

Millennial Purchasing Trends in Islamic Fashion: A Comparative Analysis of Malaysia and Indonesia

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Nov, 2025

Revised Jan, 2026

Accepted Jan, 2026

Keywords:

Comparative Study;
Islamic Fashion;
Malaysia and Indonesia;
Muslim Millennials;
Social Media

ABSTRACT

The growth of the Islamic fashion industry in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia, reveals unique consumption dynamics among Muslim millennial. The rise of social media has accelerated the transformation of Islamic fashion, blending religious values with popular culture and digital aesthetics. This study aims to: (1) analyze differences in style preferences of Muslim millennials in Malaysia and Indonesia; (2) identify representations of Islamic values in fashion-related social media content; and (3) examine the use of different social media platforms as spaces for expressing and consuming Islamic fashion. Employing a library research approach with Thematic Content Analysis (TCA), data were collected from 20 social media posts each from TikTok and Instagram in both countries. Using Habermas' critical analysis, the findings show that Indonesian millennials favor casual and urban styles influenced by K-pop and streetwear, while Malaysian millennials prefer traditional-modern aesthetics such as *tudung labuh* and *baju kurung*. Islamic narratives in Indonesia are conveyed through religious captions, whereas in Malaysia they are expressed visually through modest and covered fashion. TikTok dominates in Indonesia, while Instagram prevails in Malaysia due to its curated visual appeal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Islamic fashion* industry has become one of the key sectors in the global creative economy, especially in Southeast Asia. Indonesia and Malaysia are two countries that have shown rapid growth in the consumption and production of Muslim fashion. This phenomenon not only reflects an increasing awareness of *syar'i* clothing but also the changing lifestyle of young Muslims who are more open to the influence of popular and digital culture. The millennial generation,

as *digital natives*, plays a major role in the development of *Islamic fashion* trends. They use social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram as spaces for self-expression and as tools for *da'wah* through stylish yet modest clothing. Their consumption behavior is not only functional but also symbolic, representing identity and Islamic values. Although Indonesia and Malaysia share similar cultural and religious backgrounds, they exhibit different styles of *Islamic fashion*. Indonesian millennials tend to prefer casual

and urban looks inspired by *streetwear* and K-pop culture, while Malaysian millennials favor traditional-modern styles such as *baju kurung* and *tudung labuh*. These differences demonstrate how Islamic values are expressed differently according to each country's social and cultural context. In addition, social media usage also reveals interesting variations. TikTok is more dominant in Indonesia due to its interactive and fast-paced nature, while Instagram is more popular in Malaysia because it emphasizes neat and elegant visual aesthetics. Both platforms serve as digital public spaces where millennials express their identity, piety, and modern lifestyle. This study aims to analyze the differences in *Islamic fashion* style preferences among Muslim millennials in Indonesia and Malaysia, identify forms of representation of Islamic values in social media content, and examine the digital platforms used as spaces for expressing and consuming *Islamic fashion*.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 First Literature

Islamic fashion has evolved into a hybrid phenomenon that combines religious values and global aesthetics [1]. It is not merely a reflection of obedience to *sharia*, but also a form of social and cultural identity in modern society. According to [2], *modest fashion* represents the negotiation between piety and aesthetic needs, allowing Muslim women to express faith through creativity. In the Southeast Asian context, Islamic fashion is an integral part of the creative economy [3]. Indonesia and Malaysia have become leading countries in this industry due to their large Muslim populations and government support for the *modest fashion movement*.

2.2 Second Literature

Social media has transformed the way Muslim millennials express their religiosity and identity [4]. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok function as digital public spaces where young Muslims produce, share, and reinterpret Islamic values. [5] argues that *digital*

Muslim influencers play a crucial role in shaping the image of "modern piety" by blending lifestyle, fashion, and spirituality. Their content demonstrates how visual communication becomes a tool for expressing Islamic values in ways that are inclusive and relatable to global audiences. Differences in platform usage TikTok in Indonesia and Instagram in Malaysia also reflect variations in digital culture and communication styles [6].

2.3 Third Literature

Habermas's theory of the *public sphere* (1984) provides an analytical framework to understand how digital communication shapes public discourse and social values [7]. In this context, Islamic fashion on social media can be seen as a symbolic form of communication within the digital public sphere. Through fashion content, Muslim millennials not only display clothing styles but also convey moral and spiritual messages. This aligns with Habermas's concept of *communicative action*, where every social act that carries meaning contributes to the formation of shared norms and collective awareness. Therefore, Islamic fashion becomes both an aesthetic and communicative practice that builds moral consciousness in contemporary Muslim societies.

