

“SHOP TILL YOU DROP OR STOP FOR FAITH”: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS ON FAST FASHION CONSUMPTION AMONG MUSLIM WOMEN IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *The rise of fast fashion has transformed global consumption patterns by offering affordable, trend-driven apparel with rapid turnover. While this model encourages frequent purchasing and wardrobe renewal, it poses critical ethical and sustainability challenges, particularly among consumer groups whose religious and cultural values emphasise modesty, restraint, and mindful consumption. Among Muslim women, especially in Malaysia, there exists a growing tension between the appeal of fast fashion and the Islamic principles that advocate against excess and materialism. Despite increasing awareness of overconsumption and its consequences, many Muslim women continue to engage in impulsive fashion purchasing, raising questions about the psychological mechanisms underlying this behaviour. This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of ten Muslim women to understand their fast fashion consumption patterns and the internal conflicts that emerge in this context. Guided by Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), the study uncovers four key themes: (1) Addiction to Shop, reflecting compulsive and emotion-driven purchasing; (2) Shopping Value, where price sensitivity and perceived bargains drive rationalised*

spending; (3) *Excusing Self*, showing how consumers justify excess through functional or social needs; and (4) *Self-Happiness*, revealing the emotional gratification and identity reinforcement tied to fashion consumption. The findings highlight how Muslim women reconcile their purchasing behaviour with religious and cultural values through various rationalisation strategies. This study contributes to the literature of consumer behaviour and Islamic ethics, and it offers practical insights for the Muslimah fashion industry to promote more sustainable, value-driven consumption aligned with faith-based principles.

Keywords: *Fast Fashion Consumption; Muslim Women; Modest and Mindful Consumption; Cognitive Dissonance*

Introduction

Fashion consumption among Muslim women in Malaysia is influenced by a dynamic intersection of religious values, cultural expectations, personal identity, and modern consumer trends. The rise of modest fashion that aligns with Islamic principles of decency while remaining fashionable, reflects a broader effort to integrate faith with contemporary style. As Malaysia proactively aim to be one of the market players of global halal and modest fashion industry (Malaysia Investment Development Authority, 2023), Muslim women are increasingly navigating the balance between religious devotion and the desire for self-expression through clothing. At the same time, Islamic teachings emphasize moderation (*wasatiyyah*), responsibility (*amanah*), and the avoidance of waste (*israf*), which are ideals that align closely with global discourses on sustainable and mindful consumption. This intersection of modesty, identity, and ethical consumption offers a compelling context to examine the tension between values and behaviours of fashion choices.

The fast fashion phenomenon, characterized by rapid production cycles, low-cost apparel and trend-driven consumption, has further complicated this landscape. Driven by the desire for affordable stylish clothing, consumers are increasingly drawn into patterns of impulsive buying and frequent wardrobe replacement, often at the expense of sustainability. Fashion goods have not only become functional items but also tools for expressing personality, social identity, and status—intensifying the demand for continuous style updates. While fast fashion meets these demands with mass production and cost efficiency, it also contributes significantly to environmental degradation. Prior research highlights that consumer demand, particularly for novelty and affordability, fuels this cycle of overproduction and overconsumption (Ramos et al., 2019), leading to unsustainable consumption practices. In Malaysia, textile waste has surged in recent years, with alarming quantities of fabric ending up in landfills, an issue exacerbated by a lack of awareness among consumers about the environmental impact of their consumption (Malay Mail, 2019). Against this backdrop, the fashion consumption behavior of Muslim women has attracted growing scholarly attention as a unique intersection between religiosity, cultural identity, modern consumerism, and sustainability challenges (Asmawi et al., 2024).

Despite growing attention on sustainable fashion consumption, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how religiosity, mindfulness, and impulse buying interact to shape fashion consumption among Muslim women, particularly in Malaysia (Syahrival et al., 2025). While government and non-government organisation initiatives have encouraged

practices like recycling and upcycling, their effectiveness remains limited without a fundamental shift in consumer attitudes. This is particularly concerning in the context of Muslim women's fashion consumption, where religious values theoretically align with sustainability principles, yet behavioural contradictions, such as impulse buying and emotional spending, persist. Moreover, existing studies on sustainable fashion consumption have largely neglected the religious-cultural dimensions unique to Muslim consumers. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how Muslim women in Malaysia rationalise, negotiate, and experience their fashion consumption decisions. Through a phenomenological approach, the study investigates how these women reconcile tensions between religious ideals, consumer desires, and the broader push for sustainable living which offer deeper insights into the emotional, ethical, and cultural complexities of fast fashion consumption in a Muslim-majority context.

