ISLAMIC AND MODEST FASHION LIFESTYLE

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to assess the need and the importance of Islamic fashion in the world. The issues highlighted are the evolution of Islamic fashion, the acceptance of modest fashion globally as well as Muslims' spending on clothing. In this study, it elaborated on the growth of Islamic lifestyle globally, the top-ranking countries for all Halal sectors as per Global Islamic Economy Index, the position of Malaysia as compared to other Muslim countries in Islamic fashion and further explained the opportunity of Malaysia that has taken on board to create job for consumers and designers. The methodology used is the review of published dissertation and literature to generate the foundation and to elicit relevant information for the issues covered by this study. Findings shows that both international designers and high street brands empower the modest fashion given the new modern modest fashion fresh attire since it does not just celebrate faith but develop a fashion-conscious society, especially among Malaysian women. With its current growth, modest fashion has created diversity, celebrated inclusion and redefined modesty as less religion. In fact, the Islamic fashion in Malaysia has becoming a new phenomenon such as the brand like dUCk, Naelofar, to name a few. Muslim fashion is a lucrative global industry with countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey are leading the way outside the Western countries. Islamic fashion has been supported by the development of internet technology which is increasingly advancing and causing an eye-opener for customers to shift to online shopping. With the high density of Muslims in Asia Pacific, Islamic clothing will be expected to be one of the promising markets in the business. In conclusion, Islamic fashion industry is becoming more diverse and inclusive, and the demand for modest-wear is gaining momentum. With a growing Muslim population, there is an increased demand for modest but also fashionable clothing for the youth, who have significant spending power. As a recommendation, Muslim-owned brands should be aware of the development of technology and the diversity of demand for Islamic fashion which not only covers Muslims' spending but also non-Muslim.

Keywords: Opportunities, evolution, Islamic fashion, modest fashion, Malaysia, spending

INTRODUCTION

Islamic fashion is basically about covering the hair, modest fashion for a wide range of clothing that caters to women who prefer looser garments or more coverage in a variety of styles (Rai, 2018). Dressing is important in Islam because one's appearance will trigger certain messages in peoples' minds when he or she is being seen. Of course, Muslims are required to pay attention to their appearance, making sure that their clothing is beautiful and clean, especially when dealing with others and when performing the required prayers (Yafai, 2017).

However, that does not discourage being stylish, looking professional or choosing colors other than black (McLaughlin-Duane, 2015). The fashion industry needs to come of age; or at least catch up with the digital revolution. To supports the modest fashion demands of this market many organizations are trying to implement new strategies in a more profound and meaningful way instead of normal fashion show (Rai, 2018). There is a new opportunity for the fashion industry as Muslim consumers desire to be fashionably up to-date while staying true to their Islamic values. There is no longer a clash between faith and fashion (IFDC, 2016). As per Ahmed (2016), fashion is a passion for modern Muslim women as reflected in the study done by IFDC to almost 130 respondent women mainly living in U.S and Europe, almost 80% of respondents claimed to consider fashion is very important, confirming the relevance of shopping in their daily life.

The global Muslim population is the second largest in the world and more than 60 per cent is under the age of 30, which makes Muslims have the largest youth population that is growing at an alarming rate. With this rate, there is a huge consumer base of Muslims, which would like to adhere to the Islamic lifestyle (Yafai, 2017). The consumers like to live within the parameters of what their ideology tells them is Islamic (McLaughlin-Duane, 2015).

Islamic fashion has been rebranded as modest fashion with recognition that its appeal surpasses women of faith and being seen as revolutionary (Yafai, 2017). Islamic fashion has evolved around the years and is diversified across the world based on interpretation and adoption of 'modesty' among Muslims in that specific part of the world. Local culture also plays a role in drawing up various styles of Islamic fashion that is adopted by Muslims in that area. The underlying Islamic order however is for Muslims to preserve modesty as laid in the Quran and the Sunna (Brugnoni, 2014). Additionally, the evolution of the Internet drove Muslim women to connect through blogging about fashion styles. Through these blogs, Muslim women learnt and discussed the differences between regional trends and shared modest fashion identities from different regions (Goud, 2016).

Leading the charge of the style movement are cosmopolitan Muslim women in their 20s and 30s (Shirazi, 2017). It is now a growing trend for young Muslims to wear modern and presentable clothes, yet still following the mandate to cover the required parts of the body. In 2013, fashion shows had taken place in Indonesia, Malaysia, Dubai, Turkey, US, UK, Germany and Russia to exhibit the latest Muslim modest clothing creativity to the public. From the West to the East, Muslim population spent USD224 billion in clothing and footwear in 2012. This is 10.6% from global expenditure (Brugnoni, 2014). In 2015, the number went up to USD243 billion (11.5% of global expenditure), and this number is expected to reach USD268 billion in year 2021 (14.4% of global expenditure) (Centre, 2017). An estimated of USD44 billion was set aside for modesty (Salvá, 2017).

