

Reframing Fashion Show Management as a System: A Shariah-Compliant Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper reconceptualises fashion-show management as an integrated operational system from a Shariah-compliant perspective within the Malaysian fashion industry. Existing fashion-show scholarship has predominantly focused on spectacle, branding, visual communication, and audience experience, while modest- and Islamic-fashion studies have largely emphasised garments, identity, consumption, and representation. Consequently, limited attention has been given to the integration of backstage management, front-stage management, and Shariah principles within a unified management framework. Adopting a qualitative conceptual research design, this study employs an integrative literature review and thematic synthesis of relevant scholarship on fashion-show production, backstage and front-stage operations, modest and Islamic fashion, and Islamic ethics. The conceptual synthesis generates four principal findings. First, backstage and front-stage management function as interdependent operational domains connected through people, garments, information, technologies, and production decisions. Second, backstage management represents a particularly sensitive ethical-operational domain involving dressing procedures, spatial and privacy management, staff and model coordination, and media access. Third, visual modesty does not independently demonstrate comprehensive Shariah compliance because operational processes may require separate ethical evaluation. Fourth, Shariah principles should function as an embedded governance layer informing both backstage and front-stage management through modesty and aurah protection, privacy and dignity, ethical responsibility, and gender-sensitive interaction. Based on these findings, the paper proposes a preliminary conceptual framework that shifts Shariah-compliant fashion-show assessment from a garment-centred perspective towards a system-level management approach. The framework provides a theoretical foundation for subsequent empirical examination and may support the future development of ethically informed management practices and industry guidelines in Malaysia.

Keywords: Fashion-show management; Shariah governance; backstage management; front-stage management; modest fashion; Malaysian fashion industry



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1 INTRODUCTION

The global fashion industry functions not only through garment production and commercial exchange but also as a platform for identity, cultural representation, and visual communication. Fashion

shows are central to this ecosystem because they connect designers, models, production teams, media, buyers, sponsors, and audiences through a coordinated presentation. Their significance has expanded through physical, digital, and hybrid formats, making fashion-show management increasingly complex (Business of Fashion & McKinsey Company, 2021; Ahn et al., 2023; Kim, 2023).

The growth of modest fashion has increased the cultural and commercial importance of fashion presentation in Muslim-majority settings. Global Islamic-economy reporting and Malaysian research indicate that modest fashion is shaped by religious values, cultural identity, market demand, and contemporary aesthetics (DinarStandard, 2022; Kamarulzaman & Shaari, 2023; Saaidin et al., 2022; Saidan et al., 2022). Nevertheless, modest fashion and Shariah-compliant fashion are not equivalent. Modest fashion is commonly recognised through visible features such as bodily coverage and loose silhouettes, whereas Shariah compliance also concerns the processes, interactions, responsibilities, and environments through which fashion is produced and presented (Kaur et al., 2021; Arshad et al., 2024).

Existing fashion-show scholarship has mainly examined spectacle, branding, visual communication, cultural performance, and audience experience (Stark, 2018; SanMiguel et al., 2023). These perspectives explain the public value of fashion shows but give less attention to the operational relationship between backstage and front-stage management. Backstage activities—including rehearsals, garment preparation, model line-ups, dressing, styling, staff movement, technical coordination, and media access occur simultaneously under substantial time pressure and directly affect the visible runway presentation (Skov et al., 2009). Front-stage activities include runway delivery, technical and media coordination, audience management, and the public representation of garments, bodies, brands, and cultural values.

From a Shariah perspective, backstage and front-stage environments may involve ethical concerns related to aurah, privacy, dignity, photography, access control, and gender interaction. These concerns should not be treated as isolated issues or as assumptions that fashion shows are inherently non-compliant. Rather, they identify management areas requiring systematic investigation and safeguards. A garment may appear modest on the runway while the procedures used to prepare, record, and present it remain unexamined.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite Malaysia's prominence in the modest-fashion economy, discussion of Shariah compliance remains predominantly garment-centred. Four related gaps are evident: fashion-show management and Shariah compliance are usually discussed separately; backstage and front-stage activities are insufficiently integrated as one operational system; visual modesty is often treated as a proxy for overall compliance; and the literature offers limited guidance for translating Shariah principles into fashion-show management practices in Malaysia. This fragmentation restricts the ability of organisers, designers, production teams, educational institutions, and policymakers to evaluate the ethical integrity of the complete event process.

