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Celebrity-Fan Engagement on Instagram and Its Influence on The Perception of Hijab Culture Among Muslim Women in Malaysia

TENGKU SITI AISHA TENGKU MOHD AZZMAN SHARIFFADEEN
AINI MAZNINA A. MANAF
International Islamic University Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Celebrities who use Instagram can influence their female followers in many ways, for instance, in influencing their perceptions on body image, adoption of healthy eating lifestyles, and persuading them to purchase products or services endorsed by these celebrities. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the influence of celebrity-fan engagement on Instagram on hijab culture among Muslim women in Malaysia. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among female university students from the International Islamic University of Malaysia (N = 630). In order to participate in the study, respondents completed an online survey and are instructed to think about a favourite female Muslim celebrity they follow on Instagram while completing the research instrument. Results indicate that almost one-third of the most popular Muslim celebrities among females Instagram users are non-traditional celebrities (i.e. bloggers/vloggers, YouTube personalities and social media influencers). Furthermore, attitude homophily and parasocial interaction with said celebrity may significantly influence the likelihood that the celebrity's profile will be visited, and the number of likes on their photos. Finally, after controlling for the respondents' religious educational background, this study found that those who had positive attitude and behaviour towards the hijab, and perceived a higher degree of parasocial bond with Muslim celebrities on Instagram tended to have a more positive perception towards the hijab culture. The repercussions of these findings on the parasocial interaction theory, and the influence of celebrity-fan engagement on social media over hijab culture are discussed.

Keywords: *Homophily, hijab culture, Instagram use, Muslim celebrities, parasocial interaction.*

INTRODUCTION

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social media networking service, and one of the most popular social media platforms used to follow celebrities, media figures and well-known individuals. Currently owned by Facebook, since it's launching in 2010, Instagram has gained an immense popularity worldwide, including in Malaysia. According to Lee (2016), Malaysians are considered as one of the most active Instagram users across the Asia Pacific region, and it is popular not only among teenagers and young adults, but also among older adults. Not surprisingly, a survey carried out by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) on Internet users in Malaysia in 2017 has found that aside from Facebook, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in Malaysia, with increased number of users from the year 2016 to 2017 (MCMC, 2017).

One of the reasons for its popularity maybe attributed to its features that allows for interactive and instantaneous engagement between celebrities and their fans. For example, a research by Safko and Brake (2009) suggests that due to its ability to share personal information among individual users within the same network, social media is more interactive compared to traditional media. Therefore, social media users who follow celebrities on Instagram have an opportunity to develop a bond with their favourite

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celebrity through viewing their videos, commenting on their posts, and liking their photos. Interactivity may not only be initiated or expressed by the fans, but also by the celebrities, e.g., by replying to a comment by their fan on their Instagram account. Thus, with increased interactivity, a well-known media figure may have significant influence over their followers through celebrity-fan engagement on social media by communicating their lifestyle to their fans. For example, by analysing content on Instagram accounts of social media celebrities in Malaysia, researchers found that these celebrities shared personal experience with plastic surgery and selfies during plastic surgery to describe the procedure with their fans in an open manner, thus indirectly encouraging fans to do the same by emphasising that plastic surgery is not difficult and has become an established norm in today's modern society (Mohamad & Wan, 2017).

Based on the above discussion, the present investigation attempts to extend the current understanding of the celebrity-fan interaction on social media by focusing specifically on Muslim celebrities, and how they may influence their female fans, specifically by identifying how celebrity-fan engagement drive perception towards the hijab culture. Although the hijab culture maybe widely practiced and accepted by Malaysian women, perception towards the hijab may also be influenced by celebrity trends through the media, i.e., repeated exposures to Muslim female celebrities promoting the hijab culture on social media may lead to a more positive acceptance of the hijab, particularly for those who perceive high similarities with the celebrity, and experience stronger parasocial bond with the celebrity. Therefore, this study is also attempting to provide clearer insights on how Muslim celebrities may influence their followers, possibly by indirectly encouraging the adoption of an Islamic lifestyle (i.e. hijab culture) through their promotion of the hijab culture based on celebrity-fan engagement on social media. In summary, the research objectives for this study are as follows:

1. To identify popular Muslim celebrities followed on Instagram and types of products they endorse;
2. To analyse the relationship between Instagram use and parasocial interaction with a favourite Muslim celebrity;
3. To determine the relationship between attitude homophily with a favourite Muslim celebrity and Instagram use; and
4. To examine the relationship between formal religious educational background, attitude and behavior towards the hijab, attitude homophily and parasocial interaction with perceptions on hijab culture among Muslim women in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hijab culture in Malaysia

Hijab wearing is common in Malaysia, as Islam is the most widely practiced religion in Malaysia, with 61.3% of the population being Muslims (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). Therefore, a majority of Malaysians are aware of the practice of hijab wearing among Muslim women, and many may have started wearing it at a young age. In some educational religious institutions, i.e. religious boarding schools, hijab-wearing is even compulsory among female students.

