thayyib* (wholesome, high-quality), making product quality evaluation more critical in their decision-making.

In contrast, santriwati with lower halal awareness may focus primarily on surface-level halal indicators (such as logos) without thoroughly evaluating product quality. Thus, the translation of product quality perceptions into purchase decisions varies based on halal awareness levels. Therefore:

H3: *Halal awareness moderates (strengthens) the influence of product quality on cosmetic product purchase decisions among santriwati at Islamic boarding schools.*

Research methodology

Research design

This research employs a quantitative approach with explanatory research design aimed at explaining causal relationships among variables and testing formulated hypotheses. The quantitative approach was chosen because it aligns with research objectives to measure influences and relationships among variables objectively and measurably using numerical data and statistical analysis (Oktaviany et al., 2025; Suryani & Hendriyadi, 2016).

This research is categorized as field research because data are collected directly from respondents at the research location, namely Islamic boarding schools in East Java, Indonesia. This research type is associative causal with moderation effects, where researchers not only measure direct influences of independent variables on dependent variables but also analyze how moderator variables (Islamic branding and halal awareness) affect the strength and direction of these relationships (Oktaviany et al., 2025).

Population and sample

The population in this research consists of all female students (santriwati) at Islamic boarding schools who use halal cosmetic products. The research focuses on a large Islamic boarding school complex in East Java that serves female students. The selection of this Islamic boarding school as research locus is based on several considerations: (1) it is one of the large pesantren in East Java with a significant number of students; (2) it has diverse educational levels from secondary to higher education; and (3) santriwati have access to various halal cosmetic products in the market.

Sample size in this research is determined based on PLS-SEM guidelines. Sample size follows the "10 times rule" for PLS-SEM analysis, requiring a minimum of 10 times the largest number of structural paths directed to a construct (Hair et al., 2019). With 5 paths to Purchase Decision (3 direct + 2 interaction paths), the minimum is 50 respondents. Given the pesantren research setting constraints and specific inclusion criteria (active halal cosmetic users with minimum 1-year experience, aged >15), 95 qualified respondents were successfully recruited, representing 190% of the minimum requirement and providing adequate statistical power for moderation analysis.

Operational definition and variable measurement

This research involves five main variables measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly

Agree). Following are operational definitions and measurement indicators for each variable:

Table 1. Operational definition and measurement of variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators	Source
Purchase decision (Y)	The process by which santriwati choose and decide to buy specific cosmetic products based on evaluation of material quality, quality maintenance, natural ingredients, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend	Y1.1: I decided to buy halal cosmetic products because of the quality of materials used Y1.2: I buy halal cosmetic products because the quality is maintained Y1.3: The halal cosmetic products I use do not damage my skin because they are made from natural materials Y1.4: I feel satisfaction during and after using halal cosmetic products, which attracts me to make repeat purchases Y1.5: I will recommend halal cosmetic products to friends	(Dari & Fourqoniah, 2023; Pamungkas et al., 2021)
Product quality (X1)	Santriwati's perception about excellence and capability of halal cosmetic products in meeting skin care needs, including aspects of performance, durability, customization, natural ingredients, safety, and packaging attractiveness	X2.1: In my opinion, halal cosmetic products can deliver desired results X2.2: In my opinion, halal cosmetics can keep products sterile so product durability and resistance are guaranteed X2.3: In my opinion, halal cosmetic products are customized based on skin type and customer needs X2.4: In my opinion, halal cosmetic products contain natural basic ingredient composition according to the concept "Natural ingredient with High Technology" X2.5: In my opinion, halal cosmetic products are safe so free from side effects of product use X2.6: In my opinion, halal cosmetic products are packaged with attractive packaging	(Hidayat, 2023; Nadhiro' et al., 2023)
Islamic branding (M1)	Santriwati's perception about use of Islamic identity, symbols, and values in cosmetic product branding, which includes use of Islamic names, religious symbols, and sharia compliance in marketing	M1.1: Brands that comply with sharia principles are my choice M1.2: Islamic branding has applied empathy with sharia values to attract Muslim consumers like me M1.3: Brands or trademarks have appeal to consumers M1.4: Islamic branding is a halal identity in a product	(Bukhari & Isa, 2020; Pamungkas et al., 2021)

