

The Rise of Halal Beauty in Muslim-Minority Country: A Case Study of a Japanese Halal Beauty Brand

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ABSTRACT

The global halal industry has experienced significant expansion beyond the food sector, extending into various domains, including cosmetics. This growth is evident not only in Muslim-majority countries but also in regions with smaller Muslim populations, reflecting a broader consumer interest in ethical and sustainable products. The global halal cosmetics market was valued at approximately USD 47.76 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 115.03 billion by 2032, with a CAGR of 11.67%. In Japan, where awareness of halal beauty remains limited, businesses face unique challenges in establishing and promoting halal-certified products. Therefore, this study explores the rise of halal beauty in Japan through a case study of Hajime Skincare, a halal cosmetic brand in Osaka. The research examines the motivations and challenges behind launching a halal beauty brand, marketing strategies for promoting halal cosmetics, and the certification process in Japan for biochemical products. Data was collected through an in-depth interview with the brand owner. Findings reveal increasing demand for halal cosmetics, driven by ethical consumerism and Muslim-friendly tourism. However, challenges persist, particularly in raising public awareness of halal principles and sourcing halal-certified ingredients. This is especially significant for Hajime Skincare, which produces collagen and elastin-based products, as obtaining halal-compliant sources for these ingredients is complex. The study emphasises the necessity of enhanced consumer education to foster the growth of Japan's halal beauty industry.

INTRODUCTION

The global halal industry has undergone substantial expansion beyond the food sector, extending into various domains, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and services. This growth is observed not only in Muslim-majority countries but also in regions with smaller Muslim populations, reflecting a broader consumer interest in ethical and sustainable products (Selvakumar et al., 2025). The global halal cosmetics market was estimated to be valued at approximately USD 47.76 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 115.03 billion by 2032, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.67% (Fortune Business Insights, 2025). This study focuses on the emergence and development of halal beauty brands in Japan, a

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country where the concept of halal is relatively nascent. The objectives of the study are: (1) to examine the motivations and challenges associated with establishing a halal beauty brand in Japan, (2) to identify the marketing strategies employed to promote halal beauty products, and (3) to explore the certification processes in Japan regarding biochemical products. To achieve these objectives, an in-depth interview was conducted with the owner of Hajime Skincare and Herbs, a halal-certified cosmetic brand based in Osaka, Japan. The study further highlights the distinctive challenges faced by halal cosmetic brands in Japan, including the navigation of certification processes and the effective marketing to a diverse consumer base.

Overview of the Japanese Cosmetics Market

Japan's cosmetics market is one of the largest and most sophisticated in the world, known for its high-quality products, innovation, and strong consumer trust. As of 2023, Japan ranks globally as the third-largest beauty and personal care market, following the United States and China, with a market value exceeding USD 35 billion (Statista, 2025). In 2024, the market size was USD 27.5 billion, projected to grow by 2.6% to 2,704 billion yen in 2025 (TPC Marketing Research, 2024). Japanese consumers prioritise skincare over makeup, emphasising the importance of healthy, radiant skin as the foundation of beauty. Products such as facial cleansers, serums, and sun protection are particularly popular due to Japan's skincare-centric beauty culture. The demand for anti-ageing products is also rising, driven by the country's ageing population.

One of Japan's most influential platforms shaping consumer choices is @cosme (<https://www.cosme.com>), Japan's largest online beauty community. The platform features extensive user-generated reviews, product rankings, and expert recommendations. Twice a year, in June and December, @cosme hosts The Best Cosmetics Awards, where beauty products are ranked based on real user votes. Winning an award significantly boosts a product's popularity, often leading to increased sales or even selling out in stores. This highlights the importance of consumer trust and peer recommendations in the Japanese beauty industry. On the other hand, Japan's cosmetics market is dominated by several major companies, including Shiseido, KOSÉ, Kanebo, Pola Orbis, and FANCL, which have established strong domestic and international reputations. These brands engage in substantial investment in research and development (R&D) to uphold superior product quality and integrate innovative skincare technologies, including biotechnology and advancements in dermatology. Nevertheless, the accessibility of halal cosmetics continues to be restricted. Certification authorities, including the Nippon Asia Halal Association (NAHA) and the Japan Muslim Association (JMA), are striving to certify a greater number of products, ensuring compliance with rigorous halal standards.

Key Trends in Japan's Halal Beauty Industry

The beauty industry in Japan has experienced noteworthy trends in recent years. It is characterised by a creative integration of traditional practices and innovative approaches, consistently adapting to changes in consumer demands, preferences, and technological advancements. The dynamics of technological developments, evolving consumer preferences, and international influences significantly reshape Japan's beauty sector (Nancy Chhabra et al., 2021). Beauty Tech, representing the convergence of beauty and technology, has emerged as a prominent trend that includes technologically sophisticated beauty products, diagnostic instruments, and virtual reality applications crafted to enhance consumer experiences (Kim, J.W., 2022). These technological advancements enrich the consumer experience by empowering beauty companies to furnish personalised recommendations and solutions tailored to individual consumer needs and skin types (Esther Choi, 2022). Furthermore, well-informed consumers who prioritise convenience and effectiveness are adopting innovations such as 3D digital makeup, customised cosmetics manufacturing processes, and at-home beauty devices (Hwang et al., 2024).

