

# MODEST FASHION MOVEMENT: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC ART AND DESIGN ON CONTEMPORARY CLOTHING TRENDS

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**Abstract:** *This paper explores the growing trend of modest fashion and its intersection with Islamic art and design. It studies how Islamic artistic traditions have influenced contemporary clothing styles, particularly among Muslim women seeking to adhere to modesty guidelines while expressing their cultural and religious identity. Through an analysis of primary sources, including fashion collections, and observation through social media, this paper delves into the creative processes behind incorporating Islamic motifs, textiles, and techniques into modern fashion designs. By highlighting the role of Islamic art and design in shaping the global modest fashion movement, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural influences on fashion trends and the evolving dynamics of identity expression in the fashion industry.*

**Keywords:** *Fashion design, Modest fashion, Trends, Women*

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## Introduction

In recent years, there has been a remarkable shift in the fashion industry, one that celebrates modesty as a statement of empowerment and cultural expression. This movement, often referred to as the "modest fashion movement," has gained significant traction worldwide, transcending cultural boundaries and reshaping the way we perceive style and modesty. Rooted in diverse cultural and religious traditions, the modest fashion movement has its origins in the desire to adhere to principles of modesty while embracing individuality and creativity. As stated by Hassan et al., (2019) the Muslim community, which is the second largest in the world with over 60% of its population under 30, is best served by modest fashion. Modest fashion serves the needs of the global Muslim population, who are the second largest population in the world, with more than 60% under the age of 30.

Historically, modest fashion has been associated with specific religious practices, such as Islamic hijab or Jewish tzniut, but its appeal has expanded far beyond religious communities. As stated by (El Guindi 1999), modesty is associated with the "awra," an Arabic term that refers to a person's intimate bodily parts and means "inviolable vulnerability" or "what must be covered." Designers like Dian Pelangi, Anniesa Hasibuan, and Hana Tajima have gained international acclaim for their innovative designs that cater to modest dressers while appealing to a broader audience. The cornerstones of this rapidly expanding sector are faith and modesty, which have made their mark on the runways in Dubai, Indonesia Turkey, Monte Carlo, and Malaysia among other places (Halim et al., 2018). One of the most striking aspects of the modest fashion movement is its celebration of diversity and inclusivity. Unlike traditional fashion norms that often prioritize revealing attire and body-conscious silhouettes, modest fashion embraces a wide range of styles, shapes, and sizes. Modest fashion caters to individuals of all backgrounds, regardless of age, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. It offers an alternative to mainstream fashion trends, providing women with the opportunity to express their personal style while remaining true to their values and beliefs.

At its core, the modest fashion movement is about empowerment through choice. It rejects the notion that modest dress is restrictive or oppressive, instead framing it as a conscious decision made by individuals to assert control over their bodies and identities. For many women, modest fashion represents a form of resistance against societal pressures to conform to narrow standards of beauty and sexuality. By choosing to dress modestly, they reclaim ownership of their bodies and challenge conventional notions of femininity and style.

## Literature Review

### Perspective on Modest Fashion in Islamic Culture

Exploring how Islamic art and design principles have historically influenced clothing styles requires a comprehensive examination of various sources and methodologies. This research studies the rich legacy of Islamic art and design, including the intricate geometric patterns, elegant calligraphy, and sophisticated textile techniques found in architecture, manuscripts, and decorative arts. By analyzing these artistic traditions, researchers can identify recurring motifs and aesthetic principles that have informed clothing styles in Islamic societies. This exploration involves examining historical garments, textiles, and visual representations to discern how geometric patterns and calligraphic inscriptions were integrated into clothing decoration.

