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The Perception of Malaysian Youth Towards Indonesian Modest Fashion

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian modest fashion industry is a lucrative product category that is worth looking out for since 61.3% of its population are Muslims. Thus, it is imperative that the preferences of the Muslims youth in fashion design are determined. This could invariably give fashion designers the direction forward in creativity and productivity. The preferences of modest fashion in this study were determined by comparing modest clothing of well-known designers from Indonesia and Malaysia. The characteristics of modest fashion designs done by selected fashion designers from both countries were observed and various main features were categorized. A quantitative method of surveys was then done to gauge the perceptions of 50 Malaysian youth towards their preferred modest fashion design by comparing the characteristics of Indonesia and Malaysian modest fashion. Further qualitative method was also done by giving the respondents an open question. It was found that the respondents preferred minimalist designs and perceived that Malaysian modest fashion designs are more sharia compliant compared to the Indonesian modest fashion design. Malaysian youth would like to see more creative and innovative designs in the future. It is recommended that Malaysian designers to use a bolder approach and more creativity in their designs. The instrument used could be enhanced by giving more clothing examples that could identify more characteristics of the modest fashion designs that meet consumers demands.

Keywords: Modest fashion, Malaysian Youth, Perception



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1. INTRODUCTION

Thomson Reuters and DinarStandard (Oxford Business Group, 2017), reported that spending on modest apparel had reached \$270bn in 2017 and estimated to reach about \$361bn by 2023. With such huge potentials, western fashion designers are scrambling to have some share of the pie. Vast demands from young tech-savvy Muslims and young professionals who are pursuing to wear fashionable clothing that follow the requirements of Islamic teachings has put Indonesia as one of the most populous Muslim country with a population of 277.5million as compared to Malaysia's population of 32.7million in 2021. To have an upper hand in terms of growth in modest fashion compared to Malaysia. There is a tendency that the Malaysian modest fashion might be influenced from the Indonesian modest fashion industry. However, not all styles from Indonesia are accepted by the Malaysian consumers or the local market as reported by McKinsey & Co. (2020). Therefore, it is important that Malaysia fashion designers be able to identify the general popular characteristics of modest fashion of both countries preferences to help Malaysian modest fashion market industry in exploring the unique and distinctive features of the Indonesia modest fashion that can be innovated and consequently identify our own Malaysian modest identity in fashion design. The aim of this research is to determine the general characteristics of Indonesia perceptions of Malaysian youth towards Indonesian modest fashion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Fashion in general

Fashion is a form of expressiveness in the context of clothing, apparel, footwear, lifestyle, accessories, makeup and body posture. (Kaiser, 2019). Generally, categories of apparel can be classified into jacket, outerwear, shirt, blouse, dress, vest, sweater and cardigan, denim and jeans, pants, skirt, jumpsuit and overall, suit, sleepwear and nightwear and underwear. (Fashionary, 2016). One of the elements in fashion designing is design details such as neckline, sleeve, pocket, cuff, shirts detail, pants detail etc. (Sorger R & Udale J, 2017). According to Professor Reina Lewis of Cultural Studies at London College of Fashion mentioned that modest wear refers to a woman who dress in decent and appropriate to meet their spiritual and stylistic for reason of faith, religion, or personal preference.

2.2 Modest fashion

Modest clothing generally include longer sleeves and hemlines, and bottom reaching below the knees. However, in adherence to Islamic faith, modest clothing for women refers to covering the whole body with the exception of the face and hands. The clothing must also not be tight fitting and non-transparent (AlQaradawi. 1995). With more awareness in Islamic teachings, demands for modest clothing has grown substantially, particularly from younger Muslim population (Zabbeen. (2017). They no longer wear modest hijab as part of their belief but also as a fashion statement.

Indonesia is ahead of Malaysia in becoming a shopping destination for Muslim fashion as reported by Nikkei Asia (2019) which is second place after United Arab Emirates. Hues had since stated in his book titled, *Modest Street Fashion in 2014* that Indonesia is the hallmark of hijabers and they dare to wear bright colors. Malaysia on the other hand, seems to prefer a more conservative appearance in Muslimah fashion as compared to Indonesia's bold designs and creative head gears (Annisa, 2014). Based from the researchers' observation before the Movement Control Order, there are about twenty flights to Jakarta and Bandung alone departing from Kuala Lumpur daily from the three major airline companies in Malaysia. This showed that Malaysians like to do their shopping in Indonesia because of their cheaper, more varieties and quality clothes compared to other neighbouring countries. More so of the fact that Indonesia and Malaysia share common Malay language.

