

COUNTERFEIT COSMETICS PERCEPTION AMONG MUSLIM GOVERNMENT SERVANTS IN WISMA PERSEKUTUAN TAIPING, PERAK

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Abstract: *The aim of this research is to ascertain whether a significant difference exists in the perceptions of Muslim consumers concerning counterfeit cosmetic products in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping, contingent upon their degree of religiosity and brand awareness. We used the basic random sample method to get 239 surveys from Muslim government workers living in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping. We then used SPSS software to look at the data. The study's findings revealed a significant association between brand consciousness and the perception of Muslim government personnel in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping concerning counterfeit cosmetics. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that there is no significant association between religiosity and the attitudes of Muslim government personnel in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping towards counterfeit cosmetics. This study contributes to the current literature on Halal cosmetics research and provides important information to authorities on how Muslim consumers see fake cosmetic items. These findings can help regulators make the halal cosmetics business better regulated.*

Keywords: *Brand consciousness, counterfeit cosmetics, halal, perception, religiosity.*

Introduction

Cosmetic consumption has become an essential aspect of daily life, particularly among women, who constitute the primary consumer segment. The cosmetic industry encompasses various product categories, including skincare, haircare, dental care, bath, and fragrance products. Contemporary consumers are increasingly discerning and attentive to the composition and safety of cosmetic ingredients. Historically, cosmetic purchasing decisions were largely influenced by brand reputation and advertising appeal. However, a significant shift has occurred with the rising global demand for *halal* cosmetics. Muslim consumers, in particular, are more inclined to purchase *halal*-certified products produced by Muslim entrepreneurs, as these are perceived to be ethically manufactured and compliant with Islamic values. The growing Muslim population and its increasing purchasing power have further expanded the *halal* cosmetics market worldwide (Bakar et al., 2021). Despite this potential, awareness and acceptance of *halal*-certified cosmetics remain limited among consumers.

In contrast to the extensive emphasis on *halal* compliance in food products, concerns regarding *halal* issues in the beauty and personal care sector remain relatively neglected (Awang et al., 2020). Moreover, empirical studies on Muslim consumers' perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics are scarce. Religiosity is a crucial determinant of ethical consumption, shaping individuals' moral beliefs and behavioral tendencies. Ng et al. (2021) demonstrated that religion exerts both direct and indirect effects on consumers' inclination to purchase counterfeit products, while Pfordten et al. (2020) revealed that consumers in Kuwait did not perceive such behavior as unethical. Similar tendencies are observed in Malaysia, where Muslim consumers continue to use counterfeit cosmetics despite being aware of potential health risks and official warnings from the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) (Quah et al., 2022). This phenomenon underscores the limited understanding of *halalan tayyiban* principles, which emphasize both lawful (*halal*) and wholesome (*tayyib*) consumption. Consequently, the issue of counterfeit cosmetics extends beyond health and safety concerns to encompass moral and religious dimensions of consumer behavior.

Despite increasing awareness of *halal* and ethical consumption, the use of counterfeit cosmetics remains prevalent among Muslim consumers, including government servants who are expected to exemplify ethical conduct in accordance with Islamic teachings. Prior research has examined the influence of religion on consumers' engagement with counterfeit goods (Ng et al., 2021; Pfordten et al., 2020); however, limited empirical attention has been given to the combined influence of religiosity and brand awareness on perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics. This gap is critical because brand awareness significantly shapes consumer behavior—many women equate branded cosmetics with self-confidence, prestige, and social identity (Kumar & Kumar, 2022). Nevertheless, the high cost of authentic branded cosmetics often drives consumers toward cheaper counterfeit alternatives (Mussanova, 2021).

Furthermore, the rationale for focusing on Muslim government servants lies in their dual role as both consumers and public representatives of ethical standards. Understanding their perceptions offers valuable insights into how religiosity and brand awareness interact in shaping attitudes toward counterfeit cosmetics within a professional and ethically guided environment. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between religiosity, brand awareness, and perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics among Muslim government servants in Wisma Persekutuan, Taiping, Perak.

Literature Review

Halal Cosmetics

Cosmetics, also referred to as beauty products, are substances applied to the body for cleansing, beautifying, or altering appearance. According to the U.S. Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (2012), the term covers products such as lipsticks, moisturisers, makeup, sunscreens, and perfumes. In Islam, the concept of halal extends beyond food to include all consumable and personal care products. Halal cosmetics refer to products manufactured, stored, and distributed in compliance with Shariah principles, ensuring they are free from prohibited ingredients such as porcine derivatives, blood, or improperly slaughtered animal materials (Nur & Sapir, 2021; Hadi et al., 2020).