The perspective on modest fashion within Islamic culture is deeply rooted in religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and societal norms. According to Biancone, P., & Radwan, M. (2014),

shariah outlines the laws and precepts that Muslims are required to uphold in all spheres of life such as religious, political, cultural, social, and economic, and that they must adhere to everywhere in their interactions with God and other people. Modesty in dress holds significant importance in Islam, as it is viewed as a means of fulfilling religious obligations and adhering to the teachings of the faith. The Quran and hadith emphasize the virtues of modesty and decency in attire, encouraging both men and women to dress modestly to preserve their dignity and guard against immodesty. Within Islamic culture, modest fashion extends beyond mere clothing choices to encompass a holistic approach to appearance and behavior, emphasizing humility, dignity, and self-respect. Modest clothing styles often include loose-fitting garments that cover the body modestly, with particular attention to concealing areas deemed private or intimate. Said Ajaib, N., & Altunişik, R. (2022) the hijab, which not only represents the identity of women but also reflects religion, gender, and industry, has been institutionalized by influential institutions like the family, religion, and the state. However, it's essential to recognize that modest fashion in Islamic culture is not monolithic and varies across different regions, communities, and individual interpretations. While some may adhere to traditional dress codes, others may embrace contemporary interpretations of modest fashion that blend cultural heritage with modern aesthetics. Overall, the perspective on modest fashion in Islamic culture reflects a dynamic interplay between religious values, cultural practices, and personal expression, highlighting the diversity and richness of Islamic dress traditions.

### **Contemporary Modest Fashion Trends and Industry Growth**

The emergence of the modest fashion movement as a global trend marks a significant shift in the fashion landscape, with a particular focus on its rapid growth within the fashion industry and mainstream market. In recent years, modest fashion has transcended cultural and religious boundaries to resonate with a diverse global audience seeking clothing that balances style with modesty. One of the sector retail businesses is modest fashion, which has become an emerging industry internationally (Standard, D., 2019). As said by Sharma, G. (2024) this modesty industry is currently expanding market through online. This phenomenon has been fuelled by several factors, including shifting societal norms, the increased representation of diverse identities in fashion media, and the rise of digital platforms showcasing modest fashion influencers and designers. Recognizing the demand for modest clothing options, major fashion brands and retailers have begun to incorporate modest styles into their collections, catering to the needs and preferences of a growing consumer base. Discuss by Hanzaee & Chitsaz, (2011), the modest fashion world is approaching becoming more relevant as it is interesting not simply because it concerns a good part of the world population but also because it has been growing with new resources to invest in luxury clothes but also because of the global companies that are increasingly interested in this market. Additionally, the modest fashion movement has spurred the emergence of independent designers and niche brands specializing in modest clothing, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse fashion landscape. Since the number of hijabs has increased Muslim immigrants to developed nations like Europe and the United States have altered their lifestyles, as Muslim fashion has grown (Ajaib, N., & Altunişik, R., 2022). As modest fashion continues to gain momentum, its impact on the fashion industry and the mainstream market is undeniable, challenging conventional notions of beauty and empowering individuals to express their style while upholding their values of modesty and self-respect.

The rise of modest fashion can be attributed to several key factors that have reshaped the fashion landscape in recent years. Firstly, shifting consumer preferences have played a significant role, with many individuals seeking clothing options that offer both style and modesty. This shift reflects a broader cultural movement towards inclusivity and diversity, as consumers

increasingly prioritize clothing that aligns with their personal values and beliefs. The increased representation of diverse identities in fashion media has contributed to the mainstream acceptance of modest fashion. There is a lot of debate about the rise of modest fashion photography, modeling, and Muslim beauty pageants (Reuters, T., & Standard, D. 2014). By showcasing a diverse range of styles and perspectives, fashion media has helped to challenge conventional beauty standards and promote a more inclusive definition of fashion. Furthermore, the influence of social media cannot be overstated in driving the popularity of modest fashion. Consequently, social media has evolved into a set of highly interactive platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok where people continuously engage and interact with one another to share (Pillar et al., 2011) or provide a space for modest fashion influencers and designers to showcase their creativity and reach a global audience. Social media has democratized fashion, allowing individuals to discover and engage with modest fashion content tailored to their preferences. As a result, the rise of modest fashion can be seen as a reflection of broader societal trends towards diversity, inclusivity, and self-expression within the fashion industry.

