



Consumer Preferences Of Indian Traditional Textiles Among Lgbt

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Abstract: India boasts a rich history of textiles, celebrated for both traditional and contemporary styles. The response was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the community's appreciation for traditional fabrics. This initiative not only honors India's textile artistry but also fosters greater awareness of traditional materials within the LGBT community.

The use of Ajrakh print in fashion for the LGBT community exemplifies a meaningful fusion of cultural heritage and modern identity. This creative approach opens up opportunities for the fashion industry to embrace inclusivity, while also educating LGBT individuals about the rich tapestry of traditional Indian textiles.

Index Terms - Ajrakh, Traditional Textiles, Indian Textiles, Transgender, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Indian Traditional Textiles

Indian traditional textiles are a profound representation of the country's rich culture and heritage. Many consider textiles to be one of India's most significant exports, reflecting a long history of producing high-quality fabrics in both traditional and modern designs. Indian textiles have been made from various materials, such as cotton, silk, wool, paper, and jute. Over time, the designs and patterns of these fabrics have evolved to reflect the diverse traditions and cultures across the country. Birds and animals commonly found in India have also greatly influenced these designs [14].

According to Trivedi (2022), the history of Indian textiles can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization. The city of Taxila, located in Pakistan's Punjab province, was where the first cotton textile was produced. Cotton was used to create clothing and accessories such as shawls and turbans, while woolen fabrics were used to make clothing, blankets, and carpets in India. The Latin word "textilis," meaning to weave, is the origin of the term "textile." Early Indian textiles were produced by hand-processing natural fibers such as cotton, silk, and wool, employing techniques like weaving and knotting [14].

By the 10th century AD, Arab traders introduced cotton to India, further expanding the country's textile production. Indian traditional textiles truly reflect the nation's deep-rooted culture and traditions, which continue to thrive in the form of intricate designs and craftsmanship. These fabrics, made from diverse materials like cotton, silk, wool, and jute, have adapted over the centuries, mirroring the changing influences and values of Indian society. The rich history of Indian textiles showcases the influence of nature, with birds and animals serving as prominent inspirations for the patterns and designs seen across the country. [10]

1.1.2 What the LGBT

Mike C (2013) states that LGBT, an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, has been used since the 1990s as an inclusive term for sexual orientation and gender identity. Initially introduced as "LGB" in the 1980s to replace "homosexual" or "gay and lesbian," it evolved to include transgender individuals. In cases where transgender persons aren't included, "LGB" remains in use [12]. Finne (2002) notes that LGBT can also broadly encompass non-heterosexual and non-cisgender individuals. LGBTQ, adding "Q" for queer or questioning, offers further inclusivity, though not everyone agrees with the initials LGBT or GLBT [13].



Fig – 1: LGBT Community

1.2 Objectives of Research

- To impart knowledge about Indian Traditional Textile among LGBT.
- To identify the preferences of the LGBT community for wearing Traditional Indian Textile.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 LGBT Community

The acronym LGBT, representing lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people, has been widely used in research and discourse to discuss sexual minorities. Scholars have highlighted its flexibility and inclusiveness, but this inclusivity often comes with methodological challenges. While the acronym aims to reflect a broad spectrum of sexual and gender minorities, it has been criticized for marginalizing bisexual and transgender individuals by focusing predominantly on the L and G (lesbian and gay) parts of the acronym, at the expense of the B and T. Brotman et al. (2002) argue that this focus perpetuates the invisibility of bisexual and transgender individuals, furthering their marginalization. [16]

The expansion of LGBT into even more inclusive forms like LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and others) reflects ongoing efforts to represent all groups, but this inclusivity can still be methodologically problematic. Price (2011) suggests that lumping together diverse identities without considering their unique experiences risks oversimplifying the complexity of each group's struggles[1]. Bisexuality, for example, deserves distinct research focus, as the identity is constructed differently from those centered on same-sex desire or gender identity. Wilton (2000) notes that dissatisfaction with one's biological sex, as seen in transgender identities, is fundamentally different from identities rooted in same-sex attraction, necessitating separate and careful study. [15]

Hardell (2016) highlights the nuances of terminology, explaining that terms like lesbian and gay are used to describe individuals attracted to the same gender, but also that non-binary or genderqueer individuals might identify with these terms. Bisexuality refers to attraction to two or more genders, while transgender describes individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. [2] Hardell also discusses the shifting meaning of androgyny, once understood as embodying both masculine and feminine traits, but now used to describe individuals who reject binary gender expressions entirely.[2] This evolution in language has caused some tension, as the term now invokes images of gender-ambiguous individuals with slim jeans and undercuts rather than someone displaying a mix of traditionally masculine and feminine traits. [2]

