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British Muslim Pop Culture: a Space for Identity
Negotiation and Self Construction

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Dedication 1

I am honoured and proud to dedicate this work to my beloved parents for their endless love, patience and support to achieve my goals and dreams.

I express my feelings of gratitude to my siblings Saliha Ferial, Nouria and Yousef .

Special thanks go to my family members and my friends specially chahrazad to whom I would like to say how much I am lucky to have her by my side.

Rania Nekkaz

DEDICATION 2

I dedicate this work to my cherished parents, my lovely family for their endless love and support, and all who heartened me to undertake and complete this work.

Hafida Zenasni

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Abstract

This work examines British Muslim pop-culture and its role in negotiating and constructing the identity of British Muslims.. The work begins by tracking the history of migration and the formation of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom from 1945 till 2024. It starts with analysing the open- door policy of post-World-War Two, which allowed the entry of a notable number of Muslim immigrants from different countries. The aim with this historical tracing is to highlight the issues Muslim immigrants have experienced ever since they began to settle in the UK. This investigation also allows for understanding the creation of Muslim Communities with all its particularities and challenges in Britain, this enables us to understand the multifaceted nature of the Muslim identity, an identity that has often been distorted and associated with stereotypes and clichéd perceptions especially since the Muslims in our study occupy a western multicultural society. The chapter then ends by looking at the public and governmental reaction to the increased migration and settlement in the country. Chapter Two sets a remarkable pivot on the representation of Muslims in British media and the way through which they have been influencing the public sphere. This part of the dissertation investigates the appearance and development of Muslim pop culture in the UK focusing on different media outlets, including newspaper articles, stand-up comedy, cinema and TV shows as well as fashion to argue that British Muslims have adopted and adapted pop-culture to provide an alternative perception of Muslims. These means of creativity, art and communication allowed Muslims to create a space for themselves through which racism, Islamophobia and preconceived notions about Muslims and Islam have been counteracted and corrected. Ultimately, the study ends by giving consideration to broader

implications of these cultural changes for understanding Muslim identity in present-day Britain.

List of acronyms

BMC: British Muslim Council

HFA: Halal Food Authority

HMC: Halal Monitoring Committee

MV: Music Video

MCB: Muslim Council of Britain

List of Figures

Figure 1: Aab 2024.....	33
Figure 2: Aab 2024.....	33
Figure 3: Maysaa 2024.....	34

Table of Contents

Dedication 1	i
Dedication 2.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
List of Acronyms.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Table of Contents.....	viii
General Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Migration’s History and formation of Muslim communities in the UK (1945-2024).....	4
1.1 introduction.....	5
1.2 The Rise of Islam in UK after World War Two	5
1.2.1 Britain's Open Door Policy.....	6
1.2.2 Muslims’ origins in Britain	7

1.2.3 The distribution of Muslim communities.....	8
1.3 Muslim role in the reconstruction of Britain.....	10
1.4 Reasons that led to migration's high rate.....	10
1.5 Britain's reaction towards mass migration.....	11
1.6 Important aspects of identity for Muslims in Britain.....	14
1.7 Muslims Representation in the UK through media.....	16
1.8 Conclusion.....	18
Chapter two: Muslim pop culture in UK.....	19
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Definition of Muslim pop culture.....	20
2.3 The Evolution of Muslim pop culture in the UK through Media.....	22
2.4 Muslim representation in Pop culture.....	26
2.4.1 Through newspapers.....	27
2.4.2 Through stand-up comedy.....	28
2.4.3 Through fashion	31
2.4.4 Through cinema.....	35
2.4.5 Through music.....	38

2.5	Perception of Muslims in pop culture	41
2.6	Impact of Islamic pop culture on UK's politics.....	42
2.7	Conclusion.....	44
General Conclusion		45
Bibliography		47

General Introduction

This dissertation inspects the historical path, social dynamics and cultural evolution that have sculpted the Muslim identity and shaped Muslims' perception in the UK over the past decades. We have chosen to explore the theme of pop culture as a space within which the Muslim identity came to be constructed and negotiated. Islam and Muslims have been the subject of much distortion and negative representation. This misrepresentation started from the 18th century with the orientalist scholars who have presented a deceitful image on Muslims through their literary and scholarly works, or through arts such as paintings and sculptures (Said, 2003). Within the 20th and 21st century, this image was further tarnished by the ongoing media technologies to present Muslims as backwards and dangerous (Alsultany, 2012). As this work will show, Muslims in the UK faced racism and marginalisation due to their faith and have for long endured stereotypical description, yet throughout time they created an alternative perception of them through their candid participation the different arenas of pop culture, destabilising thus, previously established discourses on Muslim and reconstructing the narrative to present an authentic image of what is to be a Muslim in the UK.

In its first chapter, the dissertation starts by grounding an important topic, the presence of Muslims in the UK. It looks at the immigration history and the formation of Muslim communities in the kingdom which is a narrative that spans from the Second World War era to the present day. Commencing from the post war period, when Britain opened its doors to Muslim immigrants, the UK became home to a great population whose motivation to settle there varied, common however as it shall be shown, is the employment factor which was a result of the country's open door policy. It is remarked through the research undertaken for this topic that, Muslims have indeed helped in the construction and the development of the

country as they constituted its labour force, either as blue collar workers or white collar ones. Examining these issues at this first stage of the chapter for a relevant purpose, for this enables us to understand the different identity components of Muslims in their new home, the UK, and the general reaction of both government and the public regarding the mass immigration of Muslims to the kingdom at one particular point in time. The chapter ends by arguing that Muslims in the UK were not always met with a warm welcome and enthusiastic hospitality, rather Muslims became the subject of racism and Islamophobia of the British media and the latter helped in generating a negative public opinion regarding Muslims in the UK.

The second chapter of the work explores the growth of Muslim pop culture in the UK particularly in relation to the topic of identity construction and negotiation. This is achieved by examining its progression and impact across different forms of media and cultural aspects. By analysing the participation of Muslims in newspapers, music, cinema , stand-up comedy, the work establishes that Muslim journalists, artists, comedians, fashion designers and producers use these pop culture means and spaces to re-inscribe and re-present Muslims as authentically as they could and shows that these spaces constitute suitable platforms from which stereotypes and clichés are reversed and altered to voice out their experience as Muslims in this mostly white Christian dominant society. The work also considers how public perceptions and political debate were influenced by Muslims in the UK.

Therefore, the general research question guiding this work is “How does pop culture allow Muslims to reconstruct themselves as British Muslims and negotiate their identity against a preconceived, rigid discourse?”

In the concluding part of the dissertation, it will be confirmed that indeed, Muslims in the UK have successfully managed to break down any limiting narratives about their subjecthood and challenged all racist discourses. Pop culture is proven to have given Muslim a voice and a

podium from which they can express themselves, and present themselves as British Muslims with all these two affiliations.

Chapter One: Migration's History and the Formation of Muslim communities in UK (1945- 2024)

● Chapter One : Migration's History and the Formation of Muslim Communities in UK (1945-2024)

1. 1 Introduction :

Britain has had a great history of immigration; it witnessed the settlement of different groups from different places. After the Second World War and its great damage, Britain found itself in a complicated situation seeking to establish and rebuild a new country by adopting different policies.

Muslims from former colonies were motivated by the British Open door policy to leave their lands looking for a new life .Thus, they established new minor communities which played a crucial role in rebuilding the UK after the second world war. Those communities were located in different regions in Britain. As a result of the noticeable increase in the number of immigration, the British government adopted new policies to stabilise the uncontrolled situation.

Muslims have experienced many circumstances in Britain because of the hybrid identity.

1-2 The rise of Islam in UK after World War Two:

Broadly construed, Islam has emerged in the UK after the Second World War as a result of waves of immigrants, looking for better lives conditions and economic opportunities. Since Britain was facing severe labour shortages due to the war's destruction and the aim of recovering the economic efforts, the British government passed a set of laws to mitigate these shortages. Hence, it encouraged immigration from

commonwealth countries. However, as immigration increased, the UK introduced more restrictions to overcome the large number of Muslim immigrants. Thus the open door policy as a part of the British national act was considered as one of the policies that boosted the Muslim migration waves and raised the Islam in UK. .