Halal awareness (M2)	The level of knowledge, understanding, and concern of santriwati about the importance of using halal cosmetic products, including awareness of halal labels and their impact on product safety and spiritual life	M2.1: I am aware of the need to use products with halal labels	(Muslichah et al., 2020;
		M2.2: I have interest in using halal cosmetic products because they are halal-labeled	Vanany et al., 2020)
		M2.3: Halal cosmetic product packaging has a clear halal label so I am safe to use it	
		M2.4: I feel comfortable choosing halal cosmetic products because they are halal-labeled and product cleanliness is guaranteed	
		M2.5: I feel happy when seeing other people (Muslims) also consume halal cosmetic products	

Source: Developed by researchers based on literature review, 2025

Data collection technique

Data in this research are collected using primary and secondary methods. Primary data are collected through structured questionnaire surveys distributed directly to santriwati respondents and brief semi-structured interviews to complement questionnaire data. Secondary data are collected from official Islamic boarding school documents, academic literature, statistical data about halal cosmetics industry, and market research reports.

Data analysis technique

Data analysis is conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with SmartPLS 4 software. The data analysis process includes: (1) Descriptive Statistics; (2) Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model); (3) Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model); (4) Additional Analysis.

The structural equation model with moderation effects:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_2 + \beta_2 M_1 + \beta_3 M_2 + \beta_4 (X_2 \times M_1) + \beta_5 (X_2 \times M_2) + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Purchase Decision (dependent variable)

X₂ = Product Quality (independent variable)

M₁ = Islamic Branding (moderator variable)

M₂ = Halal Awareness (moderator variable)

β_4 = Interaction coefficient (Product Quality \times Islamic Branding)

β_5 = Interaction coefficient (Product Quality \times Halal Awareness)

ε = Error term.

Results and discussion

Result

Respondent demographic profile

Table 2. Respondent demographic

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15-25 years	95	100%
	Total	95	
Education Level	Junior High School	18	19%
	Senior High School	51	54%
	Undergraduate/Graduate	26	27%
	Total	95	
Monthly Income/Allowance	< IDR 500,000	38	40%
	IDR 500,000 - 1,000,000	55	58%
	> IDR 1,000,000	2	2%
	Total	95	
Monthly Expenditure on Cosmetics	< IDR 500,000	50	53%
	IDR 500,000 - 1,000,000	44	46%
	> IDR 1,000,000	1	1%
	Total	95	
Duration as Halal Cosmetic Consumer	1-3 years	79	83%
	> 3 years	16	17%
	Total	95	

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

This research involved 95 female students (*santriwati*) at Islamic Boarding School. Table 2 presents respondent demographic characteristics. All respondents (100%) are aged 15-25 years, representing young Muslim consumers. Education levels vary: 18.9% junior high school, 53.7% senior high school, and 27.4% undergraduate/graduate level, reflecting the multi-level educational structure of the pesantren. Monthly income distribution shows 40.0% receive less than IDR 500,000, 57.9% receive IDR 500,000-1,000,000, and 2.1% exceed IDR 1,000,000.

Cosmetic expenditure patterns indicate 52.6% spend less than IDR 500,000 monthly, 46.3% spend IDR 500,000-1,000,000, and 1.1% exceed IDR 1,000,000. These patterns reflect modest economic backgrounds and prudent consumption behavior consistent with Islamic principles. Regarding product experience, 83.2% have used halal cosmetics for 1-3 years, while 16.8% have over 3 years of experience, indicating sufficient familiarity to form reliable product evaluations. This demographic profile represents young, educated, economically modest Muslim consumers with meaningful halal cosmetic consumption experience, making them ideal subjects for examining the moderating roles of Islamic branding and halal awareness.

Measurement model evaluation (outer model)

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure the validity and reliability of constructs before examining structural relationships. Assessment criteria included internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Table 3 presents the results of validity and reliability testing for all constructs in the research model.

Table 3. Validity and reliability test results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_c	AVE	Assessment
Islamic branding	0.734	0.822	0.538	Reliable & Valid
Halal awareness	0.864	0.901	0.646	Reliable & Valid
Product quality	0.848	0.891	0.622	Reliable & Valid
Purchase decision	0.802	0.863	0.558	Reliable & Valid

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

All constructs demonstrate excellent internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.734 to 0.864, all exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite reliability values range from 0.822 to 0.901, substantially above the 0.70 cutoff, indicating that the indicators consistently represent their respective constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The highest reliability is observed for Halal Awareness ($\alpha = 0.864$, CR = 0.901), suggesting that santriwati respondents interpreted the halal

awareness indicators with high consistency, likely reflecting their intensive Islamic education background in pesantren environments (Ali et al., 2017).

