The Strategy of Self-Disclosure by Wardah in Brand Communication on Social Media

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Sections Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: This study aims to explore Wardah's self-disclosure strategy in brand communication on social media, focusing on how it fosters trust and loyalty, particularly among the younger generation. *Method*: A qualitative approach was employed, using discourse analysis of Wardah's social media content and in-depth interviews with young consumers of Wardah products. *Results*: The findings reveal that Wardah effectively utilizes self-disclosure to create emotional connections with its audience, enhancing both trust and loyalty. Various narrative types, such as personal stories and behind-the-scenes content, were identified as key tools in this process. *Novelty*: This research offers new insights into the application of Social Penetration Theory and Relationship Management Theory in digital marketing, specifically within the context of brand communication strategies targeting younger audiences. The study highlights the role of authentic and personal narratives in building long-term relationships between brands and consumers in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the halal cosmetics industry in Indonesia has seen significant growth, driven by increasing public awareness of the importance of products meeting halal standards. One of the successful brands in capitalizing on this market potential is Wardah, which has consistently promoted the theme of high-quality halal cosmetics since its inception [1]. Wardah is not only recognized as a cosmetics brand but also as a brand that introduces transparent and more personal communication with its consumers. Amidst growing competition, information openness or self-disclosure by the brand has become a crucial strategy in building long-term relationships with consumers, especially in the rapidly evolving digital space [2]
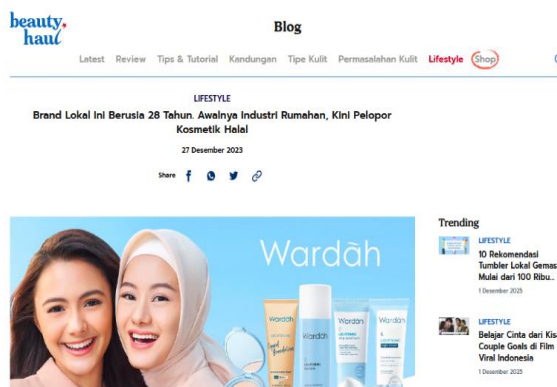

Figure 1. 28 years of Wardah standing as a halal brand in Indonesia.
Source: Beautyhaul media portal

The phenomenon of self-disclosure in the Wardah brand reflects an effort to build closeness with its audience through authentic, honest, and transparent narratives. Self-disclosure, in this context, refers to the brand's attempt to open up more information about the product creation process, its values, and even the story behind the brand itself. In brand communication, particularly on social media, self-disclosure can be an effective strategy to foster trust and loyalty among the younger generation, who are increasingly open and critical of information. This study examines how Wardah's self-disclosure strategy on social media can build trust and loyalty among the younger generation, which is the brand's main audience.

Wardah is chosen as the subject of this research due to its strategic position in the Indonesian halal cosmetics market. As the brand that first introduced halal cosmetics in Indonesia, Wardah has successfully become a market leader, with its halal cosmetics continuously experiencing rapid development. The Indonesian halal cosmetics market is expected to reach a value of 2.2 billion USD in 2024 and is projected to continue growing at 10% annually until 2025. According to the Indonesian Halal Market Report, halal cosmetics have a significant market potential in Southeast Asia, with Indonesia as the main hub. This positions Wardah not only as a local cosmetics brand but also as a pioneer in the halal industry, engaging with its audience through a more open approach that aligns with social values.

Data Top Halal Index 2025

| MAKANAN & MINUMAN | PERSONAL CARE & HOME CARE | COSMETIC | RESTAURANT |

Lipstick

Merek	Index	
Wardah	9.498	● TOP HALAL
Pixy	9.251	● TOP HALAL
Hanasui	9.075	● TOP HALAL
Implora	8.935	
Revlon	8.835	
Maybelline	8.667	

Parfum

Merek	Index	
Casablanca	9.703	● TOP HALAL
Axe	9.255	● TOP HALAL
Oriflame	9.073	● TOP HALAL
Vitalis	8.977	
Wardah	8.886	
Scarlett	8.846	

Serum

Merek	Index	
Wardah	9.212	● TOP HALAL
Skintific	8.959	● TOP HALAL
Hanasui	8.890	● TOP HALAL
Glad2Glow	8.350	

Figure 2. Top Halal Index Data 2025.
Source: Top Halal Data 2025

In this context, Wardah utilizes social media as a primary channel for communication with consumers. The brand leverages platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to communicate the values of halal certification, product quality, and the story behind the products it offers. This study focuses on how self-disclosure through social media is used by Wardah to build trust and loyalty among young consumers, primarily Generation Z, who are active in the digital world. This younger generation prefers to engage with brands that appear authentic, transparent, and consistent with the values they hold, making self-disclosure a key element in building relationships [3].

