

“WORN, LOVED, LET GO”: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FASHION DISPOSAL AMONG MUSLIM WOMEN

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Abstract: *The rise of fast fashion has intensified impulsive purchasing and accelerated product turnover, leading to growing concerns over clothing disposal and environmental waste. Despite awareness of sustainability, many consumers continue to engage in rapid consumption and discard fashion items prematurely. Among Muslim women, these behaviours present a unique tension, as Islamic values emphasize moderation (wasatiyyah), responsibility (amanah), and avoidance of waste (israf). This study explores how young adult Muslim women negotiate this tension through their fashion disposal behaviour and how they reconcile the psychological dissonance arising from overconsumption. Guided by Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) and employing a phenomenological approach, in-depth interviews uncovered four emerging themes. The theme of sustaining value beyond possession demonstrated proactive, value-driven disposal through donation, resale, or gifting, viewing these acts as ethical extensions of utility. The theme of strategic minimizers displayed functional and delayed disposal patterns centred on practicality and item longevity. The theme of sunk cost rationalisation framed disposal as a structured cognitive process to justify wardrobe renewal and reduce guilt, while the theme of self-compensation exhibited emotionally avoidant disposal rooted in self-gratification and attachment. These findings reveal that fashion disposal among Muslim women is not merely functional but a morally and emotionally charged process influenced by internalized values and psychological coping mechanisms. While practices like donation reflect moral alignment, they may also perpetuate cycles of excessive consumption. This study advances understanding of faith-based sustainable fashion behaviours, emphasizing the need for culturally grounded interventions that address emotional, ethical, and cognitive dimensions of consumption and disposal.*

Keywords: *Sustainable Fashion Consumption; Muslim Women; Fashion Disposal Behaviour; Cognitive Dissonance; Islamic Consumption*

Introduction

Fashion engagement among Muslim women in Malaysia is shaped by a complex blend of religious values, cultural norms, individual expression, and contemporary consumer trends. The growing popularity of modest fashion—styles that adhere to Islamic standards of decency while remaining visually appealing—reflects an ongoing attempt to harmonise faith with modern aesthetics. As Malaysia positions itself as a competitive player in the global halal and modest fashion market (Malaysia Investment Development Authority, 2023), many Muslim women find themselves negotiating between spiritual adherence and the aspiration for fashionable self-representation. Within Islam, the principles of moderation (*wasatiyyah*), stewardship (*amanah*), and avoidance of extravagance (*israf*) resonate strongly with current global discussions on sustainability and conscious consumption. This intersection between modesty, identity, and ethical responsibility presents a meaningful context to examine how values translate or fail to translate into actual consumption and disposal practices.

The fast fashion industry, with its rapid turnover, low prices, and trend-oriented designs, has intensified these tensions. Consumers' growing appetite for inexpensive yet fashionable clothing has normalised impulsive purchases and quick wardrobe renewal, often undermining sustainability goals. In fact, clothing and apparel not merely serve as a necessity but as a form of self-expression and social identity, driving an endless pursuit of novelty. While fast fashion satisfies this craving through efficient mass production and affordability, it simultaneously accelerates environmental harm. Prior research indicates that the constant demand for affordability and variety sustains cycles of overproduction and overconsumption (Ramos et al., 2019), further exacerbating waste generation. The convenience and allure of fast fashion foster impulsive buying and constant wardrobe turnover, exacerbating environmental degradation and unsustainable consumption (Hassan & Ara, 2022). In Malaysia, textile waste has surged, with millions of tonnes of fabric ending up in landfills annually (Hayat et al., 2022).

While both government and civil society campaigns have promoted practices like clothing recycling, reuse, and upcycling in moving towards circular economy initiatives, these efforts often fall short without a deeper behavioural transformation among consumers. This challenge is particularly evident among Muslim women, whose faith-based values ostensibly encourage mindful and responsible consumption, yet whose buying habits sometimes reflect impulsivity, emotional gratification, and overindulgence. Furthermore, much of the existing studies on sustainable fashion neglects the religious and cultural underpinnings of Muslim consumer behaviour. Addressing this gap, the present study explores how Muslim women in Malaysia make sense of and rationalise their fashion consumption and disposal patterns. Using a phenomenological approach, it investigates how they navigate the moral and emotional conflicts between faith-inspired moderation and the lure of fast fashion. In doing so, the study provides nuanced insights into the ethical, psychological, and cultural dimensions of fast fashion consumption and disposal within a Muslim-majority society.

