

Benefit of Wardah Innovation Through the Colourverse Program in Creating Skin Tone Harmony

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of Indonesia's beauty industry has been accompanied by increasing interest in self-care and personalized beauty. However, limited consumer understanding of skin tone and undertone often leads to unsuitable cosmetic choices. This creates an opportunity for beauty brands to combine consumer education, personalization, and technological innovation. This study examines Wardah's Colourverse initiative using a qualitative case analysis. Keller's brand equity theory and Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory are applied to analyze how AI-based personalization contributes to consumer education, brand perception, and technology adoption. Colourverse uses AI-powered facial scanning to analyze skin tone, undertone, and lighting conditions and recommend suitable cosmetic shades. The initiative provides consumers with an interactive and educational experience that supports more informed product selection while encouraging appreciation of individual skin characteristics. It also strengthens perceptions of Wardah as an innovative and consumer-oriented local beauty brand. The findings suggest that AI-based beauty personalization can function beyond product recommendation as a strategic branding and educational tool. Colourverse demonstrates how technological innovation may strengthen brand differentiation, consumer engagement, and the adoption of personalized beauty solutions in Indonesia's competitive cosmetics market.

KEYWORDS

Colourverse
Program; Beauty
of Indonesia
Woman; Wardah;
Skin Tone; Digital
Era

INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry in Indonesia has grown rapidly over the past two decades, driven by women's awareness of self-care and the importance of aesthetics that match their personal identity. In February 2025, cosmetics sales reached IDR158 trillion with an annual growth of 16%, much faster than other FMCG sectors. However, many Indonesian women still have difficulty choosing cosmetic products that match their skin color, mainly due to a lack of education about skin shades and undertones. This often results in color mismatches that affect appearance and self-confidence.

Wardah, a well-known local cosmetic brand, faces a strategic challenge because it is not yet fully considered a pioneer in innovation and education in beauty personalization. Competition from imported products that offer more advanced color variations and technology further complicates Wardah's position. Despite being well-

known, consumers do not necessarily choose Wardah consistently, indicating a gap between brand awareness and purchasing preferences.

As a solution, Wardah launched the Colourverse program which integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to help consumers choose the right cosmetic color based on analysis of skin tone, undertone, and lighting through facial scanning. This program not only provides more accurate color recommendations, but also serves as an educational tool and emotional experience, building a deeper connection between consumers and the brand. With this approach, Wardah creates an inclusive and authentic beauty narrative, while strengthening loyalty through meaningful brand experiences.

This research question focuses on "How Wardah's innovation through the Colourverse program helps women recognize and determine the suitability of cosmetic colors to their skin tones". The study also examines this program using branding and innovation diffusion theories.

A consumer-centered branding approach is essential to building a socially and emotionally relevant brand. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model explains four stages in building brand strength, from awareness to emotional attachment (resonance). Wardah seeks to build brand meaning and resonance through the Colourverse program that combines education and AI technology to personalize cosmetic colors, create inclusive narratives, and empower consumers. In addition, Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory explains the process of adopting innovation through five stages (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, confirmation), which are influenced by innovation characteristics such as relative advantage, compatibility, ease of use, opportunity to try, and visibility of results. AI technology in Colourverse meets these characteristics, facilitating acceptance and adoption in the market.

Wardah utilizes the Colourverse program as an innovative communication platform that integrates education, brand experience, and technology to strengthen brand equity both emotionally and functionally. Drawing on Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, which consists of brand salience, brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance, Colourverse contributes particularly to strengthening brand meaning and emotional engagement through interactive and personalized consumer experiences. These experiences allow consumers to perceive Wardah not only as a cosmetic brand but also as an innovative and consumer-oriented brand that responds to individual beauty needs.

