

Colonial Legacies and Gender Representation on Social Media's Muslim Fashion Brands in Indonesia

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Abstract: Despite the positive impacts, there are challenges in how Muslim fashion is digitally represented, particularly in how social media can unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or uphold Western beauty standards shaped by colonial legacies. Therefore, critical engagement is essential to ensure a more inclusive and unbiased portrayal. This study examines postcolonial and gender representations in Indonesian Muslim fashion brands on social media using a qualitative content analysis approach. The study analyses four Instagram accounts using an interpretive framework: @vanillahijab, @winonamodest, @hijabalila, and @nusseyba.id. By integrating postcolonial and gender theories, this research critically explores the influence of colonial discourse on *hijab* brands in the digital space. The findings reveal that these brands' social media platforms serve as a space for cultural reclamation, challenge traditional gender roles, and offer more diverse representations of Muslim women. However, many still reflect colonial narratives, particularly in promoting Westernized beauty ideals such as fair (white/light) skin, a thin, and a tall figure. Regarding gender representation, the content predominantly depicts women as professionals actively engaged in the workforce. These highlight the need for a more conscious and inclusive approach in digital Muslim fashion branding, encouraging brands to actively challenge colonial beauty norms and promote diverse representations that resonate with Indonesia's rich cultural and ethnic identities.

Keywords: gender; Muslim fashion; postcolonial;
representation; social media

Abstrak: Meskipun memiliki dampak positif, representasi fesyen Muslim di dunia digital menghadapi tantangan, terutama dalam bagaimana media sosial secara tidak sengaja dapat memperkuat stereotip atau mempertahankan standar kecantikan versi Barat yang dibentuk dan terbentuk oleh warisan kolonial. Oleh karena itu, keterlibatan kritis sangat diperlukan untuk memastikan representasi yang lebih inklusif dan tidak bias. Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi pascakolonial dan gender dalam merek fesyen Muslim di Indonesia melalui media sosial dengan pendekatan analisis konten kualitatif. Dengan menggunakan kerangka interpretatif, penelitian ini menganalisis empat akun Instagram: @vanillahijab, @winonamodest, @hijabalila, dan @nusseyba.id. Melalui integrasi teori pascakolonial dan gender, penelitian ini secara kritis mengeksplorasi pengaruh

wacana kolonial terhadap merek *hijab* di ranah digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa media sosial dari merek-merek fesyen Muslim ini berfungsi sebagai ruang untuk mereklamasi budaya, menantang peran gender tradisional, dan menawarkan representasi yang lebih beragam tentang perempuan Muslim. Namun, banyak kontennya yang masih mencerminkan narasi kolonial, terutama dalam mempromosikan standar kecantikan yang terbaratkan, seperti kulit cerah (putih/terang), tubuh yang langsing, dan postur tinggi. Dalam konteks representasi gender, sebagian besar konten menggambarkan perempuan sebagai profesional yang aktif terlibat dalam dunia kerja. Temuan ini menekankan perlunya pendekatan yang lebih sadar dan inklusif dalam branding fesyen Muslim digital, mendorong merek-merek untuk secara aktif menantang norma kecantikan kolonial dan mempromosikan representasi yang lebih beragam yang mencerminkan kekayaan identitas budaya dan etnis Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: gender; fesyen Muslim; pasca kolonial; representasi; media sosial

A. Introduction

Since the emergence of social media, fashion has received much attention. It was marked by the emergence of the Outfit of the Day (OOTD) trend in 2013, which has become increasingly popular over the last two years. OOTD is identical to the photo of the dress style worn that day.¹ This trend involves individuals displaying and documenting their everyday outfits to share on social media platforms. One example is the fashion trend for cake, mamba, and earth girls on TikTok in 2022.² The concept of the OOTD trend on social media is used as a forum for self-presentation for the younger generation. Fashion contains values that are to be promoted and communicated to other people.³

Muslim fashion has also been strengthened significantly with the marked increase in the industry in this field. The State Global Islamic Economy reports that global Muslim fashion consumption currently reaches USD 270 billion,

¹ Vina Agustin and Gilang Gusti Aji, "The Strategy of Self-Presentation Fashion Influencer on Social Media Instagram," *The Commmercium* 6, no. 2 (2023): 74–86, <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/Commmercium/article/view/51041>.

² Nabila Mecadinisa, "Arti Istilah Viral Cewek Kue, Cewek Mamba, dan Cewek Bumi, yang Heboh di TikTok," *fimela.com*, June 23, 2022, <https://www.fimela.com/fashion/read/4993337/arti-istilah-viral-cewek-kue-cewek-mamba-dan-cewek-bumi-yang-heboh-di-tiktok>.

³ Kerina Jefani, "Tren OOTD di Sosial Media: Representasi Gaya Hidup Konsumtif Generasi Muda," *Genta Andalas*, June 29, 2022, <https://www.gentaandalas.com/tren-ootd-di-sosial-media-representasi-gaya-hidup-konsumtif-generasi-muda/>.

which is predicted to continue to increase at a growth rate of 5% so that in 2023 it will reach USD 361 billion. Meanwhile, Muslim fashion consumption in Indonesia is at USD 20 billion with a growth rate of 18.2% annually. Indonesia is third after the United Arab Emirates and Türkiye in the Modest Fashion Ranking Indicator.⁴ With these facts and data, the fashion industry in Indonesia, including Muslim fashion, has become discussed in society.

The increasing Muslim fashion trend has been responded to well by entrepreneurs by creating brands with an Islamic identity. One of the popular ones is brands related to the *hijab*, an identity attached to Islam as a teaching and doctrine believed by most of its adherent women. The brand becomes an important intangible asset for the company, a unique tool for building long-term relationships with consumers, and protecting their rights.⁵ Currently, almost all of the brands created are marketed and advertised via social media, one of which is Instagram. Instagram focuses on visuals by showing photos of products accompanied by stories and other images.⁶ They use Instagram for brand awareness and brand management purposes.⁷

Hijab companies display product visualizations on Instagram according to their target market and the style they want. Moreover, the *hijab* has experienced many more varied shifts to address emerging trends.⁸ Of course, this is a response to the development of information technology, especially social media, which has changed the paradigm of global communication and opened up new spaces for conveying cultural, religious, and identity messages.

⁴ Rafiuddin Shikoh, *The State Global Islamic Economy Reports: Unlocking Opportunity* (Dubai: DinarStandard, 2022), 23.

⁵ Afizan Amer et al., "Brand Preferences in Muslimah Fashion Industries: An Insight of Framework Development and Research Implications," *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* 7, no. 1 (2019): 209–14, <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.7125>.