Next, sustainability is becoming an increasingly significant consideration for Japanese consumers when purchasing, and many are even willing to pay extra for environmentally conscious products (Kaori

Takahashi, 2024). As consumers' awareness of environmental and health issues develops, research shows their preferences gravitate toward more organic and natural beauty products (Park, et al., 2022). According to a study by K. Han et al. (2023), the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted consumer behaviour, increasing online purchasing and heightened interest in more holistic and self-care products. According to the same study, consumer psychology is significantly influenced by beauty management behaviour, which affects service demands, psychological benefits, and safety standards. Consequently, this raises consumer awareness of ingredients and production methods, where transparency is required, and brands must explicitly explain the benefits and contents of their products.

Furthermore, due to the increasing concerns regarding environmental issues and heightened consumer awareness of the potential health risks associated with certain cosmetic ingredients, the 'clean beauty' trend, characterised by products that contain no hazardous substances and are produced using environmentally sustainable practices, has gained considerable popularity in Japan (Pandey et al., 2024). Japanese consumers are actively seeking formulations that are gentle on both their skin and the environment, and they are becoming increasingly discerning regarding packaging and ingredients (Baviskar et al., 2024). Consequently, numerous companies have reformulated their products, eliminated controversial components, and adopted greater transparency concerning their formulation standards. This development mirrors a growing shift in consumer beliefs, wherein ethical, sustainable, and health-related factors are no longer regarded as supplementary benefits but are now integral to purchasing decisions. In addition, digital marketing has significantly contributed to the expansion of Japanese beauty companies, as they have now embraced influencer partnerships and social media platforms to engage with consumers (Kalaij et al., 2025). Beauty companies are utilising artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) technologies to enhance the online shopping experience by enabling consumers to virtually try their products before making a purchase. Thus, social media can be perceived as an effective channel and resource for advertising, obtaining consumer feedback, and identifying new trends. It also empowers consumers with an abundance of information, allowing them to utilise reviews and comparisons to make more informed purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, Japanese beauty companies place a significant emphasis on ecological sustainability, as manufacturers adopt a range of measures aimed at minimising their environmental impact. One effort is using eco-friendly packaging, which is progressively valued by Japanese consumers, improving consumer loyalty and brand perception. Besides packaging, sourcing materials, production procedures, and societal responsibility initiatives that address more general environmental issues also contribute to the shift in sustainability (Hendriana, 2024). Therefore, this trend represents a significant transformation in industry practices, where sustainability is recognised as an essential component of corporate reputation and business operations. Another apparent key trend is catering to the beauty needs of senior citizens. The ageing population in Japan has increased, which has significantly impacted the beauty industry, driving demand for products and services specifically designed for senior citizens. Anti-ageing products have become a significant market niche with businesses developing formulas that address specific issues with ageing skin (Park, 2020). As a result, beauty companies are developing broader marketing tactics and product lines that promote beauty across all ages by creating new formulations and ingredients that enhance skin appearance and address age-related concerns.

Furthermore, significant effects of globalisation are becoming apparent. International brands have influenced Japanese perceptions of beauty (Jones, 2011), leading to a complex combination of traditional Japanese beauty norms and foreign ideas. This produces hybrid standards that incorporate aspects of multiple different cultures. Due to this, the Japanese beauty industry is becoming increasingly competitive, prompting local businesses to innovate to distinguish themselves from their competitors and maintain their market share and position in the industry. Subsequently, the Korean beauty trend has significantly influenced the Japanese beauty industry, offering innovative product approaches and advertising strategies

that attract Japanese consumers (Choi, 2022). Evidently, Korean beauty (K-beauty) has become a global trendsetter, with many prominent beauty businesses establishing K-beauty areas in response to increased consumer interest in Korean skincare and cosmetics. This has prompted Japanese brands to incorporate Korean beauty aspects into their product formulas and marketing strategies while preserving their unique individuality and tradition.

Contemporary Issues in Halal Cosmetics Products

One of the contemporary issues in halal cosmetics is the use of ingredients derived from animals that are prohibited or that have not been slaughtered according to Islamic law (H. Nawwaruddin et al., 2024). This is due to conflict between ethical principles and religious obligations, which may impact Muslims' religious and spiritual beliefs (Azmi & Elgharbawy, 2022). Furthermore, the origin of chemical substances used in cosmetic products, whether synthetic or natural, is essential in evaluating their halal status (Nordin & Radzi, 2021). Those sourced from insects would be deemed prohibited, while those sourced from bovine animals might be an issue if the animals are not prepared under halal standards. Furthermore, synthetic sources are frequently classified as *masbooh* or questionable, as their source of raw materials is unclear and may be either plant- or animal-derived. As a result, it becomes challenging to determine if they properly meet the halal standards (WS & Madi, 2019). Table 1 below explains some examples of ingredients considered syubhah and haram in halal cosmetics and skincare.

