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CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN HALAL CERTIFICATION IN MALAYSIA'S COSMETICS INDUSTRIES

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Abstract:

The halal cosmetics industry in Malaysia has experienced significant growth due to rising consumer demand for ethically produced, Sharia-compliant products. However, despite the increasing popularity of halal-certified cosmetics, several challenges remain in ensuring the integrity and effectiveness of the halal certification process. By employs qualitative research, this paper explores the implementation of the MS 2634:2019 standard, the challenges and possible solutions which merges religious principles with safety and quality throughout the production cycle. It specifically examines the legal necessity of complying with the Control of Drugs and Cosmetics Regulations 1984, noting that obtaining a Cosmetic Product Notification (CPN) from the NPRA before applying for halal certification. The key challenges facing the halal cosmetics sector in Malaysia, including regulatory and certification standards aspects, and issues related to the enforcement of halal guidelines. It also addresses the lack of public awareness regarding halal certification and its impact on consumer purchasing behavior. Through a detailed examination of Malaysia's halal certification framework, particularly the role of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC), this study identifies solutions, such as in strengthening inter-agency collaboration, enhancing public education, and implementing standardized global practices. It aims to support the sustainable growth of Malaysia's halal cosmetics market while maintaining its religious and ethical standards.

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Keyword:

Certification, Halal Cosmetics, Regulatory Bodies Standard



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Introduction

The concept of Halal, meaning permissible under Islamic law, is a fundamental requirement for the global Muslim population, guiding their daily consumption and religious worship (Abu Sani, 2023). Within the vast 2.2 trillion global halal economy, halal cosmetics have emerged as a significant and rapidly growing sector, with the global market valued at US 27.31 billion in 2021 and the Malaysian industry alone worth approximately USD 800 million (Adham et al., 2024). This expansion is driven by a global "halal-savvy" generation seeking products that are not only Shariah-compliant but also ethically produced, pure, and safe (ELgharbawy et al., 2025).

In Malaysia, halal certification is strictly managed by the government through the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), which ensures that products adhere to Shariah law to provide legal certainty and peace of mind for consumers (Abu Sani, 2023). By fulfilling all the requirements of the certification framework, manufacturers ensure that products meet stringent standards such as Malaysian Standard MS 2634:2019, which integrates Shariah principles with safety and quality requirements (Othman et al., 2023).

The requirements for MS 2634:2019, Halal Cosmetics – General Requirement which are develop on a “halal built-in” concept, which integrates Shariah principles and fatwas into every stage of the production process of the cosmetics products. Among the outline of the standard are:

(i) Management Responsibility

This standard requires all manufacturer to have Halal Assurance System (HAS) by designing and implementing an internal manual that include a halal policy, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and an audit system. It is also including active staff participations such as maintaining management records to ensure every step of the production process is traceable. Organization must also ensure that there has sufficient number of Muslim personnel, specifically appointing a Muslim Halal executive to oversee all activities, making sure it is complying with the policy, while all other staff must undergo formal training in halal practices and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP).

(ii) Material and Ingredients

The source of every ingredient must be unquestionably halal where it does not contain any prohibited sources that may be derived from pigs, carrion, blood, human body parts (such as hair keratin or placenta extract), predatory animals, reptiles, and insects. Then, animal-based materials must come from permissible animals that are only accepted if the animals were slaughtered according to Islamic law and supported by valid halal documentation. Other critical ingredients like water must not be contaminated with impurities and alcohol, gelatin and glycerin must be supported by halal certificates. Manufacturing must be done in hygienic facilities. If the equipment was used for non-halal procedure, it must be going through a cleansing process that is verified by a competent authority.

(iii) Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Compliance with MS 2634:2019 does not exempt a manufacturer from other legal obligations. Manufacturers must also adhere to the Control of Drugs and Cosmetics Regulations 1984 and notify their products to the NPRA to receive their Cosmetics Product Notification (CPN) before applying for halal certification.

