
**THE INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT QUALITY AND BRAND IMAGE ON
PURCHASE DECISIONS OF WARDAH SUNSCREEN THROUGH TRUST AS A
MEDIATING VARIABLE IN MATARAM CITY**



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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of product quality and brand image on purchase decisions of Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City and to examine the role of consumer trust as a mediating variable. This research employs a quantitative approach using primary data collected from 100 respondents who have purchased or used Wardah Sun Care products. The sampling technique applied is purposive sampling, and data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. The results indicate that product quality does not have a significant effect on either purchase decisions or consumer trust. Conversely, brand image has a significant influence on purchase decisions but does not significantly affect trust. Another finding reveals that purchase decisions significantly influence consumer trust, suggesting that post-purchase experiences are a key factor in building trust. Overall, the findings highlight that brand image plays a crucial role in encouraging purchase decisions, while trust is primarily shaped through product usage experiences. This study provides managerial implications for Wardah to strengthen its brand image and enhance consumer experience quality to foster long-term trust.

Keywords: Product Quality, Brand Image, Trust, Purchase Decision

INTRODUCTION

The cosmetic industry in Indonesia has experienced rapid growth over the past few years. This growth is driven not only by female consumers but also by the increasing interest of male consumers in skincare products, thereby expanding the overall market share (Hapsara et al., 2021). The beauty industry is required to create high-quality products with unique advantages to remain competitive. The growing population and changes in lifestyle have intensified market competition, pushing cosmetic companies to continuously innovate in terms of quality, functionality, and consumer experience (Friedman & Anggraeni, 2024a).

In recent years, skincare and cosmetic products have become essential components of modern lifestyles, supported by growing awareness of skin health and protection against ultraviolet (UV) radiation (Duarte et al., 2025). Within this trend, the *sun care* segment comprising sunscreens, sunblocks, and SPF lotions has emerged as one of the fastest-growing categories in the beauty industry (Ma & Yoo, 2021). According to Euromonitor's *Sun Care in Indonesia* report, this segment recorded the highest retail growth rate among cosmetic products between 2021 and 2023, following an annual increase of around 10% since 2018 and is projected to continue rising by up to 14% in the coming years. Consumers now seek multifunctional sun care products that not only protect against UV rays but also offer skincare benefits such as antioxidant protection, hydration, and skin-friendly formulations (Nawiyah et al., 2023).

The growing middle class, urbanization, and digital marketing penetration through e-commerce and social media have further boosted the demand for sun care products in Indonesia (Friedman & Anggraeni, 2024b). In this context, Wardah has established itself as a leading local brand positioned as halal, safe, and innovative attributes that strongly resonate in a Muslim-majority country (Hadits et al., 2022). The concept of halal cosmetics has become a distinctive competitive advantage, especially among consumers who prioritize religious and ethical values in their purchasing behavior (Kurniawati, 2021). In regions such as West Nusa Tenggara and particularly Mataram City, this religious and cultural orientation strengthens consumer preference for halal-certified brands like Wardah (Aliza & Akbar, 2024).

Consumer purchase decisions in the cosmetic industry are influenced by various factors, among which product quality and brand image play central roles (Nugraheni & Suparna, 2024). Product quality encompasses both technical and experiential attributes, including formulation, effectiveness, safety, texture, and comfort of use (Aakko & Niinimäki, 2022). According to Kotler et al. (2016), high product quality fosters customer satisfaction, builds trust, and encourages repeat purchases. Empirical evidence also supports these relationships; for example, (Goel & Sharma, 2020; Z. A. Khan et al., 2025; Madhavedi et al., 2025; Othman et al., 2022; Tiwari & Kumari, 2024) found that perceived product quality significantly influences purchase intention, while (Komari, 2023; Putri & Evi, 2024) confirmed its positive impact on purchasing decisions in skincare products.

Brand image, on the other hand, reflects the set of perceptions, associations, and symbolic values that consumers attach to a brand (Alić et al., 2020). A positive brand image differentiates products and creates emotional bonds with consumers (Li et al., 2024). Kotler et al. (2016) emphasizes that a brand image consistent with consumers' personal values strengthens loyalty and purchase intention. In Indonesia, studies have shown that Wardah's positive brand image associated with halal values, innovation, and product quality

significantly influences female consumer preferences (Aisyah et al., 2021; Amalia et al., 2022; Katuuk et al., 2022; Moniaga et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2023).