Muslim has spread out to many countries; therefore, the Islamic fashion is needed around the world. Starting from the number of immigrants from the Middle East to the countries in the world, they brought Islamic culture to non-Islamic countries (Indarti, 2017). Islam is a religion that has rules about how to dress. As adherents of the religion of Islam, we need to wear special dress. This dress we called Islamic dress or modest fashion.

Islamic fashion it started in the 1980s when ethnic grocery dealers in Western Europe and United States began importing modest fashion clothing along with other items for the Muslim population (Shirazi, 2017b). Prior to that, most Muslim women would put together their own styles. These small endeavours ultimately morphed into a competitive and lucrative Muslim fashion industry.

Islamic fashion in general is understood as women wearing modest clothing with long sleeves, descending to the ankle and having a high neckline. The outfits are non-hugging, with some form of head covering that could be draped in a variety of styles. Women who prefer to wear pants combine them with a long-sleeved top that covers the buttocks and has a high neckline, along with a head covering.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In 2014, Brugnoni in her presentation for Assaif in Milan, Italy mentioned that globally Muslims spent about USD1,620 billion for halal food and Islamic lifestyle in 2012. Out of this number, USD224 billion comes from clothing (13.8%). In 2015, Muslims globally spent USD1,900 billion on halal food and Islamic lifestyle, and USD243 billion comes from clothing. In 2016, Muslims' spending on halal food, beverage and lifestyle continues to grow at USD2,006 billion (USD254 billion from clothing). The expenditure for halal food and Islamic lifestyle is expected to continue growing to reach USD2,470 billion in 2018. In 2022, Muslims expenditure on food, beverage and lifestyle globally is expected to reach USD3,000 billion, where USD373 billion come from clothing alone (Reuters, 2017). There are also consumers who are not a Muslim but are buying food and clothes from Islamic category (Brugnoni, 2014).

Figure 2.1 shows the graph of Muslims spending on food, beverage and lifestyle globally. Figure 2.2 shows the graph of Muslims spending on clothing globally.

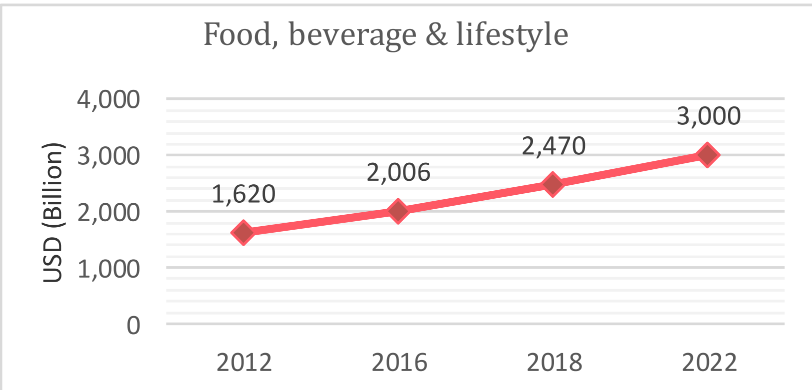

Figure 2.1: Muslims spending on food, beverage and lifestyle globally.

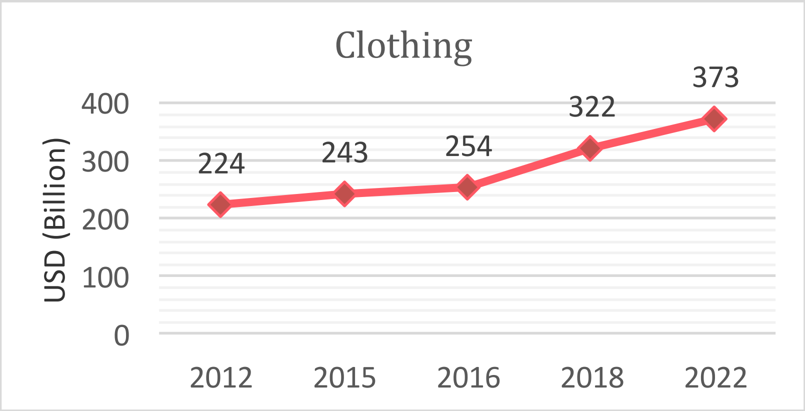

Figure 2.2: Muslims spending on clothing globally.

