


The effects of brand image, halal label, and animosity on purchasing decision with promotion as a moderating variable: A case study of Scarlett Whitening sales at Mutiara Kosmetik Shop

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ABSTRAK

Introduction

The Indonesian skincare market has experienced rapid growth, driven by increased consumer awareness and demand for affordable, high-quality products. Scarlett Whitening has emerged as a leading local brand, leveraging its brand image and halal certification. However, challenges such as limited consumer awareness of halal certification and socio-political animosity complicate purchasing decisions.

Objectives

This study examines the influence of brand image, halal certification, and consumer animosity on purchasing decisions for Scarlett Whitening products. It also investigates the moderating role of promotional activities in these relationships.

Method

A quantitative approach was adopted, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze data from 220 respondents at Mutiara Kosmetik in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The study employed a structured questionnaire to measure brand image, halal certification, animosity, promotions, and purchasing decisions, ensuring validity and reliability through established scales.

Results

Brand image significantly and positively influenced purchasing decisions, highlighting its role in fostering consumer loyalty. Halal certification exhibited a negative relationship with purchasing decisions, suggesting gaps in consumer awareness. Animosity had no direct impact but was moderated by promotions, which effectively mitigated its effects. Promotions also amplified the positive influence of brand image but had limited impact on halal certification.

JEL Classification:

L21, L26, L84, Z12

KAUJIE Classification:

C54, H42, H65, P0

ARTICLE HISTORY:

Submitted: December 26, 2024

Revised: December 31, 2024

Accepted: December 31, 2024

Published: December 31, 2024

KEYWORDS:

brand image; consumer animosity; halal certification; promotional strategies; purchasing decisions

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE: Universitas Islam Indonesia stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Implications

The findings underscore the importance of integrated marketing strategies that leverage brand strength, address consumer trust in ethical certifications, and mitigate socio-political challenges through targeted promotions. These insights are vital for enhancing market positioning in culturally sensitive contexts.

Originality/Novelty

This study provides a holistic framework for understanding purchasing decisions by integrating brand image, halal certification, animosity, and promotions, offering actionable recommendations for culturally and politically sensitive markets.

CITATION: Heydiana, A. & Aliyanti, F. E. (2024). The effects of brand image, halal label, and animosity on purchasing decision with promotion as a moderating variable: A case study of Scarlett Whitening sales at Mutiara Kosmetik Shop. *Journal of Islamic Economics Lariba*, 10(2), 1045-1060. <https://doi.org/10.20885/jielariba.vol10.iss2.art22>

INTRODUCTION

Brand Image and Purchasing Decisions

Brand image plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchasing behavior by establishing a set of associations in the consumer's mind regarding a specific brand. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), brand image is the perception and beliefs held by consumers, often formed through experiences and information. A positive brand image strengthens consumer loyalty and encourages repeat purchases, particularly in competitive markets such as skincare (Ma'azah & Prasetyo, 2023; Putri et al., 2024; Rachmawati, 2024; Zhulkarnain et al., 2024). For instance, Scarlett Whitening has successfully established itself as a trusted local brand by aligning its image with the desires and needs of Indonesian consumers, such as affordability, effectiveness, and suitability for local skin types.

Empirical studies reinforce the significant impact of brand image on purchasing decisions. Gunawan & Pertiwi (2022) found that a well-crafted brand image enhances consumer trust and fosters loyalty, especially when combined with high product quality. Similarly, Ulyanita & Mubarak (2023) demonstrated that brand image not only directly affects purchasing decisions but also mediates the relationship between other factors, such as halal certification and consumer trust. However, challenges arise when negative perceptions—whether due to misinformation or market controversies—overshadow the brand's positive attributes. Therefore, managing brand image requires strategic efforts to maintain consumer confidence and mitigate external disruptions.

Halal Certification and Purchasing Decisions

Halal certification is a critical factor influencing purchasing decisions in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia (Djakasaputra et al., 2023; Saripah et al., 2023;

Shabrina et al., 2023), where compliance with Islamic ethical principles significantly affects consumer trust. Products certified as halal are perceived as safe, ethical, and aligned with religious obligations, making them preferable choices for observant consumers (Kartika et al., 2023; Suki, 2018; Yanti, 2024). Aligned with this, Scarlett Whitening emphasizes its halal certification as part of its branding strategy to appeal to the Indonesian market.

