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NEGOTIATION OF PIETY: THE DYNAMICS OF INDONESIAN MUSLIM IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR CULTURE

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ABSTRACT
The development of popular culture within contemporary Muslim societies has generated new forms of religious expression that are increasingly intertwined with the creative industry and digital media. One prominent phenomenon is modest fashion, which is no longer confined to ethical or ritual religious functions but has evolved into a medium for representing identity, lifestyle, and visual piety. This article aims to analyze how modest fashion functions as an arena of negotiation between piety, Islamic identity, and the logic of popular culture within the context of Indonesian Muslim society. This study employs a literature-based approach by integrating perspectives from cultural studies and theories of the commodification of religion. The analysis draws on academic literature, media articles, and studies related to the Muslim fashion industry and religious practices in digital spaces, using discourse analysis as the primary analytical method. The findings indicate that modest fashion embodies an inherently ambivalent dynamic. On the one hand, it creates space for the articulation of an adaptive, reflective, and contextual Islamic identity, while simultaneously contributing to the economic and cultural empowerment of Muslim women. On the other hand, processes of commodification and mediatisation risk reducing piety to a visual and consumptive practice governed by market logic and digital popularity. Modest fashion, therefore, cannot be understood reductively either as a mere degradation of religious values or solely as a form of cultural progress. Rather, it constitutes a dialectical arena in which piety, identity, and consumption are continuously negotiated within the landscape of contemporary Muslim popular culture.

Keywords: Modest Fashion; Piety; Islamic Identity; Popular Culture; Commodification of Religion

Introduction

The development of popular culture in Indonesia over the past decade has

demonstrated a highly dynamic transformation, particularly in the realm of religious expression. As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia constitutes a compelling social laboratory for examining how Islamic values are represented, negotiated, and commodified within modern popular culture. One of the most prominent phenomena marking this transformation is the rapid growth of the modest fashion industry, which has evolved beyond a mere mode of dress into a medium for articulating identity, social class, and the religiosity of contemporary Muslim generations.

Modest fashion, in its simplest sense, refers to Islamic styles of dress that emphasize bodily modesty, such as the wearing of hijab, loose-fitting garments, and clothing that covers the *awrah*. Despite its strong religious foundations, modest fashion has increasingly moved beyond its ritual or ethical functions within Islam. It has evolved into an industrial trend with significant economic value and has come to occupy a strategic position within the national creative industry landscape (Rohmatin et al., 2025). This transformation is inseparable from the intensification of the digitalization of religion within digital culture, where representations of piety are increasingly mediated through visually appealing, consumptive, and competitive aesthetics (Raya, 2025).

The hijabers phenomenon represents a significant milestone in the development of modest fashion in Indonesia. Since its emergence in the early 2010s, this community has successfully popularized stylish Muslim attire through social media, while simultaneously creating a space for young Muslim women to negotiate their piety through fashion (Ni'am, 2023). The hijab is no longer perceived merely as a symbol of spiritual obedience, but has increasingly come to signify modernity, middle-class identity, and urban lifestyle (Lailah & Hariasih, 2024). In other words, Indonesian Muslim religiosity has entered the market sphere and transformed into a form of cultural commodity.

From a cultural studies perspective, popular culture is understood not as a neutral entity, but as a contested space in which meanings and identities are negotiated. Religious representation through clothing becomes an arena of negotiation that reveals power relations among religious authority, capitalism, and individual aspirations (Widyanita et al., 2022). The diverse uses of the hijab ranging from shar'i styles to casual and fashionable expressions demonstrate that Islamic identity is neither singular nor static. Muslim women are thus able to position themselves within identities they perceive as most compatible with their spiritual values while simultaneously responding to social demands.

However, critical perspectives have also emerged regarding the commodification of religion. From a critical political economy standpoint, religion is no longer positioned as an autonomous source of moral values detached from the market. Instead, it becomes entangled within the logic of capitalism, which prioritizes exchange value, sales, and branding over spiritual meaning (Arifullah et al., 2023). Piety may thus be transformed into something that is displayed and marketed, rather than practiced as a purely personal commitment. Terms such as piety performance capture this phenomenon, referring to situations in which religious expression is mediated by the pursuit of likes, followers, or other forms of social capital (Redden, 2016).

