

**EXPLORING THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN CONSUMER CULTURE AND
MARRIAGE: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
ON MUSLIMS IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION**

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Abstract

The advent of consumer culture and the forces of globalization have had a profound impact on various aspects of human life, although differently in varied parts of the world. In a globalized world, individuals and communities have been exposed to new ideas, values, and lifestyles, leading to significant changes in societal norms and expectations surrounding every institution especially the institution of marriage. Consequently, the Muslim population, which constitutes a significant portion of the global community, has not been immune to the influence of consumer culture. They have encountered the influx of consumer culture through various channels, such as media, technology, and transnational networks. These factors have contributed to the transformation of marital dynamics and choices within Muslim communities. The present paper aims to explore the relationship between consumer society and marriage in the era of globalization, with a specific focus on the Muslim population. The paper investigates how the rise of consumer culture and the forces of globalization have impacted marital dynamics, choices, and expectations among Muslims. Additionally, the paper explores the interplay between consumerism, marriage, and Islamic traditions, analyzing the challenges and adaptations that arise in the context. The study employs a narrative review (preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature) research method.

Key Words: Consumerism, Marriage, Globalization, Muslims, Interplay, Culture, Identity, Cross-Cultural Influences

Introduction

Consumer society refers to a socio-economic system in which the acquisition and consumption of goods and services play a central role in people's lives. It is characterized by a culture of materialism, where the pursuit of personal desires and the accumulation of possessions are highly valued. It also involves the acquisition and display of luxurious and fashionable goods (Featherstone, 1983). In recent decades, globalization has further intensified consumerism by facilitating the flow of goods, services, and ideas across national boundaries. The Muslim population, which constitutes a significant portion of the global community, has not been immune to the influence of consumer society and globalization (Godazgar, 2007). Muslims have encountered the influx of consumer culture through various channels, such as media, technology, and transnational networks. These factors have contributed to the transformation of marital dynamics and choices within Muslim communities. The advent of consumer society and the forces of globalization have had a profound impact on various aspects of human life, including marriage (Giddens, 2003). In a post-globalized world, individuals and communities have been exposed to new ideas, values, and lifestyles, leading to significant changes in societal norms and expectations surrounding marriage. Consumerism, as a pervasive ideology in modern society, significantly influences individuals, communities, and societal structures. It emphasizes the acquisition and consumption of goods and services as a means to achieve personal satisfaction, status, and identity. Consumerism impacts society in various ways: it promotes materialistic values, where possessions and wealth are often equated with happiness and success. It drives economic growth and plays a crucial role in shaping market dynamics. It influences production patterns, advertising strategies, and consumption patterns, thereby impacting industries, job markets, and economic inequalities. Furthermore, the pursuit of

increased consumption and production places a significant burden on the environment. Consumerism contributes to resource depletion, pollution, and climate change, leading to ecological challenges (Akenji, 2014). It also influences individual identities by attaching meaning and significance to particular brands, products, and lifestyles. It can create social divisions based on one's ability to participate in consumer culture, leading to social stratification and inequality.

Globalization and its effects on culture and identity

Globalization refers to the increased interconnectedness and interdependence among nations through the exchange of goods, services, information, and ideas. It has profound effects on culture and identity (Tomlinson, 2007). It leads to the spread of dominant cultural values and practices, potentially eroding local traditions and identities. Furthermore, it fosters cultural hybridity, as individuals and communities adapt and incorporate elements from diverse cultures into their own. Globalization enables rapid communication and the dissemination of media content across borders. This exposure to global media shapes cultural attitudes, perceptions, and aspirations, including ideals and expectations surrounding marriage. It increased mobility facilitated by globalization has led to the movement of people across borders, resulting in multicultural societies and the blending of cultural practices. This mobility influences marital choices and the formation of transnational marriages. Moreover, globalization necessitates individuals and communities to negotiate their identities in the face of cultural encounters and influences. This negotiation process can be complex, especially in the context of marriage, where traditional values intersect with globalized ideals.

Interconnectedness and cross-cultural influences

Consumer society and globalization are intricately linked, influencing and reinforcing each other. The interconnectedness brought about by globalization amplifies consumerist tendencies, while consumer culture, in turn, drives the demand for globalized products and experiences. This interconnectedness has led to cross-cultural influences in the context of marriage. In a globalized world consumer culture has influenced marriage patterns, such as a shift towards individualistic values, increased emphasis on romantic love and compatibility, and a focus on lifestyle compatibility rather than traditional considerations. It has facilitated transnational marriages, where individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together in marriage. These marriages navigate cultural differences and require negotiation and adaptation to diverse consumer expectations and lifestyle choices. Furthermore, globalized media platforms and technology play a significant role in shaping consumer desires, lifestyle aspirations, and marital expectations. Media portrayals of relationships and marriage influence individuals' perceptions and choices in a globalized consumer society (Laubach-Young, 2007). While globalization promotes cultural integration, it also fuels movements aimed at preserving traditional values and resisting the homogenizing forces of consumer society. These movements often seek to maintain cultural authenticity within the context of marriage.