Literature Review

Fashion Consumption and Impulse Purchase

Muslim women believe that fashion serves not only as a means of fulfilling religious obligations but also as a platform for identity construction, social distinction, and self-confidence (Furehaug, 2024). Indeed, the growing commercialisation of fast fashion market thrives on producing low-cost, trend-inspired apparel with intentionally short life cycles, create a constant sense of urgency among consumers, encouraging repeated purchases and impulsive buying behaviour. The cycle of rapid consumption and limited product use reflects a growing concern over the social and environmental repercussions of fast fashion. The Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that approximately 17 million metric tons of discarded clothing and textile waste are produced annually (Geyer & Law, 2017). Consequently, fast fashion is now recognised as one of the most environmentally damaging industries, consuming vast natural resources, polluting water systems, and contributing around 10% of global carbon emissions through its “just-in-time” manufacturing and extensive supply chains (Brewer, 2019). Prior research indicates that fast fashion’s hedonistic and symbolic appeal can stimulate impulsive purchasing behaviour (Gawior et al., 2022). Emotional gratification, enjoyment derived from shopping, and positive mood formation are among the internal drivers that sustain this pattern of consumption.

Nevertheless, fast fashion remains a powerful catalyst for impulsive purchasing, fuelled by affordability, rapid trend turnover, and emotional excitement (Gawior et al., 2022). Consumers often equate fashion with identity construction and social positioning, which encourages repetitive purchases to sustain an idealised image (Cook & Yurchisin, 2017). Even when aware of the short lifespan of these products, many find it difficult to resist the lure of low prices and trend-driven styles. Impulse buying in fashion is not merely a reaction to product attributes but is influenced by psychological factors such as emotional reactivity and fashion consciousness (Wiranata & Hananto, 2020; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). Over time, this can escalate into compulsive purchasing behaviour, characterised by emotional highs, regret, and wastefulness, often resulting in financial strain and environmental degradation (Shin et al., 2025).

In Malaysia, Muslim women constitute approximately 63.5% of the total population, around 21.7 million people (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024), making this segment a major demographic in the modest fashion market. Responding to this demand, brands continue to introduce new collections and designs, but this commercial momentum raises ethical concerns over the commodification of Islamic values (Shriver, 2017; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). Similarly, the popularity of fast fashion has encouraged excessive and impulsive spending, leading to unsustainable consumption patterns and increased textile waste. This intersection of commercialisation, emotion-driven shopping, and hedonic motivation highlights how spiritual values are often overshadowed by consumer desires. Muslim women found the decision to discard fashion items is further complicated by religious and moral considerations as engagement in wastefulness through the purchase of unnecessary fashion items has been recognised as *israf* which is prohibited by Islam. Consequently, Muslim women rationalised the act such as clothing donation and giving away the unwanted fashion goods as part of responsible and sustainable consumption which align with the Islamic value such as stewardship and *sadaqah* (voluntary given), reflecting moral satisfaction and social contribution. The affordability and quick turnover of fast fashion items weaken purchase deliberation, leading to excessive accumulation and eventual disposal of garments that quickly lose their symbolic or aesthetic appeal (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013). Among Muslim women,

this cycle of impulsive buying and disposal often becomes entangled with moral rationalisation, where clothing donation is perceived as an act of *sadaqah*; a voluntary charity aligned with Islamic teachings on generosity and social welfare (Ali et al., 2023).

In response to the post-purchase fast fashion consumption, many studies explore on the motivation to purchase fast fashion goods and not much study focusing on the fashion disposal behaviour among Muslim women. Hence, many studies in fast fashion explored on the sustainable clothing practices examine the motivations from the dimensions of value orientations and environmental context; however minimal research has been conducted from the perspective of lived-experiences of the consumers, particularly Muslim women in the context of Islamic principles. While such acts of donation may temporarily relieve cognitive dissonance arising from overconsumption, the excessive spending or resource depletion (Bansode, P., & Goyal, P., 2024) not much being addressed. The act of giving away excess clothing may provide moral comfort and reinforce self-perception as a charitable individual, yet it paradoxically sustains the same unsustainable consumption cycle. This phenomenon echoes the concept of moral licensing, where consumers permit themselves indulgent behaviour after performing a morally positive act. In this context, *sadaqah* functions as a moral offset rather than a genuine corrective to overconsumption.