⁶ Maria Hellberg, "Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A Study on Consumer Engagement." [Master Thesis] (Hanken School of Economics, 2015), 2 <https://helda.helsinki.fi/items/3fa2042a-aed4-410d-a6d3-7421670927a4/full>.

⁷ Christos Anagnostopoulos et al., "Branding in Pictures: Using Instagram as a Brand Management Tool in Professional Team Sport Organisations," *European Sport Management Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (2018): 413–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2017.1410202>.

⁸ Agung Adi, I Made Sudarsana, and Irawinne Rizky Wahyu Kusuma, "Varian Identitas Hindu di Indonesia: Antara Multikulturalisme dan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional IAHN-TP Palangka Raya*, 2021, 32–42, <https://prosiding.iahntp.ac.id/index.php/seminar-nasional/article/view/75>.

Likewise, with the influence of colonial discourses⁹ and gender. As a colonized country, discourse and knowledge in Indonesia were heavily influenced by colonialism, including the appearance and branding of the *hijab*. As an image of women, gender discourse cannot be separated from the formation of content and branding.

In this regard, postcolonial, gender representation, and religion in *hijab* brand content on social media will be the subject of research attention. The *hijab*, apart from being a religious symbol, is also an integral part of Muslim women's identity. Through social media, *hijab* brands have become the main agents in shaping identity narratives. Postcolonialism refers to the dynamics of relations between former colonies and colonial states, and their impact on cultural identity. In this era of globalization, social media has become a complex symbolic battleground, where *hijab* brands are actively involved in designing narratives about Muslim women's identity. In addition to the postcolonial aspect, gender studies play a crucial role in the representation of the *hijab* on social media. How *hijab* brands visualize women's roles, economic power, and social responsibility globally is part of a complex discourse.

Many studies have explained postcolonial and gender representation in the media. In this case, several issues presented in the media are very much influenced by colonialism, such as research conducted by Sekayi on the influence of European beauty perspectives on black students,¹⁰ Wulan on the myth of white skin in cosmetic advertising in Indonesia,¹¹ and Das about gender representation influenced by colonialism in India.¹² Likewise in terms of gender, Astuti concluded from his research that women in the media

⁹ Katrin Bandel, *Kajian Gender dalam Konteks Pascakolonial* (Yogyakarta: Sanata Dharma University Press, 2016), 2.

¹⁰ Dia Sekayi, "Aesthetic Resistance to Commercial Influences: The Impact of the Eurocentric Beauty Standard on Black College Women," *The Journal of Negro Education* 72, no. 4 (2003): 467, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3211197>.

¹¹ Roro Retno Wulan, "The Myth of White Skin: A Postcolonial Review of Cosmetics Ads in Indonesia," ed. B. Mohamad and H. Abu Bakar, *SHS Web of Conferences* 33 (2017): 00048, <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20173300048>.

¹² Purba Das, "Gendered Representation in Postcolonial India," in *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2020), 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119429128.iegmc205>.

(television) were objectified through advertising broadcasts,¹³ then Delilah photographed the representation of patriarchal ideology through images in the media,¹⁴ or research conducted by Sumardiono which explains how the media frames femininity and masculinity for men and women,¹⁵ and Mukti examines that the representation of content on social media, especially TikTok, is gender biased.¹⁶

The above-mentioned studies address various issues related to postcolonialism and gender representation in the media. These existing works mostly focus on gender studies, postcolonial studies, or a combination of both. However, in this study, the author aims to take a more comprehensive approach by linking postcolonialism, gender, and religion in the analysis of *hijab* fashion brands on social media. The main research question is: How are Muslim fashion brands' social media accounts represented through postcolonial and gender perspectives?

The *hijab*, as a symbol of religious identity, has evolved into a commercialized product in Indonesia's growing modest fashion industry. Social media platforms serve as a primary space for *hijab* fashion branding and marketing, influencing perceptions of Muslim women's fashion and identity. In Indonesia, where colonial legacies still shape cultural and economic structures, *hijab* branding can be examined through a postcolonial lens to assess the extent to which colonial discourses continue to influence contemporary Muslim women's representations. Using postcolonial and gender theories, this study seeks to understand how the legacies of colonialism intersect with gender representation in *hijab* fashion branding and marketing.

¹³ Yanti Dwi Astuti, "Media dan Gender (Studi Deskriptif Representasi Stereotype Perempuan dalam Iklan di Televisi Swasta)," *Profetik: Jurnal Komunikasi* 9, no. 2 (2016): 25, <https://doi.org/10.14421/pjkrv9i2.1205>.

¹⁴ Gina Giftia Azmiana Delilah, Diena Rauda Ramdania, and Busro Busro, "The Representation of Millennial Hijrah Image in Online Media: Gender and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 14, no. 1 (2021): 213–43, <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v14i1.374>.

¹⁵ Nawan Sumardiono, "Representasi Identitas Gender Influencer Laki-laki dengan Ekspresi Gender Feminin di Instagram," *Bricolage: Jurnal Magister Ilmu Komunikasi* 8, no. 1 (2022): 109, <https://doi.org/10.30813/bricolage.v8i1.3056>.

¹⁶ Imam Mukti and Muhammad Asriadi, "Representasi Perempuan pada Tayangan Video dalam Media Sosial TikTok," *Core: Journal of Communication Research* 1, no. 2 (2023): 12–22, <https://journal.unpacti.ac.id/CORE/article/view/882>.

In this research, the author uses postcolonial theory combined with gender theory to critically discuss the influence of colonialism on *hijab* brands on social media. Postcolonial theory explores the consequences of imperialism on cultures and identities, focusing on how people pushed back against being colonized.¹⁷ Postcolonial is used to see and criticize the influence of colonialism that still exists today, because the colonial mindset aims to civilize, assimilate, and develop other cultures, portraying them negatively while emphasizing the West's superiority.¹⁸ This approach shapes both the colonizer and the colonized to accept their designated roles in colonization. Nandy explains that:

"This colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies, and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all. In the process, it helps generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds."¹⁹

Postcolonial studies provide a framework for analyzing how colonial histories continue to shape identities, cultures, and economic practices. In the context of *hijab* branding, remnants of colonial influence can manifest in visual and textual narratives that dictate standards of beauty, femininity, and consumerism. Many *hijab* brands in Indonesia promote aesthetics that align with Western ideals of beauty—light skin, slim bodies, and European facial features—while simultaneously positioning the *hijab* as an important marker of Islamic identity. It raises critical questions about whether *hijab* fashion reinforces hegemonic Western beauty norms rather than celebrating the diverse identities of Indonesian Muslims.