However, the implementation of halal certification in the cosmetics industry faces several critical challenges. Maintaining the integrity of this process involves navigating complex hurdles, ranging from technical difficulties to significant regulatory and enforcement issues (Adham et al., 2024). Crucially, a lack of public awareness regarding what constitutes a genuine halal certification remains a barrier, directly impacting consumer purchasing behavior and leaving room for unethical practices like the unauthorized use of halal logos (Adham et al., 2024). Producers often struggle with heterogeneous standards and inconsistent interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence, which lead to varying requirements across different markets (Islam et al., 2023). A primary technical hurdle in cosmetics is the presence of questionable raw materials, including alcohol, haram chemicals, and animal by-products such as porcine-derived gelatin (Abu Sani, 2023). These difficulties are compounded by unsupportive or unethical suppliers who provide fraudulent documentation or lack an understanding of halal regulations (Islam et al., 2023). Furthermore, the certification process itself is often viewed as tedious and stringent, plagued by communication gaps between Shariah experts and auditors, as well as a lack of a skilled workforce to manage complex documentation (Abu Bakar et al., 2023).

To address these issues, various solutions and strategic frameworks have been proposed. There is a strong call for the development of uniform halal standards to minimize confusion and facilitate global trade (Tajuddin et al., 2023). Manufacturers are encouraged to implement internal Halal Assurance Systems (HAS) or Internal Halal Control Systems (IHCS) to ensure continuous compliance throughout the production cycle (Tajuddin et al., 2023). Advanced technologies, such as DNA tracers and PCR tests, are essential for detecting non-halal contaminants, while blockchain is suggested to enhance supply chain transparency and traceability (Mujanah, 2024). Additionally, the application of Stakeholder Theory highlights the need for robust collaboration between government agencies, Islamic scholars, scientists, and producers (Islam et al., 2023). By increasing the training of auditors and forming dedicated internal halal teams, the industry can create a more transparent and efficient certification ecosystem, ultimately enhancing the Unique Selling Point (USP) of Malaysian cosmetic firms.

in the global market (Muhammad et al., 2020). is one of the fastest growing development sectors in addition to other development strategic agendas such as energy, food, infrastructure

The Concept of Halal Cosmetics

According to Liew and Karia (2024), the concept of halal cosmetics is a comprehensive framework that integrates Islamic law (Shariah), safety, and ethical manufacturing practices into the production and consumption of personal care products. ELgharbawy et al. (2025) and Tajuddin et al. (2023) note that in the context of Malaysia and the global industry, this concept is defined by several key dimensions which are the Halalan-Toyyiban foundation, the ingredient integrity, the 'Halal Built-In' process management, the products compatibility with religious routine and their ethical and holistic values.

Abu Sani (2023) defines the term Halal as what permissible or lawful under Islamic law, while its opposite, Haram denotes what is forbidden. Elgharbawy et al. (2025) explains that in the cosmetics sector, this is intrinsically linked to the concept of Toyyib which emphasizes that a product must be wholesome, safe, pure and of high quality. Therefore, as Halim and Aghwan (2025) point out, halal cosmetics are not merely those free from prohibited substances but are also recognized as global indicators of cleanliness and safety.

Othman et al. (2023) identify a primary requirement for halal cosmetics as the absence of haram substances throughout the formulation. This is including the ingredients must not contain any derivatives from pigs (porcine), carrion, blood, human body parts, predatory animals, reptiles, or most insects (Liew and Karia, 2024). The products also must remain free from any form of najis (filth or impurity) during the preparation, processing, manufacturing and storage. According to Sugibayashi et al. (2019) that any animal-derived ingredients must come from permissible animals slaughtered according to Shariah law. Then Tajuddin et al. (2023) highlighted the other critical area such as the use of alcohol (ethanol) is generally permitted if the synthetically produced or sourced from natural aerobic fermentation rather than the liquor industry.

Next, the concept of halal extends beyond the final products as it covers the entire supply chain and seen as the "halal built-in" approach. Adham et al. (2024) describes how halal requirements are integrated into the management and control system, starting from research and development (R&D) and raw material selection to distribution. Previous studies also stated that manufacturers must implement a Halal Assurance System (HAS) to provide proper documentation and traceability for every stage of production, ensuring that halal products are physically separated from non-halal items to prevent cross-contamination (Tajuddin et al., 2023). Othman et al. (2023) note that in Malaysia, these practices are guided by specific standards compliance such as MS 2634:2019, which provides the requirements for halal cosmetics management.

On top of that, a unique functional needs requirement of halal cosmetics that stated by Sugibayashi et al. (2019) is their compatibility with Muslim's daily routines, specifically wudu (ablution). Halal cosmetics can be considered as halal-compliant for daily use when the product is ideally able to be penetrable by the water to ensure the validity of ritual cleansing. Not only that, but the product performance can also be evaluated on its wash ability or the ability to be completely removed during the ablution routine.