Although it is a religious obligation and common practice in many Muslim countries including Malaysia, hijab wearing can be an important part of their identity as a Muslim. In some studies on hijab conducted among Malaysian women, findings indicate that wearing the hijab is an important part of one's identity as a Muslim, whether as a modern representation of a more liberated identity of Islam (Nurzihan, 2014), or as a statement about one's identity as a Muslim, and a symbol of modesty and piety (Shahreen, 2017). Others found that Muslim women in Mauritius veil to maintain their Muslim identity by consolidating their awareness of their religious practices (Bhowon & Bundhoo, 2016). However, recently hijab wearing has become somewhat of a fashion trend among Muslim women, and can be regarded as a fashion statement for many. One study by Hochel (2013) on Malaysian women indicated that in making the decision to veil, many admitted to wearing the veil because it is perceived as fashionable. Thus, the practice and acceptance of hijab culture maybe motivated by many factors, including to fulfill religious obligation, maintaining identity as a Muslim, and also because it has become a fashion trend.

In Malaysia particularly, celebrities may be powerful influence in determining popular fashion trends, including how women perceive the hijab culture. Many female celebrities in Malaysia wear the hijab and are promoting their own brand of hijab to their followers. For instance, popular Malaysian singer Siti Nurhaliza has collaborated with popular Muslimah wear company, *Ariani* to create her own brand of shawl and head covers. Another example is popular Malaysian actress and television host, Nor Neelofa Mohd Nor, who initiated her own brand of hijab cover, the Naelofar Hijab brand. Since its' establishment in 2014, this brand has produced over 80 brands of hijab, a majority of which has been sold out within minutes of its launching (Nadia Badrudin, 2017). Financially, the business has been a phenomenal success with more than RM 50 million in sales since its establishment (Nadia Badrudin, 2017). Neelofa's celebrity status may have had a hand in the brand's success; with 5.6 million Instagram followers and 2.4 million Twitter followers, loyal followers who wish to emulate her maybe driven by the need to purchase her products, in order to look just like her. Other celebrities who have also established a niche in introducing Muslimah friendly attire (including hijab) to the Malaysian population includes popular entrepreneur Vivy Yusof and famous social media personality, Hanis Zalikha. Overall, these celebrities and influential media figures have established a strong social media following and can also be considered as social media influencers.

Perception on Hijab Culture in Malaysia

Despite hijab wearing being an established practice in Malaysia, not many studies have examined how it is perceived among Muslim women in Malaysia, and specifically what role does social media and celebrity-fan engagement plays in influencing perceptions on the hijab culture. In one study, Zulkifli and Fatin (2013) found that the media plays a crucial role in promoting acceptance of the hijab wearing culture among the masses. In their study, the findings highlight that most of the respondents are aware the existence of hijab culture through hijab magazines, and many believe that the rise of hijab wearing is due to the proliferation of these magazines. The respondents' reason for wearing the hijab is because the hijab is perceived as modest, trendy and attractive.

In another study, Nurzihan, Md Sidin and Shahreen (2016) qualitatively examined the 'commodification' of hijab culture phenomenon among Malaysian media consumers and found that parasocial interaction is one of the motivating factors that drives the acceptance

of the hijab culture in Malaysia. For instance, when readers of fashion magazine see prominent figures wearing the hijab featured in that publication, this resonates with the audience, and facilitates in establishing a common ground between them and the media personalities or organizations referred to in these magazines. In another study, Hamisah, Ezhar, Jusang and Muhammad Mizal (2014) found that Malaysian females were highly involved with advertisements that used the Islamic symbol of 'hijab' and this generated a positive attitude towards such advertisement. Thus, for Muslim women in Malaysia, the hijab is also a positive symbol of their identity as a Muslim. From these studies, it is evident that as the hijab culture is popularised in the media, it has influenced modern Muslim women into associating with the modern hijab as part of their personality. Finally, one quantitative study by Aini Maznina, Saodah and Rizalawati (2014) examined perceptions and attitude on the hijab culture; overall Muslim women in Malaysia had a positive attitude and perception towards the hijab culture. Also, having a positive attitude and perception towards the hijab culture is a crucial predictor in determining the impact changes in wearing the hijab among Muslim women. However, the latter study did not specifically address the influence of social media in predicting the perceptions towards the hijab culture.

In summary, these studies highlight that the hijab culture is an accepted social norm in Malaysia, and for many Muslim women in Malaysia, embracing the emerging hijab culture is perceived as a crucial part of their identity of a modern Muslim. Various media may also play a significant role in popularising the hijab culture in Malaysia, by influencing awareness on hijab culture and portrayal of a positive image of hijab culture among media users. Hence, this study would attempt to extend existing studies by looking specifically at the role of social media and how celebrity-fan engagement in social media may influence perceptions towards the hijab culture.