In relation to gender theory, it talks about men and women being socially constructed, as Connell explains: "Being a man or a woman, then, is not a pre-determined state. It is a becoming, a condition actively under construction."²⁰ ...

¹⁷ Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 174, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203488836>.

¹⁸ Musa W. Dube, "Postcoloniality, Feminist Spaces, and Religion," in *Postcolonialism, Feminism and Religious Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 104, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315023274-6>.

¹⁹ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xi.

²⁰ Raewyn Connell, *Gender: In World Perspective*, 2nd ed. (London: Polity Press, 2009), 5.

Gender, like other social structures, is multi-dimensional; it is not just about identity, work, power, or sexuality, but all of these things at once.”²¹

Because gender is a social construction closely related to colonial power, which established the dominance of knowledge and constructs the social structure of society.

Gender theory is central to assessing the portrayal of women in *hijab* advertising. The commercialization of *hijab* fashion often reinforces certain gender roles and expectations, positioning women as pious and stylish consumers. By presenting the *hijab* as a product that enhances beauty while maintaining modesty, brands may contribute to a paradoxical discourse in which Muslim women are expected to conform to both religious and consumerist ideals. This study will analyze the visual representation of women in the social media content of *hijab* brands, exploring how these depictions reflect broader societal norms regarding femininity, piety, and modernity.

The implications of this study are important for understanding how colonial legacies persist in contemporary Muslim fashion branding and how gendered representations shape societal perceptions of Muslim women. By critically examining *hijab* brands through postcolonial and gender perspectives, this study will provide insight into the cultural and ideological forces that influence the modest fashion industry in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study will contribute to broader discussions about the commodification of religious identity in the digital media era.

Using postcolonial and gender theory, the author will see and criticize how the colonization of knowledge, ideas, thoughts, paradigms and perspectives from colonialists even after the colonization was completed, whether or not it still influenced social media for the fashion brand as a former colonial country. It is because “Knowledge is not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power,”²² in this case, the owner of that power is colonial, whereas Indonesia is a former colony.

²¹ Connell, 11.

²² Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 60, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315751245>.

Method

This research employs a qualitative approach with content analysis techniques. Qualitative content analysis, often categorized as interpretive, draws from literary theory, social sciences, and critical scholarship. This method involves closely examining limited textual data, which is then interpreted to construct new narratives. Working within interactive hermeneutic circles, analysts acknowledge their own social and cultural influences in the interpretive process.

Content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. This definition extends beyond written content, recognizing that “other meaningful matter” such as art, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols, and numerical records can also serve as data in content analysis, provided they convey information about phenomena beyond what is directly observable.²³

To ensure a focused and relevant analysis, the sample selection followed certain criteria: the brand had to have an official Instagram account with regular posts, indicating an active social media presence; had to demonstrate significant engagement and influence through a large number of followers and interactions, including likes, comments, and shares; had to explicitly market itself as a Muslim/modest fashion brand to ensure relevance to the study; and finally, the selected accounts had to represent a diverse brand approach, such as traditional, modern, luxury, or casual modest fashion, to capture a broad spectrum of representation within the industry.

Based on these criteria, this study will analyze the Instagram accounts of four Indonesian Muslim fashion brands: @vanillahijab, @winonamodest, @hijabalila, and @nusseyba.id. These accounts were selected based on the diversity of products they offer. @vanillahijab, with 2.5 million followers, specializes in headscarves; @winonamodest, with 112 thousand followers, sells turbans; @hijabalila, with 755 thousand followers, focuses on khimar; and @nusseyba.id, with 113 thousand followers, offers *cadar/niqab/burka*. The study will analyze content uploaded by these accounts from November 1 to

²³ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2019), 22–24, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781>.

November 30, 2023. These brands were chosen because they reflect distinct brand narratives, have a strong presence in the Indonesian modest fashion industry, and provide diverse representations of Muslim women while still influenced by global fashion trends.

To systematically examine the data, the study will categorize the content based on the following themes: 1) Postcolonial Influence: Examining how Western beauty standards, such as fair skin, slim body types, and tall stature, are represented in the visual and textual content. 2) Gender Representation: Identifying the roles and depictions of women, such as whether they are portrayed as professionals, homemakers, or influencers, and how these representations reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles. 3) Cultural Reclamation and Identity: Analyzing how the brands use imagery, language, and symbolism to reclaim Islamic and local cultural identities in contrast to global fashion trends.

By categorizing the content according to these themes, this study aims to critically understand the intersection between postcolonial discourse and gender representation in the Indonesian Muslim fashion brands on social media.

Discussion

Social Media and Accounts Overview

Overall, the four Indonesian Muslim fashion brands analyzed in this study—@vanillahijab, @winonamodest, @hijabalila, and @nusseyba.id—serve different segments of the Muslim fashion market, each with a unique branding approach and style. Although all four brands specialize in head coverings, their product variations and slogans reflect different marketing strategies that appeal to various consumer identities and aspirations.

The account of @vanillahijab, which primarily sells hijabs or headscarves,²⁴ carries the slogan "*Inspirasi Harimu!*" (Inspiration for Your Day!). This branding suggests that the brand aims to position itself as an everyday fashion choice, promoting the *hijab* as a religious requirement and an integral part of everyday style and self-expression. The use of the word

²⁴ In this context, the author defines headscarves which do not have to cover the chest completely.

"*inspirasi*" seems to convey a motivational message, implying that wearing the brand's *hijab* can boost a woman's confidence, creativity, and personal growth throughout the day. Appealing to the modern Muslim woman who balances faith and contemporary fashion, @vanillahijab is aligning itself with the growing demand for stylish yet modest clothing that fits a variety of lifestyles.

Similarly, the account of @winonamodest, which specializes in turbans,²⁵ has adopted the tagline "Your Confidence Booster." This branding speaks directly to fashion's psychological and emotional impact, positioning the turban not only as a modest covering but also as a confidence-boosting accessory. Turbans are often associated with a more modern, urban, and sophisticated aesthetic or style. It certainly appeals to modest Muslim women who embrace fashion while maintaining their religious identity. By framing the product as a tool for confidence, the brand taps into a broader empowerment narrative, where modest fashion is not about restriction but choice and self-expression.

On the other hand, the account of @hijabalila, sells *khimar*²⁶ (a longer, looser veil that covers the chest) and carries the tagline "*Sahabat Taatmu*" (Obedient Friend). The branding emphasizes a stronger religious connection, indicating that the product is designed to support women on their journey towards greater religious devotion. The word "*sahabat*" implies a sense of closeness and trust, reinforcing the idea that the *khimar* is more than just a garment—it is a partner in a woman's commitment to faith and piety. Unlike brands that emphasize fashion or confidence, @hijabalila's branding is deeply rooted in religious devotion, catering to consumers who prioritize spiritual fulfillment in their clothing choices.

