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## Role Of Luxury Consumption In Extending Digital Self: Through The Lens Of Religiosity

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### Abstract

*The digital world has provided immense opportunities for emerging luxury brands to shape the consumption attitude of their potential and actual consumers. With the success of the internet and digital platforms to socialize. Consumption of luxury brands has grown dramatically globally. The exponential rise and hype of luxury purchases worldwide has been witnessed over the last two decades. With this proliferation of selfie culture netizens are more inclined towards presenting their selves differently in cyberspace. While, studying self, an important aspect to consider is how people come to conceive their self and how they represent themselves to others, particularly in the digital world. The two important aspects of self-formation are found to be self-conceptualization and self-presentation of youngsters to others in cyberspace. Religion being a piece of one's identity and their prepping and a complete code of life, it is asserted that religiosity potentially plays a vital role in forming consumer values, beliefs, and personality. The study aimed to examine the extent to which netizens extend their selves in the digital world by consuming luxury brands.*

**Key Words:** Digital Self, Religious Orientation, Luxury Consumption Intentions.

### Introduction:

The digital world has provided immense opportunities for emerging luxury brands to shape the consumption attitude of their potential and actual consumers. With the advent of the internet and digital platforms to socialize. Consumption of luxury brands has grown dramatically globally. The exponential rise and hype of luxury purchases worldwide have been witnessed in the last two decades. It is reported that the demand for luxury brands has hit a growth of 4 to 5 percent yearly, surprisingly, luxury consumption is tremendously growing in emerging markets like China, India, and Pakistan (Jain, 2018). Interestingly, the Islamic market of luxury brands is huge in the world. Where Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, and Indonesia have the biggest fashion industries producing style and fashion for the world (Abalkhail, 2021).

Regarding their consumption habits and patterns, Pakistani customers are focused both socially and digitally, fuelled by global lifestyle and digitalized exposure to various luxurious brands. However, some people think that people with high religiosity are not into fashionable and do not like buying luxury brands. Although necessities of economies and globalization lead to more global consumption, consumers are using these luxury belongings as a means of extending their selves in digital cyberspace.

The stream of literature discussed luxury from the perspective of cultural and social values but the current study sheds light on a significant void in the literature. The main perspectives on luxury have been economic, symbolic, psychological, and personality aspects (Sagrera et al. et al. 2019). Additionally, research on luxury consumption has looked at consumers' exclusive sense of belonging, their emotional reactions (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2015), how they derive pleasure by showing their digital self (Amatulli et al., 2015), their intrinsic motivations (Bernes, 2013), and how luxury brand and digital media interact (Jain & Schultz, 2016). Academia also highlights different luxury trends and luxury branding through digital platforms along with smartphones (Schultz & Jain, 2014). Based on this overview, I was unable to locate many studies that have examined luxury consumption and the formation of the digital self through religiosity, particularly, among this emerging class of luxury consumers, the millennials and netizens (Schultz & Jain, 2014). The study aimed to examine the extent to which netizens extend their selves in the digital world with luxury brand consumption intentions. That will contribute to understanding luxury brand providers and the way netizens/ Gen Y (end consumers/business users ) use their brands to socialize and to show their extended selves, the following sections will discuss how the digital self is formed by the consumption of luxury by digital individuals.

### **Literature Review:**

Luxury consumption is considered a highly individualistic means through which consumers can pursue their personal goals. Consumption of luxury products is an important lifestyle choice for consumers. However, most consumers consume luxury products for social influence and the outer public self, while others are oriented towards the inner self. While, studying the self, an important aspect to consider is how people come to conceive their self and how they represent themselves to others, particularly in the digital world, two important aspects of self-formation are found to be self-conceptualization and self-presentation of youngsters to others in cyberspace. As religiousness can be an individual's identity and prepping, religiosity potentially plays a vital role in forming consumer values, beliefs, and personality. It is asserted that religion as a social guide can bring about good to society. However, religion is not just a matter of paying respect to God. Instead, it provides a complete code of life and provides guidelines for living and the formation of self. The point to ponder is how the level of religiosity helps consumers in shaping their digital self and how it affects consumers' luxury lifestyle consumption. The question that the present study attempts to answer is very interesting how do consumers' quest for religiosity shape their digital identity and luxury consumption? It is asserted in the present paper that consumers intend to purchase those luxury brands that enhance their digital self while underlying religious beliefs remain operative at the primary level, during the pandemic how people look into their religious beliefs. The empirical study examines the effect of religious orientation on luxury consumption at the juncture of the digital self. In existing literature limelight is given to the affirmation of religious beliefs and attitudes and their influence on luxury brand consumption, however, consumer consumption behavior through the lens of their level of religiosity is still blurred while the influence needs to be addressed during the time of artificial intelligence.

