

Fashion, Performance and the Politics of Belonging among Muslim Women in Cape Town



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Contents:

Keywords	i
Abstract	ii
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Context of the Research	8
1.2 People and Spaces	9
1.3 Outline of the Thesis	10
Chapter Two: <i>Hijab</i> fashion, self styling and performance – a global perspective	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Belonging	14
2.3 Performance	16
2.4 From uniformed dress to individual expression	19
2.5 The <i>hijab</i> fashion market: the example of Turkey	26
2.6 Conclusion	31
Chapter Three: Doing research on <i>hijab</i> fashion: the local scene	32
3.1 Introduction	32
3.2 The making and unmaking of ‘Cape Malay’ ethnicity	33
3.3 Pictures of dress	41
3.4 Ethnography	44
3.4.1 Athlone: Its sub areas and surroundings	51
3.5 Ethical Concerns and Reflections	55
3.6 Conclusion	58
Chapter Four: Trading <i>hijab</i> in Cape Town: Islam and femininity in malls and fairs	59
4.1 Introduction	59
4.2 Vignettes – Vangate Mall and Gatesville	60
4.3 Islam at the mall	65
4.4 The evolution of Islamic wear shops	70
4.5 <i>Hijab</i> expos	77
4.6 <i>Hijab</i> Fashion Shows	80
4.7 Conclusion	90
Chapter Five: ‘ <i>Hijabistas</i> ’: middle class Islamic femininity, social media and fashion shows	92

5.1 Introduction	92
5.2 Gadija Khan – Fabulous in <i>Hijab</i>	92
5.3 Gadija Khan Online.....	97
5.4 Conclusion.....	103
Chapter Six: Sartorial biographies: self styling, performance and belonging	105
6.1 Introduction	105
6.2 The sartorial biographies of three women.....	106
6.2.1 Ilhaam	106
6.2.2 Hajirah	111
6.2.3 Washiela.....	114
6.3 The local sartorial context.....	120
6.4 Performing ‘Muslimness’.....	121
6.5 The affect of globalization- the case of Mufti Menk	122
6.6 Creating belonging through dress.....	124
6.7 Conclusion.....	128
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	129
Reference	132



Keywords:

Muslim women

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Islamic wear

Hijab fashion

Self stylisation

Performance

Belonging

International *Umma*

Cape Town

South Africa



Abstract

This thesis explores how the *hijab* fashion market has emerged in Cape Town and how Capetonian Muslim women are appropriating *hijab* fashion as a means of redefining themselves as Muslim South Africans instead of ‘Cape Malays’, the ethnic label given to Muslims in the Western Cape during the apartheid era. I argue that through self stylisation Cape Malay women are performatively rejecting the ethnicisation of Islam during apartheid. I show that ‘Cape Malay’ women are using *hijab* fashion to perform their ‘Muslimness’ in order to claim a positive and legitimate spot in the ‘rainbow nation’ as Muslims as a religious-cultural category, and not as ‘Malays’, an ethnic category, while simultaneously claiming their belonging to the global *umma* (Muslim community).

The public sphere in contemporary Cape Town is becoming partially and increasingly Islamicised partly due to local aspirations, and partly due to the global Islamic resurgence of the early 21st century. It is in this context that the *hijab* fashion market has emerged as an increasing amount of women want to be perceived as both fashionable and Muslim.

This thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork which took place mostly between March and September 2011. During this period I worked intensively with producers of *hijab* fashion and ‘Cape Malay’ women who make use of this style of dress. I have engaged daily in informal discussions with many ‘Cape Malay’ women. With a small number of key participants, I engaged on an ongoing basis over this period and conducted formal interviews with them and observed their style of dress.

Declaration

I hereby declare that *Fashion, Performance and the Politics of Belonging among Muslim Women in Cape Town* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Hibah Hendricks

November 2013



Prof. Heike Becker

November 2013

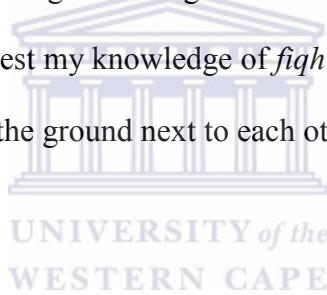
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Chapter One: Introduction

Growing up as a Muslim girl in Cape Town I, like many of my friends and family members, was taught to ‘cover my *owra*’¹ which locally referred to everything besides my hands and face once I became *mukalaf* or reached puberty. This conditioning took place at a young age primarily via *madrassa*² (Muslim school) teachers and my mother who would show me how to cover my body when making *salaah* (praying) as your *owra* has to be concealed in order for your prayers to be acknowledged by God. Occasionally, after making *dua* (which -as an act of supplication to God- follows *salaah*) and kissing me and blessing me with good wishes, she would take the opportunity to remind me and test my knowledge of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) while we were still calmly seated on the ground next to each other, making these moments precious and memorable.



¹ Derived from Arabic, the term *owra* has many meanings depending on the context. In the local vernacular it is used to refer to parts of the body which should be concealed. It should be noted that in different schools of thought there are different interpretations of a woman’s *owra*; for the vast majority of ‘Cape Malay’ women who are considered as Sunni’s and who follow the *Shafi’i Mathahab* (one of four particular Sunni school’s of thought) it refers to parts of their body that should be concealed in the presence of non-*mahram* (marriageable) men. Also it should be noted that local Muslims in Cape Town also speak in terms of covering the *owra* so for this reason I have adopted the phrase throughout the study.

² Unlike the now established Islamic Schools in the city such as Cape Town Islamic High School and Darul Islam which offer a secular and Islamic education by incorporating the syllabus set out by the Western Cape Educational Department into their school subjects, local *madrassa*’s solely focus on Islamic subjects such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Arabic, *tauheed* (Islamic monotheism- the belief that God is one and unique) and Quranic studies.

However, like most Muslim girls in Cape Town, I never started covering my body in line with these ideals when the time came to do so as an all-covering dress style for young Muslim women, adolescents and also young adults, was and is not a cultural norm amongst ‘Cape Malays’; in fact such practices are more frowned upon than encouraged by many adults³. Thus, it hardly came as a surprise that my parents had mixed reactions when I told them at the age of twenty-four that I wanted to wear *hijab* (referred to here as covering my entire *owra* and not leaving any part of it -including my hair- uncovered) on our way to a *doepmal* (baptism).

Sitting on the backseat of the car with my parents seated in front, I was admiring in the rear view mirror my look with my scarf wrapped neatly around my head and all my hair tucked in. I said “I think I’m going to start dressing like this”. At first my mother, a smart and dynamic professional woman in her mid-fifties who herself had only started dressing in an Islamic style after she and my father went on *hadj*⁴ a few years ago, was silent. On the other hand my fifty-five year old father said that it was okay as long as I did not become an extremist. They both then continued speaking about Islam being about balance, telling me that they were proud but that I needed to understand the consequences of it [understood as becoming an extremist], that it was my choice and that they would not force me to do it or not to do it.

³ For instance, toward the end of 2012 my cousin’s ten-year old daughter became *mukalaf*, as a result of it and her sound Islamic knowledge she started wearing *hijab* to the surprise of her parents and everyone else. Many of her aunts tried to force her out of it by telling her to take her headscarf off and saying that she was too young to dress in such a manner. Her mother (who only recently started wearing *hijab* herself) maintains that it was her child’s decision so she defended her choice to do so and allowed her to carry on wearing it.

⁴ The obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia

For me, *hijab* became interesting at the time as I started seeing women wearing it in a fashionable, modern way. It was different to local understandings of modest dress, which my friends and I had always regarded as old fashioned, unpopular. There had never been much of a requirement among my family and the wider Cape Town Muslim community that young women should conceal their body as much.

This vignette of my personal experience opens my exploration of the emerging phenomenon of decidedly Islamic fashion in Cape Town. The first time I noticed the emergence of *hijab*-fashion⁵ as a trend in Cape Town was when I attended the 2009 Islamic Expo⁶ held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. In addition to the conventional shirt and skirt combinations worn with a headscarf by many older Capetonian Muslim women, and the jet black *abaayas*⁷ with their matching scarves worn by the seemingly more orthodox females in the crowd, there were a few younger women who sported clothes in a completely unconventional manner. They wore dresses, kaftans, pants, skirts, and scarves, all mixed creatively to complete their layered outfits.

Unlike the other women who clearly dressed with ideas of modesty in mind, these women appeared almost ‘loud’ in their appearance, most of them wore heavy make-up and some even had facial piercings - all of which may be considered to be quite the

⁵ Locally *hijab* is used to refer to all-covering dress, thus I have used the term *hijab* fashion to refer to it as fashionable all-covering dress.

⁶ An exposition where Islam is promoted and everything related to it is sold including literature, pre-recorded sermons, Islamic wear and children’s educational DVD’s.

⁷ An *abaaya* refers to an opaque, long sleeved, floor length dress commonly worn by Arab women as outerwear.

opposite of what one commonly expects of modest Islamic decorum. Some women wore trendy slim fit jeans with upper-thigh length, loose fitting tops or jackets with voluminous scarves to match, while others either looked stylish in their close-fitting woollen long sleeved maxi dresses or their maxi skirts which were colour co-ordinated with long sleeved garments which covered their bodies from the shoulder to the hips, paired with a scarf wrapped neatly around their heads.

I remember from my childhood in the 1990's that there were always shops in Cape Town which sold modest female Islamic wear such as prayer robes, skirts, long shirts and scarves. Today however, these Islamic clothing stores have considerably changed their appearance as they started selling fashionable, *hijab* friendly items to their customers who are mostly dressed in styles that demonstrate that they are looking for chic, rather than just Islamic modesty. The number of Islamic fashion shops has also vastly increased over the past three years.

Not only are there more *hijab* fashion stores than ever before but 2009 also saw the onset of *hijab* fashion shows in Cape Town. The first one was hosted by the local Islamic radio station, *Voice of the Cape*. The show, which took place in the form of an Islamic fashion designer competition particularly contributed to a greater public awareness of the phenomena given that it was hosted at the radio stations annual fun fair which is supported by thousands of listeners.

Hijab fashion is not a purely local phenomenon as Muslim women around the globe have begun wearing this form of dress over the past decade or so. Observers such as Tarlo (2010) and Moors and Tarlo (2007) have argued that in European countries such

as Britain, Muslim women have been wearing *hijab* fashion in response to, amongst other things, the Twin Tower attacks on 9/11 in New York City and negative media representations. These women are thus wearing *hijab* fashion in environments that are unfriendly towards Muslims as their belonging comes in to question (Moors 2009).

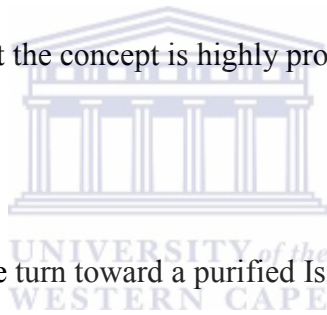
The central argument of my thesis is, however, different. I argue that while belonging of Muslim women in Western European countries is questioned due to their clothing, in contemporary Cape Town, Muslim women are appropriating *hijab* fashion as a means of redefining themselves as Muslim South Africans instead of ‘Cape Malays’, the ethnic category bestowed on Cape Town Muslims under apartheid (see, Jeppie 2001). They are not only observing their religion more due to the global Islamic resurgence of the early 21st century, I argue that they also performatively reject the ethnicisation of Islam during apartheid (see Tayob 2004). I therefore argue that ‘Cape Malay’ women are using *hijab* fashion and perform their ‘Muslimness’ in order to claim a positive and legitimate spot in the ‘rainbow nation’ as Muslims and not ‘Malays’ while simultaneously creating their belonging to the global *umma* (Muslim community).

This self styling performance or “symbolic embodied enactment”⁸, to employ Becker’s (2011) conceptualisation of performance, becomes even more significant if one takes into consideration that there has been no everyday ethnic clothing for ‘Cape Malay’ women who have been wearing Western fashion since the early 1800’s, as argued by Lyon (1983)⁹.

⁸ This is further discussed in chapter two

⁹ At the time the only difference in dress between ‘Cape Malay’ and European women were that European women wore bonnets on their heads while ‘Cape Malay’ women preferred styling

As the Cape Town-based Islam Studies scholar Tayob (2004) and the anthropologist Hansen (2012) write, during the 20th century South Africans have been increasingly exposed to a more purified Islam because local scholars were studying abroad in countries such as India and Saudi Arabia, which resulted in them acquiring text based knowledge of the Quran and *sunnah* that refer to the life and ways of the Prophet Muhammad. Hansen (2012), who is renowned for his work in both South East Asia and Southern Africa, further argued that along with the *Ulama*'s (religious leaders') 'pure' knowledge, *the Tablighi Jamaat* (which is a men's only proselytising movement established in South Africa in 1962) influenced local Muslims to increase their religious observance and lead them to perceive themselves as being a part of the global *umma* (Islamic community) given that the concept is highly propagated by the *Tablighis* and the *Ulama* alike.

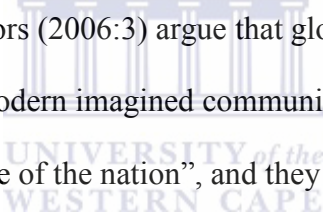


According to Tayob (2004), the turn toward a purified Islam in South Africa is also greatly supported by globalisation, especially the flows of media, ideologies and people that Muslims are increasingly exposed to. Media, ideologies and encounters with international people provided South African Muslims with an opportunity to absorb and appropriate a new range of Islamic concepts, symbols and beliefs. It is apparent how the public sphere in those Capetonian residential areas with a substantial Muslim population has become more visibly Islamic since the end of apartheid as Islamic schools, mosques

their hair to the back and tying it with a bodkin either silver or gold in colour (Lyon, 1983). Lyon (1983) argues that perhaps it was in the 1860's when Turkish Muslim missionaries introduced the fez to 'Cape Malay' men that they also introduced the *doek* (headscarf) to 'Cape Malay' women in an attempt to Islamise their appearance given that they were disgusted and appalled by the fact that - as Muslims, they were bare-headed in public.

and other institutions have been erected along with supermarkets and shopping malls that are increasingly catering for Muslim customers.

The sound of the local Islamic sphere has also been changing as local terminologies which are believed to have Indonesian origins are being replaced with Arabic terms. Spending time amongst Muslims in Cape Town it has become clear that as Alhourani (2013) argues, Arabic has come to symbolize ‘Muslimness’ in Cape Town as the language not only aesthetically creates a sense of community with foreign Muslims but being the language of the Qur’an it is also understood by Muslims to be the authentic sound of Islam.



Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (2006:3) argue that globalization and electronic media in particular allow for modern imagined communities to exceed that of the “territorial and conceptual space of the nation”, and they significantly demonstrate that in different societies in the early 21st century these days religion aids in the transformation of the public sphere. Drawing on this, in my thesis I will therefore explore the matter from different directions. I will explore the changing context in which *hijab* fashion has emerged in Cape Town against a historical background to people who are in South Africa commonly known as ‘Cape Malays’. Through sartorial biographies I will explore how ‘Cape Malay’ women use *hijab* fashion to style their bodies and perform their Muslimness. I will also look at the market places that have emerged both on and offline in response to the demand for fashionable Islamic wear in the city.

1.1 Context of the Research:

My research was conducted in the context of the project, “Performing the Rainbow Nation: Cultural performance, belonging and citizenship in contemporary South Africa”. This project was led by my supervisor, Professor Heike Becker, and supported by the South Africa Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD). Here we, UWC academics and postgraduate students, were collectively concerned with the significance of -and interrelation between- cultural performance, citizenship and belonging in South Africa given that in recent years these issues have been central themes in current affairs. The interdisciplinary project, involving academics and students from Anthropology, Sociology, English and Gender Studies, aimed to investigate the politics of belonging (and in turn inclusion and exclusion) that is taking place within the country both in relation to the local and global sphere; while also looking at how performance relays what being South African means to citizens in this current era; and also questioning the “significance of aesthetic strategies for the reconfiguration and authentication of citizenship in contemporary South Africa” (Becker. *et al* 2010:1).

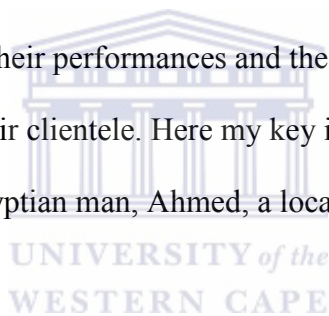
Central to the project is the concept of ‘cultural performance’. Even though ‘culture’ has been critiqued by many anthropologists for (among other things) being bounded and homogenous (Wright, 1998:8), ‘othering’ (Abu-Lughod, 1991:138) and also for being treated as text (Friedman 1995:82 cited in Caglar 1997:173); Heike Becker (2011) argued that the culture concept was and still is widely used by ordinary people and social scientists alike. It is for this reason that Becker (2011:06) argued that the concept cannot be dismissed; but instead of merely framing it in terms of ‘hybridisation’ and ‘creolisation’ as is often the case, she proposed that it be re-theorised and thought of in

terms of ‘performance’ and ‘authenticity’ so as to incorporate the way in which people construct their social world. By drawing on Goffmann (1959) and Turner (1982, 1986), Becker (2011:14) argued that performance can be understood among other ways as the “informal enactment of social categories in everyday life”, to which aesthetic strategies are central, given that they are used to authenticate everyday performances. It is in this sense that I use ‘performance’ as a means of exploring how Muslim women in Cape Town create their belonging to the global *umma* and the ‘rainbow nation’, while simultaneously dismissing the ‘Cape Malay’ ‘identity’ which was ascribed to them during the apartheid period.

1.2 People and Spaces:

I conducted fieldwork between March and September 2011, even though I unofficially carried on doing so after that, and as I have demonstrated with my opening vignette had been doing my own ‘auto - ethnography’ several years before. The homes of family and friends as well as Facebook pages acted as entry points for my research. My interactions in these physical and virtual spaces allowed me to select key informants with whom I would work with intensively. I was interested in the sartorial biographies of the women I have worked with: what motivated them to wear *hijab*? Was there a specific turning point in their lives that motivated them to do so? What is the difference between their understandings of modest dress compared with that of other local Muslim women? How is it that they style their bodies and what informs their style of dress? On this basis, I chose three key participants, Washiela, Hajirah and Ilhaam as they all make use of *hijab* fashion. The three women present different age groups and phases in a woman’s life.

On the other hand, this research also concerns the *hijab* fashion market. I conducted focused research in shopping malls, at *hijab* fashion shows, *hijab* expositions¹⁰ as well as online. Here I interviewed and interacted with Islamic wear store owners and also volunteered as an assistant in a shop and at *hijab* fashion shows so as to observe and interact with customers. A large part of this section revolves around the work of Gadija Khan – a local *hijab* fashion designer who promotes the concept through her online Facebook store. Gadija organises *hijab* fashion shows; she has guest appearances on Muslim radio and television stations and partakes in *hijab* expos around the city. With the *hijab* fashion designers and store owners I was interested in finding out their motivations for selling Islamic wear. I was interested in the Islamic ‘identity’ of their stores; I wanted to know how their performances and the environment of their stores influenced the purchases of their clientele. Here my key informants included a Palestinian man, Habib, an Egyptian man, Ahmed, a local woman Tasmeena and a local man Rafiek.



1.3 Outline of the Thesis:

Following this introduction of my thesis, Chapter Two provides an overview of how the concepts of performance and belonging will be used in this study. It then looks at the use of *hijab* fashion around the world before over viewing the business aspect of this niche market.

¹⁰ A trade fair where everything related to *hijab* will be sold and promoted - this includes literature and pre-recorded sermons, accessories, scarves, clothing and so on.

Chapter Three sets the scene for the study by providing a historical background of ‘Cape Malay’ people which is followed by pictures of dress which ranges from the late 1950’s to the early 1990’s. In this chapter I also include how Cape Town has changed in the post apartheid era thereby leading the public sphere to also become more ‘Islamised’. In the second section of this chapter I provide an account of my research methods as well as the limitations and ethical concerns which I have experienced. Lastly, I introduce some of the research sites and participants.

Chapter Four looks at the offline Islamic fashion industry in Cape Town. It explores the real world places of Vangate Mall and Gatesville bazaar and argues that these spaces are Islamically inclined thereby encouraging customers to buy into the concepts of Islamic fashion. It provides vignettes of these spaces and delves into the evolution of Islamic wear stores. Owing to the increase in Islamic fashion it has also lead to the emergence of *hijab* expos and fashion shows; the latter of which is mainly a result of a particular Islamic fashion designer –Gadija Khan.

Chapter Five looks at the career path of Gadija Khan and demonstrates how the world of online *hijab* fashion retail operates in Cape Town.

In **Chapter Six** I present the sartorial biographies of three visibly Muslim women so as to explore their motivations and style of dress. I then discuss this and look at how they perform their Muslimness with regard to globalization and the broader sartorial setting, arguing that these three women and others like them are actively presenting themselves as modern Muslims and are thereby rejecting the ethnicisation of Islam that took place during apartheid. Thus, I argue that through self styling and performance they are

claiming a legitimate place in the ‘rainbow nation’ as Muslims and not ‘Malays’ while simultaneously creating their belonging to the international *umma* as well.

Chapter Seven draws a conclusion based on the overall study.



Chapter Two: Hijab fashion, self styling and performance – a global perspective:

2.1 Introduction:

Annelies Moors (2009), an Amsterdam based anthropologist who has published extensively on clothing strategies and cultural politics amongst Muslims, argues that aesthetically, *hijab* fashion successfully combines Islamic principles of covering the entire body, except for the hands and face, with the latest [Western inspired] fashion trends. Furthermore, she argues that this style is trademarked by a stylish headscarf that covers all of the hair. In recent years this fashionable form of Islamic dress has emerged in different parts of the world as it is used by young Muslim women for various reasons – it is this which I explore in this chapter.

As written by Lewis (2007), Moors (2009) and Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) in places such as Egypt and Turkey, these styles of dress emerged from more austere forms of dress which was used by women in the 1970's as a part of the Islamic revolution which took place in response to Western influence and power. Furthermore, Moors (2009) writes that in Western European countries such as the Netherlands and Germany, *hijab* fashion emerged in response to the growing hostility towards Muslims expressed by the state and non-Muslim citizens. She argues that they have primarily identified immigrants from various ethnic groups and nationalities as Muslims as opposed to anything else thereby leading women to take an interest in their clothing and the way in which they style their bodies (*ibid.*).

Moors (2009) further argues that Muslim European women use consumption and Islamic fashion as a means of demonstrating their willingness and ability to comply with the social standards and values of their societies. In Great Britain, as the anthropologist Emma Tarlo (2007, 2010) claims, women are employing similar strategies to aesthetically redefine themselves as being primarily Muslim instead of being identified by their ethnicity – they do this by mainly making use of the headscarf since it is a requirement of their religious and not ethnic dress. I also make use of Tarlo’s work (2007, 2010) to show that women’s dress may be a result of many things including political situations, memory and their occupation as opposed to merely their religion and traditions.