1.2.1 Britain's Open-Door Policy:

After the Second World War, the number of Muslim immigrants in Britain increased due to several factors. Britain set new acts and policies to allow people including Muslims to migrate to Britain unconditionally for both skilled and unskilled workers by implementing the open-door policy under the British national act of 1948.

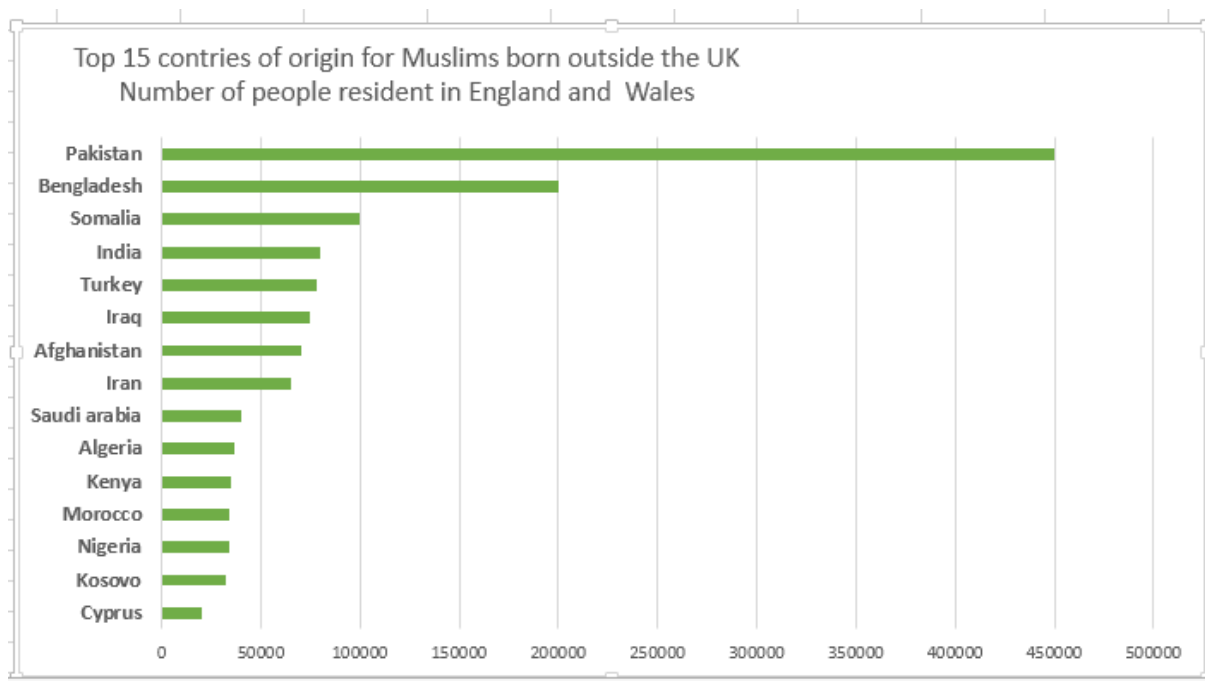
The main objective with this policy was to reconstruct the country that was suffering in various fields primarily, the economic one. At that time, thousands of buildings and factories were destroyed and severely damaged, as well as thousands of people were killed during the war. Hart in his book entitled *Employment: where the UK went wrong* states that Britain “suffered a massive loss of nearly 400.000 of its citizens, most of them were young –able bodies” (Hart, 2015)

As previously mentioned, Britain welcomed the newcomers aiming to rebuild itself again and stabilise its economic domain. In addition, the labour shortage was another issue that led the British government to receive workers from former colonies to immigrate to the kingdom with the particular objective of solving the issue of the scarcity of the health workforce following its entry and participation in World War Two. “It was not just the loss of life that affected the country; many of the men who returned were injured or suffering from psychological conditions”. (Hart. 2015). p8

Despite the financial support offered by the US which allowed Britain to implement programs to recover from the war damage, the labour force was constituted mainly of immigrants, including Muslims who were able to contribute to bringing stability in the health field, though many of them also participated as workers in factories and construction.

1.2. 2 Muslims' origins in Britain:

Right after 1945, the numbers of Muslims residents increased in Britain especially those originating from former British colonies whose roots extend from Africa, The Pacific Rim, the Caribbean to the Indian subcontinent. This finding was introduced in BBC news in a research article by the Muslim journalist Jawad Iqbal who states "In descending order the top 15 countries of Muslim origin born outside of the UK are Palestine, Bangladesh, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Congo, Morocco, Nigeria, Kosovo and Cyprus". (Iqbal, Jawad. 2016). The following diagram shows the top countries of origin for Muslims born outside the UK according to 2011 research.



As indicated in the chart, Pakistan is ranked first with more than 400.000 Pakistanis residing in Britain, followed by Bangladesh with approximately 200.000 emigrants. Morocco, Nigeria, Kosovo and Cyprus occupy the bottom with less than 30.000 emigrants there. The new wave of Muslims formed a large influx of ethnicities and cultures through the establishment of their own small communities, which led in a change in the demographics of Britain

1.2.3 The distribution of Muslim communities:

Upon arriving in the UK, Muslims settled in different areas in Britain, especially the industrial ones. Throughout time, people who came from various Muslim countries established new minor communities representing, hence, 6.5 percent of the total population of England and Wales and they distributed in several regions. According to the latest Data in 2021 by Muslim Council of Britain, the population in England and Wales increased by 1.16 million accounting for approximately 33 percent of the total increase. The following table shows the regions that the Muslim communities located

Local authority District	Region	Rank	2001	2011	2021
Birmingham	West Midlands	1	140,033	234,411	341,811
Bradford	Yorkshire and the Humber	2	75,188	129,041	166,846
Tower Hamlets	London	3	71,389	87,696	123,912
Manchester	North West	4	35,806	79,496	122,962
Newham	London	5	59,293	98,456	122,146
Redbridge	London	6	28,487	64,999	97,068
Leicester	East Midlands	7	30,885	61,440	86,443
Kirklees	Yorkshire and	8	39,312	61,280	80,046

	The Humber				
Luton	East of England	9	26,963	49,991	74,191
Brent	London	10	32,290	58,036	72,574
Ealing	London	11	31,033	53,198	68,907
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber	12	21,394	40,772	63,054
Enfield	London	13	26,306	52,141	61,477
Waltham Forest	London	14	32,902	56,541	60,157
Oldham	North West	15	24,039	39,879	59,031
Bolton	North West	16	18,444	32,385	58,997
Sheffield	Yorkshire and The Humber	17	23,819	42,801	57,044
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	18	26,674	39,817	54,146
Barking and Dagenha	London	19	7,148	25,520	53,389

Table 1: Muslim population by local Authority Districts 2021

According to the 2021 British Muslim council data table provided above, Muslims are widely distributed in different parts of the UK; they are mainly centered in Birmingham with more than 300.000 Muslims in addition to Bradford and Tower Hamlet, specifically in London.

The communities who originate from different backgrounds had solid beliefs and values inherited from their grandfathers “One of the most notable characteristics of the present Muslim population in the United Kingdom is its diversity. Notwithstanding widespread British popular perceptions to the contrary, terms such as ethnic, religious

and social heterogeneity are more useful than radical Islamic solidarity when describing Muslim communities in the United Kingdom” (Robert J, 2016)

1.3 Muslim role in the reconstruction of Britain:

Muslims contributed greatly in rebuilding Britain in its public and private spheres. A large-scale influx of especially skilled migrants coming from Muslim countries in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s played an important role in the post-war economic reconstruction of Britain. Justin Vaisse attests to the major contribution of Muslims to the building of Britain, arguing that: ‘Beyond the reconstruction of Britain there are the brave Muslim men who contributed to the stability of Britain in different spheres.’ (Amikam Nachmani, 2010) Muslims filled gaps in many sectors such as engineering construction, textiles and sewing production, agriculture, food processing and health care.

The significant involvements made by Muslims to the development and stability of Britain within the postwar reconstruction period had seen the efforts and participations of Muslims permeate through various sectors. Despite the obstacles Muslims may have come across, their courage and determination in facing challenges left a positive impact on the fabric of British society in general.