Crown Prince of Dubai who is also the Dubai Executive Council's Chairman has established Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre (DIEDC) in year 2013 with the aim to transform Dubai into being the capital of Islamic economy. In 2017, DIEDC has come out with new Islamic economy strategy (2017 – 2021) which focuses on monitoring the growth of Islamic finance, halal products, and Islamic lifestyle (culture, art, fashion and family tourism). These three (3) are the main contributors to Islamic economy sectors.

Based on the Global Islamic Economy Index in 2016, United Arab Emirates (UAE) is at the top of the ranking for all Halal sectors (Food, Travel, Fashion, Media and Recreation, and also Pharmaceuticals and Cosmetics). Malaysia is also in the list, no.5 for Halal Food, no.2 for Halal Travel, and also Halal Pharmaceuticals and Cosmetics. Malaysia however is not in the top 5 list for modest fashion. Turkey, China, India and Italy are the other four (4) countries in the top 5 list of the modest fashion (Centre, 2017).

However, in 2017, Malaysia has successfully made itself into the top 10 list of Modest Fashion. Malaysia stands at number 7, after UAE, Turkey, Italy, Singapore, France and China (Reuters, 2017). Figure 2.3 summarizes the GIE performance for Islamic Fashion for year 2016/2017 and 2017/2018.

TOP 10 Modest Fashion	TOP 10 Modest Fashion
2016/2017	**2017/2018**
1. UAE	1. UAE
2. Turkey	2. Turkey
3. China	3. Italy
4. India	4. Singapore
5. Italy	5. France
6. Sri Lanka	6. China
7. Bahrain	**7. Malaysia**
8. France	8. India
9. Singapore	9. Sri Lanka
10. Togo	10. Morocco

Figure 2.3: GIE performance for Islamic Fashion for year 2016/2017 and 2017/2018.

In Malaysia, Muslim women in some states like Kelantan and Terengganu wear tight clothing and do not wear scarf. In Kuala Lumpur however, many women dress modestly, including wearing scarf. However there is no fine applied to the Muslim women who do not do so (Salvá, 2017).

Both international designers and high street brands empower the modest fashion which has given the new modern modest fashion a fresh attire whereas it not only celebrates faith but develops a fashion conscious society, especially among Malaysian women (Wasteson, 2015). With its current growth, modest fashion in the modern age has created diversity, celebrating inclusion and redefining modesty as less religion (Naj, 2017).

It is an opportunity that Malaysia has taken on board and how this sector inspires, creates jobs, allows flexibility for women and designers while keeping their focus on what they have always been showed (Wasteson, 2015). Certainly, one of the biggest trends in Malaysia is the idealistic Muslim influencers as well as the demand and spending power are growing (Naj, 2017). Muslims have a very balanced approach towards clothing as they want to look presentable and beautiful, but they don't become obsessed with it, or with the latest fashion (Wasteson, 2015).

The Islamic fashion in Malaysia has becoming a new phenomenon now. dUCK scarves brand by Vivy Yusof is an example that Islam and business are in agreement. Her success story shows that Malay Muslims can be successful financially while still adhering to Islamic requirement in public life. Alia Khan, chairwoman of the Islamic Fashion and Design Council stated that the emergence of celebrities like Vivy Yusof gives people more awareness of modesty. But people who adhere to modest style because it is aligned with their life values, has surely embraced the modesty because of higher reason, not because of following the trends (Salvá, 2017).

Neelofa is another Muslim woman who has proven that Islam and business are in compatible. In 2015, the first year of her business operation, the sales of Naelofar Hijab headscarves hit USD16.6 million. The total sales kept on growing in years, where 2017 sales jumped 30% compared to the year 2016 (Rodzi, 2018).

Over time, national and international designers came to be involved in the sale of chic Islamic fashions. Today, Muslim fashion is a lucrative global industry with countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey leading the way outside the Western countries. The Global Islamic Economy report for 2017/2018 indicated Muslim consumers' spending on clothing at \$254 billion (11 percent of global expenditure) in 2016. This is a growth of 4.2 percent from the previous year, and is comparable to global market growth of 4.3 percent.

Muslim spent on clothing \$254 billion in 2016, and forecasted to reach \$373 billion by 2022.The Muslim market (\$254 billion) for clothing ranked third behind the U.S (\$412 billion) and China (\$357 billion), and ahead of the U.K. (\$116 billion) and Germany (\$103 billion). Muslim countries with the highest spending on Muslim fashion in 2016 were Turkey (\$27.4 billion), the UAE (\$20.8 billion), Nigeria (\$17.6 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$16.0 billion), and Indonesia (\$13.5 billion). Figure 2.4 summarizes these findings. Russia and India, countries with Muslim minorities, also spent \$11.9 and \$11.1 billion, respectively. Based on in Global Islamic Economy report for 2017/2018, Malaysia ranked second after Singapore, South East Asia in the Top Islamic Economy for Fashion (Reuters, 2017).