Because fashion and self-styling is related to consumption, in this chapter I also explore the Islamic fashion markets of Turkey and Great Britain by looking at the strategies employed by brand owners and the effects veiled staff members have on Muslim customers. However, I start off by introducing key concepts of my thesis, namely belonging and performance and explain in which sense I will make use of them in this study.

2.2 Belonging:

What is belonging? Belonging is commonly used in our everyday speech as we for instance speak of belonging to a particular sports club or gym. The anthropologist Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, however, who has done extensive research on political and legal anthropology with particular focus on democratization processes and minority rights, described belonging as “an emotionally charged, ever dynamic social location, that is, a position in social structure, experienced through identification, embeddedness,

connectedness and attachments” (2013:04). Thus belonging, as understood in contemporary Anthropology, is more complex than the way in which it is used in everyday speech.

According to Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) belonging consists of three distinct aspects as it combines a sense of commonality and its performance with an attachment to both immaterial and material things which often leads to feelings of entitlement, along with the idea of reciprocity with people whom one shares a somewhat formalized form of collective allegiance with.

Concerning ‘commonality’ Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013:5) argues that it is felt by a person who embodies what they believe to be common attributes, thereby making it “*collectively negotiated and performed*” (emphasis my own). Therefore, when looking at the phenomenon of Muslim Capetonian women using international styles of *hijab* fashion (material things) the validity of commonality is evident as it also - as Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) points out – distinguishes between insiders and outsiders of a group through performance. From Pfaff-Czarnecka’s (2013) point of view, one’s belonging to a group that you have an allegiance with is either ascribed or acquired. I argue, however, that in the context of my study, it is through self stylization that women can visibly validate their allegiance with and belonging to the global *umma* given that without it these factors may be doubted by onlookers.

According to Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) belonging is therefore constantly worked on, constantly created. Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) also argues that it is multiple, partial and coexists within a person’s life as one can belong to more than one group thereby making

it possible for visibly Muslim Capetonian women to simultaneously perform their belonging to the national and international community.

2.3 Performance:

With regard to the second key term, 'performance', I follow Becker's (2011:14) approach to performance as it combines notions developed by Goffman (1959) and Turner (1982, 1986). Becker argues that performance may be used as a mode of enquiry to observe the enactment of social categories in informal settings. I find Becker's approach appropriate given that Goffman (1959) proposes that in the theatre of everyday life people are engrossed in performing certain roles without paying much attention to it thereby endlessly [re]presenting their culture. Turner (1969) too argues that it is impossible for people not to perform some sought of ritual in their daily lives whether it be a religious ritual, one concerning life roles, or the rituals of day to day living (cited in Schechner 2002). Combined they propose that all people are performing something in their daily lives thereby making Shakespeare's saying "All the worlds a stage" truer than ever.

Furthermore, Becker (2011:08) places an emphasis on Turner's (1982) statement that the "politics of performance" and the aesthetics involved in the process of it, is about "making, not faking" social reality. I relate this to Judith Butler's (1988: 519) idea of gender performativity which is the idea that gender is performed through the repetition of certain stylized acts such as bodily movement and gesture. Butler (1988) argues that when 'performers' go through their day to day living neither they nor their audience are aware that they are performing, but through this recurring performance they all come to believe in it and see it as true hence they carry on performing particular (gendered)

roles. Extending her theory beyond gender, I argue that a Muslim 'identity' can also be performed through a "stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988:519).

Even though the present study is the first research done in South Africa on these themes in relation to Islamic dress, it is worth noting how South Africans who do not wear Islamic fashion are expressing themselves through dress in this post apartheid era. It is in this vein I found Sarah Nuttall's (2009:110) work most interesting, as she explores how the black middle class youth of Johannesburg - who "represent a consumer base that spends 6.4billion Rand a year" - were indulging, in the early 2000s already, in a particular lifestyle and clothing brand known as *Loxion Kulcha* in an attempt to reposition the black body in the 'new South Africa'. Nuttall (2009) recognizes self-stylisation as a valuable concept as she argues that through particular items of dress *Loxion Kulcha* aids in the transformation of people in the post-apartheid era who are dealing with the shift from being previously economically and socially disadvantaged under apartheid to being empowered in this current era. For instance, in its 2000-2002 collection the label converted overalls which were traditionally worn by migrant workers and miners into a fashion item and gave it a new meaning of sophistication thereby allowing those who wore them to re-represent themselves as it came to symbolise an alternate lifestyle which allows one to earn a sufficient income in a less strenuous manner (*ibid.*).

By looking at Nuttall's study (2009) it is possible to see how significant the concept of self-stylisation is and how South Africans are actively using it combined with consumption and performance to represent themselves in their cosmopolitan and newly democratic country. In relation to Nuttall's study I feel that this work is similar and

particularly relevant given that in this post apartheid era, Muslims in Cape Town are using their bodies to redefine themselves as being primarily Muslim as opposed to 'Cape Malay'.

This is related to the fact that South Africans are increasingly being exposed to a 'purified', global Islam, which is opposed to the ethnicised forms of Islamic practice, which were promoted during the apartheid era. For instance, regarding Indian Muslims in Durban, Hansen (2012) argues that during apartheid and the earlier segregationist period, Durban Muslims never contested the ethnic terms and classifications bestowed upon them as they are doing now. Hansen (2012) argues that in the post-apartheid era, Indian Muslims are doing away with ethnicised versions of the religion and are instead increasingly replacing it with a 'pure' form of global Islam which is particularly promoted by the *Tablighi Jamaat* as discussed in Chapter One. This version of Islam is therefore a unifying one which does not discriminate racially or ethnically and therefore on that basis has the ability to unite Muslim South Africans. Even though Hansen does not deal with *hijab* fashion, his analysis is thus quite inspiring for this thesis.

Following the above understanding of self stylisation and performance and following Moors (2009) and Tarlo's (2007) arguments, the dress and bodily performances of people may reflect their socio-economic status as well as their national, ethnic and religious affiliations. Given the effectiveness of the dressed body to create a sense of belonging and relay beliefs and lifestyles, it is of particular interest to see: 1) How Muslim women are appropriating *hijab* and fashion in various ways, 2) How their social worlds may influence their style of dress and 3) How they are creating their social

worlds through their style of dress. Starting off in Egypt and Turkey I now wish to explore how and why women appropriate Islamic dress in different countries.

2.4 From uniformed dress to individual expression:

Islamic fashion can mean different things in different contexts. For instance, Moors (2003) argues that in San'a, Yemen the styles of all covering black *abaaya*'s would hardly be perceived as fashionable to non-locals, but to local women there are definite differences in design thus attesting to the garments trendiness. In this study however, I am interested in a style of dress that uses trendy Western-type clothing as outerwear combined with a stylish headscarf that conceals all of the hair thereby making the wearer "recognizably Muslim" as Moors (2009:176) argues.

In this instance, as observers of *hijab* fashion have argued, the clothing would be unlimited in its styles and appearance and may appeal to many interested women irrespective of their age, education, socio-economic status and style preferences (Moors 2009, Gökarıksel & Secor 2009, Tarlo 2007). However, even though there is probably a style for every Muslim woman many times all covering headscarves are simply described as being used to 'Islamise' a fashionable/stylish outfit. Therefore it should be noted that, as Moors (2009:181- 182) and Moors and Tarlo (2007:134) argues, not all Muslim women indulge in *hijab* fashion given that Muslim women's opinions differ as to the relationship between Islam, its virtues and their style of dress. According to Moors (2009:181-182) and Moors and Tarlo (2007:134), many Muslim women do not even wear a headscarf as they may not see a connection between these factors, whereas others who do assume this connection (and therefore believe that Islam requires its

followers to dress in a modest manner) may not always don such attire, thus making it easy for many Muslim women to be mistaken for non-Muslims.

Furthermore Moors (2009: 181-182) asserts that women tend to have different beliefs concerning the relation between clothing and self – some may feel that their style of dress will influence their person, while others may use self styling to convey a certain ‘identity’ of theirs. In addition to this, Moors (2009:182) and Lewis (2007) argue that there are also a number of Muslims who believe that there is a basic contradiction between practicing the religion and following the latest fashion trends; but as Lewis writes (2007), judging by the growth and increasing popularity of *hijab* fashion it seems that many Muslim women do not share this opinion.

Over the past forty-odd year’s Muslim women in different national contexts have been using *hijab* as a form of expression (Moors 2009; Lewis 2007). As scholars such as Lewis (2007), Moors (2009) and Moors and Tarlo (2007) have written, in Turkey and Egypt during the 1970’s women used “Islamic” dress to show their support for Islamic movements. They also used it to partake in local cultural politics since it allowed them to openly defy the increasing western authority, secularization and materialist culture which surrounded them. According to Moors (2009) as a result of these movements, a distinctly plain and simple form of Islamic dress emerged as many of its followers wished for visual uniformity among themselves irrespective of their various tastes in clothing or their economic backgrounds.

However, Moors (2009:179) states that in the late 1980’s and 1990’s the Islamic resurgence was no longer seen as a radical movement in opposition to consumerist

lifestyles. Instead it became increasingly fragmented and diverse which led many of its followers to indulge in consumerism as a means of representing themselves (*ibid.*). As a result of this Islamic consumer culture, the *hijab*, which became a potent symbol of the Islamic revivalist movement, saw itself being altered to the individual and fashionable tastes of more young, educated and affluent Muslim women thereby giving rise to an entire new trend known today as Islamic-fashion (*ibid.* see also Gökarıksel & Secor 2009).

Not all forms of *hijab* fashion have emerged in this context. In the Netherlands for example Muslim women have turned to Islamic, yet fashionable styles as a means of dealing with the growing hostility directed towards them. Moors (2009:181) argues that because many migrant workers in Western European countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany are followers of Islam, they have been collapsed into a single category of Muslims irrespective of their different nationalities and backgrounds. Hence, as Moors (2009:181) writes, the social issues that are often assumed to be connected to Islam (such as domestic violence and substandard academic achievement) have been identified by most of the European societies as a problem which seemingly derives from their religion, therefore clearly making Islam “incompatible with European values”.

Thus, as a result of this supposed incompatibility, Muslims are generally perceived as different beings -often making apparent Muslim women the subject of much heated public debates (Moors 2009). Moors (2009) writes that perhaps as a consequence of the prejudice and scorn which these women face on a daily basis from politicians and fellow citizens, they are not only becoming more aware of their religion but they are

also increasingly interested in their clothing - especially since it tends to act as a mediator between themselves and their societies at large. It is in this context that Muslim women in Western European countries such as the Netherlands choose to perform their 'Muslimness' and in turn create their belonging to the Muslim *umma*. Using dress as a means of performing/creating ones belonging is also quite evident in Tarlo's (2007) ethnographic study as she discusses how Muslim women in the United Kingdom are taking up Islamic dress forms in an attempt to redefine themselves as such as opposed to being primarily perceived as belonging to 'ethnic' groups such as Pakistani or Indian.

Emma Tarlo (2007) a London based anthropologist who has published significant studies on the self styling strategies of Muslim women in the United Kingdom, not only explores how three well-known and successful British women style their bodies in *hijab* as a means of expressing their beliefs and lifestyles while simultaneously performing their belonging to the Muslim *umma*, but she also explores how their memories and life experiences influences their sense of dress as opposed to it merely being inspired by their traditions as is often assumed. She discusses how these three women who were born to Pakistani or Indian immigrants rejected their ethnic forms of dress such as the *sari* or *shalwar-kamiz* as they felt that it symbolised "foreignness and restrictive roles for women" and that it also could not necessarily portray them as Muslims since it never required them to permanently cover their heads in public (Tarlo 2007:169).

However, by assuming their own dress code which draws on a combination of 'Islamic' colours, styles and prints, these women made a concerted effort to restyle themselves as Muslims instead of as Pakistani or Indian in order to portray themselves as belonging to

the international *umma*. In their personal or professional lives they thereby demonstrate a turn away from local ethnicities towards a globalised Islam which apparently has specific, 'authentic' markers of 'identity' (*ibid.*). For instance, two of Tarlo's (2007) three interlocutors initially used the *hijab* purely as a tool of communication within their working environment. The first, a stand up comedian, dressed in a black outfit consisting of full length pants, a long-sleeved shirt or tunic and a headscarf as it allowed her to "speak about Muslims 'as a Muslim'" as it gave her the authority to confront and challenge the stereotypes which surrounded them (such as being erratic terrorists for example) whereas the second, who is a councillor and advisor on Muslim affairs, started wearing *hijab* as it allowed her to work more closely with conservative Muslim foreign immigrants (Tarlo 2007:158). Thus, Tarlo argues, both of these women demonstrated that by performing their 'Muslimness' they were allowing others to perceive them as Muslim given that they are actively creating their belonging to the *umma* by primarily making use of the headscarf which is seen as an authentic symbol of Islam in popular culture.

Tarlo's study also suggests that women's *hijab* styles can emerge out of their "cosmopolitan lifestyle and attitudes". Some of the styles of the women she worked with drew on their childhood memories and past experiences such as being displaced, coming from a culturally distinct / multicultural household and feeling different from others (Tarlo 2007:144,145). For instance, one of the women in her study lived with her Pakistani family in the basement flat of the Nigerian embassy in London where as a young girl she would often play with the ambassador's children as well as the children of the Spanish cook. Thus along with receiving a Pakistani upbringing from her parents and attending a Church of England state school, she experienced a rather ethnically

diverse childhood which exposed her to various dress forms and ultimately resulted in her wearing loose, natural fibred tunic and pants combinations (in colours such as red blue and green) with an ‘African turban’ as a head covering - something which she first saw on a British convert (*ibid.*; Moors and Tarlo 2007).

In addition to the influences from their immediate environments, Tarlo (2007, 2010) also shows how the broader social environments of women impact on their clothing decisions. For instance, it is widely promoted by mainstream media that on the 11th of September 2001 Muslim terrorists flew aeroplanes into the twin towers in New York, killing hundreds of people. In reaction to the media responses to the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent ‘War on Terror’ which was passed by the Bush administration, Tarlo (2007, 2010) shows how women use dress and performance to challenged the idea of Muslim women being oppressed and forced into veiling their entire bodies including their faces as this was a common belief at the time due to widespread propaganda¹¹. For Tarlo’s (2007, 2010) interlocutors this meant a change in dress styles. As mentioned above the comedian done so as an aid to her on-stage performances, while another permanently wore Islamic fashion in her everyday life by layering trendy clothing items such as “a gypsy style skirt [with] ... trousers and... fitted tops” which she accompanies with a two-layered headscarf “usually in contrasting colours and made of subtle but interestingly textured and coloured fabrics” (Tarlo 2007:154).

¹¹ Laura Bush for instance promoted it in her 2001 “Radio Address to the Nation” by stating that the subsequent War on Terror was necessary, since fighting the Taliban was not only seen to be in the interest of Western civilisation but also in the interest of Muslim Afghani women who were denied the infamously exaggerated freedom to wear makeup and nail polish (Bush 2001 cited in McLarney 2009; Eisenstein 2002; Abu-Lughod 2002).

Another example which shows how a woman's cosmopolitan environment and lifestyle may affect her choice of clothing is found in the auto-anthropological study of Waseema Barendse (2008). Barendse was a young Muslim Capetonian woman who came to appreciate and started dressing in *hijab* fashion while away in London for a year. She relays how she had never felt able to visually express her 'Muslim identity' while living in Cape Town for fear of being perceived as "old fashioned" or "traditional" as it was not the regular thing for a young woman to do (Barendse 2008:33). When she lived in London however, she noticed how Muslim women there freely combined a headscarf with the latest fashion trends – a practice which she 'tried out', and maintained after her return to Cape Town as it allows her to be fashionable while still adhering to the Islamic principal of modest dress (*ibid.*).

Because the strategies of self stylisation and performance are ultimately related to consumption; attention will now be directed towards Turkey where the business of *hijab* fashion is in full swing. It should be kept in mind that as written by Hoodfar (2003) and Shirazi (2001), the dress styles of women in this predominantly Muslim country has been politicised ever since the rule of Kemal Ataturk who in the early 1900's forced Turkish women to abandon their headscarves and style of dress and replace it with western styled clothing so that they may portray their country as a modern state. Thus, as Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) argued, instead of conforming to state laws which today prohibit the wearing of a headscarf in public institutions such as courts and universities, many Turkish women started wearing *hijab* fashion.

2.5 The *hijab* fashion market: the example of Turkey

As mentioned above Islamic dress is politicised in Turkey; hence Gökarıksel & Secor (2009), two cultural and political geographers, argue that the *hijab* fashion industry is rapidly flourishing in the country due to the marketing strategies of many companies.

Gökarıksel & Secor (2009), and similarly Hoodfar (2003), have argued that in recent years Muslim Turkish women have been donning *hijab* fashion as a means of repositioning themselves as trendy and modern citizens, wishing to avoid being perceived as the backward and threatening other (Said 1978). Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) argue that, as a result of this and the free market system flourishing in Turkey, *hijab* fashion houses rapidly formed an ever expanding industry. By complying with Islamic codes of commerce (such as avoiding interest [*riba*] which is regarded as a major sin in Islam) while simultaneously keeping up with the latest fashion trends; these fashion houses successfully market themselves to Muslim Turkish women who have become “subjects of ...femininity and consumption” as they rely on self-stylisation and their indulgence in *hijab* fashion to portray themselves as modern Muslims (Gökarıksel & Secor 2009:14).

In addition to this, Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) suggest that instead of being negatively affected by the politicisation of the veil in the country, Turkish *hijab* fashion houses tend to exploit the issue while simultaneously playing on the devoutness of Muslims to garner sales. This much is evident when *Tekbir* (a local brand of *hijab* fashion that created an Islamic ‘identity’ for itself via its websites and catalogues and whose Arabic name means ‘God is great’) responded to the re-declaration of the headscarf ban at universities in 2008 by “publicis[ing] special ways of tying the scarf and styles for

university students ... [thus allowing for a projected] 30 per cent increase in sales” (Gökarıksel & Secor 2009:10; Türk 2008 cited in Gökarıksel & Secor 2009; Yüzbasıoglu 2008 cited in Gökarıksel & Secor 2009).

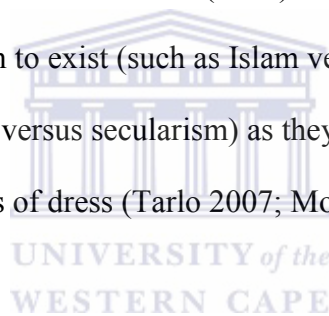
Through Gökarıksel & Secor’s (2009) interviews with store managers, salesclerks and Chief Executive Officers within the *hijab* fashion industry one gets an opportunity to see how this style of dress has emerged from mere coat-headscarf combinations of the 1980’s (*tesettür*) which came in “conservative solid colours [such as] navy, black, grey and beige” (Navaro-Yashin 2002 cited in Gökarıksel & Secor 2009:8). More recently headscarves have become vibrant and stylish displays of taste, toward a style that moves away from *tesettür* and instead draws on the latest trends irrespective of the colour, cut or print as the understanding exists that as long as a woman’s body is covered she is abiding to the Islamic precepts of dress (Gökarıksel & Secor 2009). Gökarıksel & Secor (2009: 10) also show the implementation of certain marketing strategies - for instance a store manager had her salesclerks wear a white uniform along with “hot pink and white polka-dotted headscarves” so that they may avoid the colour black and its accompanying connotations of “conservatism and fundamentalism” thus presenting themselves in accordance with their customers.

In contrast to Turkey with its majority Muslim population and complicated policies regarding Islam in the public sphere, London, as a rather secular and cosmopolitan city, provides a completely different context. It is in this city that Reina Lewis, a London based professor of cultural studies, explores the interrelation between marketing, consumption, performance, citizenship and belonging.

Situating her study in London's multicultural West End, Lewis (2007) explores how visibly Muslim shop assistants (who are protected by British legislation to wear *hijab* in a working environment) influence the consumption and dress styles of Muslim women. She suggests that because Muslim women are aware of the politics which concerns and surrounds them (such as the politicisation of the veil, the 9/11 attacks explained above and the 7/7 London bombings which saw the death of fifty six people on the London tube and which was also allegedly the doings of Muslim terrorists) they would often use their bodies to articulate their religious and political beliefs by making use of dress codes which are in opposition to western clothing styles (*ibid.*).

However, Lewis (2007) argues that because *hijab* clad shop assistants are required to dress in the store's latest fashion trends, they automatically assume a fashion sense that merges traditional and contemporary styles of dress which along with their provided services, smiles and advice in an apparently 'Muslim-friendly' environment, influences the purchases of other *hijab* wearing women who then too incorporate fashion into their style of dress (Gilbert 2000 cited in Lewis 2007). Thus, in moving around the city while still 'in uniform' these 'identity' and fashion conscious *hijab* clad shop assistants (and the consumers who follow their trends) are seen as agents who are re-representing the British Muslim population as a people who are willing to integrate into a society which largely perceives them to be antagonistic (*ibid.*). By looking at Lewis' (2007) study it is possible to see how women use self stylisation as an aid in their daily performances, and it also makes it possible to see how women who were perhaps not previously interested in Islamic fashion may now be persuaded into wearing it due to its newly acquired social meanings.

By making reference to the above studies it is possible to see how the clothing styles of Muslim women are informed by more than just their religion or tradition. Emma Tarlo (2007,2010) argues that whether it is their memories and life experiences or their involvement and interest in politics and fashion, it is evident that factors such as these come into play when it comes to their sartorial choices; by dressing their bodies women make a point that relates and displays these aspects. Furthermore, the agency and self-styling strategies of the women studied also challenge stereotypes as they prove that not all Islamic women are conservative and submissive beings; these women clearly make a concerted effort to be perceived as stylish and modern Muslims. Simultaneously, as Emma Tarlo (2007,2010) and Annelies Moors (2009) have shown, these women also disprove dichotomies that seem to exist (such as Islam versus the West, traditionalism versus modernity, and religion versus secularism) as they successfully draw on them all through their fashionable styles of dress (Tarlo 2007; Moors and Tarlo 2007).



Despite the different contexts of their studies, Moors (2009), Tarlo (2007, 2010), Barendse (2008) and Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) all reveal that Muslim women acknowledge that their dressed bodies act as mediators between themselves and their various audiences. By relying on the headscarf which in popular culture has almost come to be seen as an authentic and pivotal Islamic symbol it is possible to see that a number of Muslim women intentionally try to re-present themselves through performance and self stylisation (Moors and Tarlo 2007; Gökarıksel & Secor 2009).

These studies also consistently demonstrate the tendency of contemporary *hijab* wearing Muslim women to simultaneously engage with the forces of homogenisation and heterogenisation as they all adhere to the Islamic precepts of dress by covering their

heads and bodies yet they do so in a way which suits their contemporary lifestyles and particular fashion tastes (Moors and Tarlo 2007). Both Moors (2009) and Tarlo (2007) demonstrate that Muslim women in Europe are doing away with ethnic forms of dress and are replacing it with ones that are not only identifiably Muslim but modern too.

