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THE IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM TIKTOK ON STUDENTS' DRESS STYLES: A Perspective on Dress Ethics in Islam

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Abstrak: The increasing use of the TikTok platform as a source of fashion reference has the potential to shape their clothing identity, especially in Islamic higher education environments. This research aims to analyze the implications of using TikTok social media on the clothing styles of students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, North Sumatra State Islamic University. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods and a phenomenological approach. There were ten research informants who were selected using a side purposive technique with the criteria of actively using TikTok and having been exposed to fashion content on the platform. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. Data were analyzed using interactive analysis techniques which included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The research results show that TikTok shapes students' fashion references through repeated exposure to content, then influences changes in the way they dress. However, students do not become passive consumers because they carry out a process of filtering trends based on Islamic law, campus norms, comfort and personal identity before adopting them. These findings have implications for strengthening digital literacy, social media ethics education, and fostering dress culture in Islamic universities. It is recommended that further research examine the influence of social media on clothing identity in other higher education contexts to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

Keyword: TikTok; Fashion Style; Self-Identity; Students; Digital Communication.

INTRODUCTION

The development of social media has brought about significant changes in various aspects of people's lives, particularly in how they obtain information, communicate, and shape their lifestyles (Madhani et al., 2021). One social media platform that has experienced rapid growth in recent years is TikTok. According to 2024 data from GoodStats, the number of TikTok users in Indonesia reached approximately 157 million in July 2024. This figure indicates that Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest number of TikTok users in the world. The high number of users demonstrates that TikTok has an extremely wide reach and the potential to influence various aspects of people's lives, including the way young people think, their consumption patterns, and their lifestyles. Through the For You Page (FYP) feature, users continuously receive various content recommendations tailored to their digital activities, thereby increasing the intensity of their exposure to specific content (Fitriyani et al., 2026; Sandu, 2026). One type of content that is highly sought after by TikTok users is fashion and style content. Various content creators actively share information about the latest fashion trends, outfit recommendations, tutorials on mixing and matching clothes, and inspiration for popular styles (Fitri & Ananta, 2025; Kemple, 2024).

The phenomenon of high TikTok usage among the younger generation can be understood through the Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch. This theory explains that individuals are active media users who consciously choose media to fulfill various needs, such as obtaining information, seeking entertainment, building personal identity, and engaging in social interaction (Karunia H et al., 2021). In the context of this study, college students do not use TikTok solely as a form of entertainment but also as a source of information on fashion trends, a reference for clothing styles, and inspiration for developing their personal appearance. Thus, the use of TikTok is viewed as an activity driven by students' need to obtain information relevant to their social lives and identities.

Fashion in the digital era is no longer understood simply as fulfilling clothing needs, but has evolved into an integral part of an individual's social identity construction. The way a person dresses not only reflects their taste in clothing but also represents their values, personality, group affiliation, lifestyle, and even the religious identity they wish to convey to their social environment. From a social interaction perspective, clothing functions as a form of nonverbal communication that allows individuals to build self-image, express character, and gain recognition from their social groups. Therefore, various fashion trends developed through social media not only influence clothing preferences but also influence the process of identity formation and negotiation amidst the ever-evolving dynamics of digital culture (Lee et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, the formation of student fashion styles is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by various factors, such as family environment, peers, campus culture, level of religiosity, and socioeconomic conditions. In this context, TikTok is suspected to be one of the media platforms contributing to the formation of student fashion preferences and styles. However, the full implications of using this platform still

require empirical evidence. Therefore, this research is important to examine whether the use of TikTok is truly a factor that has implications for students' fashion styles or is only one factor that interacts with religious values, culture, and the social environment in shaping students' clothing preferences.

Students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra were selected as the focus of this study because they have a unique social context in terms of their response to developments in digital fashion. On the one hand, they are active social media users who are exposed daily to various fashion trends through TikTok. On the other hand, an academic environment grounded in Islamic values shapes students' perspectives on dress codes and behavior in public spaces. The interplay between exposure to digital culture and this Islamic-based educational environment creates an intriguing dynamic, as students are not only faced with the choice of following trends but must also weigh the compatibility of those trends with religious values, campus norms, and their personal identities. It is this characteristic that makes students of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication a relevant subject for examining the implications of TikTok use on fashion styles. Therefore, the way one dresses is not merely a matter of personal appearance but is also tied to the representation of their Islamic identity. This situation indicates that the process of identity formation through fashion is not merely about following trends but involves a process of negotiation between digital culture and the religious values held by students (Abdurrahman et al., 2024).

In Islamic teachings, clothing serves not only to protect the body but is also part of obedience to religious commandments. Islam teaches its followers to wear clothing that covers the aurat, is not tight-fitting, is not see-through, and does not resemble the clothing of the opposite sex. In addition, Muslims are encouraged to dress modestly, cleanly, and without excessive self-display. These guidelines aim to preserve the honor, dignity, and identity of a Muslim in social life (Purhasanah et al., 2023). Indonesia itself is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), in 2024 Indonesia's population reached over 281 million, with approximately 244 million identifying as Muslim. Data on the Global Muslim Population cited by Times Prayer in 2025 also indicates that Indonesia ranks first as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. This situation demonstrates that Islamic values exert a strong influence on the social life of Indonesian society, including in the aspect of dress (Siregar et al., 2025a).

This phenomenon has become increasingly relevant amid the rising consumption of fashion content on social media, particularly TikTok. Research by Masda et al. (2024) shows that college students use TikTok as a source of fashion information because it offers engaging, easy-to-apply content and makes it simple to purchase products. Meanwhile, Badik's (2026) study emphasizes that college students still need to filter fashion trends to avoid falling into consumerist behavior and to continue considering their identity and dress ethics. These findings indicate that TikTok's influence on college students' fashion styles is a real phenomenon that warrants further study, particularly in the context of Islamic universities.