1.2 Aim and Guiding Question

This paper aims to reconceptualise fashion-show management as an integrated operational system by synthesising literature on backstage management, front-stage management, modest and Islamic fashion, and Shariah-related ethical principles. It addresses the following question: How can backstage management, front-stage management, and Shariah principles be conceptually integrated into a Shariah-compliant fashion-show management system? The study proposes a preliminary framework in which backstage and front-stage management are interdependent domains and Shariah principles function as

an embedded governance layer. The framework is intended to guide subsequent empirical research rather than constitute a formal religious ruling or validated industry standard.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Fashion Shows as Integrated Management Systems

Fashion shows have evolved from relatively exclusive garment presentations into complex platforms of visual communication, branding, cultural production, market positioning, and audience engagement. Their contemporary function extends beyond the display of clothing because they communicate a brand's identity, values, creative direction, and relationship with its intended audience. Stark (2018) describes the fashion show as a distinctive performative form, while SanMiguel et al. (2023) identify models, location, theme, finale, and the spectacle effect as important components of fashion-show communication. These perspectives demonstrate that fashion shows operate simultaneously as creative presentations, communication strategies, and commercially significant industry events.

The development of digital and virtual fashion shows has further broadened the meaning of fashion presentation. Ahn et al. (2023) demonstrate that interactivity in virtual-reality fashion shows influences audience experience and engagement. Similarly, Kim (2023) explains that virtual fashion-show environments create new forms of spatial, sensory, and interactive fashion experience. Digital transformation has consequently changed how fashion presentations are produced, distributed, experienced, and evaluated. Nevertheless, much of this scholarship continues to focus on the visible presentation and the audience's experience rather than on the complete management system supporting the event.

A fashion show depends on coordinated relationships among designers, models, dressers, stylists, makeup artists, production managers, choreographers, photographers, technical personnel, media representatives, sponsors, and audiences. It also depends on the coordination of garments, staging, lighting, sound, music, spatial arrangements, schedules, technical cues, and communication systems. Fashion-show outcomes therefore emerge from interactions among multiple humans, material, spatial, and technical components rather than from an isolated runway performance.

Shu and Tzu (2018) apply Actor Network Theory to explain fashion shows as networks of interconnected human and non-human actors. Their perspective demonstrates that designers, models, clothing, production teams, venues, media, lighting, music, and promotional elements collectively contribute to the delivery of a fashion event. This relational understanding supports the treatment of fashion shows as integrated management systems. However, Actor Network Theory primarily explains how relationships among actors produce the event; it does not specifically address how these relationships should be governed ethically within Muslim-majority contexts.

A systems perspective consequently requires the visible runway presentation to be examined alongside the operational processes producing it. Decisions concerning garment sequencing, model preparation, changing procedures, staff movement, technical cues, photography, and access control may affect runway timing, visual consistency, media representation, and audience experience. Backstage and front-stage management should therefore be understood as interdependent operational domains within a continuous fashion-show management system.

2.2 Backstage Management and Operational Interdependence

Backstage management represents the internal operational structure through which fashion-show activities are prepared, coordinated, monitored, and adjusted. It includes rehearsals, wardrobe preparation, garment organisation, model line-ups, dressing and changing procedures, makeup and styling, staff coordination, technical communication, media access, and movement between preparation and performance spaces.

Skov et al. (2009) describe fashion-show production as a complex form of social organisation involving multiple professional groups working collectively under highly time-sensitive conditions. Backstage activities are characterised by simultaneous tasks, structured role allocation, communication across professional groups, and the need to respond quickly to production disruptions. The backstage environment may appear chaotic, but its effectiveness depends on organised garment arrangements, defined responsibilities, technical preparation, and coordinated decision-making.

The production manager or show coordinator performs an important integrating role by connecting designers, models, stylists, dressers, technical personnel, and front-stage production requirements. Activities undertaken backstage directly affect what becomes visible on the runway. Delayed dressing, incorrect garment sequencing, unclear technical cues, or insufficient coordination may influence the timing, continuity, and overall quality of the presentation. Backstage and front-stage processes are therefore connected through continuous movements of people, garments, information, and production decisions.

Backstage management should also be understood as more than a technical or logistical function. It constitutes a workplace in which professional roles, power relationships, bodily preparation, privacy, safety, and personal dignity must be managed. Models may be required to change garments rapidly, undergo styling and makeup, receive instructions from multiple personnel, and move between shared or restricted spaces. Photographers, videographers, media personnel, and content-production teams may also require access to certain backstage areas. These conditions make dressing procedures, spatial planning, staff allocation, media access, and visual recording important management concerns.

The relative invisibility of backstage operations creates an additional concern. Audiences generally evaluate a fashion show through its public presentation and may have limited knowledge of the working processes occurring behind the runway. Consequently, a professionally presented front stage does not independently demonstrate that backstage procedures are equally structured, safe, dignified, or ethically managed. Backstage management should therefore be evaluated as both an operational domain and an ethical management environment.

In the context of this study, four areas are particularly relevant to backstage management. The first is dressing and changing procedures, which concern the preparation of models and garments under time pressure. The second is spatial and privacy management, involving the organisation of changing, styling, waiting, media, and technical areas. The third is staff and model coordination, which concerns role allocation, workflow, communication, and professional conduct. The fourth is media and access control, which regulates photography, video recording, visitor movement, and access to sensitive preparation spaces. These areas provide the operational basis for analysing the relationship between backstage efficiency and Shariah-sensitive management.

