

**HIJAB IN THE CITY: DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATION OF
FEMALE MODESTY IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY
MALAYSIAN MEDIA**

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**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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MALAYSIAN MEDIA**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the evolving cultural identity of Malay-Muslim women through the hijab; or the act of veiling, from discursive representation of female modesty in Malaysian media. At present, women in many Muslim-majority countries are embracing the hijab as a public symbol of their faith, thus, establishing the garment as a form of worship. Furthermore, the hijab conveyed solidarity against Islamophobia after 9/11 and is symbolic in renouncing Western imperialism in social, political and economic developments. However, scholars argued that the globalization of Islam had commodified the hijab and objectified veiled women for fashion in mainstream Malaysian media (Hochel, 2013; Wok & Mohd, 2008). This phenomenon is reinforced by conversations of the hijab in social media sphere that connect like-minded audiences. As a result, modern representations of the hijab is observed to have shifted the focus of religiosity of the hijab towards the push of Islamic cosmopolitanism and produced constructs for cultural and material consumption for Malay-Muslim women who wear them. This study explored the role of selected contemporary media in renewing public practices of the hijab through displays of liberated, Islamic womanhood by Malay-Muslims. The works of Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) on Uses and Gratifications are drawn upon as a foundation to explore patterns of hijab representation in media, followed by the postmodern Double Bind Theory to examine negotiations of hijab practice from the media user perspective; in addition to Giddens' duality of structure (1984) that discussed systemic patterns of change through assimilation of the hijab as an identifier of "Malay-Muslimness". Further to this, the study conducted analyses on Malay lifestyle magazines *Hijabista*, *EH!* and *Wanita* to examine hijab-wearing discourse in contemporary media content. Secondly,

social media conversations on entertainment blog; *Beautiful Nara*, were examined to understand how Malaysian audiences negotiate the meanings of the hijab presented to them. Thirdly, data was gathered from an online opinion column written by journalist *Dina Zaman*, followed by interviews with media practitioners to analyze the permeation of hijab culture as an identity for Malay-Muslims. Findings of this study suggested that the hijab phenomenon had shaped an egalitarian Malay-Muslim structure that is adaptive to Islamic cosmopolitanism. The research questions lead to how selected contemporary media created awareness and appreciation of the hijab among educated, affluent and urban media audiences. Full control of their knowledge consumption is achieved when they are selective of their participation in the public discourse of hijab. Aside from empowerment, agency of communal experience within the media sphere saw relatability of role models that validated the practice of hijab for Malaysian media consumers. Additionally, their sense of belonging as well as differentiation in a vast, multi-ethnic society contributed to the growing share of hijab voices in media, encouraging transnational opportunities of a unique, Malaysian subculture that are mediated by global media flows of Islam.

Keywords: hijab, cultural identity, media representation, commodification, media flows

HIJAB IN THE CITY: DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE MODESTY IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIAN MEDIA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelami perkembangan identiti budaya wanita Melayu-Islam yang lazimnya dipaparkan berhijab; atau bertudung di media massa tempatan. Sekarang ini semakin ramai wanita dari negara-negara yang majoriti penduduknya beragama Islam mengenakan hijab sebagai simbolik keyakinan mereka terhadap agama dan sekaligus meletakkan hijab sebagai pengukuh iman mereka. Dengan ini, hijab dianggap sebagai solidariti menentang Islamophobia selepas kejadian 9/11 dan menghakis imperialisme Barat dalam pembangunan sosial, politik dan ekonomi. Namun, cendiakiawan berpendapat bahawa globalisasi Islam telah mewujudkan komodifikasi hijab dengan mengeksploitasi wanita bertudung dengan fesyen melalui aliran teras media Malaysia (Hochel, 2013; Wok & Mohd, 2008). Fenomena ini diperkuatkan lagi apabila isu ini menjadi bualan pengguna media sosial dan menghubungkan mereka yang mempunyai kecenderungan yang sama. Hasil pemodenan identiti wanita Melayu-Islam ini menampakkan kurangnya unsur agama, malah kosmopolitanisme Islam telah menonjolkan budaya konsumerisme yang lebih materialistik. Kajian ini mendalami peranan media dalam memperbaharui amalan berhijab secara umum melalui perwakilan wanita Melayu-Islam yang lebih liberal namun masih mementingkan batas agama di media massa. Asas teori untuk mengkaji penggunaan media ini telah di adaptasi dari model Uses and Gratifications oleh Katz, Blumler dan Gurevitch (1974); di ikuti oleh Double Bind Theory (Jamieson, 1995), untuk mendalami perundingan konsep hijab dari aspek pengguna media; manakala 'duality of structure' Giddens (1984) membincangkan corak perubahan sosial secara sistematik yang relevan kepada kajian. Selain itu, kajian ini menganalisa majalah gaya hidup Melayu berjudul *Hijabista*, *EH!* dan *Wanita* untuk

mengenalpasti kandungan yang mengulas dan mengalakkan penggunaan hijab dalam media kontemporari. Kedua, perbualan media sosial di blog hiburan Beautiful Nara telah dikaji untuk memahami bagaimana pengguna media merunding maksud-maksud disebalik kewujudan fenomena hijab. Ketiga, data telah dikumpul dari kolum pendapat Dina Zaman, berserta dengan temubual bersama pengamal-pengamal media untuk menganalisa penularan budaya hijab sebagai identiti Melayu-Islam. Penemuan kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa fenomena hijab telah membentuk struktur sosial eksklusif yang dipengaruhi kosmopolitanisme Islam. Soalan-soalan kajian telah menemui peranan media kontemporari yang mewujudkan kesedaran menutup aurat di kalangan wanita Melayu-Islam urban yang berpendidikan dan berstatus tinggi. Keupayaan untuk memperoleh pengetahuan agama melalui pemilihan arus media yang digemari membolehkan pengguna media berinteraksi dan membincangkan isu-isu hijab dengan masyarakat umum. Selain diperkuasakan agensi pengalaman komunal pengguna di media, selebriti yang menjadi pelopor pemakaian hijab juga membuatkan hijab sebagai satu praktis yang lebih relevan. Tambahan pula, pembezaan wanita Melayu-Islam yang berhijab dikalangan masyarakat yang majmuk menampakkan peluang untuk memperluaskan sisi transnasional kelompok budaya Malaysia yang unik ini walaupun dipengaruhi oleh tren media global.

Katakunci: hijab, identity budaya, pembentangan media, komodifikasi, aliran media

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of Research.....	1
1.2 Postcolonial Dilemmas of Malay-Muslim Women	5
1.2.1 The New Economic Policy and the New Malays	6
1.2.2 Integrating Islam and Modesty in Malaysian Media	9
1.2.3 Case Studies: Glocalization of the Hijab	11
1.2.3.1 Coming to Terms with the “Malaynnials”	11
1.2.3.2 The Hijab in Cultural and Material Consumption.....	15
1.2.3.3 Integrating the Hijab with Product Marketing	20
1.3 Problem Statement.....	23
1.4 Significance of Study.....	26
1.5 Research Aims and Objectives	26
1.5.1 Theoretical Framework	28
1.5.2 Research Methodology.....	31
1.5.3 Research Instrument	32
1.5.4 Potential Limitation.....	34
1.6 Organization of Chapters	35
1.7 Conclusion	36

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	37
2.1 Introduction.....	37
2.2 Media Appropriation of the Hijab	40
2.3 Deconstructing the Hijab as a Postmodern Cultural Identity	43
2.3.1 Female Modesty and Discrimination	45
2.3.2 The Socialization Hijabi Girl in Isolation	47
2.3.3 Extensions of the Modern Hijab into Intersectionality of Muslim Youths	49
2.4 Transnationalization and Hybridity of Veiling.....	52
2.5 Purporting the Hijab in Fashion and Beauty	57
2.6 “Glocalizing” the Hijab in the Malaysian Context.....	59
2.7 Empowering Malay-Muslim Women through the Hijab.....	64
2.8 Theoretical Implications on the Media as Means of Self-Efficacy.....	68
2.9 Discussion and Conclusion	73
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	77
3.1 Introduction.....	77
3.2 Media Use in Cultural Research	79
3.3 Qualitative Research Design – Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)	80
3.3.1 Triangulation in Analysis.....	83
3.4 Research Design and Instrumentation.....	84
3.4.1 Pilot Study – Online Questionnaire & Findings	85
3.4.2 Units of Analysis.....	86
3.4.2.1 Unit Analysis 1: Magazines – Representations of female modesty practiced in selected contemporary Malaysian media.....	87
3.4.2.2 Unit Analysis 2: Online Entertainment Blog – Negotiating the meanings of the hijab in contemporary Malaysian media	90
3.4.2.3 Unit Analysis 3: Online Column & Interviews – Representations of the hijab as Malay-Muslim identity.....	92
3.4.3 Data Collection and Management.....	94

3.4.4 Data Analysis	98
3.4.4.1 Coding Frames	99
3.5 Critiques on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA).....	101
3.5.1 Comparisons with Critical Discourse Analysis	103
3.6 Reliability.....	104
3.7 Validity of Data.....	106
3.8 Discussion and Conclusion	107
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	108
4.1 Introduction.....	108
4.2 Pilot Study Results.....	109
4.3 Dimensions of Coding	112
4.4 Cumulative Frequency of Codes	118
4.5 Analyses of Coding Frames.....	121
4.5.1 Influence – Learning and Applying	122
4.5.1.1 Information Seeking.....	123
4.5.1.2 Increase in Self-Worth	128
4.5.1.3 Socialization.....	138
4.5.2 Perceptions - Construct of Modesty and its Value in Society.....	141
4.5.2.1 Agency	142
4.5.2.2 Misleading Piety	145
4.5.2.3 Current Trend.....	147
4.5.3 Relationship – Structuring Hijab Representations as Cultural Identity for Malay-Muslim Women.....	150
4.5.3.1 Content Commodification.....	151
4.5.3.2 Transformation.....	154
4.5.3.3 Malay-Muslimness.....	156
4.5.4 Emergent Themes.....	159
4.5.4.1 Standards of Beauty	159
4.5.4.2 Sexualization	162
4.5.4.3 Technological Determinism.....	163

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	166
5.1 Conceptual Framework	166
5.1.1 The Media Savvy Malay-Muslims	168
5.1.2 Negotiating Hijab Representation in Malaysian media	172
5.1.3 Managing a Permanent Structure of the “Malaynnials”	173
5.2 Theoretical Implications & Future Research	177
5.3 Conclusion	178
REFERENCES.....	180
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS PRESENTED	203
APPENDIX.....	204

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: The ASTRO Universe definition and breakdown of the “Malaynnials”	13
Figure 1.2: Yuna, ambassador for Hana Tajima (right) in her campaign for international Japanese brand, Uniqlo (Malay Mail Online, 2015).....	16
Figure 1.3: Theoretical framework on representation of female modesty in contemporary Malaysian media	30
Figure 4.1: Coding frames based on Uses and Gratifications model.....	113
Figure 4.2: Coding frames based on Postfeminist Double Bind Theory	114
Figure 4.3: Coding frames based on Structuration Theory	116
Figure 4.4: Wordcloud of codes generated from ATLAS.ti hermeneutic unit	122
Figure 4.5: Dato’ Siti Nurhaliza as the cover of Hijabista magazine, speaking on her transition	127
Figure 4.6: The first anniversary issue focused on “mogul idols” and their tips for success	129
Figure 4.7: Neelofa as featured on the cover of Wanita magazine	131
Figure 4.8: Yuna on the cover of EH! magazine in her discussion about challenges of a career in showbusiness.....	133
Figure 4.9: Discursive representation of female modesty practiced in contemporary Malaysian media	140
Figure 4.10: Negotiations of hijab meanings from the representation of female modesty in Malaysian media	150
Figure 4.11: Sunsilk shampoo brand is featured in Hijabista magazine in a product placement.....	152

Figure 4.12: Hijab representation as a form of cultural identity for Malay-Muslim

women..... 159

Figure 5.1 : Conceptual framework of female modesty representation in selected

contemporary Malaysian media 166

University of Malaya

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Units of analysis for data coding	87
Table 3.2: Comparisons of advertising revenue between the selected units of analysis for women's lifestyle and hijab magazines as at 2016	89
Table 3.3: Coding stages conducted during data analysis.....	106
Table 4.1: Cumulative frequency of codes	118
Table 4.2: Cumulative frequency of codes in different media platforms	120

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABIM	:	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia
ASTRO	:	All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator
ATLAS.ti	:	Qualitative Data Analysis Software
BN	:	Barisan Nasional
CAQDAS	:	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CDA	:	Critical Discourse Analysis
DKNY	:	Donna Karan New York
GEN X	:	Generation X
GEN Y	:	Generation Y
GLOKAL	:	Globalized Locals
HYPPTV	:	IPTV by Telekom Malaysia
IKIM	:	Institut Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
MMC	:	Muslim-majority Country
MYR	:	Malaysian Ringgit
NEP	:	New Economic Policy
OIC	:	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PAS	:	Pan Islamic Malaysian Party
PDF	:	Printer Definition File
QCA	:	Qualitative Content Analysis
SIS	:	Sisters in Islam
SNS	:	Social Networking Sites
TV3	:	Sistem Television Malaysia Berhad
TV9	:	Channel 9
TVAH	:	TV Alhijrah

U&G	:	Uses and Gratifications
UMNO	:	United Malay National Front
UK	:	United Kingdom
USD	:	United States Dollar
YSL	:	Yves Saint Laurent

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

There are approximately 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide including non-Arabic countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Turkey (Sechzer, 2004). The word “Islam” itself conveys the meaning “submission” where surrendering to God is true worship as a Muslim and as such, women in Islam are embracing the *hijab* or “act of veiling” as a public representation of their faith (Shirvani, 2007). According to the Holy Quran, modest dressing identifies a female Muslim as a believer of Islam as deliberated in Surah An-Nur and differentiates her from other women. This motion of “cloaking” is regarded as a form of worship, and by virtue, limits a Muslim woman’s freedom to socialize.

“... And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty...” (Quran 24:31; Ali al-Hasimi & al-Kaṭṭab, 2005, p.73).

The Quranic commendation on the matters of modesty was not explicit in its definition as the concept during its inception in early Islamic Arabia was enforced to reduce unwanted attention or harassment in its male-dominated society, thus diminishing the role of women as the spread of Islam strengthened throughout many regions (Hoodfar, 1993; Abu-Lughod, 2001). The inclination towards the *hijab* created a secluded view for Muslim women and increased the dominance of men even though the desire to veil is seen as an exemplification of wives to the Prophet Muhammad.

On the other hand, the practice of modesty in each Islamic state is predisposed to local cultures and contrasting viewpoints on their womenfolk. The varying interpretations on the hijab practiced by Muslim women established two extremes. The first known modern form of moral policing can be seen from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 through the integration of religious teachings in the daily administration of political systems and government bodies. While the resurgence saw a more visible representation of Islam, Sechzer (2004, p.271) observed staple uniforms of scarves, robes, and long dresses for Iranian women that had taken a toll on their social lives and careers following tightened regulations on modest wear. Moreover, Muslim women in Iran are hindered from partaking in many public activities or authoritative roles as their garments are deemed unsuitable (Anatomy of a coverup, 2003). The enforcement of Islam in practicing societies imposed a protective structure of political activism and sharia laws that closely scrutinized its women. Within this context, Muslim women are expected appear as role models that abstain from impurities in order to sustain social order.

The second extreme sees hijab as a liberator through the hybrid of Muslim identity and modernization. In contradiction to the first scenario, this convergence stemmed from the access to knowledge and emancipated women from their traditional roles in the household. Turkey is one of many countries apart from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan that sought to re-introduce the important roles of women in its revived Islamic societies. Borthwick (1984) asserted that implementation of English education produced a movement of elitist Muslim women that advocated knowledge as the key to free Muslim's women from oppression, and to thrive in Islamic modernism. Borthwick's argument is pertinent to the power of media content that comes to play, where the access to fleeting information created a deepened understanding of the garment and is internalized within structures of an urban societies that provided Muslim women with voices to progress with the changing times.

Politics of Piety (Mahmood, 2011) visited the pivotal role of veiled women in communicating religion at a time where the hijab in the 1990s was only starting to make headway. In Egypt, “piety movements” in local mosques that are lead mostly by women struggled to create differentiation of Muslim females from others. In the media, the hijab became the “cultivation of these bodily aptitudes, virtues, habits, and desires that serves to ground Islamic principles within the practices of everyday living” (p.45). Another wave of resurgence for Muslim women emerged amidst the Islamophobia brought forth by the 9/11 incidents, where identification as a Muslim through the hijab has turned to waves of solidarity. As a result, negative perceptions upon Islam have created a stronger need for hijab visibility. At this point, women who veil are no longer passive in public sphere. They are seen travelling, becoming active consumers of popular media, interacting, and exchanging new information while becoming more noticeable and intellectual in public discourse (Moore, 2000).

At present, the global reification of the hijab as a feminine Islamic identity had transcended upon urban Malaysian women. In this Islamic nation state, the hijab is more commonly associated with Malay women who are born Muslims under the Federal Constitution (Yang & Ishak, 2011). Hence, the hijab remains a choice to the wearer because it is unchartered under Malaysian sharia laws. The practice of “moderate Islam” in the country is widely received compared to its more extreme Muslim counterparts in the Arab peninsula, even though social movements exist to demand secularism¹ and spark multitudes of Islamic debates² (Sheetz-Nguyen, 2007). Further to this, Aziz & Shamsul,

¹ Sisters in Islam (SIS) is filing a judicial review on a fatwa declaring SIS and other bodies that promote religious liberalism and plurality as deviant to the teachings of Islam - <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/muslim-womens-group-to-challenge-fatwa-against-liberalism-pluralism>

² Prominent political figures are criticizing the move on “witch-hunting” social movements that promote liberal Islam. See <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/wrong-to-ban-sis-allow-different-views-anwar-urges-muslim-authorities>

(2004) suggested that successful socio-economic growth and political stability in Malaysia is attributed to attempts at harmonizing ties with both Muslims and non-Muslims, whilst still maintaining the position as a focal member of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). On the forefront, tourism advertisements portrayed Kuala Lumpur as a cosmopolitan city that integrated Islamic values with recurring images of Malay-Muslim women in hijab among models of other ethnicities in cultural wear (Dłużewska, 2008). This image of modesty through “Malay-ness” signified accessibility to the practice of Islamic lifestyle for audiences from Muslim-majority countries after the media onslaught of 9/11 created cause for concern on the perception and treatment of Muslims worldwide. Consequently, Malay-Muslim women in these hijab representations became the façade to strengthen the stance of Malays as pivotal spokespersons of Islamic teachings.

This study revealed several insights on how Malaysian media shaped audience behaviors and attitudes towards the hijab; of which its significance is reframed through its representations by Malay-Muslim women. In addition, purposive and frequent exposure upon this renewed cultural identity on different media platforms presented opportunities to increase self-worth and shape self-actualization of media audiences. Therefore, the media is regarded as a prime source in promoting religious awareness, including modesty. However, considering its multi-ethnic population and the decree that veiling is not mandatory among Muslim women in Malaysia, hijab-centric content is inconsistent in its competition with clutter of Western materials, subsequently putting the importance of modesty on lower priority.

In 2015, the growth of magazine titles and the ever-changing landscape of the Internet ranked among the highest in media reach amongst the 20-29 age group at 18% each, despite threats that emerge from alternative media contents available from the Internet

itself (Perception Media, 2016). There is a general assumption that traditional media such as print, in particular, has become obsolete in its delivery of information to the masses; but findings of this studies have proved otherwise. In fact, the relationship between old and new media is imperative in complimenting each other and validating ideas to unreserved audiences. In comparison to the last few decades of stereotyping veiling as a practice for rural Malay women, the emergence of the hijab in media is currently becoming more appealing to urban Malay-Muslim women. The increase of veiled Malay-Muslim women from this segment can be largely attributed to media content that have become more creative in hijab-related marketing and the reinstatement of its significance to the identity of Malays that dominate the entertainment media sphere.

Nevertheless, findings of this study also saw debates on social and religious values in relations to how the hijab was thrust as a privilege for the urban community, rather than an obligation to appear as a modest Muslim woman. Therefore, opportunities for the media to become a more effective bearer of morals in these messages while reflecting upon sociopolitical and economical changes have become greater through the hijab as a denominator of piety.

1.2 Postcolonial Dilemmas of Malay-Muslim Women

In the decades that followed Malaysian independence, local media presented a slew of mixed messages where Malay-Muslim women are either liberated with Western schools of thought, or overzealous in their Islamic faith. What authenticates the hijab continue to be contested through various media platforms, positioning the hijab as both liberator and oppressor of Malay-Muslim women. Similarly, the identity of the Malay-Muslim woman in Malaysia experienced construction and de-construction that are predisposed to evolving consumer markets and changes in social strata. Initially, Malay women displayed strong colonial attachments where modern clothing of skin-baring garments

and revolutionary hairstyles were perceived are symbols of progression that are at par with first world countries (Khalid & O'Connor 2011). In effect, a Malay female wearing the *tudung* or known as “covering”; as how the veil was described in its earliest inception in Malaysia, yielded the profile of backwards and lower-educated women from the village. Religious teachings are rooted in family upbringing that included control of how they should ideally dress and act (Ong, 1990). Women belonging to these Islamic-structured and largely patriarchal families are usually found outside the city areas where fast-developing media access are scarce.

At present, there is an integration of the two viewpoints through the subculture of the *hijabi*³, an increasingly popular global term to describe women who embrace the hijab and believe fashion and faith can coalesce despite the polar philosophies. This renaissance of “hijabism” is thought to allow a Muslim woman to achieve her true potential despite her veil. In Malaysia, the hijabi is a recursive pattern of pious yet fashionable “hipsters” that are in tune with popular trends, also known as *hijabsters* (Baharuddin, 2011). Further to this, Hassim (2014) pointed out the convergence of veiling and fashion with rapid developments of socio-economy created progressive ideals of womanhood where veiling had been reconstructed as a “power suit” where women in hijab can be active participants of the society similar to their non-veiled counterparts.

1.2.1 The New Economic Policy and the New Malays

The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1970-1990) ultimately shaped the stakes of the *bumiputera* or “sons of the soil”; the original settlers of the land, that it encouraged Malay women to move out into the city to attain better quality of life through

³ The reference to hijabis and hijabsters are becoming increasingly popular: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/09/hijabi-hipsters_n_5961154.html

job opportunities available to them (Ong, 1990; Nain & Kim, 2004). In doing so, it encouraged the adaptation of more broad-minded lifestyles influenced by Western ideals. The transformative impact of the NEP revealed modern middle-class Malays who are eager to embrace the cosmopolitanism of a new industrialized economy. Consequently, the practice of veiling among Malay women dwindled among urban dwellers and wearing hijab in the city is considered an extremity associated with piety. Those who *do* veil liken the hijab to a second phase in life; associating it with responsibilities as a wife or mother to pledge loyalty to their husbands, in addition to being role models to their children. At most, these milestones are achieved during later stages of life thus expectations for urban Malay women to cover themselves is usually after reaching a certain age.

In response to Muslim reforms in the Middle East and neighboring Indonesia that boasts the largest Muslim population in the world to date⁴, the hijab became a tool of cultural change and as a powerful element of identification among affluent social groups (Beta & Hum, 2011). Although the NEP inculcated the desire to mobilize women in their social structure, there were concerns to fully “Islamize” the Malaysian nation state through various political and governing bodies. The making of the Constitution saw need to serve the interests of diverse cultural backgrounds among all its people which challenged opposition party PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) leaders’ aims to sustain Islam as the supreme principle among the people together with ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia) that surfaced with educated and sharia-centric Islamists (Othman, 2008). Moreover, Khoo (2006, p.89) observed that media messages continued to enculturate the

⁴ Perwita, A. A. B. (2007). Indonesia and the Muslim World: Between Islam and Secularism in the Foreign Policy of Soeharto and Beyond. Copenhagen: NIAS.

Malaysian society with Malay-Muslim behavior, such as the call for prayers that are played five times a day on television and forms of Islamic dress in print media content.

Nevertheless, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia introduced “Vision 2020” that strived for globalized Muslims in the interest of Malaysian social and economic growth that was also seen as a form of “counter-Islamization” (Othman, 2008). Policies on print and broadcast materials were tightened and re-introduced moderate Malay-Muslim women. Khoo (2006, p.84) had earlier argued that the fluctuations in the identity of the Malay-Muslim woman are seen through her shoulder-baring sarongs (*berkemban*). These imageries that were observed in contemporary filmmaking during Mahathir’s era illustrated un-Islamic, raw sexuality that is essential in projecting “Malay” femininity. It was established that this “weaker”, more conservative Malay woman is demure, soft-spoken and covers her hair partially or fully, yet it is most undesirable. Khoo contended that this disparate construct helped catapult depictions of westernized women in the media that are strong, able to make career choices, handle emotional relationships and have the freedom to choose a partner or spouse. Even so, these cultural tensions on gender and sexuality mostly emphasized in in entertainment media quickly revert to the “Islamized” Malay-Muslim women of the 1990s in the end, including films and literary texts (Khoo, 2006; Hashim, 2011).

“Framed within the discourses of modernity and Islam, Malay women must eschew their desires and sexuality and must return to Islamic ideals of morality and propriety” (Hashim, 2011, p.373).

Following varied constructs of transformative Islam among Malay-Muslim women, concerns for a more moderate state saw Sisters in Islam (SIS)⁵ conceptualizing the religion to respect a woman's right and dismiss autonomy of the sharia law. As discussed by Othman (2006), the agenda of SIS was to obliterate misogyny against Muslim women and to increase their moral autonomy. This included the right of independent expression; debunking debates that suggest ignoring the hijab is the ultimate source of social chaos by extremists PAS (Parti Islam Semalaysia).

“As repeatedly stressed in the Al-Qur'an, there should be no compulsion in religion (Surah al-Baqarah 2:256, Surah Yunus 10:99-100, Surah al-Ghashiyah 88:22). The decision to cover or not cover one's head therefore, remains the sovereign choice of the individual, not any external human authority under any pretext.”

(Sisters in Islam, 2006)

In the aspect of modesty, SIS believes that interpretations of the Quran meant concealing nakedness and dressing well for worship; and where it is not espoused upon a follower of the religion other than God-consciousness. Ultimately, the decision to embrace female modesty is not dictated by moral policing but a choice that is exclusive for every Muslim, particularly in Malaysia.

1.2.2 Integrating Islam and Modesty in Malaysian Media

Several economic and political crises, namely the East Asian economic downfall and the Anwar scandal⁶ caused the disallowing of liberalized or free speech that criticized

⁵ SIS was established by female lawyers to create social reform for justice and equality in women's rights in 1987.

⁶ Former Malaysia Deputy Prime Minister who was charged with several accusations of ethical and sexual misconduct in 1997, inadvertently changing political media landscape and control today (Kim, 1998, p.79)

the government in the press and broadcast media. Inadvertently, this restriction during the period of Mahathir's administration as the Prime Minister from 1980 to 2000s in the earlier mentioned Vision 2020 remarkably encouraged growth under the privatization policy. New ideas for media content flourished in efforts to appear as a modernized and dynamic Islamic nation despite experiencing limitation in expression. The ruling party determined the genre of content should appeal with pro-Malay content under a set guideline. New technologies such as satellite television station ASTRO emerged in 1996, whilst the press, such as Utusan Melayu Group continued to thrive under the constituency of UMNO (United Malays National Organization) and saw a trend of industry-standard media commercialization concentrated high Malay viewership (Kim, 1998; Nain & Kim, 2004). This new wave of media capitalism served to benefit *Bumiputera* (indigenous) businesses and fed audiences with Malay-centred information that dictated social expectations.

The connection of Malays with the developing state continued to present a quandary of Malay-Muslim womanhood, enhanced with the succession of Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia who further initiated the concept of *Islam Hadhari*; emphasizing on the idea of Islamic "progressiveness" as a major part of the national administrative governance (Ahmad & Rahman, 2001; Chong, 2006). The core of this Islamic philosophy are largely streamlined content to suit this vision and later redefined with transition of governance to the sixth Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak in 2008. Policies at present concentrate on building communities from creativity and innovation, independence and integration with the 1Malaysia concept that promotes unity and openness in communication (Abdul Latif, Wan Mahmud, & Salman, 2013). According to Hassim (2014) and Martin (2014), the Malay-Muslims are integral in nation-building and identity development even though postcolonial ties predispose them to imperialism that increase self-expression among female bodies. More importantly,

hijab personification created a generalized representation of the Malay-Muslim womanhood that in turn prompted audiences to seek references in media that connect them to their commitments of piety.

1.2.3 Case Studies: Glocalization of the Hijab

From the Malaysian media standpoint, there appears to be Muslim-centred representations that are part of recursive discourse on the new breed of hijab wearers. The Malay Mail Online columnist, Dina Zaman wrote candidly about her encounters and opinions of Malay-Muslim *hijabis* in Malaysia and their grueling push towards being known and accepted as creative and expressive beings. In a thought-provoking article entitled “Hijabi Pole Dancers and Then Some” (Zaman, 2013c), the eccentricities of young and veiled Malay-Muslims are highlighted through the dominance of print media and virality of the world wide web; enabling the sharing of veiling experiences with other media audiences. While these practices are less than conventional symbolisms of the hijab, Zaman noted that the crux of the matter remained objective in promoting modesty and protection for the female gender. This instance of Zaman’s pole dancers described unusual practices that may seem farfetched, but the normalization of Malaysian globalized hijabis is more congruent than what we may have thought. In the next few sections, it was established that the Malaysian media is coherent in outlining the hijab as a formal representation of Malay to uphold Islamization through gendered construct of the veil. This “strategy” of cultural consumption can be seen as a reactive relationship, where contestations of hijab modernity become parallel to visions of Malay-Muslimness and are relatable to the media audiences’ beliefs.

1.2.3.1 Coming to Terms with the “Malaynnials”

The connection to Zaman’s earlier report on modernized Muslims and normalizing of their liberal acts can be seen in present acknowledgements of these unique Malay-

Muslims in mainstream media. It was established that Malay-Muslims are shifting gears where they are defined more as globalized individuals that receive higher education, highly adventurous and claim that religion is all about experientialism (ASTRO Universe, 2016). In the article by Marketing Magazine (2016b), the “Malaynnials”, as they are dubbed by renowned Malaysian media conglomerate ASTRO, make up 10.3 million or 65% of progressive Malay audiences are currently the biggest consumer segment in the country. To capitalize on this opportunity, ASTRO embarked on an “ASTRO Universe Campaign” on 28 March 2016 and coined the term “Malaynnials” as a hybrid of “Millennials” or Generation Y aged 18-35 years old (Marketing Magazine, 2016c). As the market is evolving, ASTRO Vice President of Malay Language Business, Khairul Anuar Salleh found it imperative that ASTRO engage with its audiences in new and different ways; reaching existing and potential viewers on television, radio and social media where currently 83% of Malay households and 74% of total Malay radio listeners (Dhesi, 2016).

Further to the findings by ASTRO Universe (2016), other definitions of the Malaynnials included the “Mipsters” that signified growth of the “hipster” culture, where bohemian Malay youths who appreciate art and culture are affluent in their social circles. What is interesting this 41% of the Malay segment highlighted are the “Idola” or young role models that set the tone for other religiosity-inclined youths in the community where their actions and behaviour become exemplification to other young Malay-Muslims that in turn gather followers in a domino effect.

GET TO KNOW THE MALAYNNIALS

Your biggest and most lucrative market segment on Astro

The Malay market has evolved into a millennial group of savvy consumers, influenced by the digital age and social media culture. They are go getters who take charge and make things happen. 65% of them are under 35 years old.

10 behavioural traits



From traditionalists to trendsetters, we know them all. With our profile insights and relevant content, Astro is your best platform to reach and win over the Malaynnials. Think Malaynnials, think Astro.

To #GoGet the Malaynnials for your brand, contact Nicholas Teh at 03 9543 6688 ext. 8652 or nicholas_teh@astro.com.my

Figure 1.1: The ASTRO Universe definition and breakdown of the "Malaynnials"

It can be seen from Figure 1.1 that the Malaynnials comprise of Malay-Muslim consumers who are; to a great extent, in control of their media usage in the process of developing their individual style and identity. The hashtag described in the figure that begins with #GoGet acknowledged that the said audiences are selective in their quest for information and new knowledge as they are entitled to their own gratifications as a

Malaynnial from the excess of media platforms available to them. Aside from being increasingly educated and technologically savvy, Malay-Muslims are becoming more receptive towards international trends.

Another survey explained that 63% of the urban Malay-Muslim media consumers identify themselves as progressive and global in their outlook while also having local sensibilities (ASTRO Universe, 2016). The self-proclaimed “glokals” have religion as a big part in their lives and their yearning to become acknowledged for their presence is a top priority. Among the outstanding *#GoGet* behavioural traits that can be seen from the manifestation of the Malaynnials include *#GoGetNoticed* that assumed that the perceptions of others play a major part in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of young Malay-Muslims. The survey further described that glocal views on faith range from growing consciousness to experientialism of modern contemporary concepts. In an example illustrated by ASTRO Universe, viewership for Islamic shows doubled where reality programmes such as “Pencetus Ummah”, a show that sought new age clergies through a series of challenges and weekly performances earned about 5.1 million viewers during its run since 2014 until today (2016, p.8). While the show featured male-only contestants, the heavy discourse of modesty on the show reinforced the roles of Malay-Muslim women in the evolving Malaysian media sphere.

Furthermore, the survey also observed the significant increase of veiled women who purchase premium brands while shopping and travelling (ASTRO Universe, 2016). In addition, their material consumption detailed from the *#GoGetRich* hashtag insinuated that Malaynnials are identified from their status affluence regardless of how unconventional the means may be. In brief, the unyielding competition of Islamic cosmopolitanism through marketing in Malaysia may have excluded the working-class and reconstructed the Malay-Muslim identity in the public sphere as a determinant of

social status. This study further reviews the diminishing role of hijab as the observance of faith, whereby audiences' desires of social inclusion is slowly replacing the importance of modesty.

1.2.3.2 The Hijab in Cultural and Material Consumption

An extended illustration of unrelenting growth in Islamic marketing can be seen through the enthusiasm of retail ventures that returned the flows of media content to the East with the goal to cultivate a more urban and bohemian Muslim community. Thomson Reuters presented in its 2014-2015 report that Muslim fashion obtained a worldwide revenue of USD 266 billion from the consumption of clothing and footwear, where the figure should multiply by 2019 (Naib, 2015). International retailers have realized the niche of Muslim female consumers in recent years by customizing clothing lines that embody the hijab for the symbolic garment to be elevated in the high-fashion industry rather than ignored, as can be seen in modest yet luxurious fashion collections from *DKNY*, *Mango* and *Dolce & Gabbana* (Naib, 2015; Agrawal, 2016).