From the perspective of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, the adoption of Colourverse can be understood through the characteristics of relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Its AI-based technology provides consumers with an accessible experience that can be easily tried, while the personalized results are directly observable, thereby supporting consumer acceptance of the innovation. Overall, Colourverse represents a technological innovation that goes beyond providing personalized cosmetic recommendations. By combining branding and innovation diffusion strategies, the program strengthens consumer perception, emotional connection, and potential brand loyalty while also supporting women's empowerment through meaningful beauty education and personalized experiences.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits of the Colorverse program run by Wardah for its consumers. The qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore the quality of social influence, which is subjective and cannot be measured quantitatively (Saryono in Ratnaningtyas et al., 2023). This study focuses on the Colourverse program in the context of cosmetic color harmony education for Indonesian women, with the following main theoretical frameworks: Branding Theory from Kevin Lane Keller (2013), especially on the concepts of Brand Meaning and Brand Resonance. Diffusion of Innovation Theory from Everett M. Rogers (2003), especially related to the adoption of the latest technology and product innovation.

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with five informants selected using the purposive snowball sampling technique, namely by selecting one initial informant who then recommends the next informant. The criteria for informants are women aged 20-30 years with indoor and outdoor activities who use Colorfit products. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow researchers to ask open-ended questions with flexible topic guides to obtain in-depth information while adjusting the direction of the discussion according to the informant's response (Sarosa, 2021). Secondary data was collected through literature reviews from various sources such as books, journals, articles, and previous research that are relevant to the theme and formulation of the research problem (Ardinata et al., 2022; Snyder, 2019).

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study employed data source and theory triangulation (Denkin in Rahardjo, 2012) by comparing information obtained from different sources and examining the findings through relevant theoretical perspectives. The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach based on the three stages proposed by Miles and Huberman (in Agusta, 2003): data reduction, which involved filtering and simplifying interview data to identify key themes such as consumer perceptions of product personalization and the ease of using technology; data presentation, which involved organizing the findings into narratives and thematic tables to facilitate interpretation; and conclusion drawing, which involved interpreting emerging patterns and verifying the findings through discussions among researchers and a review of field notes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the Colourverse program provides specific benefits for users in identifying their skin tone for cosmetic purposes. In-depth interviews with five female Colorfit product users aged 20 to 30 who also attended Colourverse events revealed that all participants had difficulty identifying their skin tone and selected inappropriate makeup before using Colourverse. After participating in the program, the

participants gained a better understanding of their skin tone and became more confident in choosing cosmetics.

The Colourverse program aims to enhance users' confidence by utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) technology to identify cosmetic shades that best match their individual skin characteristics.

Beyond its educational function, Colourverse also seeks to empower users by strengthening their confidence and self-esteem. Participants viewed the program not merely as a color-matching tool, but also as a means of appreciating and embracing their individual uniqueness. In terms of usability, participants generally perceived the facial scanning process and AI-based recommendations as fast, user-friendly, and reasonably accurate.

Participants also responded positively to Wardah's adoption of this technology. They perceived the integration of facial scanning and AI-based recommendations as reinforcing Wardah's image as a progressive local beauty brand capable of competing with established international brands. Based on the interview findings, Informants 1 and 2 agreed that the Colourverse program significantly assisted them in identifying cosmetic shades that were compatible with their skin characteristics.

Khossy (2025) stated, "I feel like the analysis results are truly tailored to our skin. It's not just guesswork," highlighting her appreciation of the perceived accuracy and personalization of the analysis. Similarly, Nashwa (2025) emphasized the program's practical benefits, stating, "This program is very helpful. I used to do a lot of trial and error, and sometimes I bought colors that didn't suit me. With Colourverse, I feel more confident and don't waste time or money."

A comparison of these responses indicates that Informant 1 placed greater emphasis on the technological and personalization aspects of the program, while Informant 2 highlighted its efficiency in reducing unnecessary expenditures of time and money. These findings are consistent with Keller's (1993) concept of brand meaning within the Customer-Based Brand Equity framework, in which positive, relevant, and personalized brand experiences can strengthen consumers' perceptions of and emotional connections with a brand.

From the perspective of Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, the use of AI in Colourverse demonstrates relative advantage by offering a more accurate and personalized alternative to conventional methods of cosmetic shade selection. At the same time, the technology reduces perceived complexity through a simple and accessible user experience.