On the other hand, not all fashion trends developing on TikTok align with Islamic values. Much fashion content on TikTok showcases modern clothing styles solely focused on aesthetics and popularity, without considering compliance with Islamic law. This situation creates a dilemma for some Muslim students, particularly those in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, between the desire to follow current fashion trends and the obligation to uphold Islamic values in their attire. Thus, students are not only faced with the choice of following digital fashion trends but also with the need to align their fashion with their Islamic identity and prevailing academic norms on campus.

Prior to conducting the research, the researchers conducted a preliminary study to gain an initial understanding of the phenomenon under study. This preliminary study involved observing the use of TikTok by students of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra and conducting initial interviews with several students who actively use the platform. The results of this preliminary study indicate that TikTok is not only used for entertainment but also as a reference source for determining daily fashion styles.

Based on these initial observations, it was found that some students from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication actively use TikTok and follow various accounts discussing fashion, outfit of the day (OOTD), lifestyle, and viral clothing trends. Some students admitted to drawing inspiration for their clothing styles from this content and applying it to their daily lives. However, others strive to filter the fashion trends they see to ensure they remain in line with campus norms and Islamic law. This situation indicates that students do not necessarily follow all fashion trends developing on social media, but rather engage in a process of negotiation between the influence of digital culture and their religious values.

Based on several previous studies, three main trends were identified. First, the influence of social media on the behavior of the younger generation. Madhani et al. (2021) showed that social media influences the behavior and lifestyle of Muslim students. Second, research on social media and consumption behavior and fashion. Abdurrahman et al. (2024) also found that social media can influence the consumer behavior of the younger generation, including fashion purchases. Third, research on Islamic identity and dress etiquette. Research by Toyyib et al. (2026) explains that digital popular culture has become a crucial space for Millennials and Generation Z Muslims to construct and negotiate their Islamic identities. The study shows that social media serves not only as a means of religious expression but also as a meeting place for religious values, lifestyle, popular culture, and digital economic interests.

However, these three trends from several studies still show several limitations. Most studies discuss the influence of social media in general on the behavior of the younger generation, fashion consumption behavior, and the construction of Islamic identity separately. To date, there is still very limited research that specifically integrates these three aspects: the use of TikTok as a dominant social media platform, the formation of student fashion styles, and the negotiation process between digital fashion trends and Islamic

values in the context of Islamic higher education. Thus, there are still gaps in both the study aspect and the research context that need to be filled.

This research gap highlights the importance of this study. This research not only seeks to identify the implications of TikTok use on student fashion styles but also examines how students interpret, filter, and adapt fashion trends obtained from TikTok to Islamic values and prevailing norms within the campus environment. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of TikTok use, student fashion styles, and the negotiation of Islamic identity within a single analytical framework within the context of students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. Unlike previous research that tends to examine social media, fashion, or Islamic identity separately, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms by which students adopt digital fashion trends without neglecting the Islamic values that are integral to their identities.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the implications of TikTok use on student fashion styles at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, and to examine how students filter and negotiate digital fashion trends with Islamic values in shaping their fashion styles. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of studies on social media, fashion, and religious identity, as well as serve as evaluation material in strengthening digital literacy and Islamic values in Islamic higher education environments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was chosen because this study focuses on the informants' subjective interpretations of the phenomena they experience firsthand. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to gain an understanding of how students interpret TikTok's influence on their fashion style and how they filter fashion trends to ensure they remain consistent with Islamic values and campus norms. The material object of this study is students' use of the social media platform TikTok and their experiences in accessing fashion content, while the formal object is the implications of TikTok use on their fashion styles and the process of negotiating their Islamic identity. The study was conducted from May 2025 to February 2026. The research was conducted from May 2025 to February 2026 at locations tailored to the informants' whereabouts and activities related to TikTok use and fashion styles.

Throughout the research process, the researcher applied the principle of epoché, which involves setting aside assumptions, judgments, and personal experiences regarding TikTok use and fashion styles. Furthermore, the researcher employed bracketing, which involves temporarily setting aside personal beliefs, knowledge, and interpretations during the interview process and data analysis. Through this process, the research focus was directed toward the experiences shared by the informants so that the research results would better reflect the reality they experienced rather than the researcher's interpretations. The final

stage of the analysis aimed to uncover the essence of these experiences by identifying key themes from the interviews, such as TikTok as a fashion reference, changes in fashion style, filtering trends based on Islamic law and campus norms, and the negotiation of Islamic identity. These themes are then interpreted to gain an understanding of the students' experiences in interpreting the implications of TikTok use on their dress styles (Creswell, 2018).

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique for selecting informants based on specific considerations, who are considered to have the most knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Sugiyono, 2022). Informants were selected based on the following criteria: 1) active students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra; (2) aged 18–24; (3) have an active TikTok account and have used it for at least one year; (4) regularly access TikTok for at least one hour per day; (5) follow accounts or content related to fashion, lifestyle, outfit of the day (OOTD), Muslim fashion, or other clothing trends; (6) have been inspired or have applied fashion trends from TikTok in their daily lives; and (7) are willing to participate in this research. Based on these criteria, this study involved 10 informants. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which occurs when the data obtained is repeated and no significant new information is found.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation with informants, while secondary data was obtained from books, scientific journals, articles, documents, and other relevant references. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings of informants regarding the use of TikTok and its implications for fashion style. Observations were made of informants' fashion style, TikTok usage activities, and fashion content that became their reference, while documentation included screenshots of TikTok content, photos of research activities, and other supporting documents.

Data analysis utilized the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2020). The analysis was conducted continuously from the data collection process until themes representing the informants' experiences were identified. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to enhance the credibility of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Exposure to TikTok Fashion Content as a Source of Reference for College Students' Fashion Style

1. TikTok Usage Intensity

According to interviews with ten TikTok user informants, all of them access the app regularly every day for varying durations of between one and four hours. While the intensity varies, TikTok is one of the most frequently accessed social media platforms and serves not only for entertainment but also as a source of fashion inspiration, especially before leaving for college.