The Asian region is also known to commodify Muslim fashion, so much so that through endorsement of the hijab and Islamic fashion by celebrities and popular clerics in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world; this hub of hijab trends are currently exporting veiling fashion back to the Middle East (Amrullah, 2008). Among the multitudes of modest fashion designers that have emerged from this phenomenon in Indonesia, Dian Pelangi and her Islamic fashion empire was named among the most influential labels in fashion by UK-based magazine, *Business of Fashion*; highlighting unconventional "tie-dye" styles of the hijab which were normally donned by hippies and beachgoers (Mayberry, 2015). While this is the case, the reach of modesty in fashion is not constrained to only Muslim-majority countries. There is significant transnationalization of modest fashion ideas by retailer *Uniqlo* in adapting to the growing number of Muslim

market in Asia. While Uniqlo's products originate from Japan, their garments are manufactured in China, Vietnam and Bangladesh, and their innovative hijab creations were crafted by British-Japanese designer Hana Tajima who introduced her hijab fashion line in collaboration with the company. Yuna, an international icon and Malaysian-born singer who is considered as a role model for Malaysian hijab fashion enthusiasts was chosen to front the worldwide modest fashion campaign called *Uniqlo x Hana Tajima*. Among the objectives for the campaign was to produce clothes that are not only comfortable, but also culturally sensitive (Malay Mail Online, 2015). The fashion line has since been sold in Muslim-majority countries in lines with its AIRism product line.



Figure 1.2: Yuna (centre), ambassador for Hana Tajima (right) in her campaign for international Japanese brand, Uniqlo (Malay Mail Online, 2015)

Prior to the acculturation of Uniqlo to Malaysian lifestyle, Malaysia had already experienced elitism of the hijab through the Islamic branding and positioning of various Malay businesses. An illustration of this would be the homegrown of *Fareeda* brand that locally designed unique hijab patterns, and the first in Malaysia that self-proclaimed their designs only catered to high-end wearers that in the process had incited uproar and

controversies⁷. Even so, the impact of its brand was so significant that each product launch from Fareeda caused riots and long queues among its enthusiastic buyers⁸. In 2013 alone, the company that is run by fashion model Mawar Rashid, obtained a record-breaking revenue of MYR 30 million (USD8mil) revenue (Boo, 2015).

Subsequently, more subdued yet impactful approaches were introduced by two other exclusive hijab brands, specifically *Naelofar Hijab* and *dUckscarves*. Fareeda had earned its place from the fervent use of traditional media advertising and sponsorships through print and broadcast platforms. Not so long from the inception of Fareeda, Naelofar Hijab and dUckscarves both used more relevant business models that engage with media users at close proximity by utilizing the youth market's most popular platform on Instagram. While Mawar Rashid achieved notoriety for her association with Fareeda, the said competitors of Naelofar Hijab and dUckscarves immediately become recognizable because both companies were established by two popular celebrities that are already being followed in social media circles.

In the report by Mayberry (2015), Neelofa Mohd Noor who is a model, actress and television presenter established the Naelofar Hijab business with her family, and now are associated with approximately 700 distributors nationwide in Asian, European and United States through the excess of social media. Inspiration for her business came from her own veiling experience where she finds that many Malaysian audiences believe that only elderly and conservative Muslim females practice the hijab. Similarly, Vivvy Yusof, the

⁷ <http://www.mstar.com.my/hiburan/berita-hiburan/2014/07/03/fitnah-tudung-fareeda/>

⁸ <http://www.utusan.com.my/berita/nasional/kontroversi-tudung-fareeda-bukan-merusuh-pun-fizo-1.208936>

founder of dUckscarves felt that veiling in Malaysia lacked a universal appeal. This led to designing luxurious scarves for professional women whilst also showcasing Malaysian culture on the designs featured.

While social networks enhanced the presence of these hijab brands, traditional media on its own had an influential role in prompting audiences in making changes to their lives, especially in the negotiation of cultural identities. Television and magazines had profound effects on the attitudes and behaviors of urban Malay women where their image is developed from knowledge gathered within their daily media exposure (Wok & Mohd, 2008). With the advent of cable television in Malaysia in the late 1990s that catered to niche audiences, capitalist ideas were enforced through varied entertainment and informative programmes (Nain & Kim, 2004). Fleeting messages from broadcast media and credibility of print vehicles provided the audience with timely surveillance of what is accumulatively accepted in the society. With that said, modest display of clothing becomes a performative agency whilst religious teaching becomes a guiding factor to ascertain borders and limits among Malaysian youths (Hashim, 2011).

Among significant changes in the flow of information were the frequencies of the hijab in media and purveying of Islamic lifestyle upon urban Malay-Muslims, particularly due to the local socio-political environment and globalization of Islam in many nation states. Whereas the international *al-Jazeera* news network in Doha, Qatar aimed to revolt upon hijab protests and secularism in France through a more hijab-centric news station with veiled presenters and continuous updates on the issue (Cherribi, 2006), Malaysian broadcast goals on the hijab was more subdued and more of a religious stance, but not without commercial value. As an example, Malaysia's premier cable provider ASTRO established its first Islamic channel, *Oasis* and endorsed Muslimah celebrity named Heliza Helmi as its exclusive ambassador alongside fellow alum of singing reality show

Akademi Fantasia, Mawi (mStar Online, 2007). TV Alhijrah followed in 2009 as an independent media platform to educate and create awareness of Islam for viewers under the age of 40, and also available for ASTRO and HyppTV subscribers whilst streaming via its own YouTube channel, TVAH (TV Alhijrah, n.d). In terms of free-to-air-television, TV9, a station under the Media Prima group had pioneered the first all-female and veiled news anchors in 2006. Islam-centric talk shows for women were also produced under TV9, such as *SIS - Semangat Intelek Swadaya*, and fashion programme *Hijab Stailista* to name a few.

Although Islamic representation is less embedded in the foundations of TV9's sister station, TV3, the drama series aired on channel are mainly interlaced with religious morals and Malay-Muslim women in hijab to appeal to a large demographic of Malay-Muslim viewers. Khabir Bhatia's drama series *Nur Kasih* set precedent to a trend of Malay-Muslim love stories with fully-veiled lead female characters and became a phenomena by raking in ratings of 4.3 million viewers (Rajak, 2013). Numerous other soap dramas under primetime slots of the channel followed suit and received encouraging followings. Examples of these dramas include *Tentang Dhia* (About Dhia), *Tahajjud Cinta* (Guide to Love), *Hani*, *Laila Asyikin* and *Stanza Cinta* (Stanza of Love) that generally discuss hijab wearing and its importance in keeping piety and in relationships, albeit stereotypical plots of hate and family grievance upon the fate of the unfortunate damsel in distress, the hijabi.

Meanwhile, female magazines in the printed media realm such as *Nur* have had a humble presence since it was introduced in 2002 (Perception Media, 2012). *Nur* used the standard template of a woman's magazine with emphasis on Islamic spiritual wellbeing with guidance on lifestyle, career and fashion. Its publisher, *Group Media Karangkrak* moved one step ahead from its competitors such as *Aniqah* and *Mingguan Wanita* by

maintaining the circulation of *Nur* but established a more modern Muslim magazine title through the inception *Hijabista*. This new female Muslim magazine represented fashion for female Muslims and was derived from the fusion of words “hijab” and “fashionista”. According to an interview by Sinar Harian (2012) with *Hijabista*’s editor, Nursuziana Zulkifli, it was revealed that the magazine was designed as a guide for young females aged 21-35 years old to embrace the hijab revolution that is currently making waves in the fashion industry locally and internationally; mentioning that readers should take part in the action as “stylo” or stylish youths (in Malay colloquial). *Hijabista* have forayed into websites to keep connected with loyal fans. Compared to *Nur* that has established its Facebook page for four years, in its first year alone *Hijabista* accumulated 47,514 “likes” on Facebook⁹. At present, *Hijabista* has already gained 831,947 “likes” on Facebook while it is also popularly trending on Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. *Hijabista* has also branched into the television version of the magazine of the same name, a half-hourly show featured on highly rated cable channel ASTRO Ria, in May 2013.

1.2.3.3 Integrating the Hijab with Product Marketing

From the inception of *Hijabista*, it can be seen that integrated marketing communication had gone full throttle in encouraging consumerism among female Malay-Muslim audiences. New beauty ideas were introduced to the intended market, where the hijab became a benchmark in representing the ideal Malay-Muslim woman and offered opportunities at self-betterment through the vast halal product market (Khattab, 2006; Wok & Mohd, 2008; Wilson, 2012).

⁹ Information as at 13 June 2013.

As evidenced by *Sunsilk* shampoo by Unilever group, the *Clean and Fresh* advertising campaign featured popular hijab-wearing singer Heliza Helmi; who coincidentally is also known as a spokesperson for ASTRO Oasis as mentioned in the earlier section. Using a Malaysian reality television star as ambassador of the product without using the conventional hair-washing routines, it focused more on the hijab wearer's experience and how the shampoo can help one feel comfortable all-day long under the hijab after using the product. After reaching saturation in its product growth, the *Sunsilk* shampoo campaign started with an insight to approach a new target audience, who are women with hijab that were also perceived have needs to feel confident with their hair. The sales for *Sunsilk* rose 9% in the year after the launch of the hijab campaign (Media Specialists Association, 2014). While it was impossible to demonstrate product use on the hair of women that practice modesty, the uniqueness of the campaign inspired other ways to speak to veiled women by educating them various ways of styling of the hijab on digital platforms as well as on print and broadcast (Advertising Marketing Malaysia, 2014).

Relating this to the earlier mentioned *Hijabista* magazine, *Sunsilk* saw joint marketing opportunities that could benefit both brands as well as their target audience. After receiving very positive feedback from readers, *Hijabista* was fully sponsored by *Sunsilk* to produce a 30-minute television programme version of the magazine which ran on the highly rated Malay-language channel, ASTRO Ria (Haswari, 2013). The show utilized the partnership by promoting the signature "Sunsilk Twist" hijab style not only on television, but also on social media outlets such as Youtube, Facebook and Twitter to encourage young Muslim women to embrace the new trend. Further enhancing the show's impact was enabling by a short segment called *Dunia Lola* (Lola's World), where the storyline focused on a young Malay-Muslim woman who dreams to be an Islamic fashion designer. The show, together with *Sunsilk* as remaining sponsor, also produced a spin-off reality programme called *Hijabku Gayaku* (My Hijab, My Style) that emulated the

popular American television show, *Project Runway* (Media Specialists Association, 2014).

Following the steps of Sunsilk, another consumer brand, *Safi Shayla* by *Safi* in acknowledging their poor brand presence in the realm of fast moving consumer goods saw the need to uplift their influence among media consumers. Based on the findings of Barker (2013), the market for personal care products had a significant rise in 2012 compared to 2007, driven mainly by consumers in the Asia-Pacific region. Taking this opportunity to appeal to the local Malaysian market, *Safi Shayla* shampoo deployed ambassadors who were social media influencers in line with rebranding. As Sunsilk's clear competitor, *Safi Shayla* had also targeted veiled Malay-Muslim women. As denoted by The Appies 2016 (2016), *Safi Shayla* intended to change the perception of media audiences from being merely a shampoo brand into the voice of ambition among Malay-Muslim women. Going beyond its functional benefit, the market research done by its manufacturing company Wipro Unza found that there is a general perception that women who wear the "tudung" or better known as hijab cause missed opportunities for Malay-Muslim women as they have suffered from stereotyping of being "soft", "submissive" and "follower" instead of leader.

According to Marketing Magazine (2016a) the idea behind this emotion-driven campaign of "Cabaran Shaylanista: Show the World That There Is Nothing That Hijabisters Cannot Do", focused on the integrative needs of the consumer to be identified as career-strong women in society. Identifying the Malay-Muslim consumers' desire to be affiliated with the idea of progressiveness aside from its television commercials, this reality show thrust Malay-Muslim women in the hijab to fulfill extreme and adventurous tasks to prove that they are no longer backwards and are in touch with their liberal spirits. Marketing Magazine further reported that new constructs of hijabis and hijabsters can

break free from the stereotypes suffered by hijab wearers. As a result, the Safi Shayla campaign has improved the brand market share by 7.1% at a growth rate of 136% with increased likes on Facebook by 82%.

1.3 Problem Statement

The key aspect of this study examined conflicting forces of globalization that renew representations of the hijab and internalize modesty as part of the Malay-Muslim identity in local media. Saleh (2012, p.8) asserted that the meanings behind the hijab are in a dialogical relation with globalization that also determines its direction, magnitude and effect. The inheritance of prudent local traditions that incorporate morals of Islam is hindered by contemporary media portrayals of the hijab; where Potts (2009) asserted that a majority of Muslim countries have embraced “Islamic cosmopolitanism” that enabled the juxtaposition of their personalities with urban trends and styles despite having to conform to covered dressing; such as wearing structured blouses, elegant pants, sunglasses, accessories, and colored scarfs.

Consequently, Malay-Muslim women that desire to display their moderate personas are vulnerable to the antitheses of modesty found in sexually-charged personifications of the hijab in local media. ‘Al-Balali (2006, p.38) explained a Hadith that detailed description of women who may constitute as “Hell dwellers”; where women who wear clothes but exposes parts of her body that could incite sexual urges from a man such as her legs, thighs bosoms or as simple as wearing transparent or tight clothing that leave little to the imagination – these women are considered “naked”. The push for Islamic transnationalization has produced postmodern yet inconsistent representations of the hijab that appeal to the majority of Muslim women on Malay-centric media platforms to cater to growing opportunities of product consumption and brand expansion. The study explores its complexity in stretching the boundaries that re-define the hijab among Malay-

Muslim women by associating Islamic modesty with local culture. While both similar and different from its Southeast Asian experiences in neighbouring Indonesia and Singapore, the veiling phenomenon in Malaysia exudes appeal from its strong ethnic ties with Malay women and branding opportunities of homegrown role models. This association is much related to “transnationalization” as summarized by Straubhaar (1991) as an exchange of ideas by communities and organizations with commercialization of cultural products across nation state borders and diversity of content obtained through media companies. In addition, Flew (2007, p.147) established that culture promotes greater social inclusion and redress economic inequality and social disadvantage. In his argument, media audiences are able to connect to national cultures in media that produce symbolic communication that are simultaneously creative and commodifies cultural content in the global market. Furthermore, according to Ien Ang (1996) as quoted by Flew (2007), globalization involves the export of cultural technology through media technologies and forms to reorganize the commercialization of a local media culture for profit. In her work, she concluded that authenticity of a local culture is subject to modification and domestication of imported culture whilst Appadurai (1996) argued that electronic media possess new resources for the “construction of imaged selves and imagined worlds”. In the realm of Malaysian media, part of the hijab “world” is being redefined from the deconstruction of the “tudung” that earlier indicated forms Malay peasantry. Apart from appealing to the working class, the pursuit to inculcate ideas of modesty among affluent and egalitarian audiences saw representation of the hijab that are converged with elements that potentially downplay religiosity and put forth the importance of liberation and empowerment among Muslim women. While freedom of expression and liberation from stereotypes are concepts desired by women in Islamic communities, integration of the Muslim faith and Western paradigms skew towards culturally appropriating the hijab as a trend and a staunch denominator of progressive women that also creates a grey area

between their initially modest familial roles and an increased sense of opacity in the society.

Although the hijab holds religious and cultural resolve for Malay women who wear it, the practice of veiling in Malaysia is pressured by modernity. Even in the age of digital connectivity, media visuals on television and magazines are also enticing audiences by objectifying women's bodies as per their Western counterparts that in turn facilitates their social ties and future expectations of their self and in turn their self-esteem (Wok & Mohd, 2008). Moreover, audiences that are unfamiliar with the hijab are challenged to distinguish a Malay-Muslim woman within an urban society that lack guidelines of dress, in addition to a pluralist identity that is integrated with Western influence and homogeneity between diverse ethnicities. How does the hijab fit as an amalgamation of identities that define the Malay-Muslim woman in the urban perspective? Does veiling in Malaysian society require excessive fashionization and integration with the high fashion order of the West in order to be accepted? Has plurality of visual codes in Malaysian media created a new social structure with contemporary yet religious lifestyle through the stance of the Malay hijabi? Will the consistent exposure to hijab wear in Malaysian media provide self-actualization to Malay-Muslim women of how they should behave and interact?

This study further explored representations of the hijab by examining discursive practices of female modesty in selected contemporary Malaysian media. Syed (2011) discussed that the media has infinite potential in channelling discourses that are influential in shaping social identities. The hybridity of cultures offers power and social position for Malay-Muslim women whilst seeing opportunities of the hijab as a tool for change and economic growth.

1.4 Significance of Study

The study commenced with the perception that marketing “the new and improved” hijab has become oversaturated through commercial and cultural movements. Hochel (2013, p.52) found that Malay-Muslim women in particular are donning the veil primarily for reasons of fashion and convention, and not religion. The contemporary practices of veiling that can be seen in Malaysian media are at odds with Islamic modesty and somewhat compromised the main principles of the hijab wearing where its growing consumption culture separated elements of faith in its embodiment. This thesis addresses two intertwined concepts: veiling to *unveil* the self, and the veiling of media principles in forging piety as a consumer trend.

The study analyzed meanings behind female modesty in Malaysia that draw middle-class and upper middle-class of Malay women to embrace the cultural identity in their daily lives through their media use. To do so, the study investigated modern hijab practices in domestic media and displays of emancipation from Western influence to appear as a “localized” culture. Forces of globalization and influence of transnationalization that asserted hijab presence in the public sphere as a contemporary and Malaysian representation of Islam were observed.

Finally, the study highlighted meanings that integrate fashion and faith in projecting ideals of womanhood that could provide insights to media practitioners in understanding audience behaviour through analyses of data from both traditional and social media. The findings also shed light on the significance of media use as agency to a media user’s socialization and self-development.

1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

Based on the discussions in the previous sections and the preliminary findings in this chapter, the following objectives of the study were established:

1. To examine the practice of female modesty through representations of the hijab in selected contemporary Malaysian media.
2. To investigate how audiences negotiate meanings of the hijab through representations of female modesty in Malaysian media messages.
3. To analyze representations of the hijab in Malaysian media as an identifier of progressive Malay-Muslim women.

Subsequently, the study explored the representations of female modesty in contemporary Malaysian media with the following enquiries:

RQ1: What are the discursive representations of female modesty that are being practiced in selected contemporary Malaysian media?

RQ2: How do audiences negotiate meanings of the hijab from the representations of female modesty that are visible in selected contemporary Malaysian media?

RQ3: Why are the representations of the hijab in Malaysian media regarded as cultural identity for progressive Malay-Muslim women?

The study sought significant manifestations of the hijab in Malaysian media and ascertained reasons of resonance and acceptance of the hijab among Malay-Muslim women. Thus, the research project explored attitudes and behaviors of media consumers and the meanings behind modern hijab representations as a deepening phenomenon that influenced the growth of consumption culture in Malaysian media.

1.5.1 Theoretical Framework

Scholars' theories on media and communication discussed recurring patterns and contexts in the media that ascertain significance of mediated constructs upon attitudes and knowledge of audiences. According to Dominick, (2011, p.445), "agencies of socialization" that encompass family upbringing, friends, personal experiences and mass media as a primary source of information extend throughout years growth and development. Several dimensions discussed by West & Turner (2010) identified the use of media among audiences in attaining personal fulfillment. These dimensions include firstly; acquiring information, knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon that reside in their *cognitive needs*. Secondly, media users are susceptible to their *affective needs*, where they require media content that suit their emotions, feelings and to which they would gain pleasure. West & Turner further explained on the requirement of *personal integrative needs* as to which their desire to be recognized for their stability, status and credibility by others. Subsequently, media use is also a form of socialization where a media user's *social integrative needs* fulfills their interactions with family and friends, creating a sense of belonging for the media user. Finally, the last dimension cited *tension release needs*, where withdrawal and the availability of escape surfaces from a user's media consumption. This foundation of this approach is derived from the work by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) in the research of *Uses and Gratifications* (U&G) that assumed people are active in choosing and using particular media to satisfy specific needs; emphasizing on the media as having a limited effect on certain aspects of users' personal and social lives where they are able to exercise choice and control to accomplish personal goals (Dominick, 2011, p.39). The paradigms of the model is pertinent to how visibility of the hijab is commonly represented with Malay connotations, and are relevant to media audiences, particularly in their gratifications as well as the learning and unlearning of Malay-Muslim women's roles that would inspire personal practice of

female modesty. Hence, the U&G is instrumental to the use of media as a source to embrace and acculturate the hijab into the audiences' daily life and development of personal principles in regard to their beliefs of Islam.

Next, the postfeminist approach of the Double Bind by Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) is pragmatic to this study. Jamieson argued that women suffer multiple binds in the aspects of femininity or competence. Hence in their struggles; the first bind, a woman is presumed to have established a personal agenda or preference of how she may carry herself. In the second bind, the same woman conforms to society dictating how an ideal woman should present herself, as the case of the growing culture of the hijabis in Malaysia that continues to permeate in local media. In doing so, the media audiences negotiate contents from media use that establish their affinity and association with representations of female modesty.

The theoretical framework also encompassed the foundation of "Structuration Theory" by Anthony Giddens (1984) as cited by Barker (2003). Largely related to cultural studies, Giddens discussed the "duality of structure", an individual's adaptation to social actions and ability to reproduce them through embedded memory or "memory traces" which are recursive and constituted as a systemic practice that allow similar social practices to exist (Giddens, 1979). This theory suggests that repeated acts through agency reproduce a systemic social structure that can be adapted by others (Gauntlett, 2008). The study deployed the theory as it could deliberate the recursive practices and negotiations of the hijab through representations of veiling Malaysian media whilst shaping a subculture that is tangible and feasible to members of the society.

In brief, dimensions of the said theories explain from the view of a globalized, modernized consumer culture of how pious symbolism and identity is created and

maintained through modernized representation of urban Malay-Muslim women in hijab and how it provides gratification to users from repeated media consumption.

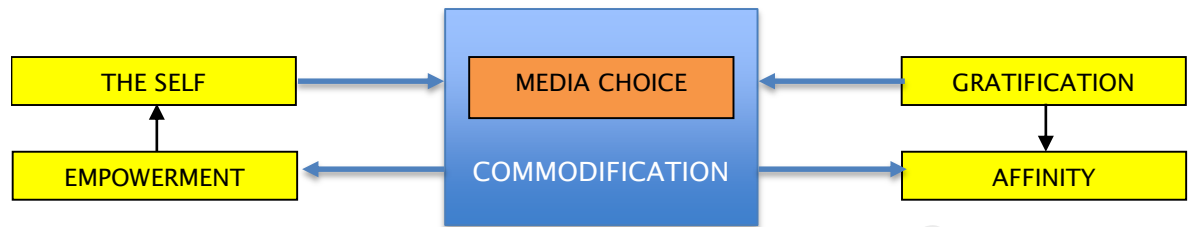


Figure 1.3: Theoretical framework on representation of female modesty in contemporary Malaysian media

As illustrated by Figure 1.3, the representation of the hijab by Malay-Muslim women featured in prominent media provides gratification that produce a sense of belonging in the new, modern community of hijab wearers. As such, affinity for the contemporary hijab movement emerges, of which creates a template of identity that women recognize as a vehicle to progress and achieve power or place in the society. This henceforth triggers the desire for Malay-Muslim women to be included in the structured community of hijabis; thus they seek information on the elements of this new subculture from the media that amplify benefits of the hijab to the audiences through media in visuals, audio or multimedia formats. This new phenomenon of the hijab is in fact, carrying a socio-political identity that allows an individual to develop self-belief and life principles upon embracing it as a positive influence upon her personal development.

During the course of study, an outlook on media impact towards the audience was made. The theoretical framework derived was used as a basis to conduct this study, where it will underpin whether expectations and beliefs shaped through media messages conform to an individual's existing beliefs hence create awareness and disillusionment of

empowerment towards new forms of hijab wearing among Malay-Muslim women. Overall, this study will underpin power relations shaped through media messages that correlate with Malay-Muslim women's attitudes as well as beliefs and the rapid change in social construct.

1.5.2 Research Methodology

In recent years there is growing interest in the development of methods to better understand relationships between texts, power and ideology in shaping social constructs, where knowledge and comprehension of individuals are determined by global capitalism. Originating from the studies of linguistics, fields of Media and Cultural Studies, Film Studies and Semiotics are gradually adapting the meaning-making process of Qualitative Content Analysis; where scholars such as Elo and Kyngas (2008) argued that QCA allowed an improvement in accuracy, precision in more systematic analyses with the emergence of visual communication. Authors such as Boyatzis (1998) also referred to this as "thematic analysis". Krippendorff (2004) and Lamnek (2010) assumes that QCA is an umbrella of content analysis, discourse analysis or objective hermeneutics.

This present study will include analyses of text (spoken or written), discourse practices (process of text production and interpretation) and an analysis of the socio-cultural conditions that affect the production and interpretation of texts. Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas (2013) and Sandelowski & Barroso (2003) found that qualitative content analysis is considered a form of narrative research, while thematic analysis is seen as phenomenology study (Holloway & Todres, 2005), hence the hazy distinction between both have resulted in "phenomenological thematic analysis" or "thematic content analysis". This study adapted QCA uses the "pluralist model" of which was cited by van Leeuwen (2005), which referred to as cooperation between disciplines treating the same subject from different perspectives. As such, the act of triangulation was largely involved

to produce several checkpoints for the results of analysis in different angles, yet organized in a systematic inclusion based on semiotics, cultural studies and various areas of social sciences.

1.5.3 Research Instrument

To gather data that is pertinent to this research, the study scope included the geographical breadth of Klang Valley areas (within Federal Territory and Selangor) in Malaysia. Qualitative content analysis (QCA) were conducted through several media platforms, notably magazines, an online blog, online newspapers and face-to-face interviews.

In seeking discursive representations of the hijab in Malaysian media, the analysis focused on cover stories of Malaysian Malay-language magazines to examine the coverage of veiling, Islamic cosmopolitanism or Malay-Muslimness that were included in the discussions of the chosen publications. References, conversations and narratives of hijab wearing is sought to make sense of the practice among Malay-Muslim women, and subsequently the similarities or differences between these magazine titles will be further examined. Among the titles chosen are *Hijabista*, *Wanita* and *EH!* as the top magazine titles in the market. Veiled women featured in these magazines may share about their personal experiences making the decision to veil, while women who do not wear the hijab could give insightful opinions from their exposure to media messages on the idea of the emergence of the new Islamic lifestyle. The selected materials will be compiled and analyzed simultaneously.

Next, for the purpose of obtaining insights to understand how hijab-related content is embraced and accepted by media audiences in their use of media, QCA was conducted on user responses and feedback on a popular online blog, *Beautiful Nara*. The conversations between media users online and their perceptions of current hijab issues

were recorded and interpreted as their negotiation of the current representation of Malay-Muslims and Islam in Malaysia. This data is pertinent in evaluating the standpoints of Malaysian media audiences, and Malay-Muslim women in their bind to exemplify veiling as a representation of ethnicity as well as religiosity of the Islamic faith.

Subsequently, to examine why representations of the hijab are regarded as a practice of Malay-Muslim women and society at large, QCA will be conducted on articles published in the online opinion column of Dina Zaman to ascertain the socio-economic and political implications upon Malay-Muslim women and the Malaysian community. Dina is a Malay Mail columnist and author of several books in relations to the urban Malay women and their Islamic representation. In addition, interviews gathered from two media practitioners will be included in the study based their experiences and work as hijab advocates in Malaysian media. The two selected women will be identified as Participant 1, a television personality and hijab activist, and Participant 2, a former chief editor at Nur magazine. The study will analyze texts obtained from these two recorded interviews on the hijab.

The content analyses through QCA reviewed the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts to add validity and reliability of data findings to the objectives of this research. Further details on the analysis can be found on Chapter 3. After gathering of the relevant data, an analysis will be rendered upon the compilation of materials. The data collected were analyzed simultaneously to identify similar themes. To organize data efficiently in effort to answer the research questions posed in this study, the technique of “coding” was employed to sort the data and categorize them according to segments. This involved reading and re-reading the data to search for emerging themes for analysis, using data-driven inductive approach by

Boyatzis (1998) to capture richness of the phenomenon and also using deductive code templates as suggested by Crabtree and Miller (1999).

Coding frameworks would be set based on the research questions and research objectives determined from preliminary scanning of text. Analyses through Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), ATLAS.ti revealed socio-psychological characteristics of the constructs or persons and their roles or significance in the social structure of the Malay-Muslim community. The data also served to cover unexplored areas relevant to the research.

Additional secondary resources of data obtained from published media content such as news stories in magazines and newspapers, communication journals, theses, and other studies related to mass media influence as well as communication concerning the hijab or female Muslim identity specifically in Malaysia, or other parts of the world were included in the relevant chapters to further illustrate the diaspora in regard to negotiation of female modesty in Malaysian media. The study aimed to analyze relationships and practices or processes that are ongoing, effects that are being felt from the trends of hijab that are fast developing in urban Malaysian society and pose a threat to the authenticity of female modesty among Malay-Muslim women.

1.5.4 Potential Limitation

The study does not represent the majority of Malay-Muslims per se, rather, it intends to explore the relationship between media use and the practices of veiling in creating a feasible subculture that is currently gaining stronghold among Malay-Muslim urbanities. While there is limited literature on Malay-Muslim women and issues of the hijab in Malaysia, an initial observation of databases and libraries was done in relations of this proposal and discovered that exact matches to this topic is currently growing in number. As contingency, the research will also cover literature on mass media interpretation of the

hijab, cultural and gender identity, the Malay-Muslim identity in Malaysia, as well as international studies on the hijab phenomenon, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. The study focused the foundations of collective theories rather single theory on cultural identity in order to ascertain that the media is instrumental in providing agency among Malay-Muslim women to create a formidable societal structure and relatable subculture.

1.6 Organization of Chapters

This study comprises of five chapters. The following chapter (Chapter 2) will provide an overview with multiple media trends that include hijab as a social, political and economic symbol, whilst also looking into historical psychological aspects of veiling that have created agency for veiling Muslim women on a global scale and further in the chapter, will be narrowed down into a Malaysian scope.

Chapter 3 will elaborate the methods and approaches that will be deployed in the study, deliberating more on data collection methods and its management. This chapter will also discuss theories and scholarly debates on qualitative content analysis in relations to the framework of the study.

In Chapter 4, the study will examine the data collected and discuss the findings associated with the new hijab culture in Malaysia today. Through the interviews, communication transcripts and miscellaneous evidence collected, the researcher will identify themes behind the reason for veiling that have become increasingly popular among Malay-Muslim women and ideologies of the new hijab resonated from the media content consumed. The study will examine the role of hijab as a form of gender power that provide opportunities to highlight female emancipation from conservative dogma of backwards and oppressed Malay-Muslim women with formerly identified with “*tudung*” peasantry.

The final chapter summarizes the findings to compare and contrast the congruence of data against initial argument made in the introduction chapter. In the new hijab manifestations amidst regional globalization, the researcher outlined propositions of study to further develop discourse on marketing Islam through its genuine form in the media within a multicultural community. Observations and research gaps on these areas will be highlighted for future exploration.

1.7 Conclusion

This research project is a step in deconstructing globalized female modesty and how its proliferation led to a growing Islamic lifestyle among Malay-Muslim women as portrayed by the localized representation of the hijab in domestic media. It is important to underline the endangering patterns of this consumption culture with misleading messages of emancipation and empowerment to ensure the resurgence of Islam remain positive and identifies a peaceful and tolerant religion in a landscape of diverse cultural influences. The outcome of this study is hoped to benefit all parties in their awareness of constructive progress among Malay-Muslim women and contribute the knowledge enhancement in regards to changes in global media flaws for academia.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Veiling, or covering of hair and other body parts with a “hijab” among Muslim women is instrumental to the reinforcement of Islamic values. This act has been performed since the inception of Islam and is closely related to traditional views to protect women and their honor in the society. The Holy Quran stated that Muslim women are ordained by God to “cover” themselves from views of strangers and distant relatives, hence, the veil or “hijab” should be used to cover the hair, arms, bosom, feet, and other parts of the body Allah through his Messenger, Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) ordered (ibid);

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their private parts from committing illegal sexual acts (Verse 24:30)”.

(Darussalam Research Division, 1999, p.28)

Although this verse is a common reminder for both genders in Islam, the issue of necessity and degree of female modesty that should be implemented in Muslim communities is still largely debated. Two types of research patterns emerged following the Islamic upheavals in the Middle East in the 1970s and the advent of ‘Islamophobia’ post-9/11; one centered on the hijab as a media discourse for cultural identity (Tarlo, 2005; Hassan, 2010; Syed, 2010), whilst the other focused on Islamic consumption culture that stemmed from repetitive imageries of the hijab and stimulated public interest in Islamic female modesty, among both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences on print media and television (Kılıçbay & Binark, 2002; Tarlo, 2007; Wilson, 2012; Jafari & Süerdem, 2012; Wok & Mohd, 2008). The changes in the representation of Islamic modesty proliferated from advances in communication media that have evolved Muslim women into informed and aware consumers who utilize media in search of the “self”.

Aside from journalistic framing, the lavish images of veiled Muslim bodies symbolizing radicalization have also appeared in the news, entertainment media and advertisements. While Gole insisted that the modern representation of hijab is merely a resistance to religious conservatism (2000, p.94), this study finds that the hijab has experienced a broader form of Islamic cosmopolitanism. In this regard, Jenkins (2004) defined cosmopolitanism as the convergence of cultural differences that heightened competence and preference for urbanity and higher social class (p.117). In doing so, “Islamic cosmopolitanism” is achieved from structuration of the hijab as an element of sophistication in modern society. Furthermore, the hijab is infused with urban ideals of the West that blur the lines between the religious obligations and objectifications for public display. This subsequently created the dilemma that binds Muslim women in their quest for piety and becoming socially adept at the same time.

Literature suggests that Muslim womens’ desire to abandon their traditional roles of docile mothers and wives is influenced by empowering feminist and “Islamic” elements of hijab-wearing in the media (Byng, 2010; Jones, 2007; Khattab, 2012; Todd, 1998). In this light, the practice of modesty is susceptible to transnational flows of veiling which is shaped by a variety of themes, merchandises and technologies that stray from the Islamic ideals called “Wahabbism”, a traditional Arab-centric Islamic initiative (Ong & Peletz, 1995; Valles, 2005; Othman, 2006). “Wahabbism” refers to an Islamic movement that “seeks to purify Islam of any innovations or practices that deviate from the seventh century teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions” (Blanchard, 2008). In recent years, different Islamic communities have strived to avoid extremities of a Wahabbi and they have adapted the hijab to specific subcultures and terrains that create psychological and subconscious effects on the hijab worn by Modern Muslim females.

One of these unique, customized experiences of hijab subcultures can be observed in Malaysia, a multicultural Muslim-majority country currently affected by constructs of modernity in female modesty. The distinct link to the ideas of beauty, fashion and self-image are requisite to sexualization of Muslim women through the hijab and are becoming increasingly familiar in the Malaysian media landscape. Consequently, failure to reproduce veiling in an innovative and forward manner may reduce an individual's visibility to the discerning public. However, Berger (1998) argued through Freud's approach in her study on hijab that veiling is a "phallic" economy, where the act of covering up actually highlights a woman, where she veils to show how "priceless" she is in the sexual economy, despite theological orders that ordain a Muslim woman to embrace the hijab. This is contrary to the findings of Saat (2010, p.187) that highlighted the agreement of 89% Malaysian Muslims on how segregation is necessary to protect women from the opposite sex through the act of veiling.