Lastly, since the modern halal cosmetics have evolved into holistic lifestyle choice that applicable to both Muslim and non-Muslim users (Elgharbawy et al., 2025), the product's concept needs to be aligned with the ethical consumerism. Liew and Karia (2024) argue that by emphasizing non-toxic ingredients, environmental sustainability, and "cruelty-free" practices, it resonates with a global "halal-savvy" generation seeking healthy and socially responsible products. This spiritual and ethical dimension, as noted by Aoun and Tournois (2015) and Musaddad et al. (2023), adds a unique layer to the brand's worldview, transforming the relationship between the consumer and the product from a purely materialistic transaction into one aligned with religious and ethical values.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design through a content analysis on related standard specifically MS 2634:2019. The literature review is also done to examine the challenges and solutions related to halal certification in Malaysia's cosmetics industry. It is suitable on understanding issues, practices, regulatory challenges, and strategic solutions on halal cosmetic industry requirements.

The study relies entirely on secondary data collected from academic journal articles, and industry reports related to halal cosmetics and halal certification. Findings from different authors were synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the current issues affecting halal certification in Malaysia's cosmetics industry. All the findings are dependent on the availability and interpretation of existing literature. Despite this limitation, the study provides valuable insights into the major challenges and possible solutions for strengthening halal certification and enhancing consumer confidence in halal cosmetic products.

Challenges In Regarding Halal Cosmetics

According to Adham et al. (2024), the challenges facing halal certification in Malaysia's cosmetics industry are multi-dimensional, spanning regulatory bottlenecks, operational hurdles, and social perceptions.

Tajuddin et al. (2023) and Islam et al. (2023), found that real challenge lies in the complex regulatory framework and the unified national roadmap for the sector. All manufacturers must secure Cosmetic Product Notification (CPN) from National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) before applying for halal certification through the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). The process in order to secure halal certification in this way often described as inefficient and creates a complex procedural barrier.

On top of that, Adham et al. (2024) highlighted that although Malaysia has several halal-related regulations and standards that applicable to cosmetics products, the country still lacks national policy or comprehensive legal framework that focusing on governing the growth and development of halal cosmetics and its usage in Malaysia. Besides, according to Tajuddin et al. (2023), lack of unified global halal standard forces Malaysian manufacturers to fulfil different requirement standards across international markets, which automatically its increase the certification costs and complicates exports.

Next, other challenges to acquire halal certification is related to its enforcement and operational guideline. To maintain the integrity of the “halal built-in” concept where all halal requirements need to be integrated as a whole into the management and manufacturing process create struggles due to resource gaps. For Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) company, they are struggling in the terms of cost of modifying suitable facilities to meet all halal standards and high price of certified ingredients are often became a barrier for them from pursuing halal certification (Abu Bakar et al., 2023). From previous study by Islam et al. (2023) found that shortage numbers of skilled Muslim auditors who are trained in both Shariah and technical Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) that specialization on cosmetics industry. This critical lack may lead to auditor depending on manufacturers for further technical clarification rather than independent verification. Then, it is also reported that the applicant often face problem with the MYeHalal system, where it cost loss of input data during the server downtime (Abu Bakar et al., 2023).

Then, Malaysia also faced a scarcity of local halal-certified supplier. This severe shortage forces a heavy dependency in foreign suppliers, where it makes more difficult to verify their materials halal status (Othman et al., 2023; Sarpaneswaran et al., 2021). The complexity to verifying the halal status of animal-derived ingredients often results in uncertainty regarding their Shariah status, as these shows the materials might derived from various sources that are not always declared (Tajuddin et al., 2023). On top of that, Othman et al. (2023) found that a major bottleneck where the suppliers are slow and giving undemanding behaviour to provide necessary documentation and some cases reported that supplier even provides false documents related to halal status just to maintain the business relationship.

Lastly, lack of public awareness and significant knowledge are directly influencing halal market dynamics. According to Adham et al. (2024), the consumer awareness regarding the halal cosmetics are significantly lower than halal food. The customer is more likely to purchase products based on trends rather than study on their ingredient's halal validity (Halimi & Yahya Zikri, 2025). Consequently, the impact of lack of awareness makes the customer exposed and purchase products with fake logos, where the fake products often contain hazardous substance such as mercury that can lead to severe health risks (Musaddad et al., 2023).