Moors (2009) and Tarlo (2007) also suggest that Muslim women are using consumption and *hijab* fashion as a means of demonstrating their willingness and ability to integrate and comply with the social standards and values of their societies - especially where their citizenship and belonging has come into question in recent years (Moors 2009). On the other hand, Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) argue that Muslim Turkish women are using *hijab* fashion to counter state rulings on the headscarf given that it is banned in state courts and universities. In addition to this, Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) and Tarlo (2007) also show that through customized advertisements, business owners capitalize on women's willingness to challenge state rulings or comply with what they believe to be Islamic precepts of dress. Last but not least, Barendse (2008) demonstrates how living in London where Muslim women already wore Islamic fashion when she lived there in 2005 encouraged her (and others) to do the same to the extent that she maintained this form of dress when returning home to Cape Town, where this dress style was not yet common at the time.

Tarlo, especially in her monograph '*Visibly Muslim*' which was published in 2010, interestingly relates Islamic fashion to self stylisation, consumption, performance, citizenship and belonging as she argues that Muslim British women are making use of these concepts to primarily redefine themselves as modern Muslims as opposed to their ethnic identities.

2.6 Conclusion:

In this chapter I discussed the concepts of belonging and performance. I show that I will draw on Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013:04) understanding of belonging as “an emotionally charged, ever dynamic social location, that is, a position in social structure, experienced through identification, embeddedness, connectedness and attachments”, while connecting it with Becker’s (2011) conceptualization of performance as “symbolic embodied enactment”. Following this conceptual discussion, I presented the contexts and expressions of Islamic fashion around the world. I argued that in response to their different social worlds which include politics and work environments, as well as their personal memories and life histories, women turn to self stylisation and performance to redefine themselves and their belonging to the global Muslim *umma*.

The chapter also showed that women’s dress is not simply a result of their traditions or religion, an often incorrectly made assumption. I related Islamic fashion instead to consumption and explored how Islamic companies and ‘Muslim friendly’ stores put to use politics, ‘Islamic symbols’ such as the headscarf and Islamic laws such as interest free shopping to attract Muslim customers. In order to further frame this first South African study on Islamic fashion, I looked at Nuttall’s study (2009) to see how local citizens are making use of self stylisation and consumption in the post apartheid era to represent themselves as they see fit.

In the next chapter I introduce the research site while also providing a historical background on ‘Cape Malay’ people and the way in which these women have dressed in the past. Furthermore, I will discuss how I have conducted the research and I will also provide the limitations and ethical concerns, which I have experienced.

Chapter Three: Doing research on *hijab* fashion: the local scene

3.1 Introduction:

In the 21st century Cape Town's public sphere is becoming increasingly Islamic, especially in those suburbs where more local Muslim schools, mosques, eateries, shopping centre's and banking institutions that cater for Muslims are being established. As I will show in this thesis, at the same time owing to the local Muslim radio and television stations, print media and the flow of Muslims immigrants into South Africa; Muslim Capetonians are increasingly being made to believe that they are primarily Muslim and that they form part of the global *umma*. This has begun to override notions of being 'Cape Malay'; this older, apartheid era-induced identification is increasingly pushed to the side. In fact, as I have noticed ever more so over the past few years, on a daily basis most people only make reference to one celebrated aspect of this 'identity', which is 'Cape Malay' cuisine.

The first part of this chapter is focused on providing a brief history of the social and cultural category 'Cape Malays' and discusses how the public sphere in Cape Town has become more Islamic in the post apartheid era. The second part looks at past styles of 'Cape Malay' women's dress in order to provide a historical background to the current changes in dress styles. This is done by presenting pictures of 'Cape Malay' women's clothing styles that were taken in the latter half of the 20th century.

Furthermore, given that I conducted different types of research, I on the one hand introduce the research sites such as those in the public sphere namely malls, shops, *hijab* expos and fashion shows as well as those online which was namely Facebook. On the other hand, I introduce some of the Muslim Capetonian women who have informed this study given that they have integrated Islamic fashion and its meanings into their everyday lives. My ethical concerns and reflections are also discussed in this chapter.

3.2 The making and unmaking of ‘Cape Malay’ ethnicity:

In this section I draw on the work of the historian Shamil Jeppie and the Islamic studies scholar Abdulkader Tayob, in order to argue that the ‘Cape Malay’ ‘identity’ was constructed and promoted by the apartheid government. I explore how ‘Cape Malays’ have accepted and rejected the idea of being a unique ethnic group whom Islam “belonged” to (Jeppie 2001). I also discuss social changes and the ‘Islamisation’ of the public sphere in/near neighbourhoods where mostly Muslims reside. I follow this up with pictures of dress to show that in the past Islamic wear was not a part of young Muslim women’s dress style but that it was instead worn by older women.

The historian Shamil Jeppie who is based at the University of Cape Town, is well known for his work on people South Africans know as ‘Cape Malays’, which is a supposed ethnic group native to Cape Town who apparently have roots in the Indonesian Archipelago. Jeppie shows that prior to the 20th century however ‘Cape Malays’ were hardly seen as a specific people with pure and unaffected traditions. Instead as Jeppie (2001:83) states the term ‘Malay’ was interchangeably used with other terms such as “Mohammedan” “Mussulman” and “Coloured Moslem” to refer to enslaved and free Muslims in and around the Cape Town area. Notably the term

‘Malay’ became synonymous with Islam as Islam was most visibly practiced among slaves who hailed from the Indonesian archipelago (Jeppie 2001; Davids cited in Jeppie 2001). Thus in distinction from other ‘Coloured’¹² and Indian people, the “Muslim-as-Malay” emerged as many people who were not in fact of Malay origin were also classified as such due to their belief in Islam (Jeppie 2001:83).

The idea of ‘Cape Malays’ being a distinct ethnic group was promoted by the poet and folklorist I.D Du Plessis who was recognised as a respected figure as far as the ‘Cape Malays’ were concerned. This acknowledgement was mainly due to Du Plessis publishing an authoritative and widely read book titled *The Cape Malays* which was frequently issued from the year 1944 up until 1972 (Jeppie 2001:88). In addition to Du Plessis’ writing, the country’s Native Administration also promoted this idea by using *volkekunde* (which was a branch of cultural anthropology in South Africa) to re-classify and stage ‘Malays’ as an exotic and foreign community who were in need of segregation in order to preserve their cultural heritage¹³ (Jeppie 2001).

Together, Du Plessis and the official policy promoted what John Sharp (1988:79) called the “apartheid vision”. Sharp (1988:79) argued that the ‘apartheid vision’ included the belief that ‘ethnic groups’ differ from each other and, based on beliefs, practices and

¹² The term ‘Coloured’ refers to a constructed social identity that is used to refer to people who are assumingly, amongst other things, mixed race (Hendricks 2005 cited in Oliphant 2013, Oliphant 2013). The idea of categorizing people into different groups was maintained and became a dominant feature during apartheid as the terms ‘Coloured’, ‘Cape Malay’, Indian and so on all became racial classifications. This was tied to specific ideas on ‘ethnic groups’ and ‘nations’ which will be discussed shortly.

¹³ This went in hand with the Group Areas Act which assigned different ‘ethnic groups’ to designated areas.

language, people within these groups would “naturally unite”. According to Sharp (1988:79), it was understood that in their designated living areas, ‘nations’ would develop from determined ‘ethnic groups’ who want to further their interests and possibly gain “political autonomy from others”. Sharp (1988:79) writes that these ideas of ‘nations’ and ethnic groups “were widely held”, thus making it possible to see why, as Jeppie (2001) and Tayob (2004) have argued, non-Indian Muslim Capetonians accepted the label applied to them and thus started to refer to themselves as ‘Malays’ as the term in South Africa ultimately became synonymous with Islam.

However, Tayob (2004:264) writes that not all Muslims in Cape Town were passionate about being identified as ‘Malay’ instead of Muslim. In the latter half of the 20th century, Islam in South Africa -and particularly in Cape Town- became more politically inclined as the Muslim Teachers Association called for the rejection of the ‘Cape Malay’ label (*ibid.*). They argued that it is racist and that Du Plessis’ book *The Cape Malays* “propagates Islam as a Malay religion whereas Islam is a universal religion and has only one law for all Muslims throughout the world” (Muslim Teachers Association quoted in Jeppie 1987 cited in Tayob 2004:264; Tayob 2004). By relentlessly campaigning against the ‘Cape Malay’ ‘identity’; the Muslim Teachers Association, for instance, catapulted anti-apartheid sentiments and discourse straight into the heart of “Muslim religious life” thereby allowing a Muslim front to emerge which in 1961 denounced apartheid as an “abhorrence to Islamic values” (Tayob 2004:265). Lead by

Imam Abdullah Haron, it was thus the well-educated and intellectual elite that opposed the apartheid vision¹⁴ (Tayob 2004:265).

In the last decade of the twentieth century the practice of Islam itself was also undergoing great changes as the middle and upper class South African Muslims became more wary and accepting of 'pure' Islamic practices¹⁵ (Tayob 2004, Hansen 2012). This revival was mainly due to the promotion of Islamic customs and beliefs by a number of bodies whose respective scholars not only studied abroad in places such as India, Saudi Arabia and Egypt; but also corresponded with international Islamic organisations and foreign influential thinkers - all of which led these Muslims to increase their religious observance (*ibid.*).

Generally however, by 1994 in Cape Town Islam was still strongly associated with the 'Cape Malay' 'identity' (Jeppie 2001). This much was evident as a festival entitled 'Three hundred years of Islam in South Africa' was solely celebrated in Cape Town

¹⁴ This was the case in Cape Town. Far from being undivided, Muslims in South Africa held different beliefs and practices and, aside from their fight against apartheid, had different priorities too (see Tayob 2004, Vahed and Jeppie 2005). In Cape Town they were calling for the rejection of the 'Cape Malay' 'identity' whereas in Transvaal and Natal Indian Muslims were striving to modernise Muslim life by for instance combining secular and religious studies (Tayob 2004:265).

¹⁵ Hansen (2012) for instance writes that Indian Muslims in Durban were split on the basis of class. The rich were particularly exposed to a global and supposedly pure form of Islam through *Tablighi Jamaats*. According to Hansen (2012) the *Tablighi Jamaat* promotes the foregoing of customary interpretations of the religion and replacing it with a more 'pure' and global Islam wherein the Quran and sayings and lifestyle of the prophet Muhammad is seen as a standard which to live by thus resulting in people practicing the religion in a more strict fashion. This Hansen (2012) argues was opposed to the beliefs of the working class who stuck to folk *sufi* (mystical) practices.

during the same year as the religion was portrayed as belonging exclusively to the 'Malay' Muslims of the city (*ibid.*). Thus, caught up in the country's rebirth, the 'Cape Malays' found themselves being no different from other citizens who too at the time were preoccupied with their own cultural performances as it was seen as a means of demonstrating their uniqueness and belonging to this diverse nation (Davids cited in Jeppie 2001; Jeppie 2001).

Thus far I have shown that under apartheid the term 'Cape Malay' became synonymous with Islam in Cape Town since the 19th century. I have also shown that in the late 20th century this ascribed 'identity' has both been contested and embraced by people especially since there has been an Islamic revival in the city, as I will show in the following section. I will demonstrate how due to globalisation and the social changes that came along with the official abandonment of apartheid, all things perceived as Islamic is being embraced by Muslims and has become more evident in the public sphere.

Jeppie (2001: 81) writes that in 1994 'Cape Malays' celebrated three hundred years of Islam in South Africa thereby promoting the idea of the religion solely being practiced by them. Even though hundreds of 'Cape Malays' participated in this cultural performance, the idea of Islam being exclusively associated with the 'Cape Malay' ethnic group was soon challenged in 1996. As numerous observers have argued, two years after the first democratic election, hundreds of Muslim Capetonians bypassed this ethnicised 'identity' and went instead for a distinctly Islamic identification through their involvement with PAGAD a vigilante group formed in retaliation to the widespread

gangsterism and drug abuse occurring on the Cape Flats (Jeppie 2001; Baderoon 2004; Baderoon 2002; Tayob 2008).

Ever since 1994, which formally marked the democratic birth of South Africa, local Muslims (like other citizens) witnessed a progressive state in action. While the new African National Congress (ANC) government granted greater freedoms, such as religious freedom and the freedom of expression, it was somewhat insensitive to conservative religious ideologies when it proceeded to legalize abortion, homosexual marriages and pornography while simultaneously being seen as condoning prostitution and teenage pregnancies (Vahed and Jeppie 2005).

Along with globalization, such as the spread of global Islamic ideas through international media and an increasing number of (male) ‘Cape Malay’ students attending universities in Islamic countries, these changes in policy had a tremendous impact on the behaviour of many local Muslims who responded by increasing their religious devotion. This in turn led to a rapid growth in new institutions as increasing numbers of Muslims intended ‘to make Islam their way of life’. Locally this not only saw the establishment of more mosques, and the proliferation of Islamic schools and universities¹⁶; it also saw the establishment of Islamic banking institutions such as Albaraka Bank and a general intensification of an Islamic presence; for instance, some

¹⁶ For instance the International Peace College of South Africa (IPSA) is a tertiary institution whereas the Al- Azhar Institute of Cape Town caters for primary and secondary level students

franchised restaurants and supermarkets either became *halal* or Muslim friendly¹⁷ while some shopping malls started catering expressly for Muslim consumers.

On a similar note, thanks to the new freedoms, which granted greater broadcasting rights to religious groupings, local Islamic radio and television stations were founded. In Cape Town two Muslim radio stations were established in 1995 namely Voice of the Cape and Radio 786. Significantly these widely accessible stations with a listenership of approximately 300 000 people in 2011 (www.saarf.co.za), promote a sense of community amongst local Muslims, who are able to communicate and relate with each other through the numerous call-in programs and live broadcasts (Vahed and Jeppie 2005). Furthermore, these radio stations also provide their listeners with Sunni Islamic knowledge and a sense of belonging to the international *umma* by keeping them up to date with events happening in the Muslim world, thus enhancing the globalizing tendencies discussed above. They also have live international call-in programs during Muslim holidays, promote foreign aid programmes and they air live and pre-recorded sermons by renowned local and international Islamic scholars (*ibid.*).

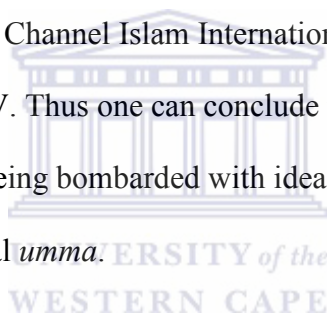
¹⁷ At restaurants, 'Muslim friendly' means that meals are *halal* and alcoholic beverages are served whereas at supermarkets it means that along with alcohol and *unhalal* products *halal* meats and food items are also sold.



Source: *Cape Argus*, Monday 24 October 2011, p4

Figure one demonstrates a sense of solidarity with the international Muslim community

Other media which promote the idea of global Islam include the free monthly Capetonian newspaper *Muslim Views* as well as television stations such as Durban based ITV and Johannesburg's Channel Islam International, which are both paid subscription channels on DSTV. Thus one can conclude that in the post-apartheid era local Muslims are constantly being bombarded with ideas of globalised Islam and the associated belonging to a global *umma*.



This has begun to override the previously dominant sentiment of being 'Cape Malay' as the main and publicly most celebrated elements of Cape Towns Muslim 'identity', which may be found in cuisine and the folk songs known as *liedjies*. Thus this attests to the fact that 'Cape Malays', as other South African Muslims (see, Hansen 2012 on Durban), have begun doing away with cultural or ethnic labels. An increasing number of Muslims and institutions of the Muslim public sphere are replacing the previously dominant ethnic categorization with one that not only appeals to them religiously or spiritually but also gives them a sense of belonging to a broader, global community – one that is not confined to ethnic or state boundaries but instead unifies them with other Muslims both locally and abroad. It should also be noted that many Muslims in Cape

Town see Islam as a way of life, hence they conform to doing things in a manner which they perceive as either being *halal* (lawful) or striving towards it thus resulting in the public sphere being constantly altered and Islamized with Islamic schools, banks and so on.

3.3 Pictures of dress:

In the past young 'Cape Malay' were not very likely to wear clothes that were recognisably Islamic [unless a specific occasion obliged them to do so]. I will now demonstrate through the use of photographs that young women favoured Western-style fashionable styles of dress and that headscarves were generally not a part of their attire. According to Lyon (1983), the *doek* (headscarf) was highly unpopular in Cape Town up until the 1920's and only slowly caught up after that, mostly among older women and those who had been on *hadj*; even at the end of the 20th century it was still not worn by young women and remained reserved for older, married women. Even though there are authors such as Wilkinson and Kragolsen-Kille (2006:85) who suggest that all 'Cape Malay' have been wearing headscarves or *hijab*¹⁸ since the arrival of the Muslim Turkish missionaries in Cape Town in the 1860's this is not so.

I present pictures of 'Cape Malay' women that were taken from the 1950's onward so as to show that –as discussed in the introduction- Muslim women in Cape Town generally wore conventional western styled clothing as a part of their everyday wear. I feel that this section is particularly necessary and important not only because it shows that in the

¹⁸ Even though there are many understandings of the term, locally, *hijab* is reserved for women and mostly refers to wearing a headscarf with all of the hair tucked in while simultaneously wearing modest dress that conceals the entire body except for the hands and face.

past young ‘Cape Malay’ women hardly ever wore Islamic dress but also because most pictures that I’ve come across in the National Archive present their ceremonial attire which in essence reinforces their exoticness and ‘others’ them as a people who are not from South Africa.



Source: Malikah Salie

Figure Two: Two friends pictured on a weekend



Source: Miriam Hendricks

Figure Three: Young ‘Cape Malay’ women attending their sisters wedding.

During the 20th century the dress styles of young ‘Cape Malay’ women hardly reflected their ethno-religious ‘identity’. Figure Two dates back to the late 1950’s whereas Figure Three is from the early 1970’s. The pictures show that these young women never wore a form of ethnic dress and preferred high-end fashion instead. Even though most of the

women in Figure Three are wearing headscarves I was informed that this was the exception given that they were attending their sisters wedding.



Source: Malikah Salie

Figure Four: A family pictured with visitors on *Eid*.

Much like Figure Three, Figure Four which dates from the late 1980's also shows young women donning headscarves for a special occasion - in this case it is the festival of *Eid*.



Source: Miriam Hendricks

Figure Five: Elderly women seated at a wedding table.

Here we see that in contrast to younger women, it was not uncommon for older women and those who have performed their pilgrimage to Mecca to cover their bodies and all of their hair.

These pictures attest to the fact that wearing a headscarf, let alone full Islamic wear, was not a regular practice of young ‘Cape Malay’ women during the second half of the 20th century, thereby attesting to my overall argument that the recent proliferation of *hijab* fashion is a result of current global flows, and perhaps, as I argued above a rejection of the apartheid vision of ‘Cape Malays’ as an ethnic group. In the next section I will now present the ways in which the ethnographic research was done.

3.4 Ethnography:

This thesis took place amongst middle class Muslims in Cape Town. It is based on seven months of ethnographic research between March and September 2011. However, informally much more time went into it. Even though I never ‘entered the field’ per se – since I already lived in it (as discussed below), I made a concerted effort to be around more Muslim people from March 2011 onward. As this research was conducted in my home environment I not only allowed my life to become a part of it but I turned just about everyone I know into an informant and every place that I frequented into a research site. I did what Geertz (1998) calls Deep Hanging Out, immersing myself among particular people and ‘hang out’ while being constantly aware - aware of what question to ask next, aware to take note and aware of my self, I would add.

Regular events, places and everyday encounters were no longer just social outings with friends and family but it all became an opportunity to observe, interact, discuss and probe. Everything became a field site whether it was weddings, funerals, baby showers, Tupperware parties, shopping malls, bazaars and restaurants. Encounters with Muslim women in *hijab* would also take place in my own home or in the homes of friends and

family. Events such as *Eid*, funerals, *hujajies* or *gadats*¹⁹ proved especially useful as it is not uncommon for young women in particular to congregate for hours on end in bedrooms where there are no elders and men around. These ‘backstage’ spaces which are reserved for close friends and family members are always informal and relaxed as opposed to the dining rooms and other spaces which have been formalised to entertain guests. It is here where tired women who have been serving guests can rest, while others come to eat, drink, smoke and socialise. These moments where women are talking about their lives and are enquiring about the lives of others provided me with opportunities to turn questions about myself into informal interviews and group talks based on my study while also granting me with the opportunity to validate my findings.

Because the study draws on performance theories, as discussed by Becker (2011) and Butler (1988), so as to look at how Muslim women use dress and embodiment to express their sense of belonging to the global Muslim community, I decided to wear *hijab* during much of my fieldwork and open myself up to the new local discourses of globalised Islam. I did so because I wanted to understand how a woman wearing *hijab* thinks, what she thinks, what influences her thoughts and how she goes about relaying her thoughts to other people. I attended Islamic lectures and seminars, I spent time with people who attended a Muslim school and I paid more attention to the ‘Islamic’ conversations around me which not only pertained to modesty and dress but which also revolved around global politics, Islamic eschatology and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad, his wives and companions.

¹⁹ *Hujajies* is a local ritual which refers to the period in which people would visit the homes of pilgrims who are on their way to perform their *haji* in Saudi Arabia whereas *gadats* refer to prayer meetings which traditionally takes place on Thursday nights.

Attending seminars, *hijab* fashion shows and *hijab* expos also proved useful for speaking to women about the interests of the study as it meant that many, if not most of the women there were interested in increasing their religious knowledge. I found that gaining access to women's circles was important as it gave me the opportunity to have conversations and conduct formal and informal interviews as well as group talks. For instance, at an Islamic seminar that I attended, young women who belonged to the An Nur Book Club²⁰ were promoting a *hijab* expo that they were hosting; I went to this event, in order to get better acquainted with them. They then invited me to their group's week long camp, which I attended. It was at the camp then that I was allowed to conduct interviews, and engage in individual conversations and group discussions.

In another instance I met Zulpha, who became a key interlocutor, at a *hijab* fashion show. I was not only able to conduct interviews with her but she also arranged for me to meet with a group of women who work at the *Voice of the Cape*, one of the local Muslim radio stations. During this group conversation I explored their motivations for leaning towards a fashionable style of Islamic dress, and given that they were radio producers and presenters it was particularly interesting to listen to them speak about the changing context of Cape Town. It was interesting to learn from them how they see the city increasingly being tuned in with the *umma* concerning ideologies, fashion and outreach programmes. We also spoke about 'Cape Malayness', what it means to them, how they perceive this category, and how it relates to them being Muslim.

²⁰ The club is aimed at introducing women and girls- through book reviews- to the women who accompanied the Prophet Muhammad.

