

Modest Fashion and Muslim Women Travellers' Perceptions of Comfort, Safety, and Belonging: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract—Travel and tourism involving Muslim women have emerged as a growing phenomenon in recent years. Existing studies have started to recognise the importance of including women, or particularly Muslim women as subjects of discussion in travel and tourism research. Modest fashion in the context of travel goes beyond clothing, representing a lifestyle that embraces modesty, creativity, and cultural diversity. This paper discusses how modest fashion has become a vital aspect of Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging, fostering respect for their unique experiences and identities while navigating diverse travel environments. Despite its growing potential, there is limited research on modest fashion among Muslim women travellers. This article reviewed published journal articles and literature on modest fashion and Muslim women travellers. The findings show that modest fashion positively influences Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging, while also supporting confidence and self-expression during travel. This conceptual paper aims to foster understanding and respect for Muslim women travellers to guide and support future research, inform inclusive tourism practices, and encourage policymakers and industry stakeholders to consider modest fashion as an essential component of Muslim-friendly and gender-sensitive tourism

development while also highlighting, as well as integrating modest fashion, tourism, and gender studies respectively.

Keywords: Comfort; Belonging; Modest fashion; Travellers

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors globally, serving as a primary catalyst for economic development, employment generation, and cross-cultural exchange. The tourism industry contributes approximately 10% to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supports over 300 million jobs worldwide (Garg, 2025; WTTC, 2025). Within this landscape, the Muslim travel market has emerged as a high-growth segment and a critical area of interest for the global hospitality sector (Henderson, 2016). Muslim women represent an increasingly significant tourist segment, accounting for approximately 63 million international travellers, or nearly 45% of the total Muslim travel market (Mastercard & CrescentRating, 2019). For Muslim women, travelling is not merely a secular leisure activity; rather, it is often understood through the Islamic concept of safar, which encompasses the pursuit of knowledge, physical well-being, and spiritual reflection on God's creation (Jafari & Scott,

2014; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). According to Zhang et al. (2024), female tourism refers to leisure travel undertaken by women, often involving trips with female friends or family members; however, for this demographic, it is frequently viewed through the lens of faith, where adhering to religious guidelines and Islamic values remains an essential responsibility during their journeys (Tavakoli & Mura, 2021).

Despite significant geopolitical and economic uncertainties, such as regional conflicts and shifting trade alliances, Muslim consumer spending has remained notably resilient. In 2023, expenditure across Islamic economy sectors grew by 5.5%, and it is forecast to reach US\$3.36 trillion by 2028, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.3% (DinarStandard, 2024). This growth is particularly evident in outbound tourism, where spending is projected to rise significantly due to rising disposable incomes and greater travel accessibility, even amid persistent inflationary pressures.

The Shariah (Islamic law) principle of halal governs all facets of a Muslim's life, including fashion and attire, which are vital components of consumer culture and identity (Hassan & Harun, 2016; Tieman, 2021). Modest fashion in the context of travel is more than a wardrobe choice; it represents a lifestyle that integrates modesty, creativity, and cultural diversity. It is generally defined as clothing that covers the entire body in a loose, concealing manner (Sultana et al., 2021; Tarofder et al., 2021). Specifically, this attire typically includes long sleeves, an ankle-length hem, and a high neckline, often paired with trousers and head coverings (Fithriana & Nopitasari, 2018). For the Muslim woman traveller, these garments must be strategically adapted to various environments, from breathable fabrics for summer to insulated attire for winter trips, ensuring a balance between physical comfort, aesthetic appeal, and cultural interactions that foster mutual respect and understanding.

The motivations for dressing modestly are multifaceted and may shift throughout a woman's life cycle. While faith is a common motivator, some women adopt modest fashion to challenge community expectations or to enable social and geographical mobility (Lewis, 2013). Regardless of the underlying driver, modest fashion functions as a tool for authentic self-expression. Nevertheless, women continue to face significant constraints when navigating global tourism spaces, especially at coastal destinations where the "tourist gaze"

frequently conflict with modesty standards (Asbollah et al., 2025; Tavakoli & Mura, 2021).