Finally, the account of @nusseyba.id, which sells *niqabs*,²⁷ uses the tagline "Be Active, Be Syar'i." This phrase challenges common stereotypes surrounding women who wear the *niqab*, who are often seen as passive or restricted in their movement. By encouraging an active lifestyle while remaining *syar'i* (in

²⁵ The turban only covers part of the head hair up to the ears.

²⁶ *Khimar* is a covering cloth that women use to cover their heads until they reach their chests, so that their neck and chest are not visible, see Wahyu Fahrul Rizki, "Khimar dan Hukum Memakainya dalam Pemikiran M. Quraish Shihab dan Buya HAMKA," *Al-Mazaahib: Jurnal Perbandingan Hukum* 5, no. 1 (2017): 19–36, <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-mazaahib.v5i1.1389>.

²⁷ *Niqabis* is a cloth covering the head or face for women.

accordance with Islamic teachings), the brand seeks to redefine the image of women who wear the *niqab*, presenting them as dynamic individuals who engage in various aspects of life while upholding their religious values. The brand appeals to women who seek a balance between religious conservatism and an active role in society, promoting the idea that wearing the *niqab* does not hinder personal aspirations or professional ambitions.

Despite their product type and approach differences, these four brands contribute to Indonesia's diverse Muslim fashion landscape. They illustrate how modest fashion is not monolithic but a spectrum that accommodates different interpretations of religious guidelines, personal preferences, and cultural influences. While this study does not delve into theological debates over the limitations of the *hijab*, the variations in brand strategies demonstrate how modest fashion is deeply intertwined with identities, social aspirations, and evolving perceptions of Muslim femininity in the digital age.

The total quantity of followers, posts, and taglines from the four accounts is based on data taken on December 17, 2023, and the number of posts during November 2023 as in the Table 1.

Table 1
Social Media Engagement Matrix

Username	Followers	Posts	Posts of November
@vanillahijab	2.500.000	7.200	102
@winonamodes	112.000	4.180	31
@hijabalila	755.000	7.105	26
@nusseyba.id	113.000	4.613	56

The four Instagram accounts of Indonesian Muslim fashion brands analyzed in this study — @vanillahijab, @winonamodest, @hijabalila, and @nusseyba.id — exhibit varying levels of popularity, content production, and engagement. @vanillahijab stands out as the most popular brand, with 2.5 million followers and 7,200 posts. During November 2023, the brand uploaded 102 posts, indicating a high level of content production and active digital presence. This consistent posting strategy reflects how the brand seeks to maintain audience engagement and solidify its position as a leading Muslim fashion brand in

Indonesia. Meanwhile, @winonamodest, with 112 thousand followers and 4,180 posts, uploaded 31 posts in the same period. Although the number of posts is lower than @vanillahijab, the brand focuses on niche products like turbans, catering to a more segmented market with a selective posting approach.

On the other hand, @hijabalila has 755 thousand followers and 7,105 posts, making it the second most popular brand in terms of followers. However, it only uploaded 26 posts in November 2023, suggesting a more restrained content strategy compared to @vanillahijab. This pattern could indicate a focus on quality over quantity or a more targeted marketing approach. Lastly, @nusseyba.id, with 113 thousand followers and 4,613 posts, posted 56 times during the observed period. The relatively high number of posts for a niche product like *niqab* shows the brand's effort to actively engage with its audience and promote its products. The differences in the number of followers, content volume, and posting frequency across these accounts highlight the diverse ways in which Muslim fashion brands navigate digital platforms to build their brand identity and connect with their audiences.

Postcolonial and Gender Representation Analysis

Beauty Standard: Fair/White/Light Skinned, Tall, and Thin Body

Colonial legacies of beauty standards shape perceptions of physical appearance and influence social hierarchies and economic opportunities. In many colonized societies, having lighter skin was often associated with higher status, privilege, and access to better education and jobs. This preference for fair skin became deeply ingrained in the cultural consciousness, passed down from generation to generation even after colonial rule ended. In Indonesia, remnants of these ideals persist in contemporary media, where white models and influencers dominate advertising for cosmetics, skincare, and fashion. Promoting skin-lightening products remains widespread, reinforcing the idea that lighter skin is more desirable. Additionally, social media algorithms often favor Eurocentric beauty norms, amplifying the visibility of influencers who conform to these standards while marginalizing those who adhere to indigenous or darker-skinned aesthetics. As a result, the struggle to redefine beauty outside of colonial frameworks remains an ongoing challenge, requiring media literacy and active resistance to homogenizing beauty ideals.

The white skin concept in the colonial era is constructed and disseminated as a beauty, while black and brown skin are viewed as the opposite. It is spread in Asia that the idea of "Caucasian" whiteness with the definition of a "white" was a beauty standard, and it is also spread through magazines.²⁸ As well as in Indonesia during colonization, drawings of women featuring Caucasian facial features suggest that the beauty standards at that time were influenced by European or Western ideals, at that time it was under Dutch colonial rule.²⁹

The idea that white bodies are superior is based on the belief that black and/or racialized bodies are seen as inferior. The concept of universality dismisses the idea that beauty is linked to power, perpetuating hierarchical structures, especially those related to race,³⁰ as noted by scholar Sarah:

"The myth of the beautiful white woman has been used to drain all women of power in the world and ownership of our sexuality. Whiteness, in women, is often associated with purity, innocence, and chastity, qualities that are assumed to be morally desirable and opposed to the "undesirable" qualities associated with sexual experience. It is by upholding this complicated myth that white women actually become a danger to others, not by being beautiful, but by representing one limiting standard of beauty which renders all other unbeautiful."³¹

The colonists brought the "clean" culture to Asia when colonialism was present, similar to a natural or civilizing clean of uncultured or civilized people. The Europeans had a dirty black, crimson, and brown appearance. Not only is a dirty person's body naturally pigmented, but they are also uncultured. Since both clean and dirty have social, racial, and colonial importance, cleanliness is not only a state free of contaminants.

"In the term of white skin, it can be categorized as the phase of mind colonization."³² Fanon said that the colonial project built a system where the local or native (the

²⁸ L. Ayu Saraswati, "Cosmopolitan Whiteness: The Effects and Affects of Skin-Whitening Advertisements in a Transnational Women's Magazine in Indonesia," *Meridians* 10, no. 2 (2010): 15–41, <https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.2010.10.2.15>.