2.3 Front-Stage Management and Public Representation

Front-stage management refers to the visible and publicly accessible dimension of fashion-show production. It includes runway and visual presentation, technical and media coordination, audience management, and the ethical representation of garments, models, brands, and cultural values. Although front-stage presentation is commonly associated with runway performance, it is also a managed communication environment through which audiences interpret the creative, commercial, and cultural meaning of a collection.

Visual presentation involves the coordination of models, garments, choreography, music, lighting, stage design, styling, and movement. SanMiguel et al. (2023) demonstrate that the model, location, theme, finale, and spectacle effect collectively influence fashion-show communication. These elements do not function independently; they must be coordinated to construct a consistent narrative and communicate the intended brand identity.

Technical and media coordination further extends the influence of the front stage beyond the physical runway. Photography, livestreaming, social media, digital screens, press coverage, and audience-generated content can reproduce and circulate a fashion presentation across different platforms. Ahn et al. (2023) and Kim (2023) show that digital technologies have transformed fashion-show experiences by increasing interactivity and expanding the spatial reach of fashion presentations. Although digital fashion shows may reduce certain physical production requirements, they introduce new considerations concerning technological preparation, visual representation, digital access, and audience engagement.

Audience management is another important front-stage component. Seating arrangements, guest access, media positioning, crowd movement, programme sequencing, and communication with attendees contribute to the professional delivery of the event. Audience experience is shaped not only by garments and runway performance but also by event organisation, visibility, timing, comfort, and the coherence of the overall presentation.

From an ethical perspective, front-stage management also concerns how bodies, identities, cultures, and religious values are publicly represented. Fashion shows may use modesty, Islamic identity, or cultural symbolism as part of a brand narrative. However, ethical representation requires these narratives to be communicated responsibly and consistently. When modesty is used primarily as a visual or marketing identity without equivalent attention to the production processes supporting the presentation, a disconnection may emerge between public representation and internal management practice.

The literature therefore suggests that front-stage management should not be assessed solely according to aesthetic success or audience response. It should also be evaluated in relation to the operational processes, ethical decisions, and representational responsibilities through which the public presentation is produced. This supports the conceptual integration of front-stage management with backstage management and Shariah governance.

2.4 Modest Fashion, Islamic Fashion and Shariah Compliance

The terms modest fashion, Muslim fashion, and Islamic fashion are frequently used interchangeably, although they do not necessarily express the same conceptual or ethical position. Lewis (2015) describes Muslim fashion as a field in which religious identity, contemporary style, global markets, and individual agency are continuously negotiated. Tarlo and Moors (2013) similarly demonstrate that Islamic fashion

involves diverse interpretations of religious belonging, modernity, social identity, and cultural participation.

Modest fashion is generally understood as a broad and inclusive category involving clothing that provides greater bodily coverage or appears less revealing. Its meaning may be shaped by cultural norms, personal preferences, religious interpretations, market positioning, and contemporary aesthetics. Modest fashion can consequently appeal to Muslim and non-Muslim consumers and may be promoted as a global commercial category rather than an exclusively religious practice.

In Malaysia, modest fashion has become an increasingly visible component of fashion culture and industry development. Kamarulzaman and Shaari (2023) identify multiple perspectives within the Malaysian modest-fashion sector, demonstrating that modest fashion is influenced by religion, culture, consumer behaviour, branding, and changing design trends. Saaidin et al. (2022) further show that Malaysian youth interpret modest fashion through contemporary preferences and cross-cultural fashion influences. Saidan et al. (2022) explain that fashion forecasting also contributes to the development of Muslimah design trends.

The growing literature on Islamic fashion reflects increasing academic attention to consumption, marketing, identity, and industry development. Pradana et al. (2023), through a bibliometric analysis, demonstrate the expansion of Islamic-fashion research but also indicate the concentration of scholarship around consumer behaviour, marketing, sustainability, and cultural identity. These areas are important, but they offer limited explanation of how Islamic principles may be translated into the operational management of fashion presentations.

Shariah-compliant fashion has a more specific normative orientation than the broader concept of modest fashion. It requires consideration of Islamic principles concerning *aurah*, garment transparency, bodily form, modesty, dignity, and ethical conduct. Kaur et al. (2021) demonstrate how Shariah-compliant principles can be incorporated into the development of a fashion e-commerce system, while Arshad et al. (2024) discuss Shariah-related requirements concerning women's dress, *aurah*, modesty, and interaction.

Nevertheless, the predominant focus of these studies remains the garment, fashion product, or consumer platform. Limited attention is given to the process through which fashion is publicly presented. A fashion show may feature garments identified as modest or Islamic without demonstrating whether dressing procedures, backstage privacy, photography, staff allocation, gender interaction, and media access have been managed consistently with the same ethical principles.