1.4 Reasons that led to migration’s high rate:

Following the end of World war Two, Great Britain had a serious shortage of labour, immigration offered a beneficial solution to the country. By the 1980s, Britain witnessed a massive migration wave of Muslims who moved to the UK fleeing civil wars in their home countries. This is especially relevant for those migrants coming

from the Southern part of Asia in which the conflict between Pakistan and India drove many of both nationalities to relocate to the UK seeking peace. Likewise, parts of the Middle East such as the tension of Iraq and Iran, or North Africa which had its fair share of internal unrest which led to ten years of terrorism that Algeria had gone through. Ultimately these internal conflicts pushed for the displacement of people. Unstable political, economic and social conditions led Muslims to immigrate to Britain. “Civil wars and political persecutions in Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Eastern Europe resulted in the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees including Muslims from Algeria, Libya, Somalia , Iraq, Kurdistan”(Gilliam, 2010)

However, it is important to stress that Muslim migrants are not only escapees who arrived in the UK for the sole reason of survival. Many other Muslims had other motives behind their emigration, either for better job opportunities or for the sake of finishing their studies and the pursuit of higher degrees in fields of study that were at one point in time only available in UK universities.

1.5 Britain’s reaction towards mass migration:

The open door policy allowed people, especially Muslims to migrate to Britain where the UK parliament provided them with British nationality. During the 1980s, the UK witnessed a surge of Muslim migrants from countries like the Middle East and North Africa; this pushed the British government to reconsider its policies regarding immigration in order to limit the number of Muslims coming into Britain. As a reaction to the rise of Muslim population in the UK, the British government passed new acts to reduce the number of Muslim immigrants. According to the web article entitled “The Immigration Act 1971:A Guide”, a new concept was introduced was “ partial statue” by the British government, Britain ranked emigrants as partial and non-partial people as

a part of the immigration Act of 1971 (Anne Morris, 2024), which means only individuals who were born in UK or have a British parent or grandparent had the right to obtain the British identity. The act includes all the immigrants from different areas but Muslims were the most targeted. The British government passed the immigration Act not because the issue of labour shortage was quickly resolved but because migration has started to be associated with social tension. Migrants' presence within the UK was seen as making the society anxious because of the mass population of the immigrants, including and particularly Muslims. On a web Article entitled: between Consciences Consolidation and Crisis: Immigration and Integration in 1970s Britain: it was said that:

In June 1970, when Edward Heath took over as Prime Minister, Britain had already put an end to mass economic immigration from the New Commonwealth, not because the country did not need migrant workers, but because their presence had aroused anxiety and resentment among vast swathes of the British population for the past two decade (Jaen, J. 2016).

Immigration began to be seen as a dangerous phenomenon and started to be represented as an issue in many political speeches such as the speech delivered by the racist British Politician Enoch Powell. In his infamous speech Rivers of Blood, he targeted non-white immigrants, including Muslims, and showed bigotry towards different races, ethnicities and religions, claiming: ``the answers to the simple and rational question are equally simple and rational: by stopping, or virtually stopping, further inflow, and by promoting the maximum outflow. Both answers are part of the official policy of the conservative party'' (Enoch. 1968).

By 1997 as the labour party came to power, Immigration policy took another path in which the system that followed was selective openness. the government has established a selection process for Muslim individuals who are allowed to migrate to UK by choosing only the individuals that serve their needs and helps in developing the country such as student and individuals with high scholar degree, the government created tough security measures and control and made changes in the conditions and the criteria of who is able to move to the UK. Indeed those processes became tougher at the turn of the 21st century especially with the terrorist attack of 9/11. Muslim immigration to Britain became harder and Islamophobia increased widely in British society and elsewhere in the western world exposing Muslims in these societies to increasing marginalisation and racism amongst other challenges. Western population developed prejudice against Muslims as the latter became the central role of British and global media being represented as savage, violent and terrorists in news headlines and other media platforms as time progressed. David Omend in his Article in Journal of terrorist entitled “ the terrorist threat to the UK in the post 9/11 decade” claimed that “ The attacks on 9/11 provided the most dramatic call to arms possible to young radicals in Muslim communities around the world ,stimulating them to action, some in conjunction with AQ planners" (Omend, 2010).

As a reaction to what happened in 9/11 and other security concerns, the parliament limited Muslims’ opportunities to immigrate and obtain the British visa and even came up with a compulsory biometric identification for the people who intend to stay in the Uk more than six months. Muslims in Britain became closely watched. Indeed, the lived experience of Muslims in the UK during the new millennium changed radically

and was marked differently which makes it a subject for close and scrutinised study and investigation.

1.6 Important aspects of identity for Muslims in Britain:

Dual belonging is part of Muslims' lives, which is mainly due to their hybrid identities between what is authentic and universal, which creates a collision between the values and beliefs of Muslims with non-Muslims in a non-Muslim nation.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad in her seminal work *Muslim Communities in North America* explains, that in the 21st century Muslims as minority communities, are faced with challenges of integration especially with 'the anti-Muslim atmosphere that permeates Western society' (Haddad, 2002, x) Inevitably, in the hostile west Muslims have chosen to remain invisible to avoid being regarded in stereotypical manners. Perhaps no other medium has contributed to the marginalisation and the invisibility of Muslims with the western media. The latter perpetuated cliché discourses on Muslims and reduced Islam to 'a handful of stereotypes, generalisations and negative facts' (Said, 1997). 9/11 media further exacerbated the image of Muslims by presenting them jointly with terror and violent behaviour, this further contributed to the marginalisation and invisibility of Muslims, turning them hence into an alienated community, Khan explains: "Muslims are considered, by some to be alien minority, with social and cultural values and belief system diametrically opposed to those of the west" (Khane 2002). Yet, even as a minority community, Muslims in the UK come from different backgrounds, cultures, practices, customs and traditions, which entails that differences are as present within them as they are between Muslims and non-Muslims in the UK. Most significantly, however, the unique features occurring between the different Muslims signify that monolithic identity is such a rigid scope of construction that the

west in general, and the western media in particular have placed Muslims in, based solely on the one shared aspect, Islam.

Margret Warnet (2016) explains the struggle of Muslims with the construction and the articulation of their identity in a non-Muslim nation. The clash of Muslim values and the western one is apparent and felt by Muslims in their daily lives. Mundane aspects of life such as nutrition become a space upon which identity is constructed and negotiated. Whilst, eating pork and consuming alcohol is common and these are recognised as edible food for non-Muslims, often also associated with celebrations and festivities in the west, for Muslims, these two do not fall within the category of Halal food, and hence they are not permitted and allowed for a Muslim consumption. In this sense, Muslims being a minority community in the UK seem to be disrupting the whole notion and significance of food to non-Muslims, and altering the perception of eating. This is what Suzanna Eddyono speaks about in her work *Halal Food and Identity* (Suzanna Eddyono 2010, 39) when she investigates food and its relationship with identity in the UK for international students, she concludes: 'Eating is defined by the meanings and values attached to it'(Eddyono.2010). Food then becomes a site of self-construction, Muslims in the UK as Halal consumers will themselves feel estranged to the society, as they are caught up in the dilemma of practising their faith without necessarily causing disruption to western values, leading hence to further alienation and invisibility of Muslims in the UK society.

Self-segregation, which is the separation and the isolation of Muslim communities from the British one by living in specific areas or neighborhoods resulting in limited interaction with people from different backgrounds. According to the web article under

the title Spatial reflection on Muslims segregation in Britain “Muslims are forced to be self-segregated through the fear of racial harassment” (Farouq, T. 15 Feb. 2023). The racist behaviours of the white British toward Muslims especially whose origins are from Pakistan and Bangladesh who came to be perceived as poor, uncivilised, savage and primitive people. The commonwealth background in addition to the religion of Islam make Muslim communities isolated since the British believe that the Muslim migrants are a threat to the British identity (Phillips 2004) claimed that the security, stability, and national identity of white Britain are being endangered by Muslim communities

1.7 Muslims Representation in the UK through media:

Media played an essential role in British societies; the Muslim representation in the UK media has been a perplexing issue. This medium could have served the cause of Muslims in terms of authentic representation by promoting portraits of Muslims in media to avoid continuing stereotypes. A recent report from the center media monitoring MCB says that” mainstream media organisations spread anti-Muslim rhetoric even in cases when the story is not about Muslims” (Pond, Ch. 2006) From 2018 to 2020 the center analysed 48000 online articles and 5500 broadcast clips from 34 British media outlets and 38 television channels and found widespread use of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim language. The report says 60% of articles on mainstream media platforms portray a negative image of Muslims and Islam. Efp Reuters and associated press are listed amongst the journals that have a tendency to perpetuate offensive images against Muslims. The report also cites many examples of how the news agencies link Islam with various crimes in their coverage. Seven percent of the articles

examined also included tropes and generalisation against Islam and the higher number of these kinds of practices belonged to the weekly British magazine the Economist.