Several informants (AG and AB) actively access TikTok to search for outfit references before going out. As AG stated, *"If I want to find a college outfit, I always open TikTok first... there are lots of examples that are easy to copy."* A similar pattern was seen with AB, who checks TikTok at night before preparing the next day's outfit.

Other informants (IAR and DAL) obtain fashion references more passively, finding outfit content in their free time without specific searches. Meanwhile, RN and MF stated that the influence of their fashion style emerged gradually due to repeated exposure to FYP content. RN said, *"What appears most frequently on FYP is outfit content or OOTDs, so over time, I'm influenced by their clothing style."*

Four other informants (SPT, NA, YS, FR) use TikTok as their primary source of fashion references, even considering it more varied than Instagram. SPT said, *"Compared to Instagram, I use TikTok more often. The content is more varied... there's a lot I can immediately copy."*

Overall, these findings indicate that high levels of TikTok usage—both active and passive—result in students being constantly exposed to fashion content through the For You Page (FYP). The more frequently the app is accessed, the greater the likelihood of encountering fashion references that subsequently influence daily clothing choices. Thus, TikTok is no longer merely a form of entertainment but a digital space that continuously shapes its users' visual references for personal style.

2. The Role of the For Your Page (FYP) Algorithm

The interview results show that all informants are aware of the role of the FYP algorithm in displaying fashion content based on their activity on TikTok. The content that appears is not random but is tailored to their viewing history, liked videos, and accounts they follow, so students are repeatedly exposed to fashion content without having to search for it specifically.

Some informants (IAR, AG, AB) felt that the more they interacted with fashion content, the more similar recommendations appeared. As IAR put it, *"If I look at outfits often, my FYP is full of outfits all the time."* AG experienced something similar after liking several pieces of student outfit content.

A different pattern was found among DAL, RN, MF, and SPT, who rarely use the search feature because fashion-related content appears automatically on their FYP. RN said, *“At first, I was just watching for entertainment, but because I often spent a while watching outfit videos, my FYP started showing a lot of fashion content, even though I wasn’t looking for it.”* This experience shows that TikTok’s algorithm gradually builds a digital environment that increases exposure to fashion content, so that students become more familiar with various clothing styles that repeatedly appear on the FYP.

Meanwhile, NA, YS, and FR realized that simple activities like liking a video, watching it all the way through, or pausing longer on a particular video also influence subsequent recommendations. FR explained, *“I wasn’t looking for them, but because I often watch them all the way through, more and more similar videos start appearing.”* This shows that the algorithm works not only based on search queries but also on user behavior patterns, so that trends that were initially just viewed are gradually perceived as attractive clothing style alternatives worth trying.

Even so, not all informants immediately followed the algorithm’s recommendations. Some used FYP content only as initial inspiration, which they then adapted to their personal preferences, the clothes they owned, campus norms, and Islamic values. Thus, TikTok’s algorithm serves to broaden students’ fashion references, while the final decision to adopt a trend remains a matter of individual judgment.

3. Fashion Accounts You Follow

The interview results also showed that most informants follow creators’ accounts that discuss Muslim women’s fashion, OOTD, and college students’ fashion styles. These findings suggest that exposure to fashion content is shaped not only by TikTok’s algorithm but also by users’ active choices in selecting which accounts to follow. AB chooses to follow Muslim women’s fashion accounts that align with her Islamic identity: *“I follow Muslim women’s fashion accounts because they offer a lot of inspiration for college—so I can stay fashionable while still dressing modestly.”* This indicates that the filtering of fashion trends begins as early as the stage of selecting reference sources.

Six other informants (AG, IAR, DAL, RN, MF, SPT) preferred creators who shared college OOTDs or practical casual styles suitable for class activities and easy to pair with the clothes they already own. This suggests that students consider the relevance of content to their campus attire needs, rather than simply following popular accounts.

Meanwhile, NA chose accounts based on personal taste, YS followed casual-style creators whose content suited her daily activities, while FR initially searched for fashion accounts by accident but eventually followed accounts whose content she felt matched her style. This variation shows that the process of selecting accounts is influenced by each individual’s background and preferences.

Overall, the students did not passively consume fashion content but rather selected creators relevant to their academic needs. The fashion references they obtain result from the interaction between users’ active choices and TikTok’s algorithmic

recommendations, which are then reevaluated based on personal identity, campus norms, and Islamic values before being applied in daily life.

4. TikTok as a Fashion Reference Source

All informants view TikTok as a platform that makes it easier for them to find outfit inspiration before heading out. DAL said, *"If I'm unsure what to wear, I look for ideas on TikTok first, then see which ones match the clothes I already own."* This shows that TikTok is no longer just entertainment, but a practical source of inspiration for making outfit decisions.

AG and AB echoed this sentiment, using TikTok as their first step before deciding on an outfit, which they then adjust based on their personal circumstances, their wardrobe, and what's appropriate for the campus environment. A similar pattern was observed among IAR, RN, MF, and SPT, who use TikTok to visualize clothing combinations before adapting them to their individual needs and comfort levels.

Meanwhile, NA and YS seek inspiration based on their personal style preferences, whereas FR does not always intentionally look for references—outfit content that repeatedly appears on the FYP indirectly influences her style choices. This variation indicates that the process of forming fashion references is not uniform but is influenced by how each student interacts with the platform.

Overall, TikTok has become the primary source for students to obtain visual fashion references, as well as a space to interpret trends and adapt them to their personal clothing styles and needs. These findings show that fashion references are formed through a combination of usage intensity, the FYP algorithm's mechanisms, and the selection of accounts followed—not merely through intentional information-seeking, but through continuous visual exposure. These results expand upon the Uses and Gratifications Theory, as students' use of TikTok serves not only to obtain information and entertainment but also to build fashion references that form part of their self-identity as students at an Islamic university.