However, the effects of product quality and brand image on purchasing decisions are not always direct, they are often mediated by *trust* (Maharani et al., 2023; Ngaliman et al., 2021; Rodiyah et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2023). Trust represents consumers' belief in the brand's integrity, reliability, and commitment to delivering its promises (Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015). In the context of cosmetics, trust reduces perceived risks such as side effects and builds emotional comfort during purchase (Q. U. Khan et al., 2024). Prior studies (Maharani et al., 2023; Nikmah, 2022; Raihanah & Usman, n.d.; Rodiyah et al., 2025) have identified trust as a mediating factor linking product quality and brand image to purchasing behavior.

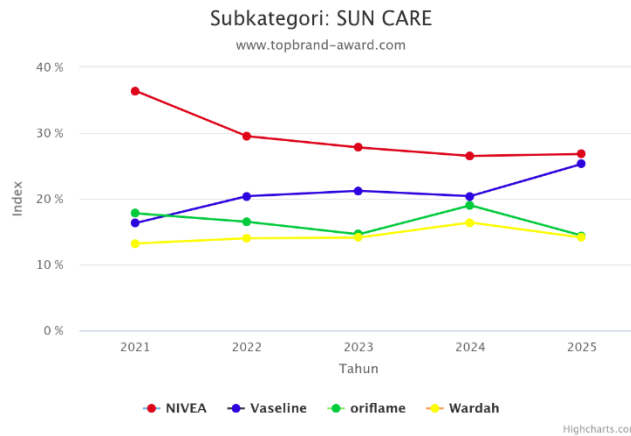


Figure 1.
Top Brand Index for Sun Care Products in Indonesia (2025)
Source: Top Brand Award (TBA, 2025)

Despite Wardah's strong brand equity, recent *Top Brand Index* data show that its Sun Care line ranks lower compared to international competitors like Nivea, Vaseline, and Oriflame (TBA, 2025). This indicates a potential gap in consumer trust or perception in this specific product category. Furthermore, most consumer behavior research on cosmetics in Indonesia focuses on major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya, while studies in eastern regions like Mataram remain limited. Yet, local factors such as religiosity, cultural values, and halal awareness may significantly influence consumer trust and decision-making patterns.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of product quality and brand image on purchase decisions of Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City, and to examine the mediating role of consumer trust in these relationships. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by enriching consumer behavior literature in Indonesia's eastern regions and clarifying the mediating function of trust within consumer decision-making models. Practically, this study provides managerial implications for Wardah and similar local cosmetic brands to strengthen brand image, emphasize halal and safety attributes, and enhance consumer experience quality to build sustainable trust in regional markets.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Consumer purchase decisions represent a complex psychological and behavioral process that involves evaluating various product alternatives before selecting the one perceived as most suitable (Reyes, 2020). (Stankevich, 2017) adds that purchasing decisions are shaped by how consumers behave and make judgments about what, how much, and how they purchase. define purchasing decisions as the process through which individuals, groups, or organizations select, buy, use, and evaluate products or services to satisfy their desires and needs.

Product quality is one of the primary determinants influencing consumer purchasing behavior. De Giovanni (2024) defines product quality as the effort to meet or exceed customer expectations. Similarly, (Septiano & Sari, 2021) describe product quality as the totality of features and characteristics that affect a product's ability to satisfy customer needs and desires. A well-designed product, both in its physical appearance (design) and its core attributes (core product), reflects a company's commitment to quality and plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and trust. High product quality is often linked to positive evaluations, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty, especially in competitive markets such as skincare and cosmetics.

Brand image is another essential concept in marketing that directly affects consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. (Lee et al., 2014) further explains that brand image consists of a network of associations, memories, and perceptions that shape how a brand is represented in the consumer's mind. Meanwhile, (Lu & Chen, 2017) emphasize that when consumers perceive a brand as having distinctive and trustworthy features, it enhances both their purchase intention and the brand's perceived value. In the cosmetic industry, brand image often reflects symbolic and emotional values such as beauty, confidence, and religious identity that extend beyond functional product attributes.