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceed the minimum requirement of 0.50, ranging from 0.538 to 0.646. This indicates that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators, confirming adequate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). The highest AVE is achieved by Halal Awareness (0.646), followed by Product Quality (0.622), Purchase Decision (0.558), and Islamic Branding (0.538). These values demonstrate that the measurement items successfully capture the intended constructs with sufficient convergent validity for structural model testing (Chin, 1998).

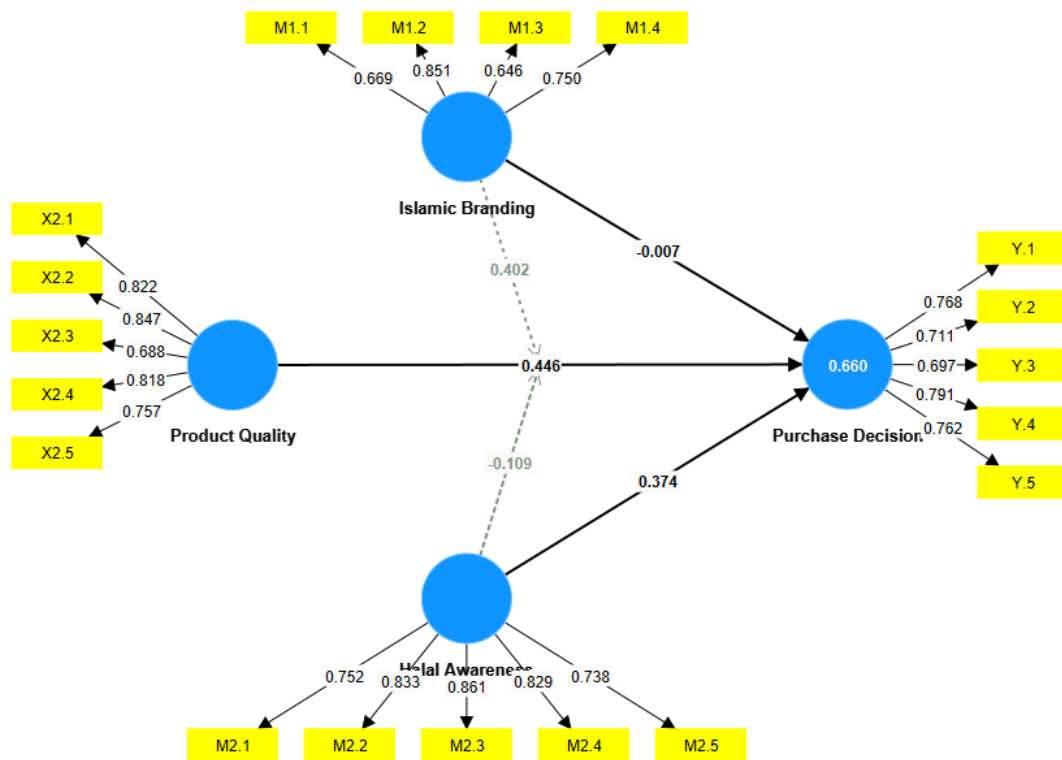


Figure 1. Outer loadings of indicators

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

All indicator outer loadings exceed the minimum threshold of 0.60 for exploratory research and approach or surpass the preferred level of 0.70 for confirmatory research (Hair et al., 2019; Hulland, 1999). Outer loadings range from

0.646 to 0.861, indicating that individual indicators reliably measure their respective constructs. The strongest indicator for Islamic Branding is M1.2 (0.851), emphasizing that santriwati perceive Islamic branding primarily through its application of sharia values in marketing communications (Alserhan, 2010; J. A. Wilson & Liu, 2011). For Halal Awareness, M2.3 (0.861) demonstrates that clear halal labels providing safety assurance constitute the most salient dimension, consistent with previous research on the importance of visible halal certification (Aziz & Chok, 2013). Product Quality is most strongly represented by X2.2 (0.847), indicating that product durability and sterility guarantee are paramount quality perceptions among Muslim consumers. For Purchase Decision, Y.4 (0.791) shows that satisfaction leading to repurchase intentions is the strongest decision indicator, aligning with expectation-confirmation theory in consumer behavior.