This critique becomes even more pronounced when modest fashion is linked to issues of social class. Idealized shar'i attire is often associated with branded or high-end

products, thereby creating a divide between Muslim women who can afford such commodities and those who cannot. Visual piety thus becomes an economic privilege (Amalanathan & Reddy-Best, 2024). In this context, representations of piety risk marginalizing Muslim communities from lower socio-economic classes who are unable to conform to the aesthetic standards constructed by market forces and media representations.

Commodification has expanded the range of authoritative actors involved in defining Islamic norms. Whereas religious scholars (ulama) once served as the primary reference, Muslim influencers with large followings now exercise cultural authority in shaping trends of piety (Zaid et al., 2022). These influencers function as prosumers simultaneously producers and consumers of religious values by combining religious legitimacy with the commodification of popularity. Consequently, the boundary between da'wah (religious preaching) and marketing has become increasingly blurred (Aida et al., 2024).

Through a combined analysis drawing on Cultural Studies and theories of the commodification of religion, modest fashion in Indonesia can be understood as an inherently ambivalent phenomenon, encompassing both the potential for empowerment and the risk of reducing religious values. On the one hand, it illustrates how Muslim women emerge as active subjects who creatively shape the meanings of their piety. On the other hand, piety becomes vulnerable to being defined by capitalist logics, measured through product consumption, visual aesthetics, and performativity within digital spaces.

It is precisely this transformation that renders the study of modest fashion particularly significant not only for understanding the dynamics of Muslim popular culture, but also for examining how religion and capital interact in the construction of contemporary social identities. This study conceptualizes modest fashion as a site of negotiation: between religion and the market, between the private and the public, between norms and style, and between piety and commodification. By focusing on the Indonesian context, this article seeks to explore the dynamics of Islamic identity representation within an evolving popular culture, while revealing how consumerism, class, gender, and visuality intersect in the ongoing negotiation of piety.

Method

This study employs a literature-based approach with a conceptual–theoretical framework to examine the phenomenon of modest fashion within Muslim popular culture in Indonesia. All arguments are constructed through critical analysis of relevant secondary sources, including academic journals, books, research reports, media articles, and policy documents related to the Muslim fashion creative industry. A cultural studies perspective serves as the primary analytical lens to explain how religious symbols are represented and negotiated through fashion consumption practices and the digitalization of identity as constructive processes shaped by power relations and social contexts. The analysis is further enriched by incorporating theories of the commodification of religion to examine how Islamic religious values are produced and circulated as commodities, particularly within Indonesia's rapidly expanding modest fashion industry. The analytical process involves thematic classification and in-depth textual interpretation of key issues such as the visuality of piety, Muslim identity, social class, and the relationship between religion

and popular culture.

Findings and Discussion

Modest Fashion as an Arena for Negotiating Piety and Islamic Identity in Popular Culture

The phenomenon of modest fashion over the past decades reflects a significant shift in the ways Islamic identity is produced, interpreted, and presented within the public sphere. Modest fashion can no longer be understood merely as an expression of normative compliance with religious teachings; rather, it has evolved into a complex and multidimensional cultural practice (Mirza, 2019). It operates at the intersection of religiosity, the creative industry, media, and popular culture, while simultaneously serving as an important medium through which Muslims particularly urban communities negotiate their self-identities within the context of global modernity. Within this landscape, clothing functions not only as bodily coverage but also as a form of symbolic communication that reflects value orientations, social aspirations, and the positioning of Muslim subjects within contemporary cultural dynamics (Ajala, 2017).

Identity is not understood as a fixed and ahistorical essence, but rather as a social construction continuously shaped through relationships, discourses, and cultural practices. Islamic identity, within the context of modern society, does not emerge as a single, uniform category; instead, it is produced through ongoing negotiations among religious texts, personal experiences, and the surrounding social contexts.