While the halal cosmetic sector shows significant growth potential, consumer awareness remains limited (Rosmala et al., 2022). Non-Muslim countries still dominate global cosmetic manufacturing, raising concerns regarding ingredient traceability and certification authenticity (Bajwa & Singh, 2019). Despite rising demand, Muslim consumers frequently express scepticism toward halal-certified products due to past incidents, such as the Cadbury case in 2014, which eroded public trust (Zaidi et al., 2022). Consequently, effective certification, transparent production, and increased consumer education are vital for reinforcing confidence in halal cosmetics.

The complexity of cosmetic ingredients—ranging from animal-derived collagen to plant-based extracts—poses a challenge in verifying halal compliance. Furthermore, cosmetic functionality must not obstruct Islamic rituals such as wudu (ablution). Hence, the halal cosmetic industry must balance religious compliance with product performance and consumer expectations (Harun et al., 2020). However, existing studies largely remain descriptive, calling for more analytical investigations into consumer behavior and perception toward halal cosmetics within specific cultural and occupational contexts.

Counterfeiting in the Cosmetic Industry

Counterfeiting refers to the unauthorized production and sale of imitation goods that infringe on intellectual property rights (Ruan et al., 2022). These fake products can be categorized as deceptive (where consumers are unaware of the falsity) and non-deceptive (where consumers knowingly purchase fakes) (Grossman & Shapiro, 1998; Shepherd et al., 2023). In the cosmetics sector, counterfeit products present serious health risks as they often contain hazardous substances such as mercury, hydroquinone, and tretinoin chemicals banned by the Malaysian National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) (Zaidi et al., 2022).

While counterfeiting is commonly studied in luxury goods (e.g., handbags, watches), fake cosmetics have more severe implications because of their direct bodily application. Prior research (Kumar & Kumar, 2022) emphasizes that counterfeit cosmetics endanger users' health and undermine trust in legitimate brands. Nevertheless, the literature reveals a lack of integration between moral, religious, and psychological determinants that explain why Muslim consumers—who are religiously discouraged from deceitful consumption still engage in counterfeit cosmetic purchases.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) explains human behavior through three determinants: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, all of which shape behavioral intention. TPB has been widely applied to predict

unethical consumer behaviors, including counterfeit purchasing (Lamptey et al., 2024; Feng et al., 2023).

However, while TPB provides a robust psychological framework, studies on counterfeit cosmetics seldom integrate external factors that are particularly relevant to Muslim consumers namely religiosity and brand consciousness. Religiosity may influence subjective norms (social and moral expectations), whereas brand consciousness may shape attitudes and perceived behavioral control by affecting consumers' evaluations of authenticity, prestige, and affordability. Thus, this study adapts TPB by incorporating these two constructs to explain Muslim government servants' perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics.

Religiosity and Consumer Perception

Religiosity refers to the degree to which religious beliefs, values, and practices influence an individual's behavior. Several studies (Zaidi et al., 2022; Arli et al., 2021) have demonstrated that higher religiosity strengthens ethical standards and reduces engagement in counterfeit purchasing. Conversely, other studies (Hadi et al., 2020; Awang et al., 2020) found that religiosity does not necessarily deter unethical consumption, as individuals may rationalize counterfeit purchases despite moral prohibitions.

This inconsistency suggests that the impact of religiosity on counterfeit consumption is context-dependent. Among Muslim consumers, religiosity is expected to reduce tolerance toward non-*halal* or counterfeit products due to *halalan tayyiban* values emphasizing lawful and wholesome consumption. Nevertheless, limited research has examined this relationship among Muslim government servants, a group expected to exemplify ethical conduct in both public and private spheres.

Hypothesis H1: Religiosity significantly influences Muslim government servants' perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics.

Brand Consciousness and Consumer Perception

Brand consciousness represents consumers' tendency to value branded products for their perceived prestige, quality, and social recognition (Ng et al., 2021). Prior studies indicate mixed findings: some report that higher brand consciousness reduces counterfeit purchasing (Quah et al., 2022; Sagban et al., 2023), while others suggest that financially constrained but brand-aware consumers may opt for counterfeit versions to maintain social status (Prathama et al., 2024; Azzari & Pelissari, 2021).