Table 1. Ingredients Considered Syubhah and Haram in Halal Cosmetics and Skincare

Ingredients	Sources	Reason for Prohibition
Collagen	Non-halal animal sources, e.g., pigs, non-slaughtered animals	Derived from non-halal slaughtered animals or pigs, which are strictly prohibited in Islam.
Gelatin	Non-halal sources, e.g., pigs, non-slaughtered animals	Obtained from non-halal animal bones and skin, commonly from pigs.
Placenta Extract	Animal-derived, e.g., pig, cow, or human	Extracted from human or animal placenta, raising ethical and religious concerns.
Glycerin	Non-halal animal fat sources	If sourced from non-halal animal fat, it becomes questionable unless verified as plant based.
Lanolin	Non-halal sheep fat	Commonly derived from sheep's wool; if the sheep is not slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines, it is doubtful.
Carmine	E120, from crushed cochineal insects	Derived from insects, which are generally impermissible (according to the Brunei and Malaysia Fatwa)
Alcohol	Ethanol, used in fragrances, skincare, and hair products	If it is intoxicating or derived from non-halal fermentation processes, it is prohibited
Urea	Animal urine	If sourced from animals or human urine, it is haram
Stearic Acid	Animal fat, unless plant based	It can be derived from animal fat or plants; the source needs verification.
Emulsifiers	Mono- and Diglycerides from non-halal sources	It may come from animal-based sources and requires verification for halal compliance.
Lecithin	Animal sources, e.g., eggs, or soy-based alternatives	Egg-based lecithin is permissible if from halal-certified sources; soy-based is halal.
Hyaluronic Acid	Animal sources or synthetic alternatives	It is doubtful if derived from animal tissues; synthetic forms are halal.

Source: Developed by the authors

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the rise of halal beauty in Japan, focusing on Hajime Skincare, a halal cosmetic brand based in Osaka. The research aims to examine the motivations behind launching a halal beauty brand, the challenges encountered in the industry, the marketing strategies used to promote halal cosmetics, and the certification process for biochemical products in Japan. The interview was semi-structured, allowing flexibility in responses while ensuring that key research areas were covered. The interview was conducted in a mixed-language format, utilising English, Japanese, and Indonesian as needed to ensure clear communication. The responses were transcribed and translated, and the collected data were analysed using narrative analysis.

Table 2. Interview Questions

Interview Questions	
1.	Can you share the story behind your <i>halal</i> cosmetic brand? What inspired you to start this business?
2.	What does Hajime mean, and why did you name your brand Hajime Skincare and Herb?
3.	What steps did you take to ensure your products meet halal requirements?
4.	Have you obtained any halal certifications for your cosmetics? If so, which organisation certified your products?
5.	Can you elaborate on the certification process in Japan? Is obtaining <i>halal</i> certification expensive, and how long is the certification valid for?
6.	Who are your main customers? Is it from Muslims living in Japan, tourists, or non-Muslims interested in ethical beauty? How do Japanese consumers perceive halal cosmetics?
7.	Have you noticed an increase in demand for halal-certified cosmetics in Japan?
8.	What marketing strategies do you use to promote halal cosmetics in Japan?
9.	What are the challenges in running a halal cosmetics business in Japan?
10.	Do you collaborate with any local or international organisations to expand the halal beauty industry in Japan?

Source: Developed by the authors

RESULTS AND FINDING

Hajime Skincare and Herb

Hajime Skincare & Herb is the first Indonesian halal skincare company established in Japan, offering a range of skincare products and facial treatment services that cater to the needs of Muslim consumers. Hajime Skincare & Herb provides high-quality, vegan, and Muslim-friendly skincare solutions, ensuring that all its products comply with halal principles. This commitment renders the products suitable for Muslims as well as individuals who opt for ethical and natural beauty items. The company partners with various traditional local Japanese skincare manufacturers that specialise in producing Muslim-friendly products, thereby further reinforcing its dedication to delivering safe and superior skincare. In addition to its skincare offerings, Hajime Skincare & Herb provides facial treatments specifically designed to relax and rejuvenate the skin, utilising 100% pure essential oils and aromatherapy fragrances sourced from Indonesian herbs. Furthermore, Hajime Skincare & Herb extends private, home-based facial treatment services at a reasonable rate, enhancing accessibility for customers who prefer personalised skincare sessions within the comfort of their residences. Table 3 is an overview of the products provided by the company:

Table 3. Products Provided by Hajime Skincare and Herb

No.	Types	Details
1.	Enchante Hot Cleansing Gel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gel cleanser that removes makeup while clearing off all the first, excess sebum and sweat in pores



Enchante Facial Lotion

- Soften the skin and make it more supple
- Boost collagen production
- Skin barrier protector
- pH balance regulator

2.



Enchante Facial Treatment Gel

- Moisturising toner smoothens and hydrates skin
- It contains a high concentration of marine collagen and elastin
- Zero irritants, fragrance-free, colourant-free and suitable for all skin types

3.



- Moisturising essence serum containing marine collagen and elastin
- Slow down the ageing process and regenerate skin

Source: Hajime Skincare

In addition to its unique product offerings, the brand has faced various challenges in Japan's growing halal beauty market. An in-depth interview with the owner gathered key insights regarding the motivations behind starting the business, obtaining halal certification, marketing strategies, customer perceptions, and the challenges encountered in running a halal skincare business in Japan.

The following section presents the owner's responses, providing a deeper understanding of Hajime Skincare & Herb's journey and impact on the halal cosmetics industry.