### **Islamic Art and Design Influence on Contemporary Fashion Design**

Islamic art and design have exerted a profound influence on contemporary fashion design, inspiring designers to reinterpret traditional motifs and techniques in innovative ways. The rich heritage of Islamic visual culture, characterized by intricate geometric patterns, ornate arabesques, and elegant calligraphy, serves as a rich source of inspiration for fashion designers seeking to infuse their creations with cultural resonance and aesthetic sophistication. Contemporary fashion collections often feature elements borrowed from Islamic art, such as geometric prints, intricate embroidery, and flowing silhouettes, creating garments that evoke a sense of timeless elegance and cultural authenticity. The modest fashion industry is extremely diverse, with its own designers' aesthetics that are connected to those of the nations it is addressing, which range from North Africa to Asia, including Europe and the United States. (Radwan, et al, 2019). Moreover, the global reach of Islamic art and design has led to increased cross-cultural exchange and collaboration within the fashion industry, with designers from diverse backgrounds drawing inspiration from Islamic aesthetics to create collections that celebrate cultural diversity and promote intercultural dialogue. By incorporating elements of Islamic art and design into contemporary fashion design, designers not only pay homage to a rich artistic heritage but also contribute to the ongoing evolution of fashion as a medium for cultural expression and creative innovation. As stated by Shirazi, F. (2024) Islam allows fashion, provided that certain restrictions are met. Fashion is a style, and as Muslim women, we can present an appearance that reflects our personality.

Designers and brands have been adept at reinterpreting traditional Islamic aesthetics, infusing them with a contemporary flair to create fashion that resonates with modern audiences. Drawing inspiration from the rich visual heritage of Islamic art and design, designers reimagine traditional motifs such as geometric patterns, arabesques, and calligraphy in innovative ways. These motifs often find expression in clothing through intricate embroidery, embellishments, or prints, adding depth and intricacy to garments. Moreover, designers experiment with traditional Islamic garment silhouettes, such as the abaya or the kaftan, incorporating modern cuts, fabrics, and details to create pieces that are both culturally rooted and fashion-forward. Additionally, brands may collaborate with artisans and craftsmen skilled in traditional techniques, infusing their creations with authenticity and craftsmanship. Through this process of reinterpretation, designers, and brands not only pay homage to Islamic heritage but also contribute to the global dialogue on cultural exchange and creativity in fashion.

### **Impact of Social and Cultural Factors on Modest Fashion Consumption**

The consumption of modest fashion is deeply influenced by a complex interplay of social and cultural factors that shape individual preferences and societal norms. According to Grotevant, H. D. (1987), the process of developing one's own identity is influenced by a variety of internal and external factors, the most common of which are family, peers, early childhood, work and school environments, and religion. Socially, the rise of modest fashion consumption can be attributed to a growing awareness of diverse cultural identities and a desire for inclusive representation within the fashion industry. Moreover, cultural factors, such as religious practices and traditions, play a significant role in driving the demand for modest fashion. In many cultures, modest dressing is associated with concepts of modesty, decency, and respect, making it a preferred choice for individuals who wish to adhere to cultural norms or religious mandates. This identity is fundamentally based on religious beliefs but it is necessary to develop boundaries that not only allow Muslim women to be on the cutting edge of fashion and show off their individual personalities (Ashraf, et al., 2023). Additionally, the influence of social media and digital platforms has democratized fashion, allowing modest fashion influencers and bloggers to showcase their style and reach a global audience. As a result, social and cultural factors intersect to create a vibrant and dynamic market for modest fashion, reflecting the diverse identities and preferences of consumers worldwide.