Despite its theoretical importance, the influence of halal certification on purchasing decisions has yielded mixed results in empirical studies. Inayah et al. (2023) found that while halal labels provide assurance to consumers, their impact on purchasing decisions can be limited by other factors, such as product functionality and brand perception. This aligns with findings by Ulyanita & Mubarok (2023), who argued that halal certification is most effective when paired with strong brand trust and consumer awareness. Conversely, research by Sani et al. (2022) revealed that many consumers overlook halal certification if other attributes, such as price and promotions, are more appealing. These findings suggest that the impact of halal certification varies depending on the target demographic's awareness, religiosity, and prioritization of ethical considerations.

Animosity and Purchasing Decisions

Consumer animosity, defined as the resentment or hostility toward a country, group, or entity, introduces a unique dynamic in purchasing behavior. Animosity often stems from socio-political conflicts and can influence consumers to boycott products perceived as associated with the antagonistic entity. Antonetti et al. (2019) describe animosity as a psychological barrier that disrupts consumer intent, reducing motivation to purchase products from specific origins or affiliations.

In the case of Scarlett Whitening, animosity emerged due to socio-political controversies surrounding its public relations response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Yassin et al. (2022) note, such situations create a ripple effect where consumer perceptions of a brand become negatively influenced by external events. However, the direct impact of animosity on purchasing decisions remains contested. Shandilya & Kumar (2023) found that while animosity can deter purchases, its influence is moderated by factors like price and consumer ethnocentrism. This indicates that animosity, while significant, interacts with other variables in complex ways, necessitating further exploration in context-specific studies.

The Role of Promotion in Moderating Effects

Promotional strategies are instrumental in shaping consumer behavior by enhancing product visibility and appeal. Promotions, such as discounts and advertising campaigns, can counterbalance negative perceptions and amplify positive factors like brand image (Cahyani & Aksari, 2022; Helmi et al., 2022; Zabashtanskyi et al., 2022). In the competitive skincare industry, promotions serve as a critical tool for differentiation, especially when targeting price-sensitive consumers.

Empirical evidence underscores the moderating role of promotions in purchasing decisions. Sani et al. (2022) highlighted that promotions not only directly influence

consumer choices but also enhance the perceived value of a product, thereby reinforcing its appeal. Similarly, Supriyanto et al. (2020) demonstrated that promotional activities amplify the effects of brand image, making it a crucial variable for sustaining consumer interest. However, promotions may have limitations when addressing issues like animosity or weak halal awareness. For example, Inayah et al. (2023) argued that while promotions attract attention, they cannot entirely offset the lack of consumer trust or mitigate the effects of negative perceptions.

Integrated Analysis and Research Gaps

The interplay between brand image, halal certification, animosity, and promotions presents a complex dynamic that is underexplored in the literature. While individual studies have examined these factors independently, few have integrated them to assess their combined impact on purchasing decisions. This gap is particularly significant in culturally sensitive markets like Indonesia, where religious and socio-political considerations heavily influence consumer behavior.

Research by Gunawan & Pertiwi (2022) and Ulyanita & Mubarok (2023) provides valuable insights into the relationships between brand image, halal certification, and consumer trust. However, these studies do not address the role of animosity or how promotions might moderate these relationships. Similarly, findings by Shandilya & Kumar (2023) on animosity highlight its potential impact but fail to consider how other factors, such as branding or ethical certifications, might interact with it. This fragmentation in the literature underscores the need for a comprehensive framework that integrates these variables and examines their combined effects on consumer decisions.

Study Contribution and Scope

This study addresses these gaps by exploring the effects of brand image, halal certification, and animosity on purchasing decisions, with promotions serving as a moderating variable. By adopting a holistic approach, the research provides a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior in a culturally and politically sensitive context. The findings aim to contribute to both theoretical knowledge and practical applications, offering actionable insights for businesses like Scarlett Whitening to optimize their marketing strategies and align them with consumer expectations. Moreover, by integrating animosity into the analysis, the study adds a novel dimension to the discourse on consumer behavior, addressing an area of growing relevance in globalized markets.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the effects of brand image, halal certification, and consumer animosity on purchasing decisions, with promotions serving as a moderating variable. The quantitative approach allows for systematic data collection and statistical analysis, ensuring that findings are reliable

and generalizable. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized as the primary analytical method, implemented through SmartPLS 3.0 software. SEM is particularly suited for evaluating complex relationships among latent variables, such as the direct and moderating effects under investigation in this study.