As a medium for representing contemporary Islamic identity, modest fashion functions as a visual language that enables more fluid and contextual articulations of Islam. Islamic identity is no longer presented as a homogeneous category, but rather as a spectrum of diverse expressions shaped by factors such as social class, gender, age, education, and engagement with global culture (Ratuannisa, 2024). What is considered "modest" attire can vary significantly, ranging from more conservative styles to experimental and fashion-forward interpretations. This diversity demonstrates that Islamic identity is not static, but is continuously reconstructed through the interaction between religious norms and ever-evolving social realities.

In this context, modest fashion serves as a means through which Muslim subjects assert their presence within modern public spaces without relinquishing their religious identities. Clothing functions simultaneously as a marker of Islamic identity and as a symbol of active participation in urban and global culture. By wearing attire that is considered consistent with Islamic principles of modesty while remaining aligned with fashion trends, Muslim individuals are able to project an image of being both religious and modern (Islam, 2023). This practice reflects an effort to reconcile two domains often perceived as oppositional religion and modernity by positioning fashion as a meeting point that enables their coexistence.

The representation of Islamic identity through modest fashion is closely linked to processes of religious individualization. In modern societies, religious authority is no longer fully monopolized by formal institutions but is increasingly negotiated at the individual level. Choices in dress become one of the ways individuals interpret and enact religious teachings in accordance with their personal understandings (Zaid et al., 2022).

Consequently, modest fashion reflects a shift from institutionalized forms of religiosity toward more reflective and subjective modes of religious practice, in which individuals are afforded greater agency to determine how piety is expressed in everyday life (Lewis, 2019).

Piety in the context of modest fashion cannot be separated from its social and performative dimensions. Piety is no longer understood solely as an inner, concealed quality, but also as a practice that can be seen, recognized, and evaluated by others. In increasingly visual and digitalized societies, expressions of piety are often mediated through images, appearances, and visual representations. Clothing thus becomes one of the primary media through which piety is presented and communicated within the public sphere (Trainer, 2017).

The performative dimension of piety becomes increasingly pronounced within the context of social media, where self-presentation can be produced, curated, and widely circulated. Photographs, videos, and visual content featuring modest fashion not only represent aesthetic choices but also convey moral and religious messages. Within this practice, piety becomes something that is both "performed" and "viewed," while simultaneously serving as an object of appreciation, validation, or even critique by audiences (Kütük-Kuriş, 2020). This process demonstrates that piety within popular culture does not exist outside social logic, but rather interacts intensively with mechanisms of visibility and popularity.

However, interpreting piety as a performative practice does not necessarily reduce it to an empty symbol. Rather, the performativity of piety reveals how religious values are lived and negotiated within concrete social contexts. Choices regarding particular forms of dress may reflect moral commitment, ethical awareness, and a desire to represent Islamic values positively in public spaces. In this sense, performativity does not negate sincerity; instead, it becomes the means through which sincerity is embodied and communicated within societies that emphasize visual and symbolic dimensions (Faiz, 2020).

In the context of visual culture and social media, the performativity of piety becomes increasingly significant. Modest appearance is no longer perceived solely as compliance with religious norms, but also as an identity performance that can be visually consumed by the public. Piety thus becomes intersubjective in nature: it is recognized, evaluated, and endowed with meaning within social relations. This performativity is not necessarily artificial; rather, it reflects how individuals respond to the demand to present themselves authentically within modern public spaces (Annisa, 2018).

The visualization of piety through modest fashion opens up spaces of ambiguity and tension. On the one hand, it may broaden the meanings of piety and render Islamic values more accessible to younger generations. On the other hand, it risks reducing piety to mere aesthetics or lifestyle, particularly when embedded within logics of consumption and commodification. This tension demonstrates that piety within popular culture is constantly situated in a dynamic interplay between spiritual values and the demands of social representation.

Modest fashion as an arena of negotiation becomes increasingly evident when situated within the context of modernity and urban lifestyles. Modern urban life is characterized by value pluralism, accelerated temporality, and the intensity of symbolic consumption. Within such environments, individuals are confronted with multiple,

competing identity options. For urban Muslims, the challenge lies in maintaining a religious identity amid the demands of professionalism, social mobility, and self-expression that typify modern life. Modest fashion emerges as a cultural strategy to address these challenges (Putri et al., 2025).