Discriminant validity was assessed using two complementary methods: the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT), with HTMT being the primary assessment tool as recommended by recent PLS-SEM guidelines (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4. Discriminant validity - fornell-larcker criterion

Construct	Halal Awareness	Islamic Branding	Product Quality	Purchase Decision
Halal awareness	0.804			
Islamic branding	0.727	0.734		
Product quality	0.718	0.614	0.788	
Purchase decision	0.657	0.538	0.7	0.747

Note: Diagonal values (bold) represent square root of AVE

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

The Fornell-Larcker criterion assesses discriminant validity by comparing the square root of AVE (diagonal values) with the correlations between constructs (off-diagonal values). Adequate discriminant validity is demonstrated when diagonal values exceed all corresponding off-diagonal values in the same row and

column (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All constructs satisfy this criterion, indicating that each construct is distinct from others and captures unique variance.

Table 5. Discriminant validity - heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Construct	Halal Awareness	Islamic Branding	Product Quality	Purchase Decision
Halal awareness	-			
Islamic branding	0.868	-		
Product quality	0.824	0.738	-	
Purchase decision	0.748	0.613	0.822	-

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

The HTMT criterion is considered more reliable than the Fornell-Larcker criterion for assessing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM, as it demonstrates superior performance in detecting lack of discriminant validity (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT values below 0.85 indicate adequate discriminant validity for constructs that are conceptually similar, while values below 0.90 are acceptable for conceptually distinct constructs.

Most HTMT values fall below the 0.85 threshold, confirming discriminant validity. However, the HTMT value between Islamic Branding and Halal Awareness (0.868) slightly exceeds the conservative 0.85 threshold, though it remains below the liberal 0.90 threshold. This elevated correlation is theoretically justified, as both constructs represent dimensions of Islamic consumer consciousness and religiosity in marketplace behavior (Shah Alam et al., 2011; Souiden & Rani, 2015). Despite this conceptual overlap, the constructs remain empirically distinguishable: Islamic Branding captures perceptions of external marketing communications using Islamic symbols and values (J. A. Wilson & Liu, 2011), while Halal Awareness represents internal cognitive schemas regarding halal-haram knowledge and concern (Abd Rahman et al., 2015). The HTMT value of 0.868 suggests these constructs are related but distinct, which aligns with theoretical expectations.

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined to assess multicollinearity among indicators and predictors. All indicator-level VIF values

range from 1.383 to 2.559, well below the conservative threshold of 3.3 and the liberal threshold of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating absence of severe multicollinearity issues. The interaction terms (Islamic Branding \times Product Quality and Halal Awareness \times Product Quality) show VIF values of 1.000, confirming that orthogonalization procedures were successfully applied in creating interaction terms, eliminating potential multicollinearity concerns in moderation analysis (Henseler & Chin, 2010).

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Table 6. Structural model assessment

Criterion	Value	Assessment
R ² (purchase decision)	0.66	Moderate to Substantial
Adjusted R ²	0.641	Moderate to Substantial

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

The structural model demonstrates substantial explanatory power with R² = 0.660, indicating that Product Quality, Islamic Branding, Halal Awareness, and their interaction effects collectively explain 66.0% of the variance in Purchase Decision among santriwati. According to classification, R² values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 represent substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2019). The achieved R² of 0.660 approaches substantial explanatory power, suggesting that the integrated model effectively captures key determinants of halal cosmetic purchase decisions in the pesantren context. This explanatory power is notably higher than comparable studies in halal cosmetics (Abd Rahman et al., 2015; Nadhiro' et al., 2023), demonstrating the theoretical value of incorporating moderation effects.

The adjusted R² (0.641) accounts for model complexity and sample size, remaining high and confirming that the model's explanatory power is not artificially inflated by the number of predictors (Hair et al., 2019). This 64.1% explained variance represents a significant improvement over models examining only direct effects, demonstrating the importance of understanding how Islamic

Branding and Halal Awareness interact with quality perceptions in shaping Muslim consumer decisions (Shah Alam et al., 2011; J. Wilson et al., 2013).