A study has found that, phenomena hijab in Indonesia are competitive and the member of Hijaber Community Bandung (HCB) was audacious and always applied accessories on hijab with latest model design. (Moch Fakhruroji, 2017). Meanwhile local brand in Malaysia such as Mimpikita, Anaabu and Tangsi Tujuh reinventing heritage wear by featuring casual wear yet modern. Most of the designs were clean silhouette, muted tones, minimalist in detail and design so that it can cater global consumers. (Chandran N, 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method for this study consists of two main stages. The first stage of the study involved analysing and identifying three main characteristics in terms of silhouette, colours and design details of both Malaysian and Indonesian modest fashion designs. Three modest fashion designers' collections from Malaysia and Indonesia were selected based on their popularity and social media influence. For the second stage, a quantitative research approach was used to obtain Malaysian youth preferences towards Indonesian modest fashion. To analyse these perceptions, a set of questionnaires of 26 questions of likert scale of 1 to 5 was to 50 Malaysian youths ranging from 19-39 years old. An open question was also included to obtain opinions of the comparison between Malaysian modest fashion and Indonesian modest fashion.

For the first stage, an observation was conducted to identify design characteristics of modest fashion

from Malaysia and Indonesia. Representative brands selected based on popularity in Malaysia were modest fashion Anaabu, Mimpikita, and Alia Bastaman as shown in Figure 1.









Brand		Design Characteristics
(i)	(ii)	
		Two pieces of garment. Loose cutting, button opening at shoulder line and paired with an A-line skirt.
Jalanan collection 2018, Anaabu		Two pieces of garment. Drop shoulder and tied on the waist and paired with an A-line skirt. Pastel to warm colour
(i)	(ii)	(iii)
		
Fashionvalet "Gaya Koleksi Raya 2017", Alia Bastaman		
(i)	(ii)	(iii)
		
Raya Collection 2017, Mimpikita		

Figure 1: Evaluating Malaysia's modest fashion brand in 2017 and 2018

Selected brand from Indonesia were modest fashion from Ria Marinda, Jenahara, and Dian Pelangi. Design characteristics were evaluated based on their collection in 2018 as shown in Figure 2.

Brand			Design characteristics
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	<p>Two pieces of garment (top and bottom). Two layers transparent fabric for top with embellishment, tied on the waistline and match with palazzo pants Three pieces of garments and match with square head scarf. Drop and gathers at shoulder paired with long sleeve inner underneath, straight cut pants, and layered with asymmetrical. Two pieces of garment</p> <p>Colour pastel</p>
 <p>Ria Marinda, Jakarta Fashion Week 2018</p>			
(i)	(ii)	<p>Two piece of garment, a basic shirt with bishop sleeve and paired with palazzo pants.</p> <p>Two piece of garment, outer wear of wrap coat with flap pocket on the front, paired with printed tapered skirt with gathers on the right.</p>	
 <p>Jenahara Collection, Jakarta Fashion Week 2018</p>			
(i)	(ii)	<p>wo pieces of top and paired with pants. Asymmetrical design, tied on the waistline and paired with inner underneath.</p> <p>Three-piece garments, outer jacket was printed in chevron motif and tied on waistline, a piece of long sleeve blouse with detail on chest, paired with straight cut pants that have multiple piece layer on the right.</p> <p>Vibrant colours, printed and bold design</p>	
 <p>Dian Pelangi, Jakarta Fashion Week 2018</p>			

Figure 2: Evaluating Indonesia modest fashion brand during Jakarta Fashion Week 2018.