Parasocial Interaction and Social Media

Horton and Wahl (1956) are the pioneering scholars to examine the relationship between media figures/personalities and media users, and the initial research in this area focused on television viewers and their favourite TV characters. Parasocial relationships is cultivated through repeated exposures in the media, and tend to resemble actual face-to-face relationships, but they are typically only one-sided and non-reciprocal as the media figures are under no obligation to get to know the media users personally, or to even initiate and maintain these relationships with media users. Therefore, media scholars have termed the relationship between fans and celebrities as 'parasocial interaction', where it is initially conceptualised as an… "imaginary, one-sided relationship, based on vicarious interaction (television viewing) rather than actual interaction, where viewers feel that they know and understand the persona (celebrity) in the same intimate way they know and understand flesh-and-blood friends" (Perse & Rubin, 1989, p. 60). Since its' earlier conception, research on parasocial interaction has been expanded to increase understanding of celebrity-fan relationships through many different media platforms, including radio, television, films, video games and even books. Only recently have scholars started to examine how parasocial relationship develops between celebrities and fans through online interactions, such as on social media (i.e., on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram).

In studies that have examined online parasocial interaction, some scholars have focused on how parasocial relationships through social media engagements with celebrities can influence fan's attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, scholars have found that parasocial

relationships with celebrities affect social media users in many ways, e.g., in fostering a heightened sense of interpersonal closeness (Frederick, Choong, Clavio & Walsh, 2012), increased sense of community (SOC) in online communities formed by Twitter and Instagram users (Blight, Ruppel & Schoenbauer, 2017), and can lead to behavioural intention to purchase products or services endorsed by the celebrity on social media (Schroath, 2016), and even elevated levels of perceived brand credibility in the brands endorsed by the celebrities on social media (Chung & Cho, 2014). Parasocial relationship with television stars can even influence the intention to watch the television show in the near future for their loyal fans who follow them on Twitter (Tengku Siti Aisha & Aini Maznina, 2017).

Further, existing studies also indicate that how social media users use their account, and who they choose to follow may influence the level of parasocial bond they form with these celebrities. For instance, Spangardt (2017) found that frequency of Instagram use and or user's affinity with Instagram does not significantly influence intensity of parasocial interactions with athletes on Instagram, but another study found partial support for that notion. When a Twitter user attempts to engage with a celebrity, the strength of parasocial interaction with that celebrity is elevated (Pennington, Hutchinson & Hall, 2016). In the latter study, the definition of 'celebrities' is looser: anyone that is considered as 'famous', and may include an actor or actress, a public official, an athlete or a musician/singer.

Further, studies on parasocial interaction with celebrities on social media have attempted to establish a relationship between social media use, the celebrity's characteristics and parasocial interaction. Some studies have indicated that a fan's social media use with celebrities tend to lead to higher parasocial bonds with the celebrity (i.e. Bond, 2016; Chung & Cho, 2014). Previous research has also attempted to examine the relationship between celebrity characteristics, such as attitude and background homophily (Schroath, 2016), social attraction (i.e. Frederick, Choong, Flavio & Walsh, 2012), perceived attractiveness (i.e. Spangardt, 2017), or celebrity attitudes (Krause, North & Heritage, 2018), with media use and also parasocial interaction. In the study by Spangardt (2017), it is found that for fans of celebrity athletes on Instagram, perceived addressing mediated the relationship between perceived attractiveness and parasocial interaction.

On the other hand, in another study on parasocial interaction with celebrities on Facebook and Twitter, Schroath (2016) found that attitude homophily (or perceived similarity) with the celebrity did not significantly influenced the likelihood of following that celebrity on either Facebook or Twitter. Therefore, in this study it would be interesting to examine if female Muslim Instagram users develop higher levels of parasocial bonds with their favourite Muslim celebrity, and if fans who perceived a higher degree of attitude similarity with their favourite Muslim celebrity will also be likely to interact more regularly with their favourite Muslim celebrity on Instagram. Finally, another primary goal of this study would be to examine if attitude and behavior towards the hijab, together with celebrity-fan engagement on social media would influence the perceptions of hijab culture among Muslim women in Malaysia.

Accordingly, based on past literature and the parasocial interaction theory, the following hypotheses are proposed for this study:

H1: Instagram use will be positively related with parasocial interaction with a favorite Muslim celebrity

H2: Attitude homophily with a favorite Muslim celebrity on Instagram will be positively related with a favorite Muslim celebrity

The theoretical framework of the study is summarized in figure 1 below:

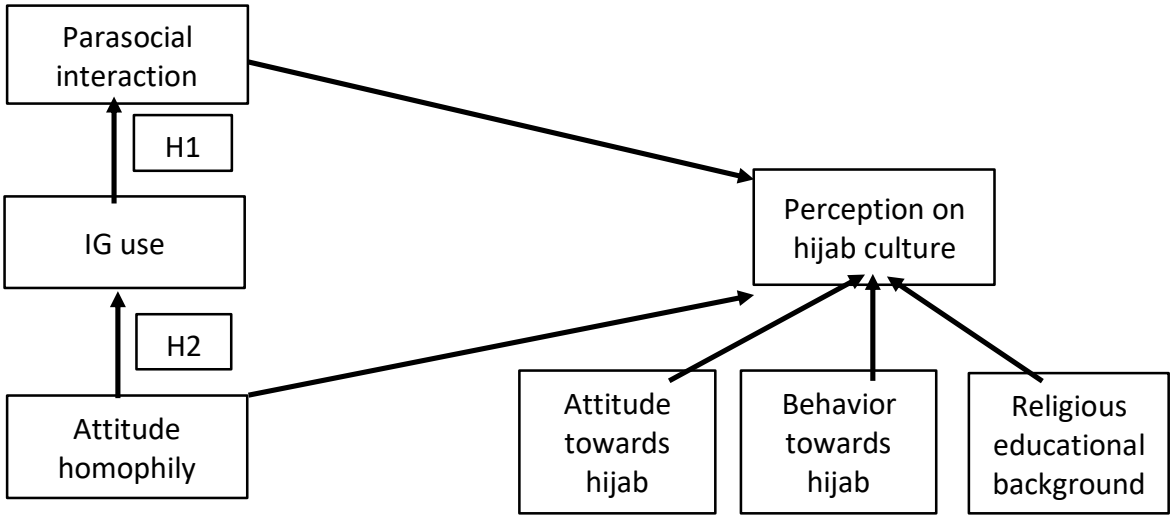

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for Perception Towards Hijab Culture Among Female Instagram Users in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

To examine the influence of Muslim celebrities on Instagram on hijab perceptions among female Instagram users, this research applied the quantitative research design by using the cross-sectional survey method. Respondents in this study consist of two samples. First, the main respondents comprise of female university students from a public Islamic university in Malaysia undertaking communication classes in Semester 2, 2017/2018. They participated in the study by filling in an online survey questionnaire, which is constructed using Google form. To increase participations from students in other courses, respondents from the main sample are also asked to recruit up to five other female students who use Instagram regularly. Respondents from the main sample were compensated with bonus marks for their participation. While answering the questionnaire, all respondents are asked to think about a favourite, female Muslim celebrity that they follow on Instagram. Specific responses pertaining to Instagram use, parasocial interaction and perceived attitude homophily are related to that celebrity. Responses from those who did not use Instagram actively, or listed a male, Muslim celebrity followed on Instagram were eliminated. After the data were collected, keyed in and cleaned, a total of 630 validated responses are obtained.

Seven main measures are used to capture the main variables in the study: Instagram use, parasocial interaction, attitude homophily, formal religious educational background, behavior and attitude towards hijab, and perceptions towards hijab culture. First, *Instagram use* is measured by using three different items: frequency of viewing a favourite celebrity's post on Instagram account, frequency of visiting a favourite celebrity's profile on Instagram account, and frequency of liking a favourite celebrity's post on Instagram. The respondents were required to estimate the frequency of all these behaviors in relation to a favourite Muslim celebrity they follow on Instagram, and the response items for all three variables range from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*).

Further, to measure *parasocial interaction* with a favourite Muslim celebrity followed on Instagram, the audience-persona interaction scale created by Auter and Palmgreen (2000) is used. The multi-dimensional scale contains 22 items, and uses the 5-point Likert scale, where response items range from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Respondents answered each item while thinking about a favourite female Muslim celebrity they follow on Instagram. Example of an item from the scale is "This celebrity reminds me of myself".

Next, *attitude homophily* is measured using the attitude homophily scale constructed by McCroskey, Richmond and Daly (2013). The scale contains 4 items, and is a bipolar scale with four different response items (i.e. *Like me versus unlike me*, *is different from me versus is similar to me*, *thinks like me versus doesn't think like me*, and *behaves like me and doesn't behave like me*), and the score range from 1 to 7. An example for an item from the scale is "This celebrity behaves like/doesn't behave like me", where the response for "behaves like me" carries a score of 7, while the response for "doesn't behave like me" carries a score of 1. For this scale, 1 and 7 represents a very strong feeling, 2 and 6 represents a strong feeling, 3 and 5 represents a moderate feeling, and finally 4 represents an undecided feeling.

To measure *level of formal religious background*, the respondent had to indicate what type of secondary school they attended. There are six different options including day co-ed school, day religious school, boarding school, religious boarding school, day girl school and boarding girl school. Then, the data was recoded into a two response items only: Yes and No. For "Yes" option, the items comprise of day religious school and religious boarding school, and indicated some formal religious educational background. The remaining items are grouped into the "No" option, which indicates that they have not had any formal religious educational background.

Next, two items are used to measure behavior and attitude towards the hijab. First, to measure the respondents' behavior towards the hijab, the item used is *frequency of wearing hijab*, where respondents are instructed to indicate their frequency of wearing the hijab using a 5-point Likert scale, where response item ranging from 1 (*Never*) and 5 (*Always*). The respondents' *attitude towards the hijab* is measured using the scale created by Aini Maznina, Saodah and Rizalawati (2013). The scale has 11 items, and uses a 5-point Likert scale, where response items range from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Example of an item from the scale is "I love wearing the hijab".

Finally, for the dependent variable, to measure *perceptions on the hijab culture*, the items created by Aini Maznina, Saodah, and Rizalawati (2013) is used. The measure contains ten items, and uses a 5-point Likert scale, where response items range from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Example of an item from the scale is "I think wearing a hijab makes me feel more secure".

All variables used in the study were also subjected to reliability testing in order to analyse the homogeneity and cohesiveness of the items. Accordingly, the Cronbach alpha values indicated that these measures are reliable, with reliability scores of more than .70, ranging from .84 to .93. The detailed results are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Test for Selected Variables in The Study.