The interview with Informant 3, Kendra (2025), further illustrates how Colourverse's AI technology can help correct consumers' misconceptions about their skin undertones. Kendra had previously assumed that she had a warm undertone; however, the AI-based analysis indicated that her undertone was neutral to cool. This experience demonstrates the potential value of the technology in helping consumers make more informed product choices. It may also reduce unnecessary trial and error, as consumers are less likely to purchase products based solely on guesswork or recommendations from

individuals with different skin characteristics. This finding is consistent with Informant 2's observation that Colourverse can reduce trial-and-error purchasing behavior.

Informant 4, Alia (2025), emphasized the simplicity and ease of using the AI-based technology. She perceived the skin tone analysis as fast and easy to understand, particularly because the results were accompanied by clear recommendations regarding suitable color choices. Informant 5, Natalia (2025), similarly explained that the AI-generated results helped her identify shades that were more compatible with her skin tone because the program also provided information about her undertone and the colors most suitable for it.

These perspectives complement Informant 1's emphasis on technological accuracy by demonstrating that Colourverse is also accessible to consumers with limited prior knowledge of skin tone and undertone analysis. Thus, Colourverse combines the relative advantage of personalized and potentially more accurate recommendations with relatively low complexity, making the innovation accessible to a broader range of consumer segments. This finding is also supported by Syafira et al. (2025), who suggest that AI-based personalization in the local beauty industry can enhance consumer satisfaction, trust, and brand loyalty.

The interview findings further indicate that most Colourverse users were women in their 20s and 30s, representing primarily Generation Z and younger millennial consumers. This demographic segmentation is particularly relevant because these groups tend to be familiar with digital technologies and increasingly receptive to technology-based personalization. Generation Z, as a digitally immersed consumer group, may be particularly responsive to interactive and shareable experiences, while millennial consumers may place greater emphasis on practical benefits such as convenience, efficiency, and value.

From a customer journey perspective, Colourverse may facilitate consumers' progression through the stages of awareness, consideration, purchase, and loyalty. At the awareness stage, consumers are introduced to Colourverse through events and social media. During the consideration stage, AI-based skin tone and undertone analysis provides consumers with personalized information that can support their evaluation of suitable products. This process may subsequently encourage purchase decisions, either directly at promotional events or through online channels. In the longer term, improved knowledge of skin tone and undertone may increase consumers' confidence in selecting Wardah products, potentially contributing to stronger satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Understanding the characteristics and behaviors of these consumer segments may enable Wardah to develop more targeted marketing communication strategies. Communication directed at Generation Z, for example, may emphasize interactive experiences and the shareability of Colourverse results on social media, whereas communication targeting millennial consumers may highlight practical benefits such as convenience, time efficiency, and reduced unnecessary spending. Overall, the findings suggest that Colourverse functions not only as a technological product recommendation tool but also as an integrated brand experience that combines personalization, consumer education, and innovation to strengthen Wardah's relationship with its consumers.

Strengthening Wardah Brand Equity through Personalization, Emotional Experiences, and Consumer Education

Based on the interviews, Informants 1 and 2 perceived the Colourverse innovation as not only helping them select suitable products but also strengthening their trust in and emotional connection with Wardah.

Khossy (2025) stated, "Now I'm more confident... we don't just choose products based on trends, but rather focus on what suits our personalities," indicating greater self-awareness and confidence in product selection as a result of the personalization offered by Colourverse. Nashwa (2025) similarly stated, "So I became even more curious to try the recommendations straight away," reflecting increased interest and motivation to try Wardah products based on the AI-generated recommendations.

Both informants also perceived the educational aspects of Colourverse as helping them better understand their individual skin characteristics. According to Keller (2022), such personally relevant knowledge and experiences may contribute to the development of brand meaning and brand response within the Customer-Based Brand Equity framework. The combination of personalization and consumer education may therefore create a more meaningful brand experience and contribute to stronger brand resonance, representing a deeper relationship between consumers and the brand. These findings are consistent with Arizona (2021), who found that immersive and personally relevant brand experiences can contribute to consumer loyalty and advocacy.