Table 4. Interview Responses

Interview Questions	Responses
<p>1. Can you share the story behind your halal cosmetic brand? What inspired you to start this business?</p>	<p><i>In 2020, we had initially planned to return home to Indonesia, but due to the COVID-19 lockdown, we were unable to travel. As a result, we decided to change our plans and establish our business here in Japan. Working as a specialist formulator in skincare and healthcare formulations in Indonesia, I have always been passionate about guiding Muslim consumers in selecting safe and permissible ingredients. Many Indonesian women frequently ask me whether Japanese skincare products are halal and safe. To address their concerns, I began researching and reaching out to companies via calls and emails. I was surprised to discover that many skincare products in Japan contain non-halal ingredients. The availability of halal-certified skincare products here is also extremely limited.</i></p> <p><i>Recognising this gap, I told my husband that I wanted to start this business to help Muslim women in Japan better understand halal skincare. Awareness of halal should extend beyond food to include personal care products as well. Some ingredients commonly found in Japanese skincare, such as those derived from animal sources, urea, placenta, and collagen, are not always halal. Additionally, I noticed that many women in Indonesia purchase Japanese skincare products through personal shoppers, known as 'Jastip' (Jasa</i></p>

- Titip). However, these products are not always verified for their halal status or ingredient safety, which raises concerns for Muslim consumers” (Translated)*
2. What does Hajime mean, and why did you name your brand Hajime Skincare and Herb?

“The name ‘Hajime’ holds a special meaning for us. In Japanese, ‘Hajime’ means ‘first’ or ‘beginning,’ symbolising a new journey and fresh opportunities. Additionally, it is also the name of our first son, making it even more meaningful” (Translated)
 3. What steps did you take to ensure your products meet halal requirements?

“To ensure compliance with halal certification, ingredient sourcing, and manufacturing processes, we take several key measures. First, we carefully select companies and factories specialising in producing halal-certified ingredients. This is crucial in maintaining the integrity of our products. Additionally, since our manufacturing facility is located in Shizuoka, which is quite far from our home, we prioritise visiting the factory at least once a week. When an in-person visit is not possible, we closely monitor the production process through regular email communication to ensure that all operations adhere to halal standards” (Translated)
 4. Have you obtained any halal certifications for your cosmetics? If so, which organisation certified your products?

“Yes, our products are officially halal-certified by the Nippon Asia Halal Association. At this stage, we believe that obtaining this certification is sufficient to ensure compliance with halal standards” (Translated)
 5. Can you elaborate on the certification process in Japan? Is obtaining halal certification expensive, and how long is the certification valid for?

“The halal certification process is quite lengthy and comes with a significant cost. For a newly certified product, the total expense is approximately ¥710,000 (excluding tax), which includes the pre-audit process. For surveillance and renewal, the cost is around ¥500,000 (excluding tax). As for the certification procedure itself, we are not directly involved in the detailed verification process. Since we focus on product development, we coordinate with a designated company appointed by the halal certification body. This company handles the necessary arrangements, including transporting our products directly to the factory for inspection and verification to ensure they meet halal standards. Once approved, the halal certification remains valid for two years, after which the renewal process is required to maintain compliance” (Translated)
 6. Who are your main customers? Is it from Muslims living in Japan, tourists, or non-Muslims interested in ethical beauty? How do Japanese consumers perceive halal cosmetics?

Our primary customers are primarily Muslims living in Japan and Muslim tourists seeking halal-certified skincare products. However, Japanese consumers often have a misconception that halal products are exclusively for Muslims. Many assume that the presence of a halal logo means the product is not suitable for them.

To address this, I make an effort to educate and inform Japanese consumers about the true meaning of halal. I explain that halal certification not only ensures compliance with Islamic dietary and ethical guidelines but also emphasises purity, cleanliness, and quality ingredients, which can benefit everyone, regardless of their religion. By raising awareness, I hope to bridge the gap in understanding and encourage more non-Muslims to consider halal beauty products as a safe, ethical, and high-quality option” (Translated)
 7. Have you noticed an increase in demand for halal-certified cosmetics in Japan?

“Yes, I believe that starting this year, there has been a noticeable increase in demand for Hajime Skincare and Herb products. We have seen a growing interest, particularly in complete skincare sets, which indicates that more consumers are embracing halal beauty. While we continue expanding our product range to meet this demand, the positive response has been very encouraging.

In addition to product sales, we also offer facial treatments, and we have regular customers who visit us on a monthly basis. Through their experience and satisfaction with our services, many of them recommend our brand to their friends and family, helping us grow through word-of-mouth marketing” (Translated)