Consumption of luxury products is an important lifestyle choice for most of the consumers However, most of the consumers consume luxury products for social influence and for the outer public self, while others are oriented towards the inner self (Wong and Ahuvia 1998). While, studying self, an important aspect to consider is how people come to conceive their self and how they represent themselves to others, particularly in the digital world, the most important contribution of this study would be the ideas of self-conceptualization and self-presentation of youngsters to others in cyberspace. Religiosity potentially plays a vital role in forming consumer values, beliefs, and personality (Vitell and Paolillo 2003). It is asserted that religion as a social guide can bring about good to society. However, religion is not just a matter of paying respect to God. Instead, it provides a complete code of life and provides guidelines for living and the formation of self (Sern.2012).

Academia supports that level of religiosity effect consumers' luxury lifestyle consumption and makes their intention towards luxury purchase.

### **H1: Religious orientation significantly affects attitude towards luxury.**

The question the present study attempts to answer is very interesting how do consumers' quest for religiosity shape their digital identity and luxury consumption? It is asserted that consumers intend to purchase those luxury brands that enhance their digital selves. The study examines the impact of religious orientations on luxury consumption at the juncture of digital self; the aim is to study that during pandemic how consumers look into their religious beliefs. In existing literature limelight is given to the affirmation of religious beliefs and attitudes and their influence on luxury brand consumption, however, consumer consumption behavior through the lens of their level of religiosity is still blurred while the influence needs to be addressed during the time of the pandemic and digital world.

Netizens are more inclined to snob their personal consumptions to enhance their self in the digital world and applications of artificial intelligence can even expand human self-expression because it can facilitate consumers to judge and decide, what suits them better and it can even help in realizing their original ideas. The consumer today is more motivated toward self-development rather than digital self-development. SDT is a grounded theory based on human motivation, and self-determination, that conceptualizes a means to human motivation, particularly emphasizing on human regulation and self-development, SDT will be coined with the looking-glass approach proposed by Cooley,1964.

In the social context, self-determination theory (SDT)is considered as a macro-theory entails personality, emotions and motivation. Intrinsic motivation, as used in SDT, is the act of performing a behavior without the need for outside rewards; the only motive is the pleasure and satisfaction the conduct provides. For example, an action is considered genuinely driven when someone attends a lecture on a religious issue only out of personal interest and fulfillment. Because intrinsically motivated individuals have a sense of psychological freedom and volition, intrinsic motivation is regarded by SDT as the characteristic of autonomous functioning.

The distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is that the latter refers to performing an action to achieve a goal that is unrelated to the action itself (Lens 1997). Therefore, the conduct is carried out for a purpose other than the purpose of that specific activity, rather than for its own sake. Extrinsic motivation was originally thought to be a non-autonomous form of motivation as pursuing an end (such as rewards) that is distinct from the activity itself would inevitably rob people of their sense of volition and choice (Harter, 1981).