Research Setting and Context

The research was conducted in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, focusing on Scarlett Whitening products sold at Mutiara Kosmetik, a prominent cosmetics retailer with multiple branches. The context was chosen due to the growing popularity of local skincare brands in Indonesia and the increasing awareness of ethical and religious considerations among consumers. This environment provides a rich dataset to explore the interplay of marketing and socio-political factors on consumer behavior.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised consumers who had purchased Scarlett Whitening products at Mutiara Kosmetik. Non-probability sampling was used, specifically the purposive sampling technique, to ensure that participants were relevant to the study's objectives. The inclusion criteria required participants to have purchased Scarlett Whitening products and to have sufficient knowledge of the brand. A total of 220 respondents participated in the study, which is an adequate sample size for SEM analysis (Kline, 2023). This sample size ensures robust statistical power and validity.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents at Mutiara Kosmetik. The questionnaire was designed based on established scales in the literature to measure the study variables, including brand image, halal certification, animosity, promotion, and purchasing decisions. Each item was assessed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Before distribution, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a small group of respondents to ensure clarity and relevance.

Variable Operationalization

The study variables were operationalized as follows:

1. **Brand Image:** Measured using indicators such as strength, uniqueness, and favorability of associations with the brand, based on Kotler & Keller's (2016) framework.
2. **Halal Certification:** Assessed through consumer perceptions of the product's compliance with Islamic ethical standards.
3. **Animosity:** Defined as negative consumer sentiments arising from socio-political issues, with indicators adapted from Antonetti et al. (2019).
4. **Promotion:** Evaluated based on promotional strategies, including discounts and advertising, that influence consumer behavior.
5. **Purchasing Decisions:** Measured by factors like purchase frequency, satisfaction, and likelihood of repurchase.

The operationalization process ensured that the constructs were accurately captured and aligned with the study's theoretical framework.

Analytical Techniques

The analysis followed a multi-step procedure:

1. **Data Preparation:** Raw data were cleaned and screened for missing or inconsistent responses. Descriptive statistics were generated to summarize respondent demographics and variable distributions.
2. **Measurement Model Assessment:** The reliability and validity of the constructs were evaluated through convergent and discriminant validity tests. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to assess internal consistency, with thresholds of 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).
3. **Structural Model Evaluation:** Path analysis was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships between variables. The model fit was assessed using indicators such as R^2 for variance explained and Q^2 for predictive relevance.
4. **Moderation Analysis:** The moderating effect of promotions on the relationships between brand image, halal certification, animosity, and purchasing decisions was examined through interaction terms in SEM.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

RESULTS

Respondent Profile

The study gathered data from 220 respondents who had purchased Scarlett Whitening products at Mutiara Kosmetik. The demographic analysis of respondents, as presented in Table 1, reveals significant insights into gender distribution, age group, and occupation. The data indicates a clear gender disparity, with 82.73% of respondents being female and only 17.27% male, suggesting that Scarlett Whitening products predominantly attract female consumers. In terms of age, 88.18% of respondents fall within the 17–26 age range, while only 11.82% are aged 26–50, reflecting a strong preference among younger consumers, particularly those in their late teens and early twenties. Regarding occupation, the majority (68.64%) are students, with smaller percentages representing high school students (1.82%), private-sector employees (8.18%), and government employees (4.55%). The data suggests that Scarlett Whitening appeals primarily to younger, student-aged consumers, likely due to affordability, marketing strategies, and product suitability for youthful skin.

Table 1*Respondent Profile*

Category	Sub-category	Count	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	38	17.27%
	Female	182	82.73%
Age Group	17-26 years	194	88.18%
	26-50 years	26	11.82%
Occupation	Student	151	68.64%
	High School Student	4	1.82%
	Entrepreneur	1	0.45%
	Private Employee	1	0.45%
	Government Employee (PNS)	10	4.55%
	Self-employed	2	0.91%
	Business Owner	6	2.73%
	Employee	23	10.45%
	Private Sector Employee	18	8.18%
	Housewife	1	0.45%
	Tutor	2	0.91%
Most Visited Store Branch	Mutiara Sutomo	42	19.09%
	Mutiara Katamso	42	19.09%
	Mutiara Babarsari	37	16.82%
	Mutiara Jakal Km. 11	46	20.91%
	Mutiara Jakal Km. 5	24	10.91%
	Mutiara Godean	29	13.18%
Purchase Frequency	1 time	28	12.73%
	2-3 times	95	43.18%
	4-5 times	55	25.00%
	More than 5 times	42	19.09%

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Further analysis provides insights into consumer behavior concerning store branch preferences and purchase frequency. Among the six branches of Mutiara Kosmetik, Mutiara Jakal Km. 11 is the most visited (20.91%), followed by Mutiara Sutomo and Mutiara Katamso (19.09% each). These branches' popularity may be attributed to their strategic locations, consumer accessibility, and promotional activities. In terms of purchasing frequency, 43.18% of respondents have bought Scarlett Whitening products 2-3 times, while 25.00% have purchased 4-5 times, and 19.09% have made purchases more than five times. The data suggests that repeat purchases are common, indicating a level of brand loyalty. However, the fact that only 12.73% of respondents purchased just once may reflect initial trial behavior, which could either result in continued use or discontinuation based on product satisfaction.