²⁹ Siti Mahrunnisa, Dwi Susanto, and Susanto Susanto, "The History of Beauty Discourse in Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Recent Language, Literature, and Local Culture Studies, BASA, 20-21 September 2019, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia* (EAI, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.20-9-2019.2296705>.

³⁰ Joanne Laxamana Rondilla and Catherine Ceniza Choy, "Colonial Faces: Beauty and Skin Color Hierarchy in the Philippines and the U.S." [Doctoral Thesis] (University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 14–15.

³¹ Sara Halprin, *Look at My Ugly Face: Myths and Musings on Beauty and Other Perilous Obsessions with Women's Appearance* (New York: Viking Press, 1995), 43.

³² Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*.

colonized) is more dependent on the colonizer. It is because the native is savage, primitive, and when it is not educated will be in danger. The basic concept of the relationship among them is that the native is constructed to be immature, savage, bad, weak, and ugly vice versa with the colonized.³³ Regarding skin color and beauty standards that are imposed on cultural norms that have been believed for generations to be social class, where individuals with dark skin are associated with work in the fields and poverty, and on the other hand, individuals with pale and light skin are associated with a cosmopolitan lifestyle that is more comfortable indoors and away from the sun.”³⁴

Similarly, the Instagram profiles of three specific *hijab* brands—@vanillahijab, @winonamodest, and @hijabalila—stand out. On @vanillahijab and @winonamodes, the content predominantly showcases white women as models, with no representation of black or darker-skinned women. In contrast, @hijabalila's Instagram account presents more diversity in its content, although the majority still features white women. The narratives accompanying the content featuring white women often revolve around beauty and modernity. These Instagram accounts highlight a notable difference in the representation of women across *hijab* brands, with some emphasizing a predominantly white aesthetic, while others, like @hijabalila, strive for more diversity in their portrayal of beauty and modern ideals. For the account of @nusseyba.id, it uses a mannequin for the display, or if it is even a model, it is fully covered until the face is blurred as an example of content from the Instagram account @vanillahijab.

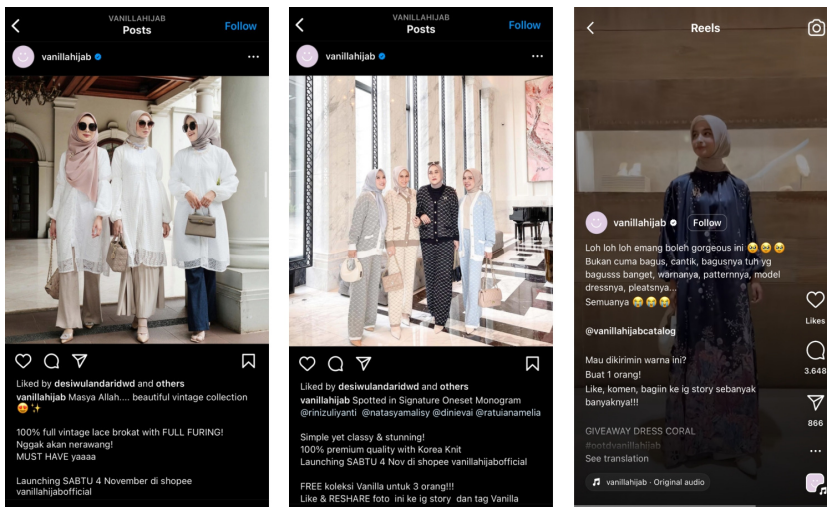
In the Figure 1, all the women depicted have fair skin, with some wearing extra accessories like bags while others do not. The narrative includes the word “beautiful” in both Indonesian and English as written in its captions “*Loh loh loh emang boleh gorgeous ini. Bukan cuma cantik, bagusnya tuh bagusss banget*” and “Beautiful vintage collection” “Simple yet classy & Stunning.” Despite the intention to describe the *hijab*, the use of this term, along with the portrayal of white women in the content, indirectly suggests that beauty is associated with white skin characteristics. The depiction in the image implies a connection

³³ Rondilla and Choy, “Colonial Faces: Beauty and Skin Color Hierarchy in the Philippines and the U.S.”

³⁴ Jusmalia Oktaviani, “Fenomena ‘Colorism’ sebagai Bentuk Stratifikasi Sosial di Kawasan Asia Tenggara,” *Jurnal Dinamika Global* 7, no. 1 (2022): 53–83, <https://doi.org/10.36859/jdg.v7i01.1037>.

between beauty and fair skin, as the use of “beautiful” is intertwined with the representation of women who share the characteristic of having white skin.

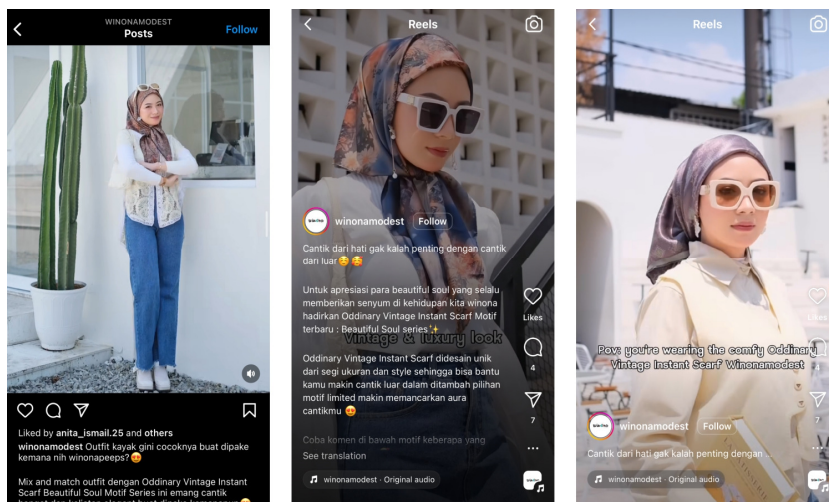
Figure 1
Fair Skin as Beauty



We can see also from the account of @winonamodest how the content is displayed white women, as Figure 2. The narrative conveyed in Figure 2 is also related to beauty. Not only that, the clothes used are also a product of European culture, namely jeans which in the picture are blue. In this context, even complementary clothing is also affected. As Bandel explained, European/ Western culture is currently the global standard or reference. Jeans or t-shirts are worn everywhere, but are sarongs used in other countries? No. He explained further that initially jeans and t-shirts were part of a certain local culture which was not necessarily better. According to him, awareness of thinking that jeans or other colonial products are better and cooler and viewing other products as worse needs to be underlined and criticized.³⁵

³⁵ Bandel, *Kajian Gender dalam Konteks Pascakolonial*, 102–3.