- Our marketing strategy encompasses multiple approaches to effectively reaching our target audience. First and foremost, we utilise social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to create and share content about halal ingredients and the benefits of halal skincare. These platforms enable us to reach a broader audience and educate them on the importance of halal cosmetics.*
- Additionally, we conduct online webinars discussing sensitive skin, its management, effective treatment methods, and suitable product solutions. Through these sessions, we not only provide skincare knowledge but also introduce the importance of halal-certified products. Another key strategy is offering free consultations. I personally provide skincare advice and recommendations, ensuring that customers feel confident in their choices. During facial treatments, I take the opportunity to educate customers about halal ingredients, explaining why specific components are more suitable for ethical and halal-conscious consumers.*
- We also conduct offline marketing efforts by directly engaging with the Muslim community in Japan. Every Saturday, when I visit the mosque, I distribute catalogues and brochures to spread awareness about our products. Additionally, we actively promote our brand during major gatherings such as Eid bazaars, where many Muslims come together. We also sponsor Muslimah competitions, further increasing visibility within the community” (Translated)*
- “In the early years of starting this business, one of the biggest challenges I faced was the lack of awareness among Muslims in Japan about halal skincare. Many would compare my products with those of well-known brands and assume that using skincare without a halal certificate or logo was acceptable. They also tended to focus more on price and ingredients rather than whether the product was halal-compliant.*
- Another challenge was building trust as a small business. Many people naturally trust big brands more, making it difficult for me to convince them that my products were halal, safe, and effective. Seeing some people doubt the importance of halal skincare was quite disheartening because they were more familiar with international brands.*
- Finding halal-certified ingredients in Japan is also a significant challenge. Since our products contain collagen and elastin, it is crucial to ensure that the sources are halal-compliant, but halal-certified ingredients and factories are very limited here. Many customers prefer to buy a complete skincare set, from facial wash to sunscreen. However, due to the difficulty in sourcing ingredients and finding a suitable factory, we have not yet been able to launch a complete set. This has led some customers to choose other brands offering complete skincare lines. While I have noticed a growing demand for halal skincare in Japan, there are still many people, Muslims included, who are not yet fully aware of its importance” (Translated)*
- “We collaborate with our Indonesian partners, particularly in packaging design and production. Our Indonesian friends handle the design and printing of our product packaging, which is then sent to Japan for final assembly. The reason we source our packaging from Indonesia is primarily due to cost efficiency; packaging production in Japan tends to be quite expensive. Meanwhile, our skincare products themselves are entirely manufactured in Japan to ensure high quality and compliance with local standards” (Translated)*

Source: Developed by the authors

Motivations behind Launching a Halal Beauty Brand

The motivation to establish Hajime Skincare & Herb originated from the founder’s personal experiences and the demand for halal-certified cosmetics among Muslim women in Japan. The founder, who was initially a skincare and healthcare formulator in Indonesia, noted that many Japanese skincare products

contained non-halal ingredients, including those derived from animal sources, urea, placenta, and collagen. Acknowledging the absence of halal-certified skincare products in Japan and the increasing concerns among Indonesian women purchasing Japanese products through personal shoppers without verified halal status, she resolved to address this gap by founding her brand to educate consumers and offer halal-compliant skincare products.

The Inspiring Journey of Hajime Skincare and Herb

The establishment of a halal cosmetic brand in Japan was motivated by personal circumstances and a profound commitment to serving the Muslim community. The founder of Hajime Skincare, who hails from Indonesia, had planned to return home in 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 lockdown and travel restrictions, they were unable to leave Japan. This unforeseen circumstance prompted a reassessment of their plans, ultimately leading to the decision to initiate a business in Japan instead. With a background as a specialist formulator in skincare and healthcare products, the founder possessed extensive knowledge regarding cosmetic ingredients. This expertise proved vital when they observed a rising concern among Indonesian women regarding the safety of Japanese skincare products. Numerous Muslim women sought advice on whether Japanese skincare brands adhered to halal principles and were permissible. This demand for beauty solutions aligned with halal considerations inspired the founder to engage in comprehensive research, which included reaching out to Japanese cosmetic companies to inquire about the sources of their ingredients and formulations. Surprisingly, they discovered many Japanese skincare products contained non-halal ingredients derived from animals, urea, placenta, and collagen.

Recognising the substantial deficiency in the availability of halal-certified skincare products in Japan, the founder experienced a profound sense of responsibility to formulate a solution. They were especially driven by the observation that numerous Muslim women acquired Japanese skincare items through personal shoppers, referred to as "*Jastip*" or '*jasa titip*' in Indonesia, without confirming the halal status or safety of the ingredients involved. This absence of awareness and transparency emphasised the pressing necessity for a dependable halal beauty brand in Japan. Motivated by the conviction that halal awareness ought to encompass not only food but also personal care and beauty products, the founder and their spouse resolved to establish a halal cosmetic brand. Their objective was not solely to provide halal-certified skincare but also to enlighten and empower Muslim women in Japan to make informed decisions regarding the products they utilise.

The actions undertaken by the founder closely resemble those of many other founders of halal beauty brands, who are driven by their faith and the objective of offering Muslim consumers products that adhere to Islamic law, thereby ensuring safety and purity. For instance, Nurhayati Subakat, founder of Wardah Cosmetics in Indonesia, was driven by her devout Muslim faith and the need for halal-certified cosmetics to allow Muslims to feel safe using beauty products without worry about haram ingredients like lard or alcohol (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2023).

The name 'Hajime' carries both linguistic and personal significance for the founders of Hajime Skincare and Herb. In Japanese, *Hajime* (はじめ) means "first" or "beginning," symbolising a fresh start, a new journey, and the foundation of something meaningful. This reflects the brand's mission to pioneer halal skincare in Japan, where awareness and availability of halal-certified beauty products are still in their early stages. In addition to its symbolic significance, Hajime possesses a profound sentimental value for the founders, as it represents the name of their first son. By naming their brand after him, they convey their love and commitment as parents while demonstrating a dedication to creating a legacy that future generations may benefit from. This personal connection infuses the brand with emotional depth, transforming it from merely a business endeavour into a reflection of their aspirations, values, and journey in promoting halal beauty in Japan. The brand seeks to introduce a halal, safe, and high-quality skincare

option for Muslim consumers and individuals pursuing ethical beauty solutions within the Japanese market. Through this initiative, the founders aim to educate, empower, and provide a new beginning for those wishing to transition to halal and ethical skincare.

