

# THE PREFERENCE OF WEARING SYNTHETIC FABRICS BY THE YOUNG MUSLIM

Pingki Indrianti, M.Ds.

*State Polytechnic of Creative Media Jakarta, pingki.indrianti@gmail.com*

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**Abstract:** Synthetic or man-made fibres are now playing an important role in fashion industry, they are less expensive and more abundant than natural fibres. The uses of synthetic fibres are found in some Muslim-Modest fashion in Indonesia especially brand with young segmentation. Eventhough the fabrics are uncomfortable to wear in hot and humid weather like Jakarta this fabric yet still demand by the market. This research aims to find the reasons behind young muslim preferences of wearing hijab (muslim wear) made from synthetic fabrics (fibres) for daily wear; from the aspects of colour, comfort, affordability, ease of care and availability. Synthetic fabrics mentioned in this research include nylon, polyester, and acrylic that is widely available on the market. This research using descriptive quantitative method by distributing questionnaires to some respondents of young muslim with hijab to find out why they chose synthetic fabrics for daily clothing. All respondents are fashion program students in Jakarta, age of 20-22 years old. The results of this research indicate young muslims choose synthetic fabrics due to affordable price, various colours and motifs, elasticity (body fit), as well as easy care. Eventhough it is less comfortable, cause sweat, cling to body, and bring unpleasant odor; these young muslims keep wearing synthetic fabrics for daily clothing.

**Keywords:** *Synthetic Fabrics, Synthetic Fibres, Young Muslim, Hijab, Muslim Clothing*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Synthetic or man-made fibres are now playing an important role in fashion industry, in Indonesia the use of synthetic fabrics easily be found in Muslim-modest fashion industry. Some well-known brand which segmentation are young market e.g. ZOYA, Dian Pelangi, MECCANISM, ETU, etc. also use synthetic fabrics in their top collection include shirt, skirt, trousers, dress, long coat, hijab or scarf. The good characteristics of the fabrics such as high lustrous, high resistance to crease, good elasticity with variated colours become the main reason why these fabrics are widely used.

Synthetic fibres e.g nylon, rayon, elastin or spandex, and polyester; referred by many literatures are less expensive and more abundant than natural fibres. Clothing with synthetic fibres, in a number of theories mentioned has a number of disadvantages with particular regard to comfort; Cause skin irritation to unpleasant body odour, bad absorbency and heat conductivity. These disadvantages makes synthetic fabrics are uncomfortable to wear especially in humid and warm weather. Besides many textile manufactures and world certification (e.g. GOTS and Oeko-Tex) today are more concerned with the environmental issues like eco fabrics and organic products, they start to substitute and banned this chemical (synthetic) material which associated with human health and environmental safety problems.

Clothing with synthetic fabrics, in a number of theories mentioned has a number of disadvantages, yet still demand in Indonesia market especially for Muslim fashion, which brand are mostly segmented to the young market. Based on this phenomenon this paper aims to find the reasons behind the youngsters preference of wearing hijab and garments made from Synthetic Fabrics (fibres) for daily clothing; from the aspects of aesthetic (colour and motifs), comfort, affordability, ease of care and availability.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Textile Fibres and Fabrics

Textile comes from the word 'texere' meaning to weave (Englewood Cliffs, 1960) textile is an item manufactured from natural or man-made fibres include yarns and fabrics.

"Fibre is a long, fine, hair-like structure" (March, et al, 2009); it is the smallest visible components of textile materials. The three main divisions in textile fibres are natural, regenerated (semi-synthetic), and manufactured (synthetic). Natural fibres are those found in nature already usable to make fabrics. The two main sources of natural fibres are plants (cellulose) and animals (protein). Semi-synthetic or regenerated fibres known as rayon is a textile fibre made from cellulose (plants). It is manufactured chiefly from spruce wood and cotton linters, the short fine fibres that cling to the cotton seed after the long fibres have been removed. The spruce wood and cotton linters are dissolved to form a spinning solution about as thick as molasses. This solution is forced through small holes of a 'spinnerette', a small metal cap of platinum with the size of a sewing thimble and containing usually as many as 13 to 270 holes. The streams of liquid from the 'spinnerette' are drawn out and solidified into long continuous fine fibres or filaments.