Overall, the findings suggest that Scarlett Whitening has successfully positioned itself as a preferred skincare brand among young, female, and student consumers. The dominance of student-aged respondents highlights the importance of

affordability and trend-driven marketing in consumer decision-making. Additionally, store visits are concentrated in specific locations, likely driven by ease of access and promotional efforts. The purchasing frequency data indicates that while many customers are repeat buyers, there remains a portion of consumers whose engagement with the brand is limited, potentially due to personal preferences or competitive alternatives. These insights are crucial for marketing strategies, suggesting that targeted promotions, expanded product accessibility, and enhanced consumer engagement efforts could further strengthen brand loyalty and expand Scarlett Whitening's consumer base..

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the key variables of interest. The descriptive statistical analysis in Table 2 provides insights into the distribution of data across key variables, including Brand Image, Halal Label, and Animosity. The Brand Image variable has a mean score of 12.23, with a minimum value of 6.00 and a maximum of 15.00, indicating a moderate to high perception of the brand among consumers. Meanwhile, the Halal Label variable exhibits the highest mean score (17.00), suggesting that respondents generally acknowledge and consider the presence of halal certification when making purchasing decisions. However, the Animosity variable records the lowest mean score (11.97), implying that negative sentiment or hostility toward Scarlett Whitening, possibly due to geopolitical issues, is not a dominant factor affecting consumer perception.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Min	Max	Std. Dev
Brand Image	220	12.23	6.00	15.00	1.812
Halal Label	220	17.00	7.00	20.00	2.482
Animosity	220	11.97	5.00	15.00	2.222
Promotion	220	12.35	5.00	15.00	1.883
Purchase Decision	220	19.58	8.00	25.00	3.562
Promotion × Brand Image	220	12.12	6.00	15.00	1.948
Promotion × Halal Label	220	12.46	5.00	15.00	1.945
Promotion × Animosity	220	11.34	3.00	15.00	2.688

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

The Promotion variable has a mean value of 12.35, with scores ranging from 5.00 to 15.00, reflecting that promotional efforts have been moderately effective in attracting consumers. The Purchase Decision variable, on the other hand, records the highest mean score (19.58), with a standard deviation of 3.562, suggesting that consumers generally exhibit a strong inclination to purchase Scarlett Whitening products. This finding indicates that despite concerns related to brand perception and external influences such as animosity, the majority of respondents still decide to purchase the brand's skincare products. The high variability in purchase decisions

suggests that factors beyond branding and promotions, such as personal preferences and product efficacy, may also play a role in influencing consumer choices.

The moderating effect of Promotion on Brand Image, Halal Label, and Animosity is also examined in the table. The Promotion × Brand Image interaction records a mean of 12.12, indicating that promotional strategies moderately reinforce the influence of brand image on purchase decisions. Similarly, the Promotion × Halal Label interaction has a mean of 12.46, showing a slightly stronger effect, suggesting that halal certification may gain more importance when combined with promotional efforts. The Promotion × Animosity interaction records the lowest mean score (11.34) with the highest standard deviation (2.688), indicating that promotion has a weaker and more inconsistent impact in mitigating the effects of animosity on purchasing behavior. This suggests that while promotions may help enhance positive brand perception, they are less effective in counteracting negative consumer sentiment.

Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate that brand image and promotions play significant roles in influencing purchase decisions, whereas animosity appears to have a lesser impact on consumer behavior. The relatively high mean for Halal Label suggests that halal certification is a key consideration for many consumers, especially in a predominantly Muslim market like Indonesia. Additionally, while promotional efforts contribute to shaping consumer perceptions, their ability to override negative sentiment remains limited. These findings provide valuable insights for businesses, suggesting that while branding and promotions are essential marketing tools, companies should also focus on consumer trust-building strategies and ethical positioning to mitigate potential animosity-related challenges.