Marin (2022) explores how young British lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals navigate the visual identity expected of their community. In an exploratory qualitative study, students were asked to associate words with the terms "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual." Responses revealed stereotypes about appearance, with words like "ugly," "butch," "masculine," "short hair," and "comfortable shoes" frequently linked to lesbian identity[4]. This reflects a broader sociocultural production of LGB identities, where individuals feel pressure to conform to certain appearance norms. [4]

These studies emphasize the importance of careful consideration in research involving sexual and gender minorities. Simplifying identities into an all-encompassing acronym without acknowledging their distinct experiences risks invalidating those identities and diminishing the accuracy and validity of research findings.

2.2 LGBT Fashion

LGBT fashion has long been a subject of fascination and discussion within both mainstream and subcultural contexts. According to Steele (2013), the intersection between fashion and LGBTQ culture can be traced through the history of various LGBTQ individuals working in the fashion industry as models, designers, stylists, and journalists. LGBTQ subcultural and street fashions often defy gender norms and have contributed to fashion's rebellious aesthetics. Fashion reflects the LGBTQ community's innovation, resistance, and creative contributions. Steele highlights the crucial roles LGBTQ individuals have played in shaping the fashion industry and argues that their impact is vital to understanding fashion history. The idea for an exhibition on LGBTQ fashion came from Fred Dennis, who sought to explore how queer culture has influenced fashion and aesthetics. [8].

Rudy and Adhitya (2020) add that fashion has been used in popular culture to represent the LGBTQ community, especially in media like TV shows that depict openly gay characters with distinct fashion senses. In American TV during the 2000s, homosexual characters were often depicted as fashion-forward, and their clothing choices became a central way to characterize them. The perception that gay men, in particular, are associated with fashion has been reinforced by the media, leading to cultural expectations about how LGBTQ individuals, especially gay men, present themselves. Additionally, Rudy and Adhitya explain that fashion goes beyond clothing to include piercings, tattoos, and accessories, and has always been a means of self-expression for the LGBTQ community. [3]

Clarke (2007) notes the prevalence of makeover shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, which portray gay men as synonymous with style and grooming. These shows help reinforce stereotypes that link gay men with fashion, while the participants in such shows often reflect a polished, aesthetically conscious image. Clarke highlights how fashion in the LGBTQ community has a dual role: it allows for personal expression but can also impose rigid standards within the community. Many LGBTQ individuals feel pressure to conform to certain looks, styles, or trends prevalent in their subcultures, limiting their freedom to express themselves fully. [4]

Marin (2020) argues that fashion plays a crucial role in our everyday lives, influencing even mundane clothing choices. It serves as a form of self-expression and a medium through which people express autonomy. Fashion is not just about designer brands or the latest trends; it is a way for individuals to communicate their identity, beliefs, and personality. In the LGBTQ community, fashion can be particularly significant as it allows individuals to break free from societal expectations and explore their gender identity, sexuality, and personal style. [6]

3. METHODOLOGY

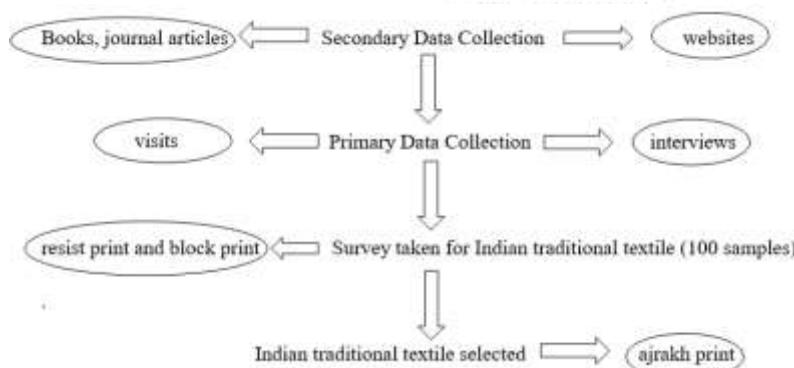


Fig – 2: Flow chart of methodology

To gather reliable secondary data, numerous general articles, books, and studies were examined to inform the choice of Indian traditional textiles for the research focus. Additionally, insights into the LGBT community, their history, and fashion preferences were obtained through visits to various communities and the assistance of friends abroad. Information on the history, production techniques, dyes, printing methods, and the natural fibers used in Indian textiles over the centuries was gathered for reference.