Synthetic fibres or Manufactured fibres e.g Nylon Polyamide, Polyester, Acrylic, Polypropylen, and Elastane Fibres are almost similiar to regenerated fibres that are formed from a thick, sticky liquid raw materials, which is extruded through 'spinneret' holes. While regenerated fibres made from natural substance (cellulose), the raw material for manufactured fibres is synthetic (synthesized from basic chemical units) and converted into textile fibres by a manufacturing process. Based on the size of its length, textile fibres can be divided into long-filament fibres and short-staple fibres, "...regenerated and synthetic fibres can be staple or filament; they begin as filament, in this form can give silky or (reeled) silk-like fabrics. They can also be cut or broken into staple to give fabrics that look and feel more like wool, cotton, or linen." (Humphries, 2009).

Fibres could be converted into fabrics, but most are converted into yarn first. By the spinning process, the fibres are drawn out and twisted together to form a yarn. After spinning, the yarns are made into fabrics by interlacing two sets of yarns at right angles to each other. This product has substantial surface area in relation to its thickness, and sufficient mechanical strength to give the assembly inherent cohesion. Most technical textile of fabrics are weaving but may also be produced by knitting, felting, lace making, net making, nonwoven processes and tufting or a combination of these processes.

### 2.2. Fibres Performances and Characteristics

"The term performance and characteristics relate the way fibres behave and the qualities they have" (March, et al, 2009). This performance and characteristics will influenced the way the fibres are made into yarn and fabric and important for the customers when choosing the fabrics.

Performance and characteristic of fibres include (1) Abrasion Resistance, refers to the amount of rubbing, wear, and tear of a fibres or fabrics could withstand; (2) Strength or the amount of pulling a fibre or fabric can withstand; (3) Elasticity; (4) Absorbency that influence the ability of fibres or fabrics to absorb moisture and perspiration, then evaporates away from the fabrics. Fibres and fabrics that hold moisture will not have static electricity which causes cling to the body; (5) Thermal conductivity is the ability of fibres or fabric to trap or move the heat away, so it will be warm or cool to wear; (6) Flame Resistance; (7) Wash ability; (8) Thermo plasticity.

### 2.3. General Advantages of Synthetic Fibres

Synthetic or manufactured fibres made from basic chemical units such as petroleum based chemicals or petrochemicals and coal. This fibres are free from most of the hazards of agriculture that affect production of natural fibres: seasonal variations of weather (sun, wind, rain, floods), variations of nutrients, with the addition of disease and infestations (sheep tick, boll weevil). Synthetic fibres are produced all year around and indoors, and require less labor and relatively little

space. Production and quality, is under controlled with synthetic fibres, much more so than with natural fibres.

The other main advantages of synthetic fibres are more durable than most natural fibres, it can be any length (staple or filament); thick and thin; with any diameter of fish-line coarse or microfibre fine (Humphries, 2009). Synthetic fibres also have good performances and offer consumer-friendly functions such as ease of care, stretching, waterproofing, good resistance to abrasion and stain, as good as their wet strength which is similar to the dry strength. Due to thermoplastic substance, synthetic fibres could easily be molded and heat set to give durable or permanent pleats or creases, garment shape, filament yarn texture, surface smoothness or texture, good wet press retention, and dimensional stability. Synthetics fibres absorb little moisture so they dry quickly, and they do not swell and distort as easily as natural fibres (cellulose). Natural fibres tend to be much more sensitive than synthetic fibres, they are susceptible to larval insect (moth) and mildew while synthetic fibres have more excellent resistance. Synthetic fibres could be printed on any kind of texture; usually it is more colourful and brighter than natural fabrics.