Changes in Students' Fashion Styles Due to Exposure to TikTok Content

1. Increased Clothing References

Informants experienced an increase in clothing references after actively using TikTok. The recurring fashion content provided a wide selection of clothing styles, color combinations, and styles that could be applied daily. AG stated, *"Now, if I want outfit inspiration, I look at TikTok first, because there are so many examples that are suitable for college."* This indicates that TikTok's initial impact was cognitive, namely, increasing students' knowledge of alternative clothing styles that had not previously been considered.

Similar experiences were shared by AB (more diverse Muslim fashion references), IAR and DAL (more casual style alternatives), RN (more OOTD choices), MF, SPT, and NA (increased insight into various styles and colors), and YS and FR (expanded casual style choices for activities outside of class). Although all informants gained

additional references, the way they utilized them differed—some made TikTok their primary source of inspiration, while others only took specific ideas that suited their needs and clothing style.

Phenomenologically, the increase in clothing references represents the initial stage of change due to exposure to TikTok content. These references aren't passively accepted, but rather interpreted as inspiration, which is then selected, adapted, or ignored based on the students' personal preferences and life context. Thus, the implications of TikTok use at this stage are evident in expanding fashion knowledge and references before students decide to adopt a particular style of dress.

2. Creativity in Mixing and Matching Outfits

In addition to gaining new inspiration, students also experienced a shift in how they mix and match their existing clothes, becoming bolder in combining colors, styles, and accessories. IAR said, *"I've become brave enough to try color combinations I've never worn before because, after seeing them on TikTok, the results turned out great."* This shows that TikTok not only provides inspiration but also encourages the courage to experiment.

Similar experiences were shared by AG and AB (who became bolder in mixing clothing and hijab colors), DAL, RN, and MF (who tried mixing formal and casual styles along with accessories), while SPT, NA, YS, and FR preferred to repurpose the clothes they already owned to make them look appealing without buying new ones. This variety shows that students aren't merely imitating creators but adapting these references to suit their individual needs and personalities. However, not all references are applied immediately. Some participants still consider comfort, suitability for campus activities, and appropriateness before adopting combinations they've seen on TikTok—demonstrating that creative dressing involves a balance between digital inspiration and personal values.

From a phenomenological perspective, TikTok encourages college students to become more creative while also shaping their process of adapting to the visual references they encounter. This creativity stems from the process of selecting, interpreting, and adapting inspiration from TikTok to their existing wardrobe, personal character, and cherished norms; as a result, the resulting personal style is the product of interpretation, not merely the imitation of digital trends.

3. Increased Attention to Appearance

The study also showed that using TikTok has made students more concerned with their appearance, both in terms of aesthetics, neatness, and appropriateness to the situation. DAL said, *"Now I pay more attention to my appearance when I go to campus. It doesn't have to be new clothes, but neater and more appropriate to wear."* This suggests that TikTok is changing the way students interpret appearance as part of their social identity—a self-representation that reflects neatness, appropriateness, and confidence.

Similar experiences were shared by AG and AB (paying more attention to neatness and appropriateness of clothing for the campus), IAR, RN, and MF (being more conscious of their appearance without abandoning their casual style), while SPT, NA,

YS, and FR emphasized choosing neat and matching clothing without constantly buying new clothes. This variation indicates that attention to appearance is interpreted differently by each student, from increasing self-confidence to simply maintaining neatness.

However, attention to appearance does not mean having to follow all TikTok trends informants still consider politeness, campus norms, and Islamic values. Phenomenologically, exposure to fashion content on TikTok not only increases attention to appearance, but also shapes the way students interpret clothing as part of their identity—not just following trends, but rather an effort to present themselves neatly, politely, and in accordance with their social environment and the values they believe in.

The study's findings also show that using TikTok has made students pay more attention to their appearance—in terms of aesthetics, neatness, and appropriateness for the situation. DAL said, “Now I pay more attention to my appearance when I go to campus. It doesn't have to be new clothes, but they should be neater and appropriate for the occasion.” This shows that TikTok is changing the way students perceive appearance as part of their social identity—a self-representation that reflects neatness, appropriateness, and self-confidence.

Similar experiences were shared by AG and AB (paying more attention to neatness and the appropriateness of their outfits for campus), IAR, RN, and MF (being more conscious of their appearance without abandoning a casual style), while SPT, NA, YS, and FR placed greater emphasis on choosing neat and coordinated outfits without always buying new clothes. These variations indicate that attention to appearance is interpreted differently by each student, ranging from boosting self-confidence to simply maintaining neatness.

Nevertheless, attention to appearance is not interpreted as an obligation to follow every TikTok trend—the informants still take into account modesty, campus norms, and Islamic values. From a phenomenological perspective, exposure to fashion content on TikTok not only increases attention to appearance but also shapes how students interpret dressing as part of their self-identity—not merely following trends, but rather an effort to present themselves in a neat, modest manner that is appropriate for their social environment and the values they hold.

4. Growing Interest in Fashion Products

Exposure to fashion content on TikTok has also sparked students' interest in various fashion products featured by content creators. Several informants admitted to having purchased clothing or accessories after seeing recommendations on TikTok. As explained by SPT, “When I see a nice outfit, sometimes I want to buy it too, especially if someone gives a review.” This statement shows that the visual presentation and reviews from creators are able to spark students' interest in a product. The resulting impact is not only an interest in clothing styles but also a desire to own products that align with their preferences.

AG and AB shared similar experiences, admitting they had been drawn to clothing, hijabs, and accessories after seeing creators' recommendations on TikTok. However, unlike them, IAR, DAL, RN, MF, and NA emphasized that this interest does not always lead to a purchase decision, as they still consider the product's necessity, price, and practicality. Meanwhile, YS and FR admitted that they often find themselves drawn to products they see on TikTok, but prefer to use them as a reference rather than actually buying them.

The findings indicate that fashion content can spark students' interest in a product through engaging visual presentations and the content creators' personal experiences with the product. However, purchasing decisions are still influenced by considerations of need, financial capacity, and the product's compatibility with the students' personal style. Some informants also admitted to having been tempted to buy a product after seeing a creator's review on TikTok, but ultimately decided against it because they felt the product was not yet a necessity or did not align with their financial situation. These findings indicate the presence of a "negative case"—namely, that exposure to fashion content does not always lead to consumer behavior but also triggers a negotiation process before students decide to purchase or reject a product. This demonstrates that students retain control over their consumption decisions.