This distinction produces two levels of assessment. The first is visual modesty, which concerns what audiences see in the garments and models presented on the runway. The second is operational compliance, which concerns how the show is planned, prepared, coordinated, recorded, and delivered. Comprehensive Shariah-compliant fashion-show management requires consistency between these two levels.

2.5 Shariah Governance in Fashion-Show Management

Shariah governance in this study refers to the incorporation of Islamic ethical principles into the planning, organisation, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of fashion-show practices. It does not refer to a claim that the proposed framework constitutes a formal religious ruling or authoritative Shariah standard. Instead, it provides a conceptual mechanism through which relevant Islamic principles may guide operational decision-making.

Islamic ethical considerations in fashion extend beyond the appearance of garments. They also concern the protection of aurah, privacy, dignity, respectful interaction, responsibility, and the avoidance of unnecessary bodily exposure. Arshad et al. (2024) identify aurah, khulwah, and relationships between mahram and non-mahram individuals as relevant principles within Islamic understandings of dress and interaction. These principles are potentially significant in fashion-show environments because models may undergo dressing, styling, makeup, fitting, and rapid garment changes in spaces involving multiple personnel.

The first component of the proposed governance layer is modesty and aurah protection. In operational terms, this principle may inform changing procedures, garment preparation, staff allocation, spatial separation, and access to areas where models are not fully dressed. Protection of aurah should not be interpreted only as a responsibility placed on individual models; it may also be understood as a management responsibility requiring appropriate procedures and physical arrangements.

The second component is privacy and dignity. Privacy concerns who may access backstage areas, observe dressing procedures, capture images, or distribute visual material. Dignity concerns the respectful treatment of models and production personnel, including communication, bodily autonomy, safety, and professional working conditions. Backstage photography and video recording require particular attention because models may be recorded during preparation rather than in their intended public presentation.

The third component is ethical responsibility. Fashion-show organisers, designers, production managers, media personnel, and other stakeholders share responsibility for decisions affecting participants and audiences. Abd Wahed et al. (2025) demonstrate the relevance of Shariah principles and ethical boundaries in visual and creative practices. Applied to fashion shows, ethical responsibility may involve clear role allocation, informed procedures, responsible visual representation, access regulation, and accountability for the consequences of management decisions.

The fourth component is gender-sensitive interaction. Fashion-show production frequently involves men and women performing different technical, creative, and management roles within limited spaces and demanding schedules. A Shariah-sensitive approach does not necessarily require the elimination of all professional interaction. Rather, it requires interactions to be structured according to necessity, professionalism, respect, appropriate boundaries, and protection from avoidable exposure or compromising situations.

These four components demonstrate why Shariah compliance is conceptualised as an embedded governance layer rather than a separate or external element. Modesty and aurah protection, privacy and dignity, ethical responsibility, and gender-sensitive interaction may inform both backstage and front-stage decisions. The governance layer therefore connects Islamic ethical principles with operational management and public representation.

The proposed governance perspective also avoids reducing Shariah compliance to a checklist applied only after the event has been designed. Ethical considerations should instead be integrated from the planning stage through spatial design, workflow development, staff allocation, rehearsals, changing procedures, media coordination, runway presentation, audience management, and post-event evaluation. This approach positions Shariah compliance as part of professional management rather than as a constraint imposed solely on garments or models.

2.6 Literature Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature demonstrates that fashion shows have been widely examined as visual spectacles, communication platforms, brand experiences, digital environments, and cultural performances (Ahn et al., 2023; Kim, 2023; SanMiguel et al., 2023; Stark, 2018). Backstage scholarship has provided important insight into production roles, time pressure, professional coordination, and relationships among multiple actors (Skov et al., 2009; Shu & Tzu, 2018). Modest- and Islamic-fashion research has also expanded substantially, particularly in relation to identity, consumption, marketing, design trends, and garment-related Shariah principles (Kamarulzaman & Shaari, 2023; Lewis, 2015; Pradana et al., 2023). Despite these contributions, four interconnected gaps remain.

First, a thematic gap exists because fashion-show management and Shariah compliance have generally been studied in separate bodies of literature. Fashion-show research emphasises spectacle, branding, audience experience, and production, while Islamic-fashion studies focus predominantly on clothing, consumption, identity, and representation. Limited scholarship integrates these areas into a unified management perspective.

Second, an operational gap exists because the relationship between backstage and front-stage management remains insufficiently developed as an integrated system. Although backstage production and front-stage presentation are connected through people, garments, information, and technical processes, they are frequently discussed as separate spaces or activities.

Third, a conceptual gap emerges from the tendency to associate Shariah compliance primarily with the visible characteristics of garments. Visual modesty does not independently explain whether dressing procedures, spatial arrangements, staff interaction, media access, photography, audience management, and public representation are ethically managed. The distinction between visual modesty and operational compliance consequently requires further conceptual development.