The perspectives on the consumption of modest fashion offer valuable insights into the intricate web of social, cultural, and economic factors that influence consumer behavior within Muslim-majority societies and among diverse global audiences. Every region of the Islamic world has its own culture and consumer behavior. As stated by Ashraf, et al., (2023) Muslim consumers of fashion particularly, the youth are primarily influenced by their religious identity and want to engage mainstream brands that understand how fashion products fit into their own identities. Clothing styles and types vary depending on the people, significant rituals and traditions, and governing regimes (Shuayto, N., 2010). Within Muslim-majority societies, the consumption of modest fashion is often deeply rooted in religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and societal norms that prioritize modesty and decency in attire. Studies highlight the role of Islam as a guiding force in shaping modest fashion preferences, with clothing choices reflecting religious values and interpretations of modesty. Additionally, the socioeconomic factors that impact modest fashion consumption, including income levels, education, and urbanization, influence access to and affordability of modest clothing options. According to State of the Global Islamic Economy (2017) Italy was the third most developed Islamic fashion economy among 73 selected countries the fifth largest clothing industry exporter in Muslim-majority countries. Moreover, within diverse global audiences, the consumption of modest fashion is driven by a desire for inclusivity, diversity, and self-expression.

### **Research Methodology**

Using a qualitative method, this paper delves into the creative processes behind incorporating Islamic motifs, textiles, and techniques into modern fashion designs through an in-depth analysis of primary sources, including fashion collections and social media observations. As stated by Tenny et al., (2017) one type of research is qualitative research, which looks deeper into real-world issues and provides solutions. By examining contemporary fashion collections, the study uncovers how designers integrate traditional Islamic aesthetics into their creations, highlighting the interplay between historical inspiration and modern innovation. Detailed analysis of runway shows and lookbooks provides insights into the creative decisions and artistic visions that drive the incorporation of geometric patterns, arabesques, and intricate embroidery into fashion pieces. Additionally, observation through social media platforms,

where designers and influencers showcase their work and engage with audiences, offers a dynamic perspective on the real-time evolution and reception of these designs. Social media also serves as a crucial tool for capturing the dialogue between creators and consumers, revealing how cultural heritage is celebrated and reinterpreted in contemporary fashion. Through this qualitative approach, the paper not only documents the aesthetic integration of Islamic art in a modern fashion but also explores the broader cultural and social implications of this creative fusion.

## Research & Analysis

### Fashion Designers Incorporating Islamic Motifs and Techniques

The creative process of incorporating Islamic motifs, textiles, and techniques into modern fashion designs involves a thoughtful exploration of cultural heritage, artistic expression, and contemporary aesthetics. Designers draw inspiration from the rich visual vocabulary of Islamic art, which includes geometric patterns, arabesques, calligraphy, and floral motifs, among others. These motifs are reinterpreted and reimaged in innovative ways, often through experimentation with scale, color, and texture, to create modern and culturally resonant designs. Geometric elements have been used in Islamic art since its inception to create distinctive geometric formations that serve as the Islamic design process's foundation (Dabbour, L. M., 2012). Discuss by ArchitectureCourses (n.d.) circles, squares, triangles, and stars are all common geometric shapes in Islamic art. Textiles play a crucial role in this process, with designers selecting fabrics that evoke the luxurious textures and intricate craftsmanship associated with traditional Islamic textiles. Techniques such as embroidery, appliqué, and weaving are employed to embellish garments with ornate detailing, adding depth and dimension to the designs. Moreover, the creative process involves a deep appreciation for the cultural significance of Islamic motifs and techniques, with designers seeking to honor and celebrate the heritage from which they draw inspiration. Through this creative dialogue between tradition and innovation, designers bring a contemporary interpretation to Islamic aesthetics, creating fashion that is both culturally rooted and globally relevant.