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 8. Path coefficients and hypothesis testing results

H	Path	(β)	t-stat	p-value	Decision	(f^2)
H1	Product quality → Purchase decision	0.446	4.191	0.000***	Supported	0.272
H2	Islamic branding × Product quality → Purchase Decision	0.402	3.228	0.001***	Supported	0.215
H3	Halal awareness × Product quality → Purchase decision	-0.109	1.106	0.269	Not Supported	0.022
-	Islamic branding → Purchase decision (control)	-0.007	0.067	0.946	-	0
-	Halal awareness → Purchase decision (control)	0.374	2.627	0.009**	-	0.11

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Effect size interpretation: $f^2 \geq 0.02$ (small), $f^2 \geq 0.15$ (medium), $f^2 \geq 0.35$ (large)

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

The hypothesis testing results reveal three key findings. First, H1 is strongly supported, demonstrating that Product Quality has a positive and highly significant direct effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.446$, $t = 4.191$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.272$). The medium-to-large effect size confirms product quality as the strongest direct predictor of santriwati's purchase decisions for halal cosmetics.

Second, H2 is supported, showing that Islamic Branding significantly moderates the relationship between Product Quality and Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.402$, $t = 3.228$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.215$). This positive moderation indicates that Islamic branding strengthens the influence of product quality on purchase decisions. Notably, the direct effect of Islamic Branding on Purchase Decision is negligible ($\beta = -0.007$, $p = 0.946$), suggesting that Islamic branding functions primarily as a quality amplifier rather than an independent driver.

Third, H3 is not supported, as the interaction between Halal Awareness and Product Quality shows no significant moderating effect ($\beta = -0.109$, $t = 1.106$, $p = 0.269$, $f^2 = 0.022$). However, Halal Awareness demonstrates a significant direct effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.374$, $p = 0.009$, $f^2 = 0.110$), indicating that halal awareness influences purchase decisions independently rather than by moderating quality perceptions. These findings will be discussed further in the following section.

Discussion

The findings of this research provide important insights into how product quality, Islamic branding, and halal awareness interact to influence purchase decisions among santriwati at Islamic boarding schools. The strong and significant effect of product quality on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.272$) demonstrates that functional attributes remain the primary driver of consumer choice, even in highly religious environments where spiritual considerations might be expected to dominate. This result aligns with previous studies on halal cosmetics showing that Indonesian Muslim consumers prioritize safety, effectiveness, and durability when evaluating products (Hidayat, 2023; Nadhiro' et al., 2023; Octavia, 2021), but extends these findings by demonstrating that such quality consciousness persists among pesantren-educated consumers who receive intensive Islamic education.

The prominence of quality considerations reflects the Islamic principle of seeking *thayyib* (wholesome, excellent) products alongside halal certification, as emphasized in the Qur'anic injunction to consume what is both lawful and good (Qur'an 2:168). Santriwati appear to internalize this holistic understanding, recognizing that halal certification alone is insufficient—products must also deliver functional excellence to truly align with Islamic consumption ethics that value both material well-being (*maslahah dunya*) and spiritual fulfillment (*maslahah akhirah*) (El-Bassiouny, 2014; J. A. Wilson, 2014). This sophisticated consumer behavior challenges simplistic assumptions that Muslim consumers are

primarily swayed by religious symbolism, instead revealing rational evaluation processes that integrate functional and spiritual dimensions (Awan et al., 2015; Mukhtar & Butt, 2012).

The significant moderation effect of Islamic branding ($\beta = 0.402$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.215$) coupled with its non-significant direct effect ($\beta = -0.007$, $p = 0.946$) reveals a nuanced mechanism that has important implications for understanding Muslim consumer behavior. Islamic branding does not independently drive purchase decisions among educated santriwati; rather, it functions as a contextual amplifier that strengthens the relationship between product quality and purchase intentions. When cosmetic products simultaneously demonstrate high quality and display Islamic branding elements, the convergence creates a synergistic effect that exceeds the sum of individual contributions—what can be understood as "dual legitimacy" where products are perceived as both functionally superior and religiously appropriate (Rajagopal et al., 2011). This pattern suggests that santriwati seek value congruence between functional needs and symbolic/religious values (Cable & Edwards, 2009), and when both dimensions align, the resulting cognitive and emotional resonance reduces perceived risk and increases purchase confidence (Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016; Jafari & Süerdem, 2012).