#### **2.4. General Disadvantages of Synthetic Fibres**

Properties that must be seen as disadvantages (of synthetic fibres) are the flip side of high strength is stubborn pilling, a problem met when staple fibres roll into balls on a fabric surface and are too strong to be brushed off easily. Low absorbency gives us quick drying, but makes for less comfortable fabrics that also tend to collect static electricity (Humphries, 2009).

From this sentence we can conclude that synthetic fibres are less comfortable to wear due to low absorbency in spite of quick drying (in tropical and dump climate) besides the surface of fabrics of synthetic fibres will roll into balls and susceptible to static electricity.

Static is a pervasive problem with most synthetics, and in dry air it makes fabrics cling to the body, crackle with sparks, and attract bits of lint and other airborne particles such as soot. Another disadvantages of synthetic fibres are related to temperature, they prone to heat damage by fire or hot washing, will melt relatively easily. Synthetic fibres are non-biodegradable in comparison to natural fibres, poor thermal conductivity, cause skin irritation to allergenic to some people and bring unpleasant odor, it will be less comfortable to wear. According to the U.S EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), acrylic fabrics are polycrylonitriles and may cause cancer. "Women working in acrylic textile factories had seven times the risk of breast cancer than the normal population. Women working in nylon factories had double the risk of breast cancer" (Labrèche et al, 2010).

#### **2.5. Fashion Theory**

Today it is important for people to understand the words: Fashion, Clothing, Apparel and Costume, the terms are not identical in meaning. Kendra (2014) referred fashion, clothing, and apparel as below;

Fashion is more than just clothing; it reflects the wider spectrum of aesthetics, art and design trends in contemporary society. This makes it a multi-faceted word engaging with a range of surrounding influences. In simple terms, fashion is a social process by which newly introduced styles or trends become popular in a certain time with acceptability by a wider cross-section of consumers. Clothing is a general term referring to actual objects related to the human body. Apparel refers to garments made of fabric, knits, leather or other wearable materials. Costume is derived from word 'custom' evolving from the environment and customs of society. It refers to clothing for a specific use - be it for a ritual or performance, ethnic or historical within a specific context of occasion and time. So we could conclude that word fashion referred to general term and associate with trend and something popular in a certain time with acceptability by consumers. While clothing and apparel is associated to garments made from fabrics (include fibres and yarn) or any other wearable materials. Costume more specifically referred to clothing for a specific use within a specific context of occasion and time.

Fashion could be categorized into 'High Fashion' and 'Mass Fashion' (fashion volume); both are affected by market absorption. High fashion refers to a small group of people who first adopted an innovation of fashion (they are called the innovator or trendsetter), while the Mass Fashion refers to the style that has been accepted by a wider cross-section of consumers (Stone, 2006).

### **2.6. Consumer Behaviour of Young Segmentation**

The segmentation theory gives an overview for marketers to whom these products should be offered. "This segmentation referred to age, gender, number of family members, such as children, adolescents, youth, adults, married / unmarried, young families with one child, families with two children, families whose children already working and so on" (Kotler, 1995). A short study on the future consumer about youth (Sinaga, 2008) their desire to shop based on (1) prestige for friends; (2) this consumer would prefer one stop shopping place with many types of goods; (3) need for joy and comfort regarding to the environment they live (4) fix and reasonable price (5) possibility for instalment payment.

Based on these references it could be seen that young market (teenagers) will possible choose a product or brand regarding to prestige, affordability, availability, and joy. Most of them were able to replace one brand to other for getting more benefits. Youth market will respond the brands which reflected their lifestyle; we could see that youngster do not concerned with the quality of products, in this case the quality of synthetic fabrics in fashion products which are not comfortable to wear.

