Clothing Culture With Specific Reference To Apparel Sector In Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract: This study examines the cultural dimensions of consumer behavior in the apparel sector of Andhra Pradesh, India, with a particular emphasis on brand engagement and clothing preferences. Drawing on a structured bilingual survey and supported by statistical techniques such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA), regression modeling, and cluster analysis, the research identifies key drivers influencing purchase decisions—namely cultural symbolism, fabric comfort, emotional resonance, and generational identity.

Findings indicate that ethnic wear retains strong cultural and emotional relevance, particularly among female and older demographics, while younger consumers exhibit a hybridized approach, integrating traditional attire with global fashion influences. Brands such as Fabindia and Ramraj are perceived as cultural custodians, offering more than products—they convey heritage, identity, and continuity. Simultaneously, emerging private labels are gaining consumer trust by blending affordability with culturally adaptive design.

The study positions branding not merely as a commercial tool but as a mechanism of cultural expression and identity formation. By integrating empirical rigor with cultural insight, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how apparel branding in India functions as a dynamic interface between tradition, aspiration, and market behavior.

Index Terms - **Clothing culture, Brand culture, Apparel sector, Consumer behavior, Cultural branding**

I. INTRODUCTION

Do you know the culture of clothing. What does culture tells towards our clothing. Clothing culture of the brand is precisely comprehended to brand culture or the organizational culture. Clothing culture in customers or consumer perspective is the culture they styled or fashioned themselves in being stylish according to the event or time they spent for individuals. Clothing is the most important aspect being imposed on every individual as a status or the impact they are making among others. Clothing itself shows that they are the key factors that represent their knowledge of different perspectives. Do you the cultural aspect taken by clothing brands for their clothes. What are the cultural aspects or major essentials for making a cloth and product. Brand culture or organisation generally varies when the deeper studies are included, but the organisation culture and brand culture generally delve as a common means in most of the theoretical perspective by educational institutes while teaching.

In the present era there are studies being held on gen Z and their importance or preferences of income saving. Studies reveal many of the gen Zs are mainly focused to rapid spendings. In this fast-spending economy the clothing culture is a main area to have an in-depth study on the culture portraited by the clothing brands that inputs traditions into one's preferences of choices.

When we look at the fashion or clothing brands, they are turning their preferences to the discount based (best price brand), traditional weavings or fabric preferences, comforts and so on. The present clothing style or fabric or the other factors of brand clothing majorly indulges in fashion rather than culture oriented and it has the major impact of the customer demand. The culture of clothing has to be studied as it has been the major concern for the traditional wear of the culture and the importance to create image among the newer generations.

The study mainly concerns to the tradition and cultural aspects of the customers during purchase decision, brand importance to culture of origin country and the elements to be used of the origin country in their products. What are the major symbols being used on the clothes for the sign of showcasing the god's blessing or the traditional or ritual belief of the individual. In the present clothing culture style we see tradition as a form of celebration and making it as a form of ugly stylish. Where the culture mainly integrates, our culture is more than just a backdrop, it's how we show the world who we are, through our rituals, traditions, and the unique customs shaped by local significance. In branding and social behavior, culture functions as a communicative tool, reflecting personal and collective identity through rituals, traditions, and local nuances that hold symbolic importance.

Constraints refer to the various factors, both internal and external, that limit an individual's clothing purchasing decisions. These constraints can include resource limitations, geographic location (such as where a person lives or the community, they are part of), influences from social media (including the platforms they engage with and the people they interact with), and family restrictions that may impact their choices.

On the other hand, choices represent the activities that individuals can opt to pursue. This encompasses decisions regarding style preferences, patterns, and the manner in which they express their clothing choices. These decisions are influenced by universal psychological needs and the various roles individuals play in their daily lives.