From the perspective of Islamic ethics, excessive consumption pattern deviates Islamic principles that emphasises on moderation (*wasatiyyah*) and warns against *israf* (wastefulness) and *tabdheer* (extravagant spending). In fact, sustainability in Islam, promote beyond charitable redistribution, requires mindful consumption, restraint, and responsible ownership that prevent unnecessary accumulation and reflect on human needs versus wants (Jamil & Khan, 2025). However, the degree of religiosity varies among individuals, influencing how Muslim women negotiate the balance between fashion consumption, spiritual obligations, and social expectations (Dehyadegari et al., 2025). Therefore, while clothing donation is commendable when motivated by compassion and utility, it should not become a recurring outlet for disposing of impulsively acquired garments. To align with the holistic principles of *maqasid al-shariah* (the objectives of Islamic law), fashion consumers must cultivate *tawazun* (balance) and *amanah* (stewardship) by reducing unnecessary purchases and prioritizing longer product use, repair, and conscious buying. By embracing these principles, Muslim fashion consumers can move beyond superficial charitable acts toward a holistic ethical consciousness that minimizes overconsumption and mitigates the waste generated by fast fashion.

Fashion Disposal and Sustainable Consumption

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 Muslim women lived-experience, negotiate, and rationalise 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.

In contrast, sustainable fashion consumption that promoting mindful consumption behaviour (Mohammad et al., 2021), consumers need 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 leading to the over consumption practice (Brydges et al., 2021; Ertekin & Atik, 2020). As sustainable consumption practice promoting modest consumption and encourage slow fashion consumption which has high longevity (Hassan et al., 2022), contradict to fast fashion that promoting irresponsible consumption. Prior study found that consumers that engage in sustainable fashion consumption incline to satisfying their utilitarian needs instead of hedonic values (Razzaq et al., 2018).

Prior literature discovered second-hand or pre-loved clothing market become one of the popular choices among youngster (Valaei et al., 2025), enable to reduce clothing underutilisation, which promote sustainable fashion consumption among the society. Although, second-hand item always being associated by ‘used’ and hygiene or contamination issue, a study found that consumers tend to fulfil their needs through the act of consuming together with people that usually they did not know before and trigger social innovation (Ritch et al., 2023). Prior studies found that among the factors that motivate fashion consumers to practice fashion renting is environment concerns (Westerberg, C., & Martinez, L. F., 2023), denotes that consumers are aware on their responsibilities towards the nature and environment.

In this regard, the present study seeks to explore the lived experiences of Muslim women in Malaysia concerning their fashion disposal behaviour. It aims to understand how these women interpret sustainability within their faith framework and how moral values, emotions, and social norms influence their choices in discarding, reusing, or donating garments. Existing studies have largely explored fast fashion consumption, impulse buying, and sustainability from environmental perspectives, overlooking the religious-cultural dimensions that shape consumer decision-making in Muslim-majority societies. While Islam promotes moderation (*wasatiyyah*), accountability (*amanah*), and the avoidance of waste (*israf*), these principles are often challenged by the emotional gratification and impulsivity associated with fast fashion purchasing. Moreover, acts such as clothing donation (*sadaqah*), though perceived as morally positive, may unintentionally normalize overconsumption and rapid disposal cycles rather than fostering genuine sustainability. While these consumers may be fully aware of the unsustainable nature of their impulse buying, they often develop self-justifications to reconcile their behaviours with their religious identity and social needs, temporarily alleviating guilt while continuing consumption practices that may not align with sustainability ideals

(Balasubramanian & Sheykhmaleki, 2024). Ultimately, integrating Islamic consumption ethics into sustainability discourses may provide a more holistic approach to addressing the global challenge of textile waste and fostering mindful consumption among Muslim consumers. This study addresses this critical gap by exploring how Muslim women rationalize and enact their disposal behaviour in light of their faith-based values, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of sustainable fashion practices within Islamic consumer contexts.

Methodology

This phenomenology study strives to explore the insights of Muslim women fashion disposal behaviour 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.

The purposive and snowball sampling strategy was employed by including Malaysian young adult Muslim women aged 20–43 years old with at least two years of experience in purchasing and consuming fashion goods and have experience in any one of the sustainable consumption activities such as donating their fashion goods, buying or selling pre-loved or second-hand fashion goods, renting or provide rental services of fashion goods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted for about 45 to 60 minutes. 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 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). The researchers recorded all interview sessions and wrote them to generate interpretations via a hermeneutic circle during the data collection process. The step intended to comprehend and interpret the phenomenon based on the consumers' shared knowledge and experience.