## **3. THE RESEARCH METHOD**

This research using descriptive quantitative method by distributing questionnaires to some respondent of Muslim women wearing hijab to find out why they choose fabrics made from synthetic fibres for daily clothing. Respondents are fashion program students in Jakarta age of 20-22 years old. These respondents are assumed to have enough knowledge about clothes, fabrics and textile fibres. The questioner consists of 17 questions, divided into two types; three numbers are screening question type, others are the content. There are more than 50 questioners distributed, 30 of them are filled and 22 of them passed the screening questions who meet these following criteria: (1) Respondents are young Muslims who wear veil; (2) Wear synthetic fabrics for daily clothing; (3) Respondents can distinguish between synthetic and natural fabrics (fibres).

14 numbers of content question are about Muslim clothing and synthetic fabrics which focus on five aspects include: (1) Aesthetic value, respondent were asked about the garment types, colours and motifs of synthetic fabrics for daily clothing; (2) Comfort, refers to the good performances of a fabric to wear including Absorbency, Elasticity, and Thermal conductivity. Respondents were asked about how they feel using synthetic fabrics for hijab or Muslim wear regarding to these performances; (3) Ease of care, respondents were asked for their opinion in washing synthetic fabrics; (4) Availability, this aspects is about how respondents find Muslim clothing from synthetic fabrics easily; and the last is (5) Affordability, to know the price range from the point of view of young Muslim.

The type of synthetic fabrics asked in this questionnaire is widely available in the market; they include Synthetic Chiffon Silk, Synthetic Crepe Silk, Synthetic Crinkle Silk, Synthetic Hi-con Chiffon, Synthetic Sateen Silk, Synthetic Organza, Synthetic IMA Cotton, Shantung, Taffeta, Spandex Jersey, Suede, Synthetic Pashmina, Velvet, Brocade, Tulle, Synthetic Wool, and Synthetic Drill. Analysis will be performed on the data collected by Descriptive Statistics method to describe the basic features of the data in a research. "Descriptive statistics is simply describing what is or what the data shows without trying to reach any conclusion or generalisation beyond the data alone" (Sugiyono, 2015). Data displays in descriptive statistics are table, graphic, chart, pictogram, percentage, modus-mean-median measurement, etc.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The questioners were filled in by 21 respondents of young Muslim who passed the screening test, below are the results divided into five aspects of aesthetic, comfort, ease of care, availability, and affordability.

##### 4.1. Aesthetic Aspect

By the questionnaires, it showed that 15 of 21 respondents prefer to wear synthetic fabrics for daily clothing due to the various motifs and colors e.g shocking colour, soft colour, and metallic. Besides synthetic fabrics have good lustre as well as good elasticity which can adjust the shape of their body (body fit).

*Table 1 respondent's opinion regarding to synthetic fabrics as daily clothing*

Questions	Good	Fair	Poor
Daily clothing made from synthetic fabrics, in terms of aesthetics aspects: Colors, motifs, luster, and body fit	15	5	1

Source : personal documentation

Six Respondents agree that hijab (veils) made from synthetic fabrics are good e.g Chiffon hi-con (nylon), Synthetic pashmina (acrylic), or Synthetic Crinckle Silk (nylon); They are elastic and easily modified to various models. Nine respondents choose fair, the other feel poor.

*Table 2 respondents' opinion regarding to hijab (veils) made from synthetic fabrics*

Questions	Good	Fair	Poor
Hijab (veils) made from synthetic fabrics in terms aesthetic aspects	6	9	5

Source : personal documentation

*Table 3 reason for using veils made from synthetic fabrics*

Questions	Easily modified to various models	Look stylish for the inner wear	Various Colors and Motifs	Fine fabrics with good elasticity
The reason for using veils made from synthetic fabrics	9	7	8	1

Source : personal documentation

##### 4.2. Comfort

About eight number of respondents agree to disadvantages of synthetic fabrics regarding to its comfort e.g bad thermal conductivity, low absorbency, and cause unpleasant odor. However, about 11 respondents do not bothered with these disadvantages and surprisingly two other feel comfortable. These young Muslims keep using synthetic fabrics for hijab and daily clothing even it bring some disadvantages.