This contradiction highlights a need to further investigate the role of brand consciousness in shaping counterfeit attitudes within the Muslim population. In the context of this study, brand consciousness is posited to influence perceptions by determining how strongly consumers associate authenticity and brand image with self-confidence and trust.

Hypothesis H2: Brand consciousness significantly influences Muslim government servants' perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics.

Methodology

The study employs the quantitative research method to ascertain the correlation between variables, specifically the relationship between religiosity and Muslim consumers' perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics, as well as the association between brand consciousness and Muslim consumers' perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics. This study employs questionnaires as the principal research instrument. The questionnaire was made using Google Forms, and the same was delivered to the people who answered it online. We chose Google Forms as the platform for the survey because it lets us make questions required, and people can't complete the survey if they don't answer all of the required questions. We will send the link to this form by email and WhatsApp to as many people as possible. The research was conducted online, yielding 239 completed replies from Muslim consumers at Wisma Persekutuan Taiping. This study's participants were selected by convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability or non-random sampling in which participants are chosen based on practical considerations such how close they are to the research location, how easy it is for them to get there, whether they are available at a certain time, or whether they are willing to take part. Convenience sampling is cheap, easy, and lets you get to the subjects quickly (Puteri et al., 2025).

The target demographic for this research comprised government employees in Kelantan. The government facilities at Wisma Persekutuan Taiping were used to collect data from government workers. There were 16 agencies involved, including the National Registration Department, Immigration Department, Department of Statistics, and Valuation and Property Services Department. Wisma Persekutuan was picked because it is the biggest place to work in Taiping and has government offices and ministries in its buildings. We used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 28.0 software to look at the data we got from the surveys we sent out. The data were subsequently analysed using descriptive analysis. We used descriptive statistics to find the mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage of the data we got from the data collection. Afterward, this investigation utilised standard multiple linear regression. SPSS has a statistical analysis method called multiple linear regression that looks at how numerous independent factors affect the variability of a dependent variable. The research utilised multiple linear regression to analyse the relationship between religion and brand awareness about Muslim consumers' perceptions of counterfeit cosmetics. As a result, various methods of analysis were used to find out if the hypotheses were true.

Results and Discussion

Survey Return Rate: 239 sets of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents were managed to be collected by the researcher where the results portrayed a yielding response rate of 90.3% as tabulated in Table 1. The raw data were then keyed in and examined by utilizing the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 28.0 and the analysis on reliability, correlation and regression was conducted parallel to the purpose of this study.

Table 1: Number of Respondents Involved (n=219)

Number of Questionnaires distributed	The number of Questionnaire returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number of valid Questionnaire	Percentage valid (%)
262	239	90.3	239	100.0

Mean and Standard Deviation: The purpose of conducting the mean and standard deviation analysis was to understand the average value of the factors and the degree of dispersion.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Religiosity, Brand Consciousness and Muslim Consumer Perception

Variables	Mean	SD
Religiosity	4.81	.38
Brand Consciousness	4.64	.34
Muslim Consumer Perception	4.58	.39

Descriptive analysis was performed on the variables in this study. As presented in Table 2.0 above, it shows the results of the analysis which involve mean value and standard deviation of each variable. The mean values are in the range of 4.81 and 4.58. Standard deviation values range from .34 to .39. The highest mean value is for Religiosity with a score of 4.71 and the lowest mean value is for Muslim Consumer Perception with a score of 4.58. Regression analysis is conducted to investigate the correlation between several independent variables and a single dependent variable. The variables investigated in this investigation include religiosity and brand consciousness. The dependent variable in this study refers to the perceptions of Muslim consumers regarding counterfeit cosmetics.

Table 3: Results of Regression Analysis with Muslim Consumer Perception as the Dependent Variable

Independent Variables	Standardized Beta Values
Religiosity	.180
Brand Consciousness	.393*
R	.385
R squared	.188
F values	6.552
Significant F values	.003
Durbin Watson	2.198

From table above shows that the R squared value is 18.8%, indicating that 18.8% of the variance in the regression model has been explained by the independent variables. The significance F value ($F = 6.552$, $p = 0.003$) indicates model fit and the Durbin Watson value is 2.198 and still within the acceptance range. Looking at the individual contribution of independent variables in explaining Muslim Consumer Perception as the dependent variable, Brand consciousness ($\beta = .393$, $p < .01$) is found to be a significant predictor. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported. This suggests that brand consciousness is positively associated with the perception of Muslim government servants in Wisma Persekutuan, Taiping regarding counterfeit cosmetics, and this association is statistically significant. This finding is based on a study conducted by Zia et al. (2021) revealed that brand consciousness has a strong effect on the intention to purchase counterfeit goods. Hence, this finding is consistent with a study conducted by Zollo et al. (2020), which demonstrates that being aware of brands has a positive engagement with or intention to purchase counterfeit products.