The imminent growth of "halal marketing" is possibly the strongest feeder to this "modest sexuality" oxymoron, where hijab-related consumer products, brands, and personalities are conveniently tied to pillars of religion. Jafari & Süerdem (2012, p.62) saw elites in the society as immersed in "consumption crealisation", whilst maintaining that Islam is both secular and plural, juxtaposing what is both considered sacred and profane, particularly what is "Halal" (lawful) and "Haram" (unlawful) as well as those "Mustahabb" (favoured) and "Makruh" (disliked). Islamic and non-Islamic values are combined to show there is a proliferation of global cultures. One example of this contradiction is when female Muslim models catwalk on the runway wearing latest Muslimah trends, exposing themselves to males and females alike despite the objective to promote modest hijab fashion. In this light, women are veiled but the clothings worn belong to foreign fashion labels, while during these sessions they are able to mix freely with members of the opposite sex and thrusting themselves into the public spotlight. This

movement of change, parallel to the resurgence of Islam in the country, has seen a paradoxical acceptance of the hijab that falls back on Western ideals in the process of achieving national identity and development. In Malaysia, this was imminent since the 1970s, where expansions in the economic sector and heightened levels of education had created opportunities for social mobility. Nevertheless, this advancement was overshadowed by postcolonial imperialism and at the same time, brought forth a new wave of religiosity among the Malaysian youth (Khoo, 2006; Stivens; 2006, 2010).

2.2 Media Appropriation of the Hijab

Due to the scarcity of media penetration into the culture of hijab and its history, the public only understands the hijab through the debates on Islamic dress debates – such as the banning of the hijab and the burqa in western countries such as France, UK, Turkey and the Netherlands (Posetti, 2006). The lack of exposure to the hijab practice and traditions in first world countries is linked to the newsworthiness priorities of Western media which may limit the opportunity for the Muslim community to engage society's understanding of Islam. In Canada, Todd (1998) and Bullock & Goya (1997) found that Islam is seen as a community that does not promote Canadian values as the practice of veiling is considered as backwarda, or a third world idea. Popular images in global media, such as imported films, distort the perception of media consumers with stereotypes and assert a sense of power relations that put the Muslim as “weaker” or “flawed” social groups which subconsciously created a sense of inferior “self” within the wearer.

As individuals are able to create different meanings in the representation of Islam and the media channels play the role of mediators that negotiate the idea of the Muslim religion upon journalists as a social influence. Visual representations through language and images have formed an idea of Islam. As a result, in Australia, Muslims observe media images of the hijab as a mark of authenticity that provides information to the

general public of what “Islam” is purported to be, hence, turns a negative image into a positive one. In this light, although the media is the main channel for anti-Muslim sentiments after the 9/11 incident, it has also become a vehicle that reinforces the hijab among the Australian community where Muslim women are rendered in press photos and news television, especially those that belong to Islamic centers or mosques. Consequently, these images become the visual cue that establishes a story despite its stereotyping, and mostly for viewers to recognize them as Muslims (Hussein, 2007; Vis, 2009). The 1977 Lacanian Theory, as cited in Todd’s work called this “mirror stage” and asserts that media consumers should pay more details to such representations as it is a foundation determining what we are, in turn of evaluating one’s self, and social groups outside our community (2008). However, at the same time, editorials discussed the hijab and why it is worn, subconsciously educating and creating hijab awareness where Canadian media was seen to have observed “Muslim lifestyle”, such as clothing styles and festivals.

“Semiological guerillas” are described as the support of veiled Muslim women in Australian media that does not discriminate or underpin general behaviors based on specific religious groups due to the country’s plateau of multiculturalism (Vis, 2009). This is because women who veil have limited possibilities to engage in the public sphere and prefer to partake as audience members of the media where in a consumer lifestyle, magazines become agency that represent constructs of Muslim women. Not only is it intimate, the lavish portrayal of the hijab became an “exotic” concept, the news media coverage of Islamic fashion shows has framed its importance to the society.

In the meantime, Yustina Saleh (2010) explored veil-wearing acceptance among modern middle and upper-class women, where Saleh’s research focused on the politicization of the veil and its socioeconomic effects in Egypt, where the hijab becomes

the marker of transnational empowerment and leadership. It is interesting to note that through her investigation of these forces through in depth-interviews and observation of sermons in Egypt had yielded the “state hybrid” that argued that evolution of telecommunications and information in Arab countries which allowed growth of space digitization that affects daily living. This includes “societal, cultural, subjective, economic, and imaginary structuration of lived experience and the systems within which we exist and operate” (p.12). Hence, the concept of a nation state has been abandoned to welcome the rise of a global city with international trade zones. The penetration of radio and television, especially satellite, is crucial in spreading awareness and education as well as shape a modern public identity by transforming the meanings and practices of religiosity through “intraregional” globalization where there is a fusion among Arab, Islamic and Indian cultures. Although the line of authentic Muslim practice has been blurred, religious cultural transformations, including the importance wearing of the veil a suitable fashion style for females have been highlighted.

In this light, veiled women are considered as the “actors” in the popularization of political Islam and the conceptualizing a civilized identity in Turkey through advertisements. This has also ensured that Turkish women are significantly differentiated from women from the West (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2009; Kilicbay & Binark, 2002). In the meantime, Croucher et.al (2005) examined the religiosity and identification of ethnicities of Muslims and non-Muslims in France and Britain and illustrated that Muslims have higher levels of ethnic identification and religiosity than non-Muslims do resulting from attacks and criticism of the veil in both France and Britain. In relations to this, Cherribi (2007) argued that Al-Jazeera discussed the issue of France’s ban on veiling on an extended basis, where the channel tried to build a global Muslim identity based on the shared public opinion of its viewers and a vision of an imagined transnational Muslim community. Cherribi further discussed the promoting of hijab throughout Al- Jazeera’s

television programs and advertisements that emphasize on “Islamic chic” visuals and fashion (p.125). The study looked into the various examples of discourses and visuals that appeared in Al-Jazeera where hijab appears as often as current news programs and compared this practice with those of the Christian Broadcasting Network which used music ads with to fill up advertising spaces. This is predominantly and apparent in Al-Jazeera coverage about the debate on the ban of hijab in France in mid-2002. One of Cherribi’s most interesting finds is that the frequency of the use of the word “hijab” had created a situation that required endorsed improvement, for the public to “convey a moral judgement” (p.124). In this regard, conditioning was applied to educate and make aware of the positive functions of the hijab.

The findings of Tarlo (2007) on hijab and the resonance of its culture by media audiences in metropolitan London illustrated that one of the major allures to the act of veiling is from the high influx of immigrants originating from Muslim majority countries. This sparked a vast acceptance of Islamic values which was mentioned by as an exemplary display of multiculturalism, and have become a successful model for other major cities to follow. Other than that, human rights activist movements are widely practiced, hence equality for Muslim sisters is also one of the plights that receive constant attention in the United Kingdom.

2.3 Deconstructing the Hijab as a Postmodern Cultural Identity

Looking at the big picture, the hijab is a piece of a puzzle that completes the ideals and prominence of Islam. However, covering oneself with the hijab would be futile when the clothing adheres to Islamic teachings, but the wearer does not believe in the practice. At the same time, Islam purports its followers to lower the gaze and dressing modestly to fulfill the use of the hijab. Hence, despite being a simple garment that defines Muslim women in their modest state, the hijab has become an appropriation of religious standards,

beliefs and most importantly, a structural context to which communities reside and habitually practice the Islamic principles. As shown by al-Huraibi & Konradi (2012), despite the surrounding multicultural environment, Muslim American immigrants are less likely to abandon their way of dressing and their lifestyle for the more dominant Western influences. Furthermore, in most parts of the world, religiosity is not just identifying a Muslim by the way he or she dresses, but to also their participation in religious activities. Consequently, the hijab reminds Muslim women to safeguard their image in public where they face moral and ethical evaluations (Droogsma, 2007; Croucher et al., 2005).

The hijab in general symbolizes most Muslims through the morals, attitudes and behaviours of their veiled women. Rooting from this worldview is the extension of the hijab role in protecting ethno-religious interests of Islamic communities by signifying their differentiation from others, as well as fulfilling its role in upholding female modesty as ordained by God. Bullock (2002, p.87) pointed on how the hijab became a tool to diminish forces of colonization, particularly in Algeria in the 1950s and Iran in the 1970s and upholding the structure of Islamic nations that benefit Muslims of their country. In doing so, dressing with the hijab helped achieve regulation and normalcy and slowly reversed the flak on modesty that is seen as a limitation and mode of oppression by external communities. Such example is observed from the study of Haddad (2007) that had extensively examined the shifts and changes of the hijab in the United States, a non-Muslim majority country and found that the “prototype” of Muslim women was initially incarnated in the West to create the balance of female gender representation, of which Muslim females fall under the less coveted “stereotype” of morals, while Western molds of men and women are considered as the remedial ideals of heroes and heroines. In a sense, this representation of Muslim women started in 18th century in literature where they are presented as harem-dwelling and lustful damsels in distress who turn meek and needed saving, in this case, saved, by the patriarchal males of their descent (Kabbani,

1994). Fast forward to present day, Haddad argued that in the wake of 9/11, there was an urge to strengthen this already negative and weakened Islamic identity by maintaining the hijab as the choice of garment for Muslim females. In this light, while the hijab reverted into its traditional views to uphold the religion of Islam, there are many opportunities to educate the general public on the hijab's role in defending Muslim women and more importantly, an appropriation of Islamic authentication, regardless of ethnicity and state.

2.3.1 Female Modesty and Discrimination

In a recent study on the hijab, Syed (2010) focused on the origins of veil-wearing in the Quran and hadith, observing the transformation of covering and modesty of women in Islam throughout the ages in the socio-cultural context of Muslim-majority countries (MMCs). There were shifts adapted from religious narratives that opposed the patriarchal outlook on Muslim women as a waste of human resources in a nation's economy due to critical analysis of gender relations reform in MMCs resulting from the revival of the hijab. Nevertheless, the compliance of female morality through veiling is seen to yield honor and signifies them as equal in employment, political participation and citizen rights (Shirvani, 2007; Droogsma, 2007). In this regard, United Arab Emirates is largely influenced by the transnational impact from its growing economy where there are social identities constructed by Arab women managers of educated women who try to balance modernity and conservativeness. This was established by Omair (2009) who studied the construct of social identities of working women with managerial power where the hijab itself commands respect from the male gender (2009). Similarly, Yemeni women born in the United States wear the hijab and pursue careers beyond local community's narrow borders to challenge the gender bias and empower Muslim women. At the same time, they themselves do not believe in the dominant American culture (Witteborn, 2007). In spite of the discrimination experienced due to wearing a hijab, Muslim women that go through the exercise of veiling are often associated with a higher-level form of religiosity,

equating their status to of women of religion like nuns, or even the Virgin Mary, giving the practice of veiling a status quo (Droogsma, 2007, p.307).

Currently, in first world countries, the hijab is more commonly associated with Arabs who represent the “prototype” of Muslims, as mentioned in Haddad (2007) who argued that Arabs have become the inevitable stereotype of Muslims in the media. Scholars tend to disregard that there Muslims populations outside of Arab countries, and aggressions towards Muslims and wearing the hijab tend to abandon the idea that other Islamic communities exist and thrive while glocalizing their interpretation of Islam. According to a research by Pew Research Centre (Lipka, 2016), out of the 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide in 2010, 62% reside in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in countries like Indonesia (which has the largest followers of Islam), India, Bangladesh, Iran and Turkey, while ironically, the more stereotypical Arabs from the Middle East and North African regions only hold about 20% of the Muslim population. Moreover, In the meantime, while “protecting the female body” is intrinsically aforementioned in the Holy Quran, the hijab alone is not exclusive to veiling, rather, it has become a blanket term to describe female modesty. El Guindi (1999) argued that there are more than 100 names given to the garments that resemble the act of adorning the hijab such as the “burqu”, “niqab”, and “jilbab”.

The establishment of veiling monikers in Indonesia has had much digressions, where it was originally referred to as the “jilbab” as aforementioned. In modern Muslim communities in its vast regions, hijab-clad women are referred to as “hijabers” as they are commonly discussing the hijab from the aesthetics point of view – from its design, colour and application and inspire the members to creatively produce innovative styles of the hijab to be shared with others (Fakhruroji & Rojati, 2017). Not to be left behind, it has been a recent sensation for the “jilboobs” of Indonesia that comprise of modest

women that veil, yet still subject themselves to clothing that is fitting and clearly outlines the silhouette of their bodies despite criticisms of the public and negative coverage in mass media. Even so, the jilboob community still insists on their patronage of veiling that gives a lot of attention to their movement for liberal piety and the right to appear as fashionable and forward Muslimah (Pakuna, 2014). For that reason, as discussed by Fernea & Fernea (1979) and Roald (2001), it can be concluded that use of the term “hijab” is streamlined as a representation of veiling today for the more globalized audience.

2.3.2 The Socialization Hijabi Girl in Isolation

It has been observed that Islamic states that purport the hijab as a way of life have created a spatial disconnect between Muslim women and non-believing counterparts, due to the participatory habits of hijab-clad women who seek to become pious to achieve their personal goals. In this light, such habits involve socializing with those who have similar motivations. As illustrated by Saba Mahmood in “Politics of Piety” (2011), the practice of wearing hijab consciously structures a Muslim woman’s life, as the ritual of modesty or performing repetitive, religious bodily acts are agency to the development emotional well-being and spiritual rewards (p. 31). Mahmood’s revelation of piety relied heavily on immersion in Islamic communal activities to validate a Muslim women’s adoption of the hijab and as a follower of the faith. There are a lot of emphasis on the “self” while being part of social experiments that put the hijab in context. However, mosques discussed in Mahmood’s study provided modest Muslims in Egypt a platform to engage with opinion leaders within a niche yet condensed community, these habitual Islamic practices go beyond the scheduled interpersonal communication and interactivity. Akbarzadeh and Smith (2005) found that aside from textual discourse in the media, these social forces shape the dominant perceptions of Muslims and Islam. From these practices, hijabis are seen as inert and function well in group communities.

Similarly in Indonesia, the 2010s pushed forth strong communities that discuss and encourage the practice of female modesty among its Muslim women. Apart from the continuous production in Muslim wear and veiling-related products for Indonesians, the strength of this movement is largely fed from the pool of “hijaber communities” or more commonly known as HC that was founded on the objective of educating and making aware of more hijab-wearing practices in the cosmopolitan city of Jakarta. The initiative not only inculcated traditional etiquette but also accommodated and guided young Indonesian women to further embrace their roles in the Muslim society. These factors contributed to bettering their inner self with spiritual balance as well as updating fellow hijabers to improve their external persona through the latest veiling trends in Indonesia. These communities soon spread to other major cities such as Yogyakarta and Bandung, aside from the capital of Jakarta to reach out to discerning youths. Based on the study by Peng (2017), this unique designation of communal learning not only created opportunities to strengthen bonds between young Muslim women, but also to encourage more women to wear the hijab. These groups are instrumental to the commodification of the hijab in Indonesian media through their public conversations about veiling. This can be seen in the sharing of reference materials on YouTube and covering events and conventions that bring the members of the community in print media. The wholesome coverage of media had enhanced the credibility of Indonesian women as a learned and well-supported hijab public.

Looking into the earlier discussed circumstances, the symbolic attire of the hijab clearly portrays one as a Muslim, and for one Muslim to identify another female of the faith and encourages socialization between members of the same community. Subsequently, making contact with a person of similar appearance cultivated immediate bonds as found in several cultural studies (Todd, 1998; Droogsma, 2007; Croucher, 2008). From a micro lens, the hijab has become a visible marker of Muslim identity, even

in isolated, regional landscapes. In Muslim communities that seek to heighten the role of the veil, the hijab exists as a primary image for female women despite the diversities of Islamic practice that exist among them, and is strengthened by coming together communal experiences. Through its respondents, Croucher's analysis of the French-Muslim identity established that the hijab serves to "secure identity, reduce uncertainty and enhance self-esteem" (2008, p.205). Hence, the hijab symbolically includes the Muslim women who wear it into Muslim culture, whilst those who don't, are excluded. Instead of being perceived as an "outsider" ethnically, they become the "insider" in a shared religious community.

The media holds the key information for media audiences and that times, serves as a mediator of content, hence, its availability motivates Muslim women to further elevate their commitment to piety through the framing of ideas and frequency of exposure to a media platform. As identified by Dougherty (2001, p.373) centralized social groups control social structure and cultural expectations which consequently exerting control over more marginalized groups. For that reason, Dougherty's presupposition challenges Mahmood's autonomous characterization of the modern hijab-wearing women and enforces the notion that the hijab is a cultural stamp set by opinion leaders who influence their insights in their attempts to enrich their personal lives.

2.3.3 Extensions of the Modern Hijab into Intersectionality of Muslim Youths

Based on the findings in the earlier section, it can be said that the references to the hijab in society today have reached homogeneity in the many multicultural societies that dwell in the veiling imageries. Leaving the cocoon of isolated and nation state-centric sisterhood, Harb (2015) reported the term "hijabi", which was coined by a study at the University of Michigan-Dearborn by Howell, is used in generic to describe women who wear the hijab while assimilating the veiling practice with American culture; so much so

that the term has been accepted and observed frequently in popular culture, particularly in global entertainment media. The hijabi in this sense normalizes the Muslim woman and allows her to engage in more expansive social activities and converse openly in diverse situations while bearing religious values. In contrast to Mahmood's controlled environment of modesty, Williams & Mohamed Nasir (2016) described several new subcultures that have stemmed in Southeast Asia; one being the "hijabista", the modest Muslim women who consume and contribute to the discourses on beauty and fashion on printed media and online sources. Their loud identities were first seen in fashion magazines and broadcast media mostly substantiated with detailed connection to social media.

The hijabista, while becoming the favoured mainstream reference by media audiences, is further demarcated as "hijabsters", mostly composed of the Gen Y who are mostly independent and liberal in thinking, hence, they are intentionally "post-subculturally progressive" which are derived from the phrase "hijab and "hipster" (Williams & Mohamed Nasir, 2017; Muggleton, 2000). Studies further hypothesized that the contemporary youths within this category are mostly immensely attached to their conceptually playful and leisurely nature (Williams, 2011). In this regard, Generation Y (Gen Y), are those who are born after 1981. Gen Y key characteristics include taking advantage of technological developments that shape them emotionally, cognitively and socially and allows interactions, entertainment, and moderation of their feelings among one another (Bolton, et.al, 2013; Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). The dependency of Gen Y to communication advancements, social networking, and globalization, is a result of their abundance of the economy as they were raised in affluent families, which giving them access readily available funds. Consequently, this automatically removed them from the despondence of the working class which is deprived of choice as media consumers (Park & Gursoy, 2012, Alch, 2000).

Moreover, Karimova (2008) related Islamic dress and representations with the theory of “intersectionality” that explains the concept where gender, race, class, and nation as distinctive social hierarchies, mutually construct each other. In addition to the findings, Karimova asserted the following:

“...ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or ‘types of people’) by specific groups of people”. (p.7)

Hence, aside from redefining the identity of young, Muslim Gen Ys whose interests lie in their own image-building, there is an underlying meaning to the emergence of urbanized piety within the present hijab phenomenon where its potential to become a political identity manifests. A case study conducted by Moruzzi (2008) maintained that the hijab was democratically used to stake their interests in the state’s social capital, where the Muslim-majority country feature innovations in “hijab” representations to present options of sexualized modernity. It was further asserted that while the hijab is meant for the upper social leagues, there are different versions of hijab that are referred to in Iran, such as simple headscarves to perform daily duties that are non-glamorous as compared to the hijab which represents a more formal identity of young Muslim women in the nation state, while affiliating their stands with elite religious clans in Tehran. It was also argued by Morruzi (2008, p.226) that provincial ladies that known to adorn the “chadori” or headscarfs (rather than a “hijab”) because they are recognized as those who perform religious commitments, as compared to the upscale, educated Iranian women that have their social statuses manifest in their politically-correct and religious identification.

2.4 Transnationalization and Hybridity of Veiling

Hall (1990) suggested that the transnationalization of hybrid cultures eliminates the barriers to exclusion and diminishes the “purity” of a specific way of being. Cultures evolve through history in transformations and during the process, acknowledge best practices of others hitherto in which any culture would appear in itself, “unique”. For that reason, the emergence of the hijab in its modern representations is ubiquitous in its expression because of its hybridity (Stokes, 2004, p.60). The hijab, while it can and should be a symbolic expression of religion in its current postmodern state, cannot remain in its traditional role as a purveyor of morals alone. This is because, with its constantly evolving facades in the media, the hijab in general, it has crossed beyond borders of nations and its boundaries as a Muslim-inclined identity and political symbolism has become more ambiguous in its new definition as a popular new cultural product. The hijab, in its successes from cultural and material consumptions has reached vast communities around the world through the constant remodeling of its urban representation for varying consumers and flows in multi-directions, particularly in Asian countries, and in specific, Muslim-majority countries.

In Indonesia, religious courses in education and Islamic resurgence had mandated the administration of its women post-Soeharto in the late 1960s. The movements of female Muslims; similar to those from the transformation of the NEP in Malaysia, had adhered to tenets of Islamic classes thus movements of female Muslims as professionals and in civic duties were visible. In the decades that followed, young Javanese women are seen as powerful advocates of the veil and modernization of gender, while resisting Islamic traditionalization for middle class Muslims (Smith-Hefner, 2007). Through structured education and empowerment through mass media within a heightened sense of piety and grand public participation, the veil became a tool of public oration and a significant form of Muslim mobility. In the age of the Internet, the proselytization and outreach of dakwah

through diverse use of media was enabled a more extensive freedom of speech that brought together the “hidden others” in the previous delimitations by New Order legislations (Nisa, 2013). With the use of the press and the World Wide Web, female Muslims are able to connect with empathic Islamic networks and are able profess female modesty subcultures in the mediascape. It can be seen that the cultural identification of the hijab as a lived and shared experience. Moser (2013) further argued that Indonesians despite their strong affiliations with piety, are definite products of consumerism converged from prevalently fleeting Chinese, Mexican and Korean media content that is illustrated in their integration of faith and fashion trends. This imagined transnational community reach beyond Indonesian boundaries and carry almost secular, progressive identity of Islam.

In concern of secularity and imports from specific nations, Korea; infused its national attitudes and behaviors with Western constructs in their media content innovations (Jung, 2009). As a non-Muslim majority country with little to no affiliations to religion, the multitudes of specific “Korean” cultural products of drama, film, music and subsequently, fashion have expanded beyond Asia to Europe, the Middle East as well as South and North America (Kwon & Kim, 2013). In Southeast Asia, merchandise, products and cultural exports that bear the Korean Wave identity, or way of living had recorded a revenue of USD458 million in 2009. To illustrate transnationalization of its cultural identity, the Korean Wave phenomenon was sparked from socio-political revolution in the 1960s-70s where the government ensured that any forms of broadcast on television would cast a good light on the Korean legislation. The Park government used this to enhance media control and ensure that the broadcasts of news, entertainment, documentary and educational programs cast a good image of the government, similar to the delimitations of Malaysian media in projecting progressive “Malayness” during developments in the Mahathir-era onwards. While piety being a secondary theme to

generating media innovations in Korea, the increase of Western competitors on content saw the educated middle-class demanding quality, culturally-inclined products. Therefore, the development of technology particularly in broadband and the internet allowed heavy investments to innovate the media industry with new forms of entertainment that embodied the “Korean Wave” (p.529).

While the hijab is the foundation for Islamic symbolic communication in Muslim nations, the Korean wave similarly portrayed intelligent and urban youths that uphold their national language and values. These values that lie in respect and familial tie, common to the Asian roots of traditions, are frequently discussed in their drama content. Ideals of beauty is another common denominator in the cultural products portrayed regardless of gender, so much so that the strong parasocial relations media audiences may have with Korean celebrities have generated dialogues within the self to exemplify or change their personal appearances in the attempt to become more engaged to the Korean Wave trends and fashions. Consequently, the key aspect to this argument is that the Korean Wave displays an epitome of transnationalization or a form of cultural hybridity that extends out on a global scale.

There is an agreement among researchers that the indirect outcomes of media use in the Korean Wave have a profound effect in creating representations among individuals. Jung (2009) and Iwabuchi (2002, p.17) depicted transnationalism as multidirectional flows of content that are locally contextualized. In the case of Korean popular culture, its expressions have had similar experiences to the cultural identity of the hijab. Elements of the Korean wave was vastly distributed and differently embraced by international communities as its ability to mobilize the audiences into a more urban socio-cultural position that are present through the meanings presented in its local media, as well as in the international media. While the Korean Wave is known in general as a nation-specific

Korean identity, the hijabi phenomenon falls back on its Pan-Arabic reincarnation of the Islamic image that represent Muslim-majority countries. Despite the differences, cultural hybridity that was aforementioned and applicable to both dimensions was described as:

“...the fusion of two hitherto relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities . . . which often occurs across national borders as well as across cultural boundaries” (Kraidy, 2005, p.5).

Therefore, in comparing between the Korean Wave and the hijab phenomenon, similarities emerge in the hybridity of both scenarios; where a new subculture is produced from the foundations of other cultures and amalgamated as “the others” of the self. Bhabha (1995) identified this as a possible “Third Space” which allows such positions to offer a place in the negotiation of identity by the media audience. On the other hand, the hybridity of these two unique systems with different origins disallow the dilemmas of having to appear authentically “original” in its dissemination. In the case of the Korean Wave or *Hallyu*, while what represented in the media are the combinations of separate the East and West cultures, (particularly Japanese and American), it is not entirely authentic “Korean” lifestyle. However, the Korean Wave is uniquely a Korean identity, and similarly, the hijab that is considered a marker that Islam, as religion does not solely belong to the Middle East where its Quranic decree originated from and that the dynamics of veiling and modest wear are interchangeable from its acculturation of different cultures around the world such as in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, where the hijab culture dwells and in doing so, is unique in each nation state’s media experience in negotiating the hijab in its “third space” of hybridity.

These spaces can be connected to the idea of a “religiosity hybrid” as highlighted by Saleh (2010, p.18) that conceptualized religious activism on urban sites, where there is a distinct connection between veiling and individual’s social class. The research argued

that the middle and upper strata have the capacity and financial capability to disseminate the idea of hijab as opposed to the lower-income groups. The movement of Islam and its revival with the youths of today relies heavily on the aforementioned group's educational background as they are known to set the standards for the criteria Muslim women should be, using the concentration of wealth to convey religious ideas through consistent activism and education through media news and programs. Featuring elite scholars, this framework explains the values and shares of religious role models within an expanding society to those who do not belong to the middle or upper class, or even those practicing Western life styles. The globalized Islam tackled in this study suggests that the modern intelligentsia created has developed significant influence on youths, especially in insinuating that the veil is the way of Islam, hence, encouraging social stability.

However, this stance was much debated by Tarlo (2007), who suggested the following that the the adoption of hijab are more likely accepted by middle-class Muslim women. In her exploration of metamorphosis through the veiling practice in a multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan city such as London, Tarlo established the following observation of veiling:

“...often a product, not so much of their cultural backgrounds as of the trans-cultural encounters they experience in a cosmopolitan urban environment” (p.131).

In this regard, resonance is the main theme in Tarlo's work as the hijab has reshaped politics through consistent media coverage, as well as, campaigns by hijab wearers which influenced Muslim women to adopt the hijab. However, Tarlo did not dwell on the cultural determinist approach that concentrates on the hijab as a product of specific ethnicity but looked at the importance of the ecosystem of modern Muslims among Muslim women and provided information and recommendations on how people

should make meaning of their lives in this environment. The term “metamorphosis” discussed in the study delves into an individual’s connection with his or her surrounding, where the act of wearing the hijab itself invokes the visual space of another and provokes thoughts or feelings that surface in an urban landscape.

Nevertheless, this finding is yet to be replicated through research on hijab representation in contemporary media. Scholars may need to further provide evidence on how the hijab in itself have created discursive representations for the Muslim audiences, particularly from Malay descent in Malaysia as part of its multi-directional flows of identity in Asia as well as its global presence. In summary, past literature on transnationalism upon globalization suggested that embodiment of cultural identities is subjective to media contexts. Insights on the need to uphold the Malay identity and its clash with the need to stand as a Muslim nation can be explored, further analyzing causes of why media representations in Malaysia is shaped by this spatial disconnect.

2.5 Purporting the Hijab in Fashion and Beauty

In the context the main areas of beauty that needs to be covered, culture and religion have traditionally encourage hijab as a way to honor female modesty. Ironically, in modern times, fashion becomes one of the forces that drive Muslim women to embrace the veil, allowing women to follow and keep up with the “fashionization” of the hijab. This consequently make the apparel appear more modern and stylish. Metwally (1991) asserted that Muslims usually hold on to Islamic values before purchasing or consuming a product as it relates to the utility of spending in good deeds to lead an efficient life in the way of Allah, where these consumers are less likely to spend impulsively. On the other hand, besides fast moving consumer goods, the influence of religion within branded items and fashion is yet to be highlighted. This it raises the issue whether the styles

comply with Islamic guidelines, and being lax on these principles would mean taking the hijab for granted.

As one of the countries with the largest Muslim population, the women in Indonesia embraced the hijab as inspired and influenced by what they learned in Islamic classes. Some Muslim provinces, such as Aceh, also strictly adhere by 'sharia' law which reflect the communal identities (Amrullah, 2008). In this case, male religious teachers often wear fashionable Muslim wear, and motivated the Muslim women in Indonesia to wear trendy clothing. Furthermore, they are also inspired by Indonesian Muslim fashion designers who are further hyped by popular media; including prominent Islamic fashion magazines and websites such as *Noor*, *Paras* and *Alia* that promote modest fashion. This fad has created a transnational flow of commodity into Arabic countries that quickly found profits in marketing these Muslim wear, where the focus of the new Muslim fashion "high society" is to 'catch' the public eye.

Kilicbay and Binark's study (2002) found visual codes from branding strategies of various fashion products which are generally linked to English names and western practice of dressing. Such codes provide satisfaction to the target audience in form of a heightening status quo. Hence, high-end fashion models in hijab who are featured in a dreamlike state are associated with technology and gadgets, such as mobile phones. Consequently, this suggests that hijab fashion is diverse and modern. This presents veiling as a socially desirable experience, not to mention as a step in Islamic modernity. However, the aforementioned study was leaning more towards a change in consumption culture in Turkey's fashion industry with little regard for incoherence of religiosity. Potts (2012,p.13) also observed that "Islamic Cosmopolitanism" has become the median for high fashion or haute couture where women are seen to be fashionable despite preserving their modesty. For instance, Malaysians are known to luxuriously don silk and chiffon

which imply that there are efforts to dress up the conservative Muslim image. Shimek's dissertation on the subject of fashion, religion and identity in a globalized world (2012) mentioned about the demeaning messages behind "Sex and the City 2" that was filmed in Abu Dhabi. The movie has featured a typecast Arabian community and Western ignorance on Muslim wear, while at the same time, underlined one of the aspects of globalization through the hijab and Muslim female dressing in high fashion (p.2). The movie's representation of clothing items such as the "burqini", "abaya" and "niqab", has made one to ponder upon how two opposing ideologies manage to mesh and create a hybrid culture that has transcended upon other regions in the world.

In the meantime, veiling-fashion continues to become an important issue as it puts two incompatible, unappalled systems together, which is described as the following:

"...religious, cultural and political references, and fashion, an unmoored system of self-referential change associated with capitalism, modernity and a particular kind of consumer subject."

(Gökariksel and Secor 2009, p.7)

The study analyzed urban advertisements that appeared in the 1980s in Turkey where advertisements showed limited exposure of a woman's body, and sometimes, a female form is drawn without a face. This is a stark contrast to today's profitable industry of veiling that includes the four elements of marketing – product, place, price and positioning that portray the hijab in line with elite lifestyles such as upscale vacationing and proliferation of cuts, colors, and styles that include tight-fitting clothing, which differ from conservative view. This brings up the question whether if ever the veiling fashion was at all "Islamic".

2.6 "Glocalizing" the Hijab in the Malaysian Context

In the Malaysian sphere, wearing of the hijab or "tudung" as it is more commonly known in the Malay language is considered an act of godliness, which is similarly and

fervently seen on a global scale. Beforehand, wearing the tudung signified “peasantry” – in which a woman shies from the public eye; as well as unwillingness to participate within the public sphere. At present, modesty has turned into a mainstream representation of modern Muslims through Malay women who wear it. This brings forward the argument that Malay women, who in the past were considered as passive and vulnerable to social changes, are now challenging their cultural limitations. It is also observed that the media allows Malay-Muslim women to engage with elements of the new hijab, having become discerning audiences that usurp the position with their backgrounds as Malays and the pillars of Islam as their points of references. Consequently, the discussion of female modesty in Malaysian media has allowed Malay-Muslim women to negotiate and conceptualize the type of Muslims they would want to embody and interpret their media consumptions into their representation of their selves

Scholars have discussed that since the 1970s to present day, the effects of socio-political changes in Malaysia have created the necessity to enhance “Muslimness” as a predictor of one’s Malayness. The literature on political Islam in Malaysia have suggested that these patterns are correlated with the use of hijab as an agency to effectively identify young, progressive Muslims onto the public sphere. The religion-and-state status quo can be traced to post-colonial developments post 1957 that had influenced constitutional settlement and modified the political realities among the nation’s citizens (Kessler, 2008). The negotiation of the Malay identity can be seen through the opposing political party, PAS’s (Parti Islam Semalaysia) victory in 1959 Kelantan. This has exalted Islamic practice until today, particularly those concerned with sharia-compliant behaviors including women’s modesty. In doing so, the major Islamic and Malay party, UMNO (United Malay National Organization) as part the ruling BN’s (Barisan Nasional) party has contended the integration of Islamic practice in their administration, albeit with moderation in considering the interests of both Malays and non-Malays (ibid, p.85). Even

with the careful consideration of multiculturalism on the parts of UMNO and BN, stronger analyses have yielded more consistent results on the Islamic negotiation in Malaysia. It can be seen that the global Islamic upheavals in the 1970s had an intense effect on religion radicalism in Malaysia with the establishment of Islam as a national religion. The discouraging of the veil by western-influenced Reza Pahlavi from Iran and Qasim Amin in Egypt during the Middle East War of 1967 and the contesting pro-veiling Iranian revolution in 1979 had respectively raised concerns from many Muslims globally, including those from Malaysia (Khalid & O'Connor, 2011). As a result, Islamization is spread through the media and later became a central theme of cultural belonging among the predominantly Malaysian university communities that perceive moderate as a display of their affiliation. In so doing, while Malay youths embrace the Islamic practice as an informed decision and as a result, Malaysia, which adheres to Islamic teaching has been largely considered to “Malay” state despite initially attempting to harmonize a seemingly promising secular nation through its multi-ethnic “social contract”(Kulenovic, 2006; Dłużewska, 2008; Othman, 2008, Kessler; 2008).