*Table 4 experience of wearing synthetic fabrics, in terms of comfort aspect*

Question	Good Comfort	Fair	Poor Comfort
Experience of wearing synthetic fabrics for hijab (veils) and daily clothing, in terms of the comfort aspects especially during hot and humid seasons	2	11	8

Source : personal documentation

*Table 5 reason that synthetic fabrics are less comfortable to wear*

Question	Sweaty cloths (less absorbent) during hot and humid seasons	Cause skin irritation and allergenic	Cause unpleasent smell (body odor)	Not simple to wear (some fabrics require inner wear)
The reason that synthetic fabrics are less comfortable to wear	8	1	8	7

Source : personal documentation

### 4.3. Ease of care

Respondents prefer synthetic fabrics because they are ease to care; based on their experiences, they do not need any specific detergent to wash and most of it could be washed by hand, machine or dry clean. Respondents can wash synthetic fabrics easily because most of them have good resistance to stain (dirt); besides synthetic fabrics are quick to dry and do not swell. However these respondents agree that they need to consider the iron's temperature in order to avoid damage.

*Table 6 respondents' opinion in washing synthetic fabrics*

Question	Easy	Medium	Hard
Synthetic fabrics care	9	12	0

Source : personal documentation

*Table 7 respondents' opinion for fabric easy-care factors*

Question	Washed by hand, machine or dry clean	Easy to dry	Wrinkle-free	No specific detergent require
Fabric easy-care factors	3	6	4	2

Source : personal documentation

### 4.4. Availabilty

Young Muslims age 20-22 agree synthetic fabrics are easily found and available in many stores (on-line or off-line shop). The types of product for hijab clothes also come in various model such as vest, scarf, dress, gown, skirt, t-shirt, trousers, etc.

Table 8 availability of clothing made from synthetic fabrics

Question	Agree	Disagree	DK/NA
Synthetic fabrics are easily found and available in the market better than natural fabrics	18	1	2

Source : personal documentation

#### 4.5. Affordability

Respondents are university students, age of 20-22 years old. They agree synthetic fabrics are less expensive than natural fabrics; they choose synthetic fabrics due to its cheap price. By the respondents opinion, the range of prices for one garment (dress, skirt, hijab, or trousers) are vary start from IDR 10,000-40,000 for hijab or scarf; IDR 50,000-500,000 for blouse, cardigan, vest, skirt, and dress; IDR 70,000-250,000 for trousers; IDR 90,000-350,000 for training suits and sports jacket.

Table 9 respondents' choices based on the cheap price

Question	Agree	Disagree	DK/NA
Reason for choosing synthetic fabrics due to its cheaper price	18	2	1

Source : personal documentation

### 5. CONCLUSION

By the five aspects, the reasons behind young Muslims preference of wearing hijab and garments made from synthetic fabrics (fibres) for daily clothing are: (1) Synthetic fabrics have various colours and motifs, good lustre, body fit, easily modified to varoius model (hijab) and look stylish with the inner wear; (2) The respondents do not bothered with some disadvantages of synthetic fabrics; (3) Synthetic fabrics are ease to care; (4) Available in many stores with various models; (5) The price is cheap, less expensive than natural fibres. From this result we can see that young Muslim of age 20-22 choose synthetic fabrics for daily clothing and hijab because of the variation of colors, motifs, models, and body fit; besides synthetic fabrics are easy to care, available in many stores, and the price is affordable for the students. These young Muslims do not really care for the comfort aspects eventhough these fabrics can cause sweat, cling to body, bring unpleasent body odor, and skin irritation, especially in Jakarta with hot and hummied seasons.

This research could be used as information for the fashion industry, including designers and entrepreneurs which business focuse on Modest Fashion especially youth market. Results are expected to help the industry in creating designs as well as doing product research and development. This Research also requires further research, which is more steeped in the concluding remarks through qualitative methods such as interviews, in order to obtain more accurate and detailed information.

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