In relation to this I made use of my regular circle of friends and family; I also paid attention to local events, newspaper reports and television and radio productions. All these sources were vital to the context of the study: it all demonstrated an interest in, and a turn towards, a purified Islam. It became evident that my friends and family members were no longer content with their Islamic knowledge – for instance my mother and aunts completed a *tajweed* course²¹ after which they enrolled for an Arabic course, they also started attending more Islamic lectures hosted by organisations such as the *Islamic Peace College of South Africa (IPSA)*²² and the *Muslim Students Association (MSA)*²³. I observed similar things happening amongst my friends, that is the younger generation who have grown up after the end of apartheid. Not only did they attend the same Islamic lectures but they also became increasingly pre-occupied with the link between global politics and Islamic eschatology and would attend film screenings, lectures and open discussions based on it while simultaneously increasing their religious observance and becoming visibly Islamic in their appearance.

I would spend much time in the homes of the women who became my key interlocutors. Here we would speak about their motivations for wearing *hijab* – their ‘moments’ when they realized and felt that they needed to change their dress style. In these times we would speak about how they use to dress and how they gradually started wearing a scarf

²¹ This course is aimed at reciting the Quran with the correct elocution.

²² IPSA refers to a tertiary institution where subjects such as Arabic and Islamic history are taught.

²³ MSA refers to a national student organization that has branches at numerous South African universities. The aim of the organization is to spread Islam.

and how their clothes got longer and/or looser²⁴. Because this idea of dress (namely that it must not cling to the body and that it should not be short and revealing) is mainly thought of as the prerogative of middle-aged women, we also spoke about how – irrespective of it being fashionable- the people around them reacted to their new look and how these people either encouraged or discouraged them from dressing in an ‘Islamic’ way. Also, speaking about how they felt about other peoples reactions was not only therapeutic for them but it also gave me an idea of how they perceived themselves and others – this part was rather complex as it clearly showed a divide between the more conventional and newer ‘Islamic’ thinking in Cape Town.

As Hansen (2012) reminds us, ‘cultural’ forms of Islam are now, in the post-apartheid era, being seen as backward and ill-informed as opposed to the purified *sunni* version of Islam. When I spent time with the women I was working with we would also speak about their actual dress styles. In these moments we would speak about local Islamic fashion designers as many of them would mention their favourite brands and designers by name. Because these designers all have e-stores on Facebook we also spoke about the effect designers and scarf styling tutors in the virtual world have on their dressed body. In this regard the women almost always made reference to Amenakin, a famous UK based scarf stylist who is regularly giving tutorials from her virtual home on YouTube. In addition to this, we also spent a sufficient amount of time in the women’s wardrobes as they would show me what they would wear on a daily basis, for special

²⁴ This was the case with most if not all of the participants as concealing their *owra* was a gradual process for them. This is perhaps tied in with local customs which sees wearing a headscarf in particular as a gradual process- this will be discussed further in chapter five.

occasions and so on – this included the coordinated scarves and accessories that would go with the outfits.

In the Islamic fashion scene in Cape Town Islamic ideologies, retail and consumption are closely intertwined; I therefore spent much time attending *hijab* expos and fashion shows in the city. At the *hijab* expos which were held in Rondebosch East and Surrey Estate (both areas will be discussed shortly) I interviewed stall holders about their motivations for setting up shop. At the same time I was able to listen and participate in the conversations which took place in the lounging sections. In addition to this, the expos often included a lecture series which I would attend in order to gain knowledge about what ideas are being promoted and to also learn how women respond to what is being said to them – in one instance Roshan Misbach the founder of An Nur Book Club and the host of multiple Islamic events aimed at Muslim women in Cape Town, spoke about dress being able to reflect one's spirituality²⁵.

In addition to the expos, I also attended and worked at *hijab* fashion shows by helping Gadija wherever possible this included taking photographs, managing the ticket system and finances and assisting at pre-show rehearsals. This gave me access to speak to and observe the attendees while simultaneously giving me the opportunity to see how things operate backstage. By volunteering I was also given a chance to converse and interact with the designers present; I thus learnt more about their motivations and inspirations

²⁵ Speaking at the *hijab* expo 'And I thought My Hair Was Too Beautiful to Cover' Roshan mentioned that "Our *imaan* [faith] is reflected on our bodies, the more faith we have in Allah the more we would cover ourselves... *Subhana'Allah* [praise be to Allah]! Imagine the level of spirituality a sister has when she wears *niqab* [a face veil]..." – March 2011.

for their designs, especially since I was interested in knowing if the new, more Islamic lifestyle, which is constantly being promoted had inspired them in any way. Similarly I volunteered as a shop assistant for an Islamic wear store in Gatesville²⁶ so that I could interact with customers and discuss their clothing choices and styles with them.

Because multiple aspects of *hijab* fashion are influenced by the internet it was vital for me to conduct research in the virtual world. This part of my study concentrated on how the internet makes it possible for local designers to create an Islamic ‘identity’ for their labels and it also looked at how they use the internet to promote their goods via online stores, websites and e-catalogues. Furthermore, I used the internet and particularly Facebook to observe the women and find out what inspires them while also making use of YouTube as I was often directed to the site for scarf styling tutorials as well as various Islamic documentaries. On the one hand, this part of my research made it obvious to me that the clothing styles I was seeing on my participants bodies was a reflection of what they were being exposed to via Facebook and YouTube given that the former provides a platform for local designers to showcase and sell their designs via there e-stores while also having plenty of stimulating *hijab* fashion sites such as hijabfashion.com and *hijab* fashion-inspiration, while the latter is the virtual home of Amenakin whom I’ve introduced earlier. This was particularly true for their choice of scarf styles which almost religiously followed the trends promoted by Amenakin. On the other hand, it was possible for me to observe and interact with them in the virtual world by following their posts and re-posts and watching who they were subscribed to as this included renowned local and foreign scholars such as Mufti Menk, Bilal Phillips

²⁶ I discuss this area further on in the chapter

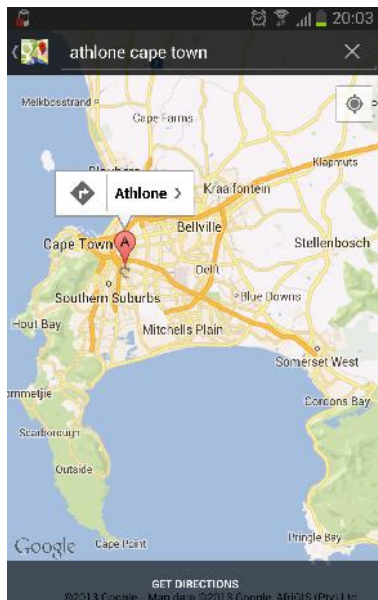
and others where much like on Twitter they are allowed to read and respond to their status updates which are always ‘Islamically inclined’.

3.4.1 Athlone: Its sub areas and surroundings



Source: www.maps.com

Figure Six: A map of South Africa showing the position of Cape Town in the bottom left hand corner.



Source: Google Maps

Figure Seven: A map showing the geographical location of Athlone in relation to greater Cape Town.

The research for this project was conducted in the broader Athlone area as it was here where most of the women I worked with lived, but it was also the area of focus for my chapter on retail and consumption as part of the emerging Islamic public sphere in Cape Town. Athlone consists of several residential areas, two industrial areas and commercial centres. It is situated on the Cape Flats, a vast low lying area in Cape Town, where the apartheid government forced most non-white people to live²⁷. The majority of the population in the broader Athlone area are considered 'Coloured' and belong either to the middle or working class. The residential areas where I did my fieldwork in Athlone included Rondebosch East, Crawford, Belgravia Estate, Penlyn Estate and Surrey Estate; these are predominantly middle-class 'Coloured' neighbourhoods with a high Muslim population. These areas all have a noteworthy public Islamic presence, which is made particularly evident by the numerous *halal* eateries, Muslim owned shops, dentists, doctors, mosques, madrassa's and Islamic schools. In Surrey Estate for instance the *atha'an* or call to prayer which is sounded five times a day, can be heard simultaneously from two or three different mosques and depending on your exact location will include the residential one which is situated in the centre of the area as well as one or two others which are sounded from the neighbouring areas of Manenberg, Primrose Park and Gatesville. Here, like in the other areas, there are always people who are visibly Muslim going about their daily lives - children dressed in white *salaah tops* or prayer robes with scarves or fezzes on their heads are moving to or from *madrassa* in the afternoons, while bearded, fez-wearing men and fully covered women with their headscarves in place can be seen filling up their cars at the petrol station, moving in and out of their homes or at the local corner shops.

²⁷ Even though this was the case the 'Cape Malays' were suppose to live in the Bo Kaap area which is closer to the city centre.

In distinction from the *madrassas* or Muslim schools which solely concentrate on Islamic education and which are attended by children after school hours, Athlone and its surrounds also boast four large Islamic schools that offer fulltime Primary and/or Secondary Education. Islamia College in Rondebosch East, Habibia Primary in Rylands Estate and Darul Islam Primary School and Darul Islam Islamic High School in Surrey Estate not only abide to the curriculum set out by the Western Cape Education Department by teaching “normal” subjects such as Mathematics, English, Biology and so on but they also teach additional subjects such as Quran, Arabic and Islamic studies thereby reflecting the parents desire for a sound Islamic education for their children. These schools do not only teach Islamic subjects, they promote an overall Islamic lifestyle by hosting and partaking in various religious events and inviting local and international scholars to address the pupils on all sorts of topics ranging from global politics to issues of dress.



Source: www.darul-islam.com

Figure Eight: Darul Islam Islamic High School, Surrey Estate

Concerning retail, I have primarily conducted research at fashion shows and *hijab* expos which were held in, but were not restricted to Athlone, as well as at Vangate Mall and Gatesville Bazaar/ Shopping Centre which is situated in Athlone. Some of the fashion

shows that I attended were held at up-scale places such as The River Club Golf and Conference Centre in the suburb of Observatory, and at the four star Capetonian Hotel in Cape Town's city centre; others were held at Cape Town Islamic High School (CTIHS) in Rondebosch East and at Darul Islam Islamic High School in Surrey Estate. All the fashion shows were exclusively organised, hosted and attended by women; the same was the case with the *hijab* expos that I attended in Rondebosch East and Surrey Estate.

The shopping spaces of Vangate Mall and Gatesville however cater for both men and women. These commercial spaces, located in the same neighbourhood, situated off Vanguard drive (a main arterial on the Cape Flats) predominantly attract 'Cape Malay', 'Coloured' and Indian people and a much smaller number of black Africans. This might be a reflection of the areas population with (according to the 2001 census) 69.66% of the people being Coloured [including 'Cape Malays'], 23.45% of them being Indian, 3.21% of them being black Africans and 3.69% of them being white. However with Cape Town's oldest 'African' township, Langa, being less than three kilometres away it is more likely that it is the cultural and religious appeal of Gatesville and Vangate Mall that attracts shoppers to it. Both these commercial spaces provide prayer facilities (in the form of an in-house Mosque and a prayer room respectively); what is more, the shops predominantly cater for Muslims: the eateries and butchers are all *halal*²⁸. Aside from food, other stores which sell items such as Islamic clothing, books, and household ornaments such as *rakams* (framed verses from the Quran) also give

²⁸ Even though this is so un-*halal* meat can be bought at the two supermarkets in Vangate Mall, one of which is also the only licensed liquor store in the vicinity.

these shopping spaces their Islamic vibe thereby making it welcoming to Muslims in particular.

3.5 Reflections and Ethical Concerns

Doing a study in my home environment presented many challenges. I had to be aware of my conduct and attire while also being aware of how I visually represent my interlocutors given that their style of dress purposefully does not expose their body. I also had to deal with being denied access by women who did not want to participate in the study and who felt that I have no right asking about certain things.

Aside from wanting to understand women who wear *hijab* I've realized that I had no choice but to 'go native' for this study because if I did not some women [and men] would not only perceive and treat me like an outsider but because I am Muslim they would avoid me since *munaafiq*'s or hypocrites are deemed to be of a lower status than non-Muslims. I won't say that I never knew this but to be honest I never thought that the trendy and fashion conscious women I was interested in would be excessively religious so I initially did not pay much attention to my clothing because in my mind it was acceptable for it to be figure hugging as long as I covered my hair and body. Even though I proceeded to do this when entering certain spaces or meeting particular people, I quickly learnt that (irrespective of the differences between the women partaking in the study) my way of being hardly corresponded with their understandings of appropriate Islamic decorum as I would for instance not observe gender boundaries²⁹.

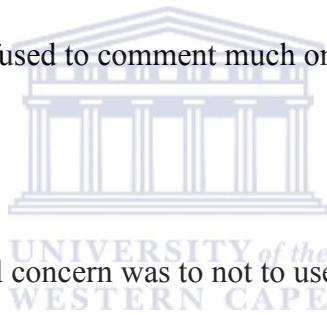
²⁹ For instance, once at an Islamic conference I introduced myself to a *sheikh* and had a conversation with him in the hallway much to the disapproval of the hosts who were trying to promote segregation between the sexes given that they put a screen up in between the men and

Thus, in order for me to gain access to women to partake in the study and be able to observe and interact with them without upsetting anyone, I became more aware of my demeanour, appearance, mannerisms, speech and opinions and I would mould my persona to somewhat agree with theirs. This strategy proved effective but it was not always successful as I was denied access to information on more than one occasion given that it was not possible for me to control the fact that I too was being observed by others.

On another note I found that I was not able to freely converse with some of the Palestinian and Egyptian male shop owners as there would be a language barrier between us, which also caused them to be sceptical about my work. Given our different backgrounds, I also felt that I was perceived as being promiscuous since I was not shy and would spend time alone with them in their stores often speaking about their personal motivations for setting up shop. In one of the stores my uneasiness was made worse after the owner insisted that I accept a bottle of *attar* as a gift and after I found out via one of the customers that the Arabic music he plays is of an erotic nature. Even though I ignored his advances, especially after he was kind enough to let me assume the role of shop assistant so that I could interact and converse with customers, I found it too awkward to continue frequenting his store and therefore stopped doing so.

women so that they were not only seated separately in the same hall but that they also could not see each other. The hosts who were both men and women seemed almost irritated with me given that I held eye contact with the man (which goes against the fairly popular *Quranic* verse which states that you have to lower your gaze and guard your modesty), and judging by their dirty looks I was probably not dressed appropriately enough since my dress and stockings was rather snug on my body.

In addition to these difficulties some older women continuously attempted to curb me. I found this particularly problematic in a store which I was quite interested in as the shop assistant (who I'm assuming was in her fifties) refused to let me talk with the Egyptian owner. Every time I tried to speak with him about his shop and the motivations behind it she would interrupt our conversations by saying "Why do you want to know these things?"; "No but you can't ask him such things his older than you"; "No but that is none of your business"; "No but you shouldn't be studying you should be working"; "Stop wasting your parents money you too old to study". Eventually I figured out that she did not work on Sundays so I frequented the store on those days; unfortunately my conversations with the owner was very limited as he responded to my questions about his stock and customers but refused to comment much on his personal motivations for setting up shop.



During the study a main ethical concern was to not to use photographs of my interlocutors when they were not in *hijab* given that they make a determined effort to conceal their bodies in public. My initial conversations with the women and men who participated in this study took the form of me introducing it and having a discussion with them wherein I would ask if they are willing to participate and disclose information about themselves that is related to it. If our meetings were ongoing I would casually ask them for consent in the beginning of each session and would do so again in the form of reminders. Since Ilhaam is on high school, her mother was aware of our meetings and never objected to it.

All of the key interlocutors in the study were eager to participate and have their names mentioned therefore pseudonyms were not used with the exception of one school. I felt

that even if consent is officially granted by the school, there might be members of the committee or governing board who would object to it as previous experiences while I attended the school proved that there is internal politics amongst them.

3.6 Conclusion:

In this chapter I argued that the ‘ethnic group’ of ‘Cape Malay’ was constructed as one that is synonymous with Islam. Drawing on Sharp (1988) I claimed that this went in hand with the ‘apartheid vision’ which saw South Africans divided in terms of ‘ethnic groups’ and ‘nations’. Even though ‘Cape Malays’ accepted this ascribed ‘identity’, given that as Sharp (1988:79) argues, the apartheid vision was held by non –Afrikaner South Africans too, the label was contested in the early 1960’s by Muslim Capetonians who could be considered as the intellectual elite. I have argued that in the post apartheid era, social changes and globalisation lead to parts of the public sphere becoming more Islamic due to the Islamic revival in the city. Furthermore, I have described the challenges and opportunities of the ethnographic research process. Lastly, I introduced the research sites and discussed my reflections. In the next chapter I will explore the *hijab* fashion industry in Cape Town, as it manifests itself in the public sphere.

Chapter Four: Trading *hijab* in Cape Town: Islam and femininity in malls and fairs

4.1 Introduction:

Grown out of an era where Islamic wear was plain and modest, a new niche market has emerged in shopping spaces such as Gatesville bazaar and Vangate Mall which cater for Muslim customers, as well as at fashion shows and *hijab* expos where everything related to *hijab* is sold and promoted.

In this chapter I explore these various market places by making use of conversations with owners and managers, observations and participation. I firstly argue that the shopping spaces of Vangate Mall and Gatesville Bazaar cater for a Muslim market and promote the idea of a global and pure Islam. This I suggest is due to the available prayer areas, the selling of *halal* food products, Islamic wear, literature and digital media products, the display of *rakams*, the sound of *anasheed* (Islamic music based on history, the Prophet and so on) or Arabic pop music playing and the visible presence of Arab men who (dressed in their customary white robes) have come to trade from Egypt and Palestine. Thus I argue that this atmosphere not only encourages Muslim customers to shop at these places but it also encourages them to present their Muslim ‘identity’ on their bodies so as to express their belonging to the international *umma*.

Secondly I bring to light that even though Cape Town has had an established Islamic wear sector, the results of globalisation had different effects on these stores. On the one hand the influx of Arab traders and their stylish *abaayas* replaced the plain white cotton

salaah (prayer) tops which were regarded as Islamic wear thereby decreasing the demand for it. On the other hand internet sites such as Facebook and YouTube exposed local women to *hijab* fashion thereby creating a demand for fashionable Islamic wear. This caused traders in this sector to embrace the new concept of Islamic fashion and adapt accordingly, or they were forced to downsize and explore other sectors. Lastly, I explore how *hijab* fashion designers make use of *hijab* expos and fashion shows as a means of broadening their consumer base.

4.2 Vignettes – Vangate Mall and Gatesville

On the day before *Eid-ul-Fitr* (the Islamic festival marking the end of the month long dawn-to-dusk fast, known as *Ramadan*) in Vangate Mall, most of the stores ostensibly cater to the wants of visibly Muslim women who dominate the space as they come out to shop. On this day the Vangate Mall branch of Edgars, which is a middle-class retail fashion chain store, has dedicated its window displays to the occasion; big backdrops depict ivory minarets in a blue sky and, in playing with feelings of tranquillity and spirituality, *Eid Mubarak* ('Blessed *Eid*') messages greet onlookers with peace and blessings, while the store's mannequins stand alongside it dressed up in *hijab* clothing such as maxi dresses or long tops paired with pants. In store, the Islamic orientated theme continues as most mannequins are displayed wearing *hijab* fashion such as long sleeved tops with pants, maxi dresses and short shift dresses with leggings while some shop assistants are wearing *doekies* (headscarves styled in a 'traditional' way) and are using Arabic greetings such as *salaam* ('peace') and *afwan* ('you are welcome').



Source: Hibah

Figure Ten: A part of Edgars' window display in Vangate Mall – it not only wishes customers a blessed *Eid* (*Eid Mubarak*) but it displays a *hijab* fashion ensemble too.



Source: Hibah

Figure Nine: Signage in Vangate Mall acknowledging -and wishing customers well for- the festival of *Eid*.

Further down the mall's corridor Woolworths, a more upmarket department store, attracts its customers by pushing their fancy children's range to the front; the shop is decorated with beautiful bouquets of fresh flowers which, to the Muslim consumer not only symbolises the celebration of *Eid*, but also serve as an intimate reminder of death and family since adorning the graves of loved ones with flowers is a tradition carried out by many local Muslims on *Eid* morning. In the store, after the Muslim women walk directly to the flowers to smell them and check their price, they browse freely between

men's, children's and women's wear. I approach two shop assistants who are also wearing *doekies* while chatting at the changing rooms – they are friendly and while assisting me with my errands they speak to me about *Eid* preparations as if we knew each other (This is, I suspect, because I too am wearing a headscarf).

Around the corner a Muslim clothing store - Fazlin's Islamic Wear³⁰, is bustling with activity. Customers are passing things over one another's heads, others are arguing, young girls are throwing tantrums since they and their mothers disagree about the outfits they intend to buy, shop assistants are found on the floor pulling down undergarments and turning up trousers. This is a women's space; men are standing around looking absolutely bewildered. To the untrained eye the front part of the store does not seem to live up to the 'Islamic' part of its name since it displays the latest trends in women's fashion such as long laced- back waterfall tops, bold striped maxi dresses and the like. Further inside the store though one finds headscarves, prayer tops, *hijab* accessories such as stylish scarf pins, *anasheed* (Islamic vocal music) and Islamic menswear. Once again the space is dedicated to women as the store's layout and the occupation of its space attests to it since the men are forced to try on the Arab inspired robes and fez's in the menswear section given that on this day there is an unwritten rule which says that the changing room area is reserved for women and that the only men allowed in the space are husbands who wait outside the cubicles to either see if their wives garments fit them well and give their opinions on it, or carry out orders from their women as they get told to go and fetch other sizes.

³⁰Further on I will explain the store in more detail.

On the same day approximately half a kilometre away, Gatesville (a local trading hub consisting of formal and informal stores) is so busy that cars looking for parking switched off their engines while standing in traffic and pedestrians are walking in the streets. The sidewalks are occupied by informal traders, who have set up shop on the pavements while others park in the road and sell things off their car boots. There are local traders everywhere. Women selling homemade garments hang their stock on make shift lines which reach from one tree to the next. At one stall a woman decorates a section with the season's latest trend –neon colours. Aside from it being visually stimulating; the bright orange, green and yellow tops which are all thigh-length and long sleeved draw a crowd of visibly Muslim women who frantically search for their size given that they are being sold at the bargain price of 25 Rand each. Directly opposite her, another woman trades out of her VW Caravelle selling fashionable shoes for no more than 150 Rand. This kind of informal trading takes place on the fringes of established shops and carries on in a diameter of about 300 metres around the formal shopping area. A range of items are being traded. Victorian themed bed linens, oriental brass ornaments, and imported bags, clothes and accessories from China are being sold next to homemade curtains, underwear, and women's apparel. It's the women's apparel that is most interesting and extra-ordinary. Designed and sold by the Muslim store holders all the latest trends are available in good and poor quality materials as beautifully patterned maxi dresses hang alongside baby-doll tops and embellished tunics. The prices are generally fair; nothing goes for more than 200 Rand. This makes these local products compatible with (and perhaps even more attractive than) the cheap Chinese imports, which have come to dominate the South African clothing market in recent years.