5. Growing Awareness of Emerging Trends

The interview results also showed that students became more quickly aware of fashion trends after actively using TikTok. Information about the latest clothing styles, colors, and fashion trends was repeatedly obtained through the For You Page (FYP). As YS explained, *"Now I know which clothing styles are trending because they appear on TikTok almost every day."* This statement indicates that TikTok accelerates students' access to information about fashion trends. Repeated exposure to content makes it easier for students to recognize popular trends without having to search for them specifically.

A similar experience was shared by AG and AB, who admitted that they learn about trends in colors, clothing styles, and Muslim women's fashion more quickly through content that appears on TikTok. However, the informants' experiences were not entirely the same. IAR and DAL stated that they had become more open to new trends even though they did not always follow them, whereas RN, MF, SPT, NA, and FR used this information more as a basis for consideration before deciding on a style of dress that suited their needs.

This statement indicates that TikTok accelerates the dissemination of information about fashion trends among college students. However, being aware of trends is not always accompanied by a desire to adopt them immediately. From a phenomenological perspective, the informants' experiences show that TikTok serves as a medium that accelerates the dissemination of information about fashion trends, but the process of accepting these trends still involves personal judgment and negotiation. College students do not view every trend as something they must follow, but rather as a reference to be selected based on their needs, personal identity, and the social and religious values they hold.

Students' Process of Screening Fashion Trends

1. Screening Based on Islamic Law

Interview results show that all informants consider Islamic law as a primary consideration before following fashion trends on TikTok. Although many of the content attracts attention, students do not immediately copy them if they perceive them to be in conflict with Islamic dress codes.

AB stated, *"I first check whether they are in accordance with Islamic law. If the clothes are too tight or revealing, I usually don't follow them."* Similar sentiments were expressed by AG (considering modesty before adopting a style), IAR (only adopting certain features such as sleeve styles or colors), DAL (screening for suitability with Islamic teachings), RN and MF (maintaining modesty), SPT (modifying trends to align with Islamic values), and NA, YS, and FR, who also always consider Islamic law compliance before adapting a style.

These findings indicate that students are aware of evaluating each trend before adopting it—exposure to digital content does not automatically change their dressing style, as each reference is first compared with their understanding of Islamic dress codes. Religious values serve as the primary framework for fashion decisions, with students more often drawing inspiration from specific aspects (color combinations, sleeve styles, and how to style clothing) rather than imitating the overall style of creators.

While all informants agreed on using Islamic law as a basis, some remained interested in following certain trends, adopting only elements deemed appropriate because the original designs did not meet the requirements for modesty (*awrah*). This confirms that Islamic law is the most dominant consideration in selecting fashion trends, followed by campus norms and personal comfort in determining the appropriateness of a trend for everyday use.

2. Screening Based on Campus Norms

In addition to Islamic law, students also pay attention to dress codes on campus. As students in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, they recognize the need to display a modest appearance that reflects an Islamic-based academic environment.

DAL stated, *"For lectures, I first consider whether it's appropriate to wear. Even if it's trendy, it's not necessarily appropriate to wear to campus."* Similar sentiments were expressed by AG (separating styles for entertainment content and styles for campus), AB (considering the appropriateness of Muslim attire for the academic environment), IAR (adjusting casual styles to maintain appropriateness), RN and MF (considering appropriateness before wearing on campus), SPT (being more selective to maintain the image of students in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication), and NA, YS, and FR, who also considered campus norms before following popular trends on TikTok.

These findings indicate that students' clothing decisions are influenced not only by personal preferences but also by the social context in which they wear them they

differentiate between clothing for social media and clothing appropriate for academic settings. Campus norms serve as a social control mechanism that shapes how students interpret fashion trends, ensuring that aesthetic aspects remain aligned with the values of the educational environment. Some clothing styles are considered appropriate off-campus but not during class demonstrating that students' clothing choices differ based on the social context in which they operate.

3. Filtering Based on Comfort and Personal Identity

The research also shows that in addition to Islamic law and campus norms, comfort is also an important consideration before students adopt fashion trends, as not all popular styles on TikTok align with their character and habits. FR stated, "If I'm not comfortable wearing it, I don't follow it. I choose what truly suits me." Similar sentiments were expressed by AG and AB (choosing styles that are comfortable and make me feel confident, not just viral), IAR and DAL (who consider comfort a primary consideration because visually appealing trends aren't necessarily comfortable), RN and MF (maintaining a style that aligns with their personal character), SPT (consistent with their own clothing identity), and NA and YS, who also maintain their personal preferences and only follow trends that truly align with their comfort.

These findings indicate that students don't position trends as something they must always follow—their clothing decisions are more influenced by comfort than by the desire to follow trends. Personal identity plays a crucial role in this screening process: students first evaluate a trend's suitability to Islamic law, then campus norms, and finally, comfort and personal identity, before deciding to adopt, modify, or reject a trend. Thus, clothing decisions are the result of a negotiation of various values, not simply a result of exposure to TikTok content.

The Formation of Self-Identity Through Digital Fashion

1. Fashion as a Form of Self-Expression

Interview results show that students view fashion as a way to express themselves in daily life. For the informants, clothing serves not only as a basic necessity but also as a medium to showcase their character, personality, and how they want to be perceived by others. As AG stated, "I think clothes reflect our personality. People usually judge us at first glance based on how we dress." AB also noted that her choice of attire—particularly when selecting modest Muslim clothing—is part of how she wants to present herself to others. IAR added that the casual style she chooses reflects her laid-back personality and aversion to excess.

DAL stated that, for her, clothing is a way to demonstrate neatness and seriousness as a college student. RN and MF expressed similar views, seeing their style of dress as part of how they create a first impression on others. SPT added that her clothing choices reflect how she wants to be perceived in both social and academic settings.