In Martin’s work (2014) on *Gender, Malayness and the Ummah*, the philosophies of de Certeau was intrinsically applied to deliberate the consumption practices that nestled the outcomes of transnational Malay-Muslims. It is agreed upon that the subjectivity of the elitist and urban Malay-Muslim middle-class was a strategy to construct religiosity as contemporary Malayness, in which to resist colonial threats in the administration of socio-politics. This is in contradiction to the views of Alatas (1977) and Joel Kahn (1992; 2006, p.92) that argued the use of symbolisms in Malay-Muslim culture was a way to eschew imperialism and dependency upon consumerism and Western-influenced development. The anxieties to manage identities that appear dependent from colonizing elements, transcended from Malay peasantry to the pillars of Islam as a more congruent administrative and society role as well as personal influence.

Further to Martin's review of de Certeau, it can be said that the formality of identifying Malay-Muslimness could be applied through the hijab as a strategy to compartmentalize power of the Malays, in which any threats to this dominant society can be managed through a societal model that includes religiosity as an element that consolidates the Malay classes as Muslims. This societal model was also earlier suggested by Frow (1991) where the isolation of the hijab as an identity marker creates an elitism of religio-ethnic relations between the Malays and other races in a multiculturalist Malaysia through this unique position made available for Malay-Muslims as compared to women from other ethnic backgrounds, in which the Malay-Muslim women need to balance their spirituality internally as well as externally. It can be said that Malay-centric political standpoints have created the legacy of Islamic emphasis in consideration of its place as the official religion of the nation state. Hassim (2014b) had established that the globalization of Islam had enforced initiatives to emulate progressiveness and liberalism similar to how modernity had been promulgated in other developing Muslim communities in South East Asia. In addition, an earlier study by Ong (1990) argued that the mobility of class was made available through increased wealth and education Malay-Muslim women in efforts of "depeasantize" them and step forward the movement of urbanization.

While reverting to the hijab is considered a return to the symbol of a special Malay class, this process was argued by Frith (2002) as a form of "retraditionalization" which can be considered as a form of reflexive modernity. While it is an act that positions Islam as a holistic order for its stability and predictability, the traditional meanings of modesty now is being contested with modernity and therefore creates a paradox which warrants discourse. Therefore, commendation on reflexivity of this praxis should be undertaken, as reclaiming traditional Malay roles in throes of cosmopolitanism is a conscious connection to a progressive Malay-Muslim woman's desires and personal needs. Ong had

long argued about the decadence of Malay-Muslim women, as there are only “Muslim women” (1995, p.445).

In so doing, within the increased observation of their modern representations as Muslim women that dominate the media sphere, their spiritual affinity alone does not decree being Malay. There is evidence that global media flows have affected media audiences, more significantly upon their Muslim identities, rather than the national manifestations of their Malay culture, as the convergence of the Islamic elements are exemplified from foreign influences, or what regarded as “cultural imports”. The media is seemingly influential in the cultivation of Islamic identity as one element of “Malayness” among the Malaysia audiences. Initially, this was being shrugged off by audiences as it creates a cringe worthy representation before becoming imminent media contents. This may be sparked by the political move during the era of Dr. Mahathir in the 1980s where politics had moved further into the Islamic terrain to rectify left-wing extreme views of PAS through a media campaign that attempted to reiterate Malaysia as an Islamic state, and at the same time, enjoying successful economic development under two decades of his administration. The strategy of inculcating the political agenda of Islam to the public was also supported by the Ministry of Information which announced that more Islamic contents would be aired on Malay-centric radio and television to enforce the high status of Islam as the main religion of the country, compared to other faiths (Buyong & Ismail, 2011). Furthermore, the former prime minister also strived to validate *Barisan Nasional* or known as ‘National Front’ that are dominantly Malay, among its constituents from its competition with the opposing PAS (Othman, 2006: 2008). On the other hand, Farouqi (2008) observed Islamic modernism through the ideals of adopting European forms and state of economy, yet, championing the restructuring of Muslim societies through adopting modern education, organizing sophisticated technology and centralizing the power of state, in case, through the Malay-Muslims.

2.7 Empowering Malay-Muslim Women through the Hijab

The quality of research on the Malay-Muslim representation has increased; a review by Ong & Peletz, Noor and Martin (1995; 2000; 2012) had subsequently unraveled the dilemma in pursuing the identity, particularly among its youth and female population. Empowerment has been one of the driving forces in the support of hijab as the bearer of modern modesty representation. This is in contradiction to studies that discussed the less sophisticated perceptions and thought processes of Malay-Muslim women; Aihwa Ong in her anthropology of “State versus Islam: Malay families, Women’s Bodies and the Body Politic in Malaysia” (1990) that focused on kinship, gender representation and reproduction. In this process, Malay-Muslim women saw introduction of policies such as the NEP (New Economic Policy) that mobilized a vast number of rural women into the metropolis in search of employment opportunities. This had resulted in a newfound self-awakening, availing Malay women to means and social freedom for social experiments whilst freeing themselves from the condescending traditional constraints of the “kampong”. In doing so, Ong’s disposition on the female agency was ethnocentric to the Malay peasantry and the progressive state of experience and motivations of rural women during the phase of Islamic revivalism. Consequently, this study is observed to have had blind spots upon more educated, urbanite women that made up a major portion in the resurgence of the identity as her generalization was limited to purposely sampled interview participants in Sungai Jawa, a community that was basically bare in modernization and the villagers were nurtured with Islamic education since the day they were born.

In a study on postcolonial Malay women in Malaysia and Singapore, Rizuan (2011) claimed that there was a large analysis, based on the work of Narli (1991) in *Unveiling the Fundamentalist Woman*. Through this perspective, it was observed that Islamic dakwah movements in the early 1980s had created Islamic awareness among Malay

Muslim females and had encouraged participation among university students in Malaysia. There are significant actors in the phenomenon, higher education and dakwah in Islamic communication, and they had allowed the renewed socialization of the Malay Muslim women to elements of this gender-differentiating value, as well as alluding that women with higher level of education are more receptive and are keen towards Islamic egalitarian ideas which bring empowerment of the Muslim women. Stivens (1994), quoted by Khoo (2006, p.126) asserted that magazines targeting Malay women's are actors in the emergence of urban culture and the middle-class which identify themselves as, among others, pure Muslimah wives who upkeep their family values with Malay modernity. This assumption contradicts the findings where rural women with less educated parents was perceived to be more adept to such Islamic teachings which decreased the potential to uphold the demands for equality, due to the traditionalism of their religious foundations which despite the consciousness of the movements directed towards liberation in their role in the community, women tend to relapse their roles in the Islamic framework.

Farish Noor (2000) contended that various countries have experienced the resurgence of Islam and Islamic communities are often forced to maintain authenticity of the culture. Martin (2012) further observed that former Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had projected Malaysia as a model for other Muslim countries and at the same time, asserted that the Malays, UMNO and Islam cannot be separated. This is not a new ideology as it has also been incorporated into facets of the Rukun Negara or national principles. Martin further elaborates that the general population of Malay Muslim youth believe that religion is a more acceptable identity, where they preferred to be seen as a "Muslim" rather than the ethnic marking of being a "Malay", even though the practice of faith among them is not uniform (p.48).

Several scholars indicated that a woman's decision to veil can be influenced by vastly different factors as illustrated in the chronology of developments in the Malaysian landscape. In this light, the variables of Western influence of discord still exist and fuses an innate desire for Muslim women to be in control of their bodies. Furthermore, it also allows women to debate about the legitimacy of Islamic jurisprudence in adopting to their ongoing progress within the society. Meanwhile, Rizuan (2011) criticized modern Malay Muslim women who want to liberate themselves. The work claimed that these women tend to misinterpret the term "empowerment" for freedom from the patriarchal system of Islam through the change of appearance and conditioning of the hijab and modest wear in media. On the other hand, while the misleading representations of the modern hijab have encouraged women to escape their daily grind, the perspectives on the new subculture of hijabsters or hijabistas that are also present in the Malay-Muslim community do not necessarily destroy the purpose of modesty altogether, despite being a hybrid of something that is absolutely alien from the public sphere.

Appadurai (1996) asserted that electronic media is a major denominator in identity construction and modification of identity in modern times. Concurrently, the ability to mediate imagined selves allows media audiences to revel in media platforms that enable them to do so. In this sense, Malaysian women are adept to synthesizing versions of modernity into their way of life and are prone to retain the cultural and customary practices of their *adat* (traditions), as evaluated by Syed (2011). In the meantime, while the "tudung" as it is previously known in the Malay community, serves the same purpose as a modern hijab, its manifestation upon each individual is customized based on one's preferred taste. This past study does not believe that the current scenario downplays the mindsets of Malay-Muslim women, instead, it fuels the the idea that audiences champion their own knowledge in the negotiation of their identity.

Similarly, Norani Othman's take on Islamic fundamentalism and Malay Muslim women (2006) asserted that Sisters in Islam, a Malaysian NGO has extensively critiqued the notion of protecting the female modesty. Instead SIS expresses the notion of a liberal Islam that respects a Malay-Muslim's choices and refutes the autonomy of sharia law. However, the Malay-Muslim society is still a highly conservative and taboo-filled society, as it tries to dance on a thin wire to balance between PAS extremism which claims that women's refusal to don the hijab is the source of all social chaos and the multicultural and socio-economic driven ideology of Barisan Nasional. Consequently, Othman had made a series of broad assumptions based on the experiences of Sisters in Islam with the media as discussed in Chapter 1, and confirmed the earlier argument on the intelligencia of how the women choice of wearing the hijab (or not) represent the society.

One of Othman's principle suppositions is that Malay-Muslim women in a modernized state are vocal, yet are constrained by the Islamic sharia law. This maintains the distinction of liberated females that seek freedom of expression and equality to man that was not stated in the Holy Quran. This void is realigned by Moghissi as cited by Rizuan (2011) that acknowledged this feminist gap, describing emancipation as a concept that should be contextualized carefully in society, cultural and political aspects, with focus on advocating women's rights in a Muslim perspective by communicating to women on the potential of their movements and social interactions, to pursue a non-gender specified career path while being able to participate in public discourses. Othman's report was significant not only for symbolism but also on substance, drawing upon the chronologies of Muslim women's rights and attaching it to the rise of female independence in Islamic debates.

2.8 Theoretical Implications on the Media as Means of Self-Efficacy

Many scholars agree that the hybridity of the Muslim women, as the convergence of cultures imply is double-prong. The renewed representation of the hijab in the media directly has directly affected the perception of audiences on the “self” and indirectly influences how others perceive them in return. In this light, Droogsma (2007) analyzed alternative discourses of the hijab through the Standpoint Theory where respondents’ idea of female modesty enables a sense of superiority upon the more dominant, Western ways of thinking, while Moruzzi (1993, p.257) found that “characteristics of a radical feminine agency” such as the hijab could be evaluated by using a matrix that includes class, race, sexuality and other factors. Meanwhile, findings from Droogsma’s earlier study opposes this view as based on the Standpoint Theory, the study observed that Muslim women are able to identify and negotiate contradictions between their hijab experiences and how society attempts to define them, thus are at the liberty of crafting their own identity.

There is a great deal of discussion on the Uses and Gratifications model that communication and media help build the foundation and growth of an individual, where the use of these platforms automates their desires and identity with the available content. As such, media audiences tend to customize their use of specific media platforms to satisfy this need. However, media consumers who may have had little or no time to particularly choose the media they use, and as such case, turn to what is most accessible and convenient to them during their free time. Meanwhile, Levy (1979) and Rubin & Perse (1987) asserted that the mass media is an ideal platform to combat loneliness and other scholars have contended that using media is a useful alternative when there are no means to communicate personally with others (Wang, Fink & Cai, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 1985; Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Therefore, the application of Uses and Gratifications in today’s digital age is covered mostly by social media, rather than through the precursory traditional media. On the other hand, how Uses

and Gratifications are present in the use of the social media has not been discussed in great detail by scholars. Currently, present studies on Uses and Gratifications of media use are highly concentrated on examining the effects of the growing social media landscape, particularly on analysis the use of modern communication technology that holds information that may habitually satisfy one's loneliness or feeling of inclusion. As a result, this allows the audience to escape and withdraw from the world. Even so, the use of traditional media is still relevant as there are various elements that enable the "parasocial relationship" as discovered by Horton & Wohl (1956); where older media has greater presence and permanence as compared to fleeting contents of its predecessor in social networks today. Traditional media such as television, newspapers, and magazines also have a structuration effect where its contents dictate the trends and social norm. Since the turn of the century, media audiences have relied on the canons of journalism to be in the know of current events that set precedent to social trends and subcultures. Consequently, print media, in specific, have had three hundred years' worth of agenda-setting and influence since the Partisan Press in America while in South East Asia, cosmopolitanism of content in media determine how its audiences react towards a specific issue (Dominick, 2007).

In relations to this, Steele (2003, p.130), conducted an analysis of the TEMPO magazine, an Indonesian weekly and found that the news skewed to urbanites where the magnitude of the story involved is related to its relevance to the urban Jakarta crowd. The study argued that newsworthiness in such mediums include frameworks that impact social, economic and political standings. A magazine, in particular, has a significant effect towards its niche audiences and presents an impactful messages from its mobilizing ideologies, particularly in female magazines that incite not only the male gaze, but empowers the gender on its own. In European countries, such as Russia, magazines for Muslim women's have created the positive outlooks on Islam in its contribution on

culture and history (Rabinovich, 2016), albeit presenting immutable differences towards ethnic diversity as can be seen in Malaysian representation of Malay-Muslims through the hijab. In essence, the provision of opinion pieces, feature articles constituted recognition for belonging and empowerment of ethnic communities which acculturates a Malay-Muslim with the nationalism of the state.

The lure of consumerism, therefore, provides a visual catalogue for a good life where a reader or media audience are not able to possibly refuse despite the ideals of the Muslim way of life, such as wearing a veil. Therefore, the production of such “catalogues” allow the female Malay-Muslim to pre-select the lifestyle and identity of which she feels most affiliated with, particularly when the said printed materials present familiarity of opinion leaders and prominent figures that further verify the “goodness” of what they have experienced, making it a communal voice. This could be related to the Islamic cosmopolitanism, as discussed earlier in this chapter by Jenkins. Dallmayr (2012) and Beck (2011) asserted that as cosmopolitanism is the unity of the different people from different cultures that share common governance and supranational structures made available from mass media. The context of this new world is dependent on the engaging of media and their reach of local and global dialogues that offer changes which was discussed by Beck in the behaviors of media audiences, particularly in the dedication to maintain a cosmopolitan praxis that speak a similar language, despite the borders that separate the hijab-inclined nation states. Media audiences are subconsciously exposed to the hijab through the framing of media representations that are hailed to be basic standards of the hijab, including its variations of “peoples”, such as “hijabistas” or “hijabsters” that were earlier highlighted in their intersectional identities that combine both Eastern and Western elements. Beck affirms greatly that the cosmopolitanism is made active from activism and participation, and in correlation to the hijab, the media audiences’ affiliation towards it.

There is growing consensus that shared values and habits that mutually accepted by members of the modern society which enables it to mold its structure. Oppong (2014) set forth that Giddens (1984) emphasized human agency that developed the duality of structure where one's behavior could shape the socio-political and the economical landscape based on their wants and needs. On the other hand, Giddens (1990, p.166) later argued that there is no sufficient evidence that global modernity caused the corrosion of local culture, nor, findings that replicate this assumptions. Consequently, the essence of the Structuration Theory confirms that the recurring structures in the social sphere is based the "macro" level and agency as members of the community are given agency to make a change and will not work without one or the other. He also argued that agents produce structures, while the structures reproduce and sustain themselves through actions of the agents. Agency is further elaborated by Judith Butler (1988) who posited that cultural identity is a part of "acts" that becomes a shared experience and "collective action" in the social sphere.

"The act that gender is, the act that embodied agents are in as much as they dramatically and actively embody and, indeed, wear certain cultural significations, is clearly next one's act alone. Surely, there are nuanced and individual ways of doing one's gender, but that one does it, and that one does it in accord with certain sanctions and prescriptions, is clearly not a fully individual". (Butler, 1988)

Butler's (2010) more extensive work on performative agency found that various organizations produce media content through repetitive systems and these processes program how women shape their opinions. Thus, the behaviors of Muslim women are reactive to what has been produced in the media and this creates a seamless regeneration of their individual identity constructs. This can be related closely to how Droogsma entailed that the hijab provides women and their partners greater control of the bodies, protecting it for the sake of their relationship by sharing its sanctity as well as expressing

sensuality through intimacy as opposed to the images of scantily-clad women in media that desensitizes the real role of a woman, i.e. a mother and a wife (2007, p.309). Meanwhile, Woldesemait (2012) asserted that hijab gives women agency in dealing with relationships as the practice allows women to share their beauty in a more private sphere with friends and family. In the olden days the hijab can be seen as submissive but today, limiting the display of the “aurat” or flesh, which expresses exclusivity and intimacy. Hence, there is an assumption that the hijab is an actor in calibrating modernization with culture and tradition.

It is important to analyze the results of exposure towards the images of the hijabs, and their commercial values that are adaptable by media consumers and have motivated more Muslim females to adopt the lifestyle. Tarlo (2007) highlighted the significance of blogs on social media, providing basic know-hows such as grooming, image-making, socializing and other forms of instrumental surveillance that relates to the role of the media as an alternative source of information. This helps media audiences satisfy their cognitive needs as illustrated earlier in Katz and Blumler’s Uses and Gratifications model¹⁰. Further to the study, the hijab has become an orienting device where a Muslim woman’s extent of adoption is based on their social relationships, and visual presence of others in hijab and commercialization in media. Other than its reporting role as the watchdog of the society, the media also serves as an opinion leader, transmitting values and interpretation of what should be a way of life.

A related spectrum to audiences’ media choice is included in this review and affirms how the media affects the decision-making of audiences through the Postfeminist Double

¹⁰ Uses and Gratifications Theory (1973-1974) assumes that nature the “active” audience is driven by their needs for media consumption.

Bind Theory. While it was earlier on an inception for mental conflicts, dilemmas and disorders by Bateson (1973), Kathleen Hall Jamieson reconceptualized the ideology into the “Double Bind for Surrogacy” to highlight the changing perceptions of women in progressive times (Jamieson, 1995; Senda-Cook, 2009). The construct discusses how a woman’s mind, having negotiated choices that are presented to her, which are most certainly polar opposites of each other. In example, women are portrayed either smart but not beautiful and in order to become beautiful, the woman in question needs to sacrifice her appearance and as such must be willing to change her appearance in spite not entirely being her personal preference. In so doing, social acceptance is achieved through choosing the best option (although most of the time, there are only two choices to choose from), of which the rhetoric penalizes the media audience should they choose one over the other. More recently, findings from Senda-Cook’s study of women’s representation in media through selected films established that women are bound to either transform themselves into a different persona or fail in their venture or mission to achieve a goal (p.28). Prior to this, Jamieson asserted that when a bind (or solution) offers a desirable outcome, women are encouraged to believe that they are able to achieve the success by putting in effort to please the society or the opposite sex. In summary, the discussion by Senda-Cook brought forth the correlation of the double bind with the hijab phenomenon, where the modern representations of the hijab pursue ideals of egalitarian piety, where the urbanites are more inclined to pursue veiling through their material and media consumption of culture that recursively entice with the idea that modernity represents the new Muslimah movement and anything other than that are equal to peasantry and Islamic extremism.

2.9 Discussion and Conclusion

From the literature analyzed for this review, researchers were inclined towards investigating “Islamophobia” in the media and the lack of the veiled Malay-Muslim’s

justification in the society. Most findings zoned into the choice of Muslimah clothing and its impact, where the degree of meaning was derived from observing experiences of how a hijab wearer deals with discriminating cultural and gender environments, due to biased media coverage. However, few looked into the ability of media to incite audiences' emotional and physical responses towards these messages, hence, imprinting the benefits of the hijab or encouraging an individual to embrace it. A majority of the respondents in these studies in this review comprised of urban female adults aged 25-35 years old; but did not include younger media consumers such as urban youths aged 18-30 years old despite this age group being deemed as more observant and participative in today's media as well as having the highest purchasing power.

Meanwhile, most of the studies had concentrated on the ethnographical approaches where findings were gathered through qualitative methods despite the need for in-depth exploration of discourse and opinions. Often at times, the findings were deemed as inconclusive due to the observation of opinions in news values that are often skewed towards controversy and the theme of "isolation" of hijab wearers as Muslim representatives. Furthermore, by focusing on different contexts such as the rise of Muslim women fashion in Turkey which is perceived as creating a national identity in the eyes of the world, and Indonesia's attempt to find its way as the Muslim fashion capital of the world, offer another opportunity to discuss how such denominators have affected other MMCs like Malaysia where in recent years, Malaysia has seen many changes where information penetrating the media is inclined towards the Muslim women identity and its relation to religion. Other than print and broadcast news, social media has become a vehicle to channel hijab influence among the youths, but traditional media still maintains its permanence in dominating the media sphere to supply meanings to trajectories of veiling for Malay-Muslim women.

Moreover, the entertainment industry has significant impact in producing content that portrays Muslim women imagery which is largely commercialized in the music performance, films, dramas and even product endorsement and merchandises. Based on the current state of the contemporary Malay Muslims, the analysis of traditional Muslim principles and practice is essential in order to order to formulate a knowledgeable society that understands gaps of ideologies that contradictory of today's social conditions, hence, resulting in the contextualization of hijab dress that grants the Muslim women lifestyle a status quo in Malaysia. While wearing the hijab isolates hijabis from other cultures in the community, it maintains its prevalence as a formidable subculture that warrants acceptance.

It is important to emphasize on the female Malay audience as the majority of a new breed of modern Muslims in Malaysia. These Muslims possess the interchangeable roles as media consumers, as well as empowered source of information in the communication process. In this light, their opinions matter and in turn will influence others. Traditionalists usually argue that the Western influence had created moral corruption, however, one of the perspectives that need to be looked into is the diverse areas of the media becomes an effective tool for deliberation and reflection upon old traditions hence facilitates the flow of change in new ideas with a more globalized perception. Although the discourse among patriarchal and conservative Muslims often impede the value in this transformative channel of communication, where it is claimed that the practicality of this new lifestyle is often ignored, the impact of the media proliferation that spills over continues to affect emotions and encourage young Malaysian women to join the homogenization of vibrant, trendy Muslims in hijab wear. Moreover, Croucher et al. asserted that an individual's religion or lack of religion can clearly be a significant predictor of cultural traits, other than ethnic identification (2008).

It is an apparent paradox of the tenets that exists in the efforts to promote Muslimah empowerment in modern day Malaysia. A dilemma emerges when attempts to liberate the old age bias upon women in hijab are hindered by the media audiences' conditioning of Eastern norms and taboos which are amalgamated with the morals of Islam.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss methodology related to the data collection and research design of this study. Furthermore, the chapter describes the significance of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) and how it is relevant to dataset of the study. This chapter also includes a brief summary of preliminary research that was carried out through a pilot study to determine the initial attitudes of Malay-Muslim women regarding hijab practices in Malaysian media.

Worldwide Islamic resurgence and its commodification on Islamic female modesty have been discussed and deliberated in recent years. As discussed in Chapter 1 & 2, how the media has portrayed of Muslim women's expression of piety through wearing the hijab has garnered interest to explore the meanings behind the discourse of veiling and its role in empowering women, as well as in discrediting their faith. On the other hand, Malay-Muslim women have played a significant role in nation-building that indeed created, reproduced and transformed the multitudes of social class in the last few decades in Malaysia. Subsequently, Western influence has brought capitalism through Malay-centric marketing tools that are becoming more common in the fast-developing nation (Spiegel, 2010). Through the observations of its progress and shifts, post-colonial power relations have represented Malay-Muslim women as the dominant culture that stands out due to the emergence of elitist, where their "subject positions", namely: *the Self*, *Other*, and *World* as actors as discussed by Lewis (2002).

This present study contains a scope of analyses that examine the unique realities in the practices of veiling in Malaysian media. Furthermore, this study sought to understand audience negotiations of the veiling phenomenon that create expansive and new shared meanings among the Malaysian Muslim-majority community. This study will also

correlate these meanings with the emergent and modernistic representations of the hijab as an identity for Malay-Muslim women from media representations that contradict female Muslim ideals as illustrated in the Quran.

The literature review has shown that the analysis on the representation of hijab through Malay-Muslim women in the media is relatively new. On the other hand, past studies on the phenomenon of veiling from other regions have been conducted through either quantitative or qualitative paradigms. In this light, past researchers seem to prefer structured survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews to gather pertinent data for their studies (Akou, 2010; Croucher et al., 2010; Tarlo, 2007; Kılıçbay & Binark, 2002). A *postpositivist* agenda was adopted in this present study to look into the trends and patterns emerging from the representation of hijab in the media. Here, media is perceived as an agency that creates the desire for the inclusion of the new ‘modernized’ hijab into the lives of Malay-Muslim women, which sparked the emergence of “hijabi” communities among them. Therefore this study focuses on Malay-Muslim women in Malaysia and the rise of the hijab as a cultural signifier by interpreting first-hand opinions and analysing local media texts.

In this regard, while traditional media enables hijab to flourish as a form of cultural commodification which allows Muslim women to include the hijab in their context of socialization, fashion and hijab do not come hand in hand. Social media have represented hijab as pluralism of women’s voices and material consumption (see Chapter 1). Chapter 2 discussed that Islamic cosmopolitanism is the root of the Malay-Muslim women’s “Third Space” as discussed in the works of Appadurai (1996). This illustrates the common perception that materialistic representations of veiled Malay-Muslim women do not fit in the construct of Islam because the hijab is perceived as the symbol of piousness.

Therefore, conversations on these spaces were interpreted and were expanded outwards to unveil its distinct logic that is the key interest of this study.

3.2 Media Use in Cultural Research

This study established the use of hijab as a tool for Islamic cosmopolitanism, and how this is being facilitated and networked among media audiences to negotiate hijab as the Third Space in the Muslim community. In doing so, the methods applied in this process examined the dialogues, narratives and collective actions related to representations of the hijab through Malay-Muslim women that are being negotiated by audiences in availing the cosmopolitan praxis. Hence, this study tries to answer; why the practice of the hijab is significant in the audiences' media use, how were the negotiations of the hijab applied and why does the hijab create cultural identities for Malay-Muslims the Malaysian media sphere in the normalisation of its space. The findings that correlate to these questions will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 will further discuss how the hijab is negotiated in public spaces among media audiences in the emergence of an Islamic cosmopolitan praxis that emanate from Western media networks but portray Malay-Muslim identities. This negotiation of the hijab in public spaces among audiences are often understudied. In this light , the uniformity of the hijab vernacular reinforce the Malay-Muslim identity as primary "Muslim" rather than Malay (Frith, 2002). It creates a form of renewed imperialism that is prone to divergent perceptions and exhibition of Western and foreign cultures. This creates a dilemma in balancing between the East and West, particularly in how is the representation of Malay-Muslim women in hijab is decimated in Malaysian media. In addition, it opens up discussion on should there be any contradicting tendencies in exhibiting Islam in the media. There are also concerns on what are the dynamics that

contribute to this practice, and what are the social dynamics that are collectively agreed upon in the negotiation of the hijab and female modesty in these public spaces.

3.3 Qualitative Research Design – Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

Utilizing the data that were obtained from multiple sources, the study underpins the role of media in commodifying hijab as a common practice for material consumption and the root of Islamic cosmopolitanism in Malaysia. The homogeneity in the recursive images of the hijab through its representations by female Malay-Muslims in the media assumes that the hijab is a feasible identity for the ethnicity. In this light, the hijab fills the present gap of Muslimness as it represents their identity and helps Muslims stand out in a multicultural society. It assumes that due to this dominant representation of Malays, their persona is exclusive and distinctive from other, particularly among the affluent segment. Consequently, this denominates Malays as liberals, despite their bind to their Islamic faith. In this regard, the study intends to find how collective actions of female Malay-Muslims is relatable to the misogyny in the nation state, and how the stereotype of “hijabista” or “hijabster” is used to define this unique segment Malay-Muslim women and discriminate those who do not fit into this “prototype”; whilst conforming to the objectification of female bodies through the representation of modern hijab practices.

The study on the effects of communication and media in the past decades had commonly deployed approaches that *quantify* results of human behaviour through experiments and surveys. This is based on the belief that such approaches are efficient to prove or disprove assumptive hypotheses and determine external psychological causes of human interactions (Nabi & Oliver, 2009). According to Corman (2005, p. 21), the emerging post-positivist paradigm comprises of researchers who value a scientific approach to explaining social phenomena, and those who accept many of the criticisms of the different positivism. As a result, these researchers have developed positions that

transcend them. In the meantime, postpositivist researchers rely on several premises, such as conceptualisation of phenomena and its verification, while intentionality and experience of social actors are used to *explain* the phenomena (Corman, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Moreover, other than searching for generative mechanisms for observed patterns that are interactive and evolving, the use of basic statistics can be reduced to maintain objectivity and to support a wider inference that is as neutral and unbiased (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, pp18-19).

This present study adopted the qualitative methodology as a research design tool that involved a variety of empirical materials that highlight a “complex, holistic picture,” and refers to a dense narrative that includes the multiple dimensions of a problem and displays it in all of its complexity (Creswell 1998, p.17). Therefore, the qualitative content analysis (QCA) approach was adopted to conduct a more systematic and sophisticated analysis. According to Schreier (2012), the QCA method addresses criticisms of the traditional analysis that was concentrated more on the practice of counting frequencies and describing them as statistics. Scholars argued that the implementation of QCA combines adherents of the quantitative and the qualitative research paradigm where QCA was relatively unknown and considered a “non-statistical analysis” (Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2000).

Several other authors describe QCA as a more organised “thematic coding” that still allows comparison and contrasting of data whilst also permitting the flow of theme and context for interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998; Saldana, 2009). Thus, the uniqueness of this new approach to content analysis is beneficial to novice researchers in helping to systemise their data findings and enables them to work on multiple modes of data simultaneously. Rather than waiting for concepts to emerge from analyses of the data that is practiced in phenomenological studies and grounded theory, predetermining the themes

in the body work can help find the latent meaning that is manifested in the data based on the established categories.

The qualitative content analysis applied in this study uses the same technique, and at the same time, it explores new texts in multiple platforms. Previously, content analyses are performed in traditional media such as newspapers as elaborated by Schutt (2006, p.430). Scholars have challenged this outdated observation as qualitative content analyses can be potentially used beyond conventional media and have progressed beyond the analysis of hardcopy text. In this light, the perspective of “texts” have advanced into the social media realm, and therefore, online discussions are considered as public conversations that allow self-expression, similar to traditional content analysis (Adler & Clark, 2011; Attwood, 2009; Donelle & Hoffman-Goetz, 2008; Harding, 2002). Meanwhile, Howard (2002, p.555) criticised the overrepresentation of social media data and misinterpretation of content. Further to this, this study uses multiple sources of data and follows the recommendation by Patton (1992) to ensure the credibility through triangulation. It is believed that through the multiplicity of data, the study may have substantial evidence that can be explicitly interpreted based on a recursive process of analysis and enable fruitful useful scholarly critiques based on content selected and categories that are determined prior to the analyses. The steps of analyses will be further detailed in the following sections.

QCA can be compared to the process of Critical Discourse Analysis’ “multimodality” of which makes the connections among all semiotic resources that allows comparisons of different media and discover various narratives that operate in cultural systems and local contexts of audiences (Page, 2010). The approach to CDA conceptualizes a three-dimensional view of discourse that includes analysis of text (spoken or written), discourse

practices (process of text production and interpretation) and an analysis of the socio-cultural conditions that affect the production and interpretation of texts.

3.3.1 Triangulation in Analysis

Themes that emerged in the data obtained is deliberated in Chapter 4 where the materials coded are discussed and expanded. Then, discussions and conclusions were made with the aim to answer the research objectives set in Chapter 1. Multiple and varying sections of analyses were established to address the research questions through triangulation of data. The broad use of the term “triangulation” is defined by Moran-Ellis (2006) as the use of two or more different research methods allow a study to determine a more accurate measurement of a specific phenomenon. Moran-Ellis also stipulated that the integration of analyses identifies whether any of the research methods employed are flawed, hence increasing confidence in the convergent findings. In the field of social science, triangulation as explained allows *methodological pluralism* to create a strong foundation of an empirical research through the collection of different data sources, which were used to establish themes from different perspectives of participants; as opposed to mixed methods that tend to be used for researchers to examine different facets of the same phenomenon that comprises of *epistemological chasm* where quantitative tools deployed allow participants to adhere to a set of research protocols of positivism (Creswell, 2013; Olsen, 2004).

In this study, the triangulation is shaped from various data sources, ranging from both traditional media, online discourses through the World Wide Web as well as personal communication from face-to-face interviews. The chapter details four datasets collected from different sources for the main body of research after the pilot study; which are fashion magazines, conversations in an online blog, narratives of an online opinion column, and interview transcripts. There were many similar thematic codes that were

uncovered and some significantly overlapped with each other, hence their analyses can be interrelated. Consequently, the datasets of the study was put into a flow in the form of dialogues, where it can represent collective reactions to the phenomenon of the hijab.

At the same time, the coded data could be compartmentalised and deliberated on their own to illustrate the differences between media users and content producers, which provided a more in-depth look into the issues being studied. The use of these qualitative elements of triangulation encourages interactionism where it creates a new context when participants comply or expand on discussion of the phenomenon at hand. The tandem of deductive and inductive content analysis help organise and bring to light meanings from research that utilise this research design, as described by Elo & Kyngäs (2008) in their deliberation of the qualitative content analysis processes .

This chapter will explain how the aforementioned data were procured and interpreted to increase the credibility of the study. The methodology applied helps to explore the renewed, globalised identity of the hijab and its implications towards the Malay-Muslim. With that in concern, the following sections detail each methods used in this pluralist approach.

3.4 Research Design and Instrumentation

In regards to content selection, the study referred to industry-focused annual reports from Perception Media, *Media Planning Guide Malaysia* (2012,2014,2015,2016), which is published on an annual basis and is the benchmark in determining media growth patterns, consumer behaviour and media selling and buying for both traditional and online media in Malaysia. From the author's informal conversations with industry practitioners; the guide is found to be a credible source of reference. Furthermore, secondary research deployed Google Search engine to uncover what is trending and the most-searched key-

words at present in regards to the hijab phenomenon, which included feature articles, popular columns and viral posts on the Internet.

Print media was chosen as a platform of analysis due to its status as the oldest and most credible platform of mass communication (Dominick: 2007, p.54). This is especially true for magazines and newspapers, hence they were chosen as the source for data and relevant research materials. Wok & Mohd (2008) found that magazines are significantly influential towards its audiences due to segmentation of its publication. Here, it targets specific readers thus objectifying awareness of lifestyle trends that appeal to their emotional, psychological, physical and even spiritual needs. Several other scholars contested that mass media, including newspapers, have become the foundation of national development. This is further reinforced with social criticism through “development journalism” that discusses government successes and failures and in general, provides a refreshing perspective on social, economic and political development (Kenyon & Marjoribanks, 2007; Anuar, 2005). Anuar (2000) earlier posited that citizens are more inclined to rely on the Internet for convenient means of communication and for its trustworthiness of content, particularly contents related political and social issues.

