

Taste and Style in Halal Fashion Design: Representing Identity within the Context of Cultural Capital

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Clothing is a cultural manifestation that is particularly prominent, acting as a mediator between the individual and society in all human civilizations. At the same time, it functions as a representation of cultural identity and an instrument for social distinction, allowing individuals to establish and solidify their positions within societal value systems. Consequently, the study of fashion design is not restricted to solely aesthetic dimensions; rather, it requires a sociological and anthropological comprehension of the culture of dress. It is of the utmost significance to elucidate consumer behavior and aesthetic preferences within the fashion industry by distinguishing between two fundamental concepts: “taste” and “style.”

In this study, “taste” is not solely interpreted as a personal preference, but as a social construct that is influenced by cultural capital, aesthetic experiences, and social processes. In contrast, “style” can be defined as a regulated framework that has developed from social value systems, artistic movements, and cultural history. In this regard, style functions as a “meaning-template” that enables individuals to reconcile their preferences with the society’s prevailing cultural norms.

In recent decades, the global garment industry has experienced a model of synergy between religion and modernity with the emergence of “Halal Fashion.” Halal fashion is fundamentally a collection of ethical and aesthetic principles that are rooted in Islamic teachings and are designed to strike a balance between creativity, elegance, and modesty (*Haya*). Halal fashion proves that design can exhibit high artistic quality and visual innovation while maintaining modesty and chastity, in contrast to superficial perceptions that regard Islamic dress as a constraint on creativity. Furthermore, halal fashion is a cultural and semantic framework that perpetuates religious principles through contemporary styles.

This research aims to examine the relationship between taste, style, and halal fashion within the context of cultural identity representation, as outlined by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984) posits that taste is a manifestation of cultural capital, a collection of dispositions and inclinations that are developed during the socialization process and serve as a catalyst for class and cultural distinction. Consequently, the selection of attire is not a purely individual decision, but a cultural act that acquires significance within social fields and power structures. The central question of this article is: How can Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital and an anthropological approach be used to elucidate the relationship between taste and style in halal fashion design in a manner that achieves a balance between modesty, identity, and creativity?

Methodology

The research employs a qualitative and analytical approach, utilizing interpretive cultural anthropology to re-examine the meanings of clothing and design. Initially, the concept of halal

fashion was extracted across three levels of meaning: 1) the ethical level (modesty, responsibility, and chastity), 2) the aesthetic level (the combination of form, color, and texture in interaction with modesty), and 3) the social level (the representation of identity and cultural distinction) with the help of documents, specialized literature, and Islamic fashion design samples.

Bourdieu's theory of various capitals (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) provided the analytical foundation for the second stage, which aimed to elucidate the intersection of these capitals in the selection of dress styles. The theoretical comparison method was employed to analyze the data. Halal fashion design samples from Muslim countries, specifically the United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Iran, were projected onto the theoretical concepts of cultural capital to identify common patterns and significant differences. The investigation of the process of style production and the evolution of taste in halal clothing is facilitated by this approach, which is cultural in nature rather than solely economic or consumerist.

Findings

The data analysis revealed that halal fashion is composed of three semantic layers, each of which interacts with cultural capital in a unique manner.

Initially, religious values, including modesty and chastity, are of paramount importance in **the normative stratum**. Clothing is employed by individuals with a greater religious conviction to symbolize their moral convictions in accordance with religious regulations that emphasize "piety-centeredness" (Taqwa). Despite the fact that this decision appears to be personal, it is rooted in the internalization of religious cultural norms and is regarded as a component of the symbolic capital of Islamic society.

Secondly, halal fashion offers a platform for the reinterpretation of Islamic aesthetics in the **aesthetic layer**. The intentional integration of piety and beauty is evidenced by the utilization of natural fabrics, soft hues, geometric lines, and modest forms. These components elevate fashion design from a technical perspective to a cultural one, imbuing it with significance. At this level, designers utilize their design expertise and respect for religious values to develop styles that are visually appealing and artistically diverse, while maintaining decorum.

Third, the **socio-economic layer's** findings corroborate that halal fashion has become a social and economic field in Muslim societies. The emergence of specialized Islamic clothing brands and the expansion of online halal fashion platforms suggest that this fashion is not solely a matter of faith, but also a consequence of social distinction strategies and cultural competition. Individuals with greater cultural capital are capable of integrating religious and contemporary elements to produce designs that are both authentic and global, thereby facilitating the representation of Islamic identity on a global scale.

The examination of the interaction between taste and style revealed that individual taste in halal fashion operates in two semantic fields simultaneously: the religious field, which prioritizes the preservation of moral norms and modesty, and the cultural field, which promotes social distinction and creativity. Consequently, halal fashion enables the "negotiation of values," allowing designers and consumers to incorporate religious teachings into contemporary forms without compromising the fundamental concept of modesty.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings suggest that halal fashion, a multifaceted cultural phenomenon, has developed into a symbolic mechanism for identity representation, transcending sartorial and jurisprudential (*Fiqh*) requirements. Theoretically, the results are consistent with Bourdieu's perspective, as they illustrate that the preference for Islamic attire is not solely a matter of personal preference, but rather a reflection of social position and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). In other words, the objective and aesthetic embodiment of cultural and religious values in a society that interacts with global fashion is known as halal style in fashion design.

Halal fashion is a type of active cultural capital that is produced and redistributed by specific groups with higher education and cultural awareness. It is an analytical concept. These organizations distinguish themselves from other consumers by employing religious insight and design knowledge to develop distinctive styles. Therefore, taste in halal fashion is a cultural act that is shaped by the interaction of religion, the market, and art.

This phenomenon is indicative of the symbolic globalization of Islam from an anthropological standpoint. In a variety of countries, Muslim men and women employ apparel to establish a multilayered identity that is both culturally interconnected and consistent with their religious beliefs. Halal fashion has been elevated to the forefront of cultural and artistic discourses as a result of this amalgamation of “modesty and beauty.”

In conclusion, halal fashion design is successful and sustainable when it is able to maintain a proper balance of four fundamental elements: modesty, elegance, identity-centeredness, and creativity. Halal fashion has the potential to establish a meaningful connection between individual aesthetics and ethical-cultural frameworks by standardizing indigenous designs and reproducing cultural meanings. The analysis of the interaction between religious values, luxury, and cultural capital also demonstrates how the preferences of Muslim consumers are influenced by cultural and symbolic fields, and how designers emulate these preferences within contemporary aesthetics. Therefore, halal fashion is not merely a manner of clothing; it is a mechanism for the activation of cultural capital, identity-building, and cultural distinction in the modern world.

Conflict of Interest

The author certifies that there are no financial, organizational, or personal conflicts of interest in conducting this research.

Keywords

Cultural Capital, Dress Style, Halal Fashion, Identity, Taste.