Trust, or consumer trust, plays a vital mediating role between product attributes and behavioral outcomes. (Jafari, 2017) define consumer trust as the total knowledge and conclusions formed by consumers about an object, its attributes, and its benefits. They identify three dimensions of trust: object-attribute beliefs (trust in specific product characteristics), attribute-benefit beliefs (trust in the benefits associated with attributes), and object-benefit beliefs (trust in the overall product performance). In marketing literature, trust is viewed as a critical factor in reducing consumer uncertainty and perceived risk during purchasing decisions. It reflects the consumer's confidence that a brand will consistently deliver on its promises. In the context of cosmetic and skincare products, trust is built through perceived product safety, consistent quality, positive usage experiences, and transparent communication from the brand. High consumer trust strengthens emotional bonds, fosters long-term loyalty, and increases the likelihood of repeat purchases.

Overall, the literature suggests that product quality and brand image are key antecedents of consumer purchase decisions. However, their effects are often mediated by trust, which bridges the gap between cognitive evaluations and behavioral outcomes. Trust transforms rational assessments of quality and image into emotional assurance and purchasing confidence. In this regard, examining how trust functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between product quality, brand image, and purchasing decisions—particularly in the halal cosmetic market—provides valuable insights into consumer behavior and strategic brand management.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach using the survey method as the primary data collection technique, referring to the positivistic paradigm in social research that enables objective and measurable analysis of variable relationships (Sugiyono, 2020). The research is designed to examine the influence of product quality and brand image on purchasing decisions of Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City, with consumer trust serving as a mediating variable. This approach allows for empirical testing of hypotheses using statistical tools to verify causal relationships among constructs in a structured and replicable manner.

The population in this study includes consumers who are aware of, have purchased, or have used Wardah Sun Care products in the last twelve months. Due to the absence of a precise population frame, the sample was selected using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, which allows for respondent selection based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The sampling criteria included respondents aged at least 17 years, residing in Mataram City, and having prior experience purchasing or using Wardah Sun Care products. A total of 100 respondents were included in the study, which meets the minimum requirements for Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis as suggested by (Hair et al., 2021)

The data were collected using a structured questionnaire as the main research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of four main constructs: product quality, brand image, consumer trust, and purchasing decision. Each construct was measured using several indicators adapted from validated scales in previous studies, modified to suit the context of halal cosmetic products in Indonesia. The measurement items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). Before the main survey, the instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure clarity, content validity, and consistency. Construct validity was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis, while reliability was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability, with thresholds above 0.7 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021).

The data collection process was conducted over a two-month period, from February to March 2025, through both online and offline distribution methods. The responses were coded and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique through SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it allows simultaneous testing of both measurement and structural models, is robust for small to medium sample sizes, and is suitable for testing mediation effects. The analysis procedure included evaluating the outer model (to test convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability) and the inner model (to examine path coefficients and hypothesis testing). The significance of path relationships was tested using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 subsamples. Hypotheses were accepted if the t-statistic value exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05, at a 95% confidence level.

This methodological framework enables comprehensive examination of both the direct and indirect relationships between the variables. The integration of trust as a mediating variable provides a more complete understanding of how consumer perceptions of product quality and brand image translate into behavioral outcomes in purchasing decisions. The study was conducted in Mataram City, which represents a culturally and religiously significant market for halal cosmetics in Eastern Indonesia, where consumer decisions are influenced by values of religiosity, safety, and ethical product assurance. The findings are

expected to contribute to both academic theory and managerial practices by providing insight into how local halal brands like Wardah can strengthen brand image and trust to improve consumer purchasing behavior.

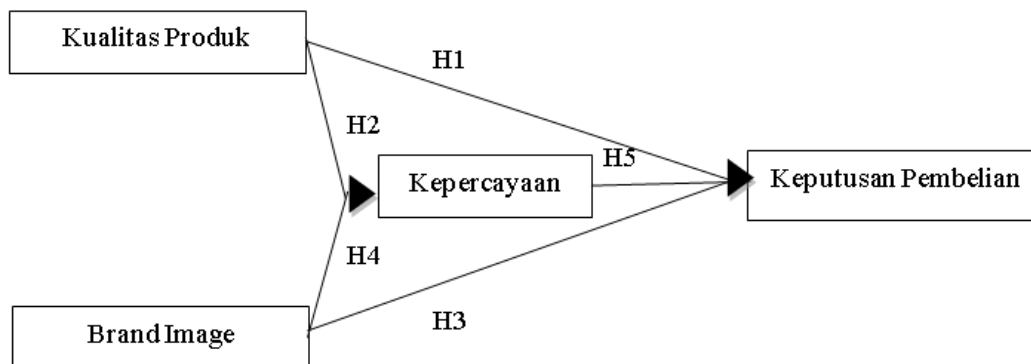
Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

- H1: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City.
- H2: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust in Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City.
- H3: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City.
- H4: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust in Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City.
- H5: Consumer trust has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions of Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City.