Changing Paradigms of Marriage

Traditional paradigms of marriage have undergone significant transformations in the era of globalization. Factors such as consumer society, globalization, and cultural shifts have contributed to changing marital dynamics. The emphasis on individualism and personal fulfillment has impacted marriage, with individuals seeking partners who align with their personal goals, aspirations, and lifestyle choices (Gross, 2005). Moreover, in many societies, there has been a trend

toward delayed marriage as individuals prioritize education, career advancement, and personal development (Browning, 2003). The pursuit of consumerist goals may lead to a postponement of marriage until later stages of life. With the influence of consumer society and globalization, there has been a decline in traditional arranged marriages, where families play a significant role in selecting marital partners. Individuals now have more agency in choosing their partners based on personal preferences and compatibility.

Marital choices and expectations

Consumer society and globalization have influenced the choices and expectations individuals have regarding marriage. Individuals place importance on finding partners who share similar lifestyles, interests, and consumption patterns. Compatibility in terms of leisure activities, consumer choices, and social status has become a significant consideration in partner selection (Shah & Swaminathan, 2008). The influence of media and globalization has placed a higher emphasis on romantic love and emotional compatibility in marriage (Hull et al., 2010). Individuals seek partners with whom they feel a strong emotional connection and share intimate bonds. Personal happiness has heightened expectations of marital satisfaction and fulfillment. Individuals expect their partners to meet their emotional, social, and material needs, leading to increased pressure on marriages to provide a sense of personal happiness and fulfillment.

Influence of media and technology

Media and technology play a crucial role in shaping perceptions (Cockerill, 2002), expectations, and practices related to marriage in the era of globalization. Media, including television, movies, and social media, often portray idealized versions of relationships and marriage. These depictions can influence individuals' perceptions and expectations, creating a gap between

reality and the idealized portrayal. The rise of technology and globalization has facilitated online dating platforms and matchmaking websites. These platforms offer individuals a wider pool of potential partners, crossing geographical boundaries and allowing for the exploration of different cultural backgrounds. Social media platforms not only provide a means for individuals to connect and form relationships but also contribute to the construction of a curated online identity. Social media can influence the perception of others' relationships and shape individuals' desires and aspirations for their marriages.

Shifts in Gender Roles and Power Dynamics:

Consumer society and globalization have brought about shifts in gender roles and power dynamics within marriages. In many societies, there has been a shift towards more egalitarian gender roles, with both partners sharing household responsibilities, decision-making, and financial contributions. This shift is influenced by changing societal expectations, economic factors, and the pursuit of individual fulfillment. Globalization has provided women with increased access to education, employment opportunities, and economic independence. This empowerment has influenced their expectations and roles within marriages, leading to a renegotiation of power dynamics and decision-making processes (Kabeer, 2007). Within the context of a post-globalized world, traditional gender roles may intersect with modern expectations. Individuals and communities navigate this intersection by negotiating cultural values, societal norms, and personal aspirations within their marriages. Understanding the changing paradigms, choices, expectations, and power dynamics in marriages within a globalized world is crucial for addressing the complexities faced by individuals and communities. The influences of consumer society, globalization, media, and technology shape the landscape of contemporary marriages and require thoughtful considerations and

adaptations to ensure healthy and fulfilling relationships. Understanding the interplay between consumer society, globalization, and marriage is crucial in comprehending the evolving dynamics of relationships and choices, particularly within the Muslim context.

Aim of the study

Understanding the intersection of consumer society, globalization, and marriage within the Muslim context holds significant implications. This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the following areas: a) to examine the impact of consumer society on marriage patterns and practices among Muslims in a globalized world. B) to explore how consumerism and globalization have influenced the expectations and preferences of Muslim individuals in selecting a marital partner.

Methodology

With an aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between consumer society, marriage, and Muslims in a globalized world, the study employs a narrative review (preliminary assessment of the potential size and scope of available research literature on a given topic) research method to explore the undertaken topic. As reviews provide a synthesis of published literature on a topic and describe its current state of art (Ferrari, 2015). In the initial stage, the researcher framed keywords on the undertaken research and consequently searched sources like Google Scholar, Jstore, and PubMed. The search terms (keywords) define the limits and the nature of the literature search. The key concepts were transformed into keywords, choosing only the most distinctive terms. Using inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of 12 studies were selected for final analysis, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing knowledge

on consumerism, marriage, and Muslims. All 16 studies were qualitative, and empirical in nature.