### **Luxury Consumption:**

The conceptualization of luxury is difficult because of its subjectivity and ambiguous interpretations (Yeoman, 2010). It is asserted that luxury conceptualization differs during different times or spaces. Few consumers take it as a luxury while considering it as an everyday commodity by others. Probably, for this reason, Low (2010) likely claimed that there exist “inevitably varied interpretations of the term”. Indeed, the conceptualization and perception of the term luxury is found to be very contextual. For the present article, it is asserted, that a large part of what makes luxurious is the exclusivity attached to the brand, and maintaining this aura is a great challenge for these luxury brands. (Berridge 2018)

Moreover, Sombart (1967) claims, that expenditure on luxury goods has been a fundamental component of capitalism since its inception. Veblen (1899) postulated in his groundbreaking work that the foundation of contemporary capitalism was largely laid by the nobility's desire for power and money, which was demonstrated by their consumption of luxury items (Loader,1991). However,

Danziger (2005) took a different perspective and related luxury consumption to the need for experience and self-indulgence rather than status-seeking. However, in a nutshell, people of different ages, gender, and races defined and related luxury differently. Thus, "Luxury can be considered as a work in progress, a unique order of discourse and a contested domain meaning," Roper (2013). However, one can generally recognize that religion has a significant impact on how much people value money and luxury (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996), though it is less clear how this plays out in the context of Islamic societies (Hamelin et al., 2013)

### **Religious Orientations:**

One, of the most significant societal concerns facing the globe today is religion, which is distinct in its behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and motivational elements (Chowdhury, 2018). Based on Allport (1967) bifurcation between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, previous research on religiosity's role in determining consumers' ethical behavior and attitude has concentrated on detecting the influence of the degree of consumer religiosity orientations on their consumption ethics. But quest religiosity, as put out by Batson (1976), "represented an unrestricted search, where religion was viewed as a process of queries, doubting, and understanding core principles, values and beliefs," (Batson and Gray 1981)

### **Intrinsic & Extrinsic Religiosity:**

Ross and Allport (1967) proposed two major categories of religiosity: intrinsic and extrinsic, which are comparable to the substantive division that Hunt and Kind (1971) explored. The subsequent studies reflect that Allport (1967) asserted that although those who are intrinsically motivated live their religion (emphasizing the significance of ideas, doctrines, and creed), while, extrinsically motivated people merely use it functionally. Therefore, extrinsic religiosity can be defined as the extent to which a person uses religion for other reasons, such as wanting social acceptance or endorsing certain religious activities, and intrinsic religiousness can be defined as the extent of religion influences on everyday life (Belku and Fiume, 2004).

Donahue (1985) shows how intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations differ from one another: "Intrinsic religiosity is religion as a framework that gives meaning to life and through which all of it is understood." Contrarily, extrinsic religiosity is a self-centered, functional approach that is tailored to an individual's needs and is the religion of ease and social norms. Accordingly, intrinsic religiousness might be defined as a goal unto itself, in which case religiosity plays a fundamental role in one's identity (Allport and Ross 1967). "The intrinsic dimension is related to the inherent motivation and goals of traditional religious values," according to Vitell et al. (2009). Conversely, extrinsic religiosity is utilitarian in that it uses religion to further self-serving, non-religious objectives including forming friendships and gaining financial advantages, among other things (Vitell 2009). Consequently, extrinsic religiosity is considered a means to reach the ends and goals (Allport, 1967).

The claim that religiousness has a significant impact on consumer materialism is established, despite the clear discursive conflicts in research on religion and consumerism (Veer and Shankar, 2011). To varied degrees, most world religions are not materialistic, seeing material possessions as inherently opposed to ideals that are high at spirituality (O'Shaughnessy, 2002). In Islam, let's say, hoarding is forbidden and those who do so are doomed to a terrible and agonizing retribution. Another example of this is the prohibition against openly consuming luxury goods. [At-Tauba: 34]. Hazrat Umar claimed that the Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "Do not wear silk, for those who wear it in this life shall not wear it," based on Islamic beliefs.

### **Attitude Functions:**

The conceptualization in the 'Theory of Planned Behavior' (TBP) that attitude guides or influences behavior can be implemented in the consumption of luxury brands (Ajzen, 1991) defines attitudes as

“a learned predisposition to respond consistently favorably or unfavorably concerning a given object.” Social attitude function can be divided into two dimensions: social-adjusted and value-expressive function. While other dimensions of attitude function are hedonic and utilitarian functions.

