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Topic of Research: **Consumerism and Religion: Changing Lifestyle and Identity among Muslim Youth**
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FINDINGS

The change in attitudes, beliefs and lifestyles among the Muslim societies in an under-developed country like India that experienced large-scale consumption is of salience amidst the dearth of existing research. Besides, the identity issues associated with consumerism that Muslim youth is subjected to, particularly within the polarity of consumerism and religion also is of importance as it illuminates how the Muslim youth, who is under continuous gaze of religious values in a society, accommodates himself/herself within the broader consumer society. The issues faced and the stigmas associated with the adoption of modern consumption patterns among the Muslim Youth shall also enhance the understanding of how they cope with the dichotomy of Tradition (in terms of religion) and Modernity (in terms of Consumption patterns). Against this backdrop, the present study attempted to explore the relationship between religion and consumerism with special reference to Muslim Youth in Kashmir. The thesis explored the multifaceted relationship between consumerism and Islam, with a particular focus on their impact on the lifestyle and identity formation among Muslim individuals and communities. In an era marked by globalization and the pervasive influence of consumer culture, understanding how Islamic values and consumerist trends intersect is essential for comprehending the dynamics of contemporary Muslim societies.

Additionally, the research investigated the role of Islamic consumerism, where Muslim consumers seek products and services that align with their faith and ethical beliefs. It considers how Islamic branding and marketing strategies are employed to cater to this growing market segment and how this phenomenon shapes the self-identity of Muslim consumers. The whole issue of identity crisis and modernized Islamic lifestyle gets attached to the Muslim youth who are eventually looked upon as deviants by the strict followers of the religion. Muslim youth are oscillating between two polar ends viz; religion which limits over-consumption, and consumerism, which enhances desires and choices to consume endlessly. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between consumerism and Islam, highlighting the ways in which these forces influence the lifestyles and identities of Muslim individuals and communities in the contemporary world. It also underscores the need for nuanced discussions and critical reflections on consumerism within the context of religious and cultural identities.

Through empirical research, including interviews, specific case studies of Transgenders and beauty parlours, micro-ethnography of two dar-ul-ulooms and digital ethnography (cyberethnography) of social media profiles, this thesis provides insights into the lived experiences of Muslim youth as consumers and their strategies for negotiating consumerism within the framework of Islamic values. It also sheds light on how Islamic scholars and religious authorities engage with issues related to consumerism and lifestyle choices, offering guidance to the Muslim community. The study examined the correlation between consumerism and Islamic beliefs, specifically focusing on the impact of these factors on the identity and

lifestyle of young individuals in the region of Kashmir. The findings of the study suggest that consumer culture in Kashmir is influenced by the socio-cultural and economic position of individuals. There exists a subset of individuals who consistently refuse to embrace consumerism as a fundamental lifestyle choice. In rural Kashmir, there exists a cultural inclination towards embracing the concept of “voluntary simplicity” and promoting a more leisurely lifestyle that places less emphasis on materialistic consumption. The phenomenon of contemporary consumerism can be understood as the manifestation and proliferation of diverse consuming patterns, rather than the complete abandonment of specific qualities.

When examining the issue of identity in the context of Kashmir, one can analyze the involvement of Muslim youth through the lens of Deleuzian Theory. Specifically, this analysis focuses on the concepts of “Deterritorialization” and “Reterritorialization” as defined by Deleuze, in order to understand how these individuals navigate the spatial dimension and establish their sense of self within the complex Socio-Religious landscape of Kashmir. This aligns with the Deleuzian concept of identity as a process of “becoming” rather than a fixed state of “being”. It can be asserted that the identities of young individuals in Kashmir exhibit a state of fluidity and perpetual transformation in reaction to various religious, cultural, and contextual shifts. The current consumer society, intertwined with Islamic prescriptions and proscriptions, presents a challenge for young individuals who are seen as potential catalysts for constructive societal transformation, but find themselves grappling with the task of defining their own identities.

The results of this study indicate that there are notable variations in shopping orientation among customers with varying degrees of religiosity. The interplay between conscious religious ideology/modern consumerist ideology and the concepts of *taqwa/ghaffar and dunya/akhira* has remarkable and prominent effect on Muslim youth who are in a volatile and nascent phase of their life. They play with their identities providing logic to each role they perform. They want to be religious and modern simultaneously. As a result, they have adopted a middle path of contextual identity which is fake, pleasing, spatial and situational.

The Muslim Youth in Kashmir have thus, approached consumerism as an ideology through three distinct approaches. Firstly, there are those who outrightly reject the adoption of a consumerist lifestyle. Secondly, there are those who fully conform to consumerism. Lastly, there are those who selectively embrace certain consumerist attributes while adhering to the fundamental lifestyle advocated by religious doctrines. However, all three stances lead to the alteration of subjectivities and the negotiation of identities. Muslim youth who do not embrace the consumerist lifestyle are sometimes stigmatized as non-progressive Muslims, while those who do conform to it are sometimes referred to as deviants of faith. Consequently, this phenomenon has resulted in identity crisis among individuals, who find themselves in a perpetual state of flux as they strive to disavow these categorizations.