Source: Hibah

Figure Fourteen: Women shop at an informal store in Gatesville selling home made modest wear.

The Islamic atmosphere of Gatesville is undeniable. Adjacent to the marketplace is Masjidul Quds, a mosque whose impressive minaret and gold dome resembles the Dome of the Rock in Palestine. In its mimicry the mosque serves as a reminder to the believers of God of His prophet, the *miyaraaj*³¹, the struggle of their Muslim brothers and sisters in Palestine and their overall belonging to the international *umma*. As the *athaan* echoes through the market place for the afternoon prayer there's a distinct shift in energy. Some people proceed hastily towards the mosque, a few women remove their scarves from their necks and put it on their heads and mothers suddenly have a valid reason to silence their children. Many of the formal shop owners proceed to the mosque too. I find myself standing outside a family owned jewellery store somewhat amazed that inside it a mother was scolding her son for helping customers instead of going to pray.

³¹ This refers to the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven which took place from the Dome of the Rock in Palestine.

4.3 Islam at the mall

Even though in Cape Town Islamic clothing shops have been in existence since the early 1980's, the Islamic fashion market is a fairly new one which emerged in the context of the global and local Islamic resurgence. On the local scene, the Government Employees Pension Fund capitalised on the growing awareness of Islamic ideologies amongst Muslims and established Vangate Mall in the Athlone area on the Cape Flats. Regardless of the Cape Flats often being associated with social ills such as unemployment, drug abuse and gang related activities, the mall tends to attract salaried and wage-earning middle class 'Coloured' people from the surrounding areas such as Vanguard Estate, Surrey Estate, Gatesville and more recently also from neighbouring Langa, one of the cities 'black African' townships. When the Moroccan/North African themed mall was established in 2005, it was marketed as a shopping centre which would cater for the Muslim consumer by conforming to Islamic trading hours, having a designated prayer area and forbidding the trade of alcohol and non-*halal* meats on its premises. At the time this was a new development in the city. Even though bigger and more upmarket shopping malls such as Cavendish Square which has over 200 stores and Canal Walk shopping centre which has over 400 stores have prayer facilities for their Muslim customers, no mall in Cape Town caters for the Islamic community to the extent that Vangate Mall does.

As time went on however there were some changes at the mall, the most obvious ones being that two major supermarket chains namely Pick n Pay and Spar started selling non-*halal* meats and along with a few other stores they also established trade during

*jumua*³² so as to attract non-Muslim customers. On the other hand, however, the mall's Islamic 'identity' grew stronger for a number of reasons: firstly, its *salaah khana*³³ (prayer room) became functioning more like a full-fledged mosque as it introduced *jumua* prayers every Friday. It also conducts *taraweeh* prayers during Ramadan, which are mainly attended by residents from the surrounding neighbourhoods since it takes place after trading hours. Secondly, all the restaurants and food outlets on the premises remained strictly *halal* which meant that they were not selling alcoholic beverages and only meat slaughtered according to the Islamic rules. They thus attracted many Muslims to the mall both during and after trading hours. Thirdly the mall also has an indoor *souk* (Arab marketplace) which mimics the great *souks* of middle-eastern countries, such as Morocco or Dubai, thereby creating a sense of Islamic vibe. This is not only strengthened by the presence of Middle Eastern traders who specialise in the sale of *abaayas* and *hookah* pipes, the popular water pipes used for smoking flavoured tobacco, but also by local traders who sell 'modest wear' such as kaftans and long tops while other locals specialise in the latest styled headscarves, *hijab* fashion accessories such as

³² A congregational prayer held every Friday at approximately 12:30pm

³³ *Salaah khana's* (prayer rooms) are different from mosques in that *jumua* (Friday prayers), *taraweeh* (Ramadaan prayers) and other rituals are not usually conducted in them as they are not considered to be a "House of Allah". It is believed amongst Muslims that mosques belong to God – no one owns them whereas prayer rooms are different and may be found on privatised land such as airports, schools and shopping malls. Locally there are debates concerning the use of prayer rooms for *jumua* and *taraweeh salaah*. Currently, the Muslim Judicial Council has only granted Vangate Mall consent to offer *taraweeh* prayers and aside from Canal Walk shopping centre it is the only *salaah khana* that offers *jumua* prayers. In comparison this is quite significant as Vangate Mall is classified as a minor regional centre which forms part of a R350 million property development known as Vangate City - a 14ha site; whereas Canal Walk forms part of the 250ha Century city which cost over R3 billion. It should be noted that Vangate Mall was established for Muslim commerce whereas Canal Walk was meant to cater for the general public in Cape Town.

scarf pins, flower clips (which are used to create a hump under the scarf) and a range of other items.

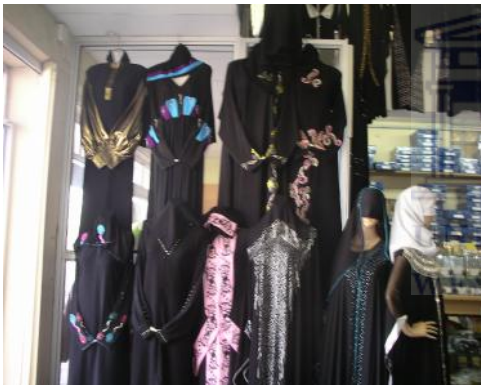


Source: Hibah

Figure Eleven: Here two women dressed casually in Islamic wear are leaving the Souk which is situated within Vangate Mall.

Similarly, Gatesville has created its own Islamic vibe. Over the past ten years there has been an influx of Palestinian and Egyptian traders who have moved to Cape Town and make a living by selling Arabic-inspired items to local Muslims. Amongst them is Habib, a Palestinian pharmacist in his early thirties who got divorced and relocated to Cape Town in an attempt to start a new life. Taking advice from a friend in Johannesburg, he started importing *abaayas* from Dubai and Saudi Arabia, which he started selling in his store along with some *attar* (essential oils). However, in addition to these items he now also sells Islamic fashion as he noted a change in the market, which called for such clothing. Habib's shop is regarded as 'hip' by his customers as he blasts Arabic pop songs from his speakers. His *abaayas* are trendy and cost about R300 on average; his *attar* is not confined to exotic smells such as Arabian Musk but includes fragrances by DKNY, Tommy Hilfiger, and Thierry Mugler. On a Saturday he has three

or four shop assistants wearing the latest in Islamic fashion which is complimented by trendy make up and scarf styles, thereby making his store appealing to fashion conscious consumers. In the same row Ahmed, a middle aged Egyptian man, who has left his wives and children behind in an attempt to make good business in Cape Town, has set up shop. With a store nearly ten times the size of Habib's, Ahmed has a far wider range of *abaayas*, which he also imports from Saudi Arabia and Dubai. Ahmed also sells all sorts of Islamic apparel from the Middle East such as long black gloves, *burqa's* (head veils), *niqaab's/purda's* (face veils) *ghufs* (leather socks) and *kajal* (kohl)³⁴.



Source: Hibah

Figure Thirteen: The *abaya* collection at the entrance of Ahmed's shop – note that the mannequins' eyes are covered given that reproducing or showing the eyes of inanimate things is considered forbidden in Islam.

³⁴ It is believed that kohl has a medicinal property which cleans the eyes; wearing it is seen as a *sunnah* (way) of the prophet Muhammad.



Source: Hibah

Figure Twelve: The scarf collection inside Ahmed's shop in Gatesville

In both Vangate Mall and Gatesville Shopping Centre the presence and products of Arab traders dramatically adds to the Islamic vibe of the places. Trading in the dimly lit Moroccan inspired Souk, Arabs play with the imaginations of local Muslims by giving them an exotic sensorial experience that transports them to distant Islamic lands. It has been argued by Howes (2003:55) that the senses play a pivotal role in understanding how people create and perceive their social worlds and also interact within it. This is certainly evident in the Souk and Gatesville where Arabs not only engage the sense of hearing by playing Arab music, Quranic recitations and speaking the language which could be seen as the authentic language of Islam (see Alhourani 2013); but they also engage the senses of sight and smell. By growing their beards, wearing Palestinian scarves, dressing in white *thobes* (robes), covering the eyes of mannequins, displaying *rakams*, burning incense, smoking hookah pipes, and allowing the subtle smells of attar to escape the big glass bottles found in store, Arabs are performing their 'culture'. The multi-sensorial performance of 'all things Arabic' adds to the spaces appeal as they regarded as being authentically 'Islamic' (see also Becker 2011; Alhourani 2013).

In no way am I suggesting that the Palestinians and Egyptians form part of a homogenous cultural entity, but by collectively referring to them as “Arabs” I aim to portray them in the way that they are seen by the shoppers who frequent these places. Goffman (1959:210) suggests that audiences often overlook the flaws of performers [in this case their ethnic / national differences] and therefore see their performances as authentic. Furthermore, in agreement with Becker (2011) I feel that it should be kept in mind that ordinary people speak and think in terms of ‘culture’ and that the concept is widely accepted among them and therefore it cannot be dismissed. As discussed in the preceding chapter however, ‘culture’ can be re-theorised and thought of in terms of performance and authenticity, which seems applicable in this instance.

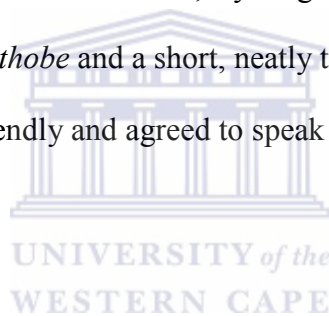
4.4 The evolution of Islamic wear shops

In this section I will explore how *hijab* fashion has affected the established Islamic wear sector in Cape Town. I focus on the development of two stores by looking at its trajectory and finding out how the owners either had to embrace the concept of *hijab* fashion and adapt accordingly, or downsize and explore other sectors. I start off with Fazlins Islamic Wear.

In Gatesville there are many locally renowned Islamic wear stores such as Fazlins Islamic Wear and ‘Top Boutique’. When I first entered Fazlins Islamic Wear one Saturday morning, the shop was fairly busy as women were browsing the aisles and a few men were having a casual chat with the owner – Mr Tape inside. Interrupting his conversation I introduced myself and told him that I was doing a study on *hijab* fashion. As we started speaking Mr. Tape told me that he would like me to forward his business card to the fashion designers I was working with as he thought that they would possibly

be interested in showcasing their designs in his stores. After agreeing to do so and seeing that he was too busy to speak with me at that moment, I asked if I could return on another day to speak with him when things were a bit quieter; he agreed.

On returning one Friday afternoon I asked to speak to the owner or a manager and was referred to Rafiek (one of Mr Tape's sons) who was managing another shop one door away. When I asked how I would recognise him they told me that I *will* see him, as he was wearing a white top (*thobe*) and had a bit of a beard. Entering the food store I saw signage with the same design and colours used in Fazlins and figured out that I was at the right place. As promised, Rafiek was there, a young man of about thirty years, sporting a slightly shiny white *thobe* and a short, neatly trimmed goatee. Surprised that I knew his name, Rafiek was friendly and agreed to speak with me about Fazlins Islamic Wear.



He explained to me that it was a family owned business, which started as a flea-market stall in 1990. Initially trading with toys and hand beaded scarves, his parents strategically opened stores in shopping centres in various residential areas in Cape Town, which are frequented by salaried and wage earning Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Nowadays they have stores in Lentegour Town Centre, Gatesville, and Ottery Hyper Market. As we were standing by a freezer of frozen delicacies, Rafiek started explaining to me that over the past twenty years, Fazlins Islamic Wear made its business by catering for *moulood jamaa's*³⁵ by embroidering dresses and scarves while also serving the general public by selling basic cotton Islamic clothing such as *salaah*

³⁵ *Moulood jamaa's* refer to groups of women who chant praises on the Prophet Muhammad around the time of his birth date.

broekies (men's prayer pants), vests, *igraams*³⁶, zipped *salaah* (prayer) tops and scarves. However, he explained that in recent years they were "forced to come in with a westernised look... [as] the trends changed very much". This he said was due to the general public's perception of Islamic wear changing which in turn forced them to adapt their concept of it since their key items [the white cotton prayer clothing] were no longer as popular and even the demand for outfits from the *moulood jamaa*'s declined. This then led them to sell items which were fashionable and appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim women due to its modest and modern designs.

Speaking about the designs of the clothes, Rafiek explains that women are usually attracted to their garments because they resemble the clothing found in popular national department stores Woolworths and Truworths. According to him, what makes the clothes at Fazlins different is that they are cut wider so as to obscure the shape of the body and the necklines are also raised which is quite different from many of the garments found in the national retail stores, which often exposed the chest area, he claimed.

Growing up in Surrey Estate which is a five minute drive away from Gatesville Shopping Centre I often joined my mother when she would shop there. Concerning Fazlins Islamic Wear's Gatesville branch, I always assumed that the majority of the customers who shopped there were Muslim given the shop's name, the ambience which is created by the Arab music, and the dress code of the male and female shop assistants; the men frequently wear white *thobes* and the women headscarves. I was thus surprised

³⁶ An *igraam* refers to two pieces of white cloth worn during the *haji* period.

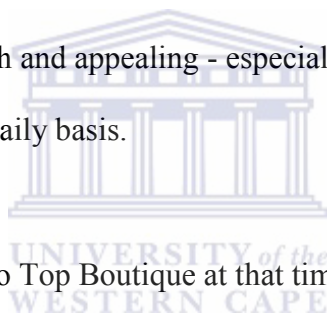
when Rafiek told me that sixty percent of their customers at the Gatesville branch are Christian. He suggested that this was particularly due to their extensive knitwear variety in winter and their wide range of casual wear all year round.

What I gathered from my conversation with Rafiek is that the idea of Islamic wear has changed as it now incorporates regular clothing which can be altered via layering to cover the entire body. It seems that for the Tape family this meant that they no longer have a niche market, since Rafiek suggested that local Muslims are not as interested in Islamic clothing 'basics' as they were before. Thus the Tapes replaced their prayer clothing with fashionable items³⁷. On the other hand, the Arabs introduced their black *abaayas* and this completely replaced the prayer clothes that were previously worn as *abaayas* were seen as more glamorous, prestigious, and are even regarded as a part of women's everyday outerwear, as is a common Arab practice. Rafiek acknowledged that as a result of these changes his family was forced to branch off into other markets. In Gatesville they now have two food stores next to their Islamic wear shop. The one store caters more for the working class by selling inexpensive food items such as cold meats and banded pack juices whereas the other store is pricier and caters for middle class consumers by selling local delicacies such as assorted pastries and biscuits.

Since I have lived in Surrey Estate my entire life I went to neighbouring Gatesville with my mother from a young age. It is for this reason that I knew that Fazlins Islamic Wear

³⁷ It should be noted that before the rapid influx of Arab traders in Cape Town, the kind of garments found at Fazlins Islamic Wear was seen as necessities – particularly for praying and visiting the mosque - for instance women wore white '*sallah* tops' which was commonly made out of cotton.

is not the only store that changed over time. As long as I can remember Top Boutique, another family owned Islamic wear business, was always in existence. In the late 1990's, as my mother started changing her fashionable urban dress style for one that was more in line with Islamic ideas of modesty, she started frequenting Top Boutique to buy her long shirts, scarves as well as other Islamic paraphernalia such as pocket sized *kitaabs* (Arabic books). I also recall from that time there was already a scarf styling craze amongst Muslim Capetonian women after a local scarf stylist Leila Barron published a highly popular step by step scarf styling manual. Many young adult and middle aged women owned a copy of this booklet, irrespective of whether or not they made use of it.³⁸ It was clear that this trend reflected a new desire among local Muslim women to make the *doek* stylish and appealing - especially for young adult women who did not wear a headscarf on a daily basis.



When I went with my mother to Top Boutique at that time, I would stand and watch the shop-assistants give in-store scarf styling tutorials to customers thereby promoting a turn away from old *doek* styles which simply saw it tied under the chin or at the back of the neck. During this period one of the owners, Tasmeena, also had a signature item - a plaited turban style scarf which was regularly worn by herself and her shop assistants. This may have well been the gestation of what has become the current craze of fashionable Islamic wear in Cape Town. At about the same time, as I remember, Top Boutique began slowly moving away from producing ultra-conservative Islamic wear

³⁸ For instance I've never seen my mother wearing any of those scarf styles in the book, whereas my friends mother who was also in her thirties at the time had three copies of the same book and would have women come to her so that she can style their scarves for them especially for special occasions such as weddings.

‘basics’ to creating garments that suited the more stylish headwear that they were promoting. The store introduced patterns and colour so their long shirts would for instance be powder blue with a small navy blue floral print on it; whereas bolder tunics would have big check blocks on it with colour combinations such as maroon, dark green and brown hereby demonstrating the clothing’s intermediary faze between ultra -modest and fashionable.

The reason why I discuss this development in some detail is that Top Boutique, from my personal observation is perhaps the one store that clearly went through dramatic changes over the years. I referred to it in the past tense because all of the stores have closed down and even though Top Boutique in Gatesville is still in existence it is no longer run by Tasmeena’s family. It now belongs to Ahmed, the Egyptian trader who has become a major figure at Gatesville. This has resulted in a complete change in the store’s merchandise and ‘identity’. However, the legacy of Top Boutique lives on as Tasmeena, one of the original owners of Top Boutique, has now opened a new outlet called ‘Taz Boutique’ a few metres away from her previous store. Here, Tasmeena once again stands behind an elevated cash counter wherefrom she extends the Islamic ‘identity’ of Top Boutique to her new store, which primarily provides the latest *hijab* fashion trends.

When I started this study I always knew that I wanted to engage with Tasmeena as she always intrigued me with her flashy style and vibrant personality. A middle aged mother of two young men who often stand by her side in the store, Tasmeena is a successful business woman. In 2012 she received a PMR Africa Award which was based on a local survey of the top Muslim businesses. As I was sitting with her in the

bustling Taz Boutique, she explained her firm belief that her successful business is due to the grace and mercy of God, who has provided her and her family with sustenance. At Taz Boutique Tasmeena blends the distinct elements of *hijab* and fashion, while catering for women of all ages, Muslim and non-Muslim, working and middle class customers. In store she has a wide range of clothing styles including street-wear, bridal-wear, eveningwear and Islamic wear and along with her female assistants she acts like a personal stylist if customers need help with items such as the Islamising of an outfit or the styling of more ‘traditional’ items. Tasmeena explains that the aim of Taz Boutique is to introduce women to modern, modest Islamic wear so as to inspire more young women to cover their *owra*. She shows them how outfits can be layered to appear more Islamic. Tasmeena also holds Islamic fashion shows at public events such as fundraising occasions as well as at the homes of clients who are eager to know how they can dress modestly yet fashionably.



Tasmeena encourages the idea of *hijab* by having unique headwear pieces such as the ‘rose cap’ and ‘*tasi* cap’ which are both all encompassing caps which can either be worn on its own or it can be used underneath headscarves to create particular styles.

Tasneema’s shop merges tradition and modernity: she not only caters for teenagers and young adults but also encourages the maintenance of old fashioned dress styles by providing services such as styling and pinning *midowra*’s and *misfals*, ie., traditional cloths made of georgette and gold or silver thread, which are used to ornate brides, bridesmaids or newborn babies.

Even though the stores in Vangate Mall and Gatesville cater to the needs and wants of women who prefer to dress more modestly, they are not alone in Islamising the dress

styles of Muslim women in Cape Town. Public events such as *Hijab Expos* have become increasingly popular in the city as many organisations and *madrassa's* take the opportunity to raise funds while simultaneously doing *dawa* (proselytising) work by inviting more Muslim women to wear *hijab* and dress more 'Islamic' by covering their body. I explore this in the next section.

4.5 Hijab expos:

Essentially *hijab* expos are trade fairs where everything related to *hijab* is sold and promoted. The expos are 'women only' events as the organizers intentionally create an Islamic space where women can freely do as they please without having to be wary of men who are not their *mahrims* (unmarriageable kin). It is here where women who have established shops in the real and/or virtual world of fashion gather and sell all things related to *hijab* such as clothing, scarves, accessories, but also other Islamic paraphernalia such as literature and pre-recorded sermons. Usually there are refreshments on sale, which women enjoy while having conversations, standing around or sitting at the dedicated book section where Islamic publications are sold on every imaginable topic from *hijab* to Arabic tuition. Expos are usually hosted by organisations such as the An Nur Book Club³⁹ or local *madrassas* in an attempt to raise funds while simultaneously creating awareness about *hijab* amongst local Muslim women.

³⁹ The club is founded by Roshaan Misbach, a Muslim Capetonian woman keen on hosting Islamic events and spreading the word of Islam. Through book reviews the club is aimed at teaching young women and girls about influential women in Islam.



Source:Hibah

Figure Fifteen

This picture was taken at a *hijab* fashion expo held at the Taronga Road Islamic Centre.

As a part of the ‘new’ Islamic movement in Cape Town, which in recent years has intensely promoted the wearing of *hijab*, *hijab* expos and fashion shows [which will be covered in the next section] popped up on the local scene. The above photograph was taken in March 2011 at a *hijab* expo that took place at the Taronga Road Islamic Centre in Rondebosch East. It was organised by Roshaan Misbach who explained to me that she thought of it as an opportunity to encourage women from the general public to wear *hijab* while also motivating the girls from the An Nur book club to wear it more confidently.

At the expo there were a number of spaces, which one could occupy. The open air courtyard served as a reception area where young women collected entrance fees of twenty Rand and handed out free DVD’s on *hijab* tutorials and spiritual lectures. On the west end of the courtyard were extensive glass sliding doors which served as an entrance to the mosque where one could pray and meditate or observe the local children participating in their Muslim school classes. To the north end of the reception area stood

a marquee that hosted stalls that sold cosmetics, children's clothing and toys as well as household products.

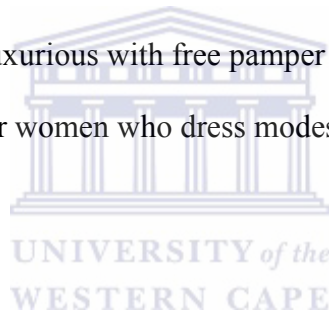
The main exhibition hall, which is pictured above, was situated on the east end and hosted exhibitors who sold all things related to *hijab* and *hijab* fashion. Here women who traded headscarves and various *hijab* accessories such as “sleeves”, scarf pins, headbands and brooches demonstrated how to use their items while others who sold fashionable *hijab* wear freely layered garments onto the bodies of interested clients. On the far end of the hall there was also a reading area where women could browse and purchase Islamic books for both adults and children or if they preferred they could join in the conversations in the coffee and cake section where women were talking about their conversions to Islam amongst other topics of interest. In the complex's established classrooms which are situated on the south end the women also had an opportunity to sit in pro- *hijab* lectures and participate in the conversations which followed.