Fourth, a governance and contextual gap exists because the reviewed literature provides limited evidence of a comprehensive framework that translates Shariah principles into fashion-show management practices within Malaysia. Existing Shariah-related fashion studies provide important garment and consumer guidance, but limited operational guidance for integrating aurah protection, privacy, dignity, ethical responsibility, and gender-sensitive interaction across backstage and front-stage management.

These gaps justify the development of a preliminary conceptual framework comprising three interrelated domains: backstage management, front-stage management, and a Shariah governance layer. Backstage and front-stage management represent the interconnected operational structure of the fashion show, while the Shariah governance layer provides ethical principles that inform and evaluate both domains. The framework therefore shifts the assessment of Shariah-compliant fashion shows from a garment-centred perspective towards a system-level management perspective.

3 METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Research Design

This paper adopts a qualitative conceptual research design to examine fashion show management from a Shariah-compliant perspective. The paper represents the preliminary conceptual phase of a broader qualitative intrinsic case study concerning fashion show management within the Malaysian fashion industry. At this stage, no interviews, direct observations, or empirical case-study findings are

reported. Instead, the paper develops a conceptual foundation by integrating literature concerning fashion show production, backstage and front-stage management, modest and Islamic fashion, and Shariah-related ethical principles.

A conceptual approach was considered appropriate because the research problem involves bodies of knowledge that have generally developed separately. Fashion-show studies have predominantly focused on spectacle, visual communication, branding, and audience experience, whereas modest- and Islamic-fashion studies have largely concentrated on garments, identity, consumption, and representation. An integrative review was therefore considered appropriate because it enables the critical synthesis of conceptually fragmented bodies of literature and supports the development of new theoretical frameworks (Torraco, 2016; Snyder, 2019). The present study brings these areas together to explain how Shariah principles may inform fashion-show management as an integrated operational system.

This design is consistent with the interpretive orientation of the broader study, which seeks to understand fashion show management as a contextual and socially constructed process. However, the present paper is limited to conceptual interpretation and does not claim to evaluate actual industry compliance or represent the experiences of fashion show practitioners.

3.2 Literature Identification and Selection

The conceptual analysis was informed by a focused and integrative review of relevant academic and authoritative sources. Literature was identified primarily through Google Scholar and supplemented by targeted searches of academic journal websites, publisher platforms, university repositories, and relevant industry reports. The searches focused on literature published between 2009 and 2025, with priority given to recent publications from 2020 to 2025. Earlier seminal sources were retained when they provided important conceptual, theoretical, or historical foundations.

Keyword combinations included “fashion show management,” “fashion show production,” “backstage operations,” “front-stage management,” “fashion communication,” “event management,” “modest fashion,” “Islamic fashion,” “Shariah-compliant fashion,” “aurah,” “privacy,” “gender interaction,” and “Islamic ethics.” These terms were selected because they corresponded with the principal concerns and conceptual domains identified in the broader research proposal.

Sources were included when they contributed directly to at least one of the following areas: fashion show management, backstage operations, front-stage presentation, modest or Islamic fashion, event ethics, or Shariah-related principles relevant to fashion practices. Sources focusing exclusively on garment construction or technical design processes, without relevance to fashion show operations, management, modesty, or Islamic ethical considerations, were excluded. Commercial materials without identifiable authorship or institutional authority and duplicated sources were also excluded.

Following relevance screening, 17 subject-specific sources were retained for the conceptual synthesis. Two additional methodological sources were used to guide the integrative review and conceptual analysis, resulting in a total of 19 references. The subject-specific materials consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, book chapters, conference papers, relevant working papers, and authoritative industry reports.

3.3 Conceptual and Thematic Analysis

The selected literature was examined through conceptual comparison and thematic synthesis. The analytical procedure was informed by the thematic logic of identifying, comparing, and organising

recurring patterns across textual materials. Unlike an empirical thematic analysis involving interview transcripts or field observations, the present analysis focused on concepts, operational activities, ethical concerns, and theoretical relationships reported in the selected literature.

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the selected sources were read to identify statements and concepts relating to fashion show production, backstage activities, front-stage presentation, operational coordination, modest fashion, and Islamic ethical principles. Second, the relevant information was coded and organised according to its principal focus. Third, related codes were compared and grouped into broader conceptual categories. Finally, the relationships among the categories were interpreted and synthesised to construct the proposed conceptual framework.

The initial coding identified operational concepts such as model preparation, dressing and garment changes, styling, garment sequencing, staff coordination, spatial organisation, technical preparation, media access, runway presentation, audience engagement, and visual communication. It also identified ethical concepts relating to *aurah* protection, privacy, dignity, modesty, responsible visual representation, and gender-sensitive interaction.

Through comparison and synthesis, these concepts were organised into three overarching domains: backstage management, front-stage management, and Shariah compliance. Backstage management represents the preparation, coordination, spatial, and human processes occurring behind the visible presentation. Front-stage management represents runway performance, technical presentation, visual communication, media representation, and audience engagement. Shariah compliance represents an ethical and governance dimension intersecting with both operational domains.