Literature Review

Fast Fashion

The fast fashion business model offers low-cost premium fashion imitations with a limited shelf life. The sensation of urgency that comes with purchasing fast fashion is based on recurring consumption and impulse purchases. Apparently, rapid fashion consumption reinforces the consumer behavioural trend of purchasing more while using products less frequently, raising concerns about its social and environmental implications. Hence, fast fashion consumption has a negative impact on the environment, where the trash of obsolete or undesirable clothing amounts to around 17 million metric tons, according to Environmental Protection Agency estimates (Geyer & Law, 2017). As a result, fast fashion is one of the most polluting businesses, requiring a large number of raw materials, causing water pollution, and accounting for 10% of global CO₂ emissions through its "just-in-time" production strategy and supply chain (Brewer, 2019). According to prior studies, fast fashion products are hedonistic and might drive impulsive purchasing behaviour due to their high degree of symbolism (Gawior et al., 2022). Emotions produced by the act of shopping for fashion, emotional pleasure, development of positive mood states, and fashion participation are all internal variables involved in impulsive buying of fast fashion.

Fast fashion, which promotes impulsive purchase behaviour, has been designed to lure materialist consumers who are concerned with trends and styles, and this has enabled them to project their self-image and identity with minimal investment. Joy et al. (2012) discovered a concept of "Today's Treasures, Tomorrow's Trash" which denotes how fashion consumers easily replenish and discard their apparel without having financial risk and limitation. Furthermore, the concept of fast fashion itself emphasizes on limited and low durability, leading to the obsolescence which promotes the consumers to do massive purchase and discard their fashion items rapidly (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Consumers who are concerned with self-image and identity enjoy the quick pace of fast fashion which offers them self-gratification within their financial mean and low-cost investment. Conversely, slow fashion scholars argue that fashion consumers should seek satisfaction while using or wearing the fashion items instead of purchasing them; thus, it should be worn and valued longer (Magnuson et al., 2017).

Prior literature found that fashion consumers define sustainability and responsible consumption practice as only related to protecting and saving the environment which is not applicable to their fashion consumption practice (Joy et al., 2012; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). This explains the level of consumers awareness on sustainable consumption which is at the infancy stage. Thus, government and non-government organizations concerned with the SDG need to further explore the consequences of promoting fast fashion which can greatly motivate consumers towards unsustainability and irresponsible fashion consumption.

Fashion and Modest Consumption

The growth of modest fashion is largely influenced by the rising visibility of Islam in the west, attributed to the shifting of demographic, cultural values, technological and educational advancement that create a modern Muslim lifestyle which is manifested in Islamic clothing practices (Lewis, 2015; O'Connor, 2012; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). Prior studies have discovered that modest fashion consumption is multifaceted, influenced by identity, religiosity, social norms, and contemporary fashion trends (Wilson & Liu, 2019; Hassan & Rashid, 2021). The emergence of “Islamic cosmopolitanism” lifestyle allows Muslim women to express their individuality through various fashion and style while covering ‘awrah’ (Hassan & Harun, 2016; Hassim et al., 2017; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). As a result, Muslim women believe that fashion is a tool to portray themselves to the outside world and fashion enables them to express their self-identity (Wilson, 2016).

Apparently, fashion is characterised on attractiveness through self-appearance which is incongruent to the concept of modesty, and it is more than a dress code since it reflects an identity and spiritual expression of Muslim women. Modesty is the “coveted and sacred aspects of one’s personality and character”, which not only includes the clothes worn but also extends to all aspects of one’s life (Siraj, 2011). As the meaning of modest varies across culture, modest fashion basic principles include loose-fitting clothing that does not reveal a woman’s body. For Muslim women, modest fashion consumption transcends mere adherence to dress codes; it becomes a mode of expressing spirituality, empowerment, and modern femininity simultaneously. Prior literature found that religion has a considerable effect on consumer values, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles which include consumption and preferences of Muslim women towards fashion items (Nora & Minarti, 2016). Additionally, Muslim consumers are cultural driven with the concept and principles of “halal consumption” (Wilson & Liu, 2011) which influence their purchase decision making and consumption practice. In order to adhere with Islam guidelines and protect “awrah” (Hassim et al., 2015), fashion manufacturer sees the opportunity to introduce Muslimah fashion market which demands a trendy outfit aligned with urbanisation and modern society. In fact, modest fashion aligns with the Islamic values in covering aurat, humility and dignity as it emphasises on the minimalist practices. It has also been associated with personal values such as altruism and egoism which are found to significantly influence consumers’ attitudes and purchase intention (Juliana et al., 2024; Kamarulzaman et al., 2023).