Measurement Model (Outer Model) Evaluation

The measurement model assesses the validity and reliability of the constructs used in the study. The key criteria for evaluation are as follows:

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity assesses whether the indicators of a construct adequately measure the underlying concept by ensuring that they share a high proportion of variance. A key criterion for convergent validity is factor loadings, where all item loadings should be ≥ 0.70 for strong reliability, though values between 0.50 and 0.70 may still be acceptable in exploratory studies. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should be ≥ 0.50 to confirm that the construct explains more variance than error. Based on the results, all constructs in this study meet the AVE threshold, with Brand Image (0.630), Halal Label (0.667), Animosity (0.690), Promotion (0.520), and Purchase Decision (0.713), indicating that the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent validity. These findings validate the reliability of the constructs and support their use in further analysis.

Table 3*Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of Each Construct*

Construct	AVE
Brand Image	0.630
Halal Label	0.667
Animosity	0.690
Promotion	0.520
Purchase Decision	0.713

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses whether a construct is sufficiently distinct from other constructs in the model, ensuring that each variable measures a unique concept. Two key methods are used to evaluate discriminant validity: the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). According to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, the square root of AVE for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs, confirming that each construct shares more variance with its indicators than with other variables. In this study, all constructs meet this requirement, with values such as Animosity (0.831), Brand Image (0.794), and Purchase Decision (0.845) exceeding their respective correlations, thereby supporting discriminant validity. Additionally, the HTMT values should be below 0.85 to ensure that constructs are not too closely related. While most values meet this threshold, Promotion and Brand Image (0.821) and Promotion and Purchase Decision (0.729) are relatively high, suggesting a strong relationship between these constructs. Overall, the results indicate that discriminant validity is largely achieved, confirming that the constructs measure distinct aspects of consumer behavior.

Table 4*Square Root of AVE and Correlation Among Latent Constructs*

Construct	Animosity	Brand Image	Purchase Decision	Halal Label	Promotion
Animosity	0.831				
Brand Image	0.574	0.794			
Purchase Decision	0.410	0.689	0.845		
Halal Label	0.554	0.733	0.505	0.817	
Promotion	0.669	0.821	0.729	0.765	0.721

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Reliability Tests

Reliability tests assess the internal consistency of constructs to ensure that the indicators reliably measure their respective latent variables. Two key measures are used: Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA), both of which should be ≥ 0.70 to confirm acceptable reliability. The results indicate that all constructs meet this criterion, with CR values ranging from 0.836 (Brand Image) to 0.909 (Purchase Decision), demonstrating strong internal consistency. Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha values are all above 0.70, with Purchase Decision (0.866) and Promotion (0.883)

showing the highest reliability. These results confirm that the measurement model is reliable, ensuring that the constructs can be used for further structural analysis with confidence.

Table 5

Reliability Tests Results

Construct	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)
Animosity	0.869	0.772
Brand Image	0.836	0.706
Purchase Decision	0.909	0.866
Halal Label	0.889	0.834
Promotion	0.905	0.883

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Structural Model (Inner Model) Evaluation

The structural model assesses the relationships between variables and determines their explanatory power.

Path Coefficients & Hypothesis Testing

The path coefficient analysis evaluates the significance and strength of relationships between variables in the structural model. A t-statistic greater than 1.96 at a 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$) indicates a significant relationship. The results in Table 6 show that Brand Image ($\beta = 0.358$, $t = 3.488$), Promotion ($\beta = 0.635$, $t = 4.627$), and Promotion \times Brand Image ($\beta = -0.239$, $t = 2.826$) significantly influence Purchase Decision. However, Animosity ($\beta = -0.108$, $t = 1.344$) does not have a significant effect, indicating that negative sentiments do not strongly impact purchasing behavior. The Halal Label ($\beta = -0.175$, $t = 1.978$) has a negative but significant effect, suggesting that some consumers may not prioritize halal certification when selecting skincare products.

Table 6

Path Coefficients & Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics (O/STDEV)
Animosity => Purchase Decision	-0.108	-0.109	0.08	1.344
Brand Image => Purchase Decision	0.358	0.353	0.103	3.488
Halal Label => Purchase Decision	-0.175	-0.178	0.088	1.978
Promotion => Purchase Decision	0.635	0.652	0.137	4.627
Promotion \times Halal Label => Purchase Decision	0.056	0.057	0.076	0.741
Promotion \times Brand Image => Purchase Decision	-0.239	-0.227	0.085	2.826
Promotion \times Animosity => Purchase Decision	0.207	0.195	0.095	2.179