The essence was the final output derived from the interpretation of lived experience. Gist from descriptive stories reflects the experiences of the informants in a specific phenomenon that comprises of "what" they experienced and "how" they encountered it (Flood, 2010).

The researchers acquired the 'familiarity' with the object or subject while discussing the phenomenon to identify the essential meaning to obtain the essence. For instance, our experience in purchasing fast fashion goods allowed us to be familiar with the phenomenon of fast fashion consumption and disposal practice. It enabled us to discuss its fundamental meaning. Consumers' thoughts on the benefits gained, feelings, and the researchers captured emotions from their involvement in fashion consumption activity signified experiences in the consumption process. The researchers interpreted such experiences into stories and texts, which were then thoroughly examined to understand fashion consumptions and disposal meaning structure as part of the lifeworld that arrived at the essence. Hence, essential meaning may be concluded as something that we are familiar with, such as life practices, wherein this familiarity has to be expressed through living, action, stories, and reflection (Creswell, 2013). The researchers used the interpretive process, and this required shifting from one part of an

experience to the whole experience, as well as back and forth continuously to increase the depth of understanding the experience (Laverty, 2003).

The researchers extracted the ‘significant statement’ from the transcription, potentially relevant and essential to answering the research questions. Then, the researchers articulated meanings for each significant statement extracted, and this process included questioning the data patterns and assigning the coded information to the RQs (Creswell, 2013). Next, the researchers transformed the identified initial themes into concise phrases to capture the essential quality found in the text (Osborn & Smith, 2008). Then, the researchers looked for connections among the subthemes to cluster them in a more meaningful way. In this process, similar themes were cross-checked with each informant transcript to ensure that the emerging themes reflected the informant’s actual words and meaning. During this process, the researchers clustered or merged some subthemes into a master list of concepts derived from both data sets that reflected the recurring patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This regular pattern turned into the main themes that illustrated abstraction derived from the data, representing the general inductive approach.

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 disposal behaviour with regard to consumers rationalisation on their impulse purchase behaviour. The four subthemes related to Muslim women fashion disposal behaviour are sustaining value beyond, strategic minimisers, sunk cost rationalisation and self-compensation. The emerging themes are presented in Figure 1.

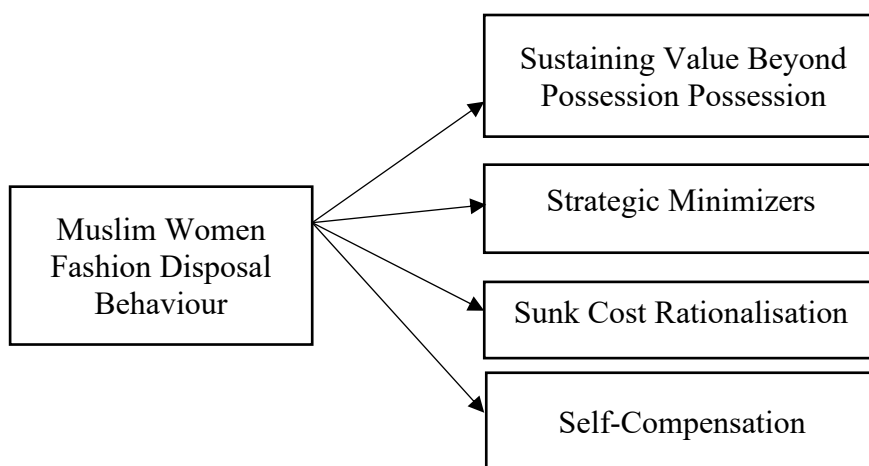


Figure 1: Emerging Themes of Muslim Women Fashion Disposal Behaviour

Theme 1: Sustaining Value Beyond Possession

The subtheme of sustaining value beyond possession describes how informants motivated by a sense of gratitude, social responsibility, and emotional meaning, they actively seek to extend the life of their fashion items through donation, resale, or gifting. These individuals perceive fashion as a resource that retains value beyond personal use and are deeply influenced by the

desire to share, give back, and contribute to others' lives. Their behaviour reflects a clear alignment with sustainability values and often incorporates spiritual or moral rationales for their practices.