Consequently, there is a rise of fashion-conscious among Muslim women who believe that fashion symbolises own meaning and delivers a value in reflecting social status, prestige, style and personality, while promoting materialism attitudes and behaviour (Almila, 2020; McNeill, 2018). Fashion has become an avenue to enhance one’s social and self-identity, and Muslim women are likely to be more attached to a product or brand that is linked to their identity

(Hassan & Harun, 2016; Ng, 2014). Moreover, pervasive influence of social media network, which significantly shapes how Muslim women engage with modest fashion, has caused the culture of overconsumption. Digital transformation has expanded access to modest fashion via online platforms and social media, allowing consumers to negotiate identity and modesty in more dynamic ways (Putri et al., 2023). Hence, the rise of modest fashion influencers also plays a role in shaping consumption patterns by blending faith, fashion, and lifestyle narratives that resonate with Muslim women, normalising impulsive purchase behaviours. As a result, Muslim women are motivated to practice conspicuous lifestyles instead of prioritising modesty in their clothing practices, which contradicts to the Islamic values of moderation and mindful consumption. Although the intention behind modest fashion aligns with religious ideals of dignity and self-restraint, the modes through which it is accessed and consumed today often foster unsustainable practices. This paradox highlights a critical area of tension where religious principles intersect with contemporary consumer culture, warranting deeper investigation into how these external influences shape the consumption patterns of modest fashion among Muslim women. Addressing this issue is vital to promoting more responsible consumption behaviours in alignment with both faith-based values and the global agenda for sustainable development.

In Malaysia, Muslim women make up an estimated 63.5% of the national population, or about 21.7 million individuals (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2024), representing a substantial consumer base for the modest fashion sector. In response to the growing demand within the Islamic market, modest fashion brands are actively introducing new designs and innovations which raise concerns on the commercialisation of the modest fashion that led to the potential of exploitation of Islamic values (Halim, 2018; Shriver, 2017; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). Similarly, the growth of fast fashion market encourages Malaysian consumers to spend excessively on unnecessary fashion items, resulting in wasteful spending that constitutes an unsustainable practice. In short, commercialization of modest fashion due to the impulse buying and emotional spending consumption is driven by hedonic and social factors. Prior literature has reckoned that slow fashion and sustainable lifestyles prevent consumers towards overconsumption (Magnuson et al., 2017) and materialism behaviour (Ahn & Lee, 2016). In a similar vein, studies by Hashim et al., (2023) revealed that modest fashion consumers actively seek brands and products that offer quality, ethical production, and styles that respect religious guidelines while appealing to aesthetic preferences. Such consumers are increasingly aware of sustainability issues, linking their modesty-driven purchases with responsible consumption ideals.

Mindful Consumption

Sustainable fashion consumption that promotes mindful consumption behaviour (Mohammad et al., 2020) requires the consumers to think on the “cause and effect” of their consumption practice as any purchase decision will give implication to the society, nature, and other living creatures. Hence, the concept of sustainable consumption encourages consumers to avoid wasteful and splurge consumption as well as impulse buying behaviour which leads to the over consumption practice (Brydges et al., 2021). The concept of mindful consumption, which encourages consumers to be wise and apply mindfulness in purchase decision making (Milne et al., 2020), prioritises on satisfaction of utilitarian needs instead of hedonic values (Razzaq et al., 2018). Hence, mindful consumption involves conscious decision-making that considers environmental, ethical, and personal wellbeing factors, which encourage consumers to practice

modest fashion and responsible consumption practice. Prior literature discovered that religiosity has significant influence with mindful consumption (Bahl et al., 2016), and it is related to sustainable consumption (Geiger et al., 2019; Minto et al., 2018). Islamic principles promote similar principles through moderation (wasatiyyah), avoiding extravagance (israf), and acting as stewards of the Earth (khalifah). These values encourage consumers to reflect on their needs versus wants, and to resist material excess.

Indeed, fashion consumers are always being “trapped” with material desires due to the emotion, social influences and hedonic values which drive consumers towards impulse purchase behaviour. Muslim consumers, particularly women, may experience internal conflict between nafs (desire) and taqwa (piety) when making purchasing decisions. As a result, consumers engage in various rationalisation strategy to “excuse” their excessive spending and overconsumption on fashion goods. According to the concept of mindfulness, consumers should have a sense of awareness towards marketing strategies deployed to influence consumer decision making, concerned on the consequences of their consumption and have the ability to control and refrain oneself from making unnecessary purchases (Gupta, 2019; Lim, 2017; Rosenberg, 2004; Sheth et al., 2011). In essence, mindfulness enhances consumers moral consciousness on excessive and waste consumption by disengaging them from impulse purchase behaviour, as they are more likely to be involved in sustainable fashion practices (Hasan & Harun, 2021). Hence, mindful consumption is also linked to reduced materialism and increased well-being, suggesting a deeper alignment with personal and spiritual values (Sthapit et al., 2023).