Other expos that I attended during my fieldwork followed a similar pattern. They usually drew in the same traders⁴⁰ and all included an Islamic book section and hosted a series of lectures. They usually intended raising funds for particular activities to promote Islam. The proceeds of the Rondebosch east event described above, for instance, went to the An Nur Book Club, which focuses on promoting a strong Islamic ethic amongst girls and particularly teenagers. The proceeds specifically were to support a week long camp where the girls prepared themselves for *Ramadan* by doing reflective

⁴⁰ Many of the traders at *hijab* expos have established stores in the real and / or virtual world.

exercises⁴¹ and reflected on their past and future events, planning their next event, which was a three day affair consisting of another *hijab* expo, a masked ball and a fashion show.

Hijab fashion shows have become firmly entrenched events of the Islamic public sphere in Cape Town over the past few years. It should be noted that the difference between *hijab* expos and *hijab* fashion shows is that *hijab* expos are primarily trade fairs that aim to educate and inspire women to wear *hijab*, whereas the fashion shows are primarily clothing parades aimed at attracting middleclass customers due to their elegant nature, which is further promoted by the up market venues. The entrance fee for fashion shows are higher and they are more luxurious with free pamper sessions, goodie bags, and tea breaks. Fashion shows cater for women who dress modestly or for those who aspire to do so.



4.6 Hijab Fashion Shows:

Hijab fashion shows are a fairly new phenomenon in Cape Town. In this section I discuss how it started in the city before exploring shows hosted by Cape Town Islamic High School and Gadija Khan a local *hijab* fashion designer and promoter of *hijab* fashion.

⁴¹ One task for instance questioned their use of time and asked them to plan an itinerary for *Ramadan* with the focus being to increase their practice of *sunnah's* (ways of the prophet Muhammad) such as reciting the entire Quran, attending *taraweeh (Ramadan)* prayers and so on.

Hijab fashion shows started in 2009 when Voice of the Cape Radio hosted the city's first event. At the time the *hijab* fashion market was hardly established and A'isha Mouneimne, a white convert to Islam, who was working for the VOC as a presenter and producer, was practically the only person promoting this style of dress through her blog, radio programmes and her own *hijab* fashion label *Haya Clothing*⁴². Even though the Voice of the Cape (VOC) radio station continued to support *hijab* fashion shows until this day by promoting it through advertisements and interviews with the organizers, the response to this first show, which they hosted, was rather critical. According to A'isha's blog posts, some locals were upset that the event was too Islamic in nature since men were not allowed to attend whereas others criticized it for being un-Islamic by either claiming that the idea of a *hijab* fashion show is oxymoronic or objecting to the conduct of the models and the styles worn by them (www.vocfm.co.za).

Nonetheless the concept of *hijab* fashion shows slowly took off in the city as individuals and organizations saw it as an opportunity to do *dawa* while simultaneously raising funds. Since 2009 when the first *hijab* fashion show was hosted by the VOC, an increasing number of shows have taken place in the city. In 2011 six such events were hosted. This is a significant number given that it is a young industry and most young Muslim women do not wear *hijab* fashion, although the shows are primarily aimed at them. The following is a narrative based on my field notes; it discusses my personal experience with regard to the first fashion show that I attended.

⁴² *Haya* means modest in Arabic.

20th May 2011:

I receive an email from Naseera. It's an invitation to attend a 'Muslimah Fashion Show' at the River Club in Observatory. It sounds posh and I decide to go. Aside from not having any Muslim friends who would actually be interested in attending I ask my mother to join because she is fun, talkative, and opinionated not forgetting that she is also addicted to making her own outfits the latest one being a uber-stylish raw silk number in matte gold.

05th June 2011:

It's the day of the event. Since I'm busy with exams I have no time to think this through and decide to wear a royal blue shift dress, a matching pashmina, black leggings and a black headscarf in the humped style with the embellished ends of the scarf dangling from the back of my head. I know it's one of those 'see and be seen' events so I quickly doll my outfit up by applying my makeup, choosing a killer pair of heels and adding some gold jewellery.

If there's anything extra ordinary my mother will notice it immediately. Arriving at the River Club we are feasting our eyes on the people so much so that we're not paying attention to finding a parking space. The alluring, glamorous, odd and downright unsightly appeared to be droning in the same direction. In the hallway the women wore just about anything ranging from stylish knitted shift dresses with leggings and snoods to long sleeved winter maxi dresses in all sorts of prints and colours – one woman for instance had on a grey and white dress with bold black symmetrical lines embossed in a zigzag pattern which she wore with a grey and maroon scarf draped around her head while another wore a solid indigo denim dress with a ruffled high collar and pleats

down the midriff (kind of like a hip take on a vintage shirt) this she partnered with a black chiffon top scarf and a bold red under scarf to match her red heels.

Walking down the corridor one gets reminded of your obligatory duty as a Muslim to be charitable as there are tables laden with pamphlets from various Islamic organisations such as Islamic Relief and Muslim Hands and after reading the various appeals to “keep South Africa warm this winter”; your eyes automatically fall on a stand which says “Muslimah Fashion Show Upstairs”. “What’s Muslimah?” my mother asks and I respond with an honest “I have *no* idea ... a Muslim woman?”

Seated upstairs one can feel the atmosphere of pure excitement among the ladies. Waiting for the show to start the oversized art work grabs my attention as I wonder whether it’s resident art or if they had it brought in for the event since most of the portraits were depictions of African women who were wearing their headscarves in a turban style and who also happened to have their eyes blacked out. Everyone is cheerful and there are smiles everywhere. Since we never chatted much for the day my mother and I catch up and she starts telling me about the scarf styles she saw at a Muslim school event which she attended the night before. As I listened to her novel descriptions of women tucking their scarves behind their ears so as to show off their huge earrings to women wearing scarves with berets over it, our conversation was soon brought to an end with the organiser Gadija’s words “*Assalamu Alaiykum Wa Rahmatullahi Wabarakatu*⁴³. Welcome to the Muslimah fashion show. I thank you all for joining us this afternoon... we will be showcasing designs from Europa Design Emporium,

⁴³ Universal greeting of Islam which translates from Arabic as ‘May the peace and mercy of Allah be upon you’

Fabulous in *Hijab*, Get Covered and Gadija Khan. To get this show on the road I would like to request a *dua*⁴⁴ from someone in the audience”. Silence. “A *dua*? Anyone? *Mienfodliek*⁴⁵?” A teenage girl responds and starts reciting the opening chapter of the Quran along with other supplications. Gadija then thanks her and explains that even though the show is scheduled to carry on during the late afternoon prayer [*Asr*] there will be a break for it and that *whudu* [ablution] and prayer facilities will be available.

Before the actual show begins there’s a website launch – a woman seemingly in her mid thirties starts speaking about the international *hijab* fashion scene and how the internet creates a space for women to inspire one another to wear *hijab*. “The purpose of the website is to create a platform to showcase local and international designs...”. Live-streaming from her site www.stylishhijab.co.za she navigates her way through the space showing us how to access the design labels which will be showcased shortly and how to learn about upcoming events relating to *hijab* fashion.

After her presentation the show starts immediately. All of a sudden Arabian music is playing and young girls stylishly dressed in funky street wear take to the ramp. Parading up and down and posing like real professionals they start modelling for various labels and it’s obvious by the amount of people rushing to the front to take pictures from their cell phones and cameras, that Europa Design Emporium⁴⁶ and Gadija Khan is the most

⁴⁴ Arabic term for supplication

⁴⁵ *Mienfodliek* is an Arabic term for please.

⁴⁶ Europa Design Emporium is a local Muslim business. Their garments are marketed as ‘modest wear’ as opposed to Islamic fashion and even though their models often wear headscarves it is common for their hair to be showing along with the neck and forearms hereby

impressive. Gadija's denim couture range drew immense attention as she strikingly combined this durable urban fabric with elements of femininity. Through her military and vintage themes she created a novelty - the urban woman who is not only tough and feminine but who is also Muslim and stylish. For instance she had a cute 50's style shift dress – it was knee length, A-line, and came in a soft light blue denim with an intricate high collar which drew attention upward and away from the body. In addition to the collar, she also ingeniously collaborated with Faye a scarf stylist from *Get Covered* so instead of having the attention from the collar lead to the face; it immediately got diverted to the bold headwear with its protruding netting and feathers.

On the other hand, Europa's designs were just as funky, detailed and Islamised and its collection were certainly appealing as it reflected the tastes of the four designers who happen to be sisters. My absolute favourites included a high collared single breasted grey coat with big red buttons and a red tail detail at the back of the knee which somehow had slits in it as well so as to show off the red silk lining underneath. This was modelled off with skinny jeans, high heels and a loosely fitted snood which showed off the models hair as was standard with all their other models.

As promised, after the show there was the break for *Asr* which was performed in an adjoining room. After their prayers, the ladies had cake and tea on the veranda and had the choice of leisurely browsing through and purchasing the garments, which were staged earlier – this trading signalled the end of the event.

demonstrating the owners attempt to make their garments appealing to a wider market. The vast majority of their customers are however Muslim.

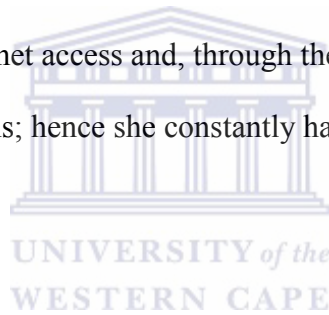
This extended write-up I did at the time depicted a fashion show, which was the first in a series of shows hosted by Gadija Khan, whose virtual *hijab* designer business I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. After this I attended four more, three of which was hosted by Gadija and the other by Cape Town Islamic High School which I discuss below. All of Gadija's shows were either held at the River Club or at the four star Capetonian Hotel. Even though the participating designers and traders at her shows often changed according to the theme the format always remained the same. They included free facials, manicures and pedicures for those who arrived early because, as Gadija often mentioned to me, she believes that similar to investing in Islamic fashion as a way of obeying the laws of Allah, pampering and looking after your self is also a form of worship and obedience to Him⁴⁷. This is followed by a welcoming speech and opening *dua* after which five minute slots are allocated to the various designers and store holders to briefly talk about and introduce their items. This was followed by a design showcase, in between which there is a break for praying as well as for cake and tea. The events concluded with an opportunity for the women to purchase the items, which were being modelled during the show.

Gadija's fashion shows are a good reflection of how Islamised things have become in Cape Town in recent years. Not only does she present the shows as Islamic events by making use of opening *dua*'s, breaking for prayers and using Arabic terminologies such as '*Muslimah*' while also playing Arabic music in the background, she also adheres to Islamic rules on segregation and modesty by making it 'women's only' events. Gadija's fashion shows are a good reflection of the different styles that have been developing in

⁴⁷ This idea is related to the common belief that your body is an *amaanat* (a gift which God has entrusted you with) that you should take care of.

local Islamic fashion. Different designers' takes on *hijab* fashion differ considerably: some for instance made use of skinny jeans and loose fitting scarves that partially covered the hair whereas others aimed at not exposing any part of the body by having garments that were not as body-hugging and paired them with scarf styles that covered all of the hair.

As indicated above, Gadija's fashion shows are aimed at middle class customers. Tickets are priced from R100, the average price for an item of clothing is about R200 and the shows are always held in up market venues. One afternoon as Gadija and I met for an early lunch, she spoke frankly about the challenges posed by the fact that her customers generally have internet access and, through the internet, are exposed to international styles and fashions; hence she constantly has to follow fashion trends and reinvent them in her ranges.



Gadija's fashion shows are not the only ones in town. Other designer's, shop owners and organisations have caught on to the idea. Cape Town Islamic High School, a prestigious private school is one such institution. In 2011, a group of the high school students decided to host the schools first *hijab* fashion show in aid of incubators for the Red Cross War Memorial Children's hospital⁴⁸. With sponsors including high-end national retail stores such as Woolworths and Stuttafords, the pupils showcased Islamic fashion, while simultaneously granting commercial companies the opportunity to showcase their garments in a different light. Interestingly though, CTIHS' fashion show was themed; it was promoted as an Arabian Night: the tickets had the face of an Arab

⁴⁸ Red Cross War Memorial Children's hospital is the only pediatric hospital in South Africa, it also provides specialist care for children throughout Africa (www.westerncape.gov.za).

woman in the background and the opening Act included Arabian music and some belly dancing as this is commonly imagined as Arab customs.

While some girls modelled their own *abaayas*; there was nothing ‘Arabian’ about the night as most of the clothes were of a Western nature and the music which was blasting from huge speakers was American hip hop. With its perverted lyrics related to sex and liquor this created an atmosphere better suited for a nightclub rather than a *hijab* fashion show as the latter usually has a tranquil and Islamic tone to it as previously described. Nonetheless, the Arabian night themed show well demonstrated how some teenagers, who have been exposed to notions of a pure and modern Islam, merge these ideas with the interest in fashion and pop culture that they share with the majority of their contemporaries, who belong to the majority non-Islamic sections of Cape Town’s population⁴⁹. This is certainly a new development. When I was a student at Cape Town Islamic High School between 1999 and 2003, there never were Islamic fashion shows as the concept was unheard of at the time.

Other *hijab* fashion shows that take place in the city are either organized by designers who want to showcase their designs or they are hosted by organizations who want to raise funds (or a combination of both). For instance, in June 2013 a local designer

⁴⁹ This was also evident when observing and talking with my cousin’s daughter who was one of the organisers of this event. Seventeen year old Ayesha is typical –she enjoys listening to music, spending time with her boyfriend and dressing up and wearing conspicuous amounts of make up. Yet she also prays regularly and is fairly observant of *hadeeth* and *sunnah*. Thus even though her style of dress is always playful and on trend with the latest fashions it simultaneously looks modern and Islamic when she opts to wear a headscarf which is more often than not.

Sumaya Adams hosted ‘the Runway Show’ in which various designers partook – it was in aid of homeless children and patients with breast cancer. It should also be noted that different *hijab* fashion show organizers have different ways of advertising. For instance the students of Cape Town Islamic High School created a Facebook page in an attempt to promote the event and were allocated tickets, which they had to sell to women friends, relatives or anyone interested in coming to the event. Other designers and organizations also create electronic posters which they circulate via Facebook in particular by posting it on the walls of fellow designers (who are usually partaking in the events as well) as well as their own. Gadija on the other hand advertises on the Voice of the Cape radio as well as its homepage, via the engine Cape Town Muslim Events, on her Facebook page[s] and via email circulations.



Source: Hibah

Figure Sixteen: Taken at a fashion show organized by Gadija Khan



Source: Hibah

Figure Seventeen: Taken at the Muslimah fashion show organized by Gadija Khan



Source: Hibah

Figure Eighteen: Taken at the Cape Town Islamic High School's fashion show

4.7 Conclusion

In Cape Town the *hijab* fashion industry is booming. In the real world spaces of Vangate mall and Gatesville, the presence and acts of Palestinian and Egyptian men are transforming the shopping environments of local Muslims who are given a taste of exotic and foreign lands. I have argued that along with an established Islamic environment (such as the presence of a mosque/prayer facility and *halal* eateries and so on) this encourages local Muslims [and women in particular] to perform their own Islamic 'identity' as it allows them to buy into the concepts of 'Islamic Wear' which are

not only seen as Arab outerwear (namely black *abaaya*'s) but are also seen as western fashion that can be '*hijabified*' to produce what is known as *hijab* fashion.

I have explored *hijab* expos and Islamic Fashion shows to show how designers and others are trying to persuade women to buy into the concept of covering ones body while simultaneously making a profit out of these ventures. In the next chapter I explore the online world of Islamic fashion. I particularly refer to Gadija Khan in order to demonstrate how online *hijab* fashion retail works.



Chapter Five: ‘Hijabistas’: middle class Islamic femininity, social media and fashion shows

5.1 Introduction

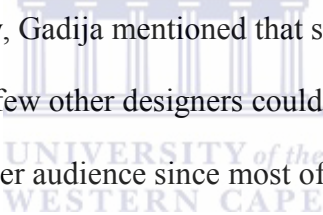
In this chapter I argue that the internet and globalisation allowed for a new Islamic market place to emerge online as it created a platform for designers to sell the garments which they produce. I particularly investigate how a space such as Facebook makes it possible for *hijab* fashion designers to successfully create online stores which have an authentic Islamic ‘identity’.

I give a detailed account of the career path of Gadija Khan with the aim of demonstrating how an ‘ordinary’ Muslim woman can spur on a local fashion revolution. Through her professional biography I show what influences women to become *hijab* fashion designers, and through her online store(s) I illustrate the significance of the internet in establishing and promoting *hijab* fashion.

5.2 Gadija Khan – Fabulous in Hijab

The first time I saw Gadija she was standing humbly alongside two rails of predominantly denim clothing at a *hijab* expo. After seeing her watch me interview and interact with Nazia (a 20 year old entrepreneur who specialises in *hijab* accessories such as headbands, clips, scarf pins and so on) I walked the four metre space between us and started looking at her garments as any other client would. Wanting to start a conversation and also free myself from wearing my mother’s long waterfall jersey and the long winter scarf which constantly refused to stay in place, I chose to fit on a

complicated asymmetrical nautical wrap dress. Uncertain of whether I could remove my scarf even though I was familiar with normative Islamic rulings on modesty I asked her [as if she represented all the women present] if I could do so and immediately confessed that wearing *hijab* was new to me and that I'm still learning how to wear it. Responding with a nonchalant “*agh* take it off here's no men here” her disposition was relaxed and welcoming as she helped me try on the dress. As she tugged and fixed the garment on my body while merrily chatting about its size and fit I knew that she had dressmaking experience so I asked her if she was the designer to which she laughed aloud and said “My dear I would hardly call myself a designer, I just make what I like and at the moment I really like denim because it has such a youthful feel to it”.



When I told her about my study, Gadija mentioned that she was going to host a *hijab* fashion show so that she and a few other designers could have an opportunity to showcase their designs to a wider audience since most of their stores are based at home and are accessible only through the internet. We exchanged cell phone numbers after I agreed to buy tickets for her show (she was going to send the banking details to my phone). Gadija agreed that I could come back to her to learn more for my research.

Gadija is a 35 year old wife and mother of two young daughters. She grew up in Belhar, a middle class area on the Cape flats. During the months when we interacted closely, I came to understand that in her parents' home being fashionable and obedient to Allah had been seen as nearly equally obligatory. When we met on numerous occasions she would mention her mother's love for high end fashion and interior decorating, which originated in her gratitude towards her husband. According to Gadija her father cared for her mother in an exquisite manner, showering her with fineries and providing her

with a home which she continuously re-dressed in the latest fashions as a token of her appreciation. She did the same with the children. At the same time obeying Allah and His laws was a non negotiable norm for Gadija and her siblings who were requested to cover their *owra* from a young age. Reminiscing on her childhood, Gadija always spoke about how they would have a new outfit for every occasion. Her mother, a wedding dress maker by trade, loved creating beautiful garments and always emphasised the importance of looking presentable.

The influence of Gadija's mother is evident in her professional life. At the age of eighteen Gadija matriculated from Excelsior Senior Secondary and found herself a job at the fashion retailer Truworths where she later was promoted to a management position. She also served as an adviser for the company's uniform catalogue for Muslim staff since it was required of them to look fashionable even if they wanted to wear a headscarf. As a result of her administrative abilities Truworths sent her on a managerial course at the University of Cape Town (UCT) which she successfully completed.

Thereafter she worked at the high-end retailer Woolworths as a textile manager for 15 years. Whenever Gadija spoke to me about what motivated her to take up her current profession she mentioned the impact working at Woolworths had, as it made her realise that retailers are not really paying attention to the needs and wants of Muslim customers:

Somehow Woolworths never got it right to cater for an Islamic market; I remember one year the Canal Walk branch imported an *Eid* range from Dubai but they got it hopelessly wrong! Even though the stuff was pretty and had frills and embellishments on it they were sleeveless and some

dresses were short and I thought to myself but this is un-Islamic, our women and kids have nothing decent to wear for *Eid* because no one is providing it. Do you know how many people would complain to me that Woolworths won't even put up *Eid Mubarak* signage even though they [Muslims] support them throughout the year? This is when I realised that there is a gap in the market; our people need good Islamic wear that is equally fashionable.

There were also other motives. As Gadija and I talked over breakfast one morning, I learnt that she had wanted to work flexible hours so that she could spend more time with her children. So, in 2009, she left her day job at Woolworths and started the fashion label *Fabulous in Hijab* jointly with her younger sister Abashiya Achilles. When conversing with both Abashiya and Gadija on different occasions it became evident that they both shared the same motivations for starting their label: they both love fashion and believe that it is a commandment of God to dress in a manner that only exposes a woman's hands and face. They wanted to combine this. From the start Gadija and Abashiya glamorised Islamic wear for women of similar background as their own Capetonian Muslim middle-class upbringing.

With the launch of *Fabulous in Hijab* in 2009 they created a platform that appealed to middleclass Muslim women. They achieved this through focusing their marketing strategies on the digital media and the virtual world, including BlogSpot, Facebook and the circulation of online fashion catalogues via email. Thereby they inevitably appealed to an audience who form part of South Africa's privileged 13.9% internet users (www.internetworldstats.com).

The sisters created a strong Islamic ‘identity’ for their company. This becomes evident, for instance, when browsing through their e-catalogues; alongside glamorous fashion photographs, the designers include Islamic phrases and etiquette. The Islamic ideas extend to the photographs themselves: their live models which appear in the catalogues are headless, if the pictures were taken at fashion shows, however, they have the faces blanked out. In this way they intend maintaining the elements of *haya* (modesty) while also conforming with Islamic understandings that the reproduction of artefacts with eyes are forbidden.

With regard to the latest trends the sisters also showed a great flair to recreate contemporary designs which made them highly popular amongst local “*hijabistas*”⁵⁰. The pictures below demonstrate how the sisters’ reinterpreted Ralph Lauren’s tiered Fillipa dress. Significantly the original dress was worn by a fictional character Serena van der Woodsens who stars in *Gossip Girl*⁵¹, which is a television series revered by

⁵⁰ *Hijabistas* is a term Abashiya uses when addressing her clientele. It plays on the words hijab, sisters [as in sisters in Islam] and fashionistas.

⁵¹ *Gossip Girl* is based on the lives of elite young adults living in New York City. The programme successfully promotes a lavish and excessive lifestyle so much so that it is possible to Google search the bedrooms, living rooms, wardrobes and hairstyles of the various characters. To demonstrate exactly how influential *Gossip Girl* is I done a quick search which I limited to Facebook (14 December 2011: 11:10 am). In about two minutes I found that *Gossip Girl* has 10,667,028 fans of which 76,027 people were talking about it at that moment and that 40 of my 270 Facebook friends are fans of that particular page. As for the relation between gossip girl and fashion, Blair who is another fictional character from the series, has been the face of *Fashion is My Drug* for a number of months now. *Fashion is My Drug* is a popular Facebook page dedicated to updating its 175,464 followers with the latest fashion trends in clothing, accessories, shoes, hair and makeup. The pages popularity is evident when it is compared to

many fashion lovers both locally and abroad. Abashiya's picture below shows how she, and Gadija, reinterpreted this glamorous design by adding a headscarf and sleeves while also covering the chest and shoulder areas.