3.4 Conceptual Framework Development

The conceptual framework was developed through an iterative process of integration and interpretation. In the first stage, backstage and front-stage activities were identified as the two principal operational domains of fashion show management. In the second stage, relevant Shariah principles and ethical considerations were mapped against the activities and potential risks associated with both domains. In the third stage, the relationships among the operational and ethical categories were examined to determine how Shariah principles could be incorporated into fashion show planning, production, presentation, and evaluation.

The framework positions backstage and front-stage management as interdependent rather than separate processes. Activities occurring backstage influence runway timing, visual presentation, technical delivery, media representation, and audience experience. In turn, front-stage requirements determine backstage workflows, model sequencing, role allocation, and production schedules.

Shariah compliance is positioned as an embedded governance layer that guides and evaluates both domains. For example, *aurah* protection may inform dressing and changing procedures; privacy may guide backstage access and photography; dignity and respect may influence the treatment of models and production personnel; and gender-sensitive interaction may inform spatial zoning and staff allocation.

The resulting framework is interpretative and theory-building rather than empirically validated. It is intended to provide a preliminary conceptual structure for the broader qualitative intrinsic case study. Subsequent phases of the research will examine and refine the framework through semi-structured interviews with fashion industry practitioners and Shariah experts, direct observation of selected fashion shows, document analysis, thematic analysis, and data triangulation.

3.5 Methodological Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to conceptual analysis and literature-based synthesis. It does not report empirical observations of backstage or front-stage practices and does not determine the actual level of Shariah compliance within the Malaysian fashion industry. References to privacy risks, aurah exposure, media access, changing spaces, and gender interaction should therefore be understood as conceptually identified areas requiring further investigation rather than confirmed descriptions of all fashion shows in Malaysia.

The framework should be treated as a preliminary conceptual proposition. Its relevance, comprehensiveness, and practical applicability will require subsequent evaluation through the qualitative intrinsic case-study design outlined in the broader research project.

4 CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

The integrative review and thematic synthesis generated four principal conceptual findings. First, backstage and front-stage activities function as interdependent operational domains. Second, backstage management represents a particularly sensitive ethical environment because it involves bodily preparation, changing procedures, privacy, spatial control, and interaction among production personnel. Third, visible modesty on the runway does not independently demonstrate comprehensive Shariah compliance. Fourth, Shariah principles should function as an embedded governance layer informing both backstage and front-stage management.

4.1 Backstage and Front-Stage Interdependence

The first finding concerns the interdependence between backstage and front-stage management. Although the two domains represent different production environments, they are connected through continuous flows of people, garments, information, technical cues, and decision-making. Activities such as model preparation, garment sequencing, styling, lineup management, and technical coordination directly affect runway timing, visual presentation, media representation, and audience experience.

This interdependence demonstrates that front-stage performance cannot be evaluated separately from backstage preparation. A visually successful runway presentation is produced through coordinated backstage processes, while front-stage requirements simultaneously determine backstage schedules, role allocation, and workflow. Accordingly, both domains form a continuous operational system.

4.2 Backstage as an Ethical-Operational Domain

The second finding positions backstage management as both an operational and ethical domain. The backstage environment involves activities that may create risks relating to bodily exposure, privacy, dignity, visual recording, and gender interaction. These risks do not establish that every fashion show engages in non-compliant practices; rather, they identify areas requiring structured ethical safeguards.

Backstage management therefore requires more than production efficiency. It also requires access control, appropriate changing arrangements, clearly defined staff roles, responsible media practices, gender-sensitive allocation of personnel, and procedures that protect the dignity and privacy of models and production personnel.

4.3 Distinction Between Visual Modesty and Operational Compliance

The third finding identifies a conceptual distinction between visual modesty and operational Shariah compliance. Visual modesty concerns the appearance of garments and models as presented to the audience. Operational compliance concerns the processes, interactions, spaces, and management decisions through which the presentation is produced.

A fashion show may therefore communicate modesty at the level of visual presentation while leaving backstage privacy, media access, staff interaction, and changing procedures insufficiently addressed. Comprehensive Shariah compliance requires consistency between the ethical message presented on the runway and the management practices occurring throughout the production process.