"With the orphanage here, there are indeed programs and such. Sometimes, when I visit, I see them wearing the clothes we gave. At that moment, I really feel happy because I know they truly appreciate what they're wearing. So, after that, I no longer had doubts like— 'Did they really keep the clothes? Did they sell them?' Even if they sold the clothes and used the money for their benefit—like to buy groceries or something for daily use—it's fine, as long as the clothes bring some kind of good to them. I felt happy because I was able to help them. It's not like they often get new items, right? So, when they do receive new clothes, and I see them wearing them, at least they're useful to them. It's a joy to see them wearing them, looking adorable, beautiful, that kind of thing." (Informant 5)

"So far, not yet for handbags. Handbag-wise, there hasn't been any top-up like that. Previously, I used to buy, then buy again. And I have one Michael Kors and one Coach that I gave to my sister... not asking her to pay... two Long Charms... But she had to have them. Like young people, just starting work, so they enjoy new things. Something like that... not just giving the bag away because we love the bag too. Otherwise, we just keep it. But when you keep it, it doesn't really do anything, right? It's a pity for the bag just to sit there." (Informant 2)

Theme 2: Strategic Minimizers

The theme of strategic minimisers describes how informants maximize utility through shared or prolonged use. Muslim women who adopt a strategic and pragmatic approach to fashion usage, maximize the utility of their wardrobes by sharing items, rotating usage among family members, or selectively reusing older pieces. Their awareness of item longevity influences both purchase and disposal behaviours, although unused fashion items are still common. They display a moderate consumption pattern and are often attuned to the functional value of clothing, with limited impulse behaviour. The informant shows a clear awareness of different clothing roles; distinguishing between work and casual wear, however, disagree with the need for an excessive wardrobe. The mindset of "not needing a huge collection" and reusing outfits indicates a low-consumption orientation, with a strong sense of practicality and self-confidence. Instead of purchasing new items to avoid repetition, the speaker relies on creativity and styling strategies, like mixing and matching or changing a scarf, to refresh her outfits. This approach reflects a cognitive strategy to extend the lifespan of clothing while still maintaining variety in appearance.

"Yes, I do have work clothes—like, okay this one's specifically for work—and others that are more casual, like for staying at home. But I'm not the type who has a huge collection just for work clothes. I don't think like, 'Oh, I already wore this last week, I can't wear it again.' That kind of thought doesn't cross my mind. Besides, I think if we know how to mix and match, it's totally fine to wear the same clothes again—maybe just change the scarf or something. The idea is just not to make it look exactly the same. . And I don't really mind what others wear either. Like, I don't keep track of what others wore last week, so I don't feel the pressure that others are watching what I wear either." (Informant 10)

Theme 3: Sunk Cost Rationalisation

The theme of sunk cost rationalisation illustrates the informants guided by cognitive justifications, such as lifecycle completion or the need for wardrobe renewal. This group views decluttering not just as a response to physical clutter, but as a psychological process that allows them to resolve consumption-related tension and rationalize new purchases. They are influenced by sunk cost rationalization, often using prior investment to justify further acquisition or replacement. Informants are aware of their unused fashion item; struggles with the idea of parting with a fashion item simply because it had monetary value and emotional investment. This creates cognitive dissonance, a psychological discomfort arising from the inconsistency between the desire to declutter or give away an item and the feeling of losing value.

"... if I've looked at it many times... I feel it's a waste; I've already spent the money; I can't just give it to someone... But then I think, it's fine... I'll just let it go. I won't keep looking at it for too long. Oh, this was my outfit before—I'm happy, I'm happy, I'm really very happy. At least I feel like someone else is wearing it. I don't feel any sense of loss... I've already given it to them, and I don't feel that attachment anymore..." (Informant 6)

Theme 4: Self Compensation

The theme of self-compensation illustrates fashion as a mechanism for emotional regulation or situational validation. Their purchasing and usage patterns are driven by internal motivations such as stress relief, reward, or the desire to meet social or event-based expectations. Consumption is often impulsive and context-dependent, with items frequently purchased for specific occasions and later underused or forgotten. Disposal tends to be postponed, with accumulation resulting from emotional inertia rather than utility-based decision-making. 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.