NA, YS, and FR also expressed similar views, stating that for them, fashion is not merely about following trends, but rather a way to express their individual identities. These statements indicate that students view fashion as a form of nonverbal

communication capable of representing personal identity. The way one dresses is part of the process of building a self-image within a social environment; thus, clothing choices are no longer based solely on practical function but also on the meaning one wishes to convey to others. These findings show that the experience of using TikTok broadens students' perspectives on fashion. The content they consume not only provides visual references but also fosters an awareness that appearance can be part of self-representation in a social context.

2. Negotiating Digital Trends and Islamic Values

Research findings indicate that college students do not fully embrace fashion trends from TikTok. Instead, they engage in a process of negotiation by adapting these trends based on the Islamic values they hold. As expressed by IAR, "I just take the idea, but I adjust it so that it still covers my aurat." AG also stated that she only takes certain elements from a trend, such as a clothing style, and then adapts them to ensure they still cover her aurat. AB expressed a similar view, noting that the trends she sees on TikTok are always modified first to ensure they align with Islamic dress codes for Muslim women.

DAL stated that she never follows trends in their entirety but instead filters them first to ensure they remain consistent with the Islamic values she adheres to. RN and MF also expressed the same sentiment, namely that they always adapt the trends they see to the Islamic guidelines for dress. SPT added that this modification process is carried out to ensure that the trends they follow do not conflict with their beliefs.

NA, YS, and FR also shared similar experiences, noting that fashion trends from TikTok always undergo a process of adaptation to Islamic values before being fully incorporated into their daily lives. These statements indicate that the adoption of fashion trends occurs through interpretation and adaptation. The students do not view all digital trends as something that must be followed; rather, they select specific elements that remain consistent with Islamic principles of dress. Thus, fashion trends undergo a process of modification before being incorporated into daily life. This finding demonstrates that TikTok's influence on dress styles is not direct but is mediated by the students' value systems. This phenomenon reveals a mechanism of identity negotiation the process by which students reconcile digital culture with their Islamic identity before determining how to dress. This mechanism is a significant finding because it shows that students continue to play an active role in constructing their identities amid the rapid flow of digital information. Although all informants engaged in this negotiation process, the forms of adaptation varied. Some altered only specific details, such as sleeve styles or garment lengths, while others chose not to follow trends if they deemed them too far removed from the Islamic values they uphold.

3. Identity as a Student in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication

In addition to religious values, the formation of student identity is also influenced by the academic environment. Informants recognized that being a student in the

Faculty of Da'wah and Communication carries a moral responsibility to maintain their appearance in public spaces.

YS stated, *"As a Da'wah student, I have to be careful about how I dress because people will definitely judge us based on our appearance."* Similar sentiments were expressed by AG (maintaining neatness as a representation of the faculty), AB (being more careful in choosing styles in public spaces and on social media), IAR and DAL (maintaining a modest impression while following fashion trends), RN and MF (presenting an appearance that reflects da'wah values), SPT (considering the image of a Da'wah student), and NA and FR, who also use their faculty identity as a reminder to dress modestly and in accordance with Islamic values.

These findings indicate that academic identity influences students' clothing decisions, as they view their appearance as a representation of the educational institution and the values they are studying—thus striving to keep up with current trends without losing their sense of modesty and conformity to the campus environment.

Phenomenologically, the identity of a student in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication strengthens the process of filtering fashion trends. The formation of a fashion identity takes place through negotiations between digital culture, Islamic law, campus norms, and personal comfort and identity, so that fashion trends are not accepted in their entirety, but are selected, modified, or rejected according to the values believed in.

The Impact of TikTok on the Dress Style of Students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra

Based on the findings, TikTok's influence on students' dress style occurs in several stages. Exposure to fashion content broadens their references for dressing, ultimately influencing how they select and coordinate their outfits. However, this influence does not occur directly, as each reference first undergoes a filtering process aligned with Islamic values, campus norms, and students' personal identities. This indicates that the use of TikTok contributes to a shift in how students view fashion as part of their social lives.

These findings can be explained through the Uses and Gratifications theory proposed by Elihu Katz. This theory explains that individuals actively use media to fulfill specific needs, such as obtaining information, entertainment, personal identity, or social integration. In the context of this study, students utilize TikTok to obtain fashion references because the platform is able to provide information that aligns with users' needs and interests. This indicates that students are not merely passive users but have specific goals when accessing fashion content on TikTok (Arifin, 2022).

Furthermore, TikTok's influence is also shaped by its algorithmic mechanisms, which operate based on user preferences. These algorithms ensure that content relevant to users' interests continues to appear repeatedly, thereby fostering a more intensive pattern of information consumption (Putri & Prakoso, 2025). This process demonstrates that the

algorithm does not directly alter dressing behavior but shapes initial preferences that subsequently influence how students evaluate a fashion trend.

The changes experienced by students are not only related to clothing choices but also to how they interpret their appearance. Appearance is understood as a symbol that can convey a person's identity, character, and values. This perspective aligns with the theory of Symbolic Interactionism proposed by George Herbert Mead, which explains that humans construct meaning through symbols in social interactions. Clothing is one such symbol; thus, changes in dress style can be understood as part of the process of constructing meaning about oneself and one's social environment.

In the context of students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UIN North Sumatra, the symbols constructed through their attire are not only related to personal image but also represent their identity as students at an Islamic university. Therefore, appearance is understood as a form of nonverbal communication that reflects Islamic values, politeness, and the academic culture prevailing on campus. The findings of this study also demonstrate that the influence of TikTok is not deterministic. Students still have the ability to reflect before applying various fashion references they obtain from social media. In other words, social media provides a variety of alternative clothing styles, but the final decision remains the individual's based on their experiences, needs, and values. This demonstrates that students play an active role in constructing meaning from the information they receive.