Figure 2
Beauty and Colonial Product



Apart from influences in the white context, body shape also has a lot of influence from colonial discourse. Body shape is closely related to the history of colonialism, as Silva said “the history of the body is the very history of civilization”.³⁶ In regard to that, as the project of civilization is coming from colonialism. As colonials form the west, if looking at Western culture, being thin is seen as the modern idea of what is beautiful for women,³⁷ as Lelwica explained:

“Repeated exposure to images of a homogeneously thin, light-skinned feminine ideal makes the slender white bodies of actresses and models seem a lot more “normal” than they really are. The cumulative effect of such images is to erode women’s capacity to choose alternative visions of happiness, health, and beauty”³⁸

³⁶ Ana Flávia De Sousa Silva et al., “‘Thinness as Normal, Normal as Fat’: Reflections on Contemporary Body and Beauty Standards (‘A Magreza Como Normal, o Normal Como Gordo’: Reflexões Sobre Corpo e Padrões de Beleza Contemporâneos),” *Revista Família, Ciclos de Vida e Saúde No Contexto Social* 6, no. 4 (2018): 808–813, <https://doi.org/10.18554/refacs.v6i4.3296>.

³⁷ Patricia R. Owen and Erika Laurel-Seller, “Weight and Shape Ideals: Thin Is Dangerously In,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 30, no. 5 (2000): 979–90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2000.tb02506.x>.

³⁸ Michelle Lelwica, Emma Hoglund, and Jenna McNallie, “Spreading the Religion of Thinness from California to Calcutta: A Critical Feminist Postcolonial Analysis,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25, no. 1 (2009): 19–41, <https://doi.org/10.2979/fsr.2009.25.1.19>.

Because of the continued normalization of the idea that to be beautiful you have to be thin, people cannot even make their independent choices. People think being slim and tall, having long hair, light or tanned skin, big breasts, large eyes, a small nose, and high cheekbones are what makes someone beautiful.³⁹ As a consequence, the knowledge which is disseminated as "beautiful body as synonymous with lean body" should be critiqued.⁴⁰

In the context of social media, the four accounts the author uses as sources also display and narrate beauty in the context of body shapes influenced by colonial discourse. In Figure 3, the authors will give examples of several images and narratives used from several accounts.

Apart from that, the captions also talk about slim bodies, such as in the post on the @winonamodest account on November 10 which explains that chubby cheeks are something that must be covered with the products he offers, "*karena Scup hadir untuk menyamarkan pipi tembam dan double chin*" which means because Scup is here to disguise chubby cheeks and double chins.

Of the three accounts @hijabalila, @vanillahijab, and @winonamodest, as sampled in Figure 3, all show slender female bodies.

Apart from that, in the captions of the posts on November 16, 17 and 20, the discourse on slim bodies is also explained as follows, "*sulit cari desain inner yang bikin keliatan slim*" means "It is hard to find an inner design that makes you look slim", "*buat bentuk badan kamu terlihat slim*" means "makes your body shape look slim", and "*bikin look kita jadi slim loh peeps*" means "makes our look slim, peeps." Likewise, the captions on the @nusseyba.id account on November 20 and 21 are as follows: "Soft pad feature that can easily adjust the shape of your face without making it look chubby" means "*Fitur soft pad yg bisa dgn mudah menyesuaikan bentuk wajah tanpa bikin keliatan chubby*", "*Soft pad yang membingkai wajahmu Auto samarkan pipi chubby dan double chin*" means "Soft pad that frames your face, automatically disguises chubby cheeks and double

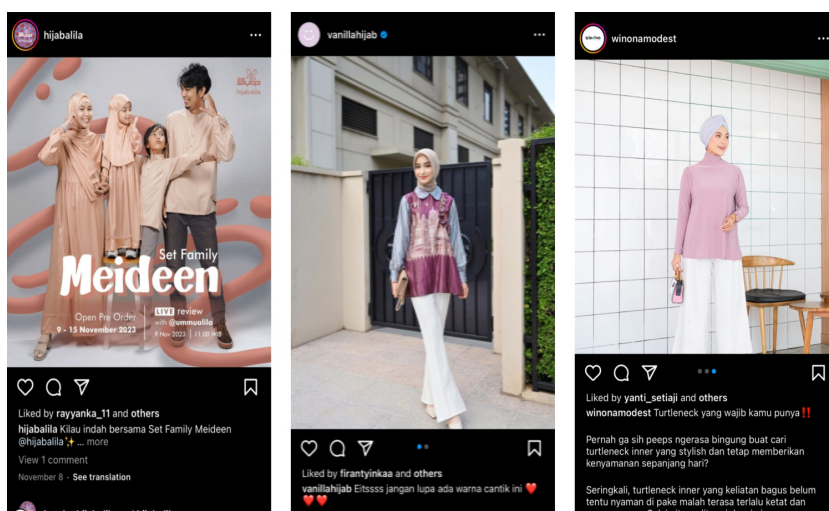
³⁹ Toby Chen et al., "Occidentalisation of Beauty Standards: Eurocentrism in Asia," *Across The Spectrum of Socioeconomics* 1, no. 2 (2020): 2, [chromehttps://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/isl/files/occidentalisation_of_beauty_standards_eurocentrism.pdf](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/isl/files/occidentalisation_of_beauty_standards_eurocentrism.pdf).

⁴⁰ Silva et al., "'Thinness as Normal, Normal as Fat': Reflections on Contemporary Body and Beauty Standards ('A Magreza Como Normal, o Normal Como Gordo': Reflexões Sobre Corpo e Padrões de Beleza Contemporâneos)," 811.

chin”, and “*Kalau harus pilih, Mbaksis lebih suka Hawla yang punya saku serbaguna, atau Ataya yang kasih kesan lebih slim*” means “If you had to choose, Mbaksis prefers the Hawla which has multi-purpose pockets, or the Ataya which gives a slimmer impression.”

Bright or white skin and a slim body are narratives that continue to be spread to this day as beauty standards, which are products of colonialism. This influence is deeply rooted throughout the world, including Asia and Indonesia. Toby et. al stated, “The modern beauty standard in Asia for females shows evidence of aligning with Eurocentric ideals, for example East Asian beauty standards stress having large eyes, a small nose bridge, and white skin.”⁴¹ Clark and Clark’s research, for example, since 1947, has confirmed how strong its influence is. He studied children and saw their preferences. He presented dolls with darker skin and light/white skin. The light or white skin was considered better by the children.⁴²

Figure 3
Slender Female Body



⁴¹ Chen et al., “Occidentalisation of Beauty Standards: Eurocentrism in Asia.”

⁴² Kenneth B. Clark and Mamie P. Clark, “Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children,” in *Mental Health and Segregation* (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 1966), 175, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-37819-9_7.