According to the report, British media mostly uses misinformation, generalisations and Islamophobic statements about Muslims and Islam. Anti-Muslim content uses irrelevant and misleading headlines. Hence, white nationalist figures say white people are under threat because their nations are being invaded. Thus according to the Guardian article “more than a third of people in the UK believe that Islam is a threat to the British way of life” (Frances, P. 17 Feb. 2019). Islamic immigration is called the enemy immigration Black people, Jews but above all Muslims according to the reports a number of articles analysed are biased against Islam even though only six percent of them are about the religion itself and it further goes on to give examples of how news publications blame Islam for crimes committed by various races and ethnicities.

All the reports about Muslims and Islam as well as all the statistics reported warned media organisations that defamation should not be practised and advised that associating Islam with crime, terrorism and extremism should be avoided. Instead, providing space for broader Muslim perspectives and also having more Muslim journalists on board could invite a reconsideration of what Muslims are like. Faisal Honey who authored the report has emphasised that neither Muslims nor Islam should be immune to criticism but that this should be done fairly and with due care without resorting to well-worn tropes and generalisations. The fact is that mainstream media shows Islam and Muslims in a bad light and many Muslims worldwide feel and live the impact in their everyday lives.

1.8 Conclusion:

All in all, Muslims settlement in the UK has proven to be challenging particularly during the early years of the 2000s. Initially, Muslims were encouraged to move the country to contribute to the construction of Britain and participate in the remaking of its glory within the post-war period. Yet, Muslims found themselves under the spotlight, due to unfavourable reasons. 9/11 events seem to have exposed Muslims to stereotypes and unjust treatment and attitudes. Western media contributed greatly to the alienation and invisibility of Muslims within the UK though as will be shown throughout Chapter Two. The latter argues that pop culture makes the perfect means and space for transcending the status quo through which Muslims impose their identity via comedy, music, film, television and theatre.

Chapter Two: Muslim Pop Culture in UK

2-1 Introduction:

This chapter discusses Muslim pop culture in Britain, showing how it is represented. In this part of the work, major attention is given to the understanding of Muslim pop culture in Britain and its evolution, it provides information about the different fields and industries that Muslims contributed to, in addition to the perceptions received also its effect on politics and society.

Finally, this chapter tends to give a clear image of Muslim pop culture and the way it changed and was represented through different periods.

2-2 Definition of Muslim pop culture

Pop culture is a concept that combines two words: pop which refers to popularity in the context of culture and culture which means the lifestyle of a group of people, behaviours, beliefs, and values. (Nieuwkerk. 2016)

Pop culture is a dynamic system of life that is transmitted from one generation to another, representing mainstream trends, behaviours, and ideas that reflect various societal preferences at a particular period; it includes different aspects of life such as fashion, music, technology, and sports. It is defined by Shirley who states that: "Popular culture-the culture of everyday lives. It's present in all human groups and is much more than entertainment, it is the sun of performance, expression, and symbolism that both influence and reflect human culture". (Shirly, 2009). Shirly sees pop culture as an influential factor in society reflecting the different aspects of people's lives. It is further considered as a mirror of a certain culture with having a power to drive trends and influence society's behaviour. Smart Hall in his essay

"Cooling and Cooling in the television discourses" (1973) argues that pop culture in that it both shapes and reflects our ideas.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer on the other side view pop culture as a product of the capitalists that serve to control people. They argue that the cultural industry was created for a market desire to promote products and even ideas with the aim of shaping the society with particular ideologies and controlling their minds by using music and sports figures to spread and convince people with specific beliefs which are all under the domination of the capitalist's system. "Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies. The sound film, far surpassing the theatre of illusion, leaves no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience" (Theodor & Horkheimer, 1947). Films and different entertainment aspects are generally used for capitalist propaganda to shape societal thought and limit their imagination.

Muslim pop culture represents different beliefs, behaviours, and ideas that are related to the Islamic religion. It aims to give a clear image of Islam and Muslims through displaying different cultural aspects and spreading the reality of Islam disseminating it in an accurate way to (re)present it to the largest number of people whose perception of it has been Islamophobic. As explained in Chapter One over the course of the years, western propaganda has distorted the image of the religion of Islam which was portrayed as a savage and violent terrorist religion. Muslim pop culture has thus the power to subvert the status quo, as shall be shown.

Karin Van Nieuwkerk defines Muslim pop culture as a dynamic and rich culture that has been shaped throughout centuries because of different circumstances like global trends and individual experiences. She said, "we defined popular culture as the expressive practices of everyday life, which include mass media products such as Television shows and video games, individualised forms of expressions". (Nieuwkerk, 2016). According to Nieuwkerk,

Muslim pop culture is a creative culture that has been shaped by the world's development technologically and psychologically, making it an open culture rather than a monolithic one.

The Muslim culture is represented as both an influential and impactful phenomenon which means that Muslim pop culture plays a crucial role in shaping the Islamic identity in a dynamic way that goes hand in hand with global revolutions and changes. As an ancient culture with specific values and practices that is affecting other societies and also inspired from other communities to form a modern culture that fits in the modern world. Indeed Muslim pop culture is the reflection of Muslim ideology, beliefs, and diverse identities, which came as a reaction to the different stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam. Muslim pop culture permeates through and continues to leave an indelible mark on different domains including music, literature, fashion and global runways as well as most recent self-expression mediums on social media such as YouTube broadcasts and Facebook.

Muslim pop culture witnessed a great development in the 21st Century in the UK, influencing many fields and marking itself as an important cultural trend. It has introduced Islamic values and principles as a personal identity alongside British national identity earning itself the label “British Muslim pop culture”. The latter hence, is a popular culture that reflects the amalgamation of British and the Muslim identity. In this light, British Muslim Pop Culture is a site of negotiation upon which both identities of being Muslim and being British collide and reconcile.

2-3 The evolution of Muslim pop culture in the UK

In the mid-20th Century, Muslim Pop culture in the UK has been influenced by the immediate presence of Muslim communities. There was an emergence of artists, musicians, and filmmakers who started to integrate their identities into their work. (Rooij. 2024)

Some outstanding figures include musicians like Yusuf Islam known as Cat Stevens. He experienced a major change in his career after converting to Islam in the late 1970s. His songs such as "Peace Train" called for peace, spreading love and safety. As a Muslim artist, he has been praised for highlighting and bringing to the attention the pressing issue of intersecting faith and identity in pop culture, encouraging young people to take pride in their identities such as his album "Barakah" which features seventeen songs of spiritual music inspired from different cultures and traditions to encourage listeners to find happiness and purpose in their identities

Hanif Kureishi, a British playwright and screenwriter of Pakistani origin, examined themes of multiculturalism and other dire social circumstances in his works such as the screenplay for the film "My Beautiful Laundrette 1985". He says "Hope isn't an empty dream - it means there is a possibility in the world that what you want can happen, and my kids don't think they will ever be able to buy a house or find lucrative work" (Yasmine, R.2024). Young people have nothing to be hopeful for. BBC News.

The Syrian-American filmmaker Moustapha Akkad of Pakistani descent released his film "The Message" in 1976, an epic movie about Islam's birth in the early 7th Century. The film portrayed Islam as a message of social justice for oppressed people. Akkad depicted Prophet Mohamed's life through this film; he contributed to a wide understanding of Islam and Muslim culture in the West. He received recognition for his work in the UK at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards ceremony in 2005. BAFTAs rewards highlighted his efforts in bridging cultural gaps through his films. (Michael, R.2014).