For primary data, a pilot study was conducted at the Humsafar Trust, an NGO that supports the LGBT community. Interviews were conducted with community members to understand their perceptions of fashion and Indian traditional textiles. In August, a survey questionnaire was developed to explore the LGBT community's preferences regarding these textiles. Using snowball sampling, approximately 100 participants from diverse backgrounds were surveyed through the Humsafar Trust, Instagram, and Telegram. Profiles on Instagram and groups on Telegram facilitated contact, while a few transgender individuals were approached on railways.

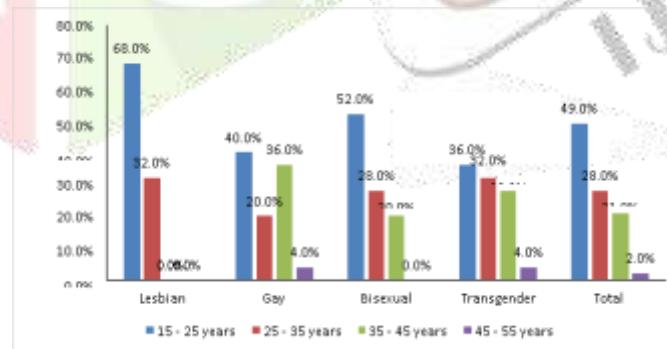
Survey responses provided insight into the community's clothing preferences and the types of traditional textiles to be incorporated. Additionally, online interviews through Google Meet further clarified fashion inclinations within the LGBT community. Key interviewees included Mohana, a 22-year-old tomboy working in a corporate office, who alternates between feminine and masculine clothing styles, primarily preferring Western and party wear. Priyanka Kumar, a 23-year-old queer and IPS aspirant, identifies as female but favors men's clothing. Radhika, a 19-year-old bisexual student, and Fathima, a 22-year-old lesbian corporate employee and new mother, also provided valuable insights.

Through these surveys and interviews, this study aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the LGBT community's fashion preferences and choices, especially concerning the integration of Indian traditional textiles into their wardrobes.

For the research on traditional textile preferences among the LGBTQ community, snowball sampling was employed through platforms like Instagram and by attending LGBTQ events in Juhu. Instagram served as a vital tool for connecting with community members, where profiles were explored, and individuals were approached to participate in the survey. Additionally, visiting LGBTQ events in Juhu provided the opportunity to engage directly with participants in a more open and inclusive environment. These events allowed for in-person discussions, enhancing the depth of the insights gathered on fashion preferences, particularly regarding traditional Indian textiles among the LGBTQ community.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical analysis for the study was conducted using SPSS software (version 25, 2007, IBM Corporation, Armonk, New York, USA). The data are presented as frequency (percentage) or Mean \pm SD, depending on the variable type. Categorical variables were compared across four different groups using cross tabulations and chi-square tests. Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to analyze differences in fabric ratings between these groups. A p-value of less than 0.05 ($P<0.05$) was considered statistically significant for all tests. For example, the age distribution of study participants is shown in Figure 4.1. Among the participants, 49 individuals (49%) were in the 15–25 age group, 28 individuals (28%) were in the 25–35 age group, 21 individuals (21%) were in the 35–45 age group, and only 2 individuals (2%) were aged between 45 and 55



years. There was no significant association between age and sexuality, as indicated by the chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 14.544$, $p > 0.05$).

Chart -1: Age distribution of study participants

Figure 4.2 illustrates the cost range preferences for outfits among the participants. A majority (61%) of the participants selected a cost range of Rs. 500–Rs. 1000, while 30% opted for Rs. 1000–Rs. 2000. Only 3% of participants selected Rs. 2000–Rs. 3000, 5% chose Rs. 3000–Rs. 4000, and 1% indicated a preference for Rs. 4000–Rs. 5000. There was no significant association between age and sexuality in relation to the cost range ($\chi^2 = 10.640$, $p > 0.05$).

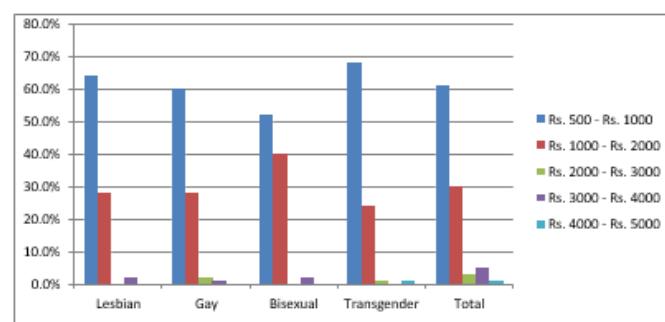


Chart -2: Cost range for outfits

In Figure 4.3, the participants' awareness of Indian traditional textiles is shown. A small percentage (14%) of participants reported knowledge of Indian traditional textiles, while the majority (86%) were unaware. However, there was a statistically significant association between age and sexuality concerning awareness of Indian traditional textiles ($\chi^2 = 8.306$, $p < 0.05$).

