

How women of the
middle east integrate
fashion trends with
their culture and
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Veil Fashion and Islamic Identities One of the consequences of modernity and the entailing developments such as globalization, geographical mobility, empowerment and democracy is that societies across the globe could no longer exist in isolation. (Pellicani, 1994, pp. 205) What this means is that cultures and belief systems are constantly being influenced by external forces. This is best demonstrated in the way the veil or hijab is worn as a fashion statement by many Muslim women. It is clear that this piece of clothing came to represent an evolving identity that emerge as Muslims try to navigate the rules and norms of their culture and religion on the one hand and the impact of modernity on the other.

In Islamic fundamentalism, women are required to cover their bodies with a veil. (McCullar, pp. 57) The only exposed body parts allowed are the face and the hand. For a long time, this norm has dominated many Islamic societies since the practice is believed to be based on the teachings of the Quran. Today, however, another Islamic school emerged called as Islamic modernism. It promotes women's rights and cultivated the Islamic version of feminism, wherein restrictions were questioned and unjust attitudes and behavior towards women were criticized. According to Moaddel (1998, pp. 109), this transition marks the changes in Islamic ideas, which are brought about by new sociological perspectives. In this context, the use of veil as a fashion accessory than as a religious restrictive tool became easily understood. The veil came to represent an aspect of the Muslim woman's identity and it was celebrated. For example, in Turkey, the veil became a staple in fashion runways as the country positioned itself as an Islamic fashion capital. (Navaro-Yashin, 2002, pp. 218)

The cases of Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic modernism depict how the <https://assignbuster.com/how-women-of-the-middle-east-integrate-fashion-trends-with-their-culture-and-muslim-religion/>

veil came to represent the ideologies and values of different periods in the Islamic world. As a piece of clothing it is used to conceal identity. More recent and secular rules and regulations enabled the veil to become a tool to express an identity. Both the fundamentalist and modernist perspectives support Bennett's (2005, pp. 96) argument that fashion "play a considerable part in informing notions of commonality" typified by shared patterns of cultural consumption and tastes. This variable is an excellent example of social construction. It does not only demonstrate the alliance of individuals to establish and perpetuate norms but also offer a channel by which meanings can be attached in order to define identities and social contexts. (Bennett, pp. 97)

The veil and its transformation as a fashion statement were encouraged by globalization and consumerism. Gokariksel and Secor (2009, pp. 6) explained that there is a resurgence of Islamic identities worldwide because it is widely seen as a way to adapt in a complex geopolitical landscape wherein Islam as represented by the veil-wearing woman is stereotyped as "the alien" or the threatening "other". As many Muslim try to adapt and struggle to express what modern Islam is today, the veil became a tool, a visual representation or denial of the categorization. According to Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005), clothing such as the veil became an agency for Muslim women to negotiate meanings within specific temporal and historical contexts. Bennett (pp. 98) supports this point, stressing that fashionable clothing such as the veil "allows for a high degree of creativity on the part of individuals in the construction of their identities and the presentation of such identities in everyday life."

The evolution of the veil and the meanings it represents demonstrate how
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fashion is important in defining and expressing the identity of people. The experience of both the Islamic fundamentalists and modernists highlight this. Their interpretations and use of the hijab serve their respective objectives and values and allowed others to understand the identities they espouse.

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