Gender Role and Stereotype

Gender roles are societal expectations placed on people based on their identified gender. These shared expectations dictate how individuals are supposed to behave within society. These roles are determined by the prevailing social understanding of what is appropriate for men and women.⁴³ Traditionally, women, having fewer resources, were often expected to take on a larger share of housework compared to their husbands. However, when women gain more resources, like improved education or full-time employment, it does not necessarily result in a more equal distribution of tasks and responsibilities within the family. This suggests that gender behaviors are shaped not only by individual factors but also by cultural norms.⁴⁴ In addition, "Stereotyping has three characteristics: the categorization of persons, a consensus on attributed traits, and a discrepancy between attributed traits and actual traits."⁴⁵

Despite shifts in societal structures and increased opportunities for women, deeply entrenched gender norms continue to influence expectations and behaviors. Even as more women enter the workforce and attain higher levels of education, traditional stereotypes persist, reinforcing the idea that caregiving and domestic responsibilities remain their primary domain. This imbalance is further exacerbated by cultural narratives that glorify women's roles as caregivers while often downplaying or ignoring men's contributions to domestic tasks. Moreover, gender stereotypes do not operate in isolation—they intersect with factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and religious beliefs, shaping unique experiences for individuals in different communities. As a result, challenging these stereotypes requires not only individual agency but also broader societal change, including policy changes, workplace adaptations, and redefining gender roles in popular culture and media representations.

⁴³ Mandy Boehnke, "Gender Role Attitudes around the Globe: Egalitarian vs. Traditional Views," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 39, no. 1 (2011): 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853111X554438>.

⁴⁴ Leeni Hansson, "Gender Role Attitudes," in *The Russian Second Generation in Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve*, ed. Raivo Vetik and Jelena Helemäe (Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 183–202, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9789048512881.010>.

⁴⁵ Paul F. Secord and Carl W. Backman, *Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 66.

On these accounts, the content also illustrates the relationship between the *hijab* and women's roles in everyday life, highlighting how the *hijab* functions as an identity marker and influences women's perceptions in various social roles. The depiction of women wearing the *hijab* in various work environments challenges traditional notions of gender roles, showing that women who wear the *hijab* are not confined to the domestic sphere but actively participate in the professional world.

For example, the caption from @winonamodest account on November 13 explained that the product is suitable for use in the office "*Pakai hijab Melayu dan ga lupa dengan Squeeze Big Scrunchie ini cocok banget buat jadi ide outfit ke kantor sehari-hari Dilengkapi dengan inner dan ga perlu lagi pakai peniti kamu udah tampil oke ke kantor*" means "Wear a Malay *hijab* and don't forget the Squeeze Big Scrunchie. This is really suitable as an everyday office outfit idea. Equipped with inner and no need to use safety pins, you will look good at the office." This caption not only markets its product, but also subtly reinforces the idea that women who wear the *hijab* are active professionals. It portrays the image of the modern Muslim woman as someone who is fashionable and career-oriented, challenging the traditional stereotype that women's primary role is limited to domestic responsibilities. The association between the *hijab* and professionalism and productivity challenges the long-held narrative that Muslim women, especially those who wear the *hijab*, are passive or limited in their contribution to society.

Account from @nusseyba.id depicting women wearing *niqab*. People think that the veil is part of Arab culture. Women who wear the *niqab* are stereotyped as individuals and close themselves off from the social environment of society. This is because women who wear the *niqab* are seen as closed, rarely communicate and socialize and stay at home most of the time, rarely mingling with the surrounding community.⁴⁶ The perception that these women do not engage in professional settings further reinforces the misconception that the *niqab* is a barrier to women's participation in broader society.

⁴⁶ Tika Nofalia, "Stigma Negatif terhadap Pengguna Cadar di Kalangan Mahasiswi Universitas Negeri Padang," *Journal of Education, Cultural and Politics* 1, no. 1 (2021): 8–13, <https://doi.org/10.24036/jecco.v1i1.2>.

However, in this content, women who wear the *niqab* are also depicted as career women who work in offices, in other words, if they work in an office, of course they have to communicate and be open to collaborating in the work space. This portrayal counters the stereotype that *niqab*-wearing women are socially disengaged and highlights the fact that they, too, are professionals who contribute to various fields. By representing women in *niqab* as part of the workforce, @nusseyba.id helps reshape the narrative around the veil, emphasizing that wearing a *niqab* does not equate to social exclusion or professional limitations.

The juxtaposition of these depictions across accounts reveals an evolving landscape in how Muslim women and their dress are represented in the digital space. While @winonamodest portrays the *hijab* as a fashionable and practical accessory for working women, @nusseyba.id disrupts conventional narratives around the *niqab* by placing women in a professional setting. Both representations challenge the persistent notion that Muslim women's primary roles are confined to the domestic sphere, instead presenting them as dynamic individuals who engage with society in a variety of capacities.

This shift in representation is significant within the broader discourse on gender and postcolonial identity. The portrayal of Muslim women as professionals aligns with global movements advocating for women's empowerment and gender equality. However, it is important to examine and consider whether these representations truly reflect the realities of women who wear the *hijab* or whether they are constructed to fit dominant narratives of modernity and progress. The commoditization of the *hijab* and *niqab* in fashion branding also raises questions about whether these depictions are driven by the need to sell products rather than to authentically represent the experiences of Muslim women.

Furthermore, while these representations challenge traditional gender roles, they are not entirely free from the influence of colonial beauty standards. The women depicted in these campaigns often conform to Western beauty ideals, such as fair skin, slender body shapes, and symmetrical features. This suggests that while the *hijab* is being reimagined as a symbol of empowerment and professionalism, it is still enmeshed in a broader framework of beauty norms that prioritize Eurocentric aesthetics. This phenomenon reflects the

enduring impact of colonialism on perceptions of beauty, where the acceptance of hijabi women in professional spaces is often contingent on their adherence to these dominant ideals.

Another important aspect of these representations is the intersection of religion and consumerism. The portrayal of the *hijab* and *niqab* as fashionable items for professional women highlights how religious attire has been integrated into the commercial marketplace. While this can be seen as a positive step towards the normalization of the *hijab* in some settings, it also raises concerns about the commodification of religious identity or what Einstein and Taylor said “There’s Religion in My Marketing; There’s Marketing in My Religion.”⁴⁷ The transformation of the *hijab* from a personal religious commitment to a marketable fashion item suggests that its representation in digital spaces is shaped by capitalist interests as much as by cultural and religious expression.

