The Impact of Religious Beliefs on Halal Skincare Brand Loyalty in Central Java Indonesia: The Mediating Role of Brand Love

Pengaruh Keyakinan Agama pada Loyalitas Merek *Skincare* Halal di Jawa Tengah Indonesia: Peran Mediasi *Brand Love*

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ABSTRACT

People's lifestyle changes after the Covid-19 pandemic has penetrated, increasing awareness of the importance of skin health and beauty care. Many studies have examined the relationship between brand love as a mediating variable on consumer loyalty. However, there is still little research on the context of halal brands, where many make them different from conventional brands because of restrictions in Islam. This study examined and explained the role of brand love in mediating religious beliefs on loyalty to halal-labeled skincare brands. The number of samples in this study was 157 respondents who were Muslim consumers who use halal skincare using a purposive sampling method. The analysis technique used was Path Analysis using SmartPLS version 3. The results show that religious beliefs have a positive and significant effect on brand love and brand loyalty; moreover, brand love is proven to be able to mediate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. Halal skincare producers need to manage their consumer loyalty so that new consumers will be interested in buying.
Keywords: religious beliefs, brand love, brand loyalty, halal skincare

Abstrak

Perubahan gaya hidup masyarakat setelah pandemi Covid-19 merambah, meningkatkan kesadaran akan pentingnya perawatan kesehatan dan kecantikan kulit. Banyak penelitian yang meneliti hubungan antara brand love sebagai variabel mediasi terhadap loyalitas konsumen. Namun masih sedikit penelitian tentang konteks merek halal, dimana banyak yang membedakannya dengan merek konvensional karena adanya pantangan dalam Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji dan menjelaskan peran brand love dalam memediasi pengaruh keyakinan agama terhadap loyalitas merek skincare berlabel halal. Jumlah sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah 157 responden yang merupakan konsumen muslim yang menggunakan skincare halal dengan menggunakan metode purposive sampling. Teknik analisis yang digunakan adalah Path Analysis dengan menggunakan SmartPLS versi 3. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa religious belief berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap brand love dan brand loyalty; selain itu brand love terbukti mampu memediasi hubungan antara brand experience dan brand loyalty. Produsen halal skincare perlu mengelola loyalitas konsumennya agar konsumen baru tertarik untuk membeli.
Kata Kunci: keyakinan agama, brand love, loyalitas merek, skincare halal

I. INTRODUCTION

People's lifestyle changes after the Covid-19 pandemic has penetrated, increasing awareness of the importance of skin health and beauty care. Based on a report from Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the cosmetics industry in Indonesia experienced an increase of 5.59% in 2022. One of Indonesia's rapidly growing cosmetic industries is cosmetics with a halal label. Around the world, awareness of halal and haram products and services is increasing in the Muslim community (Trivedi & Sama, 2021). Standard Dinar released survey results for 2021, which stated that Indonesia is the second largest user of halal cosmetics in the world after India (Dinar Standard & Salam Gateway, 2022). The use of halal cosmetics is increasing due to the demand for sharia-compliant cosmetics and halal labeling on these products.

In general, halal means an action or thing that is permitted in Islamic law (sharia). The definition of halal in cosmetics includes all aspects of halal production. Start from procuring halal raw materials and using approved materials to processing, packaging, and distribution that must comply with Islamic law (Kassim et al, 2021). Halal skincare or cosmetic products may not contain materials contaminated with uncleanness, such as blood, urine, and faecal products (Sama & Trivedi, 2019). The growing popularity of Halal is due to the belief that it is healthier and cleaner

Halal branding emerged as a differentiating strategy to position products to specific population segments (Garg & Joshi, 2018). So many halal skincare products are circulating in Indonesia that companies must adopt a better strategy to survive. Producers must increase customer value by building customer loyalty to maintain a competitive advantage (Kassim et al, 2021). Loyal customers are less likely to switch, spread positive word of mouth, and provide stable revenue for the company. This causes producers to be more cost-effective in retaining than attracting new customers, loyal consumers are more willing to pay more and make purchases more frequently than disloyal consumers (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016).