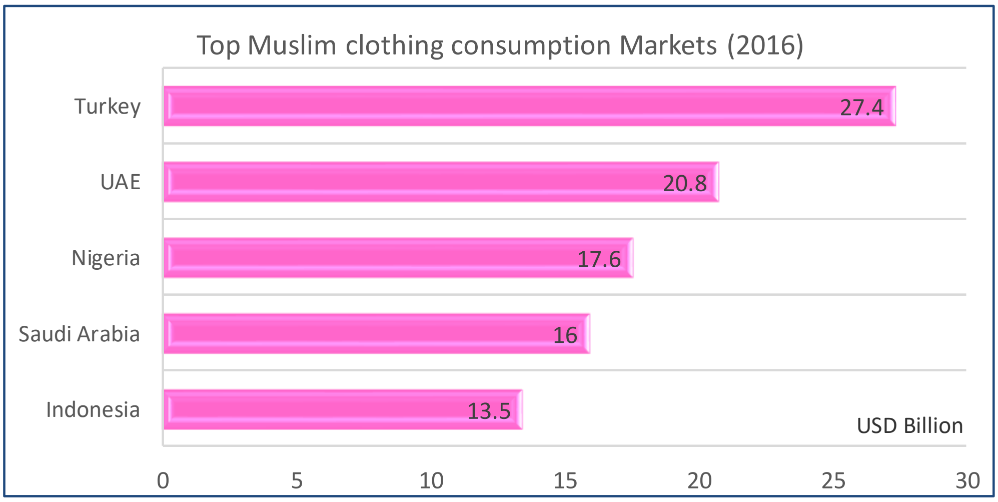

Figure 2.4: Top Muslim clothing consumption markets year 2016.

Global Islamic clothing market is expected to be driven by the growing Islamic population in emerging markets of Indonesia and Malaysia and enforcement of Sharia law in Middle East. Hijab, khimar, abaya, chador, jilbab, niqab, burqa, shalwar kameez, ghutr, bisht and thobe are product forms available in the Islamic clothing market (Hassan, Zaman, & Santosa, 2015). These products are used in the form of apparels, footwear, headwear and other accessories.

In the Middle East, the regulatory for making enforcement for women to cover their heads increases the demand for hijab clothing as headwear and further promotes market growth over the forecast period. Additionally, the clothing industry in the Middle East is expected to have a positive impact on the Islamic market in the forecast period through the enhancement of the use of halal standards along with technological advances. Furthermore, market growth will be challenging with the rising of Western clothing products in Islamic countries based on new product launches (Muslim, 2018).

The development of internet technology is increasingly advancing causing an eye-opener for customers to shift to online shopping. This is a factor that prevents the Islamic clothing market in the forecast period. With the high density of Muslims in Asia Pacific, Islamic clothing will be expected to be one of the promising markets in the business (Elasrag, 2016). Low manufacturing costs and favourable regulatory tendencies provide an opportunity for growing textile industry in China and India. In addition, it facilitates foreign investors to penetrate the Islamic clothing market for that country.

The Global Islamic Economy report 2017/2018 Reuters (2017) stated that China ($17.5 billion) is the highest export most clothing to OIC countries followed by India ($5.4 billion) and Turkey ($2.7 billion). Middle East countries have started to reduce reliance on domestic energy sector on account of decreasing output of oil and gas reserves and declining crude oil prices. As a result, the governments of Middle East countries particularly, Saudi Arabia announced new policies aimed to open investments in textile, automotive and construction sectors at the domestic level. Therefore, increasing investment in textile industry in Middle East on account of regulatory support and growing domestic consumptions of apparel is expected to augment Islamic clothing market growth over the forecast period.

The Islamic fashion industry will become more and more similar to the mainstream fashion industry in terms of presentation and style of clothing (Wasteson, 2015). It is noted that the new younger generation want to be modern without compromising on their halal lifestyle and thus both the Islamic fashion and beauty industries are predicted to boom.

However, due to the great influence of culture and many different modes of dress, it can make people forget that they must cover their bodies except for their face and hands whereas Islam requires that clothing must also be loose enough to cover the body properly therefore, skin-tight and see-through clothes are not allowed in Islam.