Thus, in the context of market-profit oriented blending with global power under the colonial legacies which softly influence the way muslim brands in representing their product, it should be more aware on how they depict the product especially on looks and narrative. Indirectly, the way the brands represent on their social media, it will become new culture that the people adopt becoming style and even the way of life specifically in the fashion life. Portraying product and influencing by it has to be responsible of the brands in order to continually resist or reclaim of the identity which can be genuinely based on the preference of their brands rather than only influence by the global market and fashion. Especially if it is directed towards a more inclusive and gender-fair depiction and narrative that is free from colonial influences.

This is because as Caldeira et al. argued that social media exposure Instagram is a platform that is widely used by women to display and mediate their identity through self-presentation.⁴⁸ Even it accentuates by Entwistle and Wissinger:

⁴⁷ Mara Einstein and Sarah McFarland Taylor, *Selling the Sacred: Religion and Marketing from Crossfit to QAnon*, ed. Mara Einstein and Sarah McFarland Taylor, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2024), 2, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003342229>.

⁴⁸ Sofia P. Caldeira, Sander De Ridder, and Sofie Van Bauwel, “Exploring the Politics of Gender Representation on Instagram: Self-Representations of Femininity,” *DiGeSt. Journal of Diversity and*

"Presentations on Instagram will contribute to constructing a discourse about the concept of the ideal appearance of women, because Instagram presents art and interesting language choices. This makes Instagram chosen to be a source of style inspiration and ideas by groups of women who are interested in contemporary styles who are connected to the Instagram account network..."⁴⁹

Fashion is Constructive: Being Fashionable the Way You Are

The popularization and westernization that occurred in Indonesia made the fashion of clothing that was oriented and centered on the world adapted into fashion. In addition, social media, such as Instagram, has become a very effective tool for introducing Muslim fashion trends throughout the world. Muslim influencers from various countries, whether wearing the *hijab* or clothing that complies with sharia, have opened up space for the public to see how fashion and religion can be combined. Muslim clothing is now not only a symbol of religious identity, but also a mode of expression that can be combined with global trends.

According to Berger, society is a dialectical phenomenon in the sense that society is a human product, besides that no one will always give feedback to its producers. Society is a product of humans. Society has no other form except the form that has been given to it by human activity and consciousness. Social reality is not separate from humans, so it can be ascertained that humans are a product of society. Humans cannot exist separately from society, the two are not opposites, on the contrary, both describe a trait.⁵⁰

Apart from that, the combination of Muslim popularity and the constructivism of the meaning of beauty forms an identity. In terms of that, identity comes from the word identity which means a condition or reality of something that is the same, a condition that is similar to each other, a condition or fact about something that is the same between two people or two objects, a

Gender Studies 5, no. 1 (2018): 23, <https://doi.org/10.11116/digest.5.1.2>; Mila Sari et al., "Beauty of Women from Ideal Appearance and Understanding of Beauty Standards: A Literature Review," *INFOKUM* 10, no. 5 (2022): 686–99, <https://doi.org/10.58471/infokum.v10i5.1124>.

⁴⁹ Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger, "Dress like a Mum/Mom: Instagram Style Mums and the Fashionable Ideal," *Fashion Theory* 27, no. 1 (2023): 5–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2021.1934326>; Sari et al., "Beauty of Women from Ideal Appearance and Understanding of Beauty Standards: A Literature Review."

⁵⁰ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1990), 3.

condition or fact that describes something that is the same between two people (individuality) or two groups or objects at the technical level, or what Hoggs and Abrams called as “people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others.”⁵¹

Digital platforms provide great opportunities for designers and influencers to create more diverse communities that will form an identity that will be known and recognized, thus providing an opportunity for Muslim women worldwide to express themselves in a way that reflects their beliefs and lifestyles. However, the digital world offers not only opportunities, but also quite big challenges. One of the main challenges is how social media can reinforce existing stereotypes about Muslim women, especially related to the way they dress. When more conservative Muslim fashion appears in cyberspace, there is often tension with global fashion trends that tend to be more “open and free”. In many cases, social media is still dominated by Western beauty standards that often ignore diversity and the broader cultural context.

On the other hand, stereotypes about Muslim women often fall into a narrow mold: women who are covered up, backward, and oppressed. This image, which persists despite significant advances in Muslim fashion, not only hurts Muslim women themselves but also influences how the outside world views them. For example, when modest and elegant Muslim clothing is not given the same level of attention as clothing that is more revealing or “fashionable” by Western standards, it reinforces the idea that Muslim fashion is limited to conventional, uncreative looks. In addition, social media also often displays standards of beauty that are heavily influenced by the legacy of Western colonialism. Images of women with fair skin, slender bodies, and long, straight hair often dominate digital platforms, despite the diversity that exists across the world. This form of beauty, a legacy of colonialism, creates pressure for many Muslim women to conform to these standards, even if they wear the *hijab* or dress more modestly.

The digital world must continue supporting diversity in Muslim fashion by introducing more inclusive and realistic representations. It means showing

⁵¹ Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg, *Social Identifications* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203135457>.

Muslim women dressed according to their traditions and religion and celebrating the diversity of different bodies, skin tones, and lifestyles. Cultural, personal, and situational dimensions influence the meaning, interpretation, and judgment of these themes or issues of identity. In recent years, there has been an increase in Muslim designers and influencers who have begun to introduce more diverse and bold fashion that is not tied to one definition of beauty or style. Social media can play a vital role in changing this narrative by promoting broader representation, showcasing Muslim women in all shapes and colors, and showing that Muslim fashion can be fashionable. It also provides an opportunity for Muslim women worldwide to feel more valued and acknowledged.

Conclusion

The combination of postcolonial influences and gender representations in Indonesian Muslim fashion is ever-changing. Gender representation in *hijab* brands remains a complex issue. The findings are that while some brands challenge traditional gender roles by depicting *hijab*-wearing women as professionals and active participants in the workforce, others continue to frame women within conventional expectations of modesty, domesticity, and consumerism. The *hijab*'s dual role as a religious symbol and a fashion product complicates its depiction, often placing Muslim women in paradoxical expectations of piety and modernity. Furthermore, the online world can inadvertently reinforce stereotypes or enforce Western beauty standards. Brands must be aware of these challenges and work towards more detailed and inclusive representations.

By offering alternative representations, *hijab* branding can truly inspire and empower identity while promoting more gender-equitable depictions. These representations must move beyond conventional stereotypes and colonial influences, ensuring that Muslim women are portrayed in diverse and empowering ways. Rather than reinforcing narrow beauty standards or rigid gender roles, brands should embrace inclusivity, reflecting the richness of Indonesian Muslim women's experiences. Last, we propose further research on how muslim men are represented on social media, especially related to gender and postcolonialism.[s]

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