A growing body of research has found that religious mindfulness can act as a buffer against excessive consumption and impulsivity. Islamic ethics reinforce mindfulness in consumption through the concepts of niyyah (intention), barakah (divine blessing), and hisab (accountability in the afterlife). In the context of Muslim women, religiosity can manifest in preferences for modest apparel, avoidance of excessive spending, and a sense of moral accountability in purchasing decisions. However, the degree of religiosity varies, influencing how each individual negotiates the tension between spiritual obligations and modern consumer culture. Some may interpret modest fashion as a spiritual duty, while others may view it through a more flexible, fashion-forward lens. Prior study has found that religious faith, which is defined as “the belief in a higher power than provides meaning and purpose in life” (Edwards & Holden, 2007), creates more awareness about the self and others, which strongly influences self-control and a reduction of wants (Minton, 2018). This suggests religious faith, which is a part of parcel of religiosity, should be further explored to uncover how Muslim women rationalise their fashion consumption and manage their impulse purchase behaviour by incorporating the element of religiosity in guiding their everyday life. Hence, this study also delves into how mindful Muslim women are in their purchase decision making, particularly in fashion consumption and how consumers compensate their excessive spending and overconsumption.

Impulse Purchase and Hedonic Purchase

Impulse buying is often described as a spontaneous and emotionally driven behaviour, occurring without prior planning or rational deliberation (Rook, 1987). In the context of fashion, this behaviour is particularly prevalent, as clothing and accessories serve not only functional but also symbolic and expressive purposes. Fashion items are frequently purchased in response to a combination of internal emotional triggers and external marketing stimuli,

leading to quick, unplanned decisions. This form of consumption is inherently hedonistic—rooted in the pursuit of pleasure and emotional gratification (Park et al., 2012; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Research has shown that impulse purchases can momentarily relieve stress, evoke excitement, and create high-arousal feelings of joy (Atalay & Meloy, 2011; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). The rise of online shopping and “buy now, pay later” schemes have further fuelled this tendency, encouraging impulsive and, in some cases, compulsive consumption behaviour (Raj et al., 2023).

Fast fashion, in particular, has been identified as a key driver of impulsive buying due to its affordability, rapid trend cycles, and strong emotional appeal (Gawior et al., 2022). Consumers often associate fashion with identity construction and social positioning, leading them to repeatedly purchase items to curate a desired wardrobe or image (Cook & Yurchisin, 2017). Despite being aware of the short lifespan of fashion items, many consumers struggle to resist the temptation of low-priced, trend-driven goods. Impulse buying behaviour in this context is not only influenced by product attributes but also by individual psychological traits such as fashion consciousness and emotional reactivity (Wiranata & Hananto, 2020; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). Over time, this behaviour can escalate into compulsive purchasing, marked by repetitive, emotionally charged decisions that often result in regret, financial strain, and environmental harm (Kwak et al., 2006).

Many studies of consumer behaviour have provided support to the idea that making impulsive purchases can reduce the feelings of stress and other unfavourable emotions (Atalay & Meloy 2011), heighten the feelings of excitement and pleasure (Verplanken & Sato, 2011), and elicit hedonistic feelings of high-arousal pleasure (Ramanathan & Menon 2006). Consequently, the hedonic values enable the consumers to keep up with the newest fashion and trend, which contribute towards some detrimental effect on sustainability and harms the environment. Prior literature has investigated and identified that credit card usage, shopping for immediate satisfaction, and shopping for novelty have a significant impact on impulsive purchase (Secapramana et al., 2021). A study on sustainable fashion consumption overlooked on the religiosity and cultural dimensions, particularly among Muslim women on how they rationalise their overconsumption of fashion goods and deviate from the sustainability values. While Islam emphasizes moderation, responsibility, and environmental stewardship, these ideals are often in tension with the hedonistic impulses encouraged by fast fashion. The absence of culturally nuanced insights raises critical questions about how to foster responsible consumption within religious and culturally distinct communities. This raises critical questions on how to promote responsible consumption, and at the same time discouraging excessive spending on fashion goods in order to achieve sustainable development goals. Therefore, there is a need for in-depth understanding of how modesty and mindfulness are interpreted and practiced in daily consumption since sustainability efforts in fashion may fall short of engaging meaningfully with Muslim consumers. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how Muslim women in Malaysia experience, negotiate, and rationalize their fashion consumption choices, particularly when these behaviours appear to conflict with sustainability values. By focusing on dimensions such as modesty, mindfulness, and emotional satisfaction, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of sustainable consumption in faith-based consumer contexts.