In addition, prior to embarking on the main body of research, a pilot study was conducted to make sense of what needs to be done in order to understand the adoption of hijab and its proliferation among young Malay-Muslim women in Malaysia. Once the pilot study results were tabulated and its findings summarized, several research designs were sought to answer the research questions of the study.

3.4.1 Pilot Study – Online Questionnaire & Findings

The pilot study data was conducted from February to June 2014 to grasp the pattern of attitudes and behaviours of female Malay-Muslims living in the urban areas around Klang Valley, which consists of the states of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. These locations were

selected due to their high population and the high accessibility to various media platforms. Media Planning Guide Malaysia (Perception Media, 2016) also reported that these states had recorded the highest advertising expenditure, denoting the frequency and exposure of media consumers to media messages. Furthermore, these two states have the highest rate of economic growth by state in Peninsula Malaysia (Perception Media, 2015, p.44). An online survey was administrated via Google Forms to reach this highly sought target audiences for their technologically savvy nature. Wright (2005) and Lumsden & Morgan (2005) claimed that an online questionnaire method allows filling the gap of time and space between researchers and faster turnaround time as respondents that use online platforms are largely tech-savvy.

The Google Form (refer to Appendix A) administered contained 27 close-ended questions and included questions with Likert-scale rating to assist audiences in evaluating their perception of the hijab and their media usage in Malaysia. The pilot study used snowball sampling where the researcher shared the link for the questionnaire through the social media network, Facebook, as well as through e-mail via the University Malaya student email portal while respondents contacted also forwarded the questionnaire to others prospective sample of this study.

3.4.2 Units of Analysis

The units of analysis were selected based on prior knowledge obtained from the literature review. The main body of research in the study referred to the research questions detailed in Chapter 1 and are also determined by the outcomes of the pilot study and observations of Malaysian media trends under the influence of the hijab phenomenon. These units were collected, organized and categorized to enable efficient coding for the study. The table below is a summary of the units of analysis:

Table 3.1: Units of analysis for data coding

Unit of Analysis	Coded Source	Number of Units Analyzed
Malay female lifestyle magazines (feature stories)	1. <i>Hijabista</i>	36
	2. <i>Wanita</i>	35
	3. <i>EH!</i>	32
Online entertainment blog	Respondents in comments section	221
Online news column	Reported feature story	23
Interviews	1. Participant 1 2. Participant 2	2

3.4.2.1 Unit Analysis 1: Magazines – Representations of female modesty practiced in selected contemporary Malaysian media

This study analysed the contents of three Malay women's lifestyle magazines to identify messages that represent the practice of hijab through Malaysian media. According to the *Magazine Titles by Segmentation* section of the Media Planning Guide (2014, p.129), there is currently no existing Malay-centric female lifestyle magazines in the English language, hence, all magazines chosen are in the Malay language and are have high circulation among readers in the metropolitan areas of Klang Valley and Selangor. These magazines were analysed to seek meaning behind the collectivisim of hijab ideologies and display of Malay-Muslimness presented in its publications.

The first magazine chosen was *Hijabista*, an Islam-centric female lifestyle magazine. This magazine was established to guide young women in expressing their identities and become aware of new hijab concepts and its community (Sinar Harian, 2012), and becoming the main reference for women in hijab. Analyses performed were on selected articles from issues published between July 2012 to July 2015. During this time period,

Hijabista was introduced into the market and established a new pattern of media consumption among Malay-Muslim females. Based on to the Hijabista Rate Card (2013), 92% of its readership are Malay females and 65% of the readers are white-collar workers or professionals. The study chose Hijabista because of its standpoint of newsworthiness and novelty as a pioneer publication aiming to Malay-Muslim women whilst encapsulating the growing trend of veiling in Malaysia. Hijabista has expanded to social media which the launch of its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, as well as extended into television with its own television show based on positive feedback received. The richness of material available from the niche Hijabista magazine is beneficial for this study as it illustrates the patterns of hijab representations among Malay-Muslim women, which is shown as a diaspora of female empowerment and renewed liberation.

The data included comparison of market sales between Hijabista and those of other general female lifestyle magazines targeting Malay-Muslim women from different publishers to reduce bias (Schreier, 2012). Hijabista is published by *Group Majalah Karangraf*, a publication company that holds 23% of the magazine market share in year 2013. However, the largest market share belongs to *Blu Inc Media* at 40%. Another publisher that also publish Malay female magazines is *Utusan Karya* at 3.8% (Perception Media, 2014, p.120). Consequently the corresponding female magazines are chosen from Blu Inc Media and Utusan Karya respectively, which are *EH!* , and *Wanita*.

These three magazines are similar to each other in terms of their readership segment, where all are categorised as female lifestyle magazines, and the similar majority of audiences ranged from age 20-39 years old that cater to the middle class and urban audiences that were also cited and referred to by the pilot study in section 3.4.1 earlier. Although Hijabista was chosen due to its milestone in publication history, the remaining

two (EH! and Wanita) were picked due to their high advertising revenue within their respective publication companies, which would correspond to the readership attractiveness from marketers' point of view. Considering the very specialized topic covered by Hijabista that appeals more to women who wear the hijab, it seemed that the sales of the two other titles overpowered the veiling magazine. Even so, Hijabista had still outranked the second hijab fashion specialisation magazine called *Hijab Fesyen* published by rival, Utusan Karya.

Table 3.2: Comparisons of advertising revenue between the selected units of analysis for women's lifestyle and hijab magazines as at 2016

Magazine Title	Publisher	Revenue 2013 (RM)	Revenue 2014 (RM)	Revenue 2015 (RM)
EH!	Blu Inc	7,058,456	6,753,891	5,104,713
Wanita	Utusan Karya	3,126,600	2,547,000	3,044,700
Hijabista	Karangraf	1,182,800	1,654,600	1,378,400
Hijab Fesyen	Utusan Karya	45,000	459,000	558,000

(Perception Media, 2016)

In general, all three magazines contain segments on fashion, health, and beauty. Although several other magazines were considered, including *Nona* and *Mingguan Wanita*, but the study decided to exclude them as they belong to the same publication house as Hijabista. This is because the study intends to determine whether the patterns are consistent throughout print media regardless of the publishing company where they belong to.

A total of 103 magazines issues were collected from Hijabista, EH! and Wanita in the timeframe of July 2012 to July 2015. All of the cover stories featured in each magazine were analysed for this study. The purposive sampling is intended to include variability or differences in the materials chosen, which would subsequently play a role in increasing

the validity of the data obtained (Neuendorf, 2002; Schreier, 2012). The research time period begins from the first edition of Hijabista magazine and were compared with issues of EH! & Wanita magazines for 36 consecutive months. This aims to determine whether representations of the hijab is present in media and whether the discussions on veiling increase over time within the non-Hijabista publications (EH! & Wanita) as per Hijabista itself. This sampling is established to explore the objectivity of each magazine title in their narratives of educating and creating awareness among Malay females on the current social issues that include discussions of the hijab movement and trends both locally and globally.

3.4.2.2 Unit Analysis 2: Online Entertainment Blog – Negotiating the meanings of the hijab in contemporary Malaysian media

The initial Google searches for online discussions on hijab were based on key terms such as “tudung”, “hijabi”, “hijabsters”, “veiling”, “modesty”, “covering hair”, “hijab fashion” and other hijab-related terms commonly used in Malaysia. The study is interested in examining how female Malay-Muslims visibly express their thoughts on the hijab movement as conversational currency, while they remain invisible behind the screens of their computers or gadgets. In order to establish how Malay-Muslim women negotiate the representation of hijab in local media, the study narrowed down the search to prominent and popular posts. Google searches had highlighted a viral online post in February 2013¹¹ that discussed the multiplicities of the Muslim women, and was depicted as a contradiction in Islam teachings. This post also highlighted that the hijab representation was marred by consumer-driven ideas that is similar to magazines from the West. What was appealing in particular was the mention of Hijabista magazine (that

¹¹ <http://beautifulnara.com/luahan-hati-seorang-muslimah-buat-majalah-hijabista/>

is also part of the QCA in the section 3.4.2.1) as a catalyst to corruption and spreading non-Islamic ways which insinuated the impact of magazines upon media audiences, and how the audiences could easily address their feedback in the communal experience of social networking platforms. The study proceeded to examine this post entitled “Luahan Hati Seorang Muslimah Buat Majalah Hijabista” by an anonymous writer, *A Worried Muslimah*, which was featured on *Beautifulnara.com*, a popular Malay-language entertainment portal (see Appendix C). The “open letter” criticised Hijabista magazine and the post received 221 comments from blog readers, 2200 likes on Facebook and 97 tweets on Twitter¹².

The analysis on this viral online post illustrated fleeting reactions from Malay-Muslim women on the accusation of Hijabista magazine creating a misleading outlook of piety for the hijab. The comments section on this post observed saw varied opinions on the open letter, nevertheless it also demonstrated the comradery among the participants who responded to this post. There were also disagreements, suggestions as well as supporting comments that mirrored physical group interactions which made it possible to see the different patterns of thinking among young Malay-Muslim women. This also provides an idea of how they agree and disagree to what was written in the open letter, and consequently, negotiate the meanings behind what was presented in the post, as the media audience. In the meantime, Islam & Mungai (2015, p.4) defined content analysis as a systemic description of behaviour that limits bias with systematic rules, while Beers (2014) and Kozinets (2010) argued that online participation and interaction of media audiences can be constituted as digital ethnography that focuses on the meanings of

¹² The Facebook post of MIZAN Sisters have since been taken down after being shared by 1060 Facebook users and shared 831 times, however was also shared by online portal, Beautiful Nara (information as at 15 March 2013)

participants' interpretation thus ascertain their perceptions towards a specific issue in the process. The feedbacks obtained from the aforementioned blog comments (which will now be referred to as respondents) were thematically coded for qualitative analysis.

3.4.2.3 Unit Analysis 3: Online Column & Interviews – Representations of the hijab as Malay-Muslim identity

This particular analysis dwells into the nuances of the hijab movement on Malay-Muslim woman and society. The textual analysis looked into the collective action of media practitioners that destabilised the perceptions of their followers through their personal outlook on the hijab phenomenon and Malay-Muslimness, hence their opinions create recursive structures in the community. Consequently, the first part of content analysis in this design selected online reporting, rather than printed news for an alternative view on the hijab compared to framing that are already existent in mainstream media. The Malay Mail Online is a strategic channel of communication as it represents the urban community of Malaysians and was once coined as “The Paper That Cares”. Often times, it discusses diverse issues ranging from politics to lifestyle, showing credibility of the newspaper (Perception Media, 2014). Albeit its “Malay” proclamation, the paper serves a general audience of multicultural Malaysians.

The interest to study The Malay Mail Online was derived from the opinion column of Dina Zaman, a prolific writer who provides regular social commentary, particularly in the areas of female liberation and Islam. She is also a household name due to popularity as a writer as well as her blogging approach that seems more personal and warm towards her readers. Her article entitled “*Hijabi pole dancers and then some*” garnered a viral status

in social media, where it attracted 1423 likes and 300 shares¹³. She continues to write various other opinion pieces on Malay women and Islam such as “*Holy Men, Holy Women – A look at one kampong in Sabah*” that hit a staggering 16,500 shares and 5300 likes¹⁴. These articles discussed on similar yet polarised views of Malay women and Islam that garnered interest and raised discussions from the website’s audiences.

With that in mind, this study analysed 23 of Zaman’s framing of Malay-Muslim women in her writing to identify and elaborate the ramifications of socio-economic and political representation of Malay-Muslim women in the media. As cited by Cassidy (2007), Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) believe the interactive and transactionality of citizen journalism provides a cost-efficient and seamless connectivity compared to traditional news sources. Its online features allow constant update of information and provides in-depth information and analysis of vast array of supplementary background stories for readers to further dwell in the current issues.

The second part of analysis for this design comprise of transcribed interviews with media practitioners. The interview participants were selected from various media industry professionals who have represented or engaged with audiences as opinion leaders in Malaysian media pertaining the issues of the hijab. They were also identified to share their first-hand experiences and opinions on the relationship between the hijab and Malay-Muslim women in the media in their parts as role models.

¹³ <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/opinion/dina-zaman/article/hijabi-pole-dancers-and-then-some>. Information dated 21 November 2014.

¹⁴ <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/opinion/dina-zaman/article/holy-men-holy-women-a-look-at-one-kampung-in-sabah>. Information dated 21 November 2014.

The first interviewee is a social activist and avid hijab advocate, henceforth identified as Participant 1. She is known for her freelance work on television as an actor, fashion model, presenter and social media advocate of female modesty in Malaysia. Prior to this, she was a successful actress that did not wear the hijab. Nevertheless, her influence in media is sought after as she has been very vocal about women's welfare, religious and feminist issues which at times centered around her wearing of the hijab. Participant 1 has close to half a million followers on her Facebook. Meanwhile, the second interviewee is who is a former Chief Editor for *Nur*, a Malay-Muslim female magazine that has been established for almost a decade before the emergence of the more contemporary *Hijabista* magazine, henceforth identified as Participant 2. Her role in as content producer for the magazine was selected mainly for the publication's rather traditional values that define women's roles as mother, wife, and nurturer compared to magazines such as *Hijabista*. Both interviewees were later referred to as interview participants. Both interviews used standardised, open-ended questions based on the research questions and were later transcribed for coding purposes.

In summary, the commitment of media audiences in subscribing to content is related to the 'celebrification' of the issue by their preferred opinion leaders or prominent public figures who play significant roles in the structuration of the society.

3.4.3 Data Collection and Management

The data collection took approximately six months after the proposal and research framework of the study was approved by the university. The researcher made contacts with the necessary media organizations and media practitioners to obtain leads to the materials needed. The study also referred to sources from the Internet and Malaysian media directories to ascertain the locations that needed to be visited in order to collect the materials.

As detailed in section 3.4.2, the study conducted a corpus of materials related to the discourse hijab and its relationship with Malay-Muslim women by collecting data from selected magazines, online blog and online newspaper column. These materials were written and published from July 2012 to July 2015. This timeline allows the study to analyze themes on materials from both platforms related to the hijab phenomenon; starting from the establishment of Hijabista magazine in July 2012. The launch of this magazine is deemed as the ground-breaking identifier of this new culture, being the first of its kind in the Malaysian media sphere. Subsequently, the analysis proceeded two years after the launch of the magazine to examine progress, changes and current developments of the hijab in print media as well as other media platforms. This was also intended to analyze the growing momentum of veiling fashion and negotiation of female modesty among globalized Malay-Muslim women in the media. Aside from these, the interviewings of media practitioners were also performed along this duration.

For the first unit of analysis, the researcher had contacted publishing companies that produced Hijabista, EH! and Wanita to obtain issues pertinent to the aforementioned timeline when the researcher started this study in 2013. However, the study came across an obstacle due to the limited amount of running issues available. Although Group Media Karangkrak publication that produces Hijabista has a physical store that sell back issues of all magazine titles produced – the researcher was only able to retrieve the latest six back issues for interested buyers. Furthermore, even though the researcher had previously collected a year's worth of Hijabista since its inception, after July 2013; the data collection came to a halt when the recent issues of the Hijabista magazines were sold out. Meanwhile, Blu Inc Media (EH!) and Utusan Malaysia (Wanita) do not archive any of their past publications and were not able to provide the final proofs of each issue, as these are considered private and confidential material to their organisation.

Nevertheless, the researcher came across oral information that the National Library in Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur maintains a catalogue of most magazines published in Malaysia since the 1980s. The magazines are carefully archived and are accessible to the general public and use. However, loaning of the magazines is prohibited as they are categorised as public reading materials. The study collected 103 issues of the abovementioned magazines from the library from the pre-determined time, 36 for Hijabista, 35 for EH! and 32 for Wanita respectively. From these published issues, the study selected the cover story featured for that month from each magazine. Cover stories were selected as they are issues that are considered as newsworthy and are framed for the reader's interest. Moreover, they often highlight what is trending and should be made known to the general public during the time of publication. The stories were then photocopied at the library premises and were converted into scanned softcopies of PDF to be imported into the ATLAS.ti software for analysis. The PDF documents were kept in a folder on cloud storage while the hardcopies were filed physically according to their dates and issues for archiving and backup purposes.

Meanwhile, the study also collected the writings of Dina Zaman through her works and stories shared on Facebook by social media users. After following the shared link of Zaman's work on social media, the researcher found the Malay Mail Online news portal. In this light, Dina Zaman's articles which were featured in Malay Mail Online and Utusan can be accessed from any point or location by writing the keywords "hijab" in the search bar. Most of these articles are achieved under the category of "Opinion". While the timeframe of her writing is slightly newer compared to the magazine samples (from year 2013 to 2015), the relevance of these written articles is significant to the changing times. A total of 23 articles from Zaman was downloaded as PDFs from The Malay Mail Online website and labelled according to dates published and their title. The articles were then stored in a folder on cloud storage for easy retrieval.

Meanwhile, for the second part of the third research design that involved interviews, a set of 16 questions were established (see interview transcripts at Appendix D & E). Although the questions were derived mainly from the results of the pilot study and literature review, the interview flow was not rigid, as it follows the flow of the conversation where the interview was conducted at the pace set by the participant. Based on recommendations by Thomson et al. (1989), the predetermined questions were formulated to elicit the reflections of the participants so that they can articulate their understanding of the topic at hand, which is the hijab phenomenon. Prior to the interviews, both participants had submitted an interview consent form (Appendix F) and had been briefed on the study objectives in gaining their perspectives on the media industry and the role of the hijab in mediating attitudes and behaviours of consumers. The interviews were conducted in a private space by the researcher, and due to the busy schedules of both participants, the interviews had to be arranged separately. The first participant, Participant 1, was contacted via her Twitter account after she shared *A Worried Muslimah's* post on her Facebook page. Participant 1 then responded by providing her email address. Therefore, after exchange of information, an appointment was set at her home in Kota Damansara, Malaysia. The interview was conducted on 27 March 2013, and lasted approximately one hour. Similarly, Participant 2, the former editor of NUR magazine was also approached to participate in the study via email. After confirming the venue and time through telephone, the interview was set at the Karangkraf headquarters on 27 May 2013 in Shah Alam, Malaysia.

Each interview started with basic or “grand tour” questions of participants’ backgrounds, personal interest, careers as well as education backgrounds. These questions were recommended by McCracken (1988) to create a more comfortable environment to enable fruitful responses. Both participants were generally resourceful on their opinions on the hijab phenomenon and provided a holistic view of their experiences

as media producers. Both interviews were recorded using a Samsung Note 3 smartphone and later, the recordings which were in .mp4 formats were transcribed by an appointed transcriber in Microsoft Word. The Word document was later also exported as PDF to enable seamless ATLAS.ti coding during the stage of analysis. The recordings and the word documents were both filed on cloud storage to enable convenient retrieval of the said recordings. In concern of the mostly Malay-language medium of the collected materials, the materials were coded first, and then the selected nodes were translated to English concurrently during the data analysis, by the bilingual primary researcher, who is an experienced translator.

3.4.4 Data Analysis

Analyses of themes were deployed through the qualitative content analysis (QCA) method to identify trends and dissimilarities in the participants' statements from the data collected. Later, they are interpreted to develop insights on the hijab phenomenon in Malaysian media and its relation to media users' consumption habits. As a result, these findings will create a better understanding of how the cultural identity was adopted, applied and transformed in this study context.

The study finds that validity of the analyses does not depend solely on the emergent concepts from data collected as argued by Kvale (1996, p. 88), where thematic analysis in research already detailed "the concept of the topic under investigation before interview begins". While traditional approaches of content analysis develop codes or themes during the course of analysis itself as can be found frequently in grounded theory research, QCA is a fairly new practice that systematically treats the data by establishing pre-determined themes prior to the coding exercise. These themes or known as main categories of coding are derived from the study objectives and research questions of this research, the theoretical framework and the literature review (Schreier, 2012). Thus, by using these

paradigms to code, the researcher was able to ascertain the scope of analyses into different individual compartments and at the same time, expand the findings into a bigger network of interpretation.

3.4.4.1 Coding Frames

As cited by Saldana (2011), such structural coding relates to segments of data that uses research questions to frame an interview and textual material and allows similarly coded segments of data to be collected for a more comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, by organising the data in these clusters beforehand, a more detailed outlook on the commodification and negotiation of the hijab in Malaysian media could be obtained. Consequently, this provides opportunities for expansions of multiple conceptual frameworks from the intertextual meanings uncovered in the study.

The data were divided into three categories based on the research questions; 1) Influence – to ascertain the representations of veiling in select contemporary media, 2) Perception – to evaluate the negotiations of media audiences on the representations of the hijab in local media; and, 3) Relationship – to determine the roles and implications of hijab representations upon identity of Malay-Muslims at large. Consequently, subcategories were identified from the main category, branching from literature and research; and coined into key coding terms such as “commodification”, “identification”, “information-seeking” and others. These subcategories were arranged under the relevant main categories as the root code. However, these subcategories are not limited to those from the literature, any emergent themes that the investigator may come across during the process of coding can be included as subcategories to the root code, as the categorising system is meant to guide the researcher into a well-paved path of analysis (French, 2008; McClelland et al., 2008; Schreier, 2012). Moreover, the study should not restrict the category descriptions to only the coding frames established as hypothetical examples can

also be included. For instance, other than positive examples, negative examples that illustrates something that was earlier not meant to be covered. As discussed by Schreier (2012, pp. 100 -101) instances that do not correspond with the themes or coding frames set should also be categorised rather than eliminated.

This study draws upon the logical flow of consequences of the issues discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 (Schreier, 2012). After the relevant data related with the issue were collected, each of article or transcript was carefully reviewed to ensure it fits the criteria of the study. This means that the data should, (a) engage with the discursive practice of hijab in Malaysian media within participants' feedback (b) related to issues concerning the hijab on a national level within newspaper articles and magazine editorials to get a multiple dimension of the subject discussed. Once the search is finalised, the study will clean up the data by inspecting each transcript or article based on the timeline as proposed in the previous sections, at the start of the *Hijabista* magazine was published in 2012 until present. This would allow other materials such as interviews to complement the progress and developments of the issue at hand and to allow breadth of the subject to be explored.

The coding frames used to categorise all the data collected were based on the themes identified from the literature review. The coding process started after the study identified the required datasets and after the data were transcribed from the textual materials and interviews. The main focus of coding in this study highlights (but is not limited to) the term *hijab*; which includes *veiling*, *modesty*, *covering hair*, *hijab fashion*. There are also colloquial and popular terms English and/or Bahasa Malaysia terms used in addressing Malay-Muslim women in hijab such as *hijabi*, *hijabster*, *hijabista*, *scarflets*, *muslimah*, *tudung*, *menutup aurat*, *berhijrah*. With regards to the intertextual materials of the data, the coding will also look into the ongoing trends of the hijab movement to be included in

the analyses, and aside from these main keywords, the study will also code materials that discuss *cultural identity, opinion leaders, celebrity influence, media consumption, uses and gratifications, media perceptions, female empowerment, gender bias* and various other discussions related to the representations of the *Malay-Muslim women* in media.

The most common findings or categories were analysed using the ATLAS.ti software to further examine the words and allow visualisation of the common themes. The software assists in organising the information for the convenience of retrieval with the feature called *Queries* to list the regularities and single out anomalies. ATLAS.ti also has a unique feature that allows the generation of “Networking Map” which condenses the most highlighted themes in the data collection for further summary. The study henceforth will construct an inductive, thematic structure to narrate the findings. The interpretive method deployed in the analysis looked at the experiences and structures at a macro level, of which would be extended into larger meanings. From here the interpretation moved to a more explicit process of relating the data analysed to cultural definitions and studies by identifying constructs that interplay between the multiplicities of texts. Therefore, various new insights are uncovered and taken into consideration in problematising the issues being examined in this thesis.

3.5 Critiques on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

The worldview on most qualitative researches is that it is not “scientific” enough proof or too soft to be considered a contribution to the society. Elo et al. (2014) highlighted several criticisms on qualitative analysis methods which are a compilation of biased findings based on one’s personal impression; secondly, it is difficult to be reproduced by other researchers; and finally, qualitative inquiries lack generalisability, as studies done, are mostly on a small setting or scale. One of the many pitfalls of qualitative research especially in content analysis is the ability to mask sloppy presentation or weak

methodologies using good writing skills. Scholars have put forth on qualitative inquiry the ability to produce rigour and validity through the clear and well justified processes of their data collection and analyses. Creswell (1998) further recommended eight verifications (or what they refer to as validity) a) prolonged engagement and persistent observation b) triangulation c) peer review or debriefing d) negative case analysis e) clarifying researcher bias f) member checks g) thick description h) external audit suggested to use at least two of them.

Divergent to the traditionalist quantitative content analysis that relies of the description of statistics, researchers in qualitative content analysis (QCA) takes on the role on examining the themes, rather than to enumerate them, which eliminates prejudice and bias led by scientific hypothesis. In this light , QCA re-orientates theories to explain the phenomena at hand, yielding results in interrelationship studies to analysis the additional volumes of causes and factors to a current phenomenon. The study of QCA is an interpretive and subjective analysis, therefore, researcher's preconceptions and personal beliefs vary from the various researchers' procedures. (Schegloff, 1997; Wetherell et.al, 2001).

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) tends to focus more on the diversity of material and points of discourse. However, QCA does not focus on picking out grammatical features or organising discussions into a plateau of power ideologies (Barkho, 2008). Instead, QCA organises the data into predetermined key themes to suit the suggested theoretical framework. Pennycook (2001) argued that there is a need to deliberate textual analysis with the practice of production and consumption to uncover the latency of meanings manifest in the data collected. Several scholars are concerned with how the knowledge is acquired. In this regard, QCA approach combines inductive and deductive processes in the attempt to derive a conclusion; inductive reasoning is applied where

evidence is both used as genesis to arrive at the construct, whilst the deduction supports it. Ritchie & Lewis (2003) alluded that qualitative and quantitative analyses are not competing but are complementary tactics to resolve different issues as well as research questions in the development of transdisciplinary research and overcome concerns of *positivism* and *interpretivism* philosophies. Although the need for multi-method researches is slowly increasing, Ritchie & Lewis further contended that several scholars debate on analytical clarity on mixing methods of a different paradigm due to the dissimilar types of data that would be difficult to reconcile. In the case of QCA, the various forms of data should reconcile efficiently as it can be organised into textual forms for the purpose of analyses during the abstraction process.

3.5.1 Comparisons with Critical Discourse Analysis

The integrated approaches of studying a wealth of materials in this study is closely related to the van Dijk (1993) approach of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA). Although most critical works on CDA are concerned with social distress such as inequality and racism, it means to understand and expose these issues (1993). Similarly, the thematic and textual analyses used in this section attempt to uncover the structuration of social status through the reproduction of messages in text and talk in a social and political context as discussed in the Theoretical Framework of Chapter 1. According to van Dijk (1988), CDA analyses global topics or themes and schemata; and relevance structures or rhetorical orientation at all structural levels of a text. However, the CDA approach is broad, loose and described as a whole, similar to grounded theory. The remedy to this shortcoming is through the trustworthiness of qualitative content analysis that creates categories, concepts, a model, conceptual system, or conceptual map, which can be, discovered from the research questions itself (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Schreier, 2012). The concepts are created during the process of abstraction or directly obtained

from the preliminary collection of literature or data dependent on the insights already obtained prior to starting the study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

This present study examined how hijab is portrayed in the *Hijabista* magazine with focus on the common use of language in the *hijabster* communities or hijab-wearing stylish Malay-Muslim women in the featured articles. Both positive and negative discourses on the topic of *hijabis* were analyzed to reveal how the print media frame the phenomenon and subsequently, seek to find how use of language influenced the readers to change their perception the renewed structuration of Malay-Muslim women's social positions or increases their desire upon the commodification of the hijab to become a more active and participative consumer. Nevertheless, due to the nature of the articles, which are largely in the Malay language, this study did not evaluate the grammatical analysis of the words, rather, the analysis will look into the connotations behind them. Most importantly, the results reported after the analysis are based on carefully planned stimuli, harvested from an organised system of concepts and themes ready for replication by other researches. Therefore, the efficiency of the QCA research method becomes ideal in a multi-platform analysis on this research project.

3.6 Reliability

Boyatzis (1998) asserted that reliability in QCA could be assessed through consistency between two coders or consistencies across time. As this particular study is coded by a solo researcher, the focus and reliability of data analyses depend on the findings based on the timeline used from the point where *Hijabista* magazine was first published in 2012 to the 2015, by identifying similarities and dissimilarities in ideologies or terms used. The criterion of analysis is determined by one coder, as opposed to two coders to reduce multiplicity or intersubjectivity, as well as to increase the quality of analysis (Seale, 1999; Steinke, 2004). While Schreier (2012) and Neuendorf (2002) identified that reliability of

most quantitative analyses can be determined by using double coding where two coders code the same way to reach meaning manifest instead of doing it independently, however, some of the differences can be seen in qualitative content analysis (QCA) where reliability is not necessarily quantified by consistency scores and its validity is as important as reliability (Schreier, p.167). Fundamental to this is the theoretical role and descriptiveness in QCA, where it is partly data-driven compared to quantitative content analysis which is normally concept driven, as argued by Holsti (1969). In the meantime, similar to quantitative content analysis, QCA looks into the importance of the theoretical roles to describe the material gathered but does not dwell on testing hypotheses as how it validates quantitative study objectives. Therefore, QCA would need to capture coding frames derived from the material. The *internal reliability* applied by quantitative content analyses possess methods to maintain consistency through 1) the use of two coders, 2) comparing units during different points of time (Bryman, 2008, pp. 154) using this principle and applied to QCA which can be a measure of consistency. As prescribed by Schreier (2012, p.34), in QCA, consistency can be applied by a solo coder by recoding the materials in ten to fourteen days to ensure that definitions of the codes are clear and does not overlap one another in order to yield similar results to materials analysed by two coders in a quantitative study.

As the coding is conducted by the primary researcher which lacked inter-coder reliability, the data obtained were coded twice in the period of six months as prescribed by Schreier (2012, pp.174-5). Reliability is related to consistency in content analysis, where traditionally, consistencies are compared through intersubjectivity of multiple coders, but stability can be achieved through the gap of time where the components of interpretations are compared to validate the data during different coding periods as an alternative method. Once the first round of coding was completed, re-coding took place by using the thematic codes established earlier on.

Table 3.3: Coding stages conducted during data analysis

Coding Stage	Date	Coder
First coding	19 September 2015	Primary researcher
Second coding	18 November 2015	Primary researcher

3.7 Validity of Data

QCA has been criticised for its abstract conceptualisation as well as lack of consistency. This is because most researchers utilised the thematic analysis with description of various data-gathering techniques, but lack consistency in detailing the data analysis; therefore it has also been dubbed as “phenomenological thematic” (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003) or “thematic content analysis”, thus, field notes and a similar coding scheme for all data collected is pertinent to establish rigour in the study (Green & Thorogood, 2004) as cited in (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). As cited by Schreier (2012, p.175), Krippendorff (2004) and Neuendorf (2002) the validity of instrument is verified if the analysis captures what it sets out to capture. Schreier discussed that the coding frame represents concepts presented in the research question, and holds validity to a certain degree.

Berelson (1952, p.20) argued that the modes of communication in QCA should be simple and direct, contending that ‘latency’ of content manifest to be understood by the audience is too great for analysis. However, qualitative explorations beyond counting frequencies should allow researchers to gain both extrinsic and intrinsic values of data collected from confrontation with the participant, with the ability to also gather observed behaviours and attitudes from the participants’ body language and non-verbal communication. Consequently, this would offset literal statistical accounts that allow a researcher to enjoy relative meanings of their data. Berelson’s contention in the validity

of manifest and latent content are challenged by proponents of QCA (Kracauer, 1952), that argued communication contents to varying degrees require some form of meaning and interpretation. Therefore, no data were left unexamined for the benefit of a QCA study. As further recommended by Elo & Kygas (2008), a successful analysis relies on conceptually and empirically grounded categories of which provides much room for reflexivity, hence, the categories created should comprehensively cover the data to a point of saturation. Furthermore, as the study is conducted by a solo researcher, the data was coded twice to ensure validity of the data; the first coding exercise was conducted in September 2015 and the second coding exercise was done in November 2015. The dataset was once again cleaned up during this time to ensure there is no duplication of quotes in the dataset. The researcher had organized the quotes in simple tables for easier reference and auditing. The steps and methods applied to enhance credibility of the research relies that would allow easy replication of this study on different context.

3.8 Discussion and Conclusion

Although Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is relatively new in the field of qualitative research, its content, methods and selection of participants' is based trustworthiness. In this regard, the notion of female Muslim liberation is interpreted differently by various researchers in regards to social change. Its meaning is discursive within the minds of the participants and text that are under study, and as researcher to this study, hence, this calls for an engagement and awareness of the issue discussed at hand, particularly in regards to female modesty and the fundamentalism of Malay-Muslim women in Malaysian media. The emphasis on using a more systematic approach in making sense of data would benefit the study by bridging theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed, as well as the knowledge acquired corresponds with the phenomena the study sought to represent.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, the act of veiling or wearing the hijab was discussed in its role of mediating the cultural identity of Malay-Muslim women in the global movement for female modesty. It was argued that the hijab in Malaysia is a matter of “glocalization”, a recursive pattern that is transnationalized by global Islamic upheavals and assimilated to Malaysian culture. The study also highlighted how the hybridity of the hijab in Malaysia is closely related to media use habits and advancement in consumer culture in the media, making it relevant to the embodiment of the Malay-Muslim female body. This chapter will further explore symbols and meanings of the hijab that are presented in Malaysian media as well as how it is being perceived and negotiated by Malay-Muslim women. The representations of the hijab are part of how young Malay-Muslim women view themselves and its reflection on their self-representation, whilst the media continues to reproduce and frame female modesty as a catalyst to consumerism at the height of Islamaphobia and the conflicting need to reinforce Islam as a dominant identity in the public sphere other through the prism of their dress.

This chapter deliberates the findings that were obtained for the main body of research. After the pilot study was conducted, the primary researcher acquired further understanding of how female modesty was normalized with the familiarity of the hijab. While more and more Malay-Muslim are wearing the hijab, the pilot study deliberated in Chapter 3 found that the hijab is no longer an oppressive garment that is related to peasantry, rather; the hijab has become a more urban expression of fashion aside from being a signifier of faith and religion. At the same time, its current representations are also considered inappropriate, as it does not ideally epitomize a pious Muslim woman. Concurrently, literature has also found that there are elements of female objectification

and innate sexuality from the way the hijab is portrayed as a form of Islamic cosmopolitanism. Thus, the findings that are collected in the following sections will be discussed and correlated with theoretical perspectives that were highlighted in Chapter 1. In doing so, the rich materials that were obtained from the data was coded through the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) approach as described in detail in Chapter 3. QCA differs from traditional content analysis where the themes, rather than become emergent in the process of coding, can be predetermined prior to the analysis and expanded in the process. The coding frames were based in the research objectives, literature and overall research on the commodification of hijab in Malaysian media. Although the materials are from multiple sources; particularly female fashion and lifestyle magazines, online newspapers, online entertainment portal as well as interviews, the findings were compared and contrasted in order to create a connective flow between the insights that were uncovered.