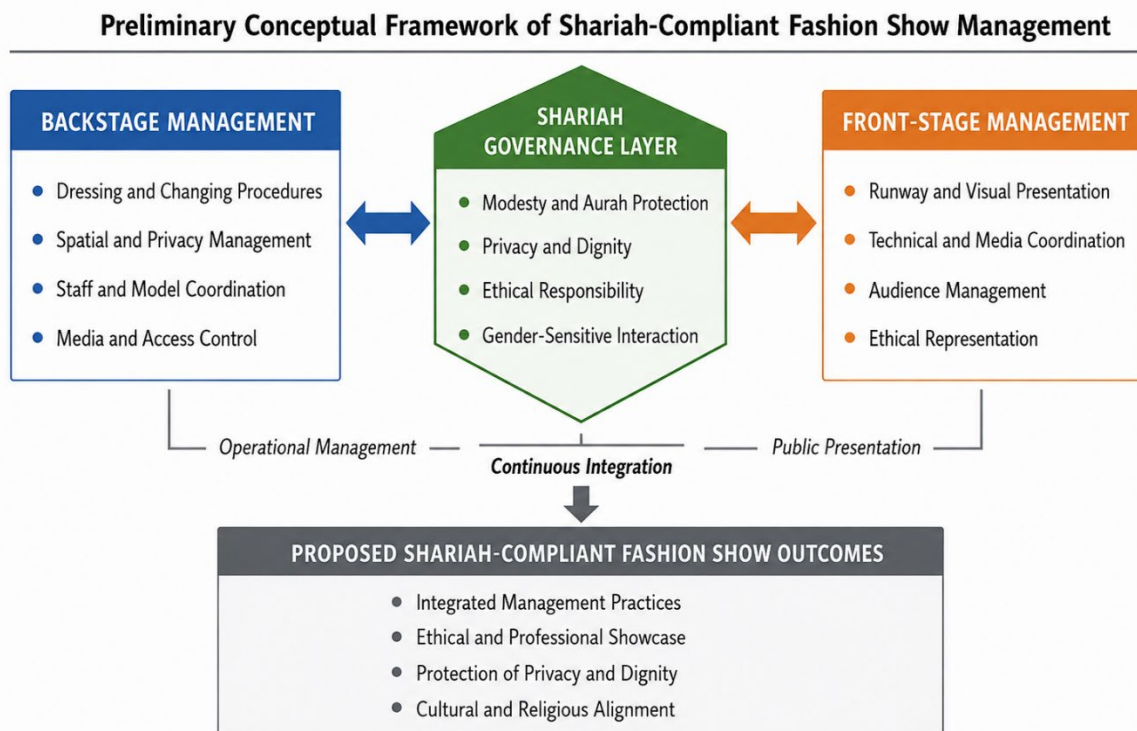
4.4 Shariah Compliance as an Embedded Governance Layer

The fourth finding positions Shariah compliance as an embedded governance layer rather than an external restriction or independent operational unit. Shariah principles should inform planning, spatial organisation, staff allocation, access control, model management, technical coordination, visual presentation, media practices, and post-event evaluation.

This governance perspective enables Islamic ethical principles to be translated into practical management considerations. Aurah protection may inform changing procedures and staff access; privacy may regulate backstage photography and recording; dignity may guide the treatment of models and personnel; and gender-sensitive interaction may influence spatial zoning and task allocation. Shariah compliance consequently operates across the entire fashion show system.

4.5 Proposed Conceptual Framework

The framework does not suggest that backstage management, front-stage management, and Shariah compliance operate as three isolated components. Instead, backstage and front-stage management represent interconnected operational domains, while Shariah compliance functions across both domains as an ethical and governance mechanism. The framework consequently shifts the assessment of Islamic fashion shows from garment-centred evaluation towards system-level evaluation.



Source: Authors' conceptualisation based on the literature synthesis.

Figure 1 Preliminary Conceptual Framework of Shariah-Compliant Fashion Show Management

This study proposes a preliminary conceptual framework comprising three interrelated components: backstage management, front-stage management, and a Shariah governance layer. The framework positions fashion-show management as an integrated system in which operational processes, public presentation, and ethical considerations are continuously interconnected.

Backstage management encompasses dressing and changing procedures, spatial and privacy management, staff and model coordination, and media and access control. Front-stage management encompasses runway and visual presentation, technical and media coordination, audience management, and ethical representation. These two domains operate interdependently because backstage decisions and workflows directly influence the quality, timing, and ethical representation of the public presentation.

The Shariah governance layer intersects with both operational domains through modesty and aurah protection, privacy and dignity, ethical responsibility, and gender-sensitive interaction. Rather than functioning as an external restriction, this layer informs planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation across the fashion-show management system. The proposed outcomes include integrated management practices, an ethical and professional showcase, protection of privacy and dignity, and cultural and religious alignment.

5 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Fashion-Show Management as an Integrated System

The conceptual synthesis demonstrates that fashion-show management should be understood as an integrated system rather than a collection of separate production tasks. Backstage and front-stage

management are connected through movements of models, garments, personnel, information, technical cues, and production decisions. A disruption in dressing, garment sequencing, staffing, media access, or technical preparation can therefore affect runway timing, visual consistency, audience experience, and public representation. This extends scholarship that has emphasised fashion shows as spectacles, communication platforms, and brand experiences by making the operational relationships that produce those outcomes analytically visible (Stark, 2018; SanMiguel et al., 2023).