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Additionally, the interaction effects provide further insights into moderating relationships. While Promotion \times Brand Image ($\beta = -0.239$, $t = 2.826$) and Promotion \times Animosity ($\beta = 0.207$, $t = 2.179$) are significant, the Promotion \times Halal Label interaction ($\beta = 0.056$, $t = 0.741$) is not significant, indicating that promotion does not enhance the effect of halal labeling on purchase decisions. This suggests that while brand perception and promotional efforts play a key role in influencing consumer behavior, halal labeling is less impactful, and its moderating role within promotional strategies remains weak.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the explanatory power of independent variables on the dependent variable. According to Chin (1998), an R^2 value of 0.67 indicates a strong model, 0.33 suggests a moderate model, and 0.19 represents a weak model. Based on Table 7, the R^2 value for Purchase Decision is 0.607 (60.7%), meaning that the independent variables collectively explain 60.7% of the variance in purchase decisions, while the remaining 39.3% is influenced by other factors not included in the model. This value indicates that the model has moderate explanatory power, suggesting that brand image, halal labeling, animosity, and promotion contribute significantly to purchase decisions, but other external factors may still play a role. Thus, while the model provides meaningful insights, additional variables could further enhance its predictive strength.

Table 7

Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Test Result

Dependent Variable	R^2 Value	Interpretation
Purchase Decision	0.607	Moderate

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Effect Size (f^2)

The effect size (f^2) measures the magnitude of the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable, based on Chin (1998), where 0.02 indicates a weak effect, 0.15 a medium effect, and 0.35 a strong effect. According to Table 8, the three strongest influences on purchase decisions are promotion ($f^2 = 0.225$), brand image ($f^2 = 0.095$), and the interaction of promotion with brand image ($f^2 = 0.041$), all classified as having a large effect. This finding suggests that marketing efforts and branding strategies play crucial roles in influencing consumer purchase decisions for Scarlett Whitening products. The significance of these variables underscores the importance of building a strong brand image and leveraging promotional activities to drive consumer interest and engagement.

Table 8*Effect Size (f^2)*

Variable	f^2	Interpretation
Animosity → Purchase Decision	0.016	Medium
Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.095	Large
Halal Label → Purchase Decision	0.024	Medium
Promotion → Purchase Decision	0.225	Large
Promotion × Halal Label → Purchase Decision	0.002	Weak
Promotion × Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.041	Large
Promotion × Animosity → Purchase Decision	0.031	Medium

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Additionally, three paths exhibit a medium effect, namely animosity ($f^2 = 0.016$), halal labeling ($f^2 = 0.024$), and the interaction between promotion and animosity ($f^2 = 0.031$), indicating that these factors moderately influence purchase decisions. Meanwhile, the interaction between promotion and halal labeling ($f^2 = 0.002$) shows a weak effect, suggesting that promotion does not significantly enhance the impact of halal labeling on consumer decisions. This implies that while halal certification may be relevant for some consumers, promotional efforts do not necessarily strengthen its influence on purchasing behavior. Overall, the findings highlight that branding and promotion are the primary drivers of consumer decisions, whereas halal labeling and animosity have a comparatively weaker impact.

Predictive Relevance (Q^2 , Blindfolding Test)

The predictive relevance (Q^2) test evaluates the model's ability to predict endogenous variables, where a Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates predictive relevance. Based on Table 9, the Q^2 value for Purchase Decision is 0.417, confirming that the model has strong predictive power for explaining purchase decisions. This means that the independent variables—brand image, halal label, animosity, and promotion—effectively contribute to predicting consumer purchasing behavior. Since the Q^2 value is significantly above zero, the model demonstrates good explanatory capability, reinforcing its reliability in forecasting future purchase decisions within the context of Scarlett Whitening products.

Table 9*Predictive Relevance (Q^2)*

Variable	Q^2	Interpretation
Purchase Decision	0.417	Predictive Relevance

Source: Primary data. Authors' estimation.

Moderation Analysis

The moderating effect of promotions was evaluated through interaction terms in the structural model. Key insights include:

1. Promotions and Brand Image: Promotions significantly moderated the relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions. The interaction

effect indicated that promotional activities amplify the positive influence of brand image, particularly for consumers with stronger brand loyalty.

2. Promotions and Halal Certification: The moderating effect of promotions on the relationship between halal certification and purchasing decisions was not significant. This suggests that promotional efforts alone may not be sufficient to address consumer skepticism regarding halal certification.
3. Promotions and Animosity: Promotions significantly moderated the relationship between animosity and purchasing decisions. The findings suggest that effective promotional strategies can mitigate the negative effects of animosity, redirecting consumer focus toward product attributes and value.