So far, research has studied how consumers form a "like-dislike" attitude towards a brand, and in recent years research has appeared on the feeling of "love" for a brand (brand love) which makes this relationship even more complex (Batra et al, 2012; Robertson et al., 2022). Brand love is the level of passionate, emotional attraction that a consumer has when she is satisfied with a brand so that she feels love, attachment, and positive emotions toward the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Drennan et al., 2015). Brand love combines desire and declaration of love for a brand, attachment to the brand, and positive emotions in response to the brand (Drennan et al, 2015). Branding in the Islamic context cannot be separated from faith because a Muslim in loving or avoiding something, is the will of Allah SWT. The research results from Yousef (2017) stated that religious beliefs affect brand love in the retail sector. However, no study examines the effect between religious beliefs and brand love for halal skincare brands, where this industry is growing rapidly in Indonesia.

A consumer loves a brand based on its quality and durability and requires continuous promotion and consumer relationship management efforts to encourage loyalty and positive word of mouth, which a company needs (Bozbay et al, 2014; Joshi & Garg, 2022). Brand loyalty will be stronger if consumers are in a positive mood or emotional influence, such as falling in love (Drennan et al, 2015). Specifically, Islamic brand love is the level of emotional attachment and positive evaluation of passionate Muslim consumers when satisfied with certain brands that match their beliefs (Yousef, 2017).

Religious belief is one of the antecedents to the love of halal product brands and an essential factor in shaping consumer behavior (Yousef, 2017). Religious beliefs cannot separate themselves. Ismail & Alias (2016) stated that Islamic brands could be defined as products produced by Muslim companies with aspects of sharia compliance, marketer integrity (morals), and da'wah to consumers in achieving blessings from Allah SWT. Brand love itself can be influenced by psychological factors such as religious values so that consumers may love a brand because by using it they can get something else, in this case, is their adherence to religion (Batra et al, 2012; Yousef, 2017).

Many studies have examined the relationship between religious beliefs and brand love as a mediating variable on consumer loyalty (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Huang, 2017; Unal & Aydın, 2013). However, there is still little research on the context of halal skincare, where many make it different from conventional brands due to restrictions in Islam. Several cities in Central Java were chosen as the location for this research because according to research from (Anam & Khoiryasdien, 2020), residents of Central Java are among the most skincare users. The results of this study provided guidelines for

halal skincare companies on how to ensure their brands will be loved by Muslim consumers to create brand loyalty. Therefore, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive and integrated framework by combining findings from previous studies (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Sallam, 2014; Yousef, 2017) involving religious belief, brand love, and consumer loyalty with a focus on halal skincare brands.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW
Halal Skincare
One of the cosmetic products that are currently widely used by consumers is skincare products. Skin care products or skincare refers to all products used for cleaning, massaging, moisturizing, peeling, etc. on the skin, especially the face and hands (Khan & Khan, 2013). This skin treatment aims to keep the body in good condition and protect it from the harmful effects of the environment. Cosmetics and personal care products must meet the requirements for halal certification from the Implementation of the Halal Product Assurance Sector. Skincare can be said to be halal when it does not contain alcohol, pork, pork-based gelatin, or other animal by-products which do not follow Islamic procedures. Besides that, halal skincare does not contain harmful chemicals and other ingredients considered unacceptable by Muslim consumers (Aoun & Tournois, 2015). The importance of having a high level of awareness of halal cosmetics is because it can prevent users from consuming cosmetics that are not following sharia.

Brand Loyalty
A strong brand can be essential in forming brand loyalty, especially in a competitive business environment. Brand loyalty is a biased behavioral response expressed over time by a decision-making unit concerning one or more alternative brands out of a set of brands and being a function of psychological processes (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). Loyalty involves a commitment that consumers firmly hold to rebuy or protect the preferred product/service consistently in the future, even though there are marketing efforts that have the potential to cause their behavior to switch to another brand (Rodrigues et al, 2022). Loyal consumers will never forget the brand and decide to buy a product brand.