Routledge International Handbook of Social Justice. Routledge)

Muslim artists like Rasheed Araeen who was born in poor circumstances in the Pakistani desert, has gained fame for his contemporary art which explores themes of

immigration and identity. His drawings and sculptures often raised political and social issues showcasing themes of identity and belonging. Due to the unique sense of Art displayed in Araeen' work, it garnered attention and was deemed provocative and overtly diplomatic. It was the beginning of his political awakening as a response to his personal experiences of discrimination and because he was influenced by the civil rights movement and anti-war protests. (Turner. C.2018). There is an element of optimism in my work. Apollo magazine)

These examples capture the multiple ways in which Muslim popular culture developed in the UK during the mid-twentieth Century, making up with a rich tapestry of representation and expression within British society. They highlight Muslim artists' contributions in shaping British culture.

In the late 20th Century, Muslim popular culture witnessed noticeable development in several spheres, influenced by the Islamic diaspora and global trends. In no better place could this remarkable evolution could be traced other than in the merging of different artistic genres with socio political issues. Hip Hop, Rock, and world music were no longer entertainment commodities; they gained a political landscape upon which identities are negotiated. The British Pakistani band "Fun -Da -Mental" Hip Hop group formed in 1991 addresses issues such as colonialism, racism, and Islamophobia, in addition to confronting stereotypes. The band was known for its album " All is War (The Benefit of G-Had)". Fun-Da-Mental is popular, particularly in limited circles in Britain and it challenges stereotypes. (Kenney-Moosa, 2013)

By the 1980s and 1990s according to Islam in the Modern World book, the consumer culture and the public sphere have significantly influenced the evolution of Muslim popular culture in the UK, shaping various aspects of lifestyle and identity among British Muslims.

This period saw the emergence of local adaptations and global cultural production (Kennedy & Ebrahim Moosa, 2014).

While Muslims maintain their religious identity, they navigate consumer culture through the demand for Halal food. Britain started to stock Halal products in response to the growth of the Muslim population's needs for two major reasons. First, this is because the Muslim population is younger than the British one and most importantly, because half of Muslims were born in Britain. This was discussed in the Muslim childhood book: *Nature in a European book* which attests that: "Muslim communities in Britain are the relative youthfulness of this population group. Approximately half of all Muslims in Britain are under the age of twenty-five and, by now about half have been born in the UK itself" (Jonathan Scourfield, Sophie Cilliant, Asma khan, Samah Otri Ray, 2013)

According to the Halal food book, Halal certification bodies were established in the UK, such as the Halal Food Authority (HFA) and the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC); they played an important role in guaranteeing the authenticity of Halal products. The demand of Halal food has flourished the British market as it highlights the significance of Muslim communities in UK's economic sphere. (Yunus Ramadan Al-Teinaz, Stuart Spear, Ibrahim H.A Abd El -Rahim, 2020)

Muslim popular culture underwent a state of modernization throughout the years, it has become even more diverse in gender and relationships, either as a result of imitating practices of Western values. According to Islam in the modern world, the new notions and ideas received from the Muslim public sphere have seen a deeper change. Modernization and globalisation have led to notable shifts as they have had a great impact on changing

contemporary Muslim pop culture in comparison to earlier ones. (Kennedy & Ebrahim Moosa. 2014)

In the 21st Century, Muslim pop culture has indeed grown and advanced due to the increase and spread of digital media as well as a proliferated global interconnectedness. Muslim pop culture has marked significant developments across several domains mainly in social media. It has provided tools for British Muslims to express their identities and challenge stereotypes. Through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, British Muslims attempt to redefine their cultural representation. Influencers and everyday users have a preference for posting content that commemorates their heritage, talks about their faith, and spotlights their daily lives, thus coming up with a more nuanced understanding of Muslim identities. British Muslims have used these platforms to advocate for social justice, and fight Islamophobia. Hashtags have raised awareness about circumstances faced by Muslim communities and have promoted solidarity among groups.

2.4 Muslim representation in pop culture:

Muslim representation in pop culture has grown through different aspects; its diversity within Muslim identities and experiences is vast. From marginalisation to complex representations, the journey reflects considerable changes in the UK, moving towards a more multicultural context.

. Muslims use various platforms and cultural aspects such as social media, cinema, fashion and music in order to cover the different obstacles, issues and lifestyle of Muslims in Britain. Moreover they also played a crucial role in changing stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims and Islam.

2.4.1 Through newspapers:

Newspapers as the mirror of society are used to represent Muslims and Islam in the UK, Muslim journalists and publishers write articles about their religion and create their publications to reflect Islam's reality and discuss local and global issues relating in one way or another to their own issues regarding Muslim in and of the UK. Newspaper articles cover news about the community, Islamic education, scholarship, interfaith relations, social justice, and civil rights.

The middle of the 20th century saw the founding of many newspaper publishing houses like Muslim News in 1989 by Ahmed J vers, which is a monthly digital newspaper that covers Muslim news in the UK and the world, tt aims to provide a platform for British Muslims to voice their opinion and address issues pertaining to the Muslim community in the UK in particular and the world in general.

The 21st Century publications and Muslim journalists continue to raise their voices and represent their religion in addition to the representation of Muslims' achievements in different fields like sports. The Muslim news newspaper headlines show the success of Muslims in the Olympics in various sports in 2013 under the title “UK: Mo leads record Muslim haul of Olympic medals”, detailing that:

A record 65 Muslim Olympics won medals at London 2012, Led by Somali born Mo Farah, the first Britain to win gold in the 10,000 m, while earning his place in history by also winning the 5,000m crown. The total number is up from 44 Muslim medalists at the last Olympics in Beijing in 2004, exclusive Friday issue of the Muslims News newspaper. (Muslim News. 8 May 2013)

The article shows Muslims' achievements in the Olympics and states their medals from the period between 2004 and 2013. Newspapers and journals with this content are significant for they emphasise the idea that sports occasions are a way to celebrate the world's diversity despite differences in religion, race, ethnicity or skin colour. Regarding this, they write: "The Olympics are opportunities to celebrate similarities and friendship as well as diversities" (Muslim news.8 May 2013).

Furthermore, the newspaper works on covering Muslim news in the world and shares their suffering, especially in wars. In 2023, Palestine became a trending headline in newspapers where many British Muslim journalists tried to reflect on and cover Palestinians' lived experiences during the war showing their losses. Muslim News, a London based newspaper, is considered as one of the most established newspapers in the UK and has been covering the recent events of Gaza with headlines such as Ghaza: 51 killed, 75 injured by Israeli bombardment in the last 24hrs (Al Jazeera, Wafa, AA): 51 Palestinians were killed and 75 others injured by indiscriminate bombings by Israeli Defence Forces in the Gaza Strip in the last 24 hours (Abdul Adil. 27 April 2024). The article shows the pains of Muslims in Palestine and the extermination crimes Israelis are committing. Those crimes and genocide were ignored since Palestinians are Muslims and consequently are associated with terrorism, while Israel was engaged in counter terrorism.

2.4.2 Through stand-up comedy:

Stand-up is a type of comedy performance where the comedian stands alone in front of the audience and delivers humorous and satirical jokes about certain topics or social issues. (Cambridge Dictionary. 2024). Comedy is subversive in its nature and permits for the unsaid

to be said, That Muslim comedians in the UK adopted this artistic genre as a way to share and express Muslims' experiences and positions. Since stand-up has the potential to captivate people's attention, Muslim stand-up comedians in Britain used this medium to discuss different controversial subjects regarding Muslims' struggles and marginalisation in British society.

According to the web article under the title “Muslim stand-up comedians in the US and the UK” Muslim stand-up comedians often use their performances as semi-autobiographical jokes to transmit messages of their struggles like racism and prejudgment, especially with the police (Lamiae, A. 2021). Muslims are often in a suppressive situation because of their identity. The latter is expressed in one of Nabil Abduralchid's shows when he tackles the British police issues with Muslims in a comedic way saying "On the holiday the police come to my house, so I said what are you looking for. They said everything” (Nabil Abdurashid, 2010). Abdurashid makes the Muslim's daily life struggle a space created for the audience to reflect upon the lived experience of a Muslim in the UK, through concrete examples of the Muslims’ quotidian lives. As a reaction to racism, comedians raise their voices about the issue and share their experiences using dark humour. This is seen in Hasan EL Habib's statement " The worst thing about racism is that sometimes it's pretty funnythe day after 9/ 11 this kid in primary school came to me and said where are you from? I said Iraqi, he looked at me and said why don't just go back to Palestine " (Hasan El Habib 2022), Hassan Al Habib shows how Muslims have been with racist criticism since their childhood even from their schoolmates and from outside in the street.