**H2: Attitude towards luxury mediates the relationship between the level of religiosity and intention to consume luxury brands.**

### **Digital Self:**

The self is an integral structure that constantly evolves (Zaho, 2005). People we interact with influence the way we see ourselves. According to Cooley (1964) in symbolic interactionism, others serve as a looking glass in which people see themselves. That consumer's image of their self emerges from their interaction with others. People usually come to know themselves from the perspective of how others respond to them. Other nonverbal cues such as tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, and posture reveal their attitudes toward us. The proliferation of self in cyberspace has been largely in terms of the detachment of the actual self and people feel themselves as artificial self and avatars, as others cannot see who we are, we are free to claim to be whoever we want to be.

**H3: The digital self is a boundary condition between religious orientation and intention to purchase in a way that a higher level of digital self-strengthens such causal effects.**

The two main aspects of self-formation in cyberspace are the presentation of self and the conception of self.

### **Religiosity, Digital Self and Luxury Consumption:**

In this digitalized world contemporary brands have captured social media as an important medium for altering consumer views of brands and their relationship with brands. These lurking practices enable the dematerialization of luxury consumption into new digitalized virtual actualization (Leban, Seo et al. 2020), but what if we relate this luxury concept to virtual self-portray through the lens of youngster's level of religiosity.

### **Religion and Purchase Intention:**

According to Delener (1994), religion offers a set of guidelines for deportation that must be adhered to. When making purchases, a consumer who adheres to their religion's tenets may find guidance from religious tradition. Religion can affect a consumer indirectly if it does not provide explicit recommendations related to purchase, such as notions and restrictions related to dress in religion, or buying habits during the month of fasting (Mokhlis, 2010). One could think of religion as the foundation of an individual's identity. There was a discernible impact of religion on the buyer, and there was also a notable and favorable correlation between religion and the intention to buy.

### **Religion and Intention to Purchase:**

Mostly religious values provide a set of instructions to be followed to deport concretely (Delener, 1994). Religious customs and values can pave the way for consumers to alter and modify their purchase choices if the customer is adhering to his religion's edification. Religion can have an indirect impact on consumer behavior if it does not explicitly provide recommendations related to purchase. Some examples of this include purchase habits in the holy month of fasting and constraints related to clothes in religion (Mokhlis, 2010).

One could think of religion as the foundation of an individual's identity. We observed that religion had an observable impact on the buyer as well as a notable and positive relationship between religion and the intention to buy, however, other factors (such as location, sex, family and friends, and social events) may also have an impact (Zhou et al., 2010; Radder, Li and Pietersen, 2006).

#### H4: Religious Orientation indirectly affects the intention to consume luxury.

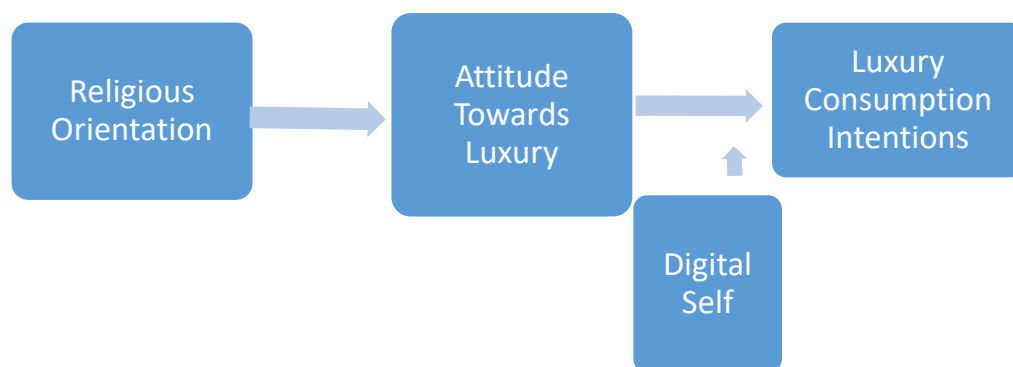
##### Theoretical Framework:

There are two reasons people consume luxury goods: social and personal. More significantly, to build their perception of these brands, buyers from emerging economies place a strong emphasis on the social side of luxury. Value systems are also used to emotionally manipulate this image and the purchasing of luxury goods (Atwal & Khan, 2009) is significantly reflected among young buyers and Gen Y is *primarily* (Atwal & Williams, 2009).