Methodology

This phenomenology study strives to explore the insights of Muslim women fashion consumption from the lens of fashion goods consumers lived-experiences. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten informants to uncover their motivation to shop fashion goods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted for about 45 to 60 minutes.

A set of interview guide questions was used in this study as the research instrument. The set of questions was flexible to use and enabled the researcher to manage the semi-structured interview sessions effectively. The interview guide questions were developed from the literature review and underpinning theory; Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), which served as the basis for exploration in this present study. The question, which began with how the informants defined fast fashion goods, the underlying motivation for informants' continuous involvement in fast fashion consumption and how the informants justify and rationalise their involvement in fast fashion consumption as an acceptable practice. Prior to the interview, the interview guide questions were checked and approved by the Research Ethics Committees of the university.

The purposive and snowball sampling strategy was employed by including Malaysian Muslim women, aged 21- to 43-year-old. The target informant should have at least two years of experience in purchasing and consuming any fashion goods. To begin the process of selection, potential informants were identified from the researcher's list of friends, family members, and acquaintances who have been involved in the purchase and consumption of counterfeit fashion goods. Subsequently, the informants were identified via social media platforms and screened through a series of questions to identify those who match the requirements (inclusion criteria). Then, they were invited for a face-to-face or virtual interview.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were analysed into thematic analysis as it offers a way of recognising and tapping the underlying themes in a given dataset, flexible enough to be modified for the needs of many studies, besides providing rich and elaborate data (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). In an attempt to empower a holistic perspective, researcher triangulation was attended to validate the data analysis and findings. The interchange and discussion of interpretations helps the researchers to define and redefine the direction of analysis. The researchers examined data categorisation and comparisons between the informant's reports to identify the primary themes.

Findings and Discussion

Four subthemes emerged in relation to Muslim women fashion consumption with regard to consumers rationalisation on their impulse purchase behaviour. The four subthemes related to Muslim women fashion consumption are addicted to shop, shopping values, excusing self and self-happiness. The emerging themes are presented in Figure 1.

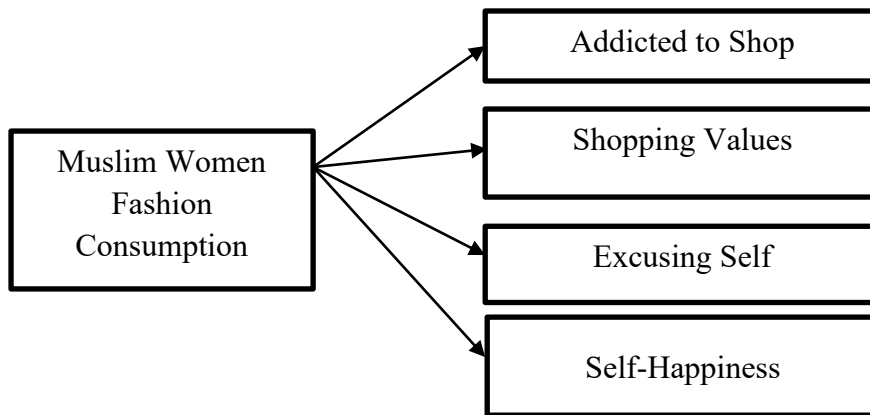


Figure 1: Emerging Subthemes of Muslim Women Fashion Consumption

Theme 1: Addicted to Shop

The subtheme of addicted to shop describes how informants experienced addiction towards shopping activity and internal struggle to combat their shopping habit. The existence of social media platform such as TikTok and Shopee acts as a stimulus, reinforcing a cycle of impulsive behaviour. The informants' excerpts articulated that consumers are losing a sense of control, and their purchase behaviour was irrational as they were aware the fashion items they bought were unnecessary.

"Sometimes it's just pure impulse buying. Clothes just sit in paper bags in my closet for five or six months... I keep wearing the same clothes and the same hijabs, like that. Sometimes I buy just because I feel like want to buy."

(Informant 1)

"Yeah, I'm impulsive... And then with Shein, it has everything... Then you feel like, 'If I buy over RM300, I get free shipping,' and that makes you feel like, 'Oh, there's no shipping cost.' The voucher makes you feel like, 'Hey, I got a free voucher already.' Actually, you only planned to use the voucher, but then you're like, 'Oh, this is nice, and that's nice too.'"