Ensuring Halal Compliance in Cosmetics Products

Ensuring that Hajime Skincare and Herb adheres to halal requirements remains a paramount priority for the founders. In consideration of the stringent standards associated with halal certification, they have adopted a comprehensive strategy to guarantee that their products align with Islamic principles at every stage of production. A crucial step in this process involves the careful sourcing of halal-certified ingredients. Given that many conventional skincare components are derived from non-halal sources, such as animal by-products, collagen, and placenta, the founders meticulously select suppliers and manufacturers who provide halal-certified raw materials. Furthermore, a significant element in maintaining halal integrity pertains to the manufacturing process. The company's production facility is in Shizuoka, Japan, which is distant from their headquarters. To ensure that all operations conform to halal standards, the founders conduct weekly visits to the factory. These site inspections afford them the opportunity to oversee the manufacturing process personally, guaranteeing that the equipment, production methods, and handling of ingredients adhere to halal and tayyib principles. In addition to physical visits, they sustain consistent communication with the factory through email and remote monitoring, thereby addressing any concerns promptly and upholding their halal commitment. Through meticulous measures, such as the careful selection of ingredients, rigorous vetting of suppliers, and continuous monitoring of the production process, the founders of Hajime Skincare and Herb ensure that their products are not only halal-certified but also safe, ethical, and appropriate for Muslim consumers both in Japan and internationally.

Halal Certification for Cosmetics in Japan

The expansion of the Muslim demographic globally, coupled with an increasing awareness of halal standards, has engendered a significant demand for halal cosmetics. Consequently, brands strive to cultivate trust and foster loyalty by rigorously adhering to halal principles, which constitute a pivotal consideration for Muslim consumers in the cosmetic sector. Therefore, ensuring halal compliance through official certification is an essential component of Hajime Skincare and Herb's operations. The company has successfully acquired halal certification from the NAHA, thereby enhancing its credibility and providing assurance to consumers. This certification guarantees that the skincare products conform to stringent halal standards, affirming that the ingredients, production methodologies, and handling procedures comply with Islamic directives. The decision to pursue halal certification is driven by the escalating demand among Muslim consumers for authentic and reliable halal skincare products. The procurement of official certification bolsters confidence among consumers who prioritise halal and ethical beauty solutions.

The founders are of the opinion that NAHA's halal certification is adequate to substantiate their commitment to halal integrity. This certification not only guarantees adherence to religious guidelines but also functions as an important marketing instrument to appeal to both Muslim consumers and individuals in pursuit of ethical and clean beauty products. Nevertheless, as the enterprise develops and ventures into new markets, the company maintains a willingness to acquire supplementary certifications to further enhance its halal credibility and expand its consumer base.

Nevertheless, acquiring halal certification for cosmetic products in Japan presents a complex, protracted, and costly endeavour. In contrast to the more prevalent and well-established halal certification for food products, the certification process for cosmetics necessitates comprehensive verification of ingredients and manufacturing processes in order to ensure adherence to Islamic guidelines. For products seeking initial certification, the total expense is approximately ¥710,000 (excluding tax), encompassing the

preliminary audit conducted by the certifying authority. Furthermore, businesses must engage in recurrent surveillance and renewal procedures, costing approximately ¥500,000 (excluding tax). Considering these substantial costs, small and emerging halal beauty brands frequently encounter financial obstacles in both securing and sustaining certification.

In terms of procedure, the founders of Hajime Skincare and Herb elucidated that they are not directly engaged in every aspect of the verification process. Rather, they collaborate with a company appointed by the halal certification authority, which undertakes the necessary product evaluations and ensures adherence to compliance standards. This company is tasked with delivering its products directly to the factory for inspection and verification. The comprehensive certification process entails rigorous assessments to verify that all ingredients, formulations, and production techniques conform to halal standards. Once acquired, the halal certification remains valid for a duration of two years. Following this period, the enterprises must undergo a renewal process to uphold compliance. Although the process is arduous, obtaining halal certification is imperative for cultivating consumer trust, broadening market accessibility, and reaffirming the brand's dedication to ethical and religious standards.

Consumer Perception of Halal Cosmetics

Hajime Skincare and Herb primarily serves Muslims residing in Japan as well as Muslim tourists visiting the country. Due to the limited availability of halal-certified skincare products in Japan, these consumers actively seek trustworthy and religiously compliant beauty options. Many Muslim residents, including expatriates and students, prioritise halal-certified cosmetics to ensure that their skincare routine aligns with their religious beliefs. Similarly, Muslim tourists who encounter challenges in finding halal personal care products during their stay regard Hajime Skincare and Herb as a reliable choice.

The demand for halal-certified cosmetics in Japan has experienced a consistent upward trend, particularly in recent years. The founder of Hajime Skincare and Herb observes that consumer interest has markedly increased, notably commencing in 2025. This growth is evidenced by the rising demand for comprehensive skincare sets, indicating that many consumers are pursuing a thorough and reliable halal beauty regimen. A significant factor contributing to this heightened demand is the loyalty and advocacy of existing customers. Hajime Skincare and Herb is cultivating an expanding base of regular clientele, many of whom frequent the establishment monthly for facial treatments. Their positive experiences motivate them to raise awareness about the brand by recommending it to their friends, family, and social networks. This form of word-of-mouth marketing plays an instrumental role in broadening the brand's visibility, especially within the Muslim community in Japan.