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Parasocial interaction	22	.93
Attitude homophily	11	.91
Attitude towards hijab	4	.89
Perception towards hijab culture	10	.84

FINDINGS

Demographic Background of Respondents

The demographic profiles of the respondents are displayed in **Table 2** (*N* = 630). Based on the data, more than two-third of these students come from the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (69.8%). They are also relatively young, mostly single, and relatively well-educated. Since they are still completing their studies, most of them do not have a fixed monthly income. More than half of these students do not have a formal religious education background (65.2%) and almost half of them grew up in an urban residential area (47.2%). Also, almost all of the respondents already wear the hijab all the time (92.1%).

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	%
Age group	Below 20 years of age: 247	39.0
	21-23 years of age: 347	55.0
	24 and above: 36	6.0
Highest education level obtained	SPM/STPM/Diploma: 164	26.0
	Bachelor's Degree: 458	73.0
	Masters/PhD: 6	1.0
Formal religious education	Yes: 219	34.8
	No: 411	65.2
Kulliyyah (Faculty)	Allied Health Sciences: 10	1.6
	Architecture & Environmental Design: 13	2.1
	Economics & Management Science: 48	7.6
	Education: 29	4.6
	Engineering: 24	3.8
	Information & Comm. Technology: 14	2.2
	Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences: 440	69.8
	Language & Management: 19	3.0
	Law: 28	4.4
	Medicine/Nursing/Science: 5	1.1
Student level	First Year: 232	36.8
	Second Year: 267	41.7
	Third Year: 88	14.0
	Final Year: 47	7.5
Residential area	Rural: 117	18.6
	Suburban: 213	34.1
	Urban: 295	47.2

Income	No fixed monthly income: 600	95.2
	0 – RM 500: 18	2.9
	RM 501 or more: 12	1.9
Wear the hijab	Never: 0	0
	Rarely: 8	1.3
	Occasionally: 14	2.2
	Frequently: 28	4.5
	Always: 579	92.1

Instagram Use Associated with Favourite Muslim Celebrity

A series of descriptive analysis is run to identify the most popular Muslim celebrity followed by female university students in Malaysia, and the products that these celebrities typically endorsed on their Instagram profile. Based on the data on Instagram use, these female students are also active Instagram users, based on the number of hours spent browsing Instagram, in a day (*M* = 4.93, *SD* = 4.26), with more than half of them spending time using Instagram at least 4 hours or more per day (53.6%).

They also used Instagram to follow celebrities, with almost half of the respondents indicating that they followed at least 1-5 celebrities on their Instagram account (43.5%) while almost 20% admitted to following 41 or more celebrities. Less than one-third of the respondents followed their favourite celebrity on other social media platforms besides Instagram (23.5%).

From the 630 responses, the respondents listed 158 popular Muslim female celebrities that they follow, and these celebrities are very popular on Instagram with massive follower counts, ranging from 6537 to 25 million followers (*M* = 1851077.37, *SD* = 24020356.23). The top five celebrities followed by these respondents on Instagram are: Vivy Yusof (@vivyyusof), Shazrina Azman (@mizznina), Nor Neelofa Mohd Noor (@neelofa), Hanis Zalikha Zainal Rashid (@haniszalikha) and Siti Nurhaliza (@ctdk). Overall, almost one-third (26.8%) of these celebrities are considered as 'social media personalities' or 'social media influencers' such as Youtube personalities, famous bloggers or instafamous individuals with huge following, while others are working in the entertainment industry; as singers, television or film actresses, and radio DJs or TV hosts (41.7%%). Finally, some are well-known entrepreneurs, with their own business (22.2%).

Almost all of these favourite celebrities wear the hijab (92.8%). These celebrities also endorse products/services quite regularly on their Instagram account (whether their own or others' products), based on the frequency of mentioning certain products/services (*M* = 2.70, *SD* = 1.21). The most popular products mentioned by these celebrities (including their own brands and/or other brands) are: makeup and beauty products (42%), hijab/head cover/shawl (38%), and clothing, including Muslimah wear such as abayas and *baju kurung* (31%). The top five most popular hijab brands recalled by the respondents are *Duck Scarf* (created by Vivy Yusof), *Cakenis* (created by Hanis Zalikha), *Naelofar Hijab* (created by Nor Neelofa Mohd Nor), Gulhive (created by Heliza Helmi), and the *Ariani* scarf worn by Siti Nurhaliza. This is not surprising as these celebrities (with the exception of Siti Nurhaliza) often endorse their own products on their Instagram account, and are also often photographed in the media wearing their own hijab brands. Food or drinks (7%), and other products (such as mobile phones, contact lenses) were not endorsed quite as regularly (12%). Overall, the respondents appeared to use Instagram intensely when it comes to following their favourite celebrities; they tended to view the celebrity's post on Instagram

quite regularly (*M* = 3.72, *SD* = .92), visit their Instagram profile page quite often (*M* = 3.03, *SD* = .96), and liked their photos frequently (*M* = 3.27, *SD* = 1.16).