The negligible direct effect of Islamic branding indicates that pesantren-educated consumers are not easily persuaded by superficial Islamic symbols or rhetoric—they demand substantive quality evidence and will reject products that display Islamic branding without accompanying functional excellence (Sandikci & Ger, 2010; J. A. Wilson & Liu, 2011). This critical stance likely stems from their deep Islamic knowledge, which enables them to distinguish between authentic integration of Islamic values and opportunistic "halal-washing" marketing tactics (Alserhan, 2017). The moderation mechanism operates by enhancing trust and reducing perceived risk: when high-quality products carry Islamic branding, consumers interpret this as dual assurance that the product meets both functional

requirements and religious obligations, creating what Temporal (2017) describes as enhanced credibility through value alignment. This finding challenges previous research that examined Islamic branding primarily as a direct predictor (Dari & Fourqoniah, 2023; Pamungkas et al., 2021), suggesting that more sophisticated models accounting for contingency effects better capture the complex role of Islamic branding in Muslim consumer decision-making (J. Wilson et al., 2013).

The non-significant moderation effect of halal awareness ($\beta = -0.109$, $p = 0.269$, $f^2 = 0.022$) contrasted with its significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.374$, $p = 0.009$, $f^2 = 0.110$) reveals an unexpected but theoretically informative pattern that warrants careful interpretation. Unlike Islamic branding, which amplifies quality perceptions, halal awareness appears to influence purchase decisions through an independent pathway rooted in religious obligation and identity rather than by enhancing sensitivity to quality variations (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008). Several factors may explain this pattern. First, the pesantren context likely creates a ceiling effect where nearly all santriwati possess uniformly high levels of halal awareness due to intensive Islamic education, resulting in limited variance that constrains moderating power (Ali et al., 2017). When halal awareness is universally high, halal certification becomes a baseline expectation rather than a differentiating factor, shifting evaluative attention to quality variations among already-halal products.

Second, the findings suggest a threshold model of decision-making where halal awareness operates at the screening stage—determining which products enter the consideration set—while product quality operates at the selection stage—determining which product is ultimately chosen from the halal-certified set (Rajagopal et al., 2011; J. A. Wilson, 2014). These processes occur at different cognitive stages and thus do not interact multiplicatively. Third, halal awareness and product quality evaluation may represent parallel cognitive processes rather than interactive mechanisms: halal awareness activates purchase intentions through moral obligation and religious identity affirmation (functioning as a

motivational force), while quality evaluation involves rational assessment of functional attributes (functioning as an evaluative process) (Shah Alam et al., 2011).

The significant direct effect confirms that santriwati with higher halal awareness are indeed more likely to purchase halal cosmetics, but this relationship exists independently of quality perceptions because halal compliance is a non-negotiable criterion for them—they will seek halal products regardless of quality variations, viewing halal certification as a moral imperative rather than a quality signal (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012). This pattern aligns with findings by Sumita and Maksum (2024), who also found unexpected relationships between halal awareness and purchase decisions among santriwati, suggesting that the role of halal awareness may differ fundamentally between general Muslim consumers and those with intensive Islamic education in pesantren environments.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that purchase decisions among santriwati result from a complex interplay of functional excellence (product quality), symbolic alignment (Islamic branding), and religious obligation (halal awareness), with the model explaining 66.0% of variance in purchase decisions ($R^2 = 0.660$). The substantial explanatory power indicates that the integrated model effectively captures key determinants of halal cosmetic consumption in pesantren contexts, surpassing typical variance explained in single-predictor models (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The prominence of product quality as the strongest direct predictor ($f^2 = 0.272$), combined with Islamic branding's strong moderation effect ($f^2 = 0.215$), suggests that optimal market positioning requires authentic integration of functional and symbolic dimensions rather than relying on either element alone. Products that achieve this integration—delivering genuine quality while authentically incorporating Islamic values—benefit from amplified consumer response that exceeds additive effects.