Despite the robust growth of the Muslim travel market, there remains a notable lack of conceptual clarity about how clothing choices directly affect a traveller's psychological sense of safety, physical comfort, and social belonging. While existing literature often focuses on the macroeconomic impact of halal tourism, it frequently overlooks the lived experiences of Muslim women who must balance religious adherence with cultural interactions. This paper seeks to bridge this research gap by developing a conceptual framework that links modest fashion to the holistic well-being of Muslim women travellers, fostering empathy and a deeper appreciation of their journeys.

Accordingly, this paper aims to conceptually examine the role of modest fashion in shaping Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging, and to propose directions for future empirical research.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Muslim women's travellers' comfort, safety, and belonging

Female Muslim travellers represent an emerging phenomenon in the travel and tourism sector (Nisha & Cheung, 2022). Travelling as a Muslim woman can be an enriching and fulfilling experience, offering opportunities to discover new cultures, interact with diverse communities, and broaden one's perspective (Zhang et al., 2024). However, thoughtful preparation is essential to ensure comfort, safety, and the ability to practise religious obligations. Recreational or travel activities are not restricted in Islam, particularly for Muslim women (Muhammad Din, 2022). Numerous travel tips are available to assist Muslim women in maximising their travel experiences. Lightweight and breathable fabrics suitable for various climates greatly enhance comfort for Muslim women travellers (Ali, 2024). These fabrics help control body temperature, minimise discomfort from heat or humidity, and provide ease of movement during travel activities. By choosing appropriate materials, Muslim women can remain comfortable while maintaining modesty throughout their journeys. In addition to physical comfort, modest fashion also contributes to Muslim women travellers' sense of safety and belonging. Dressing modestly allows Muslim women to feel more confident and secure in unfamiliar environments, as it aligns with their personal and religious values. Wearing modest clothing helps

them feel more confident and secure in new settings, as it reflects their personal and religious principles.

Furthermore, modest fashion fosters a sense of belonging to one's religious identity while travelling. By adhering to modest attire, Muslim women are able to practise their faith consistently, even when outside their homes. This continuity fosters a sense of connection to their religious principles and community, thereby offering emotional reassurance and tranquillity. Thus, modest fashion significantly contributes to positive travel experiences for Muslim women by promoting comfort, safety, and a profound sense of religious identity.

2.2 Modest fashion and practicality in travel (relevance)

Modest fashion encompasses many aspects of life, including culture, religion, and ethnicity. It is not limited to Muslim women, as non-Muslim women also choose modest fashion. A study by Farudz (2024) found that non-Muslim women prefer modest fashion because it helps them feel safe and comfortable in managing their daily activities. Practicing modest dressing provides numerous advantages. Importantly, modest fashion enables authentic self-expression without compromising religious values.

For Muslim women, modest fashion holds additional significance, as it is closely connected to religious values and spiritual identity. Modesty in dress is not merely a stylistic preference but a form of worship and ethical commitment. As a result, Muslim women often face unique challenges when navigating spaces that may not fully accommodate their modesty requirements, particularly while traveling. Travel environments frequently demand practical clothing choices that support mobility, climate adaptability, and participation in diverse activities, which can sometimes conflict with conventional perceptions of modest dress. Balancing modesty with practicality therefore becomes a central concern for Muslim women travelers. Contrary to stereotypes that portray modest clothing as limiting or monotonous, modern modest fashion embraces creativity, individuality, and style diversity while still ensuring it comply with modest scope and principles. Muslim women travelers can express their personalities through color choices, patterns, accessories, and styling techniques while adhering to modesty principles. This flexibility allows them to participate in global fashion trends on their own terms, challenging homogenized

representations of Muslim women and highlighting their agency within the fashion and tourism spaces.