Brand loyalty, according to Huang (2017) consists of two dimensions. The first is the stochastic view, where consumers show random behavior so that their buying behavior is not a function influenced by previous purchases. The second is a deterministic view which shows that brand loyalty results from the influence of external factors. Loyalty also consists of two aspects, namely behavioral loyalty and attitude loyalty (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016). Brand loyalty in this study will be measured from a behavioral loyalty perspective because we want to see consumers' systematic repurchasing behavior of a brand. This is to avoid potential overlap between attitudinal loyalty and other variables examined in this study, that as brand love.

Brand Love
We often hear the concept of love in life, which is also present in marketing: brand love. According to Carroll & Ahuvia (2006), brand love is the level of passionate, emotional attachment possessed by consumers who are satisfied with a particular brand. Brand love consists of cognitions, emotions, and behaviors consumers regulate in their minds to differ from other emotional constructs such as brand commitment or trust (Loureiro et al, 2017). The most intense satisfaction is when a consumer's satisfaction becomes a feeling of love (Unal & Aydın, 2013). Joshi & Garg (2022) stated that recent research on brand love had established it as an essential construct in the relationship between consumers and brands. Their passion for a brand can give the company an advantage over its competitors because it is a strong feeling that goes beyond liking the brand. Brand love involves passion, attachment, positive evaluation, positive emotions, and expressions of love for a brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

Past behavior and actions are often considered good predictors of future consumer behavior because they can imply greater brand loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Rodrigues et al., 2022; Unal & Aydın, 2013). Brand loyalty shows a consumer's commitment not to switch to another brand because she will never forget that brand when buying a product (Suartina et al, 2022). Brand Love involves many emotions, such as passion, attachment, and commitment (Huang, 2017). Previous research has also proved that there is a relationship between brand love and brand loyalty (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Rodrigues et al., 2022; Suartina et al., 2022; Trivedi & Sama, 2021). If consumers like a halal skincare brand, they will probably feel greater brand loyalty and be willing to buy more.

Religious Beliefs

Religious beliefs affect human behavior and can be interpreted as the extent to which a person lives according to the guidelines of his religious beliefs (Yousef, 2017). Religiosity can change the behavior of each individual in all contexts. This implies the importance of the influence of religion in determining the purchase of a brand for consumers. Halal brands become symbols of religious associations that trigger consumer cognitive decision-making (Joshi & Garg, 2022).

In addition to health factors, religious beliefs are an essential factor that encourages consumers to use cosmetics (Hasibuan et al, 2019). Shari'a-compliant provisions are the primary basis for every Muslim. Islamic Sharia regulates all aspects of life, including consumption patterns, so the skincare that Muslims must use already has a halal label. Therefore, "halal brands" as religious brands are important in studying Muslim consumers' consumption patterns (Joshi & Garg, 2022).

Hypothesis Development

The relationship between love and religiosity comes from the attachment theory introduced by (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). Based on attachment theory, brand love is a psychological consequence that can provide intrinsic rewards and positive effects. Research from Yousef (2017) found that Muslim consumers' love for a brand is influenced by their religious beliefs. For Muslims, all actions must be based on sharia principles, and they can't separate branding from faith. Consumers love and hate a brand not based on their desire but because of religious demands. Rani & Souiden (2015) stated that Muslims are expected to love what is in accordance with their religious beliefs. In particular, in choosing a skincare brand, they look for brands that are in accordance with the Islamic religion, because the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Religious belief has a positive effect on brand love

Religious beliefs are essential in Muslim-majority countries because product brands that contradict their beliefs lose credibility and customer loyalty. Zainudin et al (2020) stated that if a brand can fulfill its consumers' religious desires, this is a good indicator of a good relationship between the brand and its consumers. Alam et al (2012) stated that customers will develop loyalty to a brand when the brand is acceptable according to their religious beliefs and vice versa if the brand is not in accordance with the customer's religious beliefs, it will not get a positive response. Halal-labeled skincare brands that make products according to sharia guidelines will increase brand loyalty. Therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Religious belief has a positive effect on brand loyalty