On the other hand, Muslim women stand-up comedians participate in representing Muslim issues in Britain and breaking down the stereotypical picture about Muslim women as veiled and oppressed women. A notable feature about many Muslim women In the UK who

are stand-up comedians is that they are veiled and present themselves to their audience in Hijab, subverting therefore several preconceived notions about Muslim women. They have been using stand-up comedy as a space upon which the issues they confront in their day to day life are talked about, often in a ridiculed manner. The Moroccan British comedian Fatiha El Ghorri speaks about one form of racism Muslim women confront which is harassment, in one of her performances she says: "Men always come and try to rip out of my head but they're all dead" (Fatiha El Ghorri, 2022). El Ghorri represents the plight of Muslim women in Britain, and though this representation is concealed most of the time behind comedy and laughter, yet her jokes resonate with Muslim women who have to endure life in the UK as being Muslim women.

Likewise, the Pharmaceutical and stand-up comedian Ola Labib highlights the British misconception about Hijab through her stand-up shows, she discusses the common question "Did your dad force you to wear it?", she tries to express her reasons for wearing it as it is a sign of modesty and self-security. Ola Labib also tackles the issue of racism throughout her jokes sharing her experience with a British patient, she says" This antibiotic is being used to get rid of any foreign bodies" He replies " Does it include you" (Ola Labib. 2024). Her way of delivering jokes invites the audience to reconsider their views and preconceived ideas about Muslim women. Here stand ups are an attempt to break down any barriers that prevent from opening up conversations.

Discussing controversial topics and defending Muslims' rights are part of the stand-up shows, like the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this regard, Nabil Abdurashid says “my heart goes up for people in Afghanistan and Iraq” (Nabil Abdurachid. 11 sep. 2022), he uses his show to bring to people's' attention the plight of Muslims in war torn countries and how powerful countries bomb and kill innocent without mercy. He also expresses his criticism of the

stereotypical image of Muslims and the way they have been depicted as terrorists and a threat to Britain. In one of his gigs, he narrates a conversation with a British during the Coronavirus period saying "Covid is a threat to Britain but not as being a threat as Islam"(Nabil Abdurachid 2021). In Britain Got Talent, Abdurashid has been widely recognised for his comic jokes about the unreasonable hate Muslims receive. In one of his shows he narrates a dialogue with a British man with a white British man, the latter announces " Do you know what I can't stand " Abdurashid replies " Let me guess sobriety, employment, hygiene..... ", The British respond "To see people trying to sneak your Halloween meat into our shops", Abdurashid then corrects him "You mean Halal". (Nabil Abdurachid , 2021). In this scene, the comedian is making a direct criticism of the racist white British mentality that regards others with suspicion and threat. This criticism is subtle, disguised by humour, yet it confronts the British with their limited views of other cultures, ethnicities and religions. The British states that he "refuses to eat religious chicken" (Nabil Abdurachid, 2021) in fact such a joke could be interpreted as a way for the comedian to mock the ignorance of the racist mentalities who assume that animals are religious. In this context, stand-up comedy is used, successfully, as a social critique; the humorous aspect of the performance reminds the British society of one of its major ills, racism.

Since Muslim stand-up comedy has become more popular, It succeeded in portraying the different challenges, stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims and Islam in Britain and the world. Moreover it also reflects and introduces the Islamic beliefs and values through delivering jokes to the audience.

2.4.3 Through fashion:

Fashion is a fascinating aspect of culture that is part of Muslim pop culture as a way to reflect Muslims' trends, values, and creative styles creating thereby a relevant way of self-expression and reflection of one's identity and individuality. Hence, Muslims' representation through fashion in the UK in the middle of the 20th Century is linked to their desire to reconcile their identity and religious beliefs with British culture.

What has been noticed is that Muslim designers mix Western clothes with those from the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia to produce fascinating, unique and attractive styles showing the richness of the Muslim culture such as the "Spring and Summer 1993 collection" by the famous designer Rifat Ozbek who was inspired by the Ottoman Empire and reflects his multicultural background.

The 20th-century designers in the UK took inspiration only from the Muslim. However, the 21st Century was the turning point for Muslims' fashion to emerge broadly and become among the most prominent in representing Muslim pop culture and using couture to represent religious, ethnic or cultural background and create a space for self-expression. Through fashion shows and the influence of social media, Muslims worked on promoting their style and fashion that is modernised and shaped to fit in the British culture like Kara Sofia who started her career in 2006 by making colourful Hijabs whilst incorporating modern and trendy details.

Muslim designers in Britain started working on their brands and fashion not only introducing new and unique styles to the Western world but also creating several choices for Muslims in the UK to wear modestly covered clothes while also keeping up with the evolving fashion styles. Aab is one of the brands created by the designer Nazim Ali in 2007; it started as a fledgling label in London that became one of the largest Muslim brands in the UK. This brand provides fashionable clothes with full coverage like the Hijab and Abaya introducing

and showing the richness of Muslim culture through its different designs such as the collections of Ramadan and Eid of 2023 which takes inspiration from the golden era of Islam. “Once upon a time in” collection represents the Islamic heritage of different Arab locations like Baghdad and Damascus. Nazim Ali aims to remind Muslim and non-Muslim communities of the beauty and richness of Islam. The collection provides Muslim women with modern designs as well as various choices. The following pictures show Aab’s designs.



Figure 1: (Aab. 2024)



Figure 2: (Aab. 2024)

Hana Tajima, a British Japanese Muslim representative as a visual artist, blogger, model and fashion designer is known for her elegant and comfortable designs; she succeeded in starting her label "Maysaa" which provides fascinating casual clothes to Muslim women. On the other hand, she works as a blogger promoting Muslim fashion especially Hijab through her videos in which she tries to show the world that Hijab can never be a burden in achieving one's dreams. The following picture shows one of Tajima’s designs.



Figure 3: (Maysaa.2024)

Kazan Asker is another British Muslim designer from Yemen. She works on making designs and fashion without compromises, in other words, she offers high-quality clothes which meet Islamic standards without losing modesty and style. Moreover, she uses her fashion show to celebrate and show off her roots, she serves Yemen's tea and cakes to the audience generating public admiration and becoming a topic in the national and international news. Such as BBC News that shared a picture of her under the title "Traditional Yemeni tea and biscuits were served to the audience during Kazan Asker week presentation" (Jessica,SH. 22 Sep. .2023). Kazan Asker's designs were for both men and women. In her latest show in London's Fashion Week of 2023, she created a collection inspired by Yemen's clothes designed in a modern style. She uses her own individuality to create something unique, attractive and fashionable in her showcase creating a living art to represent her mother country as well as reminding the audience of the war crimes committed in her beloved land and calling for peace. She states, "With everything happening in the world right now, I think

that it's important that we stand for something collectively” (Molly Elizasbeth. 24 feb, 2024). She also uses part of her earnings to participate in charity work for Yemen and Palestine.

Social media takes part in representing Islam through fashion, thus many influencers use platforms to change the world's perception of beauty. Maria Idrissi with more than 106k followers represents modesty and styles as the first Hijab-wearing model of the H and M Close the Loop campaign in 2015; she paved the way for Muslim influencers to connect the two worlds of Islam and fashion. Maria Idrissi works on breaking down the barriers of misconception and Islamophobia. She raises awareness through her vlogs, and her Instagram account brings a comfortable look and represents a balanced style between what is Western with Islamic values. She has been featured in many magazines and has become the face of many brands as a representative of Muslim modern figures.

Hassiba Da Silva with more than 800k followers and bloggers is a Hijabi British influencer who performs videos about beauty and lifestyle content in which she shows people how Muslim Hijabi women can be successful, she also expresses Muslim style in a very fashionable way to British society. She uses her chic style to promote Islamic beliefs and values.