However, concerning Japanese consumers, there often exists a misconception regarding halal cosmetics. Many individuals associate the halal logo with products deemed exclusively for Muslims and may presume that such products are unsuitable for non-Muslim consumers. This perception restricts the potential market for halal-certified beauty products within the broader Japanese context. In addressing this issue, the brand endeavours to educate consumers about the authentic significance of halal certification. The founder underscores that halal products prioritise purity, cleanliness, and high-quality ingredients, thereby rendering them advantageous for all consumers, irrespective of their religious affiliations. By fostering awareness, the objective is to expand the appeal of halal cosmetics and position them as ethical, safe, and high-quality beauty options that resonate with the growing global trend towards clean and sustainable beauty.

Marketing Strategies for Halal Cosmetics in Japan

Promoting halal cosmetics in Japan necessitates a multifaceted marketing strategy aimed at effectively reaching Muslim consumers as well as a broader audience. The founder of Hajime Skincare and Herb employs a combination of digital marketing, educational initiatives, and direct community engagement to enhance awareness and cultivate demand for halal-certified beauty products. A primary strategy involves leveraging social media platforms, including TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These platforms serve as powerful tools for disseminating informative content pertaining to halal ingredients, skincare tips, and the advantages of halal-certified products. By means of engaging videos, tutorials, and posts, the brand cultivates trust and educates potential customers regarding the significance of halal beauty, underscoring its alignment with ethical, organic, and clean beauty trends.

Educational initiatives represent a critical component of the brand's strategy. The company conducts online webinars that address prevalent skincare concerns, including sensitive skin, while providing solutions and emphasising the significance of halal ingredients. These events draw individuals who seek scientifically validated and ethically sourced skincare products, thereby enhancing the credibility of Hajime Skincare and Herb.

Additionally, personal interaction is a vital marketing strategy. The brand provides complimentary skin care consultations, which facilitate direct engagement with prospective customers. Clients receive valuable insights regarding halal ingredients and ethical beauty practices during facial treatments, thereby fostering trust and fostering long-term loyalty. Moreover, offline marketing plays an equally significant role in reaching Japan's Muslim community. The brand actively distributes catalogues and brochures during mosque visits and participates in major Eid bazaars, where large Muslim congregations gather. Furthermore, sponsoring Muslimah competitions enhances brand visibility, associating the brand with empowerment and community support.

Challenges in Running a Halal Cosmetics Business in Japan

Establishing and maintaining a halal cosmetics enterprise in Japan presents several notable challenges, especially due to the limited awareness regarding halal skincare among both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. A primary obstacle is that many Muslim consumers in Japan do not completely comprehend the significance of utilising halal-certified skincare products. Frequently, they equate halal skincare with mainstream beauty brands, presuming that if the ingredients appear safe, the product is deemed acceptable without the requisite halal certification or logo. Additionally, consumers tend to focus more on price and well-known brand names, making it difficult for smaller halal-certified businesses to compete. Initially, halal cosmetics were unfamiliar to many consumers and communities. Therefore, brands had to invest heavily in educating consumers about the importance and meaning of halal certification beyond just branding or symbolism (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2023).

Another major challenge is trust and credibility. Many consumers, particularly those unfamiliar with halal-certified beauty products, tend to trust large, established brands over smaller businesses. This scepticism can be discouraging as it suggests that consumers prioritise branding and marketing over their products' ethical and religious compliance. Educating the market regarding the significance of halal skincare constitutes a vital undertaking. Beyond consumer perception, the procurement of halal-certified ingredients within Japan presents a considerable challenge. The business necessitates ingredients such as collagen and elastin, which are predominantly derived from animal sources. Ensuring that these ingredients comply with halal standards and are ethically sourced proves to be difficult, given the limited availability of halal-certified suppliers and manufacturers. Furthermore, the production costs are substantial, and the establishment of a comprehensive halal skincare line, encompassing products from facial wash to

sunscreen, demands significant investment in ingredient sourcing and partnerships with manufacturing facilities.

In conclusion, market demand and product availability pose additional challenges. Although there is an increasing demand for halal beauty products, many consumers prefer to acquire a comprehensive skincare set. Nevertheless, owing to the challenges associated with producing a complete range of halal-certified products in Japan, certain consumers opt for alternative brands that already provide a full skincare line.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the establishment of a halal beauty brand is motivated by faith, consumer safety, and market opportunities. Nevertheless, it confronts challenges pertaining to awareness, ingredient sourcing, and regulatory complexities. Marketing strategies utilise transparency and cultural alignment to foster trust. In Japan, halal certification necessitates comprehensive documentation, audits, and conformity with rigorous cosmetic regulations to guarantee halal compliance and product safety.

The procurement of halal-compliant raw materials represents a significant challenge, particularly in nations that do not have a Muslim majority, such as Japan (Othman et al., 2023). In these contexts, suppliers may lack familiarity with halal requirements (Hasnan, 2023). Manufacturers frequently encounter obstacles in verifying the origins of ingredients and ensuring compliance among suppliers throughout the supply chain. According to Hasnan (2023), the lack of a centralised halal authority in Japan exacerbates the difficulties associated with ingredient verification, rendering the process both costly and time-consuming. Additionally, the procurement of certified ingredients entails substantial expenses, necessitates the maintenance of distinct production lines, and requires frequent audits (Othman et al., 2023; Hasnan, 2023). These costs can deter smaller brands from entering the market.