Travelling presents unique challenges for Muslim women, especially in balancing modesty with practicality when choosing travel clothing. Modest fashion addresses this need by offering diverse clothing options that align with personal style while ensuring comfort and confidence throughout the journey. Whether exploring vibrant urban environments, visiting heritage sites, or enjoying coastal destinations, halal fashion supports Muslim women in navigating diverse travel settings with confidence and dignity. At heritage and cultural sites, modest attire often aligns well with local customs, fostering respectful engagement and cultural sensitivity. In coastal or leisure destinations, modest swimwear and resort wear provide inclusive alternatives that allow Muslim women to participate in recreational activities without feeling excluded. Tavakoli and Mura (2021) emphasize that halal fashion enables Muslim travelers to experience destinations authentically while remaining true to their religious values, thereby enhancing both cultural immersion and personal fulfillment.

2.3 How modest fashion influences Muslim women's travel

Modest fashion plays a significant role in shaping and influencing Muslim women's travel experiences, influencing not only the destinations they choose but also how they engage in activities throughout their journeys (Fithriana & Nopitasari, 2018). Travel decisions for Muslim women are often guided by the need to balance personal comfort, religious observance, and cultural appropriateness, and modest fashion serves to facilitate this process. Clothing that aligns with principles of modesty allows women to feel confident, secure, and respected while navigating diverse environments, whether visiting heritage sites, urban centres, or coastal destinations. Such clothing choices are not only functional but also symbolic, reflecting identity, values, and self-expression, which are important components of a fulfilling travel experience.

Studies indicate that modest fashion can influence travel patterns by affecting the selection of destinations perceived as accommodating to Muslim women's needs. These needs often include access to prayer facilities, halal food, culturally sensitive environments, and appropriate accommodation options. Destinations that acknowledge and integrate these considerations, in combination with fashion that supports modesty and comfort, encourage

greater participation and engagement among Muslim women travellers (Aune et al., 2021).

In addition, modest fashion contributes to positive psychological outcomes, including confidence, a sense of safety, and a feeling of belonging. By wearing clothing that respects religious and cultural values, Muslim women are empowered to explore new environments without fear of discomfort or cultural misunderstanding. Integrating modest fashion into tourism studies provides scholars and industry stakeholders with a deeper understanding of Muslim women's travel behaviour, enabling the development of inclusive tourism policies, marketing strategies, and services that enhance travel satisfaction, accessibility, and overall experience. As such, modest fashion is not merely a style preference but a significant factor shaping the contemporary Muslim women travel experience.

Despite the many advantages of modest fashion, travelling presents specific challenges for Muslim women. These include navigating diverse dress codes and cultural norms, as well as engaging in activities such as sightseeing, outdoor adventures, and formal events. In some destinations, finding appropriate modest clothing can be difficult, requiring a careful balance between modesty, comfort, and practicality. Therefore, thoughtful and strategic wardrobe planning is essential. This involves selecting versatile clothing that can be layered, opting for breathable, comfortable fabrics, and packing outfits suited for different climates and social settings. With the right mindset, creativity, and preparation, Muslim women can manage these challenges effectively. Rather than being limiting, these experiences can be empowering, thus allowing Muslim women to express their identity with confidence while enjoying meaningful and comfortable travel experiences.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for this study is a narrative literature review (Sukhera, 2022; Fox & Videmsek, 2026). The primary objective of a literature review is to synthesise and present the existing body of knowledge on a particular subject while maintaining a critical balance between comprehensive coverage and analytical depth (Sukhera, 2022). A narrative literature review is particularly effective for this study, as it integrates diverse scholarly sources to offer a balanced and coherent understanding of the complex relationship between faith and travel. As noted by Baker (2016), this approach is well-suited for discussing

conceptual and philosophical perspectives in a structured manner and for employing critical academic dialogue on emerging issues.

Narrative and systematic literature reviews serve different purposes in research. A narrative literature review is more flexible and less prescriptive, allowing researchers to provide a broad summary of a topic and discuss general patterns or ideas, often influenced by the author's viewpoint. It helps to explain the general background of a topic and highlight existing knowledge. In contrast, a systematic literature review adheres to a well-defined, strict, and organised process with designated steps to minimise bias and guarantee that the findings are dependable and consistent. A systematic literature review is commonly used when strong evidence is needed to support conclusions or decisions (Theile & Beall, 2024). In this article, a narrative literature review has been used to highlight aspects of comfort, safety, and belonging in a modest way and their relationship to Muslim women travellers.