Findings

1. Consumerism, Muslims, and Marriage

Muslim individuals, like individuals from other religious and cultural backgrounds, are not immune to the influence of consumer culture (Wong, 2007). The intersection of Muslim identity and consumerism presents unique challenges and considerations. The Muslim community is diverse, comprising individuals from various cultural backgrounds and regions. Consumer culture interacts differently with different cultural practices and values within the Muslim community. Furthermore, Muslim diaspora communities, residing in non-Muslim majority countries, often navigate the influences of consumer culture while preserving their Islamic values and traditions (Schmidt, 2004). They are encountering unique challenges in balancing their religious identity and participation in consumer society. Muslims have multiple identities that intersect with their religious identity, such as ethnicity, nationality, and socioeconomic status. These intersections shape their experiences and interactions with consumer culture and its impact on their marital choices and expectations.

2. Islamic Values and Consumerism:

Islamic teachings and values provide a framework for Muslims to navigate consumer society and its impact on marriage. Islam promotes the concept of moderation and contentment in material possessions. In Islamic societies, consumer culture is often portrayed as a threat, and harmful to religion as it privileges hedonism, pleasure, individualism, and an expressive lifestyle (Wong, 2007). Muslims are encouraged to avoid excess and to be grateful for what they have, fostering a balanced approach to consumerism and its influence

on marriage. Moreover, Islamic teachings emphasize ethical considerations in consumption, including fair trade, avoiding extravagance, and being mindful of the sources and production processes of products and services. These principles can influence Muslims' consumer choices within the context of marriage. It further prioritizes the spiritual well-being of individuals and highlights the importance of fulfilling emotional and social needs within marriage, rather than solely focusing on material possessions and wealth.

3. Cultural Hybridity and Negotiation of Traditions:

Muslims living in a globalized world often experience cultural hybridity, where their Islamic values intersect with influences from the dominant consumer culture (Khan, 2015). Muslim individuals and communities engage in a negotiation process, adapting to the influences of consumer culture while integrating their Islamic traditions and values into their marriages (Rosen, 2002). This negotiation involves preserving essential aspects of Islamic teachings while adopting elements of consumer culture that align with Islamic principles. Muslims may creatively express their cultural and religious identity within the context of marriage, blending traditional practices with consumer culture. This cultural hybridity can manifest in wedding ceremonies, attire, and celebration styles. Besides, the influence of consumer culture can present challenges to preserving cultural and religious traditions within Muslim marriages. The pressure to conform to dominant societal norms and expectations may require Muslims to actively navigate and strike a balance between tradition and assimilation.

4. Materialism and Its Impact on Marital Satisfaction

The prevalence of consumer society and materialistic values can impact marital satisfaction among Muslims (Teimourpour & Heidarzadeh, 2011). The pursuit of

material possessions and consumerism can lead to financial strain within marriages. The pressure to meet consumerist expectations may result in financial burden and stress, impacting marital harmony and satisfaction. Consumer culture, including media portrayals, can create unrealistic expectations of wealth, beauty, and lifestyle within marriages. Unmet expectations due to the gap between reality and consumerist ideals can lead to dissatisfaction and relationship strain. Materialism may conflict with Islamic teachings on contentment, gratitude, and the importance of non-material aspects in marriage (Chapra, 2008). Misalignment between consumerist values and Islamic values can create tension and dissatisfaction within Muslim marriages.

Discussion

The synthesis of findings highlights the complex relationship between consumer society, globalization, Islamic traditions, and Muslim marriages in a globalized world. Consumerism exerts a significant influence on marital choices, with lifestyle compatibility and material expectations gaining prominence. Globalization has both positive and negative impacts on Muslim marriages, facilitating intercultural exchanges while also presenting challenges of cultural clashes and differing expectations. Islamic traditions play a crucial role in guiding marital dynamics, emphasizing values of moderation, contentment, and spiritual well-being. However, challenges arise in balancing consumerist ideals with Islamic principles, requiring active negotiation and communication within marriages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has examined the relationship between consumer society, globalization, and Muslim marriages in a globalized world. The findings have shed light on the influence of consumerism on marital choices, the impact of

globalization on Muslim marriages, the role of Islamic traditions in shaping marital dynamics, and the challenges and adaptations faced in a globalized society. The research has highlighted that consumerism plays a significant role in shaping marital choices among Muslims, with lifestyle compatibility and material expectations gaining prominence. Globalization has both positive and negative impacts on Muslim marriages, facilitating cultural exchanges while presenting challenges of differing expectations and cultural clashes. Islamic traditions provide a guiding framework for Muslim marriages, emphasizing values of moderation, contentment, and spiritual well-being.

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