Possible Solution

The possible solutions to the challenges facing halal certification in Malaysia's cosmetics industry involve a multi-pronged approach that combine and integrates the regulatory reform, technological innovation and social innovation. The most frequently proposed solution to the challenge of heterogeneous or varied standards is the development of unified global standards. In order to expedite and minimize the manufacturer confusion, international bodies such as Standard and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) and the World Halal Food Council (WHFC) need to work together and build a standardized benchmark. Then, in Malaysia, the responsible bodies such as JAKIM and HDC must establish a cohesive collaboration. Other than that, Rahman (2025) stated that signing a Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) between Malaysia and other country such as Indonesia, UAE may reduce trade barriers by ensuring that the halal certification are recognizes across border.

Next, in order to ensure a “halal built-in” integrity throughout the business operation cycle, Musaddad et al. (2023) highlighted that manufacturer are encouraged to adopt a whole formal management system such as Halal Assurance System (HAS). By implementing HAS, it allows manufacturers to have a systematic monitoring system to keep on track on from raw material selection to distribution. Besides, Othman et al. (2023) stated that by integrating Shariah requirements into the existing quality of company’s management will ensure that the compliance towards halal standard is a continuous process rather than just an audit preparation.

Other than that, adoption and integration of advanced technology can be significant booster to smooth the process of obtaining halal certification. For example, blockchain technology will decentralize and permanent digital ledger that capture every stage of the production cycle, allowing the manufacturers, consumer and the auditors to verify the halal status and origin of ingredients in real time (Ramdani et al., 2026; Rahman, 2025). Besides, by utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) will optimize halal formulations by identifying suitable plant-based or synthetic substitutes for non-halal additives. Furthermore, AI can assist regulatory bodies to analyse data certification with high accuracy and speed, helping all manufacturer to meet complex standard demands effectively (Ramdani et al., 2026).

In addition, to cater the challenges in acquiring halal certification, the need of professional training in order to upskill the auditors is a must. By having a well-trained Muslim auditor with both Shariah law and technical GMP, it will be ensuring their capabilities in verifying a complex chemical ingredient independently of manufacturer explanations (Kasri et al., 2023). Moreover, by providing regular training programs for internal personnel, including factory worker to management level, will increase culture of halal compliance indirectly will ensure that staff are proficient in halal standards while maintaining their integrity throughout the manufacturing cycle.

In addition, the government and related bodies such as JAKIM should launch frequents strategic awareness programs and campaign to educate and increase awareness regarding benefits if halal services and help the public to identify genuine halal logo (Noviyanti & Hakim, 2025). Ramdani et al. (2026) suggests that brand to leverage Muslim micro-influencers, digital campaign and online webinars to spread more information regarding ingredient safety, purity of certified cosmetics. Finally, by having collaboratives initiatives between cosmetics firms, government, agencies and education institution can boost the integration between halal literacy into health and cosmetics (Rahman, 2025).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Malaysian halal cosmetics continues growing rapidly as a sector who represent a religious compliance, product safety, and global consumer expectations. This paper demonstrate that halal cosmetics are no longer viewed merely in terms of permissible ingredients, but rather though a comprehensive halal framework that emphasizes purity, safety, quality, and ethical production throughout entire manufacturing process. As global demand for halal certified and ethically responsible cosmetics products continues to increase, Malaysia possesses strong potential to strengthen its position as a leading global halal hub.

However, this industry continues to face several critical challenges that may hinder its long-term sustainability and competitiveness. These include regulatory complexities arising from the Cosmetics Product Notification (CPN) requirement prior to halal certification, inconsistencies in certification practices and interpretations, shortages of technically skilled halal auditors, and limited public understanding regarding authentic halal certification. In addition, misconceptions among entrepreneurs regarding halal compliance further highlight the need for stronger governance and awareness initiatives within the industry.

To address these issues, a coordinated and strategic approach is essential. Stronger collaboration between government agencies, halal authorities, scientists, and industry players are necessary to establish a more transparent, efficient, and standardized certification ecosystem. Malaysia should also continue leading efforts toward harmonizing global halal standards and strengthen Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) to facilitate international trade and reduce procedural confusion. Furthermore, the integration of advanced technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence can improve supply chain transparency and consumer confidence in halal certified. At the same time, educational campaigns and marketing strategies involving Muslim micro-influencers can play an important role in increasing consumer literacy and awareness of halal certification. Ultimately, the future success of the Malaysian halal cosmetics industry depends on its ability to balance Shariah compliance with innovation, sustainability, and global market expectations.

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