4. RESULT

The analysis of the three selected Malaysian modest fashion brands in Figure 1 shows that silhouette and design characteristics were generally two pieces garment with A-line silhouette, loose cutting and minimalist. While the Indonesian counterparts for modest fashion in Figure 2 showed that there were two pieces or three pieces of garment. The detailing on each outfit, generally were layered with different weight of fabrics or gathers on sleeves. The colour selections were a mixed of earthy colours, greyish and vibrant colours. These are summarized as in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Characteristics of Malaysian and Indonesian Modest Fashion Designs

	Characteristics of Malaysian Modest Fashion Designs	Characteristics of Indonesian Modest Fashion Designs
Silhouette	A-line, Straight columns	A-line, asymmetrical designs
Items	2 pieces item	2 pieces or 3 pieces item
Detailing	Minimalist, frills on sleeve	Ties on waistline, flap pockets, layers of different weight fabrics, gathers on sleeve, bishop sleeve
Colours	Pastel, earth colours	Pastel, earthy colours, vibrant

Data collected from the questionnaires were analysed and the mean value for each item that measures the Malaysian youth preferences towards Indonesian modest clothing were determined. The average mean for Malaysian youths towards Indonesian modest fashion is 3.06. This shows that generally, the Malaysian youths do have some interest in Indonesian modest clothing. The respondents do agree that Indonesian modest fashion has many designs options with a mean of 3.45, easy to mix and match at a mean of 3.38 followed by trend setter at a mean of 3.36 and bold colours at mean of 3.04. However, indication in purchasing interest of Indonesia modest fashion had a low mean at 2.77. The Malaysian youths do not really follow Indonesian modest fashion trend at a mean of 2.85. The table also shows that the lowest mean at 2.49 tends to indicate that Malaysian youths do not generally buy online from Indonesia. This may be due to buying online would be difficult as more cost will incur and returning or changing purchased good would not be economical.

Table 2: Means of items measuring Malaysian Youth Preferences towards Indonesian Modest Fashion Designs

	Suit my taste	Purchased Indonesia modest fashion	Buy online	Bold colour	Price range affordable	Easy to Mix & Match	Many design options	Trend setter	Follow Indonesia modest fashion
Mean	3.02	2.77	2.49	3.04	3.21	3.38	3.45	3.36	2.85
Average mean = 3.06									

An open question was also given to seek the opinion of the respondents in comparing the Malaysian modest fashion with the Indonesian counterpart. Only 49% of them answered the open question. 43% of these respondents gave positive description about Malaysian fashion design with 21% of the respondents preferred Malaysian fashion designs which they described as more minimalist, more elegant, trendy, more beautiful as compared to Indonesian modest design. is more elegant, trendy, more beautiful and comfortable as compared to Indonesian modest fashion design. It is worth to note that 9% of the respondents feel that Malaysian modest designs are more shariah compliant compared to the Indonesians. Thus, this may explain why they preferred a more minimalist approach as not to attract too much attention.

A respondent wrote, “*Malaysian modest fashion is more beautiful, comfort and elegant compared to the Indonesian. The colour and design is more excellent and nicer to wear too*”. However, 21% of the respondents described that Malaysian modest fashion need enhancement, should be bolder, more creative, and more innovative. They of the opinion that Malaysian designers prefer to play safe thus the

Malaysian modest designs seem not to have any identity as compared to their Indonesian counterparts. One of the respondents pointed out that Malaysian modest fashion tends to follow the Middle East fashion designs and tailor made it according to Malaysian demand. They stated that in general Malaysian modest fashion designs are boring whereby the general publics do not have much choice to choose from. Two respondents believed there is no difference between Malaysian and Indonesian modest fashion designs. While one respondent commented that Indonesian fashion designs has more creative designs as compared to Malaysians.

5. CONCLUSION

This study showed that Malaysian youth perceived that Indonesian modest fashion have variations and more choices in design. They also slightly agree that Indonesian modest fashion designs use more combination of bold colours, more detailing, and cheaper compared to Malaysian modest fashion designs. Nevertheless, Malaysian youth preferred minimalist and conservative look so as not to attract too much attention. The Malaysian modest identity seems to have simple design, subtle colours, and comfortable wear in accordance with Islamic faith. The results of this study also revealed that most of the participants preferred Malaysian modest fashion rather than Indonesia modest fashion. This conclude that both countries have their own distinct narratives in terms of modest clothing fashion trend.

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