(Informant 5)

Theme 2: Shopping Values

The theme of shopping values describes how individual belief and values towards shopping activity are influenced by the value-for-money considerations instead of practicality and necessity. Hence, the informant found that the fashion goods deliver some of the perceived values such as price saving and exclusivity, which drive the informants towards purchase decision-making.

"The first thing they'll say is, 'It's on sale now!' And then I'll take a look. It's all very spontaneous. Usually at night, when I'm just lying down and scrolling... and then suddenly, 'Oh, this is nice, it's on live right now.' They say it's cheap. So, I take a look... and just like that, I get hooked."

(Informant 6)

“... since it was the end of the year, December, or actually November for Black Friday. Usually, designers will do sales promotion around November or December. That day, I went to the Rizman Ruzaini warehouse where their clothes are usually priced between RM469 to RM569, sometimes over RM700. I waited for about two hours or more to catch the ‘Happy Hour’ price.”

(Informant 1)

Theme 3: Excusing Self

The theme of excusing self illustrates how informants rationalise or justify their purchase behaviour to alleviate feelings of guilt or internal conflict. Even though the informants are aware of their excessive spending, they make excuses grounded in practicality and functional benefits of the product to legitimise their impulse purchase.

“I feel like it’s wasteful. I know that wastefulness is a sinful habit. I feel like I’m part of that too. I always think that way. But in my wardrobe, there are still clothes that haven’t even been taken out of the paper bags. It’s because I’m an impulsive buyer. That’s the problem.”

(Informant 1)

“I feel like... Sometimes I feel guilty, you know? I’ve started to realize that I don’t need to buy so much, but I still end up buying a few instant hijabs because sometimes I feel tired. Especially the ones that don’t require ironing...”

(Informant 5)

Theme 4: Self-Happiness

The theme of self-happiness describes how the informants pointed out that their involvement in fast fashion consumption is accompanied by a feeling of pleasure, excitement, enjoyment, fun, and happiness. The informants had no sense of guilt or regret during the shopping process. Although the informants realised that the fashion items are unnecessary and the sense of regret arises, still the overall positive emotional satisfaction from the shopping activity outweighs the regret.

“No regrets... during the buying process, while choosing, there wasn’t any particular feeling. No regret at all. It felt fun, like when I was browsing through stores like Sasuke or whatever. It was exciting to choose because things were cheap. But when I got home and looked at the clothes, I realized I didn’t even need to buy them. Then I felt regret. But it was just for a while. It was fun. Fun because of the price... the price was cheap. And then I saw the brand, it was branded goods.”

(Informant 3)

Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) explains the psychological discomfort that arises when an individual's behaviour conflicts with their beliefs, values, or attitudes. In the context of this subtheme, the participant demonstrates clear signs of inner conflict between their knowledge of overconsumption and their actual shopping behaviour. Additionally, shopping activity delivers a hedonic value which intensifies the dissonance when juxtaposed against possible personal or cultural expectations of modesty, self-restraint or financial prudence which has been emphasised in Muslim consumption values and norms. Fast fashion

consumption which offers low price and trendy collections encourage consumers towards excessive spending and misaligned with modest consumption which emphasises on rational purchase behaviour. The dissonance emerged when the consumers acknowledged the irrationality of their purchase behaviour but continued spending on their money.

The theme of addiction to shop reflects habitual shopping behaviours and the inability to control their spending pattern due to the psychological discomfort that arises which contradicts their beliefs, values or attitudes. Hence, consumers describe how the material objects trigger the feelings of scarcity and deprivation by illustrating they were trapped between the desire to keep up with the rapidly changing fashion trends and coping with their purchasing power. Nevertheless, the consumers in this study were aware that the satisfaction on purchasing fashion goods only lasts for a short-term, but they are still unable to control the inadequate feeling to own fashion goods due to the lifestyles and trend. These consumers described their intense emotional feeling towards material goods that led to repetitive purchasing episodes, so as to create their desired “wardrobe” with the latest design. Prior literature has discovered that self-expressiveness, status consumption and perceived quality are motivators for luxury fashion brand addiction while continuous update of fashion-led items, perceived value, and product assortments are motivators for fast-fashion brand addiction (Mrad et al., 2020) as fashion is a solution to consumers in keeping up with trend (Priporas et al., 2015). Consistent with the findings, prior study discovered that materialist consumers, particularly young and tech-savvy who are addicted to the Internet, are prone to engage on e-compulsive buying behaviour (Bhatia, 2019).