As a lifestyle practice, modest fashion enables the integration of religious values into urban routines without adopting confrontational or exclusionary forms. Modest yet fashionable attire can be worn in workplaces, educational institutions, and other public spaces, allowing Islamic identity to be expressed naturally in everyday life. This practice demonstrates that religiosity does not necessitate withdrawal from modernity; rather, it can be integrated into it through symbolic and aesthetic adaptation (Rohmatin et al., 2025).

The negotiation between religious values and modernity within modest fashion is also closely linked to the dynamics of the Muslim middle class. The growth of the Muslim middle class in many countries has created new spaces for religious expression aligned with economic aspirations and modern lifestyles. Modest fashion has become part of a middle-class lifestyle that emphasizes a balance between ethics, aesthetics, and social status. In this context, clothing reflects not only religious adherence but also taste, purchasing power, and social affiliation (Raya, 2025).

However, the integration of modest fashion into popular culture and the fashion industry also carries critical implications. When religious values are presented in the form of products and commodities, there is a risk that their spiritual meanings may be reduced by market logics. Fashion, as an industry, operates through trend cycles, rapid innovation, and the drive for continuous consumption. When modest fashion enters this logic, it may encourage excessive consumption that contradicts the values of modesty and simplicity often associated with Islamic teachings. It is within this tension that the negotiation between religiosity and modernity becomes increasingly complex and problematic.

Such negotiation should not be understood merely as a form of negative compromise, but rather as a dialogical process that reflects the dynamics of religiosity in modern societies. Modest fashion demonstrates that Islamic values do not exist outside history and culture, but continuously interact with changing social contexts. The negotiation between religion and popular culture does not always produce perfect harmony; instead, it opens up spaces for critical reflection on how religious values can remain relevant without losing their ethical substance (Widyanita et al., 2022).

From this perspective, modest fashion can be understood as a social arena in which various actors individuals, communities, industries, and media participate in the production of contemporary Islamic meanings. This arena is open, dynamic, and characterized by ongoing debates, reflecting the plurality of ways of being Muslim in the modern era (Ratuannisa, 2024). Piety, identity, and lifestyle are not treated as rigid categories, but rather as practices that are continuously negotiated through everyday interactions.

Modest fashion is not merely a fashion trend or an aesthetic expression, but a socio-cultural phenomenon that reveals how Muslims respond to the challenges of modernity. It demonstrates that religiosity within popular culture does not necessarily imply secularization or the loss of spiritual meaning; rather, it can serve as a creative space for

the contextual reinterpretation of Islamic values. Through modest fashion, contemporary Islamic identity emerges as reflective, adaptive, and continuously evolving through dialogue with the modern world (Lailah & Hariasih, 2024).

Modest fashion is understood as a dialectical space in which multiple interests, values, and meanings interact. It is not merely an expression of individual piety, but a social practice that reflects the dynamics of religiosity within modern society. Modest fashion demonstrates that piety and modernity are not necessarily positioned in antagonistic relations; rather, they can be negotiated through adaptive and reflective symbolic practices. As such, it constitutes a complex socio-cultural phenomenon in which contemporary Islamic identity is produced through ongoing negotiations among religious norms, the demands of popular culture, and the logics of consumption.

The Commodification of Piety in the Muslim Modest Fashion Industry

The development of the Muslim modest fashion industry cannot be separated from two major cultural processes that shape contemporary religiosity, namely the commodification and mediatisation of piety. In modern societies characterized by the penetration of cultural capitalism and the expansion of digital media, religious practices are not only performed as normative obligations but are also represented, produced, and circulated through market mechanisms and media platforms. Modest fashion has emerged as one of the most tangible arenas in which religious values intersect with the logic of the creative industry, producing forms of piety that are visual, consumptive, and performative. This phenomenon indicates that Muslim piety does not exist outside economic and technological dynamics, but is closely embedded within the structures of symbolic production in popular culture.

The commodification of religious symbols refers to the process through which religious values, signs, and practices are transformed into commodities with economic exchange value. In the context of modest fashion, religious symbols such as the hijab, loose-fitting garments, or the label shar'i are not positioned solely as expressions of Islamic ethics, but also as products that are manufactured, marketed, and consumed on a large scale (Amalanathan & Reddy-Best, 2024). The creative industry capitalizes on these symbols as sources of added value to enhance market appeal, particularly among middle-class Muslim consumers seeking products that represent piety while remaining compatible with modern lifestyles.