Kendra (2025) also described a noticeable change in her approach to cosmetic selection. Following her Colourverse experience, she reported feeling more confident and less hesitant when choosing suitable shades. Her positive experience also encouraged her to purchase several Wardah products that corresponded with the recommendations generated through the analysis. This suggests that personalized recommendations may contribute to greater brand trust and purchase intention by increasing consumers' confidence in the suitability of recommended products.

Similarly, Informant 4, Alia (2025), explained that although she had been a long-time Wardah user, she previously tended to select cosmetic colors based primarily on personal preference without considering her skin undertone. Through Colourverse, she developed a better understanding of the color groups that were more suitable for her individual characteristics. Although she considered a single Colourverse experience sufficient, her response illustrates the educational value of the program, as the knowledge acquired during the experience could potentially be applied to future cosmetic purchasing decisions.

This perspective was further supported by Informant 5, Natalia (2025), who described her Colourverse experience as highly enjoyable. As an existing user of Wardah skincare products, she expressed particular interest in the interactive experiences offered at the Colourverse booths. In addition to learning which colors were more suitable for her skin characteristics, she was attracted to the program's modern and interactive approach, which helped her identify cosmetic shades that she could consider for both immediate and future purchases.

These findings align with Keller's (2022) Customer-Based Brand Equity framework, in which relevant, personalized, and educational experiences can contribute to stronger brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance. Across the interviews, Colourverse appeared to enhance participants' self-awareness regarding cosmetic selection while also generating greater interest, confidence, and engagement with Wardah. Rather than functioning solely as an analytical or recommendation tool, Colourverse can therefore be understood as a broader brand experience that integrates technological innovation, consumer education, and personalization.

Overall, the findings suggest that Colourverse plays a strategic role in combining education, personalization, and emotional engagement to strengthen Wardah's brand equity in an increasingly competitive beauty market.

Analysis of Colourverse Technology Adoption Based on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory and Keller's CBBE Theory

The adoption of Colourverse can be examined through Rogers' (2003) five attributes of innovation: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The interview findings indicate that these attributes are reflected in participants' experiences with the program and may contribute to consumers' willingness to adopt AI-based beauty personalization.

In terms of relative advantage, participants perceived Colourverse as offering practical benefits compared with conventional trial-and-error approaches to cosmetic selection. Kendra reported that the AI-based analysis helped correct her previous assumptions about her skin undertone, while Alia emphasized the convenience of receiving personalized color recommendations. Similarly, Khossy (2025) stated, "This AI can help us detect our skin undertones, and it's fast and accurate, you know," highlighting the perceived advantages of speed, personalization, and accuracy. Nashwa (2025) also emphasized efficiency, stating, "With Colourverse, it's more certain and doesn't waste time or money." These responses suggest that the program provides consumers with a more structured and potentially more efficient approach to selecting suitable cosmetic products.

Colourverse also demonstrates compatibility with the needs and lifestyles of its target consumers, particularly younger consumers who are familiar with digital technologies and seek greater convenience and personalization in their purchasing decisions. The program addresses practical concerns related to uncertainty, time, and unnecessary spending when choosing cosmetic shades. Its compatibility with digitally mediated consumer experiences may further support acceptance among technology-oriented users.

Regarding complexity, participants generally described the facial scanning and recommendation process as simple, accessible, and easy to understand. This relatively low perceived complexity may reduce barriers to adoption, particularly for consumers who have limited prior knowledge of skin tone and undertone analysis. The program therefore translates a potentially complex process into an accessible consumer experience.

Trialability is evident in consumers' ability to experience the technology directly at Colourverse booths before making a purchase decision. Participants could undergo the AI-based analysis, receive personalized recommendations, and subsequently try the suggested Wardah products. Khossy's description of the experience as "more interactive and real-time" further illustrates how direct interaction with the technology enables consumers to evaluate its usefulness before deciding whether to act on its recommendations.