To ensure the rigour of this conceptual paper, literature was drawn from leading academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search employed targeted keywords including "modest fashion", "Muslim women travellers", "Hijabi Muslim travellers", "Modest fashion and Muslim women travellers", "halal tourism", and "travel constraints". The selection process focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal books, and trusted industry reports (like those from DinarStandard and Mastercard-CrescentRating) to ensure the framework is rooted in both academic research and current market insights. The articles published in English were selected, discussed on conceptual, and empirical data related to topics of Muslim female traveller; tourism and Islamic attire; comfort; safety; religions; gender roles; belonging; and empowerment. Exclusion criteria involved the articles other than English language, areas of law, public health, psychology, economy, without connection to modest fashion or Islamic dress and Muslim women or female travellers. The selection and screening phase of the articles were carried out by three authors. All authors involved in the phase of full-text reading, and data extraction of the key findings. The authors also took part in the interpretative analysis of the discussion and conclusion. The analysis of the articles started with the extraction of information regarding the title, author and year, and the key findings. The initial search strategy came out with

1835 articles. First phase screening was 200 articles. Lastly, after the elimination process, 17 articles met the inclusion criteria. The timeframe of the selected articles is between 10 to 15 years ensuring coverage of both foundational, conceptual, and recent studies.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This paper examines the important relationship between modest fashion and Muslim women travellers' perceptions of comfort, safety, and belonging. Past research has mainly examined the motivations behind female travellers, safety issues, and the sense of belonging. For instance, studies on motivation explore why women travel, such as a desire for self-discovery, independence, relaxation, and cultural engagement. Not only that, studies on safety focus on women's concerns about personal security, harassment, and risk mitigation, along with the strategies they employ to stay safe. Meanwhile, studies on belonging emphasise how female travellers seek social connections, acceptance, and a feeling of inclusion in new environments, often

through interactions with local communities and fellow travellers.

Generally, Muslim women and individuals who wear hijab, frequently encounter discrimination, racism, judgement, and misunderstanding. At college and university campuses, students from minority religious backgrounds have numerous difficulties; their negative consequences are particularly noticeable for Muslim students. In an environment of Islamophobia, college students who wear the hijab may be more vulnerable to discrimination (Pouraskari, 2023).

In the context of travel, Muslim women travellers tend to face racism and gender oppression, as well as harassment. Other than that, Muslim women face travel constraints such as social responsibilities, cultural norms, and religious practices (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Table 1 summarises the selected articles (the title and key findings) from previous literature on modest fashion and Muslim women travellers.

Table 1: Literature Summary on the study of Modest Fashion and Muslim Women's Travelers

No.	Title	Author/Year	Key Findings
1.	Female travellers in the hospitality and tourism industry: A systematic literature review	Zhang et al., 2024	The study categorises 40 years of research into three dominant themes: Motivation, Risk, and Sexuality. A critical finding is that modern research now presents "contradictory viewpoints" compared to the past; for instance, what was once seen only as a "risk" is now often discussed through the lens of empowerment and gender equality. It highlights that young, solo, and middle-aged women have distinct psychological drivers. While "female tourism" is well-studied, the specific intersection of religious attire (Modest Fashion) and the Muslim woman's psychological state is an under-researched "niche."
2.	Recreation and the Creative Muslimah	Muhammad din, 2022	The paper explores how Muslim women from Indonesia, Pakistan, and the UK use digital platforms to create their own "halal-sensitive" travel experiences. It highlights that women are moving beyond traditional restrictive legal opinions to interpret religious texts themselves, framing travel as a spiritual journey to see the "signs of the Creator". Key initiatives like "Pink Mosques" and "Girls on Road" demonstrate how women proactively address the lack of inclusive spaces by documenting female-friendly facilities.
3.	Modest Fashion in UK Women's Working Life	Lewis et al., 2021	The study explores how Muslim women manage "professionalism" alongside modesty. It finds that modest fashion is a "situated practice" where women use clothing to navigate different social expectations. The paper also discusses how modest dress acts as a communicator of identity that can either invite respect or trigger bias. Women use their "look" to manage how others perceive them in public spaces.