"It's (a) fun (experience). I have a lot of new clothes. Thrift shop experiences are different (because) their prices are way cheaper, yet we get clothes that sometimes look expensive, like when we go to H&M or Uniqlo, (their goods are) quite pricey. Brands Outlet is a bit cheaper, but still costly. At thrift shops, sometimes, you can get even better stuff for much less. So, you end up buying a lot. That's how I get a lot of OOTD (Outfit of the Day) clothes." (Informant 8)

Exploring further on consumers lived-experiences of fashion consumption, the findings present a Muslim women fashion usage and disposal behaviours, revealing the complex interplay between emotional, cognitive, and ethical considerations in their engagement with fashion. Drawing on phenomenological insights, the emerging themes captures four distinct consumer orientations, each reflecting different strategies for negotiating internal conflicts and aligning behaviour with personal values, lifestyle needs, and social expectations.

The theme of sustaining value beyond exhibits proactive and value-laden disposal behaviours, often donating, reselling, or gifting clothing with the intention of extending its utility and social value. Their actions are driven by a strong moral and emotional imperative, and they experience minimal cognitive dissonance, as disposal is framed as an ethical contribution to others. mitigate dissonance by aligning their fashion practices with personal and social values. They derive emotional satisfaction and moral reassurance from practices such as donating or gifting

used clothing. By perceiving fashion as a resource with extended utility, they reconcile any dissonance arising from prior consumption by ensuring their items continue to serve a purpose. This group displays high value congruence, where their behaviour—extending product life through meaningful disposal, is consistent with their beliefs about sustainability and social responsibility. Their emotional attachment to fashion items does not lead to hoarding but motivates purposeful redistribution, thereby transforming potential consumption guilt into positive emotional outcomes.

Meanwhile, the theme of strategic minimizers, demonstrate delayed and functional disposal patterns. They emphasize practicality and long-term use, often repurposing or sharing garments within the household. Consumers shared disposal occurs only when an item loses its functional value, thus maintaining low emotional strain and cognitive tension. Consumers aware on the item longevity, which influence both purchase and disposal behaviours, although unused fashion items are still common. They display a moderate consumption pattern and are often attuned to the functional value of clothing, with limited impulse behaviour.

The theme of sunk cost rationalisation engages in disposal as a structured and cognitively driven activity. Their decisions are often justified by perceived lifecycle completion, wardrobe renewal, or spatial necessity. This group uses rationalization strategies to resolve dissonance and legitimize both disposal and future purchases. Consumers actively engage in cognitive restructuring to manage post-purchase dissonance and view decluttering as both a physical and psychological process that allows them to create space—literally and mentally—for new acquisitions. Often, they justify fashion disposal with structured narratives such as item lifecycle completion or the need for wardrobe renewal. These consumers are likely to experience moderate dissonance, especially when faced with accumulation or impulsive purchases. However, they resolve this tension through rational justifications (e.g., “I’ve used it enough,” “It’s outdated now”) that reframe the act of disposal as necessary and reasonable, thus legitimizing subsequent purchases. This reflects a classic dissonance reduction strategy where past investment and future utility are weighed to maintain psychological balance.

The theme of self compensation display emotionally avoidant and postponed disposal behaviour. Their fashion consumption is typically driven by internal needs such as stress relief, social image, or mood regulation, and disposal is often delayed due to lingering emotional attachments or indecisiveness. These consumers frequently experience post-purchase dissonance and attempt to reduce it through emotional rationalization, which may result in clothing accumulation and underutilization. Collectively, these disposal patterns illustrate how fashion-related decisions are not purely functional but are closely intertwined with the ways young adults manage internal conflicts, emotional needs, and identity construction.

Indeed, exploring further on these disposal patterns is essential for promoting sustainable fashion behaviours and developing tailored interventions that align with the psychological and behavioural tendencies of different consumer groups. Consumers reveal the highest levels of post-purchase dissonance, particularly when their behaviour (e.g., impulse buying) conflicts with longer-term values such as financial prudence or sustainable living. Fashion for consumers serves as an emotional outlet—used to manage stress, reward oneself, or prepare for specific social events. However, underutilization of items and delayed disposal often trigger internal conflict. To reduce dissonance, they may engage in emotional rationalisation, such as justifying the purchase as a deserved treat or downplaying its long-term utility. This rationalisation tends

to be short-lived, and accumulated items often symbolize unresolved tension, leading to future regret or inertia in wardrobe management.