**Figure 1: Collection 2021 from Aminah Mohd Amir**

Source: Fashion Department UiTM Seri Iskandar Perak

Figure 1 shows the collection of designer Aminah Mohd Amir during her final year student. The collection was inspired by 'sejadah' which Muslims pray on a piece of fabric called a prayer rug or prayer mat, sometimes called a pile carpet. The prayer mat is usually made with a fine cotton cloth and the mat is outlined in fine embroidery (Morris, F., 1921). The selection of the 'sejadah' with the motive of arabesque blue and white. Arabesque designs hold a significant place in the realm of modest fashion, offering a visually captivating means to integrate cultural and artistic heritage into contemporary clothing. These intricate, interlaced patterns, characterized by flowing, rhythmic forms and infinite loops, are deeply rooted in Islamic art and architecture. In modest fashion, arabesques are utilized to embellish garments such as abayas, hijabs, and long dresses, adding a layer of sophistication and elegance while adhering to the principles of modesty. The use of arabesque motifs not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of these pieces but also conveys a sense of identity and cultural pride. By incorporating these traditional patterns, designers create garments that resonate with a sense of timeless beauty and spiritual significance, appealing to wearers who seek to express their faith and heritage through fashion. The intricate detailing of arabesque designs reflects the meticulous craftsmanship and artistic devotion that goes into modest fashion, celebrating the rich legacy of Islamic art while fostering innovation and creativity in modern clothing design.



**Figure 2: Collection 2021 from Nuri Maisarah Nelisa**

Source: Fashion Department UiTM Seri Iskandar Perak

Nowadays many designers of contemporary Islamic patterns use techniques that date back centuries which are based on sub-grids of polygons, sometimes referred to as "touch polygons". Additionally, themes were included in the Stars. As stated by Elkholy et al., (2021) making use of the star polygon that results from connecting every corner in every direction. Geometric elements are a cornerstone of Islamic art, profoundly influencing contemporary fashion by infusing garments with symmetry, precision, and intricate beauty. These elements, characterized by repetitive patterns of squares, triangles, hexagons, and other polygons, reflect the Islamic artistic tradition's emphasis on unity, order, and the infinite nature of creation.

The collection based on Figure 2 is inspired by ‘tikar mengkuang’ which uses Islamic art geometric motifs such as rosette and extended rosette. The chosen colors are based on black, white, and grey as her dominant color in this collection. Using the 3D printing technique to reach the surface as shown in Figure 2 to apply in cotton fabric. From an experimental approach, 3D printing technology has been widely employed in the fashion industry. However, these methods haven't been frequently seen on international fashion runways and aren't thought of as a trend. This integration not only enhances the visual appeal of the garments but also imbues them with a sense of spiritual and philosophical depth, as the patterns often symbolize the underlying unity and interconnectedness of all things.

### **Analysis of Runway Collections Featuring Islamic-Inspired Designs**

In-depth analysis of runway collections featuring Islamic-inspired designs, shedding light on the intricate ways in which contemporary designers draw from Islamic art and culture to create innovative fashion statements. By examining a range of high-profile fashion shows, the study identifies key motifs such as geometric patterns, arabesques, and calligraphy that are reinterpreted through modern silhouettes, fabrics, and embellishments. The analysis reveals how designers skilfully blend traditional Islamic aesthetics with contemporary fashion trends, creating collections that resonate both culturally and aesthetically. Detailed visual and thematic analysis of these runway presentations uncovers the creative processes and inspirations behind the collections, highlighting the designers' efforts to honor Islamic heritage while appealing to a global audience. Furthermore, the study explores how these Islamic-inspired designs are received by critics and consumers, noting the impact on fashion discourse and the growing appreciation for cultural diversity in the fashion industry. Through this exploration, the paper underscores the significance of runway collections as a platform for celebrating and innovating Islamic artistic traditions in the modern fashion landscape.