The direct effect of halal awareness ($f^2 = 0.110$), though smaller, confirms that religious consciousness independently contributes to purchase likelihood,

functioning as a baseline motivational factor that increases receptivity to halal-certified products. These patterns suggest that santriwati represent a "critically conscious" consumer segment characterized by sophisticated decision-making that integrates rational quality evaluation, religious values alignment, and moral obligation (Ali et al., 2017; Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016). Unlike general consumers who might prioritize either functional or symbolic attributes, pesantren-educated consumers demand both, demonstrating resistance to superficial Islamic branding while maintaining strong religious commitment that manifests through halal awareness (Sandikci & Ger, 2010; J. Wilson et al., 2013). This segmentation has important implications for market strategy, suggesting that approaches successful with general Muslim consumers—such as prominent Islamic symbolism—may prove ineffective or even counterproductive with highly educated Muslim segments who possess deep religious knowledge and critical evaluation capabilities (Alserhan, 2017; Souiden & Rani, 2015).

Practical implications

The research findings offer actionable implications for halal cosmetics stakeholders. Manufacturers must prioritize R&D investments in genuinely high-quality products, as quality ($f^2 = 0.272$) cannot be substituted by Islamic branding or halal certification alone (Temporal, 2011; J. A. Wilson, 2014). However, the strong moderation effect of Islamic branding ($f^2 = 0.215$) indicates that companies should deploy Islamic branding strategically as a quality amplifier by transparently communicating substantive commitments through halal-certified ingredients, sharia-compliant production, and Islamic business ethics (J. A. Wilson & Liu, 2011). Marketing should simultaneously highlight quality and Islamic branding in synergistic messaging while avoiding superficial Islamic symbols, as educated consumers perceive this as "halal-washing" (Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016; Sandikci & Ger, 2010). Halal certification bodies should develop enhanced standards incorporating quality dimensions (thayyib criteria) alongside halal compliance and conduct consumer education emphasizing that certification

encompasses quality, safety, and ethical production aligned with maqasid shariah (El-Bassiouny, 2014; J. A. Wilson, 2014). Since halal awareness shows direct effects ($\beta = 0.374$, $p = 0.009$), stakeholders should invest in education programs enhancing halal-thayyib understanding through partnerships with Islamic scholars and pesantren institutions (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008). Islamic boarding schools can integrate consumer education into curricula, equipping students to interpret quality evidence, identify authentic Islamic branding, and make informed decisions aligned with Islamic values of rationality (hikmah) and excellence (ihsan).

Limitations and future research directions

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, the focus on one pesantren in East Java limits generalizability to urban consumers, non-pesantren environments, or other cultural contexts, necessitating replication across diverse segments and geographical settings. Second, while 95 respondents meet minimum PLS-SEM requirements, larger samples would enhance statistical power and enable multi-group analyses. Third, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences; longitudinal studies would provide richer insights into how consumer perceptions evolve over time. Fourth, this research examines cosmetics exclusively; cross-category validation across food, pharmaceuticals, financial services, and fashion would establish boundary conditions. Fifth, the elevated HTMT correlation between Islamic Branding and Halal Awareness (0.868) suggests potential conceptual overlap requiring construct refinement. Sixth, unmeasured moderators such as religiosity dimensions, social influence, and price sensitivity, as well as mediating mechanisms like perceived risk reduction and religious identity salience, warrant investigation. Seventh, complementary qualitative research could uncover nuanced dynamics and threshold mechanisms suggested by the findings. Finally, reliance on self-reported intentions creates potential common method bias; future research using actual purchase data or experimental designs would strengthen causal validity.

Conclusion

This study advances Islamic marketing theory by demonstrating that product quality remains the dominant driver of purchase decisions among religiously educated Muslim consumers, with Islamic branding functioning as a strategic quality amplifier rather than an independent alternative. The unexpected finding that halal awareness operates as a direct driver rather than contextual moderator challenges conventional assumptions and highlights the importance of context in consumer decision-making research.

Halal cosmetics manufacturers targeting educated Muslim consumers must prioritize authentic product quality while deploying Islamic branding as complementary enhancement. Marketing strategies emphasizing halal certification alone prove insufficient; demonstrable functional excellence combined with sharia compliance creates competitive advantage.

Homogeneous sample (single-site, female-only, pesantren context) limits generalizability. Cross-sectional design prevents causal inference. Future research should validate findings across diverse Muslim contexts and employ behavioral measures. As the global halal economy expands, understanding how faith-based attributes interact with functional quality becomes increasingly critical.

This study provides empirical evidence that educated Muslim consumers employ sophisticated dual-lens evaluation frameworks, demanding both spiritual authenticity and material excellence—a finding with profound implications for halal market positioning strategies.

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