2.4.4 Through cinema and TV shows:

British Muslims use cinema and TV shows to challenge the stereotypes about Islam on screen. Many Muslim producers, directors, actors and filmmakers work on reshaping and promoting a positive representation of their religion. Muslim producers and screenwriters use different genres to portray the image of Muslims.

Ayoub Khan Din, the famous British Muslim screenwriter, wrote the scenario of the successful movie "West Is West" released in 2010 about the life of Pakistani families in Britain in 1976. The film highlights how Muslims suffer from bullying. It tells the story of a Pakistani child who suffers from bullying by racists at school because of his origins, he is patronised by his teacher, which makes him reject his belonging to his homeland and religion. "West is West" is a sequel to 1999's 'East Is East'. The film received positive reviews and is a box office success; its earnings are estimated to have made over ten times its budget due to the outstanding number of people who turned to the movie theatres to watch it. It also won Alexander Korda's grant for being the best British film at the BAFTA awards and was declared the best comedy film at the British Comedy Awards. These recognitions and awards represent indeed the major efforts undertaken by Muslims in the TV industry to present new alternative stories about Muslims and their religion and to counteract racism that has been perpetuated also by the same means, which is the film and TV industry.

It is of utmost importance to know that mistreatment and pre-judgments about Muslims are part of British cinema. Muslim abusement is portrayed in documentaries based on true stories such as "The Road to Guantanamo", which speaks about the incarceration of three British Muslim citizens who were captured in Afghanistan and detained there for more than two years, because they were suspected of being terrorists. After the events of 9/ 11, the documentary shows the distress and the inhuman treatment that the three young experienced in Guantanamo prison by the American army, they prevented them from speaking, walking and even sleeping in addition to the daily investigation of whether they are Muslims or not by asking them "Are you Muslim" They are even subjected to self-torture, which affects their physical and mental health. The documentary ends with the words of the guys who live through a painful experience. Monir one of them describes the world as a terrifying place, he

says " The way I look at what is happening in the world I realise it is not a nice place"
 (Whitecross, Winterbottom,2006) While Chafiq considers it an opportunity given to him to
 get closer to god and devote himself to worship. He says" I practise my religion more now".
 (Whitecross, Winterbottom,2006)

Another category in the film industry who contributed to the ongoing changing
 perception of Muslim in the film industry is Muslim actors. Indeed they have achieved great
 accomplishments, among them Rize Ahmed who won the Oscar for his short film "The Long
 Goodbye " in the best live-action category, he addresses racism and marginalisation that
 British Muslims of Asian origins are subjected to because of their identity. The 15-minute
 short film shows the daily horror Muslim families experience because of islamophobia and
 racism from society and government. British police officers practise publicly racial profiling
 and approach individuals with no motive but for looking like a Muslim. Take the words of
 Riz Ahmed as he begins to say in a loud voice "It's happening.....It's happening"
 (Karia,2020), then everyone understands that he will be arrested. He ends his film with a
 rhymed monologue when he raps and talks about the position occupied by Muslims in British
 society saying " I'll make my place in this business of Britishness.....who knows there's
 no place like home and that stretches uskidnapped by empire and diaspora foster us"
 (Karia, 2020). The short film received positive impressions due to the strong storytelling
 about Muslims' suffering and the heroism that Riz Ahmed plays.

Something Else is very important and is considered a part of Muslims' identity: food
 or traditional meals. Muslims participate in cooking shows which represent their religion and
 introduce Halal food to the Western world. "Nadia's Time to Eat" is a Netflix TV show
 presented by Nadia Hussain, a British Muslim chef from Bangladesh. She prepares mouth-
 watering recipes to help people reduce stress, which makes the show popular and interesting.

Her strong, flexible personality and amazing attitude with her British guests make cooking enjoyable. Her family's "friendly cooking service" teaches not only people how to cook but also that being a woman Muslim wearing a Hijab could never be an obstacle to achieving and fulfilling her dreams.

“Riding Dream” is a documentary about Khadija Mellah, another British Muslim horse rider who could break stereotypes about Muslim girls. She made her career as a horse riding jockey and became the first Muslim to wear Hijab in horse riding. The documentary shows the strength of her faith, mainly when she celebrates the occasion of Eid al-Fitr with her family. In addition, it explains how her prayers positively affect her mental health and make her appear stronger. Due to her achievements, she became a role model Muslim woman.

On the other hand, cinema has an effective role in describing and shedding light on what Muslims are experiencing in Britain through films. "United Kingdom Muslim Film" directed by the British Muslim Sajid Vard, works on promoting a positive representation of Muslims and Islam in the UK, in addition to making Muslims' characters as roles' leaders rather than supporting ones' where the filmmaker empowers, informs, explores and criticises British society. Additionally, many campaigns cheer for quality and stand against racism and Islamophobia. Razwan Wadan is one of the British Muslim producers who worked tirelessly on his "Error and In Terror " campaign to promote Islam and fight for Muslim rights in Britain.

2.4.5 Through Music

Muslim pop culture touches various sides and is represented by many singers, songwriters and composers. Music is used as a tool to foster Islamic beliefs, and values in the

UK and also to fight for Muslims' rights and to give a clear view about Islam using spiritual meaningful words.

One of the most popular singers and songwriters is Sami Yusuf of Iranian origins. He started his career with the album "Al Mu'allim" which was released in 2003. Sami Yusuf introduces Islamic values through his famous songs. He picturizes the values of Muslims like respecting elderly people in the music video "Hasbi Rabbi". The spiritual scenes are also present in his songs like in "You Come to Me" in which he represents god as the shadow that enlightens his path. Sami Yusuf's songs are full of messages addressing not only Muslims but aiming to unite people from different races. His song "Forgotten Promises" comes as a reminder that we are all human whatever the skin's colour and origin, we all have one soul. He uses the profits gained from the song to fight famine in African countries. Something Else makes his lyrics special, the smooth shift from one language to another to spread his message to the largest number of audience.

Harris J, the British Muslim singer is one of the representatives of Muslims' beliefs and lifestyle. Through his musical lyrics, he calls for peace and the exchange of love among members of society, this is embodied in his song "Salam Alaikum" full of hope and peace "Peace on the earth every cherish the love let it be around us always be kind" (Harris J, 2015). His song represents the beauty of the word "May peace be upon you" and its great impact on peoples' hearts. He also touches on giving its true meaning through the song. All his words are considered meaningful messages full of vitality and positivity. He says "I know my life isn't perfect but I like the way it's going....Allah I want to thank you for the good life" (Harris J, 2015). He shows how a person should be content with what God Almighty has given him and trust in him in all his worldly affairs. In 2024, he produced a song named "came back" in which he wants to show God's forgiveness and the power of his mercy while saying "No

matter how hard I tried, all the walls I put up always broke down until your mercy conquered me O Allah".. Harris J wants to clarify that thanking God for his blessings brings a kind of serenity and inner peace to the Muslims' lives and the more thanks to God the blessings increase.

British Muslim singers also use Hip Hop and Rap music to represent Islam. Khaled Siddiq is one the most recognised Muslim artists across the globe. He believes that providing others with ethical entertainment and dispelling stereotypes about his faith has always been his calling. The Deen song shows the reason that makes him more faithful, all that he did and is doing is for God. He works hard to find a truthful religion and also calls people to find their truthful path.

Muslim Belal starts his MV praying asking God for forgiveness. He has been an advocate against racism, using his platform to address issues of inequality and discrimination. He has contributed to the ongoing conversation about combating racism and promoting inclusivity. He has been also involved in raising awareness about the challenges faced by Muslim girls in Western societies where they may encounter discrimination and cultural barriers. He has shed light on these issues through his MV and promoted understanding and support for Muslim girls. On the other hand, he has been vocal in criticising white racism, addressing issues of systemic discrimination, equality and justice emphasising the need to dismantle structures to perpetuate racism against people of colour. Ashley Chin named Muslim Belal has likely spoken out against the unfair labeling of Muslims as terrorists when individuals from their community commit wrongdoing, he has mentioned "And they won't talk to us about terrorism despite the killings by the far right and white supremacist" (Omar Esa, Muslim Billal, Essam,2019)

Music videos also address racism against Muslims such as "I Ain't Having It" by the Asian Dub Foundation. The song and video highlight discrimination faced by Muslims in the UK, particularly in the context of racial profiling and Islamophobia. It has been a powerful portrayal of the challenges and injustices experienced by the Muslim community in the UK.