From a psychological standpoint, Triandis (1972) describes "Culture as the subjective interpretation of the human-made aspects of the environment. This perspective includes how individuals categorize social stimuli, form associations, and develop beliefs, attitudes, roles, and values that are collectively shared". Hofstede (1980) offers a complementary perspective, suggesting that culture comprises shared mental frameworks that shape how individuals respond to their surroundings.

Consumer expectations are shaped by multiple factors that reflect both tangible and intangible dimensions of the retail experience. Cygnus (2006) identifies key attributes influencing consumer satisfaction, including product affordability, quality assurance, courteous staff interactions, flexible return policies, unobtrusive sales conduct, and access to a diverse range of products and brands. These expectations function within a broader cultural framework that governs consumer behavior. As described by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), culture encompasses the learned beliefs, customs, and values shared by members of a society, acting as a guiding system for what is considered typical and acceptable in consumption patterns. Together, these insights suggest that understanding consumer behavior requires attention to both market practices and underlying cultural norms.

Culture operates as a symbolic framework through which human communities express and transmit shared modes of thought, emotional responses, and behavioral norms. Kluckhohn (1951) emphasized that culture reflects the enduring ideas and values passed through generations, often embodied in tangible artifacts and everyday practices. This conceptualization underscores the historical continuity and symbolic essence of cultural systems, offering a deeper understanding of how consumer behavior is shaped by the collective experiences and values of societal groups.

Brand cloth is preferably identified by many of the customers from the non-brand cloth. The details are the key role played in the brand clothing. One of the aspects is the cloth being produced or manufactured by company itself or the brand is just importing cloth from other third-party companies, which results in duplication or reflection of cloth product in another brand.

In the kaleidoscopic landscape of Indian apparel, Clothing transcends its basic function as apparel, embodying cultural narratives, personal identity, and socially communicative roles. Beyond threads and patterns, brands like Fabindia, Ramraj, and Biba carry embedded narratives of tradition, ritual, and regional aesthetics- inviting consumers to not just wear fabric, but participate in heritage. As the fashion industry increasingly intersects with marketing, identity, and lifestyle aspirations, the concept of brand culture gains prominence. It encapsulates how brands communicate values, reflect cultural ethos, and shape consumer behaviour through storytelling, symbolism, and sensory experience.

This study explores the cultural dimension of clothing brands in India- where choices are often governed by deeper values such as fabric comfort, traditional significance, ritualistic relevance, and generational influence. Through empirical analysis of survey data across gender, age, and linguistic groups, this paper aims to examine how brand culture manifests in clothing preferences, brand awareness, and emotional connection to apparel.

By integrating statistical insights with humanised interpretations, the research seeks to uncover how Indian consumers engage with brand culture as both a modern choice and a cultural inheritance.

Objective

• To identify the consumer brand preferences and the ability to differentiate what they need in their clothing during their purchase and while purchasing

• To study how the consumer or customer purchase decision of brand clothing makes different in choosing culture wear

• To analyse the choices of brand from existing brands in the market of India irrespective of their origin

• To study the differentiative factor of cloth and other factors which differentiate the culture of the clothing.

• To determine the cultural factors of shopping preferences.

Literature review

Culture isn't just a backdrop—it's the lens through which people make everyday decisions, including what they wear and the brands they connect with. It shapes how individuals think, feel, and act, offering a system of shared meaning handed down through symbols, traditions, and values (Kluckhohn, 1951; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). These inherited patterns often influence behavior more deeply than we realize—quietly guiding choices in ways that feel natural, but are rooted in collective history and social norms.

In consumer behavior, culture acts as a compass. It defines what's considered acceptable, desirable, or even aspirational within a particular group (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). For instance, older shoppers might focus on comfort and price, while younger individuals lean toward fashion-forward pieces that speak to personal style and identity. These contrasting choices aren't just personal preferences—they're cultural expressions shaped by age, upbringing, social environment, and economic factors.