Table 3 below displays more detailed information related to the respondents' use of Instagram related to their favourite Muslim celebrity.

Table 3: Instagram Use Related to Favorite Muslim Celebrities.

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Celebrity name	Vivy Yusof: 77	12.2
	Sharina Azman: 57	9.0
	Nor Neelofa Mohd Nor: 41	6.5
	Hanis Zalikha: 37	5.8
	Siti Nurhaliza: 36	5.7
	Nur Afina Yanti: 30	4.7
	Heliza Helmi: 27	4.3
	Dena Bahrin: 17	2.7
	Diana Amir: 12	1.9
	Others: 302	48
Celebrity industry	Entertainment: 263	41.7
	Social Media Personality: 169	26.8
	Entrepreneurs (Own Business): 140	22.2
	Medicine: 20	3.2
	Journalism/Publishing: 16	2.5
	Fashion: 15	2.4
	Others: 7	1.1
Follow celebrity on other SM accounts*	**Yes**	
	Twitter: 77	12.2
	YouTube: 31	4.9
	Facebook: 30	4.8
	Snapchat/Blogs:11	1.6
	No	
	Do not follow on other SM accounts: 482	76.5
Celebrity followback	Yes: 28	4.4
	No: 602	95.6
Popular products endorsed/mentioned on Instagram*	Makeup and beauty product: 188	41.9
	Hijab/Head cover: 170	26.9
	Clothes, including Muslimah wear: 32	19.6
	Food/Drinks: 32	7.1
	Other products/services: 58	12.9
Frequency of mentioning product/services on their Instagram account in 2017	Never: 127	20.2
	Rarely: 147	23.3
	Occasionally: 196	31.1
	Frequently: 108	17.1
	Always: 52	8.3
Frequency of viewing celebrity's post on Instagram	Never: 5	.79
	Rarely: 51	8.20
	Occasionally: 198	31.4
	Frequently: 240	38.1
	Always: 136	21.6
Frequency of visiting celebrity's profile page on Instagram	Never: 39	6.2
	Rarely: 131	20.8
	Occasionally: 192	30.6
	Frequently: 152	24.1
	Always: 115	18.3

Frequency of liking celebrity's post on Instagram	Never: 16	2.5
	Rarely: 184	29.2
	Occasionally: 241	38.3
	Frequently: 141	22.4
	Always: 48	7.6
Respondents' daily use of Instagram (hours)	Less than 2 hours: 87	14.3
	2-3.9 hours: 196	32.1
	4-5.9 hours: 156	25.6
	More than 6 hours: 171	28.0

* Respondents allowed to provide multiple response to this item

Relationship Between Instagram Use and Parasocial Interaction

To test Hypothesis 1, a series of Pearson's bivariate correlations is conducted between Instagram use related to the celebrity and parasocial interaction. It is predicted that those who view a favourite celebrity's post on Instagram, visit their profile, and like their posts are more likely to form a stronger parasocial interaction with the celebrity compared to those who don't. All three tests are significant. First, there is a significant, positive, relationship between frequency of viewing celebrity's post on Instagram and parasocial interaction, r (630) = .25, $p < .001$, and it is a weak relationship. Next, there is also a significant positive, weak relationship between frequency of visiting celebrity's Instagram profile and parasocial interaction, r (630) = .37, $p < .001$. Further, there is also a significant, positive relationship between liking celebrity's post on Instagram and parasocial interaction, r (630) = .25, $p < .001$, and it is also weak relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Relationship Between Attitude Homophily and Instagram Use

To test Hypothesis 2, a series of Pearson's bivariate correlations is conducted between Instagram use related to the celebrity and attitude homophily. It is predicted that the greater the perceived similarity with the celebrity, the greater the likelihood of them viewing the celebrity's post, visiting their profile, and liking their photos. Only two analyses are significant; there is a significant, positive relationship between attitude homophily and visiting a celebrity's profile on Instagram; r (630) = .14, $p < .05$, and a significant, positive relationship between attitude homophily and liking a celebrity's post on Instagram, r (630) = .15, $p < .05$. However, both test indicate very weak associations between these variables. There is no significant relationship between attitude homophily and viewing a celebrity's post on Instagram; r (630) = .05, p = .17. Overall, based on these analyses, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

Relationship Between Formal Religious Educational Background, Attitude and Behavior Towards The Hijab, Attitude Homophily and Parasocial Interaction with Perceptions on Hijab Culture

To answer research objective 4, a multiple hierarchical regression analysis is used. In Step 1, to control for the respondent's existing religious background, their formal religious educational background is entered into the equation. In Step 2, the respondents' behavior and attitude towards the hijab are entered into the equation as one block. In Step 3, attitude homophily with a favourite Muslim celebrity on Instagram is entered. Finally, in Step 4, parasocial interaction with a favourite Muslim celebrity followed on Instagram is entered. Perceptions towards the hijab culture serves as the dependent variable in this analysis.