			The authors show that "comfort" is not just about the fabric, but the <i>mental peace</i> of knowing one's outfit won't be misread. For a traveller, this means the comfort of being "modestly covered" while still looking "socially acceptable" in a foreign destination.
4.	Breaking barriers for Bangladeshi female solo travelers	Bernard et al., 2022	The study uses Hofstede's cultural dimensions to show how high "Power Distance" and "Collectivism" create barriers for Muslim women. It finds that solo travel is seen as a "risk to reputation." However, it suggests that for Muslim women, safety involves navigating social judgment as much as physical threats. It identifies that women use "travel as a tool for empowerment" to break these cultural barriers, moving from a state of being "protected/restricted" to being "independent/mobile."
5.	Understanding the Challenges Muslim Women Face in Adventure Tourism	Nasir et al., 2025	The study identifies that Muslim women in adventure tourism experience "negotiated constraints" shaped by infrastructure, safety, and clothing expectations. Key barriers include insufficient private changing and prayer facilities, fear of discrimination or harassment in remote settings, and reputational risk tied to family/community approval. Standard adventure gear often conflicts with modesty norms, forcing women to improvise (for example, choosing between a functional but revealing wetsuit and a modest but heavy or unsafe alternative), which can reduce comfort, performance, and physical safety. In this context, safety also means protection from the social gaze and exclusion in non-inclusive environments. The absence of gender-segregated facilities can make women feel like intruders rather than legitimate participants in adventure spaces.
6.	Veiled Muslim women's Strategies in response to Islamophobia in Paris	Najib & Hopkins, 2019	This study reveals that veiled women in Paris experience "spatial oppression", which shapes where they move and how they present themselves. They often avoid crowded or "privileged" districts where they anticipate scrutiny and instead stay within familiar, "friendly" neighborhoods. Alongside this spatial avoidance, they use embodied strategies by adjusting modest dress to appear more "discreet" or "professional", aiming to reduce Islamophobic targeting. Clothing functions as a tactical tool to manage visibility and safety in a geopolitical climate where the veil is politicised, helps women avert potential discrimination. Here, safety extends beyond physical protection to the active management of visibility to prevent social conflict, and belonging is associated with locating "safe pockets" where modest fashion is normalised rather than policed.
7.	Gender, Religion and Sociospatial (Im)mobilities: Toward an Intersectional Framework for Muslim Female Solo Travel	Rostami & Trupp (2025)	Stereotyping: Muslim women should travel only with their husbands or families. It is inappropriate for them to travel alone, thus inviting judgment from others, especially if they are travelling to Muslim countries. Other than that, Muslim women tend to face harassment due to their modest fashion and their religion in non-Muslim countries. The study applies an intersectional mobility framework, arguing that Muslim women's travel experiences are shaped by the interaction of 10 identity axes, with gender, religion, and nationality as the most influential. It introduces "compounded barriers", where overlapping