4.2 Pilot Study Results

The data from the pilot survey collected from 112 respondents can be found in Appendix B. In summary, the majority of the responses recorded are young Malay-Muslims aged 26-33 years old (54%), followed by younger respondents aged 18-25 (30%). More than half of the respondents wear the hijab, while 14% of them are relatively new to this practice, and have only been wearing the hijab for between one to four years. Only 14% of the respondents were aged 34-40 years old. More than half of the respondents possess the minimum of a bachelor degree and 68% earn middle-class incomes of MYR3000 or more per month. Some of the more significant findings in this pilot studies had warranted further exploration in this study. This includes 68.8% of the respondents who believe that their hijab is a statement of their practice of the Muslim faith, followed by encouragement of friends and family and subsequently commands

them “empowerment” and “respect”. This aspect led to an in-depth examination carried out later through the narratives found in the content analyses.

Secondly, the intersectionality of Malay-Muslim women provides much interest for further analyses in the main body of research. While the respondents have agreed that the hijab is not old fashion or oppressive, its portrayal in media is deemed as westernised by the respondents. Furthermore, a neutral yet conflicting response was given by respondents on how the hijab represents the ideals of a true Muslim woman. There are also neutral responses on how a Malay-Muslim woman should not be overexposed in the media, while 45.5% neutral responses were also recorded among those who agree that Malay-Muslim women should inversely gain more exposure in the media. The respondents’ postings suggest that their consumerism of various media created dilemmas in understanding values of a Malay-Muslim women from their observation of present coverage of the hijab and its movement in Malaysia, particularly from the growth of social media platforms that created more hazy definitions of hijabi. As denoted by Robinson (2014), Indonesia and Malaysia have contributed vastly in the growing number of hijabi fashion blogs and social media channels in the global network. Their linkages from various social networking sources are part of this growing confusion on the role of the hijab within the Malay-Muslim society.

By taking into account the advances, applications and networking sites, the respondents had indicated that the internet was naturally a major force in establishing the role of the hijab, followed by television and magazines. However, as part of a booming fashion industry, the importance of magazines is significantly related to the credibility of brands and positioning of consumer goods on the marketshelves. During initial phases of this study at the end of 2014, 448 magazines were being published in the country and 8% are targeted to Malay audiences (Perception Media, 2014). It can be said that while

magazines have contents that are focused on brands and commercial information which discourage readers to evaluate them.

During the commencement of this study, the advertising revenue in 2013 for magazines had grown consistently and reached the peak of MYR 249 million compared to Internet advertising (Perception Media, 2016, p.10). Thus, despite a small drop in 2015, magazine advertising is still a preferred channel in delivery of consumer brands and material culture influencers. Therefore, the primary findings for this thesis were collected from fashion magazines which will further be detailed in the following sections. In addition to magazines that are popular avenue for advertising, the Internet and social media networks are not ignored. As highlighted by Perception Media (2015), the internet and magazines are two of the most common media consumed by the Malays, the consumption percentage of magazines were 36% for Gen Y and 46% for Gen X while the consumption for internet were 43% for Gen Y and 40% Gen X. (p.48).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the pilot study indicated that as youths (Gen Y in particular) make up a majority of the respondents, they are very much reliant on the use of mobile technology and was born with an edge on gathering online content. Hence, this thesis subsequently probed on the internet discourse, specifically online conversations as the second dataset. This is based on the assumption that the internet is a shadowing factor that supplies content to the Gen Y users in creating their alternative, communal and digital space, whilst conventional media remains in the forefront as a core consumer influencer. Furthermore, interview transcripts with media producers and journalists on the hijab movement will be examined to analyse the collective action in creating awareness on the social imprint and dynamics of the hijab movement.

4.3 Dimensions of Coding

Based on the work of Schreier (2012), a focus on consistency motivated the establishment of coding frames prior to the process of analysis. The use of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), ATLAS.ti was deployed to allow the coding process to be organized systematically for convenience of storing and retrieval. Initial coding involved highlighting concepts relevant to the theoretical framework highlighted in Chapter 1. However, since the QCA approach is data-driven, the pre-determined frames were further refined as the coding process continued, maintaining reference to the theoretical framework, literature and research questions that were recommended in this study. Emergent codes were also integrated into the totality of the coding frames. During each coding session, perceptions of the researcher were confirmed and enhanced through the establishing of coding dimensions to add to the researcher's breadth of knowledge and meaning manifest. The coding process sought consistency through specific dimensions that seek to deliberate each research question with more depth. As such, several levels of hierarchy was established and created subcategories of the dimension studied (McLelland et al, 2008). The following are the coding frames that were developed during the process of coding for each research question posed for this study.

The first dimensional coding is based on RQ1 that sought to look into the discursive representations of the hijab in Malaysian media. Thus, elements relatable to the Uses and Gratifications Theory as discussed in Chapter 1 are highlighted in the frames to examine into their media use habits and attitudes towards the media in achieving their gratifications in using the media.

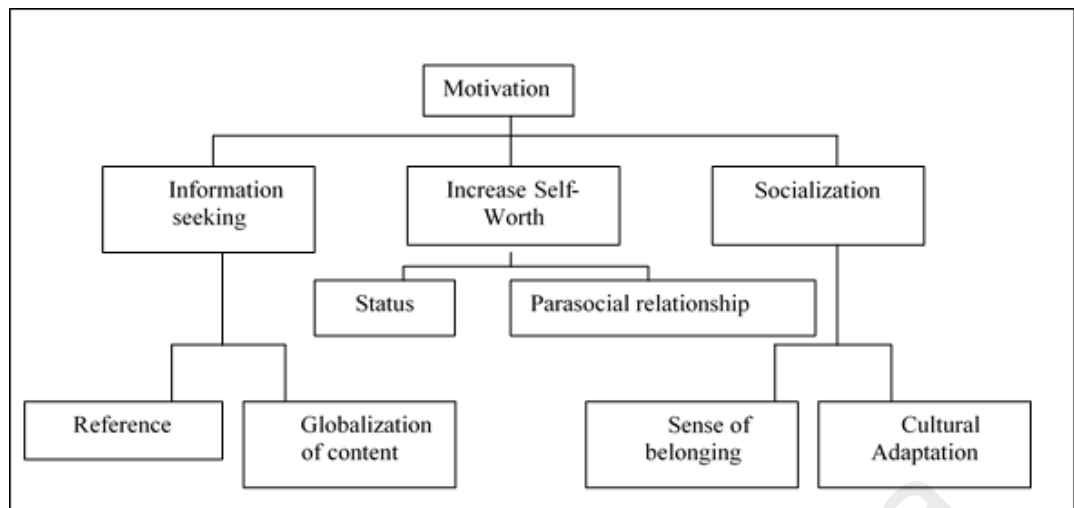


Figure 4.1: Coding frames based on Uses and Gratifications model

Uses and Gratifications Research (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) or U&G is still relevant to the blooming media today. Although its inception was in the 1970s where mass media was unilateral, both conventional and new media content rely on the decision-making process of the media users, which in turn is a cyclical process that creates the supply and demand chain of information. Significantly different from Albert Bandura's decisions on the "Bobo Doll" experiment and Social Learning Theory that individuals tend to model behavior as an "effect" from observing others (Oppong, 2014), U&G recognizes the active media consumer from the input of content and its consequences, where the media consumer is considered an active seeker of more information. At present, various forms of media compete and the consumers are at liberty to choose the platforms that satisfy their needs, interests and intelligence that in turn create self-awareness.

Hence the coding frames that were developed for Dimension 1 are in the interests of audiences and the development of personal tastes and attitudes whilst being attuned to media exposure. The top hierarchy in this dimension looks at how a media consumer would be **motivated** to accept the ideas of the hijab. One would firstly see how the practice would benefit them; particularly on their **self-worth**, followed by how they would be perceived in the eyes of others in their process of **socialization**. Concurrently

the exercise of **information-seeking** would be under way so that the media user would be able to further understand the phenomenon through appropriate **references** and expand their worldview of the female modesty movement at present with the elements of **globalization** available in the content, as can be seen in the second tier. Also in the second tier is where **status** and the media consumer's **parasocial relations** with celebrities and prominent figures that also use the hijab contributes to their self-worth, hence validating their value in the eyes of the beholder. In addition, being exposed and included part of a community of hijabis in the socialization of the media consumer creates a **sense of belonging**, even though **cultural adaptations** to Malaysian multiculturalism created hybrids of hijabis in the Malaysian public sphere

Next, the second dimension of coding frame is based on RQ2 that sought to understand the **negotiation** of hijab representations of media audiences in their use of Malaysian media. Elements of the postfeminist Double Bind Theory is explored, where it discusses the dilemma of women in pursuing personal principles yet conforming to current trends, and in doing so unveils their perceptions on the phenomenon.

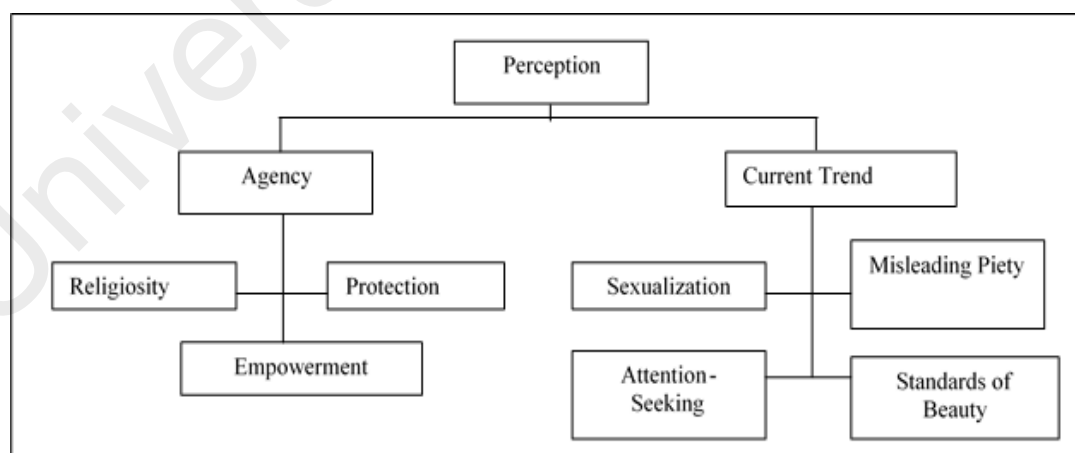


Figure 4.2: Coding frames based Postfeminist Double Bind Theory

The Double Bind asserts that a woman's feelings and emotions are equally dominant in selecting areas that are both desirable exclusive to them (Senda-cook, 2009; Jamieson, 1995). In this case it is the dilemma of the hijab that is a signifier of faith, which justifies a woman's role as nurturer, wife and mother in the society; and now, the new hijabi movement that offers Malay-Muslim a chance to become extreme and adventurous; which is the polar opposite. Therefore the representation of the hijab is instrumental in creating **perceptions**, whether positive or otherwise upon media audiences, of which they are burdened with the dilemma of choosing either side in their negotiation of media content. The top hierarchy of this dimension would be **agency**, as the message of proliferating piety encourage more women to act and embrace the hijab in their activities; and **current trends**; of which the new movement of the hijab is considered a phase of which soon will transform in one way or other. Through agency, Malay-Muslim women may feel at ease in their expression of Muslimness as the community of women in the hijab has considerably grown. Thus, through this strong bonds built among fellow hijabis, the media users feel that they have practiced their faith in their **religiosity**. Aside from that they would realize that they have the opportunity to become **empowered** from the support from using the media that engages in discussions on female modesty. Similarly, the media users feel **protected** in their practice of the hijab. Meanwhile, through literature, current trends have seen the **sexualization** of the hijab fashion, as they represented Western depictions that are **attention-seeking**. Consequently this had created a new **standard of beauty** among Malay-Muslim women, of which women who do not wear them are becoming more ostracized, despite being a form of **misleading piety** to young and aspiring Muslim girls.

Thirdly, the last dimension elaborated is based on the representations of the hijab that is regarded as a Malay-Muslim cultural identity. This dimension refers to the earlier

discussed Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984) that argued duality of structures and memory traces allow the hijab to penetrate upon the Muslim communities.

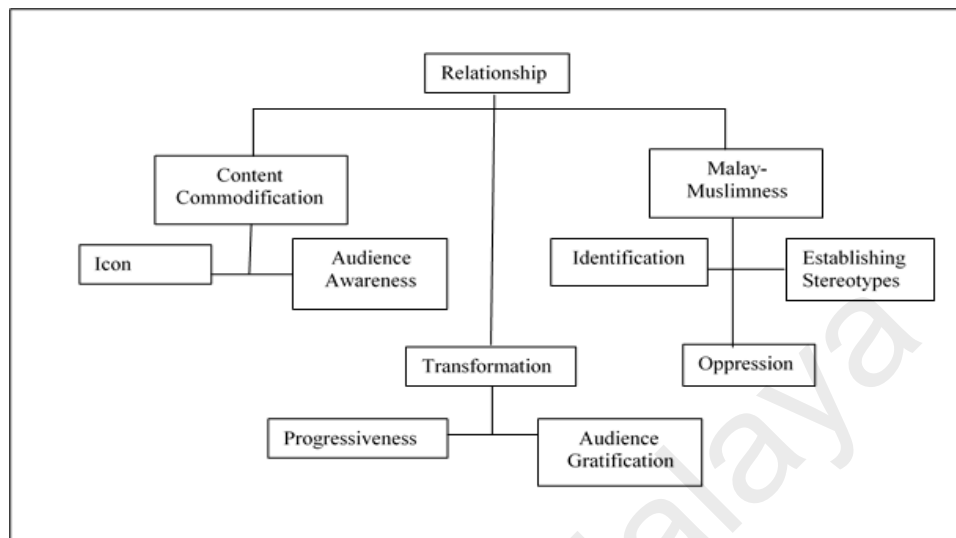


Figure 4.3: Coding frames based on Structuration Theory

The above figure is related to RQ3 of the study that attempts to examine the relationship between the hijab and Malay-Muslim women and its role in creating the normalization and permeation of veiling within an Islamic nation. The “structure” in question is a non-physical term, it relies on the mental mould that is created from human agency, of which recursive social practice becomes embedded in the minds and the identities of individuals, which in turn the “duality” in question is reproduced by a person’s reflexivity (Larsson, 2012; Andersson, 2010; Giddens, 1984, p.17). For the coding frames in this dimension, the implications of the hijab upon the local public in Malaysia are dependent on the relationship between a Malay-Muslim woman and her use of media. Their affirmation of the hijab in its assimilation and hybridity with the local public is coded from the second hierarchy, which views the **content commodification** of the hijab itself. The constant reproduction of modesty in media would in general; create **audience awareness** of the garment, and with time the hijab becomes an **icon** of Islamic identity among Malay-Muslims. Also in the second hierarchy is the instance of

transformation, where human agents seem to conform to the reproduced practice and abide by the rules and regulations that define the hijab among Malay-Muslim women. In doing so, the affected public would believe that their transformation is towards **progressiveness** or the better, and in obtaining validation from the repetitive structure in media that what is done is the ideal representation Islam, would provide Malay-Muslim women **gratification** from their media consumption.

The second hierarchy also lists **Malay-Muslimness** as coding frame that is a major part of this study; investigating what constitutes the Malays in Malaysia from the meanings of the hijab on its women. Individually, it would mean a solid **identification** of ethno-religious ties with the Malay community and their dominance through the Islamic faith, while at the same time it could create a **stereotype** that create expectations from the discerning others. At the same time, true Malay-Muslimness as discussed in literature goes back to the idea of peasantry and patriarchy, therefore the views of Giddens could have two contradicting outcomes in the coding.

Although hierarchies were established in each dimension, the top-level codes serve as a key themes whilst the following levels serves as relevant elements to the aforementioned. In the analysis, the study will look into the significant patterns that emerged from the coding process regardless of its position in hierarchy. Then, the top three codes that are identified in each dimension will be discussed and related to the remaining and connecting elements earlier established in the dimension. This will be done as a measure to step back to make sense of the material through the research objectives and literature linked to the study. In order to do so, after the coding process had completed with ATLAS.ti, the primary investigator of the research took a step back and cleaned up the data. The investigator arranged the top codes for each dimension in matrices (see Appendix G, H

and I) and analyzed the quotes related to the chosen codes. The latent and manifest meanings were then explored.

4.4 Cumulative Frequency of Codes

Various codes were identified based on the dimensions established in the earlier section during the analysis in this study. It was interesting to compare what was being said by media texts, media representatives and media audiences per se. There are contrasting yet similar outlooks on the hijab phenomenon that have permeated Malaysian and represented Malay-Muslims as a focal element of the community. The manifest ideas gave latent interpretations to the role of women in the society and the position of Malays through revealing trends that have emerged of late. Prior to the elaborations of each dimension, the primary researcher of the study listed a table for cumulative frequency of codes in Table 4.1 in order to systematically organize the data and make sense of what was collected during the analysis. These codes were generated and after the data collected was cleaned and refined through the course of study found that the concept of “content commodification” was the most apparent in all materials analysed, appearing in 118 quotations or 11.1% of total quotes extracted. This concept discussed by the respondents and participants were in the context their exposure to the hijab and its many interpretations, referring to product innovations and branding. In addition, as a construct, it means to uphold or to transcend into a specific trend and to have a firm awareness of progresses and developments in the local socio-economy.

Table 4.1: Cumulative frequency of codes

Code	Frequency	Percentage
Perception - Sexualization	9	0.8
Influence - Self-Reference	10	0.9
Perception - Attention Seeking	10	0.9

Relationship - Oppression	12	1.1
Perception - Modesty for Protection	14	1.3
Relationship - Audience Gratification	15	1.4
Influence - Sense of Belonging	16	1.5
Relationship - Malay-Muslimness	18	1.7
Relationship - Progressiveness	20	1.9
Relationship - Establishing Stereotypes	21	2.0
Perception - Standards of Beauty	24	2.3
Relationship - Transformation	24	2.3
Influence - Increase Self - Worth	30	2.8
Influence - Socialization	30	2.8
Influence - Familial Ties	33	3.1
Influence - Globalization of Content	33	3.1
Perception - Agency	33	3.1
Perception - Empowerment	33	3.1
Relationship - Audience Awareness	33	3.1
Influence - Status	34	3.2
Influence - Cultural Adaptation	38	3.6
Perception - Current Trend	43	4.0
Relationship - Technological Determinism	45	4.2
Relationship - Icon	52	4.9
Relationship - Identification	52	4.9
Influence - Information Seeking	56	5.3
Influence - Parasocial Relationship	68	6.4
Perception - Misleading Piety	69	6.5
Perception - Religiosity	71	6.7
Relationship - Content Commodification	118	11.1

(Table 4.1: continued)

The mean for the frequency seen above has been determined by $n = \text{frequency} \div 30$ codes established. As such, a mean of 35.4 denotes the significance of the codes, and as such only codes with a frequency of 35.4 onwards were further explored. Out of the various materials that were coded, magazines showed highest frequency of “Content Commodification” in its genre, based on its nature as a platform to highlight latest trends in the industry.

Table 4.2: Cumulative frequency of codes in different media platforms

Source	Significant Code	Frequency	%
Blog	Misleading Piety	52	38
Interview Participants	Content Commodification	11	12.5
Magazines	Content Commodification	92	13.5%
Online Newspaper	Malay-Muslimness	13	8.1%

Looking into magazines in detail as the biggest units of analysis, the scope of coverage differs although all function to deliver information on female fashion and lifestyle. It can be seen from the analysis that although all titles are focused on content commodification, *Hijabista* in particular is concerned into creating close ties with the veiled covergirls that were featured, who are not always comprised of singers or actors, but are also notable bloggers that come from a non-prominent background. *EH* concentrated on current information on the entertainment and fashion industries, whilst *Wanita* looks into empowering women with icons who are prominent but come from diverse backgrounds from different industries.

Table 4-3: Cumulative frequency of codes in magazines

Source	Significant Code	Frequency	%
<i>Hijabista</i>	Parasocial Relationship	25	11.3
<i>Eh!</i>	Information Seeking	21	10.5
<i>Wanita</i>	Icon	24	9.6%

4.5 Analyses of Coding Frames

After the coding process with ATLAS.ti, the primary researcher referred to the earlier coding frameworks established (see section 4.2.) and based on the cumulative frequencies identified in Table 4.1, the analysis was divided into three parts to answer the research questions; namely 1) Influence, 2) Perception and 3) Relationship. These categories were used for ease of reference during the coding process. Each part was further explored to identify the top hierarchy of related codes, and then it will discuss the lower hierarchies in its category to further deliberate the contextual meanings.

Aside from assigning the codes and quotations under predetermined categories derived from the ATLAS.ti hermeneutic unit (or coding processing file), the primary researcher used the Wordcloud function to figure out some of the more prominent words highlighted in the materials from the units of analysis that could be correlated with the research findings. The wordcloud agreed on the word “Islam”, “muslim” and “muslimah”, where the materials observed patterns that relate the need to portray a Malay-Muslim’s religiosity. Secondly, the word “woman” appeared in the cloud, emphasizing on codes and quotations that connect the importance of the female gender in presenting the hijab as part of their daily wear, and as such highlights the pertinence of female bodies in creating cultural identities among media audiences. Apart from that, the availability of almost 103 issues of magazines from the units of analysis can be linked to the appearances of the word “majalah” which literally means “magazines” in the wordcloud. It can be

2002; Croucher, 2009). Hochel had further contended that respondents in her study felt that there is no need to curate the dominance of Malay-Muslims as Malay in itself comprise 61% of Muslims (p.51).

This section will look into the influencing factors that may have induced the practice of hijab among these Malay-Muslim through the representation of veiling in the units of analyses that was identified in Chapter 3. The method of analyses on different materials was conducted to approach a breadth of constructs made through multiple media, in a strong network of messages that reinforced the idea to veil. As such, this dimension will study the Malaysian node of preaching modesty through creative reproductions of the issue by media producers, the discussions in relations to the hijab and opinion-related materials from interviews and citizen journalists that collectivizes the importance of media to the media consumer from her participation in the media sphere.

4.5.1.1 Information Seeking

Robinson (2014, p.206) further discussed the act of *homophily*, a theoretical approach initiated by MacPherson et.al (2001) that mandates frequent discussions in the media sphere foster greater Islamic knowledge consumption in the homogeneity of veiling in transnational network spaces. This can be observed among media consumers who have similar principles and beliefs, where the commodification of the hijab further ascribes its importance to the Malay-Muslim identity in Malaysia. The homophily is further illustrated with opinions by prominent figures that discusses the typologies of veiling and their practice that could that is sought after by media audiences in their quest for information as a “public practice” .

In reference to the pilot study in Chapter 3, the majority of respondents use the Internet and print media as reference points to understand the hijab phenomenon and what could benefit them. A report on the opinion column of Dina Zaman can shed some light

about the motivation of information-seeking on the practice of the hijab among Malay-Muslim women. The feature article highlighted that the availability of many information sources on a global scale allowed interviewees cited in the report, such as Sha, to experience more gratification as Muslim regardless of the multiplicity of sources that may not be entirely Islamic such as on entertainment or fashion media.

“I pray, fast and read the Quran. When I carry these in my heart, spiritually I feel complete. As a person growing up in this globalized (I apologize for using that word) world, I can’t help but be exposed to a lot of information and opportunities that may not be viewed as “Islamic” but they contribute to my work, life and personal growth.”

(Zaman, 2013c)

Extending from this opinion, findings from another report by Dina Zaman saw urban Malay-Muslim women as audiences that seek media content to satisfy their need for religious affiliation, therefore, their media use habits set the tone and religious background of the household (Zaman, 2014b). Her opinion piece deliberated about how young Muslims in Kuala Lumpur today were observed to have become keener about understanding Islam through their media use and connectedness. Dina further reported that there are now numerous communal events that are expanded from the media spheres into physical spaces, in the spread of “dakwah” or piety which are frequented mostly by urban-dwelling Malay women. The broadcast of these conventions are readily made available in mainstream media such as television, newspaper as well social media networks, in which it draws larger crowds and participation. While this transcendence is part of the reasons why young Malay women are enthused about the practice of modesty in Islam, conducting these religious classes and communions also expose Malay-Muslim women to clergies and religious teachers that are imported from foreign and more progressive countries such as the United States as an alternative take to lessons in piety.

Furthermore, as these classes deal mainly with lectures on spiritual matters, the initiative to attend these communal activities in a public space will require Malay-Muslim women to cover themselves, thus encouraging them in their customary practice of the hijab whether temporarily or permanently.

Another essential point in this section is that the selection of content by the media user is based on their consumer-centric mindsets and level of affluence. This also determines their accessibility to knowledge on modesty. The interview with Participant 1 revealed that television has a better influence upon Malay-Muslim media consumers due to its visual nature, although most of the content in broadcast media are mostly commodified for material consumption and needs filtering by those who use the media to specifically seek information on modesty.

“I’m from the media myself so I know and understand how it works and what it can do to people. It’s just that I don’t agree how some of the shows solely use the TV for their reference because we have to understand that at the end of the day, what the shows want is to make a profit.” (Participant 1, personal communication, March 27, 2013)

As a former international model and having experienced wearing flesh-bearing clothing under the male gaze, Participant 1 had understood the significance, meaning and depth of modesty by first performing her prayers and then seeking information relevant to the hijab in the media to be more informed of her new practice. In doing so, Malay-Muslims are able to support their transition and understanding of the hijab by supplementing existing knowledge with the available media platforms at present by first embracing knowledge and engaging with religious communities as deliberated by Dina Zaman earlier in this section. Coming back to Participant 1 in her interview, she argued as both media producer and consumer on a balanced coverage of content in the Malaysian media (Participant 1, personal communication, March 27, 2013).

While traditional media has the needed audience masses, the internet focuses on the selectivity of the users, where they on their own would be in charge of the content they would want to obtain in regards to Islam and modesty, hence not limiting them to censorship or filtration by traditional media platforms. As such, media consumers are solely responsible for their use and re-use of media content on the internet and social media. As for her own personal preference, Participant 1 had further asserted that she prefers using alternative media such as YouTube as she felt that in Malaysia, despite being a TV show host, presenter and activist that has worked in the industry, a lot of information are filtered and are not objective by the time it reaches audiences, thus media consumers fail to benefit from the best knowledge available (Participant 1, personal communication, March 27, 2013).

Dato' Siti Nurhaliza Taruddin, a celebrity and a most popular singer had similar thoughts with Participant 1 in a cover story that highlighted the public commotion caused when she decided to fully don the hijab in public (Hijabista, 2015b). The blurb on her cover page spoke of her "kelubung", which translated to "clouds" in which she wishes to clear the air about her small transformation into the veil. In her transition, Dato' Siti was inspired by media images of women wearing the hijab, particularly Queen Rania of Jordan who is a coveted magazine covergirl due to her regal presence and elegance. In the report, Dato' Siti had admitted that her own experience of the hijab is due to the global developments in hijab fashion, particularly with the availability of peer-uploaded content of hijab fashion tutorials on YouTube and as such, creating more room for media consumers to learn more about modesty and Islamic fashion, including herself.



Figure 4.5: Dato' Siti Nurhaliza as the cover of Hijabista magazine, speaking on her transition

Further to this, Dato' Siti believed that as Muslims, all media users have the responsibility to share knowledge on Islamic modesty and it is considered as a form of jihad, or sacrifice for the religion. According to another cover story by Wanita magazine (Wanita, 2015a), Ziana Zain, also a singer and actress, was cited to have been a “big surprise” to media audiences after by her decision to wear the hijab. While the report had covered mostly on Ziana’s 22-year foray into the business of entertainment and her latest endeavors as a celebrity, it also spoke of Ziana’s linkage with beauty products as an ambassador and how her roles in these brand promotions affected her transition as a hijabi. As her role in promoting modest lifestyle through the said product commodities, as a media user, Ziana had admitted to have similarly turned to online media and magazines as a point of reference in her veiling experience. Despite her stardom, she found her information-seeking experience as a media user more intimate and engaging rather than turning to others for help in understanding the hijab phenomenon and trends.

The excess of content is a major contributor to the knowledge buildup of Malay-Muslim women upon the hijab and modesty. From a media producer's perspective, an earlier issue of *Hijabista* magazine featured fashion mogul, Vivvy Yusof, a young entrepreneur that created a fashion marketplace startup company called Fashion Valet and had previously been a fashion blogger on her personal site called Proud Duck (*Hijabista*, 2014a). As a fashion icon and proprietor of a modest fashion company, it was important that most content are updated on her social media accounts a daily basis so that her modest fashion statements made can be shared to her fans' benefit, as do popular bloggers Raja Nadia Sabrina – whose public events she had graced and weekly style advice is newsworthy (*Hijabista*, 2013d) for followers to keep track of the latest developments in modesty per se, rather than Islam in practice. Further to this, a fashion blogger, Maria Elena further explained that it was from social media that she built her fanbase and created bonds with them. She asserted that it is the fans that urged her to upload her hijab tutorials on YouTube, in which has become a prototype of communication medium among discerning Malay-Muslims who want to feel engaged with the practice of the hijab (*Hijabista*, 2012b)

4.5.1.2 Increase in Self-Worth

Numerous cover stories in *Hijabista* had highlighted the importance of high fashion and material wealth as a purveyor of status in society. Considering the growing number of businesses stemming from innovations of the hijab phenomenon in Malaysia, a special issue had featured four local hijabi entrepreneurs or “moguls” who spoke passionately about reinventing the image of Muslimah or Muslim women into sophisticated urban dwellers (*Hijabista*, 2013b).



Figure 4.6: The first anniversary issue focused on “mogul idols” and their tips for success

As deliberated in the literature review in Chapter 2, Malay-Muslim women and their act of veiling were closely related to patriarchy and peasantry in their postcolonial dilemmas of renouncing this oppressive stigma. In doing so, Malay-Muslim women are inclined to increase their worth by moving up in the society but maintaining the dominance of the Malay race as demure, and god-abiding women. In the cover story, one of the covergirls, Ati’kah Ashaari mentioned that elevating consumers’ lifestyles with sophistication were one of her inspirations in creating her luxurious hijab designs. She had cited several fashion commodities from local and international brands such as *Hatta Dolmat* and fashion icon *Jimmy Choo*, to which she emphasized she was “obsessed” with.

In the same article, Hanis Haizi, a connoisseur of beauty products had established in the cover story that she also affiliates her style to high fashion labels such as *Coco Chanel*, *Christian Dior*, *Valentino*, *Armani*, *YSL*, *Christian Louboutin* and *Emilio Pucci*. While Atikah marketed her designs as elite “must-have” products, Hanis Haizi went on to say that wealth and material items played a big part in shaping her as a person, and was very

applicable to her current lifestyle. While consumption signifies her identity to others as a distinctively egalitarian Malay-Muslim, Hanis shared that being able to confidently carry out her self-worth embodies the success of her products on the market, and in turn gives credibility to media consumers who are exposed to her product advertising as well. She also believes that Islamic knowledge and being business-savvy is integral to mobilize the place of Muslim women in society. Insofar, *Hijabista* had focused on similar enterprising ideas in most of its issues where this paradigm of motivation is also applicable to other coding frames in this study, which will be detailed in the next few sections.

Similar to the previously mentioned acts of self-actualization through materialism and cultural consumption, *Wanita* magazine had also relayed the importance of status among Malay-Muslim women without specific focus on the hijab. Rather, their cover stories are focused on invigorating Malay-Muslim women per se, with the promise of heightened perceptions towards their self-worth through sophistication of their representation. While purely coincidental, it was noted that prior to wearing the hijab, Malay-Muslim women who had graced its cover stories such as TV personality and actresses Rozita Che Wan (*Wanita*, 2013a) and Neelofa (*Wanita*, 2013b) had also acknowledged the importance of appearances and brand names as catalyst to their success and contentment. This could relate to the resounding paradigms of the New Economic Policy (NEP) where achievements for the female gender are equated to material success; thus encouraging women to seek mobility and change of lifestyle to be recognized by the society as progressive individuals. This is a theme that has been recurrent for the last few decades in its aim to help women to achieve life and career goals, considering *Wanita's* long-standing establishment since 1969, only a few years earlier from the sudden change of economic landscape.



Figure 4.7: Neelofa as featured on the cover of Wanita magazine

On the other hand, non-hijab niche female magazines such as *EH!* in several cover stories that defined self-worth for Malay-Muslim women had featured cover stories of people that were celebrated for their work and artistic endeavors. Two notable Muslim singers were featured in *EH!*, after having achieved recognition at an international level in their careers, such as Shila Amzah (*EH!*, 2013a) and Yuna in each their respective cover stories (*EH!*, August 2015). While being a hijabi is unusual for an entertainer, they both feel that their worth is measured by their achievements and respect gained by fans and who are follow their development. In the case of Shila Amzah, she had gained notoriety in her participation in the renowned Asian Wave competition in China, as the only performer in the hijab. Instead of getting flak for her appearance, she had received commendations in both local and foreign media for her fascinating appeal as a Muslim woman who is elegant and poised.

“I thought that career would slow down when I started to wear the hijab. Indeed, I have become busier in than ever before. My family and I were very surprised about my win at the Asian Wave. My previous experiences in singing competitions made me not to put high expectations. But I’m glad that luck was on my side.” (EH!, 2013a)

While her persona is considered as familiar as many entertainers in the Malay entertainment industry through the representation of her modest image; in the cover story, it was reported that the transnational opportunities in China created vast opportunities for Shila to reach out to young girls in the Asian region and motivate them to practice modesty as well. It was mainly the differentiation of Shila as a hijabi that fascinated her Chinese fans that they followed her career through the internet, particularly from YouTube. Her career is largely driven by her fans in which what she wears becomes a prominent issue and discussion in the public sphere. Her circle of fans are dubbed the #SHILALAS, and are used fervently in social media in reference to her. It was further deliberated that her influence in her unique hijab identity had inspired both Muslims and non-Muslims in China to practice the hijab, as they had found the experience of wearing headscarves as how Shila had specifically worn it made them feel more confident to step out in the community. Thus, the convergence of cultural practice manifesting in a person’s self-reflection and influencing their outlook upon the society is possible. While it can’t be ascertained that Chinese fans are directly influenced on their faith, they are fairly fascinated by her actions and activities that are highlighted by both conventional and social media.

Further to this, Yuna in her interview with EH! shared her experiences as one of the few; if not the only Malay-Muslim hijabi singer that had achieved success in the United States after she had ventured into the international market. She realized that she needed to be open and be more adaptive to global views of foreign media in order to represent

fellow Malay-Muslim women. Slowly, her adaptability increased self-worth for herself and had prided herself as a Malay-Muslim woman. It was revealed that while Malaysian fans often adored her talents and achievements, moral policing was inevitable from what she wears in public. Yuna's presence in the American music industry was an opportunity for her to provide clarification about her identity, specifically her need to represent her religion first, and ethnicity second.