In Step 1, level of formal religious educational background (β = .20, p < .001) emerged as a significant, positive predictor to perceptions towards the hijab culture. In Step 2, both attitude towards the hijab (β = .72, p < .001) and frequency of wearing the hijab (β = .13, p < .001) emerged as significant, positive predictors to perception towards the hijab culture, while formal religious educational background ceased to be a significant, positive predictor to perception towards the hijab culture (β = .13, p < .001) at this step. The F change (p < .001) is significant. In Step 3, three variables remained as significant, positive predictors to perception towards the hijab culture, including frequency of wearing the hijab (β = .13, p < .001), attitude towards the hijab (β = .72, p < .001), and attitude homophily (β = .06, p <.05). In this step, parasocial interaction also emerged as a significant, positive predictor to perception towards the hijab culture (β = .09, p < .05). Formal religious educational background is not a significant predictor (β = .01, p = .80). The F change (p < .001) is significant.

Finally, in Step 4, both attitude (β = .71, p <.001) and behavior (β = .13, p <.001) still remained as significant predictors, while formal religious educational background (β = .00, p = .94) and attitude homophily (β = .03, p = .31) are not significant in predicting perceptions towards the hijab culture. Finally, parasocial interaction emerged as a significant, positive predictor in determining perception towards the hijab culture among female Instagram users in Malaysia (β = .06, p = .05). The F change (p = .05) is significant. The final equation accounts for 64% of the variance explained in predicting the perception of female Instagram users towards the hijab culture. **Table 4** presents a detailed summary of the regression analysis.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Analysis for Predicting Perception on Hijab Culture Among Muslim Women in Malaysia.

Predictors	*Perception towards the hijab culture*		
	B	***SE B***	***β***
Step 1			
Formal religious educational background	.21	.04	**.20*** **
Step 2			
Formal religious educational background	.10	.03	.01
Behavior towards the hijab	.58	.02	**.72*** **
Frequency of wearing the hijab	.13	.03	**.13*** **
Step 3			
Formal religious educational background	.01	.03	.01
Attitude towards the hijab	.57	.02	**.72*** **
Behavior towards hijab	.13	.03	**.13*** **
Attitude homophily	.01	.03	**.07** **
Step 4			
Formal religious educational background	.00	.03	.04
Attitude towards the hijab	.57	.02	**.71*** **
Behavior towards the hijab	.13	.03	**.13*** **
Attitude homophily	.00	.00	.03
Parasocial interaction	.04	.02	**.06* **

Note. N = 629. R = 0.20, R^2 = .04, F (1, 627) = 27.11, p < .001, for Step 1; R = 0.79, R^2 = 0.63, ΔR^2 = 0.59, F (3, 625) = 360.56, p < .001, for Step 2; R = 0.79, R^2 = 0.64, ΔR^2 = .004, F (4, 624) = 274.63, p < .001, for Step 3; R = 0.80, R^2 = 0.64, ΔR^2 = .002, F (5, 623) = 221.23, p < .001, for Step 4 * p <.10, ** p < .05, *** p < .001.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This objective of this study is to examine the influence of Muslim celebrities among female Instagram users in Malaysia. Accordingly, one objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media use and how it influences celebrity-fan interaction, in terms of parasocial interaction and attitude homophily with the celebrity. Further, another main objective of this study is to identify factors that would influence perception towards the hijab culture in Malaysia among Muslim women in Malaysia including their formal religious educational background, their attitude and behavior towards the hijab, and celebrity-fan engagement on social media.

The first research objective addresses the types of celebrities followed on Instagram and products endorsed by these celebrities. Findings indicate that female Instagram users in Malaysia follow both traditional (i.e. singers, actress, radio DJs) and non-traditional celebrities (i.e. social media influencer). When compared to other social media platforms, Instagram and Twitter appears to be the most preferable platform to interact with celebrities. Also, unsurprisingly, celebrities used their social media platform to endorse their own products or to promote other products as they are appointed as product ambassadors or trying to venture into entrepreneurship. Hijab appears to be one of the more popular products endorsed by these celebrities, indicating that celebrities maybe an influential source in determining Muslimah fashion trends among female Instagram users. It appears that Muslim celebrities are on the forefront of making Muslimah attire popular among their female followers. This supports findings from previous studies on hijab (i.e. Nurzihan et al., 2016; Zulkifli & Fatin, 2013) indicating that hijab is becoming a 'commodified product' and hijab styling is currently a fashion trend in Malaysia among young Muslim women.

Further, although it is a weak relationship, overall there is a significant relationship between the usage of Instagram and parasocial interaction (H1a-c). Celebrity fans use Instagram features such as likes, comments, and profile visits to get to know the celebrity more intimately. In supporting that it is a parasocial relationship, a majority of these fans follow the celebrity, but does not get a followback. However, comparatively to other more traditional media, it is certainly possible for the celebrity to reciprocate the interaction initiated by their fans by utilising a variety of Instagram features, such as replying to comments, liking their photos/comments, tagging them in photos, or even reposting posts by their fans. Also, there is partial support for the relationship between attitude homophily with visiting celebrity's profile and liking their posts, although the relationship is weak (H2b-c). Perhaps although these female celebrities are young and Muslims, they maybe dissimilar to their followers in many ways due to the different lifestyle and socio-economic status, and thus usage of Instagram may unveil which aspects of their lives that are starkly different compared to their followers.