The results of this study align with research by Madhani et al. (2021), which states that social media influences student behavior and lifestyle. Research by Abdurrahman et al. (2024) also shows that social media plays a role in shaping the younger generation's interest in fashion products. Unlike previous research that focused more on changes in consumer behavior or clothing styles due to social media, this study offers a different perspective, finding that TikTok's influence extends beyond changing clothing behavior to shaping how students interpret fashion as part of their social identity and academic lives. However, not all students adopt the trends they see. Some simply take inspiration, others modify trends to suit their needs, and some even reject certain trends because they are deemed inconsistent with Islamic law or campus norms.

Based on a phenomenological perspective, students' experiences demonstrate that changes in fashion style result from interpreting digital experiences while using TikTok. Fashion is not adopted entirely from social media, but rather reinterpreted through personal experiences, social environments, and shared values. Therefore, TikTok's influence on fashion style is not a direct imitation, but rather a reflective construction of meaning within students' lives.

Theoretically, these findings expand the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory by demonstrating that students' needs in using TikTok extend beyond entertainment and information to construct fashion references that contribute to the formation of self-identity. Practically, this research demonstrates the importance of strengthening digital literacy, character education, and fostering ethical dress codes in Islamic universities so

that students can use social media critically without neglecting Islamic values and prevailing academic culture.

TikTok as a Medium for Shaping Student Fashion References

Research results show that TikTok has developed into a media platform that plays a significant role in shaping the fashion references of students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. This role is inseparable from TikTok's ability to present information visually, concisely, engagingly, and easily understood by users. Various content, such as outfit of the day (OOTD), mix-and-match clothing, Muslimah fashion, and college outfit recommendations, provide alternative clothing styles that can serve as inspiration for students. This situation indicates that TikTok functions not only as an entertainment medium but also as a learning tool that broadens students' horizons regarding fashion trends.

These findings can be explained through Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura (Yanuardianto, 2019). According to Bandura, individuals can learn new behaviors through observational learning of others who are considered role models. This learning process includes attention, information retention, behavioral reproduction, and motivation. In this study, fashion content creators on TikTok served as role models observed by students. Content that attracts attention will be stored in memory, then become a reference when students determine their choice of fashion style.

This process indicates that students do not acquire fashion references through direct experience, but rather through vicarious experience by observing various content featured on TikTok. The more frequently students are exposed to fashion content, the more knowledge they gain about clothing styles, color combinations, the use of accessories, and how to adapt outfits to various activities. Thus, TikTok functions as a social learning space that enables students to build knowledge about fashion through the process of observation. In addition to being influenced by the learning process through observation, the formation of fashion references is also supported by TikTok's algorithmic system. The algorithm on the For You Page (FYP) automatically displays content tailored to a user's interaction history. The more frequently students watch, like, save, or share fashion content, the more recommendations for similar content they receive. This leads to repeated exposure to fashion information, thereby reinforcing the learning process and expanding students' references regarding clothing styles (Kemple, 2024; Lee et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the research findings indicate that students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UIN North Sumatra do not solely consider aesthetic aspects when using TikTok as a fashion reference. The research findings indicate that the references they obtain are always linked to their identity as students at an Islamic university, ensuring that the learning process via TikTok remains within the bounds of Islamic values and the campus's academic culture. Thus, Islamic identity serves as a moderating factor in TikTok's influence on the formation of students' fashion references.

In the perspective of Social Learning Theory, behavioral reproduction is not always carried out in the form of complete imitation, but can take the form of adaptation

according to individual characteristics and the social environment. Students tend to take certain elements that they consider appropriate, such as color combinations, clothing models, or mix and match techniques, then adapt them to their needs, comfort, and identity. These findings show that students act as individuals who are active in processing information, not just recipients of social media influence.

The results of this study also confirm the findings of Madhani et al. (2021) which states that social media acts as a means of social learning that influences student behavior and lifestyle through the process of observing various digital content. Apart from that, research by Abdurrahman et al. (2024) also show that social media contributes to shaping the younger generation's preferences for fashion products and trends. However, this research provides more specific findings because it shows that TikTok is not only a medium for disseminating fashion information, but also a learning space that allows students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN North Sumatra to build clothing references through a process of observation, interpretation and adaptation to the content they consume.

Thus, TikTok can be understood as a social learning media that contributes to the formation of student fashion references. These references are not formed through a direct imitation process, but rather through the experience of observing, understanding and interpreting various fashion content available on the platform. These findings indicate that the formation of fashion references is the result of the interaction between the characteristics of digital media and students' ability to interpret information according to their experiences, needs and social context.

Changes in College Students' Dressing Styles

The research findings indicate that changes in college students' dressing styles are not only influenced by the increasing amount of fashion inspiration they gain through TikTok but are also linked to social interactions that take place in both digital and real-life settings. Exposure to various fashion-related content encourages students to reevaluate how they dress—from choosing clothing styles and color combinations to using accessories and adapting their outfits to different activities. These changes indicate that fashion style is the result of both a process of social learning and interaction with an ever-evolving environment.

These findings can be explained through the Theory of Symbolic Interactionism proposed by George Herbert Mead. Mead explains that the meaning of an action is formed through the process of social interaction. Individuals do not act solely based on personal impulses, but rather based on meanings constructed through their relationships with others. In the context of this study, clothing is not merely viewed as a necessity to cover the body, but rather as a symbol that students use to convey their identity, personality, and how they wish to be perceived by their social environment.

From a symbolic interactionism perspective, TikTok serves as a space for interaction that brings students into contact with various symbols related to dress. Each piece of fashion content displayed conveys a specific meaning, such as a neat, modern, simple,

professional, or religious impression. Through a process of repeated observation, students begin to understand these symbols and use them as a reference in shaping their appearance. Thus, changes in dress style are not merely a result of following trends, but because students assign meaning to the fashion symbols they encounter in digital interactions.

However, students' experiences in interpreting these symbols are not entirely the same. Some informants use TikTok content as their primary inspiration for dressing, while others draw only on specific elements, such as color combinations or mix-and-match techniques. Some informants even choose not to follow certain styles because they deem them incompatible with their personal identities or the values they hold.