Source: Facebook

Figures Nineteen and Twenty: These pictures demonstrate how Abashiya and Gadija Islamised the dress worn by the fictional character Serena van der Woodsens.



5.3 Gadija Khan Online:

In this section I will explore the online face of Gadija Khan. In doing so I show that online, her label merges with her self, therefore it takes on an authenticated Islamic 'identity' which makes it highly popular amongst local Muslim women. As her Facebook page is her primary online store I pay particular attention to it in order to illustrate the significance of the internet in establishing and promoting faith based fashion for an elite and middle-class customer base.

similar pages such as *Fashion is Fleeting – Style is Eternal* which has 29,351 followers and *Celebrity Fashion Style* with 13,424 followers (14 December 2011: 11:10 am).

According to what Gadija told me commercially, *Fabulous in Hijab* had the potential to grow extensively but the sisters did not necessarily share the same sentiments regarding the future of their brand; the elder sister claimed that they had different ideas concerning its signature style. In 2011 Gadija thus started her own *hijab* fashion label *Gadija Khan* although she still remained a co-owner of *Fabulous in Hijab*. With the launch of her new label, Gadija took it upon herself to not only set up shop at her home in Belhar and sell her merchandise at *hijab* expo's, she also used social media even more extensively to network and extend her customer base.

Visiting Gadija's Facebook page I gained an understanding of her enterprise. Like all other Facebook profiles, Gadija's profile picture is situated in the top left hand corner of the page. It is a headshot of herself; she wears a beige silk headscarf, and light makeup. Indicating her business, she is pictured smiling broadly and has an inch-tape hanging around her neck. Beneath the picture there are several tabs which will take you to her different spaces – listed below one another the options are: wall, info, photos, notes and friends.

When visiting her profile you are greeted by her 'wall', where you can post a note, picture or video clip and where she can do the same. Gadija's Facebook wall is often used as a community notice board by others, who inadvertently create an Islamic vibe to her page. Some people for instance post upcoming Islamic events on it while others use it to do *dawa* work by uploading pictures and Islamic sayings which pertain to ethics, morals and values; and aside from pushing agenda's, it is also not uncommon for people to send her elaborate Islamic greeting cards for her birthday or *jumua* thereby merging her work and personal space which adds to the 'identity' of the site. Even though Gadija

allows this to take place (she of course has the option to delete whatever appears on her wall) she claims back her space whenever she wants to promote her latest garments or her fashion shows and it is in times like these when she vigorously interrupts a somewhat relaxed space by launching an entire range in one go.

‘Glamour wear’ for instance would appear underneath a beautiful evening dress, which serves as a cover picture of an entire photo album/clothing range. Each photo in the album is captioned with regard to colour and price and would for instance read: “Front tu dress with back sequin detail, only available in charcoal R500. Can be made up in Thai Silk in a range of colours R650”. On exiting the album there is an option of viewing her other albums⁵² that not only pertain to particular ranges such as ‘Summer 2011’ but which also covers the fashion shows that she has hosted before as well as pictures of her and her family - there are for instance pictures of her with her and her sisters in which they are all superbly dressed while having lunch at the V&A Waterfront and with her and her extended family dressed in Arab inspired robes.

Exiting Gadija’s photo albums you are once again redirected to her wall, which is likely to have changed in the meantime as requests for attire flow in. Most of the messages are personalised and conform with Islamic propriety thereby making them appear not as conventional business deals. “*Aslm* Gadija I would like this in a size 38 *kanallah* (please)” or “Love your clothes will be visiting soon *Insha Allah* (God willing)”. These are examples of her customers’ messages, which pertain to her latest designs. Gadija always responds in a courteous manner. By using the same terminology, she never fails

⁵² These are the same pictures one would find after clicking on her ‘photos’ tab.

to be affectionate when conversing with her customers as she often invites them to her home store where they can shop and come over for a cup of tea or alternatively she makes arrangements with them to have their orders delivered – either way she casually makes it common knowledge as to how her business operates thereby welcoming others to shop with her in the same way.

Whether or not one is interested in getting to know her, centred on the top of her wall there is a brief hyperlinked overview which says that she is the owner of Gadija Khan, attended Excelsior Senior Secondary, lives in Cape Town, that she is married, and born on the 25th of January. This information is also provided under the more detailed ‘info’ tab where her current employment is presented in hyperlinked form, which again leads to external pages such as another (less popular) Gadija Khan Facebook page, the Fabulous in *Hijab* Facebook page, and her personal website ‘Gadija’. Aside from this her schooling history is also listed and amongst other institutions it includes University of Cape Town’s School of Business⁵³. Under her info tab one can also browse the Facebook pages that she ‘likes’ thereby getting an idea of what her interests are and what inspires her (this for instance includes pages such as ‘*hijab* fashion for teenagers’ and ‘I love Allah’). Lastly, all Gadija’s contact information is provided at the bottom of the page above which stands a bold personal prayer in the philosophy section, it reads: “OH ALLAH WALK THROUGH MY HOUSE AND TAKE AWAY ALL MY WORRIES AND ILLNESSES AND PLEASE WATCH OVER AND HEAL MY FAMILY. AMEEN.” (capital letters in the original).

⁵³ Efficacy aside UCT’S School of Business symbolises prestige as it is rated as one of the best business school in the world.

Along with the other tabs Gadija also displays her ‘friends’ list which amounts to about 3000 people; even though her friends and family are also included on this list most of the people are buyers and browsers thereby attesting to her brands popularity. I chose to present Gadija’s Facebook profile in a rather detailed manner; I did so in order to prove what Yavuz (2003:82 cited in Gökarıksel & Secor 2008) and others (see Tarlo 2010) suggest as being a successful business strategy, that is the simultaneous use of “religious discipline, ethical solidarity and entrepreneurial dynamism”.

Even though the supposedly unrelated items found on Gadija’s page do not directly relate to her business (such as the *dawa* posts, *jumua mubarak* messages and the photographs taken with her family members) this inadvertent collage allows her customers to identify with her and her Islamic brand instead of just the product - a marketing strategy which is not so different from those often used by established fashion and lifestyle companies (Lewis and Tarlo, 2011). This is also achieved by merging the brand and her person as she named it after herself and by using Islamic phrases such as *Insha Allah* (God willing) and *Assalamu Alaiykum* (Peace be upon you) she also creates an Islamic ‘identity’ for it which is seen as an authentic, deserving and respectable frame in which to sell Islamic fashion (Tarlo 2010:167, Gökarıksel & Secor 2008:11). Thus, consumers are not only identifying with the brand and also the designer/owner, but they are also identifying with the practices of modesty which many see as Islamic (Lewis and Tarlo 2011).

The significance of the internet in Islamic Fashion retail may also be found in the fact that the internet, and especially social media spaces such as Facebook, allow for the interaction between producers and consumers on a level that surpasses regular

commercial practices. Gadija and her clients often use a language which is polite and laced with ‘Islamically inclined’ phrases, and she also invites them over to shop at her home where they can enjoy tea with her, and others who might also be there at the time. Much like the online interaction, where they comment on photos of her clients, uploaded on the site, this creates a space where women can interact with one another, giving advice, with regard to sartorial matters and about anything else. Furthermore, the internet also allows her to have a wider clientele base than would otherwise be possible (Lewis and Tarlo, 2011).

Even though Gadija was a pioneer in the local *hijab* fashion industry she is certainly no longer alone in it nowadays. Just like the fashion shows, she got joined by other female entrepreneurs on Facebook who also try to “fill the gap” for Islamic fashion in Cape Town. One of them is Unaizah Toffar, whom I have known for a number of years as a fellow Cape Town Islamic High School and University of the Western Cape graduate. She has now opened her own label, ‘*Seruna*’. With five brothers, Unaizah is the only daughter of Sheikh Toffar and his wife who is a dress maker by trade. I recall that when we were in high school, she wanted to become a Montessori teacher or a fashion designer but instead Unaizah went on to graduate (Cum Laude) in Management studies after which she launched *Seruna*⁵⁴. Thus it was of particular interest to find out her motivations for launching an Islamic Fashion label; this is what she had to say:

What inspired me to start this business was my love for what we should represent as a Muslim woman and also my great love for fashion and

⁵⁴ *Seruna* is an uncommon name which is a combination of Seraj and Unaizah (her husbands name is Seraj).

entrepreneurship. I always felt that it was necessary to help ourselves and others grow to love the idea that we are Muslims before we are *fashionistas* or any other honourable profession in life. I wanted to do my bit by motivating our Muslim women especially the youth to be proud of not only being a Muslim woman but also representing it proudly as an identity without sacrificing being creative and having fun with fashion. What drove me was the opportunity I saw in creating Islamic High Fashion on a ready-to-wear platform. Something that was stylish and current using runway trends every season but something that was also accessible and affordable to every girl and not just the girl that attended fashion week or earned a very high salary...

Unaizah's idea of using fashion to motivate young women to perform their Muslimness is particularly significant given that locally Islamic wear was/is generally regarded as anti-fashion and is therefore not worn by the majority of young women (this I will discuss further in the next section). Like Gadija and others she also promotes the idea that Islamic dress can be fashionable, Islamic and modern without sacrificing the demands of modesty, thus recreating the dress style into something novel and contemporary.

5.4 Conclusion:

In this chapter I have mainly made reference to Gadija Khan as a means of exploring the online world of Islamic fashion. I have noted that the internet provides an alternate retail space that crosses geographical boundaries as it allows for virtual showrooms thereby allowing designers to reach a far larger amount of potential customers. I have also

shown how by merging her person and her store Gadija has created an authentic Islamic ‘identity’ for her brand which allows customers to identify with it and her and not just the product which is a marketing strategy used by established businesses in the fashion industry.

In the next chapter I explore the sartorial biographies of three Muslim women. I look at their styles and motivations for dressing the way that they do, and I also look at how through their self styling strategies they are performing their Muslimness and claiming their belonging to the *umma*.



Chapter Six: Sartorial biographies: self styling, performance and belonging

6.1 Introduction

In a city where the public sphere has become ‘Islamised’ and a *hijab* fashion market has emerged, many young women appear now more visibly Muslim than before. An increasing number of women are using clothing to perform what they believe is a fundamental Islamic principle, namely the concealment of the body with the exception of the hands and face. They are not doing it in austere ways however; instead they opt for the fashionable forms of dress, which I discussed in the preceding chapters.

In this chapter, I will now focus on the self-styling strategies and performances of three visibly Muslim young women in Cape Town. I am interested in how these women dress and perform their ‘Muslimness’ in the context of Cape Town’s public and social sphere becoming more ‘Islamised’; and in their motivations for changing their style of dress from what locals would perceive as ‘decent’ fashion wear to fashionable Islamic wear. Through these self styling strategies I explore the ways that these visibly Muslim women in Cape Town are creating their belonging to the *umma* and how their performance allows them to reject the ascribed ethnic ‘identity’ imposed on them during the apartheid era and claim a positive spot in the rainbow nation as Muslim South Africans.

I adopt Tarlo’s (2007) notion of ‘sartorial biographies’ as it allows for the exploration of women’s dress styles: Why do they dress the way that they do? What life experiences

and memories inform their style of dress and how does this, intertwined with particular fashion tastes and religious views for instance, play out on the body? I start off by presenting the sartorial biographies of three of the young women with whom I worked: Ilhaam, Hajirah and Washiela.

6.2 The sartorial biographies of three women:

6.2.1 Ilhaam:

The first time I met fifteen year old Ilhaam was in 2011 at an Islamic youth camp hosted by the An-Nur Book Club in Rondebosch East. She was sitting at a table discussing a *hijab* expo that she and a group of girls had hosted the month before. The first thing that I noticed about her was her Islamic etiquette. As I walked over to her she gave me a broad smile and greeted me with “*Assalamu Alaikum*” - an Islamic term which basically means ‘May peace be upon you’ but which may further be interpreted to mean I bear you no malice or I wish to do you no harm. She flashed me a broad smile which hardly left her face. I found this interesting since I knew that as a *sunnah* (way of the Prophet Muhammad) smiling is encouraged in Islam and that it is even considered to be an act of charity.

Another reason why this 15-year old pupil of one of Cape Town’s most distinguished private high schools for girls⁵⁵ immediately appealed to me was the fact that she was obviously a fashion model of sorts. The other girls attending the youth camp wouldn’t stop raving about her style. For instance twenty-three year old Athirah, Ilhaam’s white

⁵⁵ Ilhaam attends Herschel Girl’s School which is an independent Anglican School based in Claremont, Cape Town

Zimbabwean-born friend who converted to Islam in 2010, candidly said that she drew inspiration from Ilhaam for her ability to accessorize anything, her love of lace and her use head bands when styling her scarf. Athirah loves Ilhaam's style so much that she even labelled it the 'Vertigo phenomenon'. Given that the Vertigo brand is popular among young South Africans, especially students, for its indie bohemian vibe, I kept stealing glances at Ilhaam's clothing, thinking "Vertigo? Yeah I could see that". It explains the lilac all stars sneakers, the soft wide legged denim jeans, cream waterfall top with crocheted detail on the back as well as the soft floral printed headscarf.

On another occasion when I met Ilhaam at her elegant home in the upper middle-class neighbourhood of Penlyn Estate, Athlone, where she lives with her parents, two younger siblings and her grandmother she shared her journey with *hijab* with me. Seated comfortably on her bed with Woolworths⁵⁶ pecan nut brownies and fresh juice shared between us, Ilhaam started telling me that when she reached puberty at the age of thirteen her mother started encouraging her to "cover" her *owra* while making away with her slim fit jeans and t-shirts. Even though many, if not most Muslims in Cape Town overlook this ruling, Ilhaam's mother took it upon herself to actively persuade her daughter to dress more 'modestly', in line with Islamic dress notions. Ilhaam's mother explained to her that she may thus not only protect herself [from unwanted gazes and God's punishment], but so that she may also become more God conscious so that if she ever does think of straying off the path [of righteousness], her clothing would serve as a reminder of the guiding principles by which she is suppose to be conducting her life.

⁵⁶ Woolworths here signifies supposedly high quality, natural food.

Ilhaam told me that initially she struggled with the idea of wearing *hijab* because to her it was ‘un-cool’ – her mother wore it and she felt that it wasn’t appropriate for her age. Despite her initial reluctance, she started wearing a headscarf and her clothes became more ‘decent’ as she became increasingly mindful that it should not reveal too much of her body so she would for instance wear skinny jeans with funky long tops or shift dresses.

In an attempt to motivate Ilhaam, her mother signed her up to join the An Nur Book Club so that she may interact with other Muslim girls her age. It is here where Ilhaam not only learnt about the key female Islamic characters such as the prophet Muhammad’s wives, but where she also importantly found a sense of belonging among other Muslim teenage girls.

On previous occasions when I spent time with Ilhaam and her friends at the camp previously mentioned, it was evident that these girls genuinely shared a bond which was based on loving each other “for the sake of Allah”. Based on this theme they formed ‘the sisterhood’, a group with the aim to encourage themselves and others in the real and virtual world to live righteous lives. The sisterhood’s impact on Ilhaam was evident in many ways. Not only did it convince her to wear *hijab* more confidently; it also guided her in other aspects of her life, such as what to do about boys who were interested in dating her. Because I got to know Ilhaam at a time when she had just started wearing *hijab* more regularly, she would speak of a sense of confusion that she had experienced before becoming comfortable with her new dress style.

Aside from feeling that it was not age appropriate, Ilhaam also had never felt comfortable wearing *hijab* around her school friends who are mostly Christian and white in the prestigious Herschel Girl's School, an independent Anglican School in Claremont, an affluent residential area in the historically white and middle-class southern suburbs of Cape Town. Because she felt that her school friends could not relate to her wearing *hijab*, Ilhaam felt that she found inspiration and constant encouragement among the sisterhood's girls who supported her as they all firmly believe that it is obligatory to wear *hijab* once you are *mukalaf*.

Today, Ilhaam's style of dress reflects this belief and the influence of her friends, as her clothes are no longer tight – her skinny jeans have been replaced with wide legged ones and she is more likely to be seen in floor length dresses or skirts with loose tops. Yet, Ilhaam is also an ardent fan of fashionable dress styles. I saw this at the camp where we met. At the time winter hats were really popular so instead of giving the trend a miss, Ilhaam wore a hat over her scarf which resulted in some of her friends doing the same. Similarly, she would mimic celebrity styles – at the time Nicole Richie made head bands popular so instead of wearing it across her forehead with her hair hanging loose, Ilhaam wore it as an accessory on top of her scarf. As for her clothing style it became clear that the internet is the source of much inspiration. Not only does she actively upload pictures of her own style on Facebook and blog spots (she once entered a *hijab* fashion competition) but she also turns to Amenakin for trendy scarf styles as well as Lookbook⁵⁷ for ideas on international street fashion.

⁵⁷ Lookbook is a website where bloggers could upload pictures to give the viewers ideas on how to wear the latest fashions.

When I visited her at home one Friday morning, we spoke about her style while going through her clothing cupboards and the loads of different outfits that she has downloaded on her pink iPad. As we were lounging in her bedroom Ilhaam and I were speaking about where we shop when she mentioned that she had recently become an ardent fan of Oh so Boho, a bohemian themed Cape Town boutique that sells both bright and earth coloured loose fitting items. She also said that she was no longer investing in items from Vertigo as much as she used to given that she felt that the items have become unfairly priced. I then told her of a woman from whom I buy my Vertigo apparel in a nearby neighbourhood. Pleased with the idea, Ilhaam mentioned that she has also started supporting local designers and entrepreneurs'; she buys her colourful maxi skirts from a home store not too far from her house which she matches with loose blouses found in up market retail chains such as Truworths or Woolworths. She showed me several items that she had bought from local designers, including a coral all-in-one-*hijab* – that is, a long-sleeved floor-length piece which also replaces a headscarf as it covers the hair too. Ilhaam however matches hers with a white scarf with a coral coloured floral print. She emphasized that her scarves are of course an important part of her style now, which she and her mother share. Between her and her mother, they have a dedicated space for headscarves; these drawers literally overflow with soft textured pieces, which come in all sorts of prints including polka dots, stripes and florals.



Source: Ilhaam

Figure Twenty four: Ilhaam (right) pictured with a friend



Source: Ilhaam

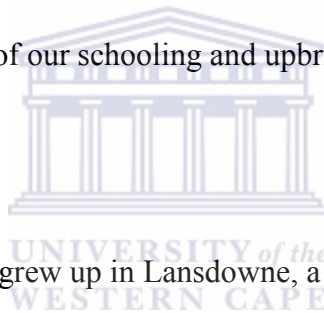
Figure Twenty five: Ilhaam (far right) pictured with two of her friends

6.2.2 Hajirah:

Browsing Facebook one night I came across the trendy ‘Hijab Style’ page - “the UK’s first style guide for Muslim women”. Impressed by the fashions, fabrics, colours, prints and presentations of the ‘Islamised’ outfits, which even included shoes, handbags and accessories; I ‘liked’ the page and noticed that Hajirah, a fellow Cape Town Islamic High School graduate, ‘liked’ it too. I immediately clicked on her Facebook profile and asked her if she wanted to participate in my study. She agreed excitedly. As she had recently become a mother to a little boy named Uthman, Hajirah could however never make time to meet me in person and thus became my first and only online interlocutor.

Through emails and Facebook messages Hajirah and I started speaking about our lives and about *hijab* – the ways in which she wears it and why she changed her dress style for a more Islamic one in her early twenties.

Since Hajirah was wearing *hijab* fashion I was curious to know more about her; I wanted to know if she attended Habibia Primary (an Islamic school) before going to Cape Town Islamic High School as so many other students have done. I asked her about her parents, how staunchly Islamic were they in their daily practices? Did they tell her to wear *hijab* when she became *mukalaf*? What were her motivations for starting to dress in *hijab*? With these questions in mind I initiated our email conversations. It turned out that the trajectories of our schooling and upbringing were not that different after all.



Hajirah was born in 1985. She grew up in Lansdowne, a predominantly ‘Coloured’ area on the Cape flats. Even though a significant amount of the residents in Lansdowne are Muslim, the local public primary school, which she attended, promoted the recitation of Christian prayers and the singing of hymns. It was expected of pupils to participate in these activities irrespective of their religious affiliation. She enjoyed her primary school years with her best friend Monique. For her secondary education, however, Hajirah’s parents sent her to Cape Town Islamic High School, where they expected her to increase her religious knowledge as far as *Fiqh*, the Quran and the Arabic language was concerned. This was her “first and only Muslim school”. Even though her high school uniform consisted of a long sleeved tunic and pants set with a headscarf to match she never wore a headscarf or *hijab* as casual wear. Her parents, whom she described as “good, pious Muslims”, never obliged her to do so. Hajirah wore regular fashion items

and could be seen, for instance, in jeans and t-shirts, or summer dresses, a trend that carried on throughout her years as a student at the University of the Western Cape. However, after Hajirah married Suleiman (whom she had been dating for five years) in 2009, she started wearing *hijab* fashion.

It was marriage that caused her rather sudden change of dress style. As she explained to me: “The reason for me changing the way I looked after I got married was just because I felt that I had entered a new stage of my life where I had to set an example one day for my children and I don’t know why suddenly I just thought it was ugly for a married woman not to wear a scarf. Silly because everyone should wear a scarf whether or not they were married, but at the time I just thought that I needed to make a change”.

As I found repeatedly during my research, Hajirah’s change in dress style at this point in her life was not uncommon. A number of young women I spoke to started dressing more ‘decently’ once they got married or had a baby⁵⁸.

As we were exchanging emails, Hajirah told me that over time the idea of living a “better life” grew on her so she slowly started covering up more of her body and hair – this was also evident when browsing through her Facebook pictures. She told me that with the passing of her beloved father in 2011, her perspective on life changed again.

⁵⁸ I could relate her situation to other friends of mine, Fatima- whose in-laws and husband pressurised her into changing her dress style and wearing a headscarf even if it doesn’t cover all of her hair and Nabeelah who after becoming a mother gradually changed her dress style by wearing a headscarf along with longer and looser tops and dresses.

With his death after a struggle with cancer she said that she strongly started feeling that her time on earth is limited so she “wanted to please Allah” and be closer to Him. Getting married and losing her beloved father caused Hajirah to start making use of Islamic fashion as a means of wearing *hijab*.

A lover of patterns, colours and fashion sales, she mostly shops at China Town and Mr Price (an inexpensive fashion retailer) as both places sell inexpensive fashion items. Even though the clothing found in these shops does not necessarily cater for her clothing style, Hajirah is already proficient in ‘Islamising’ the latest trends in an effort to conceal her body. Mostly she wears “long tops with jeans” or brightly coloured or patterned sleeveless dresses, which she pairs with a cardigan or long sleeved tops underneath. Her layering strategies also come to the fore when she sees mini-dresses that she likes as she will pair them with slim fit jeans worn underneath and a long sleeved top/cardigan. Concerning her scarf style, Hajirah always ties it in a tight bun at the back of her head wherefrom she makes various other styles such as draping a snood or large scarf loosely over it. Regardless of her co-workers at the South African Police Service (where she works as a forensic analyst) thinking that she married a black African man because of her scarf style, she says that she “love[s] the way it looks” and aside from her tying it in such a way that it doesn’t need readjustment, it also allows her to show off her earrings which she loves collecting. At the time when we spoke she owned seventy-four pairs.