The process of commodification does not unfold in a simple or unidirectional manner. Religious symbols do not automatically lose their sacred meanings upon entering the marketplace; rather, they undergo a transformation of meaning. Modest fashion is not merely sold as clothing, but also as a representation of moral identity, personal piety, and value affiliation. By purchasing and wearing particular modest fashion products, consumers do not simply fulfill functional needs, but also consume the symbolic meanings embedded in these commodities (Ajala, 2017). In this sense, consumption becomes a medium for religious expression, while the market functions as a space for the distribution of religious values that have undergone processes of aestheticization and simplification.

The commodification of religious symbols generates ethical and theological tensions. When piety is represented through products governed by the logics of trends and profit,

there is a risk that spiritual values will be reduced to mere visual aesthetics. Principles of modesty and self-restraint, often associated with Islamic teachings, may be distorted by consumer culture, which encourages repetitive purchasing and constant stylistic renewal. In this context, modest fashion reveals a paradox between the moral messages of religion and the mechanisms of cultural capitalism that rely on desire, differentiation, and symbolic exclusivity (Putri et al., 2025).

On the other hand, commodification does not necessarily imply the degradation of religious meaning. The modest fashion industry can also be understood as a form of cultural adaptation that enables Islamic values to remain present and resilient within modern landscapes. By packaging religious symbols in aesthetic forms that resonate with contemporary tastes, this industry opens spaces for younger Muslim generations to internalize religious values in their everyday lives (Farhan & Islamiyah, 2019). In this sense, commodification functions as a mechanism for translating religious values into the language of popular culture that is more accessible and widely accepted.

The mediatisation of piety further reinforces this process of commodification, particularly through the role of social media as a primary space for the production and circulation of meaning. Social media platforms not only serve as channels for promoting modest fashion products but also operate as arenas for shaping discourses on piety, Muslim identity, and lifestyle. Through visual platforms, piety is presented in the form of images, personal narratives, and carefully designed aesthetics intended to capture public attention. In this context, piety is not only practiced, but also displayed, framed, and consciously curated (Alamsyah et al., 2024).

The role of influencers within the modest fashion industry has become highly significant in the process of mediatising piety. Influencers function as intermediary figures who bridge religious values, market dynamics, and digital audiences. Through carefully constructed and consistently maintained personas, they represent what is perceived as an ideal Muslim lifestyle religious, fashionable, successful, and aligned with urban life (Islam, 2023). Such representations not only shape consumer preferences but also influence public perceptions of how piety should be displayed and practiced in the digital age.

Modest fashion influencers often combine religious narratives with lifestyle content, including travel, family life, careers, and entrepreneurship. These narratives produce a holistic yet highly visual portrayal of piety, in which religious values are integrated into the aesthetics of everyday life. Piety is no longer positioned as separate from modern life, but rather as an aspirational lifestyle component (Aida et al., 2024). Through this process, piety undergoes aestheticisation and personalisation, making it more accessible and appealing to broader audiences.

However, the mediatisation of piety through influencers also carries problematic implications. When piety becomes associated with popularity, follower counts, and digital engagement, there is a risk that religious values will be evaluated according to metrics of visibility rather than ethical or spiritual depth. Piety that is “seen” tends to be more highly valued than piety that is private and reflective. This phenomenon indicates a shift in the logic of religious authority from textual and institutional authority toward authority grounded in visual representation and digital influence (Shin et al., 2025).

To interpret this reality, the concept of piety performance becomes crucial for

understanding how piety is produced and perceived within digital spaces. Piety performance refers to the practice of displaying piety as part of identity performance in the public sphere. Through dress, visual language, and personal narratives, individuals particularly influencers perform piety in ways that are accessible to and evaluated by audiences. This performance is both repetitive and strategic, as it must remain consistent with audience expectations while also adapting to the dynamics of changing trends (Luthfia & Yanuri, 2024).