**Figure 3: Collection 2021 from Nur Amani Mohd Sa'don**

Source: Fashion Department UiTM Seri Iskandar Perak



From the Islamic perspective, tie-dye represents a harmonious blend of creativity and tradition, reflecting the faith's appreciation for artistry and the beauty of natural processes. Historically, the Islamic world has celebrated intricate textile arts, and tie-dye can be seen as an extension of this rich heritage. In Islamic cultures, the process of creating tie-dye patterns can be imbued with spiritual significance, as the meticulous folding, tying, and dyeing of fabric echo the values of patience, precision, and intentionality. Moreover, tie-dye in Islamic fashion often utilizes natural dyes and materials, aligning with the Islamic principles of stewardship of the Earth and the use of sustainable practices. Based on Figure 3 the design from Nur Amani was inspired by the nature of the forest and she implemented the technique of tie-dye as her surface. When incorporated into modest fashion, tie-dye can be used to create garments that are not only visually appealing but also respectful of Islamic dress codes, emphasizing loose-fitting and non-revealing silhouettes. This artistic technique allows for the expression of individuality and cultural identity within the boundaries of modesty, making tie-dye a meaningful and beautiful addition to Islamic fashion.



**Figure 4: Collection 2021 from Rifa Insyairah Riduan**

Source: Fashion Department UiTM Seri Iskandar Perak

Sustainable fashion, viewed through an Islamic perspective, aligns seamlessly with the faith's core principles of stewardship, moderation, and ethical conduct. Islam teaches the importance of caring for the Earth (khalifa) and avoiding wastefulness (israf), principles that resonate deeply with the tenets of sustainable fashion. This approach emphasizes the use of environmentally friendly materials, ethical labor practices, and the creation of durable, timeless pieces that reduce the need for frequent replacement. Figure 4 shows the collection of Rifa Insyairah using the excess fabric with floral prints. The technique that she uses is patchwork which involves stitching together various fabric pieces, often remnants or recycled materials, to create unique and visually dynamic garments. Patchwork fashion celebrates the idea of renewal and resourcefulness, turning what might otherwise be discarded into something beautiful and functional. The diverse textures, patterns, and colors inherent in patchwork

designs allow for a rich tapestry of expression, reflecting the individuality and creativity of both the designer and the wearer. Additionally, patchwork can be seen as a nod to traditional craft techniques from various cultures, honoring the history and skill of artisans who have long used this method to create functional art. In the context of contemporary fashion, patchwork not only aligns with sustainable practices by reducing textile waste but also offers a powerful statement on the beauty of diversity and the value of combining the old with the new. This approach ensures that each piece is one-of-a-kind, promoting a sense of personal connection and storytelling through fashion.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

Despite its growing popularity, the modest fashion movement still faces challenges within the fashion industry. Modest fashion designers often struggle to gain recognition and support from mainstream fashion institutions, which tend to prioritize more revealing and provocative styles. Additionally, there is a need for greater representation of diverse voices within the modest fashion movement. While it has made significant strides in recent years, there is still work to be done to ensure that modest fashion is inclusive and accessible to all individuals, regardless of their background or beliefs. As the modest fashion movement continues to gain momentum, it presents exciting opportunities for innovation and collaboration within the fashion industry. Designers, retailers, and consumers alike have the chance to shape the future of fashion by embracing modesty as a form of creativity and self-expression. By celebrating diversity, promoting inclusivity, and empowering individuals to make choices that align with their values, the modest fashion movement is redefining the fashion landscape and paving the way for a more inclusive and empowering industry.

### **Conclusion**

The exploration of Islamic art and design's influence on contemporary clothing trends carries significant implications for the future of the fashion industry. As designers increasingly draw inspiration from the intricate patterns, calligraphy, and rich textile traditions of Islamic art, the industry is likely to see a surge in culturally enriched and diverse fashion offerings. This trend not only promotes greater cultural awareness and appreciation but also encourages innovation in textile design and garment construction. The integration of Islamic aesthetics into modern fashion paves the way for more inclusive and representative collections that resonate with a global audience, catering to the growing demand for diversity in fashion. Additionally, this influence can lead to sustainable practices by reviving traditional techniques and craftsmanship, fostering a deeper connection to heritage and artisanal methods. The fashion industry, embracing these elements, stands to benefit from a broader market appeal and a strengthened commitment to cultural sensitivity and creativity. This shift not only enriches the fashion landscape but also positions the industry as a vital platform for cross-cultural dialogue and understanding, driving forward a future where fashion is a celebration of global heritage and artistic expression.

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