6.2.3 Washiela:

Along with her husband Ikraam and their three daughters, my thirty-five year old cousin Washiela lives in the predominantly Muslim, middle-class area of Surrey Estate. Smart

in her appearance, she always took care to dress stylishly and take care of her hair and make up. Seeing Washiela bare headed or wearing a cap was the norm as a headscarf was not a part of her everyday wear. However, two years ago on *Eid-ul-Fitr*, she surprised everyone by wearing *hijab*. Even though she looked beautiful in black, (she wore a pants, embellished tunic and headscarf with its which had a flower on the side) and carried the style off well, it was not common for her to wear a headscarf on *Eid*. I found her choice intriguing and was wondering if she had done it just for the occasion or if it was a genuine change in style.

She never made a verbal statement about her sudden change of style. However, months went by and Washiela was still wearing a stylish form of *hijab*. I knew that even though she and Ikraam were a trendy young couple they ran their household and business, an airport based shuttle service, in an Islamic fashion and that religion informed most if not all aspects of their lives. Ikraam is a staunch Muslim who has even memorized the entire Quran. I was wondering if this had anything to do with her change in appearance.

One afternoon as I visited her at her home she was casually dressed in a black and silver kaftan, which she paired with black tights. As we were speaking about her dress style I mentioned that I often used to see her wearing hats, which she said were a means of concealing her hair without overtly doing so. Still doing so now, Washiela mentioned that she does it “just to be different on days... because there’s days when I don’t feel like wearing a scarf but [that way] my hair’s all covered...so I would wear a cap and like a shawl to cover my neck...”.

Washiela explained that her turn to *hijab* came after a dream one night where she got *hidaya* or a message from God that she should turn her life around or else Ikraam would move on to heaven without her. She vividly described the dream to me:

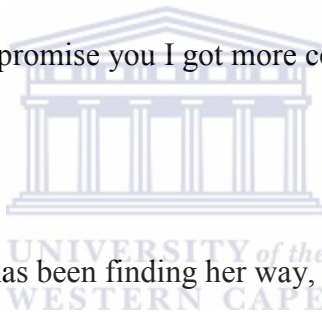
I [am] all dressed in white and everything around us is black and we see these lights and we [are] holding hands and we [are] walking and all of a sudden he starts letting go. And I ask him why are you letting go and he says that he doesn't know and eventually ... I start to fall in the dark and his moving on and I say I want to go with you, I have to go with you and his like I can't turn back I don't know [why] but I cant turn back for you, I have to move on. And then I fell, and you know when you in a dream you can feel yourself falling... and I was falling into the dark and he moved into the light. When I woke up from my dream I felt like if this is not a sign then I don't know... like obviously the dark place was *jahannam* [hell] and he was moving forward to *jannah* [heaven] which is the light...

For Washiela wearing *hijab* was not easy at first and she found it particularly hard on her first day, which was on *Eid-ul-Fitr* in 2011. As a Muslim Capetonian woman myself I know that wearing a headscarf let alone *hijab* on *Eid* is a big statement. On a day where a lot of emphasis is placed on looking fine in a newly bought, 'decent'⁵⁹ outfit and where it is expected of both men and women to groom themselves, covering

⁵⁹ I will discuss this concept further on in the chapter.

up your entire body and especially your hair opens you up to lots of ridicule. For Washiela being ridiculed by friends and family was certainly a big fear:

Everyone was like ‘What happened?’ And I was like I’ve decided to do this you know... To me that day was nerve wrecking, I wouldn’t say I was scared of people’s reactions but I was [giggling] okay maybe I was scared of peoples reactions, like how can I say man, [I was] wondering what they’re going to think and feel about me... I was doing this for myself but I knew they were [going to] feel something... You know when that day was over I was like I did it! I can’t believe I did it! My first *Eid* when I was totally covered! Like I promise you I got more compliments that day than I have in years.



Ever since that day, Washiela has been finding her way, as she would say, as far as wearing *hijab* is concerned. She likes things that are easy to wear and particularly likes the scarf styles fashioned by UK based Amenakin. Unfortunately for Washiela, she says, many of the accessories that she likes is not sold in South Africa such as the *hoojab* (a hood with two long ends that you wrap like a *hijab*) which is designed by Amenakin or the *burqita* which is a pre-draped headscarf which is also sold in the UK. Concerning the covering of her hair Washiela either turns to Amenakin who may be found in her virtual home on YouTube, her beloved hats, or to Aunty Faye a local scarf stylist who is always willing to encourage and advise her on certain styles.

As for her clothes she likes loose tops that flow from her body so she enjoys shopping in Vangate Mall’s Souk as she buys her kaftans there which she would pair with wide-leg

pants such as bootleg jeans or with tights for when she feels she wants to be more comfortable. Unlike Ilhaam, who has done away with wearing leggings, Washiela still wears them with longer tops. She says that “some people say that it’s still not right because you showing the shape of your legs” but mentions that she’s trying not to “give up” certain things that she likes.

For Washiela looking good is important because as she says “if you look good you feel good”. Given that she still has to deal with snide remarks such as “*ooh hie kom die haji*” [oh here’s the *haji*⁶⁰ coming] she always does her best to look good. She says that even though a lot of people still judge her or think that it’s just a phase, for her the *hidaya* that she got changed her life because she really realized that “no one else is going to take you to *jannah*”.

Washiela’s change in style also influenced her eldest daughter Zarah (eleven). When Zarah became *mukalaf* a year ago she immediately wore *hijab* and, according to Washiela, did so without anyone telling her to do so. As a mother, Washiela felt that she could no longer be bare-headed if her child is wearing *hijab* due to her sound Islamic knowledge which she attains from a reputable *madrassa* in Gatesville (she attends it with her younger sister Zayaan). Because Zarah loves beautifying her headscarf, Washiela finds herself playing an encouraging role and bonding with her as they would shop for accessories together.

⁶⁰ A local term used for a person who has performed the obligatory pilgrimage of *haji*.



Source: Washiela

Here Washiela, center, is pictured with her daughters Zara, Zayaan and Taaliah



Source: Washiela

Pictured with her husband Ikraam, Washiela decided to wear her hat for the day.



Source: Washiela

Some of Washiela's scarf styles.

6.3 The local sartorial context:

A common thread in all three cases is that the women did not want to be perceived as ‘*outyds*’ (old fashioned) as this would open them up to ridicule as Washiela particularly feared. This is related to the fact that amongst Muslim women in Cape Town a form of acceptable modest dress exists that does not appear to be Islamic. As mentioned in Chapter Three, in the past Islamic wear was the reserve of older women and was opposed to the Western styled fashions preferred by young women. Even though this is the case, young women are still expected to conform to local expectations of modest dress which requires the wearer to not wear clothes outside of the home that are too revealing such as sheer items, strappy tops, miniskirts or hot pants as these garments expose too much of the body. This is related to the idea of *ordentlikheid* or decency. Elaine Salo, a South African anthropologist, argues that ‘*ordentlikheid*’ is temporal in the sense that once a woman has a ‘clean’ marriage meaning that it was not a ‘*moet troue*’¹ they begin “their moral careers as ‘*ordentlike moeders*’” (decent mothers) (2004:322). Being a ‘decent mother’ as Salo (2004:322) argues includes controlling your own sexuality and that of your daughters.



Source: Nasreen Abrahams

Here the concept of decency is demonstrated. Most of Nasreen’s hair and body is covered, yet her arms, neck and hair is exposed.

This generalised notion of decency/‘*ordentlikheid*’, although not a specifically Muslim concept, is evident with Hajirah and Ilhaam. In Hajirah’s case she no longer thought that it is appropriate for her as a wife and mother “not to wear a scarf” given that she “had to set an example... for [her] children”. Her statement that “everyone should wear a scarf whether or not they were married” shows that she acknowledges that it is not suppose to be marriage that prompts one to wear a scarf but that it should instead come earlier, namely at the age of puberty. This belief is a reflection of the increased exposure local Muslims currently have to Islamic ideologies (see Chapter Three). In Ilhaam’s instance the idea of being decent is intertwined with Islamic ideologies of modesty given that her mother encouraged her to wear *hijab* from the moment she became *mukalaf*, hereby exceeding mere decent dress and making a headscarf in particular an essential part of her style.



6.4 Performing ‘Muslimness’:

As in Ilhaam’s case a headscarf plays an integral role in the self-styling strategies of women in *hijab*. Like Moors (2009) who argues that the headscarf is seen as *the* signifier of ‘Muslimness’ in the Netherlands, I argue that this is the case in Cape Town, but importantly it is also the style of the scarf that symbolizes an embrace of a modern and global Islam (this will be demonstrated shortly). It should be stressed here that in Cape Town if a Muslim woman wears a scarf around her neck, much like a *doekie* on the head with some hair showing or all covering Islamic fashion, it acts as a symbol of ‘Muslimness’ to fellow ‘Cape Malays’ and even non Muslim ‘Coloureds’ who are aware of these symbols through daily interaction. What this then suggests is that to fellow Cape Muslims or ‘insiders’ the performances of women who are dressed ‘decently’ (which like mentioned before has amongst locals come to mean not too

revealing as it has connotations of modesty and covering ones *owra* attached to it) is therefore understood as being exactly that – decent. On the other hand, to ‘outsiders’ these subtleties of dress has little or no significance, for instance a headscarf worn around the neck could perhaps be seen as a mere fashion accessory but to fellow Muslims it’s a symbol of ‘Muslimness’ and represents an intermediary phase between not wearing a scarf at all, to wearing it on the head as it is often a gradual process for many women.

It is in this overall sartorial context that Hajirah, Ilhaam and Washiela perform their Muslimness by wearing *hijab* and not mere ‘decent’ dress. They do this by firstly contesting local forms of modest dress and secondly by making use of *hijab* fashion they contest the old notions of Islamic wear given that it is both modern and fashionable. Because these three women are not the only ones changing their dress styles, in the next section I explore how Muslim Capetonian women are encouraged to wear *hijab*.

6.5 The affect of globalization- the case of Mufti Menk:

Ilhaam is a good example for pointing out how ideas of modesty, righteousness and (taken a step further) chastity are now related to *hijab* as opposed to mere decent/modest dress. I maintain that this is directly related to globalization and the increase in Islamic discourse that has been flooding the city in recent years. Constant exposure to Muslim immigrants and tourists, their ideologies and sense of dress all contribute to the current change in Muslim Capetonian women’s dress style, as does seminars, public lectures, radio and television programs and YouTube videos.

An example of the latter can be found in Mufti Ismail Menk, originally from Zimbabwe⁶¹, who has on numerous occasions encouraged women to wear *hijab*. On one occasion he did so at a seminar hosted by the Muslim Student Association of Cape Town (MSA of the Cape) where he pointed out that it is the way of the Prophet Muhammad to be clean and well dressed and that Muslims should follow suite if they intend to present Islam in the best possible manner. On the same occasion he supported *hijab* and addressed the issue of prejudice amongst Muslims as he mentioned that people should not judge others by their clothing as wearing *hijab* was a gradual process and should not be seen as a measure of faith since “a sister in a mini skirt may be fighting a great battle” so instead of judging her and others like her, Muslims should admire and encourage those who strive to better themselves. On other occasions, on Youtube and during lectures he delivered at Masjidul Quds in Gatesville, Cape Town, Mufti Menk has also advocated the donning of *hijab* and has supported the idea of a ‘World Hijab Day’ –a day on which non-Muslims would be able to experience wearing *hijab* while simultaneously showing their support for those who face persecution for wearing it on a daily basis.

Always immaculately dressed himself, Mufti Menk’s aesthetic strategy along with his fluent use of Arabic authenticates his performance as a knowledgeable Islamic scholar (Becker 2011:14; Alhourani, 2013). Furthermore, through his words and dress he is promoting the idea of performing Muslimness which can be tied in with Meyer’s

⁶¹ Internationally renowned, Mufti Menk is a highly influential and honoured leader among Muslim Capetonians. Many of them make concerted efforts to attend his lectures when he is in town and he also has a substantial amount of Cape Town based followers on Facebook and Twitter.

(2006:24) argument that “aesthetics is central to the making of religious communities”. This brings me to ask how is it that wearing all-concealing fashion with a headscarf can make it possible to perform ones ‘Muslimness’ and claim belonging to the *umma*?

6.6 Creating belonging through dress:

Birgit Meyer, an anthropologist with a keen interest in lived religion, argues that central to the success of religion lies media as it plays an integral role in the binding of people and the creation of communities (2006, 2009). Meyer (2009) proposes that today the idea of community is best understood in terms of ‘aesthetic formations’. This term is based on Meyer and Verrips’ (2008:21 cited in Meyer 2009) notion of aesthesis which refers to “our total sensory experience of the world and our sensitive knowledge of it” meaning that everything is experienced and created through the senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and sound. Meyer (2009) argues that as opposed to a cognitive experience of the world, the senses allow for a bodily experience. By placing such an emphasis on the body, Meyer (2009) in turn argues that style - the ways in which people do things and the way that in which people appear should not be taken for granted. Perhaps more importantly she states that style is integral to religious aesthetics and communities as it gives the followers of a particular religion a distinctive form - “a shared, recognizable appearance – and thus an identity” (Meyer 2009:11). This resonates well with the idea of performance (as discussed in chapter two) as an “embodied symbolic enactment” (Becker 2011:16) (see also Moosavi 2012).

Meyer’s (2009) proposition is therefore actualised in Cape Town as a number of Muslim women, including the three whose sartorial biographies I discuss in this chapter, are not only open to the ideas of dress promoted by foreign Muslim scholars

but due to the internet they are also open to the styles of *hijab* fashion that are popular in countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. This is evidenced in their dress styles that undoubtedly present their belonging to the global *umma* and which also redefines them as being primarily Muslim thereby rejecting the constructed ethnic labels.

It is of course noteworthy that in Cape Town *hijab* fashion is for the most part practiced among middle-class women who not only have disposable income but who importantly also have access to the internet. As with the internet generally, Facebook in particular exposes local women to international styles of *hijab* fashion as many of them ‘like’ the pages of companies and bloggers (see Lewis and Tarlo, 2011). In order to demonstrate this I will use Hajirah as an example to compare pictures of herself with snapshots from Facebook in order to demonstrate that her style of dress is international and can be accessed on the social networking site. By doing so I demonstrate that self stylization is an important part when performing one’s belonging and I also agree with Meyer and Moors’ (2006) argument that modern imagined communities are these days created through electronic media flows and the processes of globalization.



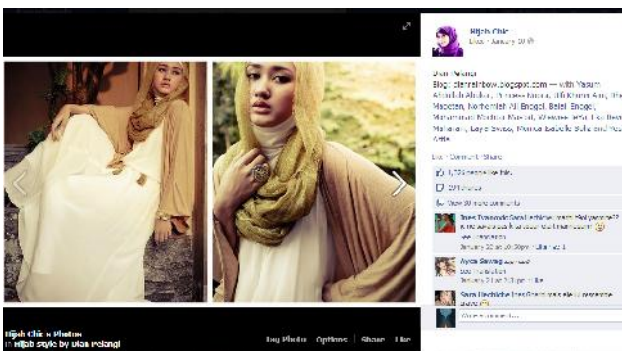
Source: Hajirah

Here Hajirah is on trend with her multi-toned complimentary, volumised scarves. The snood in her neck is multifunctional – as seen in the second picture, if she pleases she can change her look by putting it on her head. These styles are on trend with international ones as the following Facebook screen shots suggest.



Source: Facebook

Pulled from the 'Hijab Fashion' page, this picture reflects Hajirah's scarf and dress style.



Source: Facebook

This picture shows how a snood is loosely draped over an existing scarf - it was downloaded from the 'Hijab Chic' page.



Source: Facebook

Like Hajirah, this model is wearing a headscarf and makes use of contrasting tones which were and still are all the rage – Hijab Chic

What the above pictures and sartorial biographies show is that belonging, in the sense that Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) conceptualizes it⁶², as a social location that is fuelled by emotions and performed through the body, is actualized amongst Muslim women in Cape Town. This is evidenced as they appropriate the fashions that they get exposed to via electronic media in particular and use performance to demonstrate their ‘Muslimness’ thereby creating their belonging to the *umma* and indeed attesting to Meyer’s (2009) proposition of aesthetic formations. Furthermore, what this performance then does aesthetically at least, is contest the ethnic label of ‘Cape Malay’ and visibly challenge it with one that is primarily recognized as Muslim instead. In turn this allows for ‘Cape Malays’ to claim a positive and legitimate spot in the ‘rainbow nation’, a nation in which, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela stated, all of South Africa’s different ethno-racial groups are acknowledged and seen as belonging and coming together as one nation.

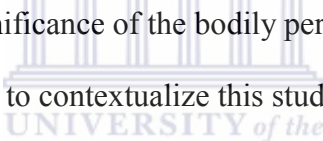
⁶² See Chapter Two.

6.7 Conclusion:

In this chapter I have used the sartorial biographies of Washiela, Ilhaam and Hajirah to show that factors such as death, the aesthetic appeal of garments and the encouragement of friends and family all influence the wearing of *hijab* fashion in Cape Town. I have pointed out that *hijab* fashion emerged in a context where a sense of modest dress already existed among Muslim Capetonian women which made it vital for this form of dress to be fashionable otherwise it would not be regarded as modern given that as Baudrillard (1981 cited in Kawamura 2005:26) argues, “fashion only exists in the framework of modernity”. I then argued that the concept of *hijab* is heavily promoted in all sorts of ways including radio broadcasts and seminars and that this idea of modest dress is replacing the idea of merely dressing ‘decently’ / ‘*ordentlik*’. By making use of Hajirah’s photographs and Facebook screen shots I argued that electronic media and globalisation does indeed influence the local sphere by causing the imagined community to exceed that of the physical and perceived borders of a nation as Meyer and Moors (2006) have argued. Lastly, I have argued that through their use of self stylisation and performance, Muslim women in Cape Town are choosing to be recognised as Muslim South Africans instead of as ‘Cape Malays’ thereby claiming a legitimate spot in contemporary South Africa’s ‘rainbow nation’.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This research has looked at how ‘Cape Malay’ women use self stylisation and performance in order to reconfigure the ‘Cape Malay’ ‘identity’ on both a personal and social level in this current post -apartheid era. I have approached the study from different angles. I have argued that through self stylisation Cape Malay women are performatively creating their belonging to a global Muslim community and are rejecting the ethnicisation of Islam during apartheid. With this in mind, I have explored how the *hijab* fashion market has emerged in the city hand in hand with the Islamization of the public sphere.



In order to demonstrate the significance of the bodily performances of ‘Cape Malay’ women it was necessary for me to contextualize this study. I have particularly drawn on the work of Moors (2009) Lewis (2007), Gökarıksel & Secor (2009) and Tarlo (2007) in order to explore some of the contexts, ways and reasons why women wear *hijab* fashion, such as the changes in lifecycles which was evident with Hajirah who became a wife and mother and Ilhaam who has reached puberty. Furthermore, I have looked at the *hijab* fashion market in Turkey and I have conceptualised the ways in which I use belonging and performance.

In Chapter Three I continued to contextualize the study by providing a historical background on the making and reconfiguration of the ‘Cape Malay’ socio-cultural category during and after apartheid. Drawing on the works of scholars such as Jeppie (2001) and Tayob (2004) I show that in line with the apartheid vision the ‘Cape Malays’

were constructed as a homogenous group of people to whom Islam “belonged”.

Following Tayob (2004), I argue that not all ‘Cape Malays’ were fanatic about this ascribed ‘identity’ as they protested against it and called for its abandonment given that they believed that Islam is a universal religion. With reference to Vahed and Jeppie (2005), I then argued that with globalisation many changes took place in the social and public sphere as Muslims became more observant of their religion. Moving closer to the key theme of my study, I presented and analysed pictures of ‘Cape Malay’ womens’ changing dressing styles.

The core ethnographic chapters explored the Islamic fashion market both off and online. I argued that the offline markets of Vangate Mall and Gatesville are Islamically inclined due to its prayer facilities, *halal* eateries and the presence and products of Middle Eastern and local Muslim traders. Furthermore, I have argued that the performances of the Arab traders are seen as authentic by the shoppers who are not only exposed to a different way of being, but who also *feel* that they belong to the same *umma* thereby giving them reason to express their belonging by buying into the concepts of consumption and self stylisation. On a similar note, I explored the evolution of Islamic wear shops arguing that with the emergence of *hijab* fashion, Islamic wear store owners were either forced to make their clothing ranges more fashionable or delve into other sectors.

I looked at the career path of Gadija Khan, a key protagonist of online *hijab* fashion design and *hijab* fashion shows in Cape Town. I paid attention to how she and other designers bring the concept of *hijab* fashion into the homes of people via Facebook. I argued that online designers give their brands an authentic Islamic ‘identity’ by using

Islamic decorum, terminologies and merging their labels with their self. I argued that this makes the customer- producer relationship more complex and personal than ordinary buyer-seller interactions. In chapter four I also explored *hijab* expos and fashion shows. I demonstrated how designers and other entrepreneurs are encouraging women to wear *hijab* fashion while simultaneously making a profit out of these ventures for either personal or communal gain.

I finally focussed on the self -styling strategies and performances of three visibly Muslim women in Cape Town. I looked at their motivations, style and how they perform their ‘Muslimness’. I applied Meyer’s (2009) proposition of aesthetic formations to show that, with Hajirah as an example, Muslim women in Cape Town are indeed using dress to create modern day communities and their belonging to the global *umma* while simultaneously opposing the ascribed ethnic ‘identity’ imposed on them during the apartheid era.

This turn away from an ethnic ‘identity’ and belonging to a global Islamic one is evident in the performances of ‘Cape Malays’ as visible Muslims but also in 1) the changing vernacular which is replacing words with Indonesian origins with Arabic ones given that as Alhourani (2013) argues Arabic is seen as the authentic sound of Islam and 2) the Islamisation of the public sphere which has seen amongst others, the increase of mosques, Islamic schools, financial institutions and media outlets. For this reason I argue ‘Cape Malays’ are doing away their ethnic label and are replacing it with one that is religious thereby allowing them to claim a belonging to the international and national Muslim community and create a positive, legitimate spot in the rainbow nation as Muslim South Africans.

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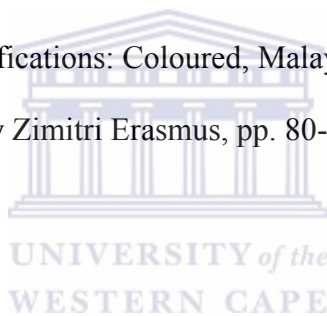
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