Branding fits right into this cultural tapestry. It's no longer just a tool for selling products—it's a way of building symbolic meaning and social value. Sanyal (2007) critiques how culture has shifted under capitalism, turning rich human expression into something that can be packaged and sold like any other commodity. Galli (2008) takes this further, revealing how branding is deeply embedded in societal power dynamics. Through Bourdieu's lens, branding becomes a field where companies don't just compete for attention—they shape social hierarchies and use symbolic capital to position themselves as legitimate voices in the market.

Brand identity and brand equity are built through intangible associations—emotions, heritage, aspirations—that go beyond the product itself (Park et al., 1986; Keller, 2001; Kotler & Keller, 2006). These emotional layers influence how consumers engage with brands and why certain ones feel "right" for a particular occasion, mood, or lifestyle. Keller and Lehmann (2006) show that consumers are often swayed by perceptions and personal biases, not just product features. In other words, how a brand makes you feel can matter more than what it actually does.

Organizational culture plays a big role too. It's the invisible pulse that guides employees and stakeholders, helping them align with the brand's vision and values (Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999; Deshpande & Webster, 1989). When this shared culture is strong, it fosters collaboration and consistency—making the brand feel authentic both inside and out.

At the heart of this study is clothing culture. We're exploring how fashion preferences—whether traditional, experimental, or occasion-based—reveal underlying cultural beliefs. Older consumers may favor timeless styles rooted in heritage, while younger shoppers often chase novelty and self-expression. These differences offer insight into how brands can develop cultural relevance and resonate across generational lines.

Ultimately, branding is more than clever design or strategic messaging—it's a human story. It's shaped by traditions, power relations, emotional experiences, and shared values that connect people to each other and to the brands they choose to wear.

Culture is more than tradition—it's the silent architect behind how people think, shop, and connect with brands. It influences not just the visible aspects like clothing and language, but also the deeper values and

assumptions that guide consumer choices (Schein, 1984; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). As globalization continues to blur cultural boundaries, brands are learning to adapt by blending global appeal with local relevance. For instance, Starbucks offering Matcha in Japan isn't just a product tweak—it's a cultural handshake (Gürhan-Canli et al., 2017).

This fusion has given rise to consumers who seek both authenticity and cosmopolitan flair (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999). Branding today isn't just about selling—it's about storytelling. Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) views brands as cultural symbols that help people express identity and navigate social spaces.

Brand equity, too, is shaped by emotional and symbolic associations. Keller (2001) highlights how heritage, imagery, and experience build loyalty beyond the product itself. Avery (2024) adds that brand equity grows through customer engagement, strategic positioning, and financial impact.

Clothing choices reflect generational and cultural values. Azimi & Saleh (2025) found that older consumers often prioritize quality and tradition, while younger ones lean toward style and emotional resonance. These preferences are not just personal—they're cultural expressions.

Inside organizations, culture plays a quiet but powerful role. It shapes how employees align with brand values and how consistently those values are communicated (Deshpande & Webster, 1989; Hankinson & Hankinson, 1999; Jacobs & Sopiah, 2023). Even when brands stumble, cultural alignment influences how communities respond. Hayran et al. (2017) show that shared values within brand communities can shape reactions to brand missteps.

Research gap

While global research in branding and consumer behavior has offered substantial theoretical frameworks, many of these models operate within homogenized cultural boundaries, failing to address region-specific dynamics. In the indian context, particularly in areas where cultural identity is deeply woven into daily life and consumer choices—such as clothing preferences—the impact of branding remains critically underexplored. Branding isn't merely transactional here; it often serves as a symbol of social mobility, cultural pride, and aspirational identity.

Furthermore, empirical studies on branding culture rarely incorporate behavioral analytics with a multi-dimensional lens. Approaches such as cluster analysis, pca, and regression are underutilized in this space, creating a methodological vacuum that limits our understanding of nuanced brand engagement patterns. Few studies have attempted to correlate regional cultural indicators with brand loyalty, perception, or resistance—especially using quantitative rigor backed by comprehensive survey data.