A previous study conducted by Iriani et al. (2024), discovered that consumer's intention toward brand awareness has a beneficial impact on their decision to buy counterfeit goods. In a separate

study conducted by Mayasari et al. (2022), it was discovered that brand consciousness has a favorable influence on customers' intention to purchase counterfeit products. The statistical analysis reveals that there is no significant correlation between religiosity and the perception of Muslim government servants in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping about counterfeit cosmetics. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. Consistent with a study conducted by Yaakop et al. (2021), it was discovered that religiosity had a negligible influence on an individual's perspective toward counterfeit fashion items. This phenomenon indicates that the instructions regarding the ban on counterfeiting activities have not been sufficiently put into practice. Conversely, prior research has demonstrated that religiosity exerts a favorable influence on consumers' attitudes toward counterfeit cosmetics. For instance, Abraham et al. (2022) discovered that those who have a stronger religious intention tend to display a more morally upright stance when it comes to counterfeit goods.

Discussion

The research utilised the Theory of Planned Behaviour to examine the impact of external factors, including brand consciousness, on Muslim consumers' views of counterfeit cosmetics. The primary aim of this study is to investigate the perception of counterfeit cosmetics among Muslim consumers in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping. The findings of this study demonstrate a significant association between brand consciousness and the perceptions of Muslim consumers in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping regarding counterfeit cosmetics. Research on the acquisition of counterfeit goods in Malaysia indicates that value consciousness is a significant determinant influencing consumer attitudes and buy intentions for counterfeit consumption (Bogal et al., 2024). This idea goes against the evidence because customers are fully aware of the risks of using fake cosmetics because of what they already know and believe about counterfeits, which affects their decision to buy them.

Malaysian consumers have been influenced by the mindset of seeking bargains and spending every cent wisely. However, factors such as safety and security take precedence in their choice of cosmetics, which elucidates the negative attitudes and beliefs regarding counterfeit products. Moreover, religiosity did not exhibit a significant association with the attitudes of Muslim consumers in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping regarding counterfeit cosmetics. The results of this study demonstrate that Muslim customers in Wisma Persekutuan Taiping have a significant awareness of the existence of counterfeit cosmetic products in the local market. A previous study by Khan et al. (2025) emphasised the apprehension of Muslim consumers regarding the 'haram' law, which prohibits actions contrary to their religion. Their justification for engaging in counterfeit consumption was that their intention was to share the benefits of resources with others, rendering their actions acceptable.

Even when their religion and personal beliefs are strong, people often use different ways to justify their bad behaviour. Hussain et al. (2024) discovered that customers asserted the acceptability of purchasing counterfeit items from a legal and registered store, indicating a deficiency in self-honesty regarding their consuming behaviour (Fernando & Hassan, 2025). This study's findings are expected to increase the awareness of counterfeit cosmetic products among consumers, retailers, manufacturers, and governmental entities. To keep Muslim clients from buying and using fake cosmetics, it is important to teach them about the importance of *halalan tayyiban* in cosmetics and warn them about the dangers of fake cosmetics. It is expected that cosmetics companies will set stricter standards for choosing ingredients, making products, packing them, and shipping them to make sure they are of high quality.

Conclusion

Cosmetic items have become essential elements of the daily lives and routines of individuals, especially among Muslim consumers. The increase in the manufacture of halal cosmetics is due to the fact that more Muslims want these kinds of products. There has been an increase, but Muslim customers still don't know much about how important halalan tayyiban is in cosmetics. Even still, some people still buy fake cosmetics and have to deal with the consequences. Because of this, governments need to be more careful about getting rid of fake cosmetics that are supplied without the right licenses or permissions. Also, government agencies can help teach people about how important halalan tayyiban is in cosmetics. Schools can teach kids about awareness so that they can learn about it at a young age. Also, television stations, columns, and other media can help spread the word about fake cosmetics. Further investigations may enhance and refine the halal cosmetic study by a more thorough analysis.

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