Consumer behavior and actions in the past are often considered good predictors of future behavior, thus implying great loyalty to the brand they love (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016). Brands that make consumers happy or excited encourage more significant purchases and create brand loyalty (Drennan et al, 2015). If consumers like their brand, they will always use it, so it can be assumed that brand loyalty is high. From this, the hypothesis is arranged as follows:

H3: brand love has a positive effect on brand loyalty

Several researchers have focused on examining the role of media brand love in shaping consumer loyalty (Trivedi & Sama, 2021; Unal & Aydın, 2013). However, the role of brand love is still less explored from the perspective of a halal brand. Thus, in this study, the researcher proposed that brand love mediates the relationship between religious beliefs and brand loyalty so that the following hypothesis is formed:

H4: brand love mediates the relationship between religious beliefs and brand loyalty

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative method, allowing researchers to explain and evaluate the level of association or relationship between variables (Hair et al, 2014). Primary data was obtained using a questionnaire containing opinions or perceptions of consumers as users of consumer products as users of halal skincare products regarding the variable indicators studied utilizing the survey method (Ferdinand, 2006). The population of this study was all elements that collectively have the same characteristics or phenomena that interest researchers, in this case, halal skincare consumers. The sample in this research was a consumer who has used halal skincare, had consumed at least one package of that brand, and is a Muslim. The sampling technique in this study was using a nonprobability sampling technique. The questionnaire was developed based on a review of the literature. All variables

were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, which is used to indicate the respondent's level of agreement or disagreement with the indicator statement below.

Table 1. Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Variable	Conceptual Definitions	Operational Definitions
Brand Loyalty (Y2)	Brand loyalty is a commitment that consumers firmly hold to repurchase or protect the preferred product/service consistently in the future, even though there are marketing efforts that have the potential to cause their behavior to switch to another brand (Torres et al, 2022).	a. Willing to pay more b. Have the desire to buy again in the future c. Have the urge to buy the brand d. Committed to the brand (Trivedi & Sama, 2021)
Brand Love (Z)	Brand Love is the level of passionate emotional attachment that a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Yousef, 2017)	a. Amazing brand b. This brand makes itself better c. This brand is amazing d. This brand makes you happy e. Liked the brand f. This brand is delightful g. I am attached to this brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006)
Religious Belief (X1)	Religious belief is the extent to which a person lives according to the guidelines of his religious beliefs which are closely related to religious commitment (Kurniawati & Savitri, 2020; Yousef, 2017)	a. Using halal products because a Muslim b. Using halal products because they comply with the Al-Quran and Hadith c. Using halal products because Islam prohibits using non-halal products(Kurniawati & Savitri, 2020)

The structural Equation Model (SEM) approach examined the relationship between variables. This method allowed multivariate analysis techniques that combined factor analysis and path analysis using Partial Least Square (PLS) software. PLS is a method that does not require strict assumptions in its calculations because it is used to predict and develop theory (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). The primary data collected were analyzed in two parts, first assessing the Outer model by testing the validity of the questionnaire using Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, and Composite Reliability. The reliability test was seen from the Chronbach Alpha value. The second was assessing the inner model or structural model.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

Based on table 2, it is known that the number of respondents who filled out the questionnaire was 157 people. The majority of respondents were female, as many as 135 respondents. Most of the respondents to this study were skincare users with the Wardah brand, as much as 32.48%, and the least were users of the Safi brand. The majority of respondents in this study were skincare consumers who lived in Surakarta City, with as many as 115 respondents.

Table 2. Respondents Characteristics

Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Genders		
Male	22	75%
Female	135	25%
Skincare Brand		
Wardah	51	32.48%
Somethinc	15	9.56%
Emina	22	14.01%
Safi	5	3.18%
MS Glow	8	5.1%
Garnier	27	17.2%
Others.	29	18.47%
Domicile		
Kab. Semarang	15	9.55%
Kota Salatiga	27	17.20%
Kota Surakarta	115	73.25

Outer Loading Factors Result

Validation is considered strong if it has an outer loading value above 0.5 on each indicator assessed (Hair et al, 1998). Outer-loading values on the variables of Religious Belief, Brand Love, and brand loyalty can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Outer Loading