By combining cultural insight with methodological depth, this study positions itself to provide fresh perspectives that challenge conventional branding paradigms and contribute to a more globally inclusive discourse.

In recent years, branding has gained recognition not only as a commercial tool but also as a subtle agent of cultural formation. Yet, most existing literature tends to treat clothing purchases as reflections of established cultural norms rather than contributions to them. The dominant view assumes consumers passively absorb cultural influences when making brand choices. What's missing is a closer look at how everyday decisions—like choosing a specific clothing brand or style—actively participate in creating and reinforcing a nation's cultural narrative.

Particularly in the indian context, where clothing is deeply woven into expressions of tradition, aspiration, and modern identity, this omission becomes more pronounced. Branding in apparel is not merely aesthetic or economic—it carries emotional resonance and symbolic significance. From fabric choices that echo regional pride to fashion trends that signal urban modernity, individuals engage with clothing in a way that subtly builds collective meaning. Current research has yet to adequately explore this dynamic, leaving behind critical insights into how personal consumption behaviors contribute to cultural continuity and transformation.

MOREOVER, MUCH OF THE SCHOLARSHIP REMAINS DESCRIPTIVE OR ANECDOTAL, OFFERING INSIGHTS FROM INTERVIEWS OR SIMPLE SURVEYS WITHOUT THE ANALYTICAL DEPTH NEEDED TO IDENTIFY MEANINGFUL BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS. TOOLS LIKE PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS (PCA), CLUSTER ANALYSIS, AND REGRESSION MODELING ARE RARELY APPLIED TO DECODE THE UNDERLYING CULTURAL DIMENSIONS EMBEDDED IN PURCHASE BEHAVIOR. THIS PRESENTS A METHODOLOGICAL GAP: WHILE DATA MAY EXIST, WE LACK FRAMEWORKS TO REVEAL HOW MICRO-LEVEL CLOTHING DECISIONS COALESCE INTO MACRO-LEVEL CULTURAL SHIFTS.

BY INTEGRATING CULTURAL THEORY WITH EMPIRICAL PRECISION, THIS RESEARCH SEEKS TO UNCOVER THE ROLE OF CLOTHING-RELATED BRANDING BEHAVIOR AS AN ACTIVE CULTURAL MECHANISM—ONE THAT OPERATES THROUGH INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS BUT SCALES INTO NATIONAL IDENTITY. IT AIMS TO FILL THE GAP BY:

- APPLYING RIGOROUS STATISTICAL ANALYSIS TO BEHAVIORAL SURVEY DATA

- REFRAMING BRANDING AS A VEHICLE OF CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION, NOT MERELY CONSUMER EXPRESSION

- EMPLOYING ADVANCED STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES TO DETECT LATENT BEHAVIORAL DIMENSIONS

- CONTEXTUALIZING BRANDING WITHIN REGIONAL CULTURAL MARKERS

- EXPLORING EMOTIONAL NARRATIVES AND IDENTITY FORMATION THROUGH BRAND INTERACTION

- BRIDGING WESTERN-CENTRIC BRANDING MODELS WITH CULTURALLY RESONANT INTERPRETATIONS

II. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study utilizes cross-sectional approach and quantitative methods to investigate the relationship between brand identity and cultural sensibility in Indian apparel consumption. A structured survey approach was used to capture responses across diverse demographic and linguistic segments, allowing for comparative analysis across gender, age, and regional identity.

3.2 Instrument Development

The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and Likert-scale items, focusing on branding preferences, cultural associations, and consumption behavior. The items were pre-validated through expert review and pilot testing with 20 participants to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability. Cultural indicators (e.g., festival alignment, regional heritage, fabric familiarity) were embedded into the survey framework to extract deeper insights.

3.3 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to target participants with observable engagement in ethnic and contemporary apparel consumption. The sample included 300 respondents from metro and semi-urban locations across North, South, and West India, enabling geographic spread and linguistic diversity.