The finding also builds on descriptions of fashion-show production as a time-sensitive form of social organisation (Skov et al., 2009) and complements the Actor Network Theory perspective of Shu and Tzu (2018). Human and non-human actors do not operate independently; designers, models, clothing, staff, spaces, lighting, music, schedules, and media technologies form an interdependent network. Digital and hybrid formats expand this network rather than remove the need for management, because interactive audience experiences and wider image circulation create additional responsibilities (Ahn et al., 2023; Kim, 2023).

5.2 Backstage as an Ethical-Operational Domain

Backstage is both a production environment and an ethical workplace. Dressing and rapid garment changes, styling, waiting areas, staff allocation, photography, and access to restricted spaces may affect privacy, bodily exposure, safety, and dignity. These are conceptually identified risk areas, not evidence that all fashion shows engage in unethical practices. Their relative invisibility nevertheless means that a polished runway presentation cannot independently demonstrate responsible backstage conditions.

Four areas require particular attention: dressing and changing procedures; spatial and privacy management; staff and model coordination; and media and access control. Clear workflows, designated zones, role allocation, restricted access, and agreed recording procedures can support both production efficiency and ethical responsibility. Shariah governance may therefore reinforce professional management by encouraging defined accountability and model-sensitive practices rather than functioning merely as an external restriction.

5.3 Visual Modesty and Operational Compliance

The distinction between visual modesty and operational compliance expands the unit of analysis from garments to the entire fashion-show system. Modest- and Islamic-fashion research has largely examined clothing, identity, consumption, marketing, and representation (Lewis, 2015; Tarlo & Moors, 2013; Pradana et al., 2023). These perspectives remain important, but bodily coverage or modest styling does not reveal how models, spaces, staff, media, and audiences were managed. Shariah-compliant fashion-show management consequently requires consistency between the values communicated publicly and the procedures used throughout the event (Kaur et al., 2021; Arshad et al., 2024).

Visual modesty concerns what audiences see; operational compliance concerns how the presentation is planned, prepared, recorded, and delivered. This distinction is especially relevant when Islamic identity or modesty forms part of a show's brand narrative. It does not diminish the importance of garment requirements, but connects them with privacy, dignity, professional conduct, access control, and responsible representation.

5.4 Shariah Governance as an Embedded Layer

The fourth finding positions Shariah governance across both operational domains rather than as a final checklist. Its four principles modesty and aurah protection, privacy and dignity, ethical

responsibility, and gender-sensitive interaction can inform venue selection, spatial planning, staffing, rehearsals, changing procedures, runway presentation, media coordination, and post-event evaluation. Early integration is important because privacy, access, and staffing arrangements are more effectively addressed during planning than after production has begun.

The term governance describes the role of ethical principles in guiding decisions and accountability; it does not claim that the preliminary framework is an authoritative religious ruling. Its operational application requires consultation with qualified Shariah experts and empirical examination in actual fashion-show environments. The framework's principal theoretical contribution is therefore the integration of backstage management, front-stage management, and Shariah governance, together with the distinction between visual modesty and operational compliance.

Practically, the framework may guide organisers, designers, production managers, media personnel, and educational institutions in reviewing zoning, changing arrangements, staff duties, model preparation, photography, audience management, and the consistency between public narratives and internal practices. It may also inform collaboratively developed best-practice guidelines or standard operating procedures. Such guidance should remain adaptable to different event scales, venues, audiences, and production structures while clarifying minimum ethical and professional responsibilities.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study answers its guiding question by proposing that Shariah-compliant fashion-show management can be conceptualised through three interrelated components: backstage management, front-stage management, and an embedded Shariah governance layer. Backstage and front-stage activities operate as an interdependent system, while the governance layer informs both through modesty and aurah protection, privacy and dignity, ethical responsibility, and gender-sensitive interaction. The analysis also shows that visual modesty alone cannot demonstrate comprehensive compliance because the processes used to prepare and deliver the presentation must also be considered.

The framework contributes to fashion-management theory by connecting literature that has generally treated production operations, public presentation, and Shariah-related concerns separately. It identifies backstage as an ethical-operational domain and extends the unit of analysis from garments to people, spaces, workflows, media practices, and representation. For industry and education, it provides a preliminary basis for reviewing spatial arrangements, changing procedures, staff allocation, access control, photography, runway presentation, and audience management. For policy, it may support collaborative development of flexible best-practice guidance involving practitioners, educational institutions, industry bodies, and qualified Shariah experts.

The study is limited by its conceptual design, focused source selection, and absence of empirical data; it does not determine the level of Shariah compliance in Malaysian fashion shows or represent the experiences of all practitioners. The proposed relationships must therefore be examined through interviews, observation, and document analysis in actual fashion-show settings. Future research may refine the framework, assess its feasibility across different event types, and develop empirically grounded indicators or standard operating procedures.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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