"Question Time" by Dave is another impactful music video that addresses racism against Muslims in the UK. In the song, Dave addresses various social and political issues including the mistreatment of Muslims in British society. The lyrics confront discrimination while urging for change and equality. He has included the violence and killings occurring in different countries, he says "The irony is we have no business in Syria but kids are getting killed for all the business and they try to tell you that it's is isis its isis so what's the difference between us and them"(Dave, 2018) He might highlight inconsistencies in how different situations are addressed and advocate for more principled approaches to addressing global issues.

2-5 Perception of Muslims in pop culture:

The perception of Muslims in pop culture has been diverse and evolving from positive portrayals reflecting multiculturalism to negative stereotypes that subject them to othering and perpetuating misconceptions. On one hand, the positive representations of Muslims in British culture are inaccurate in TV shows like "Citizen Khan" and "The Great British Bake Off", they have featured Muslim characters in positive and diverse roles. Moreover, initiatives like the British Muslim awards and the achievements of Muslims in various fields contribute to a more inclusive and accurate representation of the Muslim community in British popular culture. As an example, we take Sadik Khan, London's former mayor who highlighted the contributions of Muslims to the cultural landscape of London beyond and how Muslim

communities have enriched societies through their art, literature, cuisine and other cultural expressions. On this matter, Piers Morgan; a British journalist shared on his Twitter account " If you don't think Lee Anderson's shameful attack on Saddik Khan was racist and Islamophobic, it may be because you are racist and Islamophobic yourself". (Piers Morgan .2024, February 26).if you don't think-islamophobia yourself. Piers Morgan in this position, wanted to convince the British people that Muslims are vulnerable to racism, he thought that Sadik was a concrete example of the Muslims' identity that possesses the highest qualities and advantages. Therefore, anyone who thinks that accusations against Sadik are blatantly considered extremely racist. On the other hand, Muslims on screen have been represented negatively, always associating and linking them to violence, terrorism or subjectivity to others. As was mentioned in the Guardian UK by Bollywood royalty Shahrukh Khan, it also features Muslims in the default role of terrorists. (Meriem, K.K.2020). From mute to menacing: Why TV's portrayal Muslims still falls short, The Guardian). Another negative stereotype is represented in the Bodyguard show" Even Amazon's fantastical superhero show The Boys where vigilantes fight against those who abuse their power, overbearingly presents Muslims as a threat to Western values"(Meriem, 2020). From mute to menacing: Why TV's portrayal Muslims still falls short, The Guardian). Indeed, Muslims are often stereotyped, and portrayed as monolithic and homogeneous. These stereotypes not only misrepresent the diversity within Muslim societies but also contribute to the marginalisation and discrimination faced by Muslims in society.

The British citizens feared and doubted that the British Muslims invaded their customs and values, at the same time Muslims aimed to show the British that Islam is not a culture but a body of principles and universal values.

2.6 Impact of Islamic pop culture on UK's politics:

The impact of Islamic pop culture in the UK is miscellaneous and shines back broader societal changes in identity, representation and cultural exchanges. It has crucial effects, reflecting the amalgamation and the domination of the Muslim community.

Islamic pop culture has shaped public perceptions, inspiring political engagement among British Muslims, and highlighting key social issues. Otherwise, Islamic pop culture has motivated youthful British Muslims to become involved in politics. That participation goes beyond modes such as voting and taking part in civic activities. (Ansari. 2004)

Moreover, the rise of Islamic pop culture has driven many and various voices into the political sector such as Rusanara Ali, the first Bangladeshi-born British citizen who was elected Member of Parliament of the Labor Party. She stands for representing constituents with a significant Muslim population and advocates for issues that affect Muslim communities. (Rahman. 2001). Sadik Khan is also considered an outstanding figure in the UK, the first Muslim mayor of a major Western city who illustrates the enlarged political influence of Muslims there. His visibility and triumph stand against negative stereotypes and motivate more Muslims to seek public office. According to Ben Copley " Sadik Khan pledges to make London a fairer and more tolerant city open and accessible to all, and one made a lot of his background as a Muslim and the son of Immigrants" (Ben Copley, 2021)

Furthermore, Islamic pop culture spotlights issues like Islamophobia. It pushed Muslims onto the political agenda. Campaigns such as "Visit my mosque" day, held up by organisations like MCB, fostered community cohesion and challenged negative stereotypes.(Wilson. 2019)

Additionally, Islamic pop culture often highlights issues such as social justice, equality and immigration which influence political policies. As an example, we take the

advocacy work group MEND (Muslim Engagement Development) which was established to combat Islamophobia in the UK. It works to increase the British Muslim presence in media and politics. It wants British Muslims to play a key role in tackling issues that they care about. (Welsh. March 8, 2021)

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to portray the meaning behind the concept of Muslim pop culture in Britain and highlight the various fields that the Muslims used to promote their culture. The chapter was aimed to provide the evolution and the impact of Muslim culture and argued that pop culture could change the stereotypes and misconceptions about the reality of their religions and beliefs. Finally, this chapter dealt with the major fields that Muslim pop culture could affect such as political and social sides.

General Conclusion

In conclusion, the work has attempted to analyse the process of identity construction and negotiation of Muslims in the UK through the means of pop culture. From journalism to comedy, through TV and the big screen as well as fashion and design, Muslims of the UK managed to present a new, authentic discourse about what it is to be a British Muslim.

Muslims have often been the subject of discursive distortion and exposure to image and character defamation. This became especially a recurrent theme in the post 9/11 media, which pictured Muslims as backwards, terrorists and a threat to the western values. This was indeed, and continues to be up until today, a challenging chapter for Muslims across the world, but especially to those occupying the western world, most particularly the USA, United Kingdom and France. In these countries, racism against Muslims was extreme, making life in these societies very challenging. In Britain, as it has been shown through the work, Muslims became more vocal and expressed their rejection and fierce resistance to any stereotypes that hindered for so long their existence in the country, especially since Muslims awareness of their belonging to the country grew stronger and granted them more courage and resilience to reverse all pre-established derogatory narratives. Pop culture elements had empowered Muslims to represent themselves.

To present a holistic idea about the construction and the negotiation of identity of Muslims through pop culture, a look into the journey and the history of Muslims in the UK has been offered throughout Chapter One. Britain in Post-World War II witnessed a high rate of Muslim migrants looking for better and new life opportunities. The establishment of Muslim communities contributed to the formation of a vibrant Muslim culture. It is stated that Muslim

settlement in Britain is not monolithic but greatly diverse, comprehending a variety of traditions and practices, making up a rich tapestry of representation and expression that enriches the broader British society. Hence, the notable contributions of Muslims in bridging cultural gaps and political landscapes in Britain cannot be denied nor ignored.

Among the critical aspects scouted in the first chapter is the impact of migration on the Muslim identity within British society. The research has provided a comprehensive examination of the migration history and the formation of Muslim communities in the UK from 1945 to the present day. Muslim communities have faced innumerable issues and challenges, through which they have proved their willingness to adapt and to adopt. The amalgamation of numerous cultural elements allowed the evolution of a distinctive British Muslim identity based on traditional cultural values and influenced by contemporary modernity of British society.

In Chapter Two, it has been discussed that British Muslims have been able to challenge stereotypes through several forms of pop culture expression such as music, art and media. The evolution of Muslim pop culture calls attention to a journey towards appreciable acceptance. These cultural expressions have not only furnished a platform for Muslims in Britain to commemorate their heritage but also have offered a positive depiction of Muslims in the public sphere which in turn has exerted influence on the policy discussions.

Eventually, the key findings from the two chapters spotlight the considerable contributions of Muslim immigrants to the cultural and political landscapes and make evident their identity formation. The path of the British Muslims is pointed by strength, toughness and involvement, influencing the wide culture of Britain. Ultimately, the research calls for the boundless and prolonged attempts to support cultural diversity, appreciating it as a solidness that reinforces the constitution of the United Kingdom.

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