



The Commodification of Religion in Halal Fashion: UM Female Students' Perspectives on the SHAR'i Hijab

Nur Faizin^(✉), Adinda Zahra Amartha, and Alif Ageel Muchlis

Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia
nur.faizin.fs@um.ac.id

Abstract. Muslim fashion users among UM students, in this case, the hijab, are no longer something that is avoided in order to look beautiful and elegant with modifications to the hijab. On the other hand, the “shar’i hijab” and “halal hijab” are marketing strategies wrapped in Islamic values. This paper is the result of interviews and observations made with students of the State University of Malang (UM) regarding the use of the hijab, especially the shar’i hijab (halal hijab). Interviews and observations were conducted when the students attended lectures in the Islamic Religious Education course. The commodification of Islamic values in the discourse of “hijab shar’i” is not the main aspect, although their assumptions regarding the use of the hijab must also be straightened out, especially from an Islamic perspective. At first glance, it can be concluded that halal branding in the field of fashion among female students, especially halal headscarves, seems to have not received a big response. This is in contrast to the conclusions of studies that show a great commodification of Islamic values in the discourse of the shar’i hijab or halal hijab.

Keywords: commodification · hijab · UM · female college student · halal · fashion

1 Introduction

The change in the essence of the hijab in people’s lives is very different between the past and the present era. Women who wore the hijab in ancient times were often considered fanatical adherents of Islam. It is not uncommon for them to receive discriminatory treatment in politics and even education, such as being expelled from school and receiving bad treatment from other religions. This is one of the reasons women today want to create attractive forms of hijab or jilbab to be more acceptable to society. In addition, branding strategies also play their role in the economic world. If in the past, the hijab was considered strange and has not yet become the culture of society, then the hijab in the present era has changed. The hijab or hijab is no longer only used by certain groups of people but has been worn by all Muslim community groups, including teenagers and female students.

It can be said that there is such a complicated polemic characterized by the emergence of terms such as “*jilbab*, *hijab*, *cadar*, *kerudung*” and so on that still overlap their intentions and purposes. More complicatedly, the branding of “*jilbab shar’i*” or “*halal hijab*” turns out to bring its meaning. Some Muslim women may judge a woman who wears a small hijab just as she does not wear a hijab (keep her aura open). The branding of “*jilbab shar’i*” and “*hijab halal*” is a marketing strategy wrapped in Islamic values.[1].

In another view, hijab is not only a fashion that follows current models and trends, but the use of hijab must meet several conditions, including:[2] clothing hijab that covers her entire body other than the excluded, namely the face and palms; clothing *hijab* is not for jewellery to reveal the beauty and to attract attention, and not to use perfumes (fragrances); the hijab is not made of thin fabric so that it looks like its body shape; it is not narrow so that it appears to be in the shape of its body; the hijab closes all hair and neck.

Muslim fashion users among UM students, in this case, the hijab, are no longer something that is avoided in order to look beautiful and elegant with modifications to the hijab. Among UM students themselves, Muslim fashion has become a trend in appearance. The types, models, and accessories of equipment make hijab users more flexible and straightforward. This is evidenced by the large number of UM students who switched to wearing the hijab and made the hijab a daily dress. Including several female students who use the “*halal hijab*” model. This paper reports limited observations of around 80 female students about the use of hijab and its relationship with the trend of “*shar’i hijab*” or “*halal hijab*”. To get a variety of perspectives on the use of the hijab from female students, interviews and observations were conducted on female students who took part in Islamic religious education courses in the first semester of 2022.

2 Discussion

2.1 Commodification of Islamic Values in Halal Headscarves

As issues of gender equality have strengthened, women have now gained a more complimentary place in expressing their thoughts and implementing their freedoms as part of human rights. The current context, which is very thick with gender equality issues, has placed women in a universal and open context. Thus, the understanding of the hijab as a woman’s clothing has now become various and can even be understood as a form of inequality and even exclusion of women, such as the thoughts of Fatimah Mernissi, Qasim Amin, and many others.[3].