The absence of standardised protocols and the presence of numerous certification bodies in Japan amplify the complexity and financial burdens faced by brands pursuing halal certification (Hasnan, 2023). This fragmentation results in divergent requirements and induces confusion among manufacturers. Interviews conducted with Japanese halal certification bodies corroborate that the certification process is notably more challenging than in nations such as Malaysia or Indonesia, attributed to regulatory discrepancies and the lack of a government-supported approval system (Hasnan, 2023).

While the awareness of halal cosmetics is increasing, many consumers, particularly non-Muslims, continue to remain unfamiliar with the benefits and significance of halal certification (Koswara & Herlina, 2025). Brands encounter challenges in educating the market and differentiating themselves from mainstream competitors. Moslem and Prawiro (2024) discovered that awareness of halal significantly influences purchasing decisions; however, deficiencies in digital marketing impede consumer education and engagement.

The navigation of halal and domestic cosmetic regulations presents a dual challenge, necessitating extensive documentation and rigorous adherence to safety standards (Othman et al., 2023). Legal and regulatory obstacles are identified as significant barriers to upholding halal certification throughout the production process, particularly within Japan's intricate regulatory landscape (Hasnan, 2023).

An effective strategy that the company could apply is halal certification. Halal certification is the most effective strategy for building consumer trust and expanding market access, especially among Muslim consumers (Khan et al., 2020). The halal logo is a critical purchase driver. Khan et al. (2020) and Shaari et

al. (2019) found that ingredient safety and the halal logo are the two most important factors influencing purchase intentions among Generation Y consumers.

Moreover, brands that possess a robust digital presence, engage in collaborations with influencers, and implement data-driven campaigns demonstrate superior performance compared to those that depend solely on traditional marketing. Digital storytelling and targeted content increase brand visibility and consumer engagement. Nurhayati (2023) observed that 48% of consumers actively seek halal-certified products but often choose mainstream brands due to superior digital marketing. UmmahDesign (2023) emphasises the importance of influencer marketing and strategically using hashtags to reach broader audiences.

In addition, adapting products and messaging to local culture and values enhances acceptance among Japanese consumers, including non-Muslims who value ethical and safe products (Koswara & Herlina, 2025; Khan et al., 2020). Koswara and Herlina (2025) and Khan et al. (2020) studies also show that localising branding and emphasising universal values like safety and environmental friendliness can broaden appeal beyond the Muslim market.

Furthermore, another strategy involves maintaining clear communication regarding ingredient sourcing, production processes, and certifications, which fosters credibility and trust, particularly in markets where halal practices are not well comprehended. Koswara and Herlina (2025) as well as Khan et al. (2020) advocate for brands to emphasise transparency and ethical practices as integral components of their unique selling propositions to draw the interest of both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

Moreover, positioning halal cosmetics within the broader context of the "clean beauty" and ethical consumerism movement resonates with health-conscious and environmentally aware consumers. Todd (2004) and recent studies corroborate that ethical consumerism, which encompasses halal and cruelty-free claims, represents a burgeoning trend that profoundly impacts purchasing decisions.

In order to achieve success in the Japanese market, halal beauty brands must broaden their focus beyond basic religious certification to include extensive consumer values, such as safety, transparency, and ethical production practices. It is essential to invest in supplier relationships, certification partnerships, and consumer education initiatives to overcome the challenges faced by the industry. The most effective marketing strategies will necessitate the localisation of messaging, utilisation of digital platforms, and the positioning of halal products within the broader clean and ethical beauty movement, appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers in Japan.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of halal cosmetics in Japan signifies an increasing awareness and demand for ethical and religiously compliant beauty products, particularly among the Muslim community. Nevertheless, the establishment of a halal cosmetic brand in a Muslim-minority nation poses considerable challenges, which include restricted consumer awareness, obstacles in sourcing halal-certified ingredients, elevated production costs, and competition from established non-halal brands. The findings from this research underscore the significance of education and outreach in bridging the knowledge gap pertaining to halal cosmetics, certification processes, and the ethical considerations surrounding ingredient selection. The case study on Hajime Skincare and Herb illustrates that social media, direct customer engagement, and strategic partnerships are critical in promoting halal beauty products in Japan. To further enhance the halal cosmetics industry, stakeholders, including halal certification bodies, suppliers, and business proprietors, should collaborate to improve market accessibility and bolster consumer trust. Greater efforts are necessary to

educate both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers that halal cosmetics serve not only religious purposes but also conform to ethical, organic, and cruelty-free beauty standards.

This study concentrates on a singular entity, Hajime Skincare and Herb, and may not entirely encapsulate the challenges and strategies faced by other halal cosmetic brands in Japan. Furthermore, the research predominantly represents the perspective of the business owner, without extensively addressing consumer preferences and behaviours. Consequently, for future research endeavours, a more expansive industry analysis should be undertaken through interviews with multiple halal cosmetic brands, suppliers, and certification bodies to acquire a more thorough understanding of the market. In addition, consumer-centric studies examining Japanese consumers' perceptions, awareness, and purchasing behaviours regarding halal cosmetics would yield significant insights, particularly in evaluating whether non-Muslims are inclined to embrace halal beauty products due to their ethical advantages.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Siti Majidah and Fatin Nabilah collaboratively conceptualised and executed the research, assuming responsibility for the composition of the manuscript. Nor Surilawana oversaw the research progress, contributed to the writing, editing, and revision of the manuscript, and authorised the final version for submission.

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