	Religious Beliefs	Brand Love	Brand Loyalty
X1.1	0.866		
X1.2	0.881		
X1.3	0.888		
Z.1		0.808	
Z.2		0.797	
Z.3		0.892	
Z.4		0.871	
Z.5		0.745	
Z.6		0.909	
Z.7		0.734	
Y.1			0.656
Y.2			0.846
Y.3			0.870
Y.4			0.773

From the results of table 3, it can be seen that all research indicators used in the study have outer loading values above 0.6 so it can be concluded that they have a reasonably strong validation level. This research model can be seen in the following final path diagram image
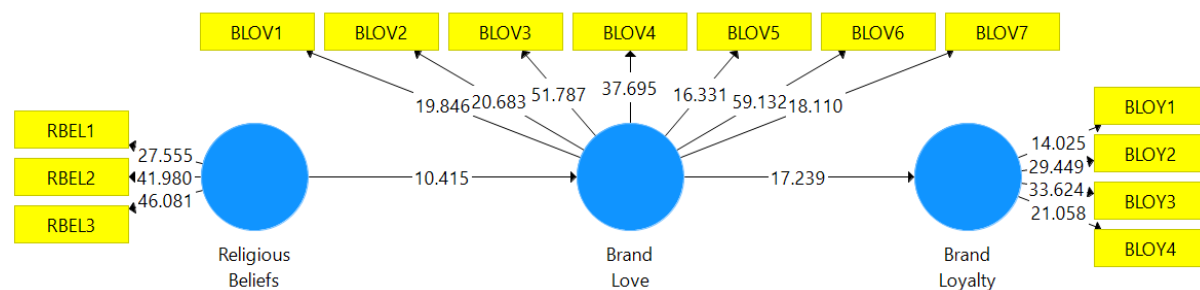

Figure 1. Path Diagram

Validity and Reliability Test

Measuring instrument reliability in this study used two criteria, namely the value of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha has a weakness, namely, it tends to estimate lower variable reliability than composite reliability (Haryono, 2017). Cronbach's alpha coefficient with a minimum result of 0.6 has a good indication of reliability. At the same time, the variable is said to be reliable if the composite reliability value is above 0.70.

Table 4. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's		Composite		Average Variance
Religious Beliefs	0.852	0.854	0.910	0.772	
Brand Love	0.920	0.923	0.937	0.680	
Brand Loyalty	0.809	0.818	0.876	0.639	

Table 4 shows that all research variables had composite reliability above 0.70 and Cronbach's alpha above 0.70. Thus, all indicators were reliable. The average variance extracted (AVE) value used to test validity used a limit value above 0.50. From the table above, it can also be seen that all variables had an AVE value above 0.50, so they are valid. A discriminant correlation test was performed to see the correlation between constructs and other constructs. The construct of a study has a good level of validity if the value of the square root of average AVE is greater than the correlation value between one construct and another. From table 5 below it can be seen that all other variables have met these assumptions.

Table 5. Nilai Discriminant Validity

	Religious Beliefs	Brand Love	Brand Loyalty
Religious Beliefs	0.879		
Brand Love	0.581	0.825	
Brand Loyalty	0.615	0.727	0.791

Acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis was used by the Bootstrapping function using SmartPLS 3.0 software. When the significance level is less than 0.05 or the t-value exceeds the critical value (Hair et al, 2014) then the hypothesis is declared accepted otherwise, if the significance level is greater than 0.05 then the hypothesis will be rejected. The t-statistics value for a significance level of 5% is 1.65.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable/ Construct	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Value
Religious Beliefs → Brand Love	0.581	0.584	0.056	10.415	0.000	accepted
Religious Beliefs→Brand Loyalty	0.423	0.430	0.054	7.788	0.000	accepted
Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	0.728	0.736	0.042	17.239	0.000	accepted
Religious Beliefs → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	0.423	0.430	0.054	7.788	0.000	accepted

Discussion

Judging from the path coefficient results in table 6, it can be seen that the original sample values, p-values, and t-statistics are used as a reference for whether or not a hypothesis is accepted. The hypothesis is accepted if t-statistics > t table or p-value < 0.05. After testing using the bootstrapping function on PLS, it can be concluded that all hypotheses are accepted.