In the early 1980s, the garment formerly known as the veil became known as the hijab, which was no longer a phenomenon of a certain social group but became a garment that penetrated all classes of society with its various social classes. The hijab in this day and age is no longer considered a strange garment, but the hijab has turned into a very common garment, and the hijab has now become one of the kinds of clothing used by women to cover their *aurat* as led by Islam, even then the term *shar’i hijab* appears and also the hijabers community, [4] which has an economic and Islamic dimension, i.e., as a branding for specific models and sizes of the hijab and as one of the religious interpretations of the command to wear clothes that cover the *aurat* in Islamic teachings.

The hijab or hijab is currently also interpreted as the Islamic cultural identity of women, as this has been the reason behind the decline of QS. Al-Ahzab: 59. Today, the use of the hijab or hijab with its various models and designs signifies classes and status in society as Max Weber's theory of sociology developed. [5] Through social media, the construction of the identity of ideal and middle-class women is used as an interesting visual interpretation and depiction of their hijab or hijab fashion. Such a phenomenon is also referred to as proselytizing or inviting to the teachings of Islam. They formed a hijab community, the Hijabers Community, with the intention of showing their existence in the post-feminism era as well as a form of Muslimah proselytizing carried out through electronic media and social media. The phenomenon of shar'i headscarves or hijabers is also what gives rise to the opposite interpretation, which is better known as the concept of "slang headscarves" and the term "jilboobs" where women combine the wearing of the hijab with tight jeans and tops that show their curves and sometimes their skin. [6] A number of UM students also displayed photos of them wearing headscarves as well as those who did not wear headscarves on their social media as a form of their existence as Muslim women as well as studying university institutions.

Like women's clothing in general, the hijab is full of meaning and has a variety of nuances. The hijab is regarded as a particular tradition, culture, and even identity that can convey meanings or messages that are social or cultural. [7] The new models of hijab have not only provided several alternative styles of dress for Muslim women but have also changed the way people view the hijab, which on a broader scale, has transformed the self-concept of women as modern Muslim women. [8] In the frame of the creative economy, cyber media users can easily define women's identities through models and styles in wearing the hijab or hijab. Through their models and styles of veiling, women can define themselves as what class women are and what status. [9] In other words, if, at the time of the descent, it was QS. Al-Ahzab: 59 serves to distinguish the class of free women and the class of slave women, so the contextualization of this function is changed to the clothing of women that distinguishes the social classes of Muslim women in society today. The hijab or hijab is, at the same time, the Muslim identity and self-concept of Muslim women in the Islamic world today.

The hijab, which was later also referred to as hijab, has turned into a trend in the fashion world. Even the hijab is considered to play a role in improving the economic and business sectors. The hijab or jilbab has now been interpreted as a commodity of women's diversity and, at the same time, a trade commodity with economic dimensions wrapped in religious teachings, beauty, and decency. [10] Bucar, in his research on hijab, *jilbab*, or *texture* in three regions of the world (hijab in Tehran, Iran, hijab in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and *tasettur* in Istanbul, Turkey), among others, concluded that women in the three regions of the country are targeted by the marketing of very promising women's clothing with a variety of clothing designs and their attractive colorful colors. [5] The hijab trend (including shar'i hijab or halal hijab) is a lucrative fashion market trend in various countries with a large population of Muslim women.

2.2 Hijab in the Perspective of UM Students

UM students realize that most Indonesians do not require women to wear hijab (hijab). They follow the category of female students who wear hijab or hijab fashion as follows:

namely, the body in a loose hijab (*hijabers*), medium hijab, and hijab with sexy clothing. *First*, student *hijabers*: this hijaber student is a woman with a loose hijab-wearing category, namely the hijab that is usually worn by Muslim women who usually use headscarfs and clothes that are large and are left to extend to the belly and back and even the tip until it reaches her hips so that the hijab she uses will appear very wide and large. The type of hijab used by Muslim women is in the form of a wide cloth, a quadrangle, then folded into a triangle and used with a pin or needle at the bottom of the chin. The wearing of this hijab is combined with Muslim women's clothing consisting of *gamis* or *jubbah* clothes, namely uncut overalls with a very loose size accompanied by wearing socks.