			identities produce distinct constraints. For example, the intersection of religion and Iranian nationality can expose women to both Islamophobia and “Iranophobia,” generating socio-spatial immobilities driven not only by formal rules but also by the social gaze and anticipatory fear. Safety is context-dependent, a woman may feel secure in a Muslim-majority setting yet feel unsafe in other destinations because of how her nationality and religion are read. Belonging is framed as an intersectional achievement, and higher education or employment status can increase confidence and capacity to navigate spaces marked by non-belonging.
8.	The flag-bearers of change in a patriarchal Muslim society: Narratives of Iranian solo female travellers on Instagram	Nikjoo et al., 2021	The study examines Instagram narratives of Iranian solo travelers and argues that travel operates as active resistance and a site of meaning-making and self-awareness. Women use digital storytelling to challenge patriarchal norms by publicly documenting mobility. Visibility on social media functions both as empowerment and as a mechanism to normalise Muslim women’s presence in “non-traditional” travel spaces. The findings also frame belonging as digitally produced, where women cultivate a sense of membership in a global community through Instagram, using shared modest fashion and travel content to build a “virtual home” and support network beyond national borders. Safety is articulated as social risk management: participants narrate travel as educational or transformative to legitimize mobility and reduce anticipated backlash from conservative home environments.
9.	Behind the invisible walls: Understanding constraints on Muslim solo female travel	Nematpour et al., 2024	The study categorises constraints on Muslim solo travellers into seven “invisible walls”: sociocultural, interpersonal, intrapersonal, religious, physical safety, practical, and structural. It argues that although religious and sociocultural pressures are often external, they are internalised as intrapersonal constraints, prompting women to self-regulate behaviour and dress to prevent conflict. Safety is conceptualised as multidimensional, covering physical risk, interpersonal harassment, and religious risk (anxiety about violating faith-based norms). Practical constraints, such as limited modest or gender-appropriate facilities, contribute to physical and mental fatigue during travel.
10.	Women's Travel Patterns, Attitudes, and Constraints Around the World	Rosenbloom, 2021	Women and men's travel differs, starting in childhood, differences that have largely persisted even as women enter the labor force and become drivers, because they reflect an unequal distribution of household and childcare and eldercare obligations. Women may also be constrained by cultural and religious norms. Women are often victims of sexual harassment and violence; they have fewer traffic crashes but are more likely to die in those crashes. Future research should focus on intersectionality, women and new technology, and why socio-demographic factors create gender differences in travel behavior. Policy analysts, planners, and engineers must ensure that persistent gender differences in travel patterns are reflected in public policy decisions to both redress inequities and to better service different transportation “markets.” Public actions should make

			travel more practical, secure, and safe for women and men travelers.
11.	Healthy, safe, and responsible: the modern female traveller	Bauer, 2021	The review highlights a travel-medicine gap around women's practical needs, focusing on personal hygiene, menstruation, and everyday bodily management across travel settings. It argues that inadequate toilet hygiene and limited private facilities create more than inconvenience, which is mental stress and safety risks when women must manage biological needs in exposed or vulnerable situations. The findings agree that comfort includes the ability to maintain hygiene routines that may be essential for religious practice (wudu/prayer) while wearing modest clothing. They also frame safety as shaped by practical constraints: time spent searching for privacy to adjust modest attire or manage hygiene can increase physical vulnerability in unfamiliar environments.
12.	The exploration of Iranian solo female travellers' experiences	Hosseini et al., 2021	The study finds that Iranian women's solo travel is motivated by freedom, flexibility, and self-empowerment. It argues that tourism enables women to become more visible in the public sphere that contest constraints associated with a religious-patriarchal context. This increased visibility supports mental well-being, strengthening independence and self-confidence. The findings also support belonging as a rights-based outcome: travel becomes a way to claim legitimate access to public space while remaining visibly Muslim, with belonging achieved when women can participate publicly without compromising identity. Safety is reframed as agency-based, as empowerment shifts women's orientation from being "protected" by others to feeling capable of assessing and navigating risk themselves.
13.	Perceived Risks and Comfort Zone Among African Female Solo Travellers	Liu et al. 2026	The research suggested the elements that contributed to uncomfortable experiences for solo female travellers. The results emphasise seven main elements that contributed to travel discomfort: sociocultural risk, physical vulnerability, psychological strain, social tension, intercultural adaptation challenges, destination performance limitations, and institutional barriers.
14.	In the Concept of Mahram for Women in Long-Distance Travel (in the Perspective of the Hadith of the Prophet)	Sodiqin & Mustaqim, 2025	The study studies the evolving interpretation of mahram requirements for long-distance travel. It contrasts traditional positions, which treat mahram accompaniment as obligatory, with contemporary scholarship that reframes the rule around its 'illat (underlying rationale), namely women's safety. Under this view, modern conditions such as secure transport and safe destinations can satisfy the safety rationale through trustworthy company or guaranteed security, rather than a specific male guardian. The paper therefore conceptualises safety as a religious condition, not only a physical state, thus traveling without a mahram in a demonstrably secure environment can be religiously legitimate, reducing spiritual anxiety. It also links this shift to belonging, as contemporary fatwas enabling solo or group travel allow women to participate in global travel practices without abandoning faith commitments.
15.	Fraught Relations: Indonesian Modest Fashion, New York	Saraswati, 2024	The study analyses travel as spectacle in Indonesian modest-fashion branding, showing how designers leveraged platforms like New York Fashion Week to