Observability is reflected in the visible outcomes generated by the program. Consumers can directly compare recommended cosmetic shades with their individual skin characteristics and observe whether the suggested products appear more suitable. For example, Kendra was able to recognize differences between her previous shade choices and those recommended through the analysis, while Alia received clearer guidance regarding suitable color groups. The visibility and shareability of these results may also contribute to broader awareness of the innovation, particularly through social media interactions, as suggested by Lestari et al. (2024).

Taken together, these findings suggest that Colourverse incorporates the five innovation attributes identified by Rogers (2003), which may facilitate the adoption of AI-based beauty personalization among consumers, particularly younger and digitally engaged market segments. This interpretation is consistent with Zamzami and Arviani (2025), who found that AI-based cosmetic innovations that demonstrate characteristics associated with Rogers' innovation attributes may be more readily accepted in local markets.

From the perspective of Keller's (2022) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) framework, Colourverse also contributes to the development of brand meaning, brand response, and potentially brand resonance. By providing personalized interactions based on consumers' skin tone and undertone, the program creates functional value through product recommendations while simultaneously offering an educational and experiential dimension. Participants reported gaining a better understanding of their individual skin characteristics and greater confidence in selecting cosmetic products.

The personalized nature of the experience may also strengthen consumers' perceptions of Wardah as an innovative, inclusive, and consumer-oriented brand. Rather than interacting with Wardah solely through product transactions, consumers engage with the brand through a process of learning, experimentation, and self-discovery. This type of meaningful interaction may contribute to positive brand judgments and feelings and, over time, support stronger emotional engagement and brand resonance.

Across the interviews with Khossy, Nashwa, Kendra, Alia, and Natalia, a consistent pattern emerged. Participants generally perceived Colourverse as providing not only a technical solution for cosmetic shade selection but also a personalized, educational, and enjoyable brand experience. The AI-based recommendations helped reduce uncertainty in product selection, while the interactive process encouraged greater awareness of skin tone and undertone. For some participants, this increased confidence also generated greater interest in trying or purchasing Wardah products.

The findings therefore indicate that Colourverse functions at the intersection of technological innovation and strategic brand communication. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory helps explain how the technology's characteristics may facilitate consumer acceptance, while Keller's CBBE framework illustrates how personalized and meaningful experiences can contribute to stronger brand perceptions and consumer relationships. Rather than functioning solely as a technological advancement, Colourverse can be understood as a strategic branding initiative that integrates personalization, consumer education, and interactive experience.

For Wardah, the strategic implications include strengthening its positioning as an innovative local cosmetics brand that integrates AI technology into the consumer experience. The program may also support purchase decisions by increasing consumers' confidence in personalized recommendations and by fostering a more informed consumer community in which knowledge of skin tone and undertone becomes part of the broader brand experience. Overall, Colourverse demonstrates how technology-based personalization can simultaneously facilitate innovation adoption and contribute to the development of stronger consumer-brand relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Wardah's Colourverse program integrates AI-based personalization, consumer education, and brand experience to address consumers' uncertainty in selecting cosmetic shades. By helping users better understand their skin tone and undertone, the program reduces reliance on trial-and-error purchasing while supporting greater confidence in cosmetic selection.

From Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity perspective, Colourverse contributes to stronger brand meaning, response, and potential resonance by positioning Wardah as an innovative, inclusive, and consumer-oriented brand. Meanwhile, Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations framework shows that the program reflects key attributes that may facilitate technology adoption, including relative advantage, compatibility, low complexity, trialability, and observability.

Overall, Colourverse illustrates how AI can function beyond a product recommendation tool to become part of a broader branding and educational strategy. Its combination of technology, personalization, and meaningful consumer engagement provides a relevant model for local beauty brands seeking to strengthen consumer relationships in the digital era. The findings also suggest that technology-based beauty innovation can create both functional and emotional value when it is designed around consumers' individual needs and experiences.

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