The emerging themes illustrates that fashion consumption among young adults is not only shaped by aesthetic or functional needs but is deeply embedded in cognitive-emotional processes. Each consumer type demonstrates a distinct way of interpreting, justifying, and navigating their fashion choices in relation to their internal beliefs, external pressures, and personal aspirations. Cognitive Dissonance Theory provides critical insight into why consumption behaviours may persist even when individuals are aware of their inconsistencies. Understanding how young adults cope with this dissonance through ethical action, pragmatism, structured rationalization, or emotional compensation able to inform strategies for promoting more conscious and sustainable fashion behaviours. The accumulation of underutilised fashion goods amplifies the dissonance, particularly when consumers know their overconsumption's impracticality and ethical conflict. Muslim women in this study are aware that their engagement in *israf* leads to the *tabdhir*, against Islamic principles and values, and to some extent, these consumers worry about the consequences they need to bear in *akhirat* (afterlife). The finding elucidated that Muslim women reframe their excessive spending on fashion goods as beneficial to others, thereby mitigating feelings of guilt and wastefulness. Although consumers worry about the punishment at *akhirat* (afterlife) for unused fashion items, consumers justify their action of *sadaqah* (charity, donation) of the unwanted fashion goods as a kind action and good deeds which will earn Allah S.W.T.'s pleasure and blessings, temporarily restores a sense of moral balance, and reduces cognitive dissonance. Through this act, consumers attempt to re-align their *israf* and *tabdhir* practice with their internalised values of social responsibility and *sadaqah* (charity). The cycle of inadequate feeling, overconsumption (*israf* and *tabdhir*), and resolving guilt through donation reflects an ongoing internal negotiation where consumers struggle to harmonise their lifestyle with spiritual beliefs, religious values, and ethics. Islamic principles emphasise the mindset of sufficiency and contentment, and consumers who are constantly experiencing material abundance, however, misaligned with the principle of *qana'ah*, are more susceptible to impulse consumption (Saleh et al., 2023; Purnama, 2021).

This study contributes to the theoretical stance by comprehending how consumers justified their involvement in counterfeit consumption and the significance of this consumption activity to their daily lives from the lens of CDT (Festinger, 1957). The findings contribute to the understanding of consumers' cognitive process by providing empirical evidence of the distinct meanings underlying irresponsible and excessive fashion consumption, thus enriching the emerging sustainable fashion literature. The findings of this study reveal that young adult consumers engage in fashion disposal practices that are deeply influenced by their internal values, emotional motivations, and cognitive justifications. Collectively, these disposal patterns illustrate how fashion-related decisions are not purely functional but are closely intertwined with the ways young adults manage internal conflicts, emotional needs, and identity construction. Understanding these patterns is essential for promoting sustainable fashion behaviours and developing tailored interventions that align with the psychological and behavioural tendencies of different consumer groups.

Contribution of the Study and Conclusion

This study offers significant contributions to both academic scholarship and practical applications within the domains of consumer behaviour, fashion marketing, and Islamic consumption ethics. This study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of fashion disposal

behaviours among Muslim women by situating it within the Islamic ethical framework, emphasizing principles such as *wasatiyyah* (moderation), *amanah* (stewardship), and *israf* (avoidance of waste). While previous studies have explored fast fashion and impulsive consumption primarily through psychological or environmental lenses, this research introduces a faith-based perspective that highlights how spiritual values influence, justify, or conflict with consumer disposal decisions.

Moreover, focusing on Muslim women in Malaysia, the study provides a contextually grounded understanding of how religious identity, modesty ideals, and social expectations interact with modern consumption pressures and sustainability challenges. Muslim women disposal practices are shaped not only by functional needs but also by emotional attachments, ethical considerations, and cognitive dissonance management. The findings revealing a distinct pattern of fashion disposal behaviour, thus, contributes to a deeper understanding of post-consumption behaviour and emphasizes the importance of addressing psychological and emotional dimensions in promoting sustainable fashion practices.

Additionally, the study provides meaningful insights for fashion marketers, sustainability advocates, and policymakers on the cultural and ethical dimensions that underpin disposal practices in Muslim societies. For the Muslimah fashion industry, the findings underscore the need for ethically responsible marketing strategies that align with Islamic principles in designing effective awareness campaigns and 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.

While this study provides rich insights into the psychological and emotional complexities of fashion disposal behaviour 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 disposal behaviour 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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