The subtheme of shopping value describes the worthiness of costs that the informants spend which drives the consumers towards impulse purchase behaviour. Society culture that values economical price holds the value of frugality, calculative and seeking bargain, which show that the consumers are acting in congruence with the society norms, thus resulting in consumers' sense of self-control behaviour. In fact, fast fashion manufacturers accommodate to the needs of these price-sensitive and “bargain seeker” consumers with short lifecycle of fashion goods, and this motivates Muslim women towards impulse purchase. Value consciousness has been identified as an influential factor that motivates consumers to purchase fashion goods and lure fashion consumers with price promotions, discounts and perceived deal value which are prevalent strategies towards excessive spending. Hence, price has a greater influence on consumer purchase (Batra, 2012; Cui & Liu, 2001) by describing consumers as very price-sensitive. The informants in this study expressed their satisfaction of the low price in which they paid for the fashion goods although they were aware the purchase action was unnecessary. As mentioned by prior study, value consciousness drives impulsive behaviour when consumers perceive a high-value opportunity they fear might be lost (Park et al., 2012). Apparently, value consciousness drives consumers towards excessive spending and overconsumption. However, consumers rationalise their impulsive purchase as a wise decision due to the thriftiness and cost saving. This finding illustrates how value consciousness, which has been defined as “a concern for the price paid relative to quality received” (Lichtenstein et al., 1990), enables the consumers to rationalise and justify their involvement in counterfeit branded fashion goods consumption as the best option to keep up with their desired brand.

The subtheme of self-excusing depicts how Muslim women mitigate the psychological discomfort associated with impulsive fashion consumption. While informants admitted their

excessive shopping behaviours, they often justify that their actions are driven by functional needs of the fashion items. These justifications serve as cognitive strategies to reduce dissonance between their behaviour and internal values, such as the desire for restraint or mindful consumption. Drawing from cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), these rationalizations can be understood as mechanisms through which individuals align their attitudes and post-purchase behaviours to preserve a coherent self-concept. In doing so, they reduce the feelings of guilt and maintain psychological comfort. In this study, Muslim women revealed that impulsiveness arises due to the feeling of not missing an opportunity to purchase the best deal of fashion goods instead of feeling regret on overspending. Such regret reflects action and inaction (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012), whereby consumers tend to regret the action of letting go the chance of “doing” the activity with others instead of “having” the material objects. Instead of worrying about purchasing unnecessary fashion goods and overspending, consumers found shopping is a coping mechanism to avoid boredom and gain positive emotional experiences (Sundstrom et al., 2019).

The subtheme of self-happiness reflects how Muslim women, particularly in fashion contexts, equate purchasing with self-enjoyment and happiness, especially when they are influenced by discounted item and brand prestige. Purchasing fashion goods becomes a mechanism for mood enhancement, where even momentary joy is enough to validate the behaviour, despite a lack of practical need. The findings illustrate how emotional value overrides functional value, leading to a repetitive episode of impulse purchase and post-purchase rationalisation. The consumers described the emotional pleasure experienced during the shopping process, especially when encountering discounted or branded items. By justifying the purchase through price and brand value, the participant reduces the internal conflict and restores emotional balance. Even though a brief moment of regret exists, it is quickly neutralized by the dominant emotional payoff which is self-happiness. Consumers sought life experiences in “doing” the activity and acquire life experiences offered through fashion consumption activity.

Exploring further on the Muslim women lived-experiences of fashion consumption, the findings revealed that consumers embrace self-indulgent cultural orientation (Hofstede, 2011), which revolves around leisure and pleasure maximisation via consumption activity. The consumers described the feeling of enjoyment, having fun and carefree money spending on new fashion collection– all those without an ounce of worry. Instead of thinking too much on the rationale of buying unwanted fashion item, consumers believe that in order to gain happiness, they should be free in enjoying the process of purchasing and consumption activities. The literature similarly depicts that young consumers, such as the Millennials, love to spend more quickly than the other generations, emphasise on work-life balance, spend more on experiences, and are concerned about the purchasing process as they seek pleasant shopping experiences (Moreno et al., 2017). Consumers can enjoy psychological benefits from their commitment to this consumption activity. In particular, shopping enjoyment and hedonistic experience contribute to consumers’ happiness (Jaunky et al., 2020) as experiential purchase reduces social comparison, unlike material possession (Gilovich et al., 2015; Gilovich & Kumar, 2015; Miller, 2015).