DISCUSSION

The Role of Brand Image in Purchasing Decisions

The findings highlight the pivotal role of brand image in influencing consumer purchasing decisions for Scarlett Whitening products. A strong brand image enhances consumer loyalty by establishing favorable perceptions and associations, as evidenced by the significant positive relationship observed in this study. These findings are consistent with prior research which emphasized that brand image is integral to consumer decision-making, particularly in competitive markets such as skincare (Gunawan & Pertiwi, 2022; Pratiwi & Silitonga, 2024; Setiyanti & Ansori, 2024; Sitorus & Realize, 2024). Consumers' perceptions of Scarlett as a reliable and effective brand likely stem from its alignment with local preferences, including affordability, suitability for various skin types, and cultural relevance.

The strong influence of brand image underscores the importance of maintaining positive consumer perceptions. However, the study also indicates that brand image alone is insufficient to overcome challenges posed by external factors such as socio-political controversies or misinformation. Therefore, brands must adopt a multifaceted strategy that combines branding with promotional activities to reinforce their image and sustain consumer trust.

Halal Certification and Its Impact on Consumer Behavior

The unexpected finding that halal certification negatively affects purchasing decisions, as also indicated in previous works (Ibeabuchi et al., 2024; Khanfani et al., 2023; Monoarfa et al., 2023), invites further scrutiny. While halal certification is typically associated with increased consumer trust and ethical alignment, this study suggests that its effectiveness may depend on consumer awareness and prioritization. As Inayah et al. (2023) observed, some consumers prioritize product functionality and benefits over ethical certifications, which may explain the negative relationship in this context.

Another potential explanation lies in the communication gap regarding halal certification. While Scarlett Whitening has obtained halal certification, the brand's promotional strategies may not sufficiently highlight this aspect, leading to limited consumer recognition. Additionally, the growing prevalence of halal-certified products

in Indonesia might dilute its impact as a differentiating factor, reducing its influence on purchasing decisions. Addressing this issue requires targeted educational campaigns that emphasize the significance of halal certification and its alignment with consumer values.

Animosity and Its Indirect Effects on Purchasing Decisions

Animosity, defined as negative consumer sentiment arising from socio-political issues, showed no significant direct impact on purchasing decisions in this study. However, its interaction with other variables reveals important insights. The lack of direct influence suggests that while socio-political factors may shape consumer perceptions, they do not necessarily translate into actionable purchasing behaviors. This finding aligns with previous studies that animosity often interacts with other variables, such as price or promotional strategies, to influence decisions (Fong et al., 2022; Gineikiene & Diamantopoulos, 2017; Shandilya & Kumar, 2023; Wang et al., 2023).

Promotional activities were found to mitigate the negative effects of animosity, redirecting consumer focus toward product attributes and value. This suggests that effective marketing can counterbalance socio-political controversies by emphasizing a brand's strengths and benefits. For Scarlett Whitening, this highlights the need to carefully manage public relations and promotional efforts to address potential backlash while maintaining consumer trust.

The Strategic Importance of Promotional Activities

Promotional activities emerged as a significant factor influencing purchasing decisions and moderating the effects of other variables. The positive impact of promotions highlights their role in enhancing product appeal, particularly for price-sensitive consumers. This finding aligns with previous studies that promotional strategies are crucial for driving sales in competitive markets (Bondarenko & Vyshnivska, 2023; Khan, 2021; S. A. Sani et al., 2022).

Promotions also demonstrated a moderating effect, amplifying the positive relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions. This indicates that promotional efforts not only attract consumers but also reinforce their perceptions of the brand, creating a virtuous cycle of loyalty and repeat purchases. However, the study revealed that promotions have limited influence on halal certification, suggesting that their effectiveness may vary depending on the variable they interact with. For example, while discounts and advertising can enhance brand appeal, they may not fully address consumer concerns about ethical certifications or socio-political controversies.

Integrated Analysis of Findings

The interplay between brand image, halal certification, animosity, and promotions provides a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior. Brand image emerged as the most influential factor, emphasizing the importance of building and maintaining positive consumer perceptions. Halal certification, while theoretically important, showed a limited practical impact, highlighting the need for enhanced consumer

education and communication. Animosity, though not directly impactful, interacts with other variables to shape consumer decisions, particularly when mitigated by promotional efforts.

These findings underscore the importance of an integrated marketing strategy that addresses both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. For Scarlett Whitening, this involves leveraging its strong brand image while addressing gaps in consumer awareness about halal certification and mitigating socio-political controversies through targeted promotions.

Implications for Theory and Practice

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of consumer behavior by integrating variables that are often studied in isolation. By examining the combined effects of brand image, halal certification, animosity, and promotions, the research provides a holistic framework for analyzing purchasing decisions in culturally and politically sensitive markets.

