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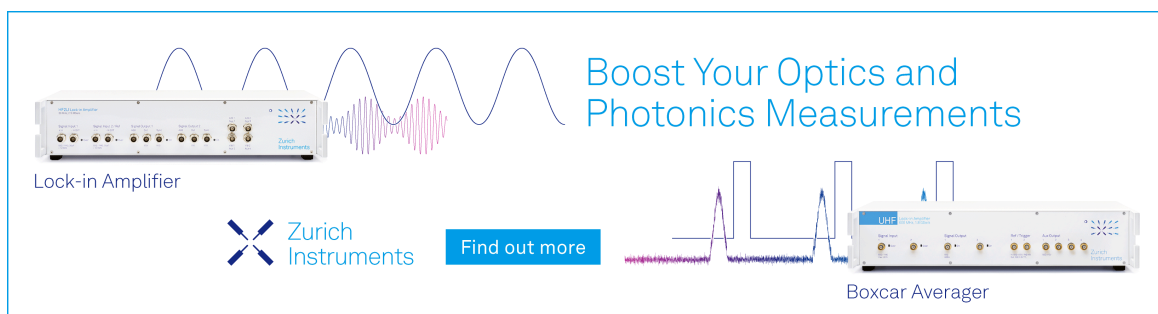
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# The Hijrah Muslim Celebrities' Influences towards Young Muslim Fashion Consumers

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**Abstract.** Young Muslim generation members are living in a challenging world due to modernisation and exposure to foreign fashion trends, such as social media platforms. Regardless of following the religious values, these young members have the tendency to try new fashion trends, which has led them to look for inspiration who can provide them with the proper fashion guidelines. However, Muslim celebrities nowadays tend to apply modesty in their style and have attracted their followers. Therefore, this study explores the influences of the Hijrah Muslim celebrities towards young Muslim fashion consumers. This study employed a qualitative approach by conducting interviews with fifteen young Muslim women respondents. Findings show that Hijrah Muslim celebrities have impacted young Muslims to stay fashionable yet still follow religious values and have become one of the main ways to guide them on the correct path as a Muslim.

## INTRODUCTION

Muslims are the majority population in Malaysia, therefore Islam is the primary way of life they are practicing. Nevertheless, the modernisation and the influence from outside nowadays can be perceived, and it may carry the Muslims away or go against the regulations [1,2], mainly the young generation who are known to have a high level of curiosity and tendency to try new things [3], for example following the current fashion trends that is inappropriate and have potential to challenge the religious values.

This also happens to celebrities in Malaysia, where they have a desire to adopt new fashion trends (foreign). Some celebrities started by paying more attention or adopting Western products, and they are willing to go against the religious values, but later slowly make a u-turn to apply modesty or what has been outlined by the religion (the transition is called 'Hijrah'). We can witness this transition via social media platforms nowadays; for example, many celebrities change their habit from free hair to covering the hair, or from wearing or exposing the body to covering the whole body (modesty) – following religious values. As celebrities are considered fashion inspirations [4], they can

influence their followers. However, the study by [4] is in the Western context but not in the Muslims' context. Hence, this is the rationale for this study; to focus more on the Muslim context. For example, how have the Hijrah Muslim celebrities affected the consumers? How is the reaction from their followers due to this Hijrah? Are they adding more followers or losing them? Therefore, more studies need to be conducted to understand Hijrah celebrities to explore their impacts on young Muslim fashion consumers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Muslims are taught to show good examples and avoid committing sins by tending to follow religious values in every aspect of life, such as treating people, eating, praying, and others, including fashion [5]. Nevertheless, like other young people globally, young Muslim consumers also desire to look up to fashion [6], regardless of the regulations they have to follow. Muslim women's fashion products need to be based on modesty [7]. Muslim women need to follow the regulations such as covering their head, not choosing sexy attires (which resemble their body, exposing their skin, and avoiding wastage, to name a few). Therefore, to choose appropriate attire for Muslims, they need to refer to valid fashion sources; for example, they can look upon the internet or celebrities' social media accounts.