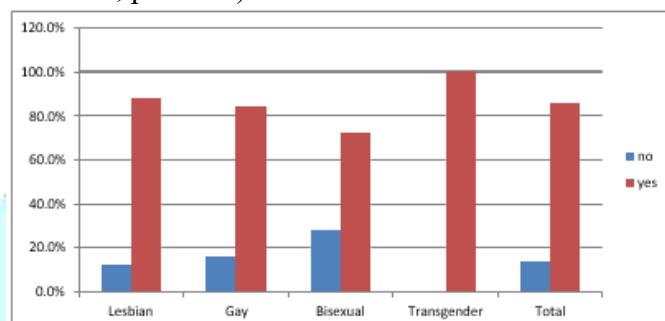


Chart -3 : Participants know about Indian Traditional Textile

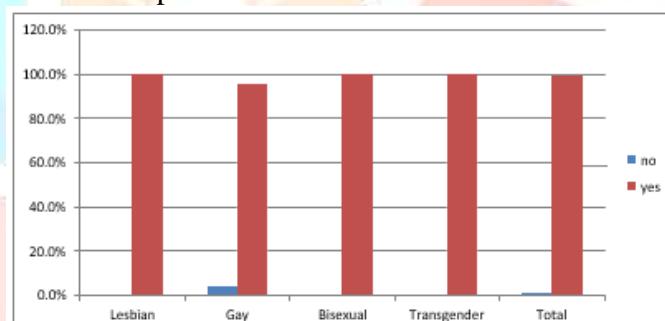


Chart -4: Participants like to wear Indian Traditional Textile

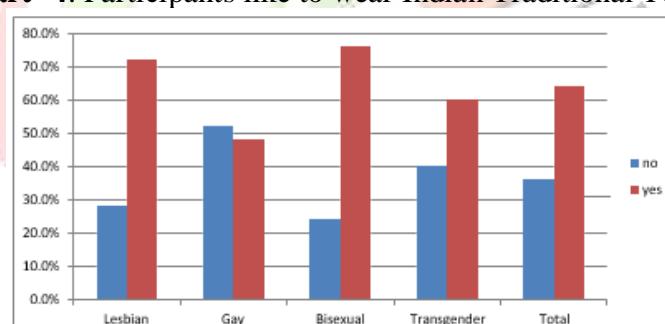


Chart -5: Participants wear opposite sex clothing

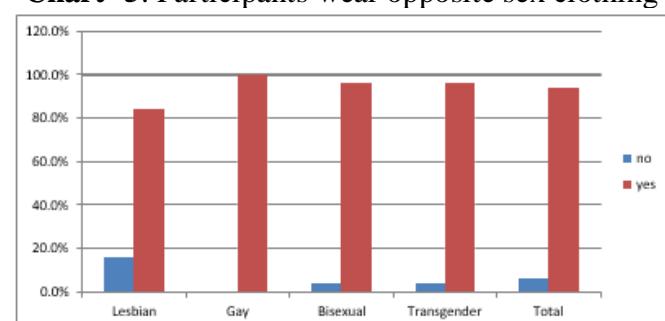


Chart -6: Participants like to wear combination of Indian Traditional Textile and Western