	Catwalks, and the Spectacle of Travel		stage the figure of the “mobile, global Muslimah.” It argues that mobility is deployed as both a marketing strategy and a political statement intended to counter Islamophobia. However, it highlights fraught relations in this visibility project: the luxury imagery of cosmopolitan Muslim travel sits in contrast to the exclusion of Muslim refugees from many of the same global spaces. The findings frame safety as partially discursive: high-end modest fashion operates as soft power that attempts to reshape the Western gaze, potentially reducing hostility by normalising Muslim women’s presence in elite travel and cultural settings.
16.	Complexities of women solo travelling in a conservative post-Soviet Muslim society	Gorji et al., 2022	The study describes a post-Soviet “double burden” shaping Uzbek women’s mobility, where patriarchal gender expectations intersect with lingering Soviet-era surveillance logics. Solo travel is often interpreted as suspicious or deviant, creating “invisible walls” that women attempt to escape through travel while continuously managing identity and respectability. Safety is primarily reputational as being seen alone can trigger social labeling. Hence, women adopt dress and conduct cues to signal they are “decent” and “respectable” while traveling. The paper reframes safety as social safety, the protection of honour and community standing, not only protection from physical crime. It also frames belonging as a balancing act between modern independence and traditional modesty, with travel operating as a liminal space where women can access a sense of global modern belonging while maintaining ties to local heritage.
17.	Liminal spaces of empowerment: veiled Muslim female tourists negotiate norms and Islamic attire by enjoying leisure without societal expectations	Fattah, 2025	The study revealed that study participants perceive their experiences as a “limonoid time space,” where Muslim women can modify their behaviours and Islamic/modest fashion attire while travelling in Western destinations. This act of alterations in attire and behavior are interpreted as a form of resistance to gendered expectations regarding appropriate Islamic dress/ modest fashion and conduct in their home environment. This resistance fosters a sense of freedom, and empowerment. The findings also show that tourism provides space for hijabi Muslim tourists for resistance against the oppressive gender roles. This study demonstrates comfort in the interpretation of Islamic dress or modest fashion, where it shows that wearing modest fashion does not prevent one from traveling comfortably. It also frames safety and belonging through the Islamic dress as the modest attire as an interpretation of empowerment and resistance.

4.1 Constraints

Muslim women face constraints when travelling, such as maintaining personal comfort. This includes finding suitable, modest, and appropriate clothing that aligns with their religious values, such as dressing modestly and participating in daily religious practices. Safety is another critical concern, especially in unfamiliar environments. In addition, Muslim women may face uncomfortable perceptions or misunderstandings from people in other countries due to cultural differences or a lack of awareness (Muhammad Din, 2022). These challenges require careful planning and awareness to ensure a smooth and positive travel experience.

Due to the patriarchal norms and religious influences, Muslim women often encounter more restrictions than other travellers. Due to this, Muslim women or those in locations with prevalent Islamophobia develop strategies to safeguard themselves and their families from verbal or mental abuse (Bernard et al., 2022; Najib & Hopkins, 2019). The findings indicate that gender and religion significantly influence how individuals adapt to new environments, shaping their efforts to find a sense of belonging and affecting how society perceives them.

Nevertheless, some findings also revealed positive developments among Muslim women travelers. They adopted strategies that allow them to travel comfortably and stand against disrespect and discrimination based on their fashion and religion (Nikjoo et al., 2021). These changes, shared on platforms like Instagram, inspired and motivated more Muslim women to pursue their travel dreams despite potential societal and environmental challenges.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

To conclude, modest fashion encompasses all aspects of life and significantly influences Muslim women travellers' experiences by promoting comfort, safety, and a feeling of belonging. However, there are fewer research studies focusing on Muslim women travellers and their views on comfort, safety, and belonging.