Several previous studies have examined the phenomenon of self-disclosure in brand communication, but most have been limited to studies on influencers or public figures as the parties engaging in self-disclosure. For instance, Leite and Baptista researched influencer self-disclosure in building brand trust, finding a positive impact on consumer behavioral intentions [4]. However, this study focused solely on individual figures rather than the brand itself. Additionally, Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka demonstrated that brand self-disclosure can create intimacy that leads to loyalty, but their focus was on brands in general, without directly linking it to halal cosmetics and young audiences [5]. This creates a gap that this study aims to fill, focusing on brand self-disclosure in the halal cosmetics sector on social media and how young audiences interpret these messages.

Numerous previous studies have examined trust and loyalty in digital marketing, such as the study by Tuzzahra and Kurniawati, which investigated the impact of brand trust and emotional attachment on halal cosmetics consumer loyalty [6]. Their findings showed that emotional attachment was a more dominant factor in forming loyalty than merely religious values. While similar to this study in its focus on consumer loyalty, this research will specifically examine the communication process that builds trust and loyalty through self-disclosure by Wardah. The gap in this research is that few studies have explored self-disclosure in the context of halal brands, particularly in Indonesia, and how this communication fosters long-term relationships with young audiences.

The two main theories used in this study are Social Penetration Theory and Relationship Management Theory. Social Penetration Theory explains that interpersonal relationships develop through layered self-disclosure [7]. In the context of brand communication, this theory helps explain how brands like Wardah can build emotional closeness with their audience through continuous self-disclosure. Relationship Management Theory, emphasizes the creation of long-term relationships between brands and their audiences through sustained and effective communication [8]. This theory is relevant for describing how self-disclosure contributes to trust and loyalty—two key elements that can strengthen Wardah's relationship with young consumers.

The main objective of this study is to identify and analyze how Wardah's self-disclosure strategy on social media builds trust and loyalty among young consumers. Additionally, the study aims to provide an understanding of how young audiences interpret this self-disclosure and the social processes behind the formation of emotional connections and trust with the brand. Based on these objectives, the research questions are: How does Wardah's self-disclosure on social media build trust and loyalty among young consumers? And how do young audiences interpret the messages conveyed by Wardah?

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative approach is used in this study to explore how Wardah's self-disclosure strategy in brand communication on social media builds trust and loyalty among young consumers [9], [10]. Discourse analysis is employed as the main technique

for data collection, where the researcher will analyze the content published by Wardah on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. The content analyzed includes various types of posts, such as images, captions, and videos, that focus on brand self-disclosure. This analysis aims to identify the forms of self-disclosure used by Wardah, such as the disclosure of halal values, the product creation process, stories behind the products, and other narratives that contribute to building trust and loyalty [11], [12].

Through discourse analysis, this study focuses on how the messages conveyed by Wardah can be understood and interpreted by young audiences. Discourse analysis also allows the researcher to delve deeper into the social and cultural meanings embedded in the messages. The goal is to identify the communication patterns used by Wardah and how these patterns contribute to the formation of emotional closeness between the brand and its audience. This approach aligns with Fairclough's concept of critical discourse analysis, which emphasizes the importance of viewing texts as social products that require understanding within the context of social and cultural relationships. In this case, the self-disclosure performed by Wardah will be analyzed in the context of digital communication, which includes interactions on social media platforms and its impact on the relationship between the brand and young audiences [13], [14], [15], [16].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The Wardah corpus (Jan–Jun 2025) shows that the brand's self-disclosure is built as a curated openness: Wardah reveals information not in the form of individual "personal confessions" but as a series of discourses that simultaneously arrange three elements—access, values, and capabilities. This pattern consistently appears across event/experience content (Feb, May–Jun), Ramadan content (Feb–Mar), and innovation content (Jun). At the language level, Wardah's self-disclosure emerges not just as "what is discussed," but "how it is discussed": temporal markers, participation invitations, forms of appreciation, and moral framing work as discourse devices that produce trust and lock loyalty as relational attachments, not merely product preference.