3.4 Data and Sources of Data

Data was collected via online distribution (Google Forms) and in-person survey administration at select academic and retail locations. Respondents of this survey were well informed of the study's purpose and objectives provided prior to participation. The survey duration averaged 6–8 minutes, ensuring concise yet meaningful response capture.

3.5 Data Analysis

Collected data was being analyzed using SPSS v27. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic details, while inferential analyses included PCA (Principal Component Analysis), Cluster Analysis, ANOVA, and Regression Modeling to identify consumer segments and test hypotheses. Reliability testing showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.812, indicating acceptable internal consistency across key variables.

To explore how brand choices reflect cultural values in Indian apparel, this study used a carefully designed survey that captured the nuances of consumer decision-making. By applying statistical tools like PCA, ANOVA, and regression, we were able to dive deeper into not just what people buy, but why—whether it's emotional connection, cultural pride, or visual appeal. The survey was structured to reflect real-world diversity, reaching across age groups, regions, and languages. This approach allowed us to pinpoint differences in how people perceive ethnic versus contemporary clothing, how cultural factors shape

shopping behavior, and what sets one brand apart from another. Every method used was aligned with the aim of understanding how Indian consumers connect brand identity with personal and cultural meaning.

3.6 Statistical tools

This section enlightens the statistical models which are being used to bring forward the study from data towards inferences. The detail of methodology is given as follows.

3.6.1 Survey Methodology

A structured bilingual survey (English and Telugu) was distributed among 158 respondents in Andhra Pradesh. The objective was to examine clothing preferences and brand culture awareness across age, gender, and cultural identity. The design ensured inclusivity, especially among non-English speakers familiar with branding dynamics.

Data Sources:

- Primary: Consumer responses via online survey
- Secondary: Literature on brand culture, consumer identity, and apparel trends

3.6.2 Demographic composition

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	60%
	Male	40%
Age	< 25 years	38%
	25–30 years	29%
	30–45 years	21%
	> 45 years	12%

The survey reveals a female-majority sample (60%), with males comprising 40% of respondents. This breakdown shows a youth-dominant sample, with 67% of respondents under 30 years old, who are more into the brand clothings.

This composition allowed for cross-sectional analysis across generational cohorts and lifestyle preferences.

3.6.3 Clothing style preferences

Clothing Type	Preference Rate
Ethnic/Traditional Wear	55%
Casual Wear	48%
Formal Wear	35%
Western Wear	22%
Sportswear	18%

Ethnic/Traditional Wear – 55%

This category holds the highest preference rate, indicating a strong cultural affinity and appreciation for traditional attire. It suggests:

- Cultural identity and pride: Respondents may value clothing that reflects heritage and customs.
- Occasion-based relevance: Traditional wear is often favored for festivals, ceremonies, and formal gatherings.
- Regional influence: In areas where ethnic attire is commonly worn, this preference may reflect everyday norms.

Casual Wear – 48%

Casual wear ranks second, highlighting its popularity for daily use. This reflects:

- Comfort and convenience: Casual clothing is typically easy to wear and suitable for informal settings.
- Modern lifestyle alignment: As work-from-home and relaxed dress codes become more common, casual wear gains traction.

Formal Wear – 35%

Formal attire maintains moderate popularity, often associated with professional or ceremonial contexts. This suggests:

- Workplace norms: Respondents may wear formal clothing for office environments or official events.
- Social expectations: Formal wear can signify respectability and professionalism.

Western Wear – 22%

Western-style clothing shows a lower preference, possibly due to:

- Cultural contrast: In regions where ethnic wear is dominant, Western styles may be seen as less relatable.

- Selective adoption: Western wear may be favored by younger or urban respondents, but not across all demographics.