"They only know one side of the story about Islam and they don't know about moderate Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Suddenly I came into the picture and they will question me about my being a Muslim woman. Subconsciously I became a representative to speak about us [Malay-Muslims]." (EH!, 2015)

In addition, Yuna felt at ease to be able to explain about how Muslim women in Malaysia lived, and she was quick to educate foreign media on how Malay-Muslim were free to choose their interests particularly in culture and arts and from then on painting a more realistic picture that demonstrate the worth of women, particularly Malay-Muslim hijabis in the nation state.



Figure 4.8: Yuna on the cover of EH! magazine in her discussion about challenges of a career in showbusiness

Based from this analysis, it can be said that local celebrities and personalities form positive role models among media consumers aside from reinforcing Islamic modesty in their veiled images. It is seen in the analysis that parasocial relations (Horton & Wohl, 1956) have had a higher pattern of recursiveness among media audiences compared to other codes in this dimension. Even though this approach asserted that it is a one sided relationship that mostly involve in fantasized intimacy by a media consumer and a celebrity; in reality celebrities have very high fan expectations to manage. Coming back to the earlier Dato' Siti Nurhaliza cover story mentioned in this section (Hijabista, June 2015b), fans seemingly felt that they are able and are in control of change of their favourite celebrities' lives based through their engagement and attempts to reach out to these prominent figures of the media. In this cover story, it was reported that Dato' Siti Nurhaliza's fans had "prayed" for her to proceed to a full hijab "transformation", as she had only worn simple scarfs with some hair showing in public upon her return from pilgrimage in the Middle East, resulting in a lot of backlash from local Malay-Muslims. Siti, as she is informally known, may have earlier felt pressured¹⁵ to do so as there were many criticisms associated to her "good girl image" that was a signature representation that was framed by the media and reinforced by fan support during the growth of her career. It was suffice to say that she had thus succumbed to public expectations and embraced the hijab on the will of the said media users.

Nevertheless, it was undeniable that her influence lies in her fanbase, in which Siti maintains a large fanclub called "Sitizoners" that was imperative in organizing activities in support of her artistic endeavours and are active in their online media use. The cover story indicated that her fans were the happiest with her new modest and from her own

¹⁵ http://www.kosmo.com.my/kosmo/content.asp?y=2008&dt=0112&pub=Kosmo&sec=Hiburan&pg=hi_02.htm

observations, she believed that her Sitizoners Fan Club was one of the most supportive of this transformation. In this report she had also relayed that it was important for all her fans to become more pro-Hijabista magazine more than anything else, as it will educate readers to not only wear the hijab right, but also wear it fashionably in accompaniment to her new journey of wearing the hijab. Hijabista had also highlighted that many the following of Adira, another local singer's journey into the veiling is due to of her frequent exposure on television as well as social media (Hijabista, November 2014d). Being under the limelight and recognized as a Muslim woman inspired her to become an example to her fans. Adira had affirmed that in reality, many are obsessed with the life stories of artists and because of that, all her actions are under scrutiny. Facing the same situation with other newly transformed celebrities like Natasha Hudson, Yatt Hamzah, Emma Maembong among others, Adira said there is no wrong for her to veil to attract more people to embrace goodness and elevate their self-worth through hijab fashion. This being said, the analysis saw the complementary relationship of both traditional and social media that support one another in the public sphere.

To support this paradigm of renewed approaches in interacting with fans as experienced by veiled celebrities, the analysis observed that this is a common pattern in the media sphere. In comparison to prominent figures who do not wear the hijab, Lisa Surihani, in an interview, agreed that identifying with fans is important in order to influence them in a positive way (EH!, 2013d). Fans who follow her closely in both traditional and conventional media refer to themselves as "Lisafghends". Lisa even opens up their engagement at another level, where she allows her fans to showcase their talents in arts and design on her website *Lisafghends.com* so that they can be more open to creating arts to contribute to charity work. Even in personal matters, Nora Danish; another non-veiled actress who coincidentally has a hijab-selling business and also portrays characters that are mostly veiled in her line of work, found that Malay-Muslim women

tend to react positively in her shared postings of which when she had visited the new wife to her former husband after having given birth, had the resulted in high media coverage and numerous feedback on her social media networks (EH!, 2013b). In doing so, this opened a deeper penetration of interactions between her and media audiences.

Whilst traditional media is a pedestal in which archives useful references to the status and careers of many public figures as well as key issues in the society, media consumers should be more realistic when seeking and retrieving information on social media. Back to the coverstory with Lisa Surihani, even though she has garnered approximately 2 million followers on Instagram, she felt that while many local and international celebrities need to have official social media accounts to increase the exposure of such icons, it is not a place to expect instant feedback from celebrities, enhancing the one-sidedness to the parasocial relations of media audiences (EH!, 2013d).

“Everyone gets 24 hours a day, no one gets more than a minute, I hope fans understand that not all comments will be read or replied.”

(EH!, 2013d).

Lisa finds that the access to information and two-way communication between celebrities and their fans can be a hindrance to personal lives and would affect their hectic daily routines. The extended reach of media consumers to media players and media producers could at some point become saturated or strained and as such may create inconveniences in their task to obtain or provide content and information. In disagreement, coming back to prominent figures that wear the hijab - Vivy Yusof sees that the overwhelming responses from fans in their media use can be seen as a form constructive communication. Prior to the successes of her own hijab line called

dUckscarves that was mainly based from her blogging experience¹⁶, Vivy Yusof confessed that while she had the idea to done the hijab for a while, her presence in the fashion industry and notoriety in creating beautiful scarf designs had impacted her fans of which she commented:

"My mom never ceased to pray for me to wear the hijab. At the same time, I had very kind blog readers who constantly emailed me and advised me to wear the hijab. Maybe this was the path Allah showed me. Emails after emails I received gave me the clues to take action."

(Hijabista, 2014a)

While she had a hand in influencing fashion choices to her fans, the two-way communication between herself and the audiences had embedded Vivy Yusof as a hijab icon where the exclusive products sold have had immense feedback in the local fashion market¹⁷. Her hijab or scarf collections in itself creates a personalized and intimate experience with her fans and customers as they are able to choose elements of the scarves that would embody their identity. An example of this would be the "Alphabet Duck" where consumers may personalize their hijab experiences with their own names, as well as to feel included and honoured as part of a hijab community in the designs of dUck's signature "Kuala Lumpur" & "Singapore" series that feature urban designs of both metropolitan cities.

¹⁶ <http://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/10/179831/duck-scarves-take-malaysia-storm>

¹⁷ <http://www.nst.com.my/news/2017/01/205248/duck-phenomenon>

Findings from parasocial interactions studies maintained that celebrities provide positive ideals to young media consumers despite not having physical contact. This means that they may have lesser risk of rejection as compared to a role model that is dealt with face-to-face; even when there is limited information about the media figure, and these reassuring notions are further magnified when celebrities possess qualities that are admirable (Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010). It has been shown that this is relevant to original founding theory prior to parasocial relations, the Uses & Gratifications model. The U&G commends that media consumer's use habits create greater recall, enhance recognition with the construct presented, and affect their attitudes towards placement. This cognition that involves the representation of the hijab in media is further improved when a character in the media provides positive and central role to the placement of the "product" or in this case, the construct of the hijab (Ruggiero, 2000; Schramm & Knoll, 2015).

4.5.1.3 Socialization

Socialization in the context of media use in is interpreted under the Uses and Gratifications approach as the effect of belonging to; or identification with a subgroup as well as transmitting cultural values in the conversations within the group (Katz et al., 1973). Briefly touching upon "sense of belonging" as one of the coding frames under the branch of socialization, Participant 1 notes in her interview with the primary researcher that discourse on the public sphere puts networking in importance where she becomes a mediator for discussions on the hijab and its significance; even warranting physical meetings to expand the knowledge on Islam and create new bonds with this shared interest (Participant 1, personal communication, March 27, 2013). Similarly, Dina Zaman's column (Zaman, 2013b) also discussed the current pluralism in Islam in Malaysia where Malay-Muslims currently feel at ease about representing themselves as Muslims while assimilating their piety despite the growing concerns for secularism in Malaysia.

Although there are many extremists in Malaysia that fight for a more Islamic-practicing country, Dina found that many Malay-Muslim women are comfortable and agree that they may still pursue progressiveness, creativity and positions in the society while continuing to abide to the laws of Islam - provided that they feel affiliated to specific groups that have mutual understanding in regards to their modesty and piety. This can be related to the work of Bordieu (1994, p.159) who argued that societal orders are reproduced from cultural elements that undergo normalization; where in the case of the hijab, creates space for individuals to express their advocacy for veiling.

In the cultivation of similar Islamic vernacular, Indonesia and Malaysia influence one another in terms of Islamic representation but the influence of Arabic elements is stronger in Malaysian modesty compared to Indonesia that promulgates its ethnic design to relay the Indonesian culture more than faith itself. Further to this, Heliza Helmi, brand ambassador and entertainer, felt that the differences are mainly at face value because in essence Islam is important, and media consumers feel that Islam promotes curiosity, gaining knowledge and being a good Muslim (Hijabista, March 2013a). In Dina Zaman's article entitled "Hijabi Pole Dancers and Then Some" (Zaman, 2013c), an anonymous interview participant emphasized that Malay-Muslims should focus enrichment of life experiences, therefore their conduct should be balanced with interests such as picking up local arts and entertainment to balance all worldly and spiritual matters. The hijab is on its own is a form of cultural adaptation in which the Malays had integrated with the practice of Islam in their daily lives, of which needed to be assimilated among other already existing multicultural elements. In a later post, Dina Zaman (2014b) saw a growth of bohemian vibes that welcomed a more urban audience in which sermons and mediums that encouraged the practice of Islam are conducted in the English language as a strong pull to entice Malay-Muslims from varying socio-economic status, particularly the more affluent. Some of the religious events highlighted by Zaman attract young Malay Muslims

with popular non-Malay preachers that contend with those already popular in Malay media.

In summary, it can be said that the learning and awareness of progresses in modesty by reaching out to media outlets are as important as practicing Islam itself. The active networking of “public practice” and “homophily” as discussed earlier in the chapter provides a sense of direction through the visibly increasing literacy on modesty. The uses of media provides gratifications to users with the interaction and information access to more liberal Muslims that intend to adapt to Islamic practices. This would also encourage the creative establishment of progressive Muslims in which allows Malay-Muslim women to express unique ways of ascribing their identity from this common grounds of interest. As discussed by Duderija (2007, p. 356), it can be said that the consumption of religious knowledge articulates distinctive Islamic practices but at the same time enforces inter-community policing to stay within the context of piety with the Malay-Muslim community.

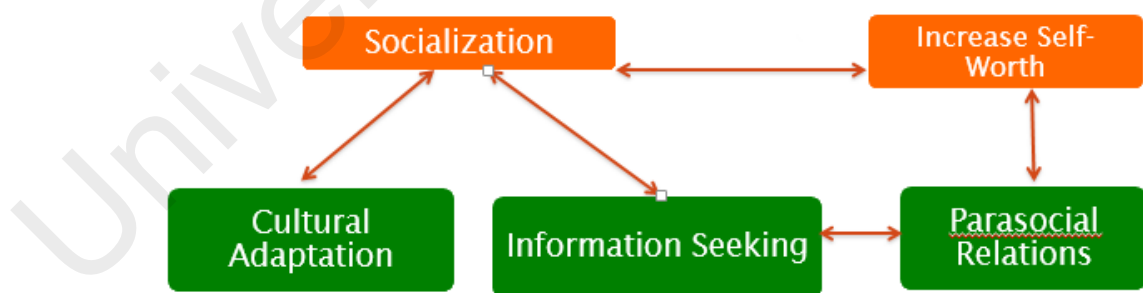


Figure 4.9: Discursive representation of female modesty practiced in contemporary Malaysian Media

4.5.2 Perceptions - Construct of Modesty and its Value in Society

Many Malay-Muslim women feel trapped in their need to appear in their conventional imagery of domestic goddesses who are obedient and pious, as how it has been denoted in various media for several decades with the dominance of Islam in Malaysia as its official religion. As it can be seen today, Islam is tied to many of the political and social expressions which also are applicable to consumer culture. Halal marketing is a given, considering that to be a good Muslim, one needs to refer to the Quran and Sunnah before deciding to purchase anything for the household, of which the women are in control (Khattab, 2006). The postfeminist Double Bind Theory looked into dimensions of the expectations of women, which gender establishes rules and limitations upon themselves but the desire to present and communicate information in favour of viewing audiences similar to self-presentation theory (Muehlenhard & McCoy, 1991; Senda-Cook, 2009). It was argued by Kathleen Hall Jamieson in her Double Bind rhetoric, where she posits that the paradigm has

“...only two alternatives, one or both penalizing the person being offered them. In the history of humans, such choices have been constructed to deny women access to power and, when individuals manage to slip past their constraints, to undermine their exercise of whatever power they may achieve. The strategy defines something "fundamental" to women as incompatible with something the woman seeks...” (1995, p.14).

Whilst many educated women are also voluntarily religious, there are still many entertainment and information portals that portray Malay women as meek and helpless, and despite living in a modern, multicultural society, Malay-Muslims as compared to other ethnicities are tied to taboos and tradition, and there are no two-ways about being a good Muslim (Khoo, 2006). At some points in time, being a Malay-Muslim in Malaysia requires one to stay put and remain docile underneath the hijab.

4.5.2.1 Agency

As argued by Jones (2007), women experience performativity of agency in today's present media landscape through content that is positioned as religious commodities that cultivate the relationship of women and God and as such, engaging themselves with representations of the hijab awards them in this relationship with piety. The bind that associates Malay-Muslim women with their responsibilities to God and household offers an alternative in which they are able to dedicate themselves to their religiosity yet become individual persons. As Dina Zaman had reported in her online column, her subject of focus; *Sha* felt that while she is very passionate about her faith, she believes the hijab does not limit her to pursue her interests (Zaman, 2013c). While her friends still feel conscious about being "out there", considering that people are naturally judgmental about Islamic women who needs to be, in all its glory, Islamic – they too have the desire and admiration to be as uninhibited like *Sha*. On the other hand, while her friends are inclined to engage in social activities, they still feel the need that they need to suppress themselves in order to maintain the image of religiosity. *Sha* – as well as a plethora of other Malay women find themselves fascinated with the growing number liberated outlooks of hijabis that challenge this perception, where they can participate in practices that are considered "less Islamic", such as in considerably immoral acts such as pole dancing (which is now a popular exercise trend). In the article written by Zaman, while the hijab is a signifier of their Muslim faith, there are many Malay women who are modernized in their attitudes and behaviors, thus it is a surprising yet refreshing construct that could be a growing culture in the Malay-Muslim community.

With reference to "A Worried Muslimah" open letter highlighted in Chapter 2 & 3, many social media users have took to the posting to be fluid in their thoughts about Hijabista magazine as well was modesty in Malaysian media in general (Abang Nara, 2013). An example of the comments received on this blog post is from *Anonymous*

(<http://SITI>) that expressed how the “tudung” (as how the hijab is referred to in Malay colloquial), while being constructed and deconstructed as a mere fashion accessory, is still considered as an empowering tool that open up horizons of today’s Malay-Muslim youth. While it is a trending identity that creates a new, empowering subculture of hijabis, the hijab automatically protects the wearer by abstaining her from negative connotations such as partying or drinking and as such counterproductive activities considering the nature of the garment.

However, Participant 2, former editor for NUR magazine in her interview maintained that stories and narratives of Muslim women automatically predispose Malay women in hijab as central characters in the media in good light (Participant 2, personal communication, May 27, 2013). While these provide agency to Malay-Muslim women in their journey of experience the hijab, the audiences need to take note that what is portrayed in media are not always the true way of Muslim women. At some points, while modesty is practiced in these narratives, the media audiences veiling need to be observe non-conformity the hijab practice to avoid noise in the dissemination of knowledge to fellow media users.

Additionally, Malay-Muslim women are able to engage in storytelling to share opinions that they are not able to share with people in their close physical content. As such, the availability of outlets that may allow them to engage with other fellow hijabis are limitless and provides them with voices which were before unheard. Not everyone shares the same opinions about the current hijab phenomenon therefore the flow of their conversations are without boundaries. Some may agree with the liberalization of the hijab in Malaysia and some may not. In “A Worried Muslimah” post, numerous blog readers had agreed that the veil has been a religious obligation for adult Muslim women and the

fashionization of women in hijab had ruined the reputation of hijabis in general. Several respondents to this post such as *maria yusof* commented:

“Clearly what is featured is against the piety guideline. In the hereafter how many muslimah will be influenced by ideas from your magazine? Many Muslimah are thirsty of religious teachings so please don’t use the tagline “stailo & sopan” because it’s disgusting and misleading.”

(Abang Nara, 2013)

KucingKopi, on the same blog had reiterated the role media in purporting the hijab on a more religious paradigm, in which respondent had criticized editors, models and citizens of Malay-Muslim magazines as the root of the problem. Their production of “sinful” content such as tutorials that manipulate young girls into wearing hijab and is focused more on its physical element rather than the spiritual. In response to this comment, *DD*, another respondent found that the Q&A section in *Hijabista* magazine was an important column that could help remedy this matter by providing a clearer picture of modesty prescribed by experts for readers to understand more about the hijab and its role for young Muslim women. The Q&A section was coincidentally mediated by Participant 1, one of the interview participants for the study which provided more leverage for the readers to follow the column. Even so, the column was powerless against the overbearing visuals that followed after in each issue despite its initial purpose to protect young women from misrepresentations of veiling. These comments are oblivious that *Hijabista* exists to sell products and promote fashion in today’s progressive marketplace.

Out of the 221 respondents that responded to “A Worried Muslimah” post, less than 10 respondents had admitted to actually reading the magazine or browsing its contents. It is presumed that the respondents are viewing the publication at a superficial level in which only headlines and visual cover stories had mattered to them. Reactions of respondents to this open letter were not surprising considering the negative connotation already indicated the reverberation of available on the letter itself, which had confirmed their presumptions.

4.5.2.2 Misleading Piety

A common misconception about the hijab is that it the practice stems from peer pressure or coercion in which the being of a Muslim itself mandates it; but at the same time the use of the hijab creates expectations of its appropriate wear in it order to differentiate Muslim women from “others” (Croucher et al., 2008; Sheida, 2007) . Even in conventional female magazines such as *Wanita* and *EH!*, covergirls such as veteran actor Sarimah, and Malaysian royalty, Queen Siti Aishah felt that it is the duty of all Muslim women to remind each other about modesty as it represents a woman’s importance in Islam. This rings true to how Vivy Yusof had described in her cover story (Hijabista, 2014a), she felt that it was her young spirit that led her to believe that wearing the hijab can be delayed and can be worn during old age (of how hijab is commonly associated to elders) even though it is ordained to be worn after puberty. This is assumed that recursive practice of the hijab in media created misleading interpretations on veiling, in which scholars argued there should be contextualized according to the culture that upholds it instead of prescribing guidelines based on age-old veiling practice which where applicable to Prophet’s wives (Barlas, 2002; Robinson, 2014). Such expectations were voiced out by a number of respondents from the open letter of “A Worried Muslimah”, such as *daud* and *aku*. Both respondents had argued that the hijab standards are already set in Islam to ensure that the hijab used covers all the aspects of the woman’s body that deemed covering. In the response by *daud*, the ideal way of veiling was described as an overall covering that enhances the quality of its wearers as can be seen in the following quote:

“An open letter with quality. Veiling in Islam is not what is presented in the magazine [Hijabista]. The real tudung in Islam is perfected by covering the chest, non-transparent, not colourful, not similar to cloaking in other religions [like nuns] and with no high buns underneath. It should be moderate, yet demure and protects the dignity and quality of its wearer.” (Abang Nara, 2013)

Barlas and Robinson's views earlier on were agreed upon by Dina Zaman in her column that earlier shared on the phenomenon of liberal hijabis that do pole-dancing (Zaman, 2013c). The findings of Dina Zaman in the feature article agreed that the Malay-Muslims have frequented the practice of policing morals of their women in spite of their intelligence and their ingrained commitment to their faith; thus any discussion in regards to worldly materials such as lifestyle, interests and even sexual matters cannot be taken into consideration if it does not become interlaced with religion as the wearing of hijab expects the affected Malay women to do so.

As mentioned in the previous sections, Dina Zaman had lengthily discussed the norms of Malay-Muslim women who involve themselves in un-Islamic activities such as socializing in clubs, smoking, dancing and deemed un-Islamic in their daily endeavors in which needs reprieve from conservative minds. In doing so, Dina Zaman insinuates that this the way of a globalized world today, where hijabis who have broader perspectives of thinking should be able to share their voice and still remain a Muslim instead of being chastised. The main premise in Dina Zaman's argument purports that the identity of Malay-Muslim woman need not be exclusive, rather; the voices of urbanites should be included in the public sphere to fill the gap in which the Malay-Muslims are considered oppressed and backwards, which is not the case with Malaysian hijabis. From the religious camp, Participant 1 somewhat agrees with this statement, although she poses a double barrel statement; while culture is important to ascertain what makes Malaysian hijabis unique, there a clear understanding of religion to preach first and a breadth of knowledge on modesty before implicating the hijab to the Malaysian cultural context (Participant 1, personal communication, March 27, 2013).

In a later report by Dina Zaman on her column, it is revealed that before hybridity of the Malay-Muslims can be recognized, there first needs to be an exorcism of exclusivity among all ethno-religious conflicts in Malaysia that spur discrimination of the dominant race (Zaman, 2013d). Dina Zaman had further retraced the history of Malay-Muslims in a more recent publishing in August 2015, *"The history of ourselves"* that cited Syed Naguib Al-Attas in the presupposition where Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago brought a desirable and egalitarian approach that promised religious enlightenment to those worthy with intelligence (Zaman, 2015). In brief, the in the Malays' apparent urgency to be exclusive can be correlated to the engagement of counter-discrimination act in forming subculture of the hijabi as their identity.

Further to this, the analysis finds that the report by Dina Zaman commended the action to compartmentalize between religion and cultural understanding through persistent interfaith dialogues. In her social commentary which relates to the series of review on Malay-Muslim women in hijab, understanding holy scriptures and traditions are an integral part of cultural convergence in which promotes commonality and ideally, social justice. In this way the Malay-Muslim can be seen as a force that can realign the relevance of modesty in representing piety without being misconstrued as a deviant act despite participating in socialization that are earlier deemed "un-Islamic"

4.5.2.3 Current Trend

At the same time, there were agreements among the blog comments in which the readers commended Hijabista as a coming-out magazine for many women who desired to be seen as progressive Muslims with the styling and other forms of lifestyle advice provided. The permeations of the hijab in Malaysian media continue to transform the construct of Malay-Muslims; therefore the availability of content is inevitable. From the

hijab phenomenon, the double bind creates a benchmark on how to be “gendered” as a Malay-Muslim woman and measures her worth from her availability to balance a paradox of ideals which controls perceptions against her, rather than her individuality. Natasha Hudson, an actress, model and covergirl for *Hijabista*, maintained that despite the discussions on the negative outcomes of the modern hijab and its representations in media, it remains as a force to be reckoned with.

"It's a new era in fashion. It's about the individual and personal style, wearing high-end, low-end, classic labels, and up-and-coming designers altogether." (*Hijabista*, 2012c)

Several respondents share experiences and impressions on “A Worried Muslimah” open letter, while some others spoke about their general knowledge of the hijab industry. There were concerns that fashion magazines are creating the wrong standards of beauty for Malay-Muslim women and that in order to seek attention from their uniqueness in the hijab, in which activates the double bind. *Pembaca Majalah*, in a response to the open letter is obviously irked by the hateful sentiments that were highlighted in the previous section.

“You already know the name of the magazine is *Hijabista*, obviously it is a fashion magazine. Not a religious magazine. From the name you already know, why you do bother to browse through it?”

(Abang Nara, 2013)

Pembaca proceeded to maintain that iman, or faith is internal and would be the root of a person’s perception about others. It also insinuates that the media audience is ultimately in control of their media consumption. Irigaray (2003) had formulated a discussion of women in her “otherness”, where her representation involves elements of sexuality (in the case of the hijab; sexualization of the garment), where to overcome this perception, she submits to radical alterations of her original self. In regards to current

trends, it was noted that hijab brands such as Fareeda¹⁸ and Naelofar¹⁹ have become household names (refer to Chapter 1). Even though there is a lot of flak about their business dealings and the way their hijabs are designed or sold in the market, these businesses are still going on strong and remain household names among fans.

Wanita magazine (March 2015) had highlighted about the success of Naelofar Hijab, having received great response from locals but also in Singapore and Brunei and soon to Europe and United States²⁰. As the act of veiling was an effect of global media flows, the achievement of local hijab businesses can be attributed to the transnational potentials of Malay-Muslim identities through the unique designs of their hijab, seeking out opportunities to appear as much as a Malaysian product that is differentiated in its brand image. The praxis of Islamic cosmopolitanism through these instances could underline whether these developments are contributing to the alternative forms of Muslim expressions among the Malay community.

¹⁸ <http://www.astrogempak.com.my/artikel/1567/kantoi-tudung-terkini-keluaran-fareeda-bukan-rekaan-eksklusif>

¹⁹ <http://www.mstar.com.my/berita/berita-mahkamah/2016/04/06/neelofa-saman-pengeluar-tudung-ciaplak/>

²⁰ <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/projekmmo/berita/article/industri-tudung-meletup-naelofar-kaut-untung-rm50j-setahun>

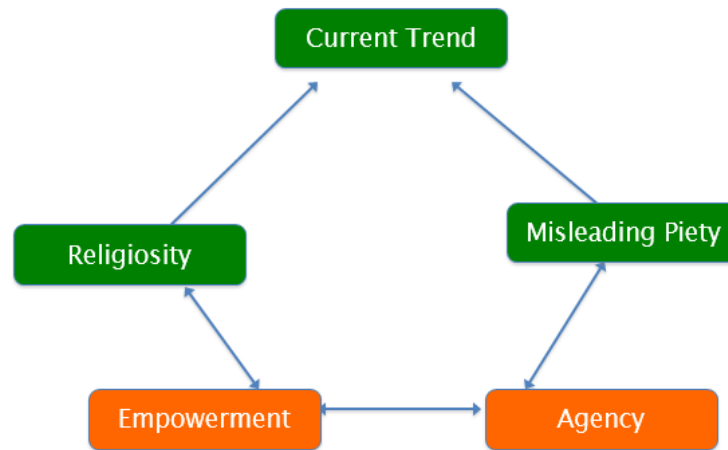


Figure 4.10: Negotiations of hijab meanings from the representation of female modesty in Malaysian Media

4.5.3 Relationship – Structuring Hijab Representations as Cultural Identity for Malay-Muslim Women

The final dimension of coding looks into the relationship of the hijab and its ramifications upon the identity of Malay-Muslim women. Various elements were related to practices of veiling in Malaysian media; while female Muslims negotiate meanings behind the constructs presented in media in the previous sections. To ascertain reasons why audiences assume representations of the hijab in the media as the cultural identity of Malay-Muslim women, the study revisited the Structuration Theory by Anthony Giddens (1984). The theory finds that the reproduction of a phenomenon or construct creates a systematic mould that shapes society expectations. In challenging this context, Leydesdorff (2010) contended the recursive patterns could restructure itself based on changes made based on hindsight in experiencing the said phenomenon; in order to manage any unexpected outcomes. Similarly, the Malay-Muslims were subjected to decades of construction and deconstruction of identity due to the dilemma of renouncing post-colonialism and at the same time rise up to the challenges of postmodern progressiveness. In doing so, the growth of urbanities in Malaysia can be seen as a

precursor to the center of creative industries that continuously reproduce innovations and processes that mediate the hijab as a subculture in the Malaysian media sphere.

4.5.3.1 Content Commodification

As discussed in Chapter 1, the case study of Sunsilk saw the introduction of the first shampoo dedicated to women with hijab; in which it became a catalyst for marketing veiling to hidden voices of the veiled Malay-Muslim. The commodification of the hijab is observed to be overpowering with the many products and services that serve a niche audience of hijabis in the Malay-Muslim market through various media platforms. Shampoo products and beauty aids are highlighted in this approach to entice and make women in hijab feel accepted, and as such its placement in the advertising and entertainment arena is apparent. After its success, the continuity of Sunsilk's hijab series is apparent and also appointed several other ambassadors, such as up-and-coming teen actress Mira Filzah. The coupling of her status as a celebrity icon and the credibility of the Sunsilk brand was further put forward to the masses in the special edition Hijabista (2013c) which was intended as a product placement for Sunsilk, together with free samples of the shampoo and a feature article about the teen actress. This encases the product with the practice of veiling to mainstream a structure of must-haves for Malay-Muslim women. One of the possible reasons that commodities such as Sunsilk are becoming a permanent fixture in Malaysian media is due to an ardent dedication to faith, thus; through information search, consumers of beauty products are develop risk aversion, and are more selective in their search and in their patronage behavior (Alam, Mohd, & Hisham, 2011).



Figure 4.11: Sunsilk shampoo brand is featured in Hijabista magazine in a product placement

This can be seen in the formulaic statements by made by Mira on Sunsilk's product features that propositions its benefits to women that wear the hijab, as well as Heliza Helmi that deliberated on her *Ready 4 Solat* cloak that would assist women in modesty in their everyday activities, as well as the innovative design in which could be expanded to ease their efforts for prayer through the material (Hijabista, 2013a). Meanwhile, the success of Naelofar Hijab alone has inspired other modesty-related ventures such as contact lenses and the Naelofar Abaya that exudes the promise sophistication, structuring a sense of status mobility in its wearer²¹. Therefore this would be a significant

²¹ <http://www.sinarharian.com.my/rencana/legasi-bisnes-ciptaan-neelofa-1.623007>

gamechanger for existing Malay-Muslim who veil, in correlating their place in society with the clothing that they wear. While other brands are specifically marketing only the hijab, the expansion into these areas of fashion highlights the opportunities which the hijab never had prior to this. The brand exudes the trait of being hip, urban and suitable for all women with a 'high end' touch, leading the media consumers to believe that these brands have all the answers to the needs of the veiled Muslimah in every aspect.

It can be seen from the result that the commodification of products and content particularly by Malay icons help enforce the ideas of Malay-Muslimness, as it gives the audiences a sense of identification which are reinforced by the prominent figure's actions and vouching for specific consumer-related products. As this is related much to parasocial interactions, it can be said that prominence of a personality is essential to create a sense of affiliation from the media consumer to the idea of the hijab. Coming back to Yuna, one of the first female singers that appeared in the hijab, was recognized as an icon for her contribution to selling the ideas of fashion in faith, particularly at present time with her venture to the United States to expand her music.

“However, in the last eight years, the young have made modest fashion their own. Yuna, the singer, who is now making inroads in the highly competitive music industry in the US, paved the way for many young Muslim women. The Internet also influenced young Muslim women, as they poured over blogs, fashion websites, and adapted the latest trends in modest wear” (Zaman, 2013c)

An issue of the popular magazine EH! (2013c) also elaborated how the identification of Siti Nurhaliza, as a Malay-Muslim songstress that in itself that basically helped enhance the image of her cosmetics product, SimplySiti. Similarly, Malay-muslim in hijab needed such permeation of ideas as they would feel a sense of belonging with their change and transcendence into the hijab world.

Participant 1 finds that the transcendence of the hijab is important to be manifested in the way of dress. Even though it is overpopularized in media at the moment, it still makes more sense for hijabis to embrace this new lifestyle (Participant 1, personal communication, March 27, 2013).

4.5.3.2 Transformation

In keeping the audiences aware of these growing hijab trends, the amalgamation of material goodness into the practice of veiling is currently a norm in the industry and are interlaced with star power of Malay-Muslim celebrities in its structure. Participant 1 who was interviewed for this study is also one of the “reverts” and according to the interview conducted, she was one of the most prominent celebrities that made her transformation from a life of glitz and glam to modesty. Participant 1 believes that her transformation that she intended for her children created a big impact as the jump to the modesty bandwagon was scarce during her time, as she was known before as a revered supermodel who lived a frivolous life. This she calls, was a shock to the system, in which this change was very much relatable to the structuring that were needed to be imposed to the society in which it becomes a norm and a habit for young Malay-Muslim women (Participant 1, personal communication, March 27, 2013).

Hijabista had also outlined the development of concept stores and retail outlets that have mushroomed through hijab-centric brands such as Mizz Demeanour by newly-veiled celebrities Mizz Nina, MODVIER and Neelofa (2014b; 2014c; 2015a). Their stories on their reversion; or return to the hijab and the ideal ways of God in modesty, create a sense of empathy among media audiences creates justification of the social structure today. Mizz Nina, the former hip-hop artist found that while her newfound business ‘Medeena’ that targets young Malay-Muslims into embracing modesty in the designs of her products, she believed that what drove her was basically her need to appear as a Muslim, which she

believes exists within all women in Islam.

“I started changing slowly, first through performing prayers, and from there my heart desired to learn more about the hijab as at the time I was preparing myself to perform my Hajj” (Hijabista, 2014b)

Apart from emulating others in her veiling practice, Mizz Nina felt that she needed to also make her transformation visible to other Muslim women as well. This gave her inspiration to further encourage fellow Muslim women to wear the hijab through her own creations. In addition, the appeal of renewed representations of Islam was the right push for Malay-Muslim women to display the strength of their faith. The stark change of her previously wild ways was a shock yet it was well-received by media audiences and could be said as a shock to the system. At the same time, Sarah Shah Nor, the founder of MODVIER, the first and most coveted urban fashion outlet for Malay-Muslims felt that it was imperative to change the way the community perceived women with the hijab. Her business covered high-end brands that refutes the claim that women in hijab cannot enjoy the benefits of modern fashion (Hijabista, 2014c). Sarah further claims that it was time to challenge the normal parallels of modesty by embedding more modern and sophisticated wear that renounces backwardness for young Malay Muslims.

Similar to Mizz Nina, Neelofa was also one of the most surprising transition among local celebrities and artists. She was also one of the most quoted names in this study, considering the impact that she had made among her fans and most media consumers alike through her Naelofar Hijab products. While she was initially known for her hijab business venture prior to making the sudden change and wearing the veil, she was in the process of getting to know more about Islam and understanding the pivotal role of modesty among Muslim women (Hijabista, 2015a). The report further asserted that the broadcast of her interview during her first week of wearing the hijab became noteworthy

to the public, in which her confessions about her hijab transformation on IKIM.fm, a local Islamic radio station touched the hearts of many listeners. In turn, this also amplified the trust and credibility of her Naelofar hijab brand, mainly due to the strong principles she had displayed in her objective for veiling. Naelofar, as deliberated in Chapter 1 had become a household name due to its instant hijab design that made the process of performing religious duties as well as social activities easier and less taxing as compared to older styles of hijab wearing.

