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Exploration

In this section we briefly explore an area of creativity that is topical in a particular discipline. We begin by posing a question from a practitioner in that discipline, "I'm curious about..."

If you have a question you would like to pose and/or answer, please contact the Editor at philip.dennett@cu.edu.au.

Modest fashion: A case of influencers blending marketing with a message

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In this exploratory paper, I consider the case of young fashion designers using platforms such as Instagram to get their message across rather than go through the traditional channel of fashion magazines.

According to Dinar Standard (2022), the modest fashion industry has grown from small beginnings 10 years ago to be a US\$295 billion industry, a figure forecasted to jump to US\$375 billion by 2025. They say this success, in no small part, has been facilitated by young modest fashion brands and their founders gradually being accepted into the mainstream through the attention gained from social media engagement.

My interest is in the duality of messaging where consumers are seeking advice and support as much as knowledge of the latest fashions (Barron, 2020).

This idea is supported by Shaari, et al (2021) who found that opinion leadership significantly relates to purchase intention. This interest is clearly driven by modest fashion bloggers on platforms such as Instagram as mainstream media still have many misconceptions (Dinar Standard, 2022).

Marketers are constantly monitoring the discourse relating to their brand and category but in this case, I believe they should also be aware of the ideas that are an integral part of the discourse. To illustrate this, I reviewed the postings on Instagram of eight notable designers/influencers and used an open coding process to identify themes using a Data structure based on Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012).

The influencers were picked based on an Instagram search on the term "modest fashion". The final 8 were chosen partly based on the number of followers and partly based on mentions by other bloggers. The following table shows the influencer (signified by a code rather than name) and their corresponding number of followers.

Influencer	Followers
INF1	333,000
INF2	2,900,000
INF3	1,200,000
INF4	444,000
INF5	170,000
INF6	237,000
INF7	781,000
INF8	21,900

Figure 1: Influencers and their followers

Posts made over the previous 12 months (to August 2023) were examined. A typical entry consisted of a fashion related image and a description. The associated message either comes from the influencer or from the comments from followers. For example, one influencer posted a question about finding your purpose and the responses were either supportive and/or brought out related issues such as being restricted by families.

In some cases, fashion is not even discussed and there is just a topical issue discussed like the banning of the hijab in France.

The table below lists all the different concepts mentioned, grouped into three second order themes.

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes
Empowerment	
Self-expression	Righteousness
Personality	
Individuality	
Modesty	
Respect	Purity
Personal journey	
Colour	
Creativity	Fashion
Comfort	
Dress to impress myself	
Fashion	

Figure 2: Concepts and themes

Discussion

The 'righteousness' theme was the most prominent with people not viewing the Hijab as a restriction, as seen by many in the West, but as a symbol of their own personality, giving them a sense of empowerment. There appeared to be a strong desire to maintain modesty, but at the same time experiment with colour and the idea of dressing to impress themselves rather than others. I used the word 'righteousness' to represent the ideas of individuality and empowerment and the word 'purity' to express the idea of modesty and respect as they were two of the dimensions of Halal brand personality identified by Ahmad (2015). Ahmad found that where faith is a factor in purchasing decisions, righteousness plays an important role. In the case of purity, he found that it offered a sense of sureness as it fulfills the halal concept for Muslims.

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Ideas for Practice

While this is only a preliminary investigation, the findings can be used by marketers to help guide the words they use when addressing a Muslim audience. It may also have relevance to a Western audience who are attracted to the idea of modest fashion, of which opinion leader Hafsa Lodi (www.modestish.com founder), says interest is increasingly growing. (Lodi, 2020).