

Halal Cosmetics

For Muslim women who feel they are violating Islam's teachings by using skin creams with alcohol and pig residues, an increasing number of manufacturers have flooded the markets with halal cosmetics. According to Layla Mandi, a Canadian makeup artist who converted to Islam who markets cosmetics called One Pure, pork derivatives and alcohol are used in most cosmetics products¹. From Islamic banking to alcohol-free perfumes, products tagged as halal have become popular among devout Muslims.

Under the concept of halal, which means lawful in Arabic, pork and its by-products, alcohol and animals not slaughtered according to Quranic procedures are forbidden. Devout Muslims only buy halal food but the market for halal cosmetics is still in its infancy in Asia and an interesting alternative for Muslims in the Arab world. Cosmetics such as Shadira, Natasya from Malaysia have been increasingly popular within the Muslim community in Malaysia and Singapore. Lately, Ginvera Cosmetics have also launched their own halal brand cosmetics, under the label Syahirah; certified halal by JAKIM (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia or Department of Islamic Development Malaysia). Another recently launched brand in Singapore fast catching on the market is Wardah Cosmetics from Indonesia certified halal by MUI (Majlis Ugama Indonesia or Islamic Council of Indonesia).

Currently, Europe is the world's largest producer of cosmetics, followed by the United States and Japan. Out of the total projected global cosmetics sales of € 126 billion in 2007, the European market has the largest share of about 55 per cent. Major global cosmetics producers are mainly multinational companies such as L'Oreal Group, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Shiseido, Estée Lauder, Avon, and Johnson & Johnson. Rising cost of funds also mean that the market players have to continually invest in the most cost effective raw ingredients mainly capitalised by the rendering industry. At hundreds of plants in the United States each year, remains of dead animals, bones, fat and meat waste, and used cooking fats and oils are heat-treated and melted down². Most of it are used to make protein supplements fed to pets, chickens, cows, sheep and other animals, whilst the rest are used to make products ranging from gelatin to facial creams.

Although Islamic scholars have differing opinions on the rendering process, citing the change-of-state, or istihala, as the central argument to the acceptable use of gelatin and cosmetics, the verdict is however clear on the use of swine placenta in many types of cosmetics including wrinkle creams and face masks. Due to its biological similarities to human placenta and its skin healing properties, swine placenta is considered to be an integral part of the cosmetics industry.

From a survey conducted by Messe Frankfurt GmbH, organisers of the Beautyworld Middle East event in Dubai, approximately USD150 million worth of Halal merchandise are distributed through the United Arab Emirates every year, and a significant proportion of these are said to be accounted for cosmetics and personal care items. In the Middle Eastern region, the market size of Halal personal care products is currently estimated to be worth approximately USD560 million. The market for beauty and grooming products in the Middle East as a whole is said to be currently growing at 12 per cent per annum, with cosmetic-related sales valued at USD2.1 billion last year. In Saudi Arabia alone, the total sales of cosmetics-related products reached USD1.3 billion in 2006. This growth is being mirrored by the demand for Halal personal care products, which in turn is being driven by increased consumer knowledge of the ingredients used and the way they are produced.

A global cosmetics company, such as L'oreal, has also decided to certify one of their products as halal, that is their hair dyes. The vast range of hair dyes do not layer itself over the hair, but is absorbed by the hair, like that of henna. However, aside from the external cosmetic products, one immediate issue is the fatwa (Islamic ruling) on cosmetic plastic surgeries to rectify physical abnormalities or enhance one's natural beauty, or the use of Botox injections for more taut skin, erasing years away.

Such halal certification may open gateways of success for companies into the global Muslim market, who are becoming more aware and driven by availability of safe cosmetics; compliant to their faith. Halal cosmetics are one notch up than those offering cosmetics free from animal testing or sourced from organic products because these products are deemed to be safe, mainly sourced from botanicals and naturally occurring elements from nature. The Muslim market can easily find allies who support ethically managed businesses like organic, vegetarian, environmentally friendly and fair trade industries. No one can deny the potential of the Muslim market. With the shifting of mindsets from consumers, manufacturers, scholars and scientist through education and advertising, it is inevitable that the next wave of change in cosmetics will be more faith-based.

1 <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/09/12/84711.html>

2 Pets wind up in cosmetics, The Prescott Courier, Aug 16 1989,

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=886&dat=19890816&id=iZEOAAAIBAJ&sjid=zYEDAAAIBAJ&pg=7114,3870043>