4.5.3.3 Malay-Muslimness

Within this structure of Islamic cosmopolitanism, Dina Zaman identified in her column that many Malay-Muslims reflect their very desire that inspired the NEP with mindsets that is locked to being disenfranchised about their origins. What constitutes a Malay-Muslim woman currently is related to how much is being spent on their education and material things that would offer them a more heightened perspective and enhanced lifestyles despite being Muslim. Feigning exclusivity of Muslim with juxtaposition of Western worldviews despite claiming to renounce it, the dynamics of the Malay-Muslims are often masked by their identification and uniqueness in their representations in the media.

“Islam ... has repeatedly become a legal tool of uniting the Malays, and as well as control. For Muslims, Islam is already a way of life but for Malay Muslims, Islam has become an identity crutch. In another essay, we will discuss what Islamisation is about. But we must think: is the Islam practised in governance today holistic and healthy?”

(Zaman, 2013a)

These Malay-Muslims constantly seek out likeminded people in where they are able to freely be bold and liberal, albeit falling under the category of the “Third Space” as elaborated by Appadurai (1996) in Chapter 2. As mentioned by celebrity Diana Amir in her interview in Hijabista magazine:

"Society is now more accepting of veiled women in the industry, whatmore if they are Islamic. However, we need producers and directors that dare to offer something that suits actors who already wear the hijab (in real life). This is because there are many veiled characters that are featured in storylines that are not appropriate." (Hijabista, 2012a)

Through this study, it can be seen that media consumers are firstly active in their use of media which gives them cognition of what are the frequently discussed issues on the hijab in society. It also gives them an engagement with other media users that are also seeking similar information that expands the knowledge base, which involves the adaptation of other cultures. Indeed, in seeking information about the hijab, it can lead the users to familiar faces, namely celebrities and prominent figures in media. The more the media is used, the more they feel affiliated and empowered by added value they may have upon their self-esteem. Texts in *Hijabista* had established that even celebrities have acknowledged Malay-Muslim celebrities are among the major influencers in motivating media users in embracing the hijab.

"All parties have opened their eyes on the fashion development and this is a good progress, in fact, I had learnt hijab tutorials through YouTube from in and out of the country, to steal fashion styles of the latest hijab trends. Alhamdulillah, each day, more have featured hijabi fashions that are Islamic." (Hijabista, 2015b)

The report in Dina Zaman's column supports this as her subjects had resigned to the idea of this subculture as stereotypes such as Yuna earlier mentioned ease their easygoing personalities into social activities such as music clubs and events, as previously not everyone was comfortable with the presence of a Malay girl (Zaman, 2013c). In an earlier report by Dina Zaman, she had discussed about the endless debates of being Muslim in Malaysia. While the nation progresses, young Malay-Muslims are becoming more observant in their faith and are inert in creating their boundaries (Zaman, 2013b). Citing a report by the Asia-Europe Institute of University Malaya by Dr. Patricia Martinez, Dina summarized that 99% of Malay-Muslim youths identify themselves as Malay, Muslim and Malaysian. Further to this, the survey highlighted in this report the moderate Muslim

practice in Malaysia is sufficient, and while Islamic extremism was discussed, the Malay-Muslim youths aspire to strike a balance in the dilemma of being progressive, yet Muslim.

Dina Zaman in her column criticized the movement of new Malay-Muslims who have embraced more Arabic culture rather than Western culture through adaptation of neo-Islamic, of which puts in much elitism in the practice. Her writing emphasizes on the urbanization of the hijab practice through communal experiences have somewhat truncated religious teachings and permeated the representation of a Muslim's identity in Malaysia into a more affluent league, despite coming from various walks of life.

Dina further asserts that the use of social media created a digital divide between Malays and their Muslimness, of which in order to belong and feel "Islamic", the society had "Arabicised" their language and the way of dress which was integrated with Arabic fashion, including the hijab and abaya. The above model demonstrates the importance of religiosity and the rampant images of misleading piety that negotiate perceptions of Malay-Muslim women on the hijab. While it is currently trending among media audiences, the images of religiosity enhances the roles of Malay-Muslim women as bearers of the Islamic identity. However this depends on the interpretation of the media audiences, as Brockmeier (2009) contended that the concept of agency is subjective in the eyes of the individual of which is also part of their personal philosophy and pragmatism. Brockmeier continues to argue that agency depends on emotions and morals that are integrated with changes in culture, society and history. As such, a Malay-Muslim woman could be empowered from the religious representation of hijab in the media, however the current representations may not always be accurate and could be just a manifestation of the ongoing trends.

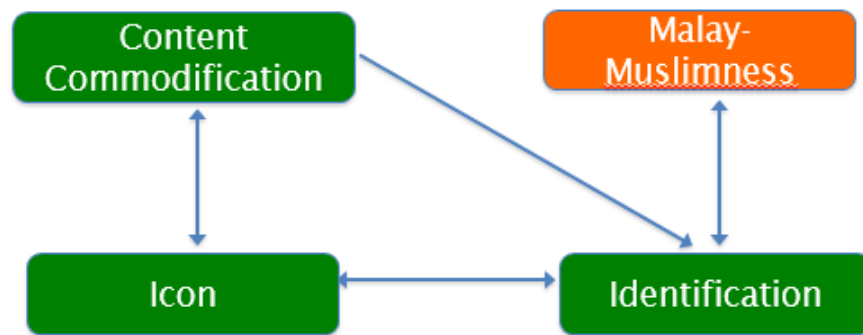


Figure 4.12: Hijab representation as a form of cultural identity for Malay-Muslim women

An individual's agency will determine their final take on the hijab and how it will be negotiated in their lives. A media consumer who is elucidated with religious teachings are able to differentiate and recommend what can be improved and identify the take-home values of the media they use. Thus, media consumers are able to negotiate what is important to them and which is not; subsequently giving them the cathartic feel of empowering themselves with the right way.

4.5.4 Emergent Themes

Alongside the coding frames that were pre-established prior to the coding exercise, the study also found notable categories that should be included in the observations of the study. These themes were highlighted to further make sense of the data collected and interpreted from the emergent perspectives.

4.5.4.1 Standards of Beauty

An interesting theme that emerged from the analysis was where the use of hijab is likened to modern standards of beauty, without which Malay-Muslim women would not

be visible in the media sphere. Additionally, the quotations coded for this frame mainly were obtained from the respondents of the Beautiful Nara entertainment portal (refer to Research Design 2 in Chapter 3). This correlates to the U&G Theory discussed in the earlier sections of this study, in where a study by Galloway (1981) asserts that the use of media would be heightened should there be consequences from a highly valued gratification when attained through the media user's exposure, hence creating expectancies of how the media user should react or behave to the values commodified by the media. Henceforth, when the hijab is set as an ideal representation of Malay-Muslim women through the media, the audiences tend to revert to media sources to obtain these symbolics. This is particularly evident in the use of magazine and its advertisements on the hijab. As discussed by Kim et al. (2015) consumer responses to media messages shape their recall and attitude in which their engagement are based on the contextual relevance of the construct and its environment.

Through the analyses, it can be seen that several respondents on the Beautiful Nara online portal are reactive to the standards of beauty through the hijabi as framed by the media, in the case of "A Worried Muslimah". An excerpt from user *aku* commented on the standards which was observed through Hijabista magazine:

"For me, it's a first edition and a trial if I'm not mistaken. It still went with the true flow of the muslimah. However when many started buying this, our youth models use thick makeup which is part of how business is run." (Abang Nara, 2013).

While it was agreed that the magazine was an attempt to penetrate the local media industry and change the standards of beauty among Malay-Muslim women, but it was also relegated to commodity of products and brands that would encourage material

consumption, stemming from the media exposure of the user in their knowledge of such established criteria of the hijabi.

Another respondent, while not denying the role of the media in propagating the beauty in modesty, felt that the media fell short in instigating a fruitful representation of the Muslimah through the superficial representation of the hijabi that was meant to inspire modesty among Malay-Muslim women.

“While one may agree with you on this, but at the same time expecting this magazine to offer you/reader with an intellectual and spiritual content I think it falls short of most reader’s expectation of this magazine. I think this magazine are meant to generate income from readers by offering the ‘superficially beauty’ concept by portraying what they believe to be “fashion/trend” in line with our Islamic teaching. Unfortunately, it didn’t do much to educate readers on actual concept of covering our aurat.” *Ezra* (Abang Nara, 2013)

Diana Amir, a celebrity featured on a cover story of *Hijabista* (June 2012a) defined that in order to achieve beauty as a hijabi, knowledge and effort is important in order to put together a cohesive Islamic image. On the other hand, a respondent by the handle *Lagubestbest*, felt that the current hijab phenomenon is influenced by a convergence of Korean and hipster culture in which affluent style-setters in the community combine ideas to determine what is trendy and accepted as a standard of beauty.

“This is a collective action of young undergraduates with a tendency to mix and match their clothing and their love for photoshoots inspired them to get together and come up with this [*Hijabista*] magazine.”

(Abang Nara, 2013)

To summarize, the media still has a foothold in dictating trends and what may excite media users in their consumption of media. While the standards of beauty set by the media may not always be agreed upon, in some ways their exposure is still recognized and are ingrained within the society.

4.5.4.2 Sexualization

To relate the acts of sexualization is an oxymoron for the hijabi and her acts of veiling. However, the Double Bind Theory had discussed that a woman's pleasure of pain is described as part of narrating the sides of women who desire to lead hedonic lives in which their voices need to be heard by the opposing gender (Becker, 1993). Jamieson had argued that in the Double Bind, women can only be considered worthy with the use of their "womb" or essential woman hood (1995, p.17). Essentially, women are considered of value if they are able to oversex themselves in order to be more attractive to men. Luce Irigaray had also discussed the sexualization of the hijab (2003) in which the headscarf is vying for attention of the publics, and creates a mystery in which the media audiences need to solve.

In Dina Zaman's report on hijabi pole dancers (2013c), it was a welcome paradox where, while women engage in their religious activities and successful careers, it is not wrong for them to explore their more untamed side in which they would not be suppressed by their practice of the hijab, particularly to destress from their responsibilities as wife and mothers to their household.

Even so, media users are not familiar with this rather alien concept. A respondent on had disagreed on Dina's views of liberalism through the examples of the pole dancers, and commented the following on the representations of sexualized celebrities on *Hijabista* magazine:

"I got a culture shock when I followed the Instagram of this particular singer..photo with the tudung so exposed in her many different styles as if she is showing herself off" *justme* (Abang Nara, 2013).

From this analysis, it was concurred that the sexualization in the context of the excerpt mentioned above did not literally mean exposing the bodyparts of the hijabi. Rather, it meant to be exposed to the male gaze, and become objectified as per Western media content in the modernized interpretations of the hijab despite being fully clothed. As seen from another excerpt from a respondent:

“It’s very obvious [sexualization] through the trends today, especially when a Muslim model poses in front of a male photographer. Where is our modesty as a true muslimah? okay fine, imagine this magazine inviting a Muslim woman to style herself in order not to look like a peasant, it’s wrong!” *Aishah* (Abang Nara, 2013)

The dilemma of the Malay-Muslim woman post-NEP continues. While she struggles to liberate herself from peasantry, the sexual connotations in the hijab while not harmful to her body, is detrimental to the perceptions of her role as the nurturer of the household.

4.5.4.3 Technological Determinism

There was much discussion on the data materials collected about how media usage from various sources, particularly from conventional media as well as social media played a role in heightening the emergence of the hijabi phenomenon among Malaysian media audiences. This comes back to the Structuration Theory in which the duality of technological structures create space for more mobility and visibility among Malay-Muslim women. In example, from the previous coding frames in the earlier sections it was noted that processes of information seeking, increasing self-worth, availing agency and more was the ability to integrate knowledge from the growth of media platforms. To date, even newspapers and magazines that are doing well in the market are keeping up with the times through mobile and online versions to ensure that media audiences are able to access the wealth of information specifically about modesty and Islam. Participant 2 in her interview had agreed that as the technology progresses, the content-seeking method

by media users also have changed. Therefore, the traditional methods of distribution for NUR also had to be refreshed.

“Actually we have an application for this too. We call it e-Mall. Our readers can download the application into their smartphones or tablets so they can read our articles online. And of course we also have our official website and Facebook fan page.” (Participant 2, personal communication, May 27, 2013)

From the analysis, aside from creating more downloadable and interactive content, proliferation of social networking sites (SNS) are essential to ensure that traditional media continue to flourish and become relevant. Among the flourishing networking sites that have become popular among Malay-Muslim hijabis is *Instagram*, due to its visual nature and the ability to update in real-time. Dina Zaman reported in her feature article that it is one of the networking sites that help propel the ideas of alternative “hijabis” that are different from the conservative types.

“Ally (names have been changed to protect interviewees) is an indie-hipster-musician hijabi. Her Instagram photos display well-taken shots of bands at play and in concerts, and occasionally she appears with the bands she manages. The ever-present cat photos appear too. When Ally is seen, she is always grinning away with her boys.” (Zaman, 2013c)

With visuals, the refreshed images of hijabis become more easily disseminated on social media. While conservative media continues to unravel the lives behind the new hijabis, the SNS used help illustrate these paradigms to the discerning media audiences. Dina Zaman further laments on the mockery of religion where SNS such as Instagram and Facebook become a place to boast about a person’s piety, such as instances where young hijabis in their telekung (cloaks for prayers) are taking selfies in mosques (Zaman, 2014a). While public practices such as these connects media users, it also opens up

Pandora's box in which judging and condemning others for their ignorance of Islam in the age of the internet creates a collective action of moral policing, rather than a safe haven for Muslims that are observant of their faith.

Dina also observed Malay-Muslim women who are categorized under the post New Economic Policy (NEP) generation, where they are more fluid in their use of connectedness on the Internet, in which wealthy young hijabis make up a population of Instagram lives and categorized them as such:

“The Ultras who spend RM10,000 and above on their handbags are usually young Malay tai-tais married to young Malay men who have made their many millions through political/business connections. They are modern, stylish, sometimes hijabed, and very loyal to the Malay cause/Umno.” (Zaman, 2014a)

These are the young Malay-Muslim that use their affluence to be displayed as public practice, which includes their affinity with God, in which even religious classes and spiritual communions are made known through the use of SNS in order to achieve gratifications from their following publics. It can be seen that the Islamic cosmopolitanism in Malaysia found itself negotiating and supporting moderate Malay-Muslims through the privilege they have in their technological and social affluence. The Malay-Muslims define success and self-actualization by being able to provide themselves with these tools that acknowledge them in the society as the epitome of success that was transcended to them by the NEP (New Economic Policy).

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Conceptual Framework

The present metamorphosis and evolution of communication platforms and technologies have changed the way hijab is represented for Malaysian audiences. There is a growing distress about how the hijab is now corrupting Muslims through the exchange of information and interaction patterns of global retail fashion and entertainment trends, while Malay women are slowly losing their strong identity to Pan-Arabic influences that exist in solidarity with current issues against Islam. Looking into the paradigms of data that explored this phenomenon, the findings suggest that female modesty is an evolving product of social conversations. Considering that it is a personal choice, joining communities of egalitarian hijab enthusiasts spread forth ideas of liberation despite dressing modestly.

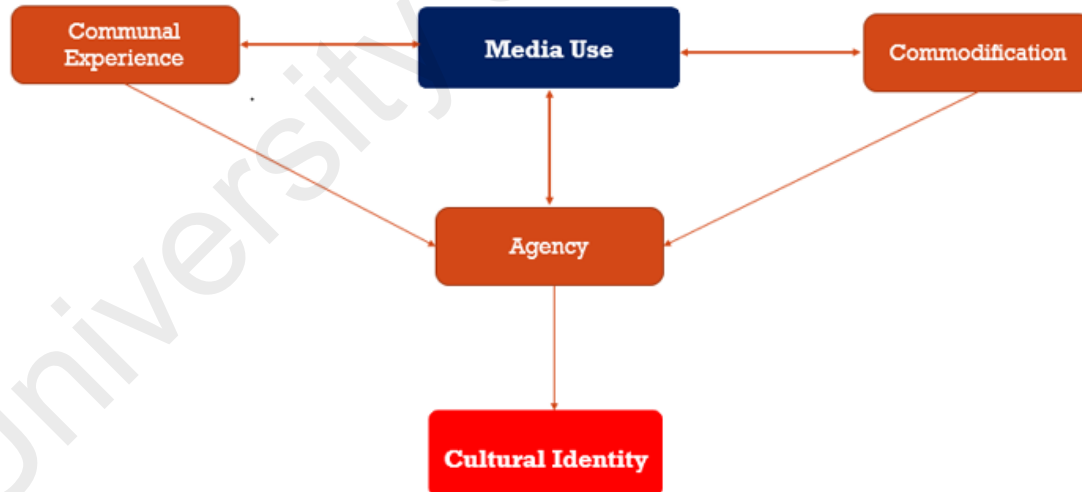


Figure 5.1: Conceptual framework of female modesty representation in selected contemporary Malaysian media

While segregation exists between hijab clad and non-hijab wearing Malay women despite their obligations as a Muslim, the construct of women in hijab that is relayed to the masses enhanced the visibility of Malay-Muslims that impacted the buying power of Malay women in the industry with niche products with customized solutions that are Malay-centric. Furthermore, it was an age-old perception that women who are modest should be averting from attention, but the opportunities be included in the hijab movement in the local sphere has influenced media audiences' perception towards the phenomenon. Ultimately, an individual's media use determined its availability, as where there is demand, there will be the supply of content. Hence, opportunities for social and economic growth became more visible with repercussions on the identity of Malay-Muslim women as new age Malays. Flew (2013) shared views that consumption culture drives commodification of products or constructs that initiate creative industries with which can be expanded to global economic markets; in which while the standpoints of the hijab in Malaysian media are highly localized, it also has the potential to become transnational circulation of cultural commodities.

These recursive patterns create a construct in which readers who have had the same dilemmas in veiling solidifies their belief that wearing the hijab is no longer an act of peasantry or submission as the study had related the earlier discussions about the hijab's initial presence in the pyramid of patriarchy that originates from more Islamic households in rural areas (Ong, 1990). Nevertheless, the act of veiling still lies in the conscious minds of the media audiences, and as such the availability of these structures become sustainable modes of references for them to embark on their journey to piety and at the same time lead a life that suits the conventions of a Muslim in multicultural Malaysia.

Bruno Latour (1992) had discussed about the paradigms of “technological determinism” in which the term describes the abundance of technology subconsciously shaped the lives of media users, in which the actor-network theorem asserts that the more media users partake in communication technology, the more connected they become with the routines of their lives. As the media acts as an agency of socialization, an individual’s identity is dependent on news updates; and more currently social media newsfeeds. The consequences of this content exchange is that there is an altered universe of Malay-Muslims that embody liberation in the Islamization of their lifestyles which fit the growing masses that attempt to modernize the Malay identity that was observed in this study. The flow of information has now reverted from colonization of the West to the imperialism of Arabs which have influenced the masses through communication and cultural relations. The portrayal of modest values in the media platforms embedded a sense of Muslim supremacy and management of identity for Malay-Muslim women who for one relates to being Islam yet needs to be liberated, modern and transparent.

5.1.1 The Media Savvy Malay-Muslims

In examining the plethora of hijab manifestations in select, contemporary Malaysian media, Malay-Muslim women displayed their adoption of the practice above other ethnicities. The study noted significant competencies of the media audiences in determining media content that suited their personal framework of identification, in which their process of “information seeking” come into play. As proposed by the Uses and Gratifications model, the study finds that the efforts of media consumers in achieving gratifications in their media use relied on on cultural resources that allow them to visualize their interpretations of Islamic modesty and clarify their dilemmas on the intersectionality of their image which is neither Eastern nor Western but a convergence of both elements.

In this regard, successful magazines such as *Hijabista* have a good balance between useful content and disguised commercials in editorials of consumer magazines to gain positive reader responses. Consequently, this nature of niche topics and special topics to readers magazines has not been examined systematically (Marht, 2012; van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2010). Mahrt (2012) argued that one of the most established types of publications are women's magazines that play a major role in shaping the identity of female readers and build the pathway towards their life goals and ambitions. He also cited Wilhelm-Fischer (2008) who argued that magazines vastly influence the awareness readers' socioeconomic status and provide materialistic ideals to pursue in terms of lifestyle, beauty, and self-image. Thus, in relation to the scope of the study, Malay magazines that include formulaic representations of female modesty provide a form of escapism for the reader and given the Malay-Muslim woman the right to choose the world that they want to be immersed in, within the new community of the modern hijab.

In this light, *Hijabista* and Malay female magazines had created an illustrious sphere of discourse and agency to its dedicated audiences through editorials and overtones of artistic veiling expressions, despite objectives to promote consumerism through various product placements and advertising. This is because topics and themes vary according to youth trends and current issues, particularly the Generation Y as inscribed by the Malaynnials earlier in Chapter 1. Researchers have described women's magazines as an all-purpose display for youths that dictates female-oriented activities, such as dressing and homemaking onto targeted audiences; providing gratification to proud, competent females and provided an experience of prolonged adolescence through career advice which gives them a sense of significance as contributors to the society (Gough-Yates, 2003). Achieving cognition of the Malay-Muslim hijab representations deterritorialized female modesty as product that counter imperialism. The data provided evidence of which while there are conflicts on how the current representations commodify these cultural

products for consumption and for economic benefits, the affective needs as discussed in the U&G perspective allows them to use these interpretations to feel rewarded in their commitment to piety.

Discourses of Islamic values and the repositioning of Malay-Muslims relayed their personal integrative needs as assumed by West and Turner (2010). Their worldviews about modesty attest that the hijabi is definitively urban, and reconstitute the Malays as part of the dominant ethnic group that provide affirmation that the hijab is indeed an imperative representation of the Malay-Muslims from the religiosity-related content that the Malay-inclined media purports. The data further stated that the hijab representation in media allows the Malay-Muslim women to socially integrate their use of the hijab and their roles as nurturers of the society and household. Thus, while they participate in the hijab movement, it does not undermine their responsibilities, nor should they abandon their faith as their engagement as fellow hijabis allows them to keep these parallel to their personal goals in life. The references to commodified hijab practices in the media only allows them to be in control of the content that they choose, which puts them at top priority in the reproduction of hijab symbols and meanings.

The study agrees that access of information through both traditional and social media emphasize that the media user itself is central to this growing phenomenon. Although the process of obtaining the information is intimate; the socially-integrative values allow a shared voice among Malay-Muslim audiences. This further builds the media users' self-worth through the centrality and stabilization of Malay-Muslim in this cycle of information. The #GoGet prescribed by ASTRO Universe's Malaynnials also saw how reflective media audiences could be in becoming locally progressive with a global outlook, putting them at the centre of this new media sphere. While there are differences and divergent interpretations of religiosity through misleading notions of piety in the display of hijab through the public sphere, the intelligence among Malay-Muslim women

in sieving the multitudes of text and ability of accepting these contradictions show opportunities where Malay-Muslim women can demonstrate their tolerance and hence encourage the empowerment of women in determining the stance of their gender, and heightens their status as informed women. This essential mix of cosmopolitanism is an opportunity for the media users to demonstrate their versions of contemporary Muslim viewpoints that are worthy of a global discussion. The interlocution of Malaysian hijab standpoints as case studies by the media users have the potential to broader Islamic discourse in demonstrating the local practice of the hijab which does not require Western media to be supported, because on a national basis, the Malaysian hijab phenomenon is already an amiable force.

Further to this, the rapport between the media consumer and prominent figures such as celebrities have significantly increased. From the data, it can be seen that the growth of various technologies in social media invites media users to become closer to celebrities' private lives, establishing parasocial relations between both parties, although mostly the interaction is more imaginative than literal despite the capabilities of technology that permit audiences to have two-way conversations. As an extension from the U&G, "parasocial relations" or interactions is the fourth most recursive theme in the study. The strong attachments to the experiences of prominent figures in using the hijab has highlighted complexities in the media habits of Malay-Muslim women, in which their engagement with daily updates of social media such as Instagram aside from the reputation built from traditional media such as magazines provides a 360° perspective of the hijab and concept of veiling among the Malay-Muslim community and as such, gratifies the media consumer with the concept of Islam, despite not necessarily being ideal. As such, while scholars have contended that traditional media is losing its touch, reports have indicated that the credibility of magazines and newspapers in particular has a firm foot in providing a voice to this new sub-community (Perception Media, 2014).

5.1.2 Negotiating Hijab Representation in Malaysian media

In this study, it can be said from the findings that the Islamization of Malaysia plays a part in determining the political and economic stance of the state, as content produced in the media adheres to the philosophies imbued within the legislation. Malay women feel obligated to subject themselves to Islamic teachings and therefore negotiate media content with their own individual principles and self-growth. From the content, the perceptions of media audiences are that products and services that now currently permeate the market are mostly related to the act of Godliness. This premise of religiosity provides Malay-Muslim women with agency through the variants of the Islamism that purports halal marketing that includes everyday wear, fast-moving consumer goods and education, including the fashion that push forward ideas of veiling. The hijab becomes the ultimate representation of the Godliness as the idea of protecting women through the act of veiling was discussed by Islamic scholars and was originally obtained from Quranic verses, of Surah An-Nur.

To come full circle meant to become Islam-literate and to accept the doctrine of hijab as the “better life” with values of wisdom, maturity and productivity in an elitist community. This dimension discusses on status and distinctiveness of Malay-Muslim women in hijab of which to the perceptions of media consumers, are differentiated in their more contemporary representations. Having the ideal projection of Malay-Muslimness also propose the concepts of practicality and inclusion in the fast-growing resurgence of Islam in Malaysia. Using a specific fashion brand or reading a specific magazine allows conversational currency with other media users of similar interests hence sparks increases social capital for the individual.

In the double-bind that was earlier discussed in previous chapters, propositions of mental constructs that create conflicting wants within the Malay-Muslim women were

found in the data. As Maslow (1968) had discussed, emotional desires are the first point of decision making; thus the negotiation of the hijab in Malaysian media Malay-Muslim women at this juncture is based on their perceptions on the frequency of content in media. The performative agency within these media platforms in which drives their reactions in the aspect further consumption and as such, application. In the psychoanalytic work of Freud (1955), the process of embodying identity is mainly an evaluative consideration in which media content that carry aesthetics of objects and even intangible attributes or benefits of consuming a product are superior symbols that retain the attention and possess the needed call-to-action from media consumers (Levy 1959). The ideas and images drawn by Malaysian media in its Islamic cosmopolitanism had abandoned Western ideals but remains in forms of capitalism in which the hijab lies within the consumer culture. The involvement of media users in their use of various media texts is guided by the ongoing developments of the hijab and the issues arising from its conflicting representation, where it encourages contestation from the Malay-Muslim women in their personal interpretation of modesty in Malaysia and their identity.

5.1.3 Managing a Permanent Structure of the “Malaynnials”

The highest recurring them during the analysis was “content commodification”. The media is known in its role as an information superhighway but the uninhibited audiences that consume these ideas and concepts are susceptible to shaping the societal structure in a community. Although before a pro-colonial Malaya had endorsed Western fashion and frowned upon the hijab as a garment choice, the political upheavals and the changes in administration influence the reach and frequency of the hijab towards its audiences. So much so that the hijab is considered as the ultimate representation of the Malay-Muslim and is used in a lot of Malay-centric marketing to appeal to the local audiences as it is the right way to go. In understanding the concept of modernity of modesty in modern day

Malaysia, the focus should be how the Malay-Muslims are conceptualized at present. Their reflections of the hijab movement is demonstrated in their media use, in which their meanings change depending on how the globalized context of modesty was perceived by the media user per se. With these media use competencies, Malay women have shaped the “Third Space” for Malay-Muslim women, in which modernity defines them as religiously informed Malays, within the hybrid of the “Malaynnials”, a moniker that was officially coined by national broadcaster, ASTRO (Marketing Magazine, 2016c). According to Astro Universe, the Malays are becoming increasingly educated and technologically advanced; which was also demonstrated in the collection of data. They were also found to be mass adapters of new technologies and are social media enthusiasts. and was dubbed the most active compared to the Chinese, Indians and other ethnic backgrounds (ASTRO Universe, 2016).

As such, the idea of mediating Malays with the religion within a multi-ethnic background, is both a practice of convergence as well as cultural differentiation as discussed by Flew (2007). Global media flows have resulted in Malaysians becoming more inclined to pluralism in which the convergence of Islam is glocalized to become a distinct identity. Further to this, on the attempt of this study attempt to understand the modernized Malay-Muslim women, one should come to terms that Islamic interest is at an all-time high with growing consciousness and experientialism. While Khairul Anuar Salleh asserted this context for TV broadcast, this rings true in the data found during the analysis of the study. As the Structuration Theory brings forth the idea of systemic categorization of Malay-Muslims in today’s society, the Malaynnials was summed up to be a majority of millennials that are discerned with the way they consume their media. It was identified that firstly; Malaynnials are progressive and global in outlook of which they are open to current worldviews and issues in politics, economics and social issues. Next, the Malaynnials; while they have globalized perceptions, they also are “glokals” or

glocals in which while their horizons are wide, they are receptive and attuned to local developments in culture.

Thirdly they are still balanced in their traditionalist views in family upbringing and grounded in Islamic values thus, the embracing of the hijab was considered natural instincts. Then, Malaynnials are mostly “orang bandar” or city dwellers to which they have the bigger understanding of both international and western orientation of media in their negotiation of the hijab messages. This brings the study to the term of modern spiritualists, in which the practice of piety is dependent to global and modern approaches. Lastly, 19% of Malaynnials are followers who accept circumstances and are accepting of trends (Astro Universe, 2016).

In articulating the materials for the purpose of this study, it is found that Malay-Muslim women are in general adventurous and seek grandeur and innovation in their daily activities. They do not mind attempting new habits, particularly social habits or trying new hobbies and are not shy about sharing it in social media. Consequently, with the buzz on the act of veiling and its contemporary interpretations by Malay-Muslim women, there also seems to be a growing number of entrepreneurs that continue the cycle of consumerism in the spread of veiling ideas, whether is on fast moving consumer goods, entertainment or fashion. In relations to idea of globalized Malaynnials, while they are not afraid of identifying themselves as Malay-Muslims, they are also willing to relegate to other cultures without abandoning their religion, such as subscribing to non-Malay channels or consuming non-Malay food.

Adapting refreshed ideas of modernity, while it breaks away from the traditional convention of Muslim women, various discourses that were analyzed in this study found that the recursiveness of media content have subtly engaged Malay-Muslims to participate in the ideologies of the hijabi. Feeding from the articulation of traditional

media, the credibility and framing of texts characterize the Malaynnial as a new breed of Malaysian youths that are receptive to shifting paradigms of Islam that incite different meanings of religiosity to them. To some extent, this new narrative of Malay-Muslims redefine their priorities. As they are in control of the content they seek, Malays are seeking to remove any form of patriarchal influences inherited from the “tudung” and as such the gender empowerment that is obtained from the innovations of the hijab and modesty by city dwellers enhance their visibility and heighten their mobility within a multicultural Malaysian society, following global trends and yet localizing them as a shared experience to their peers and other media audiences to enhance their understanding of the hijab.

From the responses gathered in the multiplicities of texts analyzed, women are accepting of their cross-cultural convergence and hybridity of Islamic representation; which are considered a premium illustration of Islamic cosmopolitanism. Some of the ideas of the affluent Malaynnials include necessitating shopping and purchasing premium brands in their daily endeavours, while accustoming to routines of travel and willingness to pay for desirable entertainment (ASTRO Universe, 2016). Malay-Muslimness at present can be determined as the ability to exercise choice despite the struggle to maintain the traditional views of the docile and demure Malay woman. In this process of selection, Malay-Muslim women are choosing quality over quantity in the aspect of consumption patterns; of which highlights their willingness to spend and become exposed to more communication channels in order to become informed hijabis. The process of selecting these outlets is a manifestation of their transformation of the new Malay-Muslim culture, in their struggle to remain authentic and progressive at the same time. As Malaysia had continuously constructed and de-constructed the Malay identity since its independence, the hijabi in Malaysian context could be a form of religious literacy which acknowledges the elements of the Malaynnials as defined in the previous sections.

While the Malaysian media currently conforms and are made avail to their need to channel their voices, the interactivity with likeminded others on the subject of the hijab creates mutual understanding of the roles of female Muslims in Malaysia. While there are still traces of misconceptions the hijab as an excuse to become attention-seeking and revising the standards of beauty through sexualizing the hijab, the new framework of the Malaynnials create a benchmark of cultural competencies to determine the ongoing relationship between Malay-Muslim women and the society.

5.2 Theoretical Implications & Future Research

Uses and Gratifications Theory is fundamentally empiricist in its view of knowledge. The segregation between the subject in media use and the person that is gratified can be further explored. While this study concentrated the Malay-Muslim women, U&G and its current manifestations of research in new media could interpret constructs from various ethnicities, religion and cultural backgrounds to *how* it was applied to achieve the said gratifications.

The alternative approach that could be applied for future research would be from the perspective of Hermeneutic Theory. This perspective dwells into human experience which was interpreted by this present study through the double bind and dilemmas of Malay-Muslim women. From Hermeneutics theory, future research could attempt to dissect meanings from a specific cultural viewpoint or horizon of understanding as well as present cultural beliefs or principles. In example, the hijab in its construct may be simply clothing for a woman, could produce deep and insightful meanings for another from a spiritual point of view and inspired from their behaviours and why they behave so. This outlook could produce more layers and narratives to generate identities.

The hermeneutic philosophy dwells in examining how certain habits come to be, and media research through hermeneutics have established it as a non-representational approach to the media consumption (Wilson, 2016). In this manner, 'hermeneutic interviewing', would look into the interview material texts or reflection in action with concern of subsequent to habituated behavior in which encompass the important resources for cultural studies, particularly in screen media use (Wilson, 1993, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2015). Further according to Wilson, philosophical hermeneutics examines the ubiquitous practice from being exposed to advertisements in a magazine to actually attending to calls to action by locating a retail outlet to purchase the hijab and also reinforcing the idea of veiling by watching hijab-inclined television programmes. That being said, this can also be applied to different religio-ethnic backgrounds.

5.3 Conclusion

As communication technology is continuously being reassessed and reinvented, researchers could also approach the sustenance of Malay-Muslimness from the social media point of view and how conversations embedded by participants create a clearer understanding of piety and modesty while maintaining the platforms of traditional media in providing tacit knowledge of Islamic womanhood in Malaysia. Looking at the structuration of the "Malaynnials" identified in the earlier section, the embodiment of a specific culture is emplaced in behaviours of its users, and in doing so, the vernacular of the hijab in the Malay-Muslim society is put in affective practice, and from this media audiences are the agency that *prefigure*, *configure* and *refigure* (Ricoeur, 1988) the construct. Stories and narratives of Malay-Muslim women and media content across provide social cues and engagement of the phenomenon. The themes ranged from concern to consumption and emerged in articulating core aspects of the incorporated veiled Malay-Muslim women and how their practices structure and embed the media consumers' point of views. As argued by Willig (2007,p.221), to reflect on

communication psychology research, individuals would be able to find reference to the process of making sense of an experience or its understanding as possessing this constitutive structure .

University of Malaya

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