The best way to describe celebrities are well-known persons, influential, become the center of attraction, and have many followers [8]. They are among singers, actors, bloggers, reporters, athletes, or important persons who always catch the attention of media or followers, to name a few. Due to their power of influence, they are hired as influencers to promote the brands or products or become endorsers [9]. Aligned with the growth of social media era, these celebrities can be perceived on this platform sharing their lifestyle with their followers [10]. For example, their family, their daily activities, diet, work out, and many more. Followers are inspired and follow their life journey, mainly the young generation likely to get attached to social media [11]. Apart from that, celebrities are also associated with fashion influencers [12]. Therefore, it is not a surprise that these celebrities are active in promoting fashion products on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and others, as this platform help to spread information and reach more consumers [13]. At the same time, they are projecting their personality via fashion by the way how they dress. Apart from that, social media is the ideal platform to spread information and eWOM [14], so celebrities can keep updating new stories or fashion styles and simultaneously stay connected with their followers. Therefore, realising the advantages of social media, celebrities worldwide have used this platform to build and maintain an audience [15], including Muslim celebrities to share their life journey with their followers.

Among famous Muslim celebrities globally are Halima Aden (supermodel), and display modesty in her appearance. In Malaysia, Muslim celebrities such as Yuna, Siti Nurhaliza, Mira Filzah, and many more have contributed a lot to the fashion industry; for example, they become endorsers and fashion inspiration for their followers other Muslim women. However, behind this story, many Muslim celebrities in Malaysia started emphasising or donning Western fashion initially but slowly transitioning to adapt to modesty. Among the celebrities involved in this transition are Fazura, Neelofar, Diana Amir, Yana Samsuddin, Natasha Hudson, and many more. These celebrities have shown that they still have a space to be fashionable but at the same time follow religious values. Therefore, their social media accounts have become a platform that followers use for inspiration or looking for religious information, aligned with [16] that Muslims nowadays use social media to search for religious content. Moreover, via this avenue, it strengthens the relationship of Muslims to inspire and remind each other regarding the regulations or religious values that they have to follow [17].

Hence, these celebrities Have shown good examples for to other Muslims to embrace Islam to the fullest, in fashion sense by emphasising in modesty in their appearance even though the progress is slow and simultaneously delivering the correct message to all Muslims in the world. In fact, Islam teaches Muslims to remind each other [18], therefore these celebrities have played their part to share good and correct lessons with their followers; simultaneously [19] stated that Muslim celebrities affect their followers' inner calm. However, less attention has been paid to the studies on the Hijrah celebrities in Malaysia, and how this has contributed to the modest wear industry. Therefore, this study aims to explore the influences of Hijrah Muslim celebrities towards young Muslim fashion consumers

## METHODOLOGY

To explore the influences of Hijrah Muslim celebrities towards young Muslim fashion consumers, the researchers need to understand the fashion consumers' opinions regarding their favourite celebrities and how they affect them, or their reaction towards the Hijrah of the celebrities. Researchers believe that they need to listen carefully and profoundly to the opinions or experiences of the participants. Hence, the qualitative method was adopted as it is meant

to explore human behaviour, and it helps the researchers to gain rich data from the participants [20]. The interviews were conducted with fifteen participants online as pandemic covid-19 struck, and we were not allowed to meet face to face as instructed by the government. Therefore, the best way was to conduct it via phone interview. The criteria for the participants are Muslim, female, below 25 years old, and following Malaysian celebrities on social media. The researchers made sure that only relevant questions were asked, such as their fashion taste, the celebrities they follow, the purpose of following celebrities, and the impacts of Hijrah Muslim celebrities. The total of the questions was 20. The researchers avoided asking sensitive questions, or sounds judgemental. The interviews lasted between 20-40 minutes each. To analyse the data, it was transcribed verbatim in Microsoft word and analysed manually by using coding and thematic analysis, which led to themes and subthemes.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to [21], coding and thematic analysis are relevant for qualitative data that helps the researcher to get the main themes and subthemes. By using coding and thematic analysis, findings revealed three main themes and five main themes. Each main theme and subthemes are explained as followed:

**TABLE 1.** Summary of Data Analysis

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
1. Modest Fashion Booster	1.1 Development of modest fashion
	1.2 More choices of modest wear range
2. Modern Muslim Representation	2.1 Muslim fashion icons
	2.2 Muslim women good behaviour
3. Motivation for Entrepreneurs	3.1 Young fashion entrepreneurs

### 1. Modest Fashion Booster

#### 1.1 Development of modest fashion

This study has demonstrated that Hijrah celebrities are changing the game of fashion in Malaysia by displaying and emphasising the modest wear that has boosted the modest fashion in the market. This aligns with [22] that celebrities have significant impacts on fashion. As a result, the development of modest wear occurs, and more choices of modest wear range can be chosen, concurs with [23] that modest wear is growing currently. For example, Respondent 2 and 7 stated:

*Respondent 2: "I think modest wear is growing nowadays in our country; I can see it everywhere I go – mall, stores, and our celebrities wear it."*