The current research paper examines the effect of religious orientation on luxury consumption intention through the lens of the digital self, luxury brand perception and attitude towards luxury are taken as mediators while self and consumer vanity are exogenous variables. It is proposed that religious orientation is measured through intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, while consumer's perception and expected attitude towards luxury are proposed as antecedents to intention to consumer luxury brands that can be public/digital luxury or private luxury brands.

**Luxury consumption** possesses rareness, uniqueness, exclusivity, expensiveness, and a prestigious image, which symbolizes wealth and social acceptance (Potts, 2007). Moreover, the understanding of consumers also affects luxury. Luxury has historically been connected to affluent Western customers (Atwal & Williams, 2009). However, emerging, non-Western markets are now seeing a shift in the demand for luxury goods. Through luxury products, these new consumers express who they are and how they see themselves. (Parrott, Danbury, & Kanthavanich, 2015).

##### Theoretical Framework:



##### Research Methodology:

##### Measures

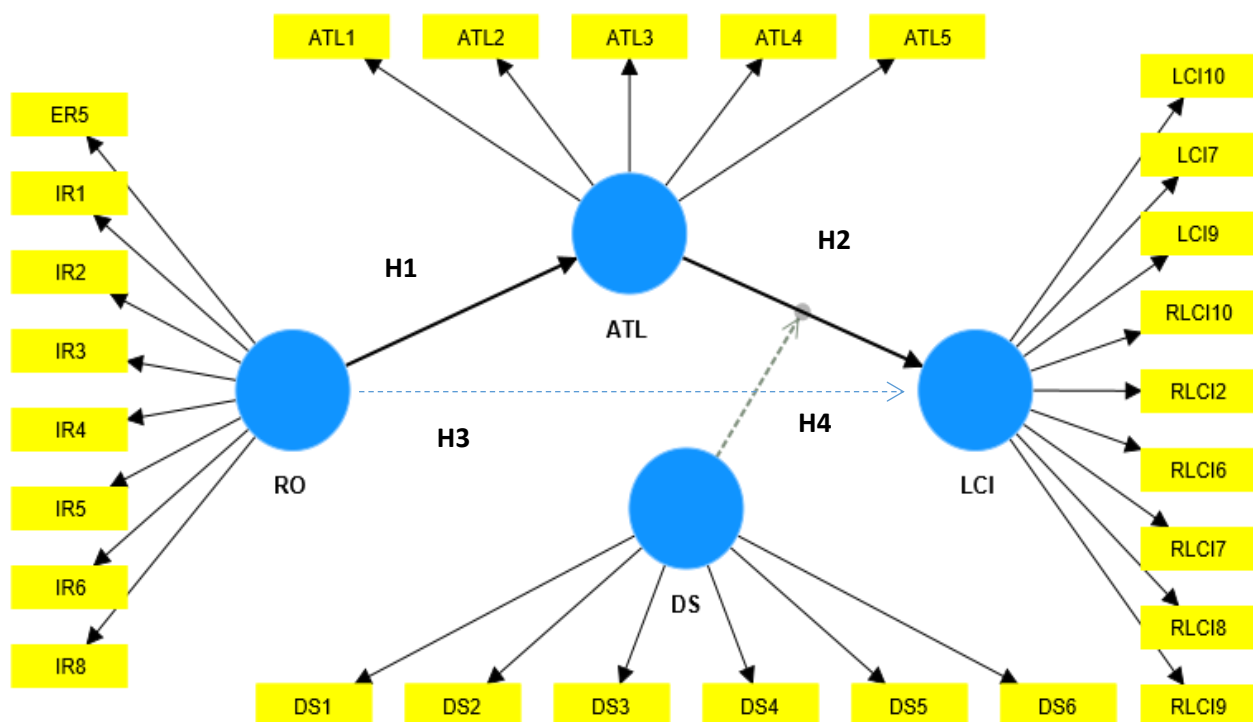
Primarily a questionnaire was developed to collect information and to conduct a survey for the current study. In the beginning of the data collection, customers were asked to fill in personal information like education level, gender, age, annual income, and current occupation, in the first part of the questionnaire. Further, respondents were required to mention their attitudes and perceptions toward luxury brands and their intention to consume these brands. Two items from Zhang and Kim (2012). In addition, respondents are supposed to opt for the extent they agree to given item on seven-point likert scale ranging between strongly disagree ("1") to "slightly disagree" ("2") to disagree ("3") to "neutral" ("4") to "agree" ("5") to slightly agree ("6") to "strongly agree" ("7").