3. METHODS

This study employed a library research approach, focusing on literature review and digital content analysis to understand the phenomenon of *Islamic fashion* across countries. This method was chosen because the research explores cultural and social discourses that can be identified through secondary data such as academic literature, online publications, and social media content.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Visual Style and Identity Narratives

The study reveals distinct differences in visual fashion styles between Indonesian and Malaysian

millennials. Indonesian Muslim millennials tend to favor urban, casual, and dynamic fashion styles characterized by the use of *hijab turban*, long outerwear, *culotte pants*, and *sneakers*—a reflection of a modern and expressive Muslim identity. The influence of global popular culture, particularly K-pop and *streetwear*, is evident in their visual choices [8].

In contrast, Malaysian millennials display a more conservative and feminine approach, with dominant use of *baju kurung*, *abaya pastel*, and *tudung labuh*. These clothing choices embody values of modesty and traditional Malay-Muslim cultural norms [9]. This distinction illustrates a process of *cultural hybridization* [10], in which religious and global cultures merge to form unique expressions of modern Muslim identity in each country.

4.2 Representation of Islamic Values

The thematic analysis identifies two primary modes of representing Islamic values. In Indonesia, piety is often expressed verbally through religious captions, Qur'anic verses, and motivational quotes accompanying visual posts. Captions such as "Beauty lies in modesty" or "Covering the aurat is faith" indicate communicative expressions of religiosity that are open and reflective [11].

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, Islamic values are represented more strongly through visual embodiment—loose clothing, soft color tones, and modest gestures. This demonstrates what Abidin (2021) calls *embodied piety*, where religious messages are delivered through physical and aesthetic expression rather than text. Both modes align with Habermas's (1984) theory of *communicative action*, emphasizing that meaning in social communication can be conveyed through language, symbols, and visual performance.

4.3 Digital Platforms as Public Spheres

The study also highlights how social media platforms function differently across both contexts. TikTok is

dominant among Indonesian millennials due to its interactive and fast-paced format, which supports spontaneous and entertaining forms of *da'wah*—often referred to as *digital da'wah entertainment*. In contrast, Instagram is more popular in Malaysia, emphasizing aesthetic order and visual curation that align with formal and polite online behavior [6].

These differences reflect the diverse ways in which digital spaces act as *public spheres* for expressing faith and identity. Social media has become not only a medium of communication but also a site of moral and cultural negotiation, where Islamic values are reinterpreted within contemporary digital culture.

4.4 Interpretation and Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this research align with previous studies by Lewis (2015) and Tarlo & Moors (2018), which describe *Muslim fashion* as a hybrid form of expression blending faith and modernity [1], [2]. However, this study extends earlier work by providing a cross-national comparison between Indonesia and Malaysia, demonstrating how local cultures influence the articulation of modesty and identity. The results also support Abidin's (2021) findings that *digital Muslim influencers* construct a new image of piety that is visually engaging and culturally adaptive.

Overall, this research confirms that Islamic fashion among Southeast Asian millennials is not merely about clothing but a dynamic form of *communicative action*—where faith, aesthetics, and social values converge in digital spaces.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Islamic fashion trends among Muslim millennials in Indonesia and Malaysia reflect a dynamic interaction between religious values, popular culture, and digital media. Indonesian millennials tend to prefer casual, urban, and

modern fashion styles influenced by K-pop and streetwear, while Malaysian millennials favor traditional-modern aesthetics such as baju kurung and tudung labuh. These differences demonstrate how Islamic identity is expressed within distinct cultural contexts. The representation of Islamic values also varies—Indonesian millennials often communicate piety verbally through religious captions and quotes, whereas Malaysian millennials express it visually through modest attire and polite gestures. Social media platforms play a crucial role in shaping these identities, with TikTok serving as a space for creative and spontaneous expression in Indonesia, and Instagram functioning as a platform for aesthetic and structured representation in Malaysia. Overall, Islamic fashion serves not only as a form of self-expression but also as a medium of communicative action that integrates moral, aesthetic, and spiritual values in the digital public sphere.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that future research expand the comparative scope to include other ASEAN

countries to provide a broader understanding of Muslim millennial consumer behavior in the digital era. Further studies could also apply quantitative or mixed-method approaches to measure the influence of digital media engagement on perceptions of Islamic fashion. Practically, these insights can assist modest fashion industries and policymakers in developing marketing strategies that align with Islamic values and local cultural wisdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the State Islamic University Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember (UIN KHAS Jember) for providing academic guidance and research support throughout this study. Special thanks are also extended to the Eastasouth Institute for offering the publication platform and to all colleagues who contributed valuable insights during the research process. This study received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors

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