Piety performance does not necessarily imply falsity or manipulation. In many cases, it represents a form of adaptation to the demands of digital public spaces that emphasize visibility and self-representation. Muslim individuals who are active on social media occupy a position in which expressions of piety cannot be fully separated from practices of visual communication. Consequently, piety performance becomes a means through which piety is continuously negotiated within social contexts that require openness and symbolic participation (Faladhin et al., 2025).

However, piety performance is also closely linked to the formation of digital social capital. Digital social capital refers to the accumulation of trust, influence, and networks generated through activities in digital spaces. Within the modest fashion industry, digital social capital constitutes a crucial asset that can be converted into economic, symbolic, and cultural benefits (Annisa, 2018). Influencers who are perceived as representing piety in an authentic and appealing manner tend to gain high levels of social legitimacy, which in turn enhances their commercial value.

The relationship between piety performance and digital social capital produces new dynamics in religious practice. Piety is no longer merely a moral value, but also a symbolic resource that can be exchanged within the attention economy. Individuals who are able to perform piety consistently and attractively are more likely to gain social recognition, business opportunities, and strategic positions within the creative industry. This phenomenon demonstrates that piety, in the digital context, is inseparable from power relations and the distribution of symbolic resources (Faiz, 2020).

The commodification and mediatisation of piety within the Muslim modest fashion industry reveal a fundamental transformation in how religiosity is practiced and understood in the modern era. Piety is no longer confined to the private sphere or formal ritual practices; instead, it emerges as a social practice operating within public spaces, markets, and digital media. This process cannot be evaluated in binary terms as either mere degradation or progress, but rather as a complex dynamic that reflects Muslims' ongoing efforts to negotiate religious values within the context of global modernity (Ratuannisa, 2024).

As an arena of commodification and mediatisation, modest fashion constitutes a form of contemporary religious practice that is adaptive, reflective, and deeply ambivalent. Piety, identity, and consumption do not exist independently, but mutually shape one another through interactions among individuals, industries, and media. This analysis underscores the importance of a critical, non-reductionist approach to the study of religious phenomena in popular culture, in order to fully capture their complexity and depth of meaning (Mirza, 2019).

This phenomenon opens up new opportunities for more inclusive and contextual

articulations of identity and religious expression; at the same time, it raises the risk of reducing religious values to visual, consumptive, and performative logics. Therefore, this discussion cannot be simplified into dichotomies such as "religion versus the market" or "piety versus popularity," but should instead be understood as a dialectical arena involving continuous negotiations among values, symbols, and contemporary social structures.

From a pro perspective, the commodification and mediatisation of piety can be interpreted as adaptive strategies employed by Muslims in responding to modern realities characterized by the dominance of media and visual culture. The modest fashion industry provides a representational space that allows Islamic values to become more visibly present in public spheres without adopting confrontational forms (Jannah & Al Ayubi, 2025). Within plural and secular urban societies, the presence of religious symbols in aesthetic and popular forms may function as a mechanism for normalizing Islamic identity, such that religiosity is no longer perceived as alien or exclusive.

The mediatisation of piety through social media and influencers may also be viewed as a form of democratization of religious authority. The production of Islamic meanings is no longer monopolized by formal institutions or religious elites, but increasingly involves individuals and communities with diverse lived experiences. Narratives of piety conveyed through popular media are often closer to the everyday realities of audiences, thereby enhancing the relevance of religion in modern life (Ni'am, 2023). Within this framework, piety performance should not be understood merely as self-branding or image-making, but as an effort to translate religious values into a social language that is intelligible and acceptable to digital generations.

The modest fashion industry, in fact, opens up economic and cultural opportunities for Muslim women. Women's participation as designers, entrepreneurs, and influencers demonstrates that expressions of piety need not be synonymous with subordination, but can coexist with economic independence and social agency. In this context, piety mediated through the creative industry may function as a source of empowerment rather than merely as an object of passive commodification (Widyanita et al., 2022). This argument reinforces the view that the relationship between religion and the market is far more complex than a simple framework of symbolic exploitation.

However, counter-perspectives highlight several fundamental problems arising from the commodification and mediatisation of piety. One of the primary critiques concerns the risk of reducing piety to visual imagery and a consumptive lifestyle. As religious expression becomes increasingly dependent on appearance and visibility, there is a tendency for the ethical and reflective dimensions of religion to be marginalized. Piety may come to be evaluated according to aesthetic standards, popularity, and digital engagement, rather than moral depth or consistency of spiritual practice (Wildan, 2021).