Second, female students wear a moderate hijab. This female student with a moderate hijab category is a Muslim woman wearing a moderate hijab, not too loose and not too minimalist. This current hijab is generally available in fashion stores, supermarkets, markets, and others that are ready to be worn. It covers the entire body except for the face and palms and combines it with Muslim women's clothing that meets the category of closing *aurat*. Some Muslim women combine it with *gamis/jubbah* clothes or overalls that are not too loose and can even show their curves. Usually, the clothes are combined with loose-fitting trousers, and some combine them with long skirts.

Third, female students wear a hijab but with a fashion that remains sexy. Students in this third category are women wearing hijabs with sexy clothes either combined with medium or minimalist hijab, namely the hijab worn by Muslim women, which is modified in such a way that it looks minimal and combined with minimalist clothes as well. The clothes chosen and worn by Muslim women are usually relatively small and seem a little tight for their body size so that they will show their curves. As for those who wear super tight long-sleeved T-shirts, some others use long sleeves only up to the elbows so that half of the stairs will be clearly visible in color and shape. However, not a few Muslim women wear *pencil*-pants-style tights combined with a long top that covers their hips. The hijab they wear is also varied, either a minimalist hijab or a medium hijab with a quadrangular cloth made into a triangle with one end wrapped around the head, which can minimize the shape of the chest and hips.

The views and motives of female students in wearing the hijab are also very diverse. However, broadly speaking, they can be grouped into religious vocation motifs, trend or model motifs, habitual motifs, comfort motives, security motives, and the motives of following friends. In other words, there are differences in views and motives for wearing the hijab among UM students. The meaning of views on the use of hijab on campus by UM students received different responses from each individual.

In addition, there are still many female students who do not wear headscarves on campus. This is because the campus does not require the use of the hijab in attending lectures, even though the lectures that are followed are religious or Islamic lectures. For female students who have not used the hijab as a fashion, wearing a hijab must wait for mature mental readiness. Broadly speaking, they consider that the hijab is an obligation that must be carried out based on awareness of the values contained in the command to use the hijab. Using the hijab as a fashion is a step in more direction. However, there are also some female students who think that wearing the hijab or not using it is an option. They do not care about the main benefits or purposes of wearing the hijab. In other words,

they consider themselves not ready to use the hijab. For them, it is better not to wear the hijab first than after wearing the hijab; the deeds and behaviors damage the image of the hijab itself, both in terms of how to dress and words. Men from UM students also justify this view. They disagree with women who “play with” the hijab, that is, women who wear the hijab but do not follow Islamic values in the clothes.

The commodification of the value of the hijab for UM students has not been seen because, in general, it can be said that UM Muslim female students are female students whose socioeconomic status can be said to be middle to lower, so they do not really mind the hijab models that continue to develop. Although the term “*jilbabers*” “*jilbab shar’i*” or “*kosher hijab*” is already a topic of conversation, excessive hedonistic behavior is still not apparent in their clothing or fashion models.

3 Conclusion

It was concluded that from an Islamic perspective, the views of UM students regarding the use of hijab began to develop. Although some of them made mistakes or deviations when wearing the hijab, not a few considered that the hijab was not an option per se but an obligation for a Muslimah. Moreover, most UM students want the choice to wear a hijab accompanied by prayers, attitudes, and speech that also reflect Islamic values.

The branding of “*jilbab shar’i*” or “*halal hijab*” has not become a prominent view among UM female students. However, the awareness of the commodification of religious values in the fashion world has begun to be understood by them. Thus, this conclusion differs from research that concludes the commodification of Islamic values in hijab discourse in Indonesia in general. However, this conclusion cannot be generalized to all female students because, for female students on campuses with middle and upper socioeconomic status or religious-based campuses, the issue of commodification of Islamic values in the hijab can be found.

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