From the narrative review of past studies, the study concludes that Muslim women travellers do face both beneficial and adverse conditions. The research found that there are several social misconducts that had been faced by Muslim women travellers such as harassment and discrimination, especially in public spaces. These behaviors are identical to one another while happening at different places—targeting the same social group; Muslim

women travellers. Despite societal evolution and advancement in technology, the deeply rooted hatred and stereotyping have not been completely eradicated in a community, impacting solo travellers amidst increasing societal awareness and tolerance. Nevertheless, Muslim female travellers are willing to take the chance to explore and live for themselves even though they have to face Islamophobia in other countries. The social barriers experienced are not enough to stop female travellers to be on their own. The findings also found that other than their willingness to explore and face the risk, females nowadays are more braver in defending themselves against aggressive attackers, thus proving that they are not a group that can easily be victimised due to their religion and attire.

Besides the unfavourable experience, solo female travellers' experience also contributes to the tourism industry. For example, from the findings, tourism has shed lights and provides a platform for hijabi or female Muslim tourists to challenge the religion and gender restriction thus demonstrating their empowerment amidst travel experience.

Other than tourism itself stepping up in providing safe space for the Muslim female travellers, attire also plays a role in securing the safety of the travellers. From the findings, modest fashion supports Muslim women travellers by offering comfort and security. Wearing modest clothing during travel can spark positive curiosity, prompting respectful questions about the hijab. Such interactions foster cultural exchange, enhance mutual understanding, and help reduce misunderstandings between different cultures. Additionally, these engagements humanise religious practices that are often misunderstood or misrepresented in the media, promoting intercultural dialogue. Through open, respectful conversations among tourists, locals, and communities, modest fashion acts as a bridge across cultural and religious differences. Over time, increased awareness and exposure can help reduce prejudice, foster tolerance, and encourage more inclusive attitudes within diverse travel environments (Mohd Zain, 2020).

Lastly, modest fashion combines practicality and empowerment during travel (British Muslim Magazine, 2025). It supports Muslim women travellers by enabling them to perform daily prayers comfortably and confidently without altering or adjusting their clothing to meet modesty standards. Garments with modest cuts, sufficient coverage, and flexible fabrics facilitate ease of movement and support religious practices in public or unfamiliar settings, such as airports, rest areas, or

tourist attractions. Consequently, modest fashion not only preserves spiritual commitments but also enhances the dignity, confidence, and autonomy of Muslim women as they navigate various travel environments. Overall, the study provides insights for the tourism and fashion industries to enhance their services by addressing the needs of every travellers from diverse groups including Muslim women travellers.

5.1 Future Research Direction

Future research should focus more extensively on Muslim women and examine how socio-demographic factors contribute to gender differences in travel behaviour. While some existing tourism studies have increasingly acknowledged women as an important market segment, Muslim women remain underrepresented in mainstream tourism research. This gap is particularly significant given the diversity within the Muslim women traveller population itself, shaped by factors such as age, nationality, cultural background, education level, income, marital status, and travel experience. These socio-demographic variables influence not only travel motivations and destination choices, but also perceptions of safety, comfort, and belonging while travelling. A deeper understanding of these dimensions would enable scholars to move beyond generalised assumptions and provide a more nuanced portrayal of Muslim women's travel experiences.

Moreover, future empirical studies could explore how Muslim women's travel behaviour differs across destinations with varying levels of Muslim-friendliness. Destinations that provide halal food (toyyib), prayer facilities and activities, and modest fashion-friendly environments may reduce perceived travel constraints and encourage greater participation among Muslim women. On the other hand, destinations that lack such facilities may increase feelings of discomfort or exclusion, particularly for women who visibly practice modest dressing. Understanding how socio-demographic factors intersect with destination characteristics can offer valuable insights into how Muslim women make travel decisions and adapt their behaviour in response to environmental and cultural cues.

The findings of this study provide important guidance for policymakers and tourism industry professionals aiming to improve the travel experiences of Muslim women. Given that Muslim women represent a rapidly expanding and influential segment of the global tourism market, there is a growing demand for inclusive policies and practices that address their unique needs and preferences. Policymakers can use these findings to develop tourism strategies that promote inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and gender equity. This includes encouraging destinations to adopt Muslim-friendly standards, supporting modest fashion initiatives, and fostering environments that welcome and respect Muslim women.

6. REFERENCES

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