Research Model

The conceptual model of this study describes the relationship between independent variables (product quality and brand image), the mediating variable (consumer trust), and the dependent variable (purchasing decision). The model illustrates that both product quality and brand image have direct and indirect effects on purchasing decisions through consumer trust.



This model will be empirically tested using the PLS-SEM method to determine the magnitude and significance of both direct and mediating effects. The results of this study are expected to provide empirical evidence supporting the role of consumer trust as a key mechanism that links product perception and brand positioning to consumer purchasing behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings derived from the PLS-SEM analysis, comprising the assessment of convergent validity, discriminant validity, construct reliability, and hypothesis testing, are presented as follows:

Table 1.
Convergent Validity

Indicator	Brand Image	Purchase Decision	Product Quality	Trust
BI1	0.908			
BI2	0.930			
BI3	0.921			
BI4	0.914			
BI5	0.874			
BI6	0.893			
KEP1		0.842		
KEP2		0.902		
KEP3		0.901		
KEP4		0.892		
KEP5		0.929		
KEP6		0.897		
KP1			0.854	
KP2			0.895	
KP3			0.902	
KP4			0.902	
KP5			0.842	
KP6			0.834	
KP7			0.889	
KP8			0.854	
TRS1				0.943
TRS2				0.940
TRS3				0.891
TRS4				0.938
TRS5				0.937

Source: Data processed (2025)

Table 2.
Discriminant Validity

Construct	Brand Image	Purchase Decision	Product Quality	Trust
Brand Image	0.907			
Purchase Decision	0.908	0.894		
Product Quality	0.889	0.854	0.872	
Trust	0.859	0.928	0.831	0.930

Source: Data processed (2025)

Table 3.
Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Brand Image	0.957	0.965
Purchase Decision	0.950	0.960
Product Quality	0.955	0.962
Trust	0.961	0.970

Source: Data processed (2025)

Table 4.
R-Square

Construct	R-square	R-square Adjusted
Purchase Decision	0.835	0.832
Trust	0.867	0.862

Source: Data processed (2025)

The results of data analysis using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS revealed the empirical relationships among product quality, brand image, consumer trust, and purchasing decisions of Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City. The analysis was conducted in two main stages, namely the measurement model (outer model) evaluation and the structural model (inner model) evaluation. The results of the measurement model demonstrated that all indicators used in this study were valid and reliable, with loading factor values above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.50 for each construct. Discriminant validity was confirmed, as the square root of AVE for each variable was higher than its correlations with other constructs. The reliability test further showed Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values greater than 0.70, indicating internal consistency and accuracy of the instruments in measuring each construct.

The evaluation of the structural model produced R-square values of 0.832 for the purchasing decision construct and 0.862 for consumer trust. These results suggest that product quality and brand image collectively explain 83.2 percent of the variation in purchasing decisions, while brand image, product quality, and purchasing decision together explain 86.2 percent of the variation in consumer trust. The Q-square predictive relevance value of 0.98 further confirmed that the model possesses strong predictive capability and relevance in explaining consumer behavior in the halal cosmetic market.

The hypothesis testing results showed several key insights. First, the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions was positive but not statistically significant. This means that although product quality contributes to the consumer's perception, it does not directly determine their decision to purchase Wardah Sun Care products. Similarly, the influence of product quality on consumer trust was also not significant, suggesting that consumers do not necessarily build trust in a brand solely based on perceived product performance. In contrast, brand image had a significant and positive influence on purchasing decisions, implying that consumers are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on their perception and emotional attachment to the brand. However, the effect of brand image on consumer trust

was not statistically significant, which indicates that while brand image enhances consumer preference, it does not directly generate trust. Finally, purchasing decision had a strong and significant effect on consumer trust, showing that trust is built through actual experience and satisfaction following product use.