Changes in dress also reflect a process of interpreting the meanings embedded in a particular fashion style. College students do not directly imitate every style they see on TikTok, but rather adapt it based on their needs, personalities, and the environments in which they engage. This interpretive process is one of the central concepts in Mead's theory—namely, that humans actively interpret symbols before determining their actions. Therefore, the changes in students' fashion styles are the result of a process of thinking and meaning-making, not merely an automatic response to social media exposure (Kim, 2024).

In addition to serving as a symbol of identity, clothing also has a social function in building relationships with others. Research findings indicate that students' increased attention to their appearance is linked to a desire to appear more confident when interacting on campus and in the community. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, this self-confidence arises because students view appearance as a form of nonverbal communication that influences how others evaluate them. In other words, changes in clothing style represent students' efforts to build a positive self-image through symbols embodied in their clothing (Aninda & Sunarya, 2023; Badik, 2026).

The research findings also indicate that students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UIN North Sumatra have become more selective in their clothing choices according to the situation they face. They consider not only aesthetic aspects but also social contexts, such as academic activities, organizations, and religious activities. This demonstrates that the meaning of clothing constantly changes according to the context of social interactions. A style of clothing deemed appropriate in one situation may not be appropriate in another. Therefore, students continually adjust their appearance to conform to prevailing social expectations in their environment.

These research findings confirm those of Siregar et al. (2025b), who demonstrated that social media plays a role in shaping the clothing preferences of the younger generation through continuous visual exposure. The study explained that fashion content on social media not only provides information about emerging trends but also influences how individuals interpret their appearance as part of social interactions. This study provides more specific findings by showing that changes in the clothing styles of students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UIN North Sumatra do not occur solely due to the urge to follow trends, but rather through the process of assigning meaning to fashion symbols acquired from TikTok. Thus, changes in fashion style are the result of the

interaction between digital experiences, individual interpretations, and the social environment that shapes student identity.

Based on the perspective of symbolic interactionism, changes in student fashion styles are a dynamic social process. TikTok provides various symbols related to fashion, while students actively interpret these symbols according to their experiences, values, and social environment. These findings indicate that changes in fashion styles are not simply changes in appearance, but rather a process of meaning-making that reflects how students interact, build self-image, and position themselves socially. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy in Islamic universities needs to be directed not only at the ability to use media but also at the ability to interpret and filter various fashion representations circulating on social media.

Negotiating TikTok Fashion Trends with Islamic Values and Campus Norms

The results of this study indicate that students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UIN North Sumatra do not accept TikTok fashion trends in their entirety, but rather through a selection process based on their values, norms, and identities. This finding aligns with the view that the influence of social media algorithms on user behavior is not deterministic, but rather involves individuals' active interpretation of the content they receive (Lee et al., 2022).

This phenomenon can be explained through the Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel (1979) and further developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986). This theory explains that individuals define themselves as part of a particular social group (in-group), so that the behavior displayed tends to be adjusted to the values and norms of that group in order to maintain a positive self-image within the group. In the context of this study, students not only view themselves as social media users, but also as part of the Islamic academic community with a religious identity and moral responsibility in dress (Egi Regita et al., 2024).

Although all informants engaged in filtering, their approaches to negotiation varied; some emphasized Islamic law, while others prioritized campus norms or personal comfort. This pattern reinforces the finding that the process of adopting trends on TikTok involves both a cognitive pathway (rational evaluation of content) and an affective pathway (emotional resonance and a sense of connection), meaning that consumers' final decisions are not solely driven by algorithms but are the result of personal considerations (Lu et al., 2026).

This negotiation process is evident when students combine elements of modern fashion with Islamic dress principles—selecting specific aspects such as color combinations or modest styles, then adapting them to ensure they remain compliant with Islamic law. Campus norms also serve as a form of social control that encourages consideration of the appropriateness of a style before wearing it during academic activities.

From a social identity perspective, filtering fashion trends is an effort to maintain membership in social groups deemed important (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This finding is also relevant to studies indicating that TikTok's algorithms can influence users' self-perception and personal values, though such influence is always mediated by individuals'

algorithmic awareness and literacy (Ionescu & Licu, 2023). Thus, the decision not to follow all TikTok trends is not due to limited access to information, but rather a conscious choice to maintain a self-image that aligns with group values.

This study expands upon previous research by demonstrating that TikTok's influence on students in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication is mediated by the negotiation between digital culture, religious identity, and academic norms, thereby reinforcing the argument that young users are not merely passive objects of algorithms but active agents who interpret and filter content according to the social identity frameworks they hold (Lee et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the use of the social media platform TikTok has implications for the fashion styles of students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN North Sumatra. TikTok has become a source of information and a reference for students in keeping up with fashion trends that are emerging on social media. Through the various types of content featured on the platform, students gain inspiration regarding clothing styles, how to mix and match outfits, and fashion trends considered attractive and relevant to contemporary trends. However, students do not directly imitate the trends on TikTok entirely. Most students select and adapt the trends they see by considering Islamic values, campus dress codes, and their personal identities. This indicates that TikTok's influence on students' fashion styles is adaptive, as students strive to balance following fashion trends with maintaining their identities and adhering to established norms.

The findings of this study indicate that students are not only consumers of digital fashion trends but also actively interpret, filter, and negotiate fashion references from TikTok based on Islamic law, campus norms, and their identity as students at an Islamic university. These findings enrich the literature on the relationship between social media, fashion, and Islamic identity by demonstrating that TikTok's influence is mediated by a process of value negotiation rather than occurring directly. In practical terms, the results of this study can serve as input for Islamic universities in strengthening digital literacy, social media ethics, and fostering a dress code culture consistent with Islamic values. However, this study is still limited to students in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UIN North Sumatra; therefore, future research is recommended to involve a more diverse sample of participants or to compare the contexts of Islamic universities and secular universities to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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