Finally, the study attempted to identify factors that would influence perceptions toward the hijab culture (RO4). First, the results from this study indicating that attitude significantly influenced perception towards the hijab culture mirrored results from previous studies (i.e. Aini Maznina, Saodah & Rizalawati, 2013). Therefore, Muslim women who continued to form a positive attitude towards hijab will have a positive perception towards the hijab. Although behavioural component is not as strong of a predictor like attitude, it is also important in inculcating a positive perception towards the hijab. Overall, these findings are not surprising considering the background of the respondents; although the majority of the respondents do not have a formal religious educational background and they are taking

non-religious courses as their major, the Islamic environment practiced by the university they have attended may have unwittingly played a role in creating a more positive attitude and behavior towards the hijab. The university enforces a Muslim dress code for all its students, and Islamic values are often emphasized, not only in classrooms but through other students' activities, such as *usrah* (a small group discussion/ meeting involving Islamic religious activities) in the Mahallah (residence) and religious events organised by student societies. Thus, having a positive attitude towards the hijab, and practicing it in everyday lifestyle is inculcated as soon as the student enters the university.

Also, findings of this study provided some support for parasocial interaction theory in the context of celebrity-fan engagement in the social media age. Even after formal religious educational background was controlled, and after taking in to account the major influence of attitude and behavioural component towards the hijab culture, parasocial interaction still emerged as a significant and positive predictor in determining perceptions toward the hijab culture. In other words, in the mediated context, the parasocial bond created by Muslim celebrities and their fans did have some influence on how they perceived the hijab. It is possible that as a social media outlet, by continuously engaging with their fans through their Instagram account, the celebrity unwittingly influences their fan's perceptions towards the hijab. Although parasocial interaction may not directly influence the fan's decision to wear the hijab, but considering the fact that most of the favourite celebrity followed either endorses their own hijab label or promote well-known hijab brands, after being exposed to daily Instagram posts by the celebrity, the fan maybe inspired to look more like the celebrity by styling their hijab in the same manner and wearing the same hijab label.

FUTURE STUDIES AND LIMITATION

This study is not without its' limitations, specifically in terms of the data collection and sampling. Future studies could benefit by targeting a different group of Malaysia females as the main respondents. As these female Instagram users are studying in an Islamic university, a positive view towards the hijab culture may already pre-exist. Perhaps by targeting female Instagram users in other public or private university, researchers may be able to compare the results of this study with Muslim women from non-Islamic institutions. Also, it is noteworthy that the main sample for this study was university students, and this selection was intentional as university students are active on Instagram and maybe more likely to follow hijab trends and celebrity culture. However, future studies could be extended by including older adults (i.e. working professionals, housewives) as this may also yield a more generalized view in terms of how Malaysian women would respond to celebrity-fan engagement on social media, and how this has affected their perceptions on the hijab culture in Malaysia.

Further, future studies could explore other factors that may influence perceptions towards the hijab culture, such as degree of interpersonal influence in determining their perceptions towards the hijab culture. Since attitude is an important predictor in influencing women's perceptions towards the hijab, perhaps there are other sources of influence (besides media figures) that drive a positive perception towards the hijab, such as social support from older family members (i.e., sisters, cousins) or peer influence. Considering the young age of the participants, they maybe more susceptible to peer or family influence when it comes to the decision to wear the hijab, or following the latest fashion trends in

wearing the hijab. Also, this study targeted female Instagram users in examining celebrity-fan interaction on social media. Future studies could consider other social media outlets that celebrities may also regularly use to interact with their fans, as findings of this study indicates that many female Instagram users tended to follow non-traditional celebrities (i.e. social media celebrities on YouTube, Snapchat or Twitter). Previous findings have indicated that parasocial bonds with celebrities may affect media users differently depending on the type of social media account used (i.e. Blight, et al., 2018; Schroath, 2014). As YouTube is a popular outlet to post fashion tutorials (including various ways to style the hijab), future studies could examine the influence of celebrity-fan engagement on YouTube upon young Muslim women's perceptions towards the hijab culture.

Finally, although cross-sectional survey used in this study may not provide an in-depth insight into how social media use affect young women's perceptions towards the hijab. Thus, combining cross-sectional survey with a more qualitative view by employing focus group discussion (FGD) may garner a more in-depth examination of how social media affects perception on hijab culture among Muslim women in Malaysia.

As hijab continues to be prominent and integral part of an identity of young Muslim women in Malaysia, how hijab culture is expressed and practiced in Malaysia may also continuously change and evolve depending on technological changes, media use, and social norms related to Islamic practices.

BIODATA

Tengku Siti Aisha Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen is an Assistant Professor with the Department of Communication, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). Her research interests include the use and impact of new media (i.e. social networking websites and mobile technologies) on societies, intercultural communication, religious communication, as well as organizational communication. Email: taisha@iium.edu.my

Aini Maznina A. Manaf is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Her interests include organizational communication, intercultural communication, communication in Islam and media studies. Email: maznina@iium.edu.my

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