## Sampling:

Pakistani population who frequently purchase high-end brands are selected for survey. The respondents were primarily selected on convenient sampling. In comparison to other available sources of data collection, the survey method is much cheaper, faster, and objective. The data was collected through available sites at social media like WhatsApp, Google Forms, and finally mall Intercept. Initially, 300 usable responses were collected from a questionnaire sent to 370 people. Most of the studies were done with 30 to 500 age sample size. Out of the total respondents, 29 % were lying within the age bracket 27 to 35 while 30 percent fell above 35 years. Approximately two-thirds of the participants were found to be male while the rest were female. Out of most of the respondents 25 percent had earned PhD, while 35 % had done bachelor's degree. Over two-third of respondents were businessmen and 11.4% were doing jobs, this depicts that the majority of consumers intend to buy branded clothing, watches, bags, cosmetics, fragrances, cell phones, and automobiles.

The data was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). (Ringle, 2022). The basic explanation for the extensive use of structural equation modeling in the social sciences is a comprehension of the connections between variables that appear to be independent. Secondly, PLS-SEM is preferred to use because of its versatility, flexibility to include new latent variables with ability to find fresh links with previously held theories. Additionally, because PLS-SEM requires a smaller sample size and is simpler to employ when resolving complex relationships including friends, peers, opinion leaders, and mediators, it is more beneficial than the covariance-based SEM approach. Finally, PLS-SEM was found to be the most effective technique (Ringle, 2022)

Fig 1: Theoretical Framework



## Statistical Results:

The critical findings and results of structural equation modeling are reported along with the descriptive statistics, constructs reliability, and validity are reported here.

### Descriptive Statistics:

Descriptive statistics such as the standard deviation and mean of the sample. The range of means of all items is found to be 2.503 to 3.698. The result of cumulative means suggests that respondents would select "agree" or "neutral" in response to statements in the survey, suggesting that the items under analysis are closely related to the study.

### Construct Reliability and Validity:

An identical set of factors have been utilized in previous research, but cultural differences may have affected those studies' findings. Thus, it was essential to preserve construct validity to guarantee the validity of research conclusions (Bryman,2015)..A conformance test was done before factor analysis to look for any obvious departures from the expected distribution. The Kurtosis values fall between -0.484 and 1.359, while skewness values were found to fall within the permitted range i.e. 1. The normality assumptions of the study were satisfied by the results.

**Table:1 Construct validity and reliability**

Construct validity and reliability				
	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ATL	0.869	0.875	0.905	0.656
DS	0.89	0.895	0.916	0.647
LCI	0.902	0.904	0.92	0.564
RO	0.895	0.907	0.916	0.579

Initially, I tested the effect of the predictor on LCI, the 0.409  $R^2$  value depicts that the overall cumulative value of all predictors explained 40.9% of the variance. While Religious Orientation (RO) ( $\beta = 0.243$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), Attitude Towards Luxury (ATL) ( $\beta = 0.273$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Digital self (DS) ( $\beta = 0.206$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were all positively related to Luxury Consumption Intentions( LCI), thus H1, H2 and H3 were supported.

