75007 - Is Selling Women’s Clothing Haram?

the question

I have some stores that sell men’s and women’s clothing in a number of shopping centres. I have read about the situations in which it is permissible to sell women’s clothes, and that it is not permissible to sell these clothes if the seller knows that the one who is buying them is going to use them in ways that Allah has forbidden. But how can the seller or employees know that they are going to be used in ways that Allah has forbidden? The seller may be in a position where he does not know how they are going to be used.

Summary of answer

If the seller knows or thinks it most likely that these clothes are going to be used in haram ways, i.e., the woman is going to wear them and adorn herself with them in front of non-mahram men, selling these clothes is haram.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Is it haram to sell women's clothing?

With regard to women’s clothes that merchants sell in their stores, one of the following three scenarios must apply:

1. The seller knows or thinks it most likely that these clothes are going to be used in permissible ways, and that they will not be used in haram ways. There is nothing wrong with selling these clothes.
2. The seller knows or thinks it most likely that these clothes are going to be used in haram ways, i.e., the woman is going to wear them and adorn herself with them in front of non-

mahram men. Selling these clothes is haram , because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“but do not help one another in sin and transgression” [Al-Maidah 5:2]

The seller can figure it out from the type of clothes and the state of the woman who buys them.

There are some kinds of clothes which it is usually known that however much a woman flaunts herself (tabarruj) she will never wear them for anyone but her husband, and she cannot go out wearing them in front of non-mahram men. And there are clothes which the seller will think most likely – or may be certain – that the one who buys them is going to use them in haram ways.

What the seller should do is to act upon what he knows or thinks most likely to be the case with regard to the buyer.

And the clothes may be used in permissible ways or in haram ways, but the fact that women observe hijab or that the state enforces hijab means that they cannot be used in haram ways, so there is nothing wrong with selling them.

1. If the seller is uncertain as to whether these clothes will be used in permissible ways or haram ways, because the clothes may be used in both ways, and there is no evidence to make him certain about either possibility, then there is no sin in selling these clothes, because the basic principle is that it is permissible to sell and it is not haram, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Allah has permitted trading” [Al-Baqarah 2:275]

The one who buys them must use them in ways that Allah has permitted, and it is not permissible to use them in haram ways.

Fatwas of scholars on selling women clothes

There follow some fatwas of the scholars which support what we have said above.

- The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

What is the ruling on dealing in women's adornments and selling them when the seller knows that the one who is buying them will adorn herself with them in front of non-mahram men in the streets as he can see how she is appearing in front of him, and as is common, unfortunately, in some areas?

They replied:

"It is not permissible to sell it if the seller knows that the one who is buying it is going to use it in ways that Allah has forbidden, because that is helping in sin and transgression. But if he knows that the buyer is going to adorn herself for her husband with it or he does not know anything, then it is permissible for him to sell it." (Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah li'l-Buḥ̣th al-'Ilmiyyah wa'l-Ifta, 13/67)

- The Scholars of the Standing Committee were also asked:

What is the ruling on selling cosmetics to women , knowing that most of those who use them are women who make a wanton display of themselves and are evildoers who disobey Allah and His Messenger, and those who use these things to adorn themselves for men other than their husbands – Allah forbid?

They replied:

"If the matter is as described, it is not permissible to sell them to them, if he knows their situation, because that is cooperating in sin and transgression, which Allah has forbidden as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"but do not help one another in sin and transgression" [Al-Maidah 5:2]" (Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah li'l-Buḥ̣th al-'Ilmiyyah wa'l-Ifta, 13/105)

- The Scholars of the Standing Committee were also asked:

What is the ruling on selling different types of tight pants for women, including jeans and those

made from stretch fabrics, as well as pant suits which consist of pants and a blouse, and selling women’s shoes with high heels, and all kinds of hair dyes, especially those which are specifically for women, and selling see-through women’s clothes, especially those made of chiffon, and women's dresses with short sleeves, or short dresses, and short skirts for women?

They replied:

“Everything that will be used in haram ways or that one thinks is most likely to be used in such ways, it is haram to make it, import it, sell it and distribute it among the Muslims. That includes what many women have fallen into nowadays – may Allah guide them to the right path – of see-through, tight and short clothes , which includes displaying their charms and showing the shape of their limbs in front of non-mahram men.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “If it seems most likely that garments will be used to help commit sin, it is not permissible to sell them or sew them for one who will use them for sinful and wrongful purposes. Hence it is makrٍh to sell bread and meat to one who you know will drink wine with them. The same applies to any permissible thing if you know that it will be used to help commit sin.”

Every Muslim merchant and businessman must fear Allah. Our advice to our Muslim brothers is not to make or sell anything but that which is good and beneficial for them, and to forsake everything that is evil and harmful for them. In that which is halal there is sufficient so that we have no need of that which is haram.

“And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine” [Al-Talaq 65:2, 3]

This advice is what is implied by faith, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The believers, men and women, are Awliya (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another; they enjoin (on the people) Al-Ma‘rٍf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all

that Islam has forbidden)” [Al-Tawbah 9:71]

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Religion is sincerity.” They said: To whom, O Messenger of Allah? He said: “To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims and to their common folk.” (Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih)

Jarir ibn ‘Abd-Allah al-Bajali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I swore allegiance to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), pledging to establish regular prayer and pay zakah, and to be sincere towards every Muslim. Sahih –agreed upon.

What Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah meant in the words quoted above, “Hence it is makruh to sell bread and meat to one who you know will drink wine with them…” is that it is makruh in the sense of haram, as is known from his fatwas on other topics.” (Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah wi’l-Buhuth al-‘Ilmiyyah wa’l-Ifta, 13/109)

For more, please see these answers: 235 , 221744 , 226184 , 197328

And Allah knows best.