Table -1: Rating for Textiles

	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Transgender	Total	H value	P value
Bandhani	3.4±1.2	3.6±1	3.6±1.3	3.2±1.1	3.5±1.2	1.926	0.588
Leheriya	3.6±1.0	3.5±1.0	3.1±1.1	3±1.3	3.3±1.1	4.705	0.195
Batik	3.5±1.0	4.0±1.1	3.4±1.4	3.2±1.2	3.5±1.2	6.381	0.094
Patola	3.4±1.3	3.8±1.1	3.4±1.5	3.3±1.3	3.5±1.3	1.711	0.634
Bandhas	3.0±1.2	3.5±1.0	3.5±1.3	3.2±1.3	3.3±1.2	3.484	0.323
Sambhal puri	3.3±1.2	3.6±0.6	3.1±1.3	3.1±1.1	3.3±1.1	2.814	0.421
Pochampalli	3.1±1.2	3.4±1.0	3.6±1.3	3.6±1.2	3.4±1.2	3.494	0.322
Dabu	3.5±1.3	3.4±1.0	3.6±1.2	3.4±1.0	3.5±1.1	0.920	0.821
Bagh	3.3±1.3	304±1.0	3.2±1.2	3.2±1.1	3.3±1.1	0.661	0.882
Bagru	3.5±1.3	3.7±0.8	3.1±1.4	3.4±1.2	3.4±1.2	2.820	0.420
Sangneri	3.5±1.2	3.9±0.9	3.3±1.4	3.4±1.3	3.5±1.2	1.922	0.589
Kamalkari	3.6±1.3	4.0±0.9	3.6±1.3	3.6±1.4	3.7±1.2	1.410	0.703
Ajrakh	4.2±1.2	4.2±0.9	3.9±1.4	3.7±1.4	4.0±1.2	2.123	0.547
Banarsi	3.3±1.4	3.8±1.1	3.5±1.2	3.5±1.4	3.5±1.3	1.279	0.734
Baluchari	3.4±1.3	3.6±1.0	3.0±1.1	3.4±1.3	3.3±1.2	3.369	0.338
Jamdani	3.0±1.3	3.6±1.0	3.2±1.4	3.1±1.2	3.2±1.2	4.285	0.232
paithani	3.4±1.4	4.0±0.9	3.6±1.3	3.5±1.5	3.6±1.3	1.868	0.600
Khan	3.3±1.2	3.6±0.8	3.4±1.2	3.3±1.3	3.4±1.1	1.151	0.765
Himroo	3.1±1.2	3.5±0.9	3.5±1.0	3.5±1.2	3.4±1.1	1.839	0.606
Ganga jamuna	3.3±1.3	3.8±0.9	3.1±1.2	3.4±1.3	3.4±1.2	4.339	0.227
Kanjeevaram	3.2±1.1	3.7±0.8	3.6±1.3	3.2±1.2	3.4±1.1	4.530	0.210
Irkal	3.2±1.0	3.8±0.8	3.4±1.2	3.3±1.1	3.4±1.0	5.937	0.115
Chanderi	3.3±1.0	3.6±1.0	3.2±1.3	3.1±1.2	3.3±1.1	2.287	0.515
maheshwari	2.4±1.4	2.8±1.1	2.9±1.6	2.9±2.0	2.7±1.2	1.833	0.608

Figure 4.5 provides insight into participants' preferences for wearing clothing typically associated with the opposite sex. More than 70% of lesbians expressed a preference for wearing opposite-sex clothing, followed by 48% of gay men, 75% of bisexuals, and 60% of transgender individuals who reported the same. Figure 4.6 highlights that a significant majority of participants are interested in wearing a combination of traditional Indian textiles and Western fashion. In this category, 100% of gay men, 88% of bisexuals and transgender individuals, and 82% of lesbians expressed their approval.

In terms of fabric preferences, Ajrakh received the highest average rating of 4 ± 1.2 , while Maheshwari was rated the lowest at 2.7 ± 1.6 . However, there was no significant difference in fabric ratings when analyzed according to sexuality ($p>0.05$).

Further breakdowns revealed that gay men and bisexuals rated Bandhani the highest, while transgender individuals gave it the lowest rating. Lesbians rated Leheriya the highest, whereas transgender participants again provided the lowest ratings for this fabric. Gay men generally gave high ratings to Bandhani, while transgender individuals rated Bandhani and Leheriya the lowest among the fabrics considered in the study.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study delved deeply into the knowledge and preferences of the LGBT community concerning fashion and traditional Indian textiles. The investigation focused on the types of clothing patterns they commonly wore and their preferences for various Indian traditional textiles. It was discovered that the LGBT community is receptive to learning more about Indian traditional textiles and incorporating them into their fashion choices. The outfits prepared using traditional textiles were well-received by the LGBT participants, indicating a strong appreciation for the fusion of traditional Indian elements with contemporary LGBT fashion.

The study also highlighted an untapped opportunity for the fashion industry to create designs that cater specifically to the LGBT community, using Indian traditional textiles. This would not only promote Indian heritage but also foster inclusivity within fashion, allowing members of the LGBT community to express their

unique identities through culturally rich garments. As a result, traditional textiles like Bandhani, Ajrakh, and Leheriya could find a new audience in the LGBT community, helping to bridge cultural and generational gaps through fashion. This integration of traditional textiles into LGBT fashion has the potential to elevate both the understanding of India's textile heritage and the diverse fashion statements within the LGBT community.

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