For practitioners, the findings offer actionable insights for optimizing marketing strategies. First, brands should prioritize building a strong and positive image to establish consumer trust and loyalty. Second, promotional strategies should be tailored to reinforce brand strengths while addressing potential weaknesses, such as limited consumer awareness of halal certification. Finally, brands must proactively manage socio-political controversies through transparent communication and strategic marketing, ensuring that external factors do not undermine consumer confidence.

CONCLUSION

This study comprehensively examines the factors influencing purchasing decisions for Scarlett Whitening products, focusing on brand image, halal certification, and consumer animosity, with promotions as a moderating variable. The findings reveal that brand image is the most influential factor, positively driving consumer loyalty and repeat purchases. Promotional activities also play a significant role, both as a direct influencer and as a moderator that amplifies the effects of brand image and mitigates animosity. However, halal certification surprisingly exhibits a negative relationship with purchasing decisions, likely due to limited consumer awareness and prioritization of product functionality over ethical considerations.

These insights contribute to the existing body of knowledge by integrating variables that are often studied in isolation, providing a holistic framework for understanding consumer behavior in culturally and politically sensitive markets. The study emphasizes the importance of strategic marketing approaches that leverage strong brand identities while addressing ethical and socio-political challenges. Practically, the findings offer actionable recommendations for optimizing branding, promotional strategies, and consumer education.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to bridge gaps in understanding the complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting purchasing decisions. It

provides a robust foundation for future research and offers valuable insights for practitioners aiming to enhance consumer engagement and market competitiveness.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides meaningful insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of purposive sampling, targeting consumers of Scarlett Whitening products at Mutiara Kosmetik, restricts the generalizability of the findings to other brands or retail contexts. This context-specific approach limits the extent to which the results can be applied to broader markets with diverse consumer profiles. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data collected through questionnaires introduces the potential for response biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may overstate their adherence to ethical considerations like halal certification.

The study also examines consumer behavior at a single point in time, limiting the ability to capture dynamic changes in perceptions and purchasing patterns over time. Factors such as evolving socio-political climates or shifting consumer awareness about halal certification may influence future purchasing behavior in ways not captured by this study. Finally, while the moderating role of promotions was explored, other potential moderating or mediating variables, such as consumer demographics or cultural values, were not included, which could provide additional layers of understanding.

Acknowledging these limitations allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the findings and underscores the need for further research to validate and expand upon the conclusions drawn here.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should address the limitations identified in this study to expand the understanding of consumer purchasing behavior in culturally sensitive markets. First, incorporating a more diverse sample that includes multiple brands and retail contexts could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Exploring the behavior of consumers in non-Muslim-majority regions or among different demographic groups may provide comparative insights into the role of halal certification and brand image.

Longitudinal studies are recommended to track changes in consumer behavior over time, particularly in response to shifts in socio-political conditions or increased consumer awareness. This approach could offer a deeper understanding of how perceptions of animosity and ethical certifications evolve and impact purchasing decisions in dynamic markets.

Future research could also investigate additional moderating and mediating variables, such as cultural values, consumer income levels, or digital engagement, to uncover how these factors interact with brand image, promotions, and halal certification. Finally, experimental designs could test specific promotional strategies to determine their effectiveness in mitigating animosity or enhancing the perceived value of ethical certifications.

By addressing these avenues, future studies can build on the contributions of this research, providing richer insights into consumer decision-making processes and guiding marketing practices in increasingly complex global markets.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization	A.H. & F.E.A.	Resources	A.H. & F.E.A.
Data curation	A.H. & F.E.A.	Software	A.H. & F.E.A.
Formal analysis	A.H. & F.E.A.	Supervision	A.H. & F.E.A.
Funding acquisition	A.H. & F.E.A.	Validation	A.H. & F.E.A.
Investigation	A.H. & F.E.A.	Visualization	A.H. & F.E.A.
Methodology	A.H. & F.E.A.	Writing – original draft	A.H. & F.E.A.
Project administration	A.H. & F.E.A.	Writing – review & editing	A.H. & F.E.A.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This study received no direct funding from any institution.

Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was approved by Program Studi Ekonomi Islam (S1), Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained before respondents filled out the questionnaire.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Program Studi Ekonomi Islam (S1), Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for administrative support for the research on which this article was based.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT, DeepL, Grammarly, and PaperPal in order to translate from Bahasa Indonesia into American English, and to improve clarity of the language and readability of the article. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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