



Faith, fashion and femininity: visual and audience analysis of Indonesian Muslim fashion blogs [

Thesis

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Although a seemingly trivial subject, fashion blogs could be put into the same categories as other feminine genres such as magazines, soap operas and romance novels that have been shown by feminist scholars to be worthy of scholarly attention. This study argues that Indonesian Muslim fashion blogs are an important and rich cultural text where gender identity, religion, nation and class intersect in contemporary Indonesian society. Using feminist audience ethnography as the methodological approach, this research first analysed why women read Muslim fashion blogs; second, how readers negotiate the articulation of modesty, modernity, motherhood, class and nation; third, the motivations behind the blogging practise; and fourth, how bloggers define and facilitate their female readers' empowerment. Using individual interviews, FGDs and archival study to gather data which can then be analysed thematically alongside visual analysis of several texts garnered from the most popular blogs in Indonesia, this study illustrates that Muslim fashion blogs are being consumed as leisure and pleasurable activities, and that such activities are also associated with hobbies and youthful activities in which my participants practised more frequently before marriage and children. Reading fashion blogs allows readers to escape from mundane domestic lives and serves as a space of resistance despite the visual representation that still conform to the state's gender ideology and traditional Islamic discourses of femininity. Indonesian Muslim fashion blogs also illustrate that the integration of modesty (through the interpretation of the hijab and Islamic clothing) and modernity (through the influence of global fashion) is undertaken with ease and fluidity despite readers' criticisms of certain styles of hijab. Muslim fashion blogs represent the hijab as a middle ground between Islamic identity and modernity that, borrowing from Smith-Hefner (2007), is "neither traditionalist nor anti-modernist

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