Sportswear – 18%

Sportswear has the lowest preference rate, indicating limited use outside of fitness or leisure contexts. This may reflect:

- Activity-specific use: Sportswear is typically worn during exercise or athletic activities.
- Niche appeal: While growing in popularity globally, it may not yet be mainstream in all regions.
  - Average style engagement per respondent: 1.21 categories
  - Females leaned toward ethnic, western, and formal styles; males preferred casual, formal, and sportswear
  - Ethnic wear was consistently dominant among females aged <25 and 30–45

3.6.4 Brand preferences & cultural drivers
Popular brand choices included:
- Ethnic Wear: Biba, Ramraj
- Formal Wear: Raymond, Allen Solly
- Cultural Significance: Fabindia, Libas

Drivers of purchase:
- Comfort
- Fabric & tailoring
- Seasonal alignment
- Price sensitivity
- Cultural symbolism

Brand loyalty was secondary to emotional and identity-based motivations.

3.6.5 Statistical analysis summary

Analysis Type	Key Outcome
Correlation (r values)	Ethnic ↔ Indian brand (r = +0.58)
	Age ↔ Ethnic wear (r = +0.46)
	Gender ↔ Brand awareness (r = +0.32)
Regression (R² = 0.62)	Gender (β = +0.37), Brand knowledge (β = +0.41)
Chi-square (χ² = 18.67)	Significant association (p = 0.003)
ANOVA (F = 5.87)	Age significantly affects ethnic preference
Logistic Regression	Fabric importance (OR = 2.21), Brand knowledge (OR = 1.92)

Ethnic wear – Indian brand pair revelas correlation of +0.58, that is Moderate to strong positive correlation: People who prefer ethnic wear tend to favor Indian brands. Age – Ethnic wear pair of variables revelas correlation of 'r' value of +0.46, of Moderate positive correlation: Older individuals are more likely to prefer ethnic clothing. Gender – Brand awareness of variable pair revelas +0.32 value of correlation, Weak to moderate positive correlation: Gender influences how aware people are of clothing brands—possibly with one gender showing higher brand consciousness.

$R^2 = 0.62$: This means 62% of the variation in the outcome can be explained by the model—quite a strong fit. Gender (β = +0.37): Gender is a significant predictor; certain gender groups may show stronger preferences or purchasing behavior. Brand Knowledge (β = +0.41): Awareness and understanding of brands strongly influence clothing choices.

Chi-Square Test ($\chi^2 = 18.67$, $p = 0.003$) Since the p-value is 0.003, which is much lower than the standard cutoff of 0.05, it suggests a meaningful connection—possibly between factors such as gender and clothing choices, or age group and brand preferences. ANOVA tests whether means differ significantly across groups. $F = 5.87$ and significant result: Age groups differ meaningfully in their preference for ethnic wear. This supports the correlation finding that older individuals lean more toward traditional attire. Fabric importance odd ratios is 2.21 where people who value fabric quality are 2.21 times more likely to choose ethnic wear. Brand knowledge of odd ratio is 1.92 those with brand awareness are 1.92 times more likely to prefer ethnic wear or specific brands.

3.6.6 Principal component analysis (PCA)

Three principal components explained 68% of total variance:

- Cultural Affinity – Ritual clothing, heritage-based fabrics
- Brand Value Recognition – Ad recall, family-led influence
- Fabric Sensitivity – Seasonal comfort, tailoring, texture

3.6.7 Cluster analysis of respondent segments

Here's a clean table visualizing your K-Means cluster output:

Consumer Segment	Key Traits	Estimated Share
Tradition-Centric Buyers	Ritual importance, cultural brands	~36%
Price-Conscious Pragmatists	Cost and fabric-focused choices	~28%
Aesthetic Aspirants	Style/image-oriented, global brand preference	~23%
Ritual-Occasional Shoppers	Traditional wear for special events	~15%
Cultural Custodians	Symbolic, family-led brand awareness	~31%
Fabric-First Pragmatists	Tailoring and comfort priority	~26%
Awareness-Led