In this context, piety performance may transform into a symbolic mechanism that normalizes the display of religiosity without sufficient ethical substance. The logic of social media emphasizing content repetition, personal branding, and audience monetization encourages piety to be performed in consistently appealing ways, even when this requires the simplification of religious messages (Redden, 2016). This risk becomes particularly pronounced when religious symbols are mass-produced and detached from their theological contexts, rendering their meanings shallow and easily interchangeable.

Another significant critique relates to power relations within digital social capital. The mediatisation of piety generates new hierarchies in which moral and religious authority tend to shift toward figures with high visibility rather than those possessing scholarly competence or spiritual integrity. In such circumstances, piety may become entangled in the logic of symbolic competition, where social recognition becomes an implicit objective of religious expression. This dynamic risks marginalizing forms of piety that are quiet, personal, and unpublicized practices that nevertheless hold profound spiritual value within Islamic tradition (Elwell, 2020).

Therefore, the commodification of religious symbols within the modest fashion industry gives rise to a normative paradox (Arifullah et al., 2023). On the one hand, modest attire is claimed to represent values of simplicity and Islamic ethics; on the other hand, the fashion industry operates according to principles of differentiation, exclusivity, and continuous consumption. This tension raises critical questions regarding the extent to which practices of religious consumption remain aligned with the moral principles of religion, or instead reproduce capitalist logics that stand in contradiction to the very spiritual values they seek to display.

In response to these pro and contra perspectives, this discussion adopts a non-reductionist synthetic position. The commodification and mediatisation of piety cannot be wholly rejected as mere degradation of religion, nor can they be uncritically accepted as forms of cultural progress. Rather, both constitute unavoidable social processes within modern societies, whose impacts largely depend on how social actors individuals, industries, and audiences interpret and enact them.

From this perspective, it is crucial to distinguish between commodification as an economic mechanism and piety as an ethical orientation. When commodification is managed reflectively and accompanied by moral awareness, it may function as a medium for disseminating religious values that are relevant and contextual. Conversely, without critical reflection, commodification risks reducing religion to mere symbolism, thereby stripping it of its transformative potential. Similarly, the mediatisation of piety may serve as an inclusive space for cultural da'wah, yet it may also generate the spectacularisation of religion when it becomes entirely subordinated to the logic of popularity.

Conclusions

Modest fashion in contemporary Muslim popular culture constitutes a complex arena of negotiation between piety, Islamic identity, and the logics of cultural capitalism. It can no longer be understood merely as a normative religious practice, but rather as a socio-cultural phenomenon operating within the spheres of the creative industry, digital media, and symbolic consumption. In this context, piety undergoes a transformation from a primarily private spiritual expression into a social practice that is visual, performative, and intersubjective. Conceptual findings indicate that contemporary muslim identity is fluid and contextual, shaped through interactions among religious teachings, individual experiences, and the demands of modernity and popular culture. Modest fashion enables Muslim subjects particularly women to negotiate their religiosity reflexively, maintaining religious identity while actively participating in modern public spaces. Accordingly, the relationship between Islam and modernity is not antagonistic, but dialogical and adaptive.

This article further emphasizes the ambivalent nature of the commodification and mediatisation of piety. On the one hand, these processes create opportunities for economic empowerment, expanded representations of Islam, and the normalization of Muslim identity within public spheres. On the other hand, they pose the risk of reducing piety to visual imagery, a consumptive lifestyle, and symbolic performance governed by the logics of popularity and digital social capital. The concept of piety performance illustrates how piety may shift from an ethical orientation toward a representational one when not accompanied by critical awareness. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of a critical, non-reductionist approach in examining modest fashion. The sustainability of Islam's ethical and spiritual meanings ultimately depend on the capacity of social actors to negotiate practices of religious consumption reflexively, ensuring that piety is not entirely subsumed by market logics and visual culture.

Conflict of Interest

The manuscript author has absolutely no financial or non-financial conflict of interest regarding the subject matter or material discussed in this manuscript.

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