Hypothesis 1 which tests the positive influence of religious beliefs on brand love, is declared accepted. This can be seen from the value of t-statistics > t-table (10.415 > 1.64) and p-value <0.05 (0,000). Muslim consumers are proven to be happy and feel better if they use halal-labeled skincare that complies with the Al-Quran and Hadith. Muslim consumers associate brands with their Muslim identity to position themselves in society. The halal brand is also a symbol of association with the Islamic Religion, triggering consumer cognitive decision-making (Joshi & Garg, 2022) that can lead to other psychological consequences (Yousef, 2017). The results of this study are the same as the results of Yousef (2017) who stated that in terms of the consumption of an item, a Muslims is sensitive to their religious beliefs and tends to love brands that take their religious beliefs into account. The results of

this study ensure that Muslim consumers adhere to sharia principles in their brand love behavior. The use of halal skin care is carried out because it is in accordance with the guidance of the Al-Quran and hadith so using it will feel pleasant

Hypothesis 2, which tests the positive influence of religious beliefs on brand loyalty, is declared accepted. It can be seen from the value of t-statistics > t-table (7.788 > 1.64) and p-value <0.05 (0.000). Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi (2017) stated that the dynamic relationship created between halal brands and consumers' religious beliefs occurs due to the similarity of shared values, so trust and loyalty will be created. Purchase decisions and the development of Muslim consumer loyalty occur if the brand is acceptable according to their religious beliefs (Alam et al, 2012). Skincare, with a halal label, must make a product that complies with Islamic law to encourage consumer confidence and create brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 3 which states that which tests the positive effect of brand love on brand loyalty, is declared accepted. Judging from the value of t-statistics > t-table (17.239 > 1.64) and p-value <0.05 (0.000), statistically, this hypothesis is accepted. This means the higher the brand love for halal skincare, which is indicated by a feeling of pleasure, comfort, attachment, and being the first choice to increase brand loyalty. Out of love for this skincare brand labeled halal, Muslim consumers are not reluctant to buy at a higher price and are committed to using the halal skincare brand they choose. The results of this study are consistent with the results of research from Alnawas & Altarifi (2016), Drennan et al. (2015), and Trivedi & Sama (2021), which stated that brand love has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 4, which tests the mediating role of brand love on the relationship between religious beliefs and brand loyalty, is accepted. This can be seen from the value of t-statistics > t-table (7.788 > 1.64) and p-value <0.05 (0.000). Religion is one of the considerations in determining the purchase of a brand for consumers. Halal brands, a symbol of religious association, can trigger consumer cognitive decision-making. This research also follows the results of Yousef (2017) who stated that brand love can also be influenced by other psychological factors, such as cultural identity, religiosity, or values, to create brand loyalty. The results of this study added to the brand love literature related to halal branding because it proved that halal skincare has been proven to have implemented sharia principles so that consumers love that brand and create brand loyalty.

V. CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that religious beliefs affect brand love. Meanwhile, brand love also influences brand loyalty. The last relationship tested is the role of brand love, which mediates between religious beliefs and brand loyalty and is also influential. This study develops a relationship model between religious belief, brand love, and brand loyalty in halal skincare. The results of this study broaden perspectives on religion-based branding because it turns out that Muslim consumers consider aspects of religiosity when buying skin care products. Overall, this study contributes to the brand love literature, which considers religious beliefs as an essential factor in creating brand love in products labeled halal so that a new construct emerges: Islamic brand love. Cosmetics businesses, especially halal skincare, should constantly increase their distribution in incentives, develop products and carry out promotions through social media that are often used by Muslim consumers so that brand love arises for their products and create brand loyalty. When brand loyalty increases, it is hoped that they can invite many new customers to use their products. This research was only conducted on Muslim consumers in Salatiga City, Surakarta City, and Semarang Regency so the results of this study cannot be generalized to another region. The mediating variable used is brand love, for the future, it is expected to use other mediating variables, such as brand loyalty and brand authenticity, and add to the measurement of Muslim consumers' perceptions.

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