*Respondent 7: "You like it or not, fashion is getting bigger in Malaysia. The modest wear on our celebrities always attracts my eyes, and I genuinely believe that they have a big impact on the growth of modest wear in our country."*

#### 1.2 More choices of modest wear range

Findings also indicated that the availability of and growth of the range of modest wear can be perceived. For example, there are many types of hijab; different shapes and colours give the consumers opportunities to enhance their appearance or mix and match. In this context, Respondent 1 and 4 commented:

*Respondent 1: "I notice that the modest wear range is snowballing, from head to toe. Now it is a bit challenging for me to choose nowadays (laughing)."*

*Respondent 4: "When I bought this hijab, I remember last year there were only 3 looks. But now, when the celebrities wear it, they add seven more looks. I cannot even choose! However, I am happy that there are more choices of my favourite hijab."*

## 2. Modern Muslim Representation

### 2.1 Muslim fashion icons

Findings showed that Muslim celebrities have become fashion icons or references. Consumers consider them one of the main guidelines for their fashion styles, especially the young Muslim generation members who have different tastes in fashion [24]. This situation has proven that they lead fashion, not fashion leads them, or they control fashion. For example, Respondent 10 and 13 commented:

*Respondent 10: "Who can display modest wear better than our celebrities? They are the first reference that I turn to when I look for fashion styles. The way they dress is so attractive and I never thought that our celebrities can turn modest wear to new trend."*

*Respondent 13: "I think they (Hijrah celebrities) are so influential and affect how I dress. For example, what Neelofar is wearing is very inspiring, and I also want to get what she wears, a total inspiration for my fashion style. for example, what they share on their Instagram account."*

### 2.2 Muslim women good behaviour

Findings also indicated the different side of Muslim fashion celebrities apart from fashion styles, that they are also inviting others to the correct path. As a Muslim, it is important to remind others to practice kindness [25], therefore, they represent the correct way how Muslim women should behave, and this has attracted other Muslims to practice the same good behaviour. This has also shown that these celebrities affect their inner beauty, and this concurs with [25] that celebrities have the ability to influence the followers' inner strength. For example, Respondent 3 and 6 mentioned:

*Respondent 3: "I think apart from fashion, their behaviour towards emphasising modesty in every aspect of their life has caught my attention. The way how they speak, walk and so on, so modest and inspiring."*

*Respondent 6: I am not here to judge, but I admire their Hijrah, from looking sexy to become Muslim representative. I truly believe that this good act will attract other people to practice the same thing, especially young people like me who are a big fan of these celebrities!*

## 3. Motivation for Entrepreneurs

### 3.1 Young fashion entrepreneurs

Previous studies also demonstrated that celebrities involve in business, that some of them become endorsers [27, 28], and others have their own fashion line or products. In Malaysia, as Muslim celebrities have boosted modest wear, they have also motivated their followers to get involved in the fashion business as well. Many entrepreneurs, mainly Muslims, have grown to participate in the fashion business as well, precisely the modest wear business. Nowadays, there are so many choices of modest wear from local entrepreneurs, whether online or offline; can be perceived and this situation has made the industry more competitive and gives the consumers more choices of modest wear range in the market. In this context, Respondent 6, 10 and 14 pointed out:

*Respondent 6: "As modest wear is growing in our country; I can see many young entrepreneurs are focusing on this type of fashion inspired by our celebrities."*

*Respondent 10: "This new demand in the market (modest wear) has motivated many entrepreneurs to shift their focus to modest wear. I think this is a piece of good news to motivate youngsters to adapt modesty in their life."*

*Respondent 14: "I take part in a modest wear business that I sell fashion items produced by our celebrities. So far, I can guarantee that the response is positive and the consumers keep coming to buy the items."*

## CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative research explores the influences of Hijrah Muslim celebrities towards young Muslim fashion consumers. Findings showed that the current Hijrah Muslim celebrities have become one of the primary references for fashion styles. As they emphasise modest wear, it can be perceived that it is growing nowadays in Malaysia, and the range is expanding. This concurs with [29] that modest wear has received an enormous response from consumers

in Malaysia. Moreover, this study also demonstrated that Hijrah Muslim celebrities can affect the internal strength of other Muslims, which is to invite them to practice kindness. And finally, this study also indicated that Hijrah celebrities have motivated the consumers to get involved in the business. Therefore, it can be concluded that Hijrah Muslim celebrities have affected young Muslim consumers' fashion and life path.

The limitation of this study lies in the sampling, that participants were focused in the same area. Hence, findings cannot be generalised to other Muslim countries. The future study should focus on men Hijrah Muslim celebrities as well, as they are also considered important for Muslim male consumers.

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