We bootstrapped the indirect effect, as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008), to evaluate the mediation hypotheses. We can determine that there is significant mediation if the confidence interval does not straddle a 0. Table 2 displays that  $RO \rightarrow ATL \rightarrow LCI$  ( $\beta = 0.100$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) are all significant. Our results were confirmed by the bias-adjusted 95% confidence intervals, which likewise did not display any intervals straddling a 0. H4 is therefore also supported.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviation Results of Algorithm and Bootstrapping**

Hypothesis		Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (STDEV)	P Values	Decision
H1	RO -> ATL	0.428	0.046	9.08	0.00	Supported
H2	ATL -> LCI	0.553	0.063	8.784	0.00	Supported
H3	DS -> LCI	0.296	0.065	4.531	0.00	Supported



H4	RO -> ATL - > LCI	0.236	0.033	6.968	0.00	Supported
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### Discussion:

The study aimed to examine the effect of the level of religiosity among netizens or digital user and their intentions to consume luxury brands. In this changing socio-economic world, consumers are attracted by luxury brands, it is imperative to study the intentions of high and low levels of religious millennials to consume luxury products. It is observed that knowing the importance of the intention to consume luxury to extend their digital self on social media will give an understanding to luxury brand providers that the way netizens/Gen Y (end consumers/business users) use their brands to socialize and to show their extended self and the extent to which this snob/consumer vanity is influenced by the level of religiosity.

The structural connections are analyzed along with the model fitness of the data.

Table 1 provides a summary of the results of the tests conducted using the bootstrapping method and the algorithm, together with t-values, p-values, and judgments on each hypothesis validation. The result depicts a significant correlation between religious orientation and luxury buying intentions of Pakistani customers', while it is supported that tuning up the attitude of the consumer will foster the intention to purchase luxury brands. The result supports a mediating role of attitude towards luxury between religious orientation and intention to purchase a luxury (RO -> ATL -> LCI > 0.00). This result supports the hypothesis (H1) and the mediating role of attitude towards luxury is also proved (H4). The relationship between the level of religiosity and luxury consumption intention is strengthened by the attitude towards luxury.

H2. There is a significant correlation between consumer's attitudes toward luxury brands and Pakistanis' propensity to make a purchase (p 0.001). Such a finding supports H3. In Pakistan, a significant correlation is found between consumers' religiosity level, digital self, and their capacity to make luxury brand purchases (0.001). This finding confirms hypothesis 3. That purchase intention and use of social media are correlated to extend their digital selves.

### Conclusion/ Limitations:

Religion is still a major factor influencing the modern world. The significance of religious devotion and its degree for comprehending consumer behavior and market dynamics is demonstrated by our research. On the one hand, consumerism serves as a vehicle for the teaching of religious norms and values and plays a significant role in the development and propagation of a religious subcultural identity. However, digital identity also influences members' interactions with luxury brands and their purchasing habits, which in turn affects market structure.

The framework has theoretically contributed to designing effective policies or workable practices to present luxury brands to meet personal and social goals among religiously oriented millennials. It has added a religious element to the self-determination theory, where it was criticized that a religious element is missing in theory which is an important factor of consumer luxury choices (Kasber, El-Bassiouny et al. 2023) Further, it builds a theoretical explanation of the way religious orientation influence attitudes and intentions on luxury consumption. It proposes a mechanism and measure to study how private consumption will influence public consequences and how purchase power can bring social change.

Further, in the practical world awareness about the religious orientation of potential consumers, business managers can offer academicians and policymakers the means to tune up and form appropriate religious attitudes that can foster required consumption intention among millennials and make their mind that luxury consumption is different from materialism and help them in social acceptability. It devises a tool to study religiosity from different angles and a new perspective of digital religiosity to segment the market based on physical or virtual orientation.

Future research can discuss or address various aspects and research implications of this causal relationship between religiosity level along with extended digital self and luxury brand consumption. While researching the level of religiosity and digital self, the relationships may have problems and issues, but it is expected that current research will motivate and facilitate new avenues for future studies that investigate the interdependence between religion, digital identity, and consumption in different contexts.

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