It is uncompromising that Islam allows fashion, but within certain limitations and provisions. Fashion is a style, and it allows us to exhibit an appearance that matches our personalities as Muslim women (Shirazi, 2017a). This growth has had controversies due to religious conservatives and Muslim scholars have raised questions about the types of dressing and apparels and whether defining clothing as "Islamic" was even permitted or lawful by Islamic principles; a concept known as "halal" (Yafai, 2017).

CONCLUSION

International brands like Dolce & Gabbana, Oscar de la Renta, Tommy Hilfiger, and clothing labels and retailers like Mango, Uniqlo and H&M are starting to embrace Muslimah-oriented fashion design in their offerings to ensure they are not left-behind. Muslimah wear has a huge global market as it has becoming an important segment in the global fashion industry today. During the Muslim Fashion Festival 2016 (MUFFEST) held in Jakarta, Indonesia for example, six (6) local Malaysian designers who participated have successfully made over 80% sales at their booths. This shows that the opportunity is there for Malaysian local designers to enter international market as the Islamic fashion has becoming popular internationally (Week, 2016).

Muslim population is expected to rise from 1.7 billion in 2014, to 2.2 billion in year 2030. The median age is 30 years old. This also constitutes as an opportunity for Islamic fashion business as the numbers represent growth in the number of potential consumers (Thomson Reuters, 2015 as cited in Ajala (2017). Business opportunity in fact is greater as non-Muslim consumers are also interested in modest fashion.

This can be seen when large retailers like DKNY and Tommy Hilfiger have also designed collection for Ramadan (Arango, 2016 as cited in Ajala (2017). Nike has also announced that they will be releasing hijab for athletes in year 2018 (Salvá, 2017). This phenomenon however has started creating a blurry line between "general" fashion from Islamic and Modest fashion. It seems like the regular fashion has stepped into the Islamic and modest fashion area, and vice versa (Ajala, 2017).

While the Islamic fashion industry is growing, retailers focused on Islamic fashion face operational challenges when expending internationally. The majority of halal fashion retailers are small, and they face challenges like high rents and excess inventory. Retail infrastructure is expensive, thus forcing retailers to use e-commerce approach, which is growing but not as mature as in other markets.

Nevertheless, manufacturing is one of the challenges. If retailers choose mass manufacturing, that means lower costs and price points, but it also means inventory risk; have to carry more inventory to produce more (Algethemi, 2015). Besides, State of Global Economy Report 2017/2018 Reuters (2017) reported that modest fashion can experience substantial growth through multi-channel expansion and investment but is at risk of being pigeon-holed if it does not take steps to re-brand itself beyond a niche.

Diversifying and branding modest fashion as a mainstream fashion subculture, appealing to a hugely relevant segment of mainstream fashion market and style subculture. Modest fashion has been a huge success as a movement, but to be a sustainable industry it needs to not only break into mainstream fashion, which it more recently has, but to find a permanent position in the global retail fashion space.

Islamic fashion industry is becoming more diverse and inclusive, and demand for modest-wear is gaining momentum. Muslim women have long been seeking a space within the global fashion industry that caters to their conservative requirements (Rai, 2018). Muslims are more brand aware than the general population. With a growing Muslim population, there is an increased demand for modest but also fashionable clothing for the youth, who have significant spending power (McLaughlin-Duane, 2015).

According to IFDC (2016), growth opportunities for the fashion industry lie in the developing countries where the population is more conquered by the young people; cushioned with the disposable incomes that are increasing and expanding product portfolios are creating awareness for different product segments. Besides, there would be niche markets to cater specifically to regional or religious values, demands and traditions, which often have a strong influence on buying decisions and consumption patterns, thus offering various opportunities for new product developments in niche segments.

In spite of that, there are some threats on the Islamic fashion coverage due to difficulties to reach economies of scale as long as halal fashion remains niche. There is significant challenge from global fast fashion brands such as Zara, H&M and Uniqlo, which have extensive scale and are growing based on responding quickly to fast-changing trends, modest fashion included (Goud, 2016).

Moreover, concerns regarding safeguarding of Muslim values in production will be an issue. One-size-fits-all approach is difficult to execute globally to protect the image of Muslim itself because different interpretations of modesty exist in the Muslim world, thus high need for tailoring to fit needs to local cultures (IFDC, 2016).

According to Goud (2016), Muslim-owned brands are only one part of the value challenge whereby the industry has to contend with raw material challenges, technology, machinery, as well as companies involved in the distribution chain. Muslim market players have been concentrated primarily at the end of the value chain as designers, retailers and customers.

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