These findings collectively reveal that in the case of Wardah Sun Care, consumers' purchasing behavior is more influenced by symbolic and emotional factors associated with brand image than by functional aspects of product quality. This aligns with (Kotler et al., 2016), who state that brand image serves as a cognitive shortcut that simplifies decision-making, especially in industries where product attributes are perceived as relatively homogeneous. In a competitive market such as skincare, where most products offer similar functional benefits, differentiation is often achieved through the emotional and symbolic dimensions of branding. Wardah's image as a halal, safe, and modern cosmetic brand resonates strongly with its target consumers, particularly in a predominantly Muslim region such as Mataram City.

The absence of a significant effect of product quality on purchasing decisions and consumer trust may be attributed to the perception that Wardah and its competitors offer comparable product quality levels. When product parity occurs, the influence of quality diminishes, and consumers begin to rely more on intangible cues such as brand reputation, emotional resonance, and perceived alignment with personal values. This phenomenon has been described by Zeithaml (1988), who argued that when functional quality becomes standardized across brands, symbolic attributes gain greater importance in influencing purchase intention. Therefore, while maintaining high product quality remains essential, it is not a sufficient differentiator for influencing consumer behavior in mature cosmetic markets.

The finding that brand image has no significant direct effect on consumer trust provides another interesting perspective. Although many previous studies (Maharani et al., 2023; Ngaliman et al., 2021; Rodiyah et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2023) found a strong linkage between brand image and trust, this study shows that trust in the Wardah Sun Care product line is not built primarily on pre-purchase brand perception. Instead, trust is formed post-purchase, after consumers have confirmed product claims through their own experience. This indicates a behavioral shift where experience-based validation is more influential than marketing-based image formation. It suggests that in the context of the halal cosmetic industry, especially for functional products like sun care, trust requires experiential confirmation rather than symbolic association alone.

The significant positive effect of purchasing decisions on consumer trust supports the view that trust is strengthened through direct interaction and satisfaction with the product. This finding is consistent with the relational marketing theory of Morgan and Hunt (1994), which posits that trust is the foundation of enduring consumer-brand relationships built through consistent delivery of value. Once consumers experience satisfactory product performance and comfort, their trust toward the brand deepens, leading to potential repurchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Anderson & Srinivasan (2003) also highlight that post-purchase satisfaction acts as a precursor to trust and long-term loyalty, indicating that brands must focus not only on persuading consumers to buy but also on ensuring that their post-purchase experience exceeds expectations.

From a managerial standpoint, these findings suggest that Wardah should focus on reinforcing its brand image by emphasizing emotional connection, authenticity, and

alignment with consumer values, while simultaneously improving post-purchase experience management to enhance trust. Strengthening communication about the brand's halal commitment, ethical standards, and product safety could further differentiate Wardah from global competitors. Furthermore, consistent product performance and transparent engagement with consumers can help convert initial purchase satisfaction into sustained trust and loyalty.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of consumer behavior in the halal cosmetic industry by highlighting the importance of emotional and experiential dimensions in influencing purchasing decisions. It demonstrates that while product quality remains a necessary foundation, it is brand image and consumer experience that drive the formation of trust and long-term brand engagement. This finding extends previous consumer behavior models by positioning trust as an outcome of experiential validation rather than merely as a precondition for purchase.

In conclusion, the empirical results indicate that in the Wardah Sun Care product category, brand image serves as the dominant factor influencing consumer purchase decisions, while trust develops through post-purchase experience rather than through initial perceptions of quality or brand symbolism. These results underscore the evolving dynamics of consumer behavior in Indonesia's halal cosmetic market, where emotional resonance, perceived value alignment, and experiential satisfaction play a central role in shaping both purchase intention and brand loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that product quality does not significantly influence purchasing decisions or consumer trust for Wardah Sun Care products in Mataram City, indicating that consumers rely more on emotional and symbolic aspects—particularly brand image—than on functional product attributes. The findings show that brand image positively affects purchasing decisions but does not directly build trust, which instead emerges through post-purchase experiences. This demonstrates that trust is shaped by consistent satisfaction and experiential validation rather than pre-purchase perceptions. Theoretically, the study contributes to consumer behavior research in halal cosmetics by redefining trust as a post-purchase construct, while practically, it suggests that Wardah should strengthen its brand authenticity, ensure product consistency, and enhance post-purchase experiences to foster lasting trust and consumer loyalty in competitive halal markets.

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