The finding provides a shred of evidence on how Muslim women fashion consumers are unaware on the consequences of their excessive and irrational spending pattern which contradicts with modest and mindfulness consumption as urged by Islam. The current study

depicted how Muslim women excuse their purchase behaviour through several rationalisation and coping strategies which deviate from the Islamic values. Although consumers are aware of their irrational current consumption practice, they prioritise more on the hedonic values they gain from shopping experiences. This indicates that the consumers are unable to control and refrain themselves, and they are far away from being mindfulness. As mentioned by literature, religious faith encourages mindful consumption (Gupta et al., 2023), indicating that Islam emphasises on modest spending and prevents oneself from waste consumption and inconspicuous lifestyles which is contrary to the current findings although the scope of the study is the Muslim women. Therefore, Muslimah fashion industry should emphasise on sustainability in order to promote modest and mindful consumption as ruled in Islam. Instead of urging consumers to be impulsive on the purchase of fashion goods, Muslimah fashion manufacturers should take responsibility by changing consumers attitudes and behaviour based on the ruling of Islamic principles and not merely using Islamic connotation as part of marketing strategies to stimulate the demand and sales.

Contribution of the Study

This study offers significant contributions to both academic scholarship and practical applications within the domains of consumer behaviour, fashion marketing, and Islamic consumption ethics. From a theoretical perspective, this research enriches the body of knowledge on cognitive dissonance theory by applying it within the context of fashion consumption among Muslim women, a relatively underexplored demographic. The study demonstrates how internal conflicts between religious values and impulsive consumption behaviour are rationalised through various psychological mechanisms such as justification, emotional compensation, and value-based rationalisation. These findings extend the application of dissonance theory beyond its conventional domains and provide a culturally nuanced lens through which post-purchase rationalisation and behavioural inconsistencies can be understood.

Additionally, the study provides meaningful insights for fashion marketers, sustainability advocates, and policymakers. For the Muslimah fashion industry, the findings underscore the need for ethically responsible marketing strategies that align with Islamic principles of modesty, sustainability, and mindful consumption. Muslimah fashion manufacturers should go beyond surface-level Islamic branding and genuinely incorporate values of restraint, moderation, and ethical production into their business models. Hence, positioning strategy should reinforce Islamic principles on modesty and the avoidance of waste through enhancement of spiritual value. Moreover, policymakers may consider leveraging religious and cultural narratives to shape consumption behaviour more effectively in order to discourage fashion waste and promote sustainable lifestyles. Integrating Islamic ethical guidelines into public sustainability messaging may resonate more deeply with the target audience in Muslim majority societies.

Further Research, Limitation of Study and Conclusion

In conclusion, this proposed study simply goes beyond investigating the issue of consumption of fast fashion consumption among Muslim women in Malaysia. The emergence of fast fashion sector encourages Malaysian consumers to spend excessively on unnecessary fashion items, resulting in wasteful spending that constitutes an unsustainable practice. In short, encouraging and promoting thoughtful, mindful and modest consumption among Muslim women in

Malaysia has become a challenge for a country to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, which include responsible production and consumption, due to the increasing consumers demand on fast fashion goods.

The study sheds light on how Muslim women, despite their awareness of religious prescriptions in promoting moderation and sustainability, struggle to reconcile these values with the allure of fast fashion and its embedded cultural narratives. This indicates a growing disconnection between Islamic consumption ethics and actual consumption practices, as they are influenced by modern lifestyles, technological access, and peer-driven consumer culture. As such, this research calls for greater ethical responsibility within the Muslimah fashion industry. Brands must move beyond superficial Islamic branding and instead embed sustainability, modesty, and mindfulness in their production, marketing, and communication strategies. Moreover, educational initiatives targeting consumers on the values of mindful consumption, aligned with Islamic principles, are essential to recalibrate the current narrative of fashion as a means of pleasure-seeking and identity formation.

While this study provides rich insights into the psychological and emotional complexities of fashion consumption among Muslim women, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the research is based on a qualitative design with a relatively small and purposively selected sample which limits the generalisability of the findings to the broader population. The subjective interpretations of the participants lived experiences, while valuable, may not reflect the full diversity of Muslim women's fashion consumption behaviours across different age groups, income levels, or cultural backgrounds. Future research that adopts a mixed-method approach, incorporates broader demographics, and explores digital and global contexts will help to build a more comprehensive and actionable body of knowledge in this important area.

In conclusion, the study offers nuanced insights into the emotional, psychological, and cultural dimensions of fashion consumption among Muslim women. It advocates for a shift towards value-driven, responsible consumption behaviours—not only as a religious obligation but as a pathway to personal coherence and long-term sustainability.

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