The first finding is **openness based on access (accessibility disclosure)**. Wardah's discourse repeatedly presents openness regarding schedules, access, and participation formats as a way to invite the audience to "enter" the brand's space. For example, in the Colourverse event corpus, access information is explicitly stated: "7 Feb (Invitation Only) | 8–16 Feb 2025 (For Public)… Free access…" From a discourse analysis perspective, access markers and "free access" are not just technical information; they serve as signals of openness and distance reduction (the brand does not monopolize space but provides space for the public). This enhances credibility through transparency and forms an entry point for young audiences.

The second finding is **involvement based on experience (experience-based involvement)**. Wardah not only tells "when and where," but emphasizes "what can be experienced"—personal color, talk shows, booth experiences, studio activities—which serves as self-disclosure oriented toward shared experiences. The Colourverse event

coverage highlights education and experiential practices, positioning Wardah as a facilitator (not just an advertiser). In discourse terms, this experience allows the audience to "test" the brand through participation and then validate the brand's meaning through shared experiences, which is relevant to the youth's social media culture.

The third finding is **a moral/identity disclosure during Ramadan (value disclosure)**. In the Ramadan corpus, Wardah shifts the focus of communication from products to identity and values, such as the narrative "Stories of Women… Coming to you this Ramadan…". The choice of the word "stories" and the emphasis on Ramadan frame Wardah as a brand that is "positioned" morally and culturally. Discourse-wise, the use of halal and Ramadan not only marks compliance but also asserts identity alignment: Wardah presents itself as part of social practices (Ramadan as culture) rather than merely a commercial actor.

The fourth finding is **social commitment disclosure on a large scale (commitment-by-scale disclosure)**. In the 2025 Ramadan release, Wardah showcases the Global Qur'an Movement program and cross-country Open Iftar, including significant participation numbers. The mention of scale (countries, number of participants) serves as moral and organizational legitimacy: the brand strengthens trust not through "promises," but through "actions narrated as public facts." In discourse analysis, numbers and scale serve as authoritative devices (evidence markers) stating: value commitments can be referred to, recorded, and cited.

The fifth finding is **expertise disclosure through innovation (competence disclosure)**. In the June corpus, Wardah highlights "release dates" and emphasizes innovations (such as new sunscreen formulas) with styles like "mark the date… 20 June 2025… new formula…". The date markers and reformulation produce two meanings: (1) the brand has a working process (not just claims), and (2) the brand has a rhythm of innovation that the audience can anticipate. For young audiences accustomed to regular updates on digital platforms, the pattern of "release date + innovation" builds trust based on competence (expertise-based trust).

The sixth finding is **co-creation disclosure (audience as part of validation)**. In the voting/nomination corpus, Wardah frames legitimacy as something "incomplete without the audience," such as "celebration isn't complete without YOU." The word "YOU" semantically transforms the audience from a target into a symbolic partner. Loyalty here is constructed as a participatory act (supporting, voting, attending), not just consumption. This expands the concept of loyalty from "repeat purchase" to "relational endorsement," in line with fandom/community culture in the digital space.

Finally, all these themes follow a common trajectory: Wardah builds self-disclosure from access → experience → values → commitment → capabilities → co-creation, so that trust and loyalty emerge as relational products that are continuously nurtured through discourse. The strength of this strategy is also related to the digital ecology of Indonesia, which has a high internet penetration rate, making social media the primary space for brand perception formation, especially among the youth.

Discourse Analysis Code Summary (to show the "analysis engine"):

1. **Temporal markers**: date/period markers ("8–16 Feb 2025," "20 June 2025") as legitimacy of regularity.
2. **Access cues**: "free access," "for public" as openness.
3. **Invitation/CTA**: invitations to attend/participate/vote as involvement and co-creation.
4. **Moral framing**: Ramadan, "stories," "goodness" as value alignment.
5. **Scale evidence**: cross-country/participant numbers as proof of social commitment.

Discussion

Using Social Penetration Theory (SPT), this finding can be explained as a mechanism of self-disclosure deepening that occurs not at the "psychological depth of self," but at the depth of the messages. The surface layer is visible in the disclosure of agenda and access (events, schedules, locations), the middle layer is seen in the disclosure of experience (activation of experience), and the deepest layer is in the disclosure of values and commitments (Ramadan, goodness, global movements), supported by disclosures of capabilities (innovation) and co-creation (YOU/voting). This progression aligns with the SPT principle that closeness develops when information moves from the surface to deeper, more meaningful layers that are relevant to identity. In the context of Wardah, the halal and Ramadan identity fills the deepest layer because it becomes a cultural intersection between the brand and young Muslim audiences.

SPT also helps explain why the corpus from Jan–Jun 2025 cannot merely be read as a "seasonal campaign." Here, self-disclosure works like relationship layering: the audience first enters through access (free/public), then stays because of the experience, strengthens through values (Ramadan/goodness), and becomes more trusting due to evidence of commitment (scale of programs) and proof of competence (innovation). In other words, Wardah builds closeness progressively—not through a single post—which aligns with the logic of SPT about the progression of openness.

In Relationship Management Theory, the study's results show that Wardah's self-disclosure is a practice of relationship cultivation that shapes the quality of relationships through openness, involvement, and commitment. Openness appears through access and agenda disclosure (free access, for public); involvement emerges through the design of experiences and presence in youth arenas like TikTok Beauty Fest; and commitment is presented through framing Ramadan, goodness campaigns, and cross-country social programs. In this framework, trust is not understood as an output variable but as a relational dimension that is produced and maintained through consistent discourse (repetition of values + evidence of action + proof of competence).

This study's findings are consistent with Huaman-Ramirez et al. (2022), who showed that brand self-disclosure can create intimacy and strengthen relationships with consumers. However, this study adds a new emphasis on the Indonesian halal context: intimacy is not only born from "warm language" but from moral framing alignment

(Ramadan/goodness), coupled with actionable evidence (program scale) and anticipated capabilities (innovation release dates). Therefore, the contribution lies in demonstrating that halal brand self-disclosure works as a multi-dimensional discourse package—not a single form of openness.

Additionally, the results align with Purnomowati, which connects Wardah's halal social media marketing activities with loyalty and relationship quality. However, the difference is that this study captures the "mechanism behind the numbers," exploring how symbols, words, and participation invitation structures work to produce trust/loyalty meaning. This means that the research enriches literature often limited to variable relationships by detailing "how the communication process happens" at the text and visual levels.

Practical Implications: For halal brands targeting young consumers, effective self-disclosure is not just product transparency but the integration of three key aspects: (1) **openness** that facilitates access (clear agenda, public feeling invited), (2) **value disclosure** that is consistent (halal/goodness narratives not just seasonal), and (3) **competence disclosure** (innovation and processes that can be verified or at least anticipated). The Jan–Jun 2025 corpus shows that Wardah has operated these three aspects in parallel through events, Ramadan narratives, and product innovations.

For future research, two main paths align with your design. First, continue discourse analysis but incorporate public reception through comments or UGC, allowing the trust/loyalty formation to be read dialogically (brand discourse vs audience discourse). Second, add interviews as triangulation to examine whether the "depth of discourse" found is truly felt as closeness and a reason for loyalty by young audiences— without altering discourse analysis as the main tool.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study concludes that Wardah's self-disclosure strategy on social media (Jan–Jun 2025 corpus) functions as a curated and layered brand openness, beginning with access and agenda disclosure, participatory experiences, value narratives (Ramadan/goodness), and culminating in innovation capabilities and co-creation invitations. This discourse strategically builds trust through two primary pathways: competence-based trust (expertise disclosure) and value-alignment trust, ultimately leading to loyalty as a relational attachment. **Implication** : For halal brands targeting younger generations, maintaining consistency in access openness, value alignment, and evidence of capabilities is crucial to preserving trust and loyalty. **Limitation** : This study is limited to the analysis of Wardah's social media content, and does not account for audience reception or external factors influencing brand perception. **Future Research** : Future studies should consider incorporating audience reception through comments or user-generated content (UGC), or triangulating with interviews to examine if the depth of discourse is genuinely perceived as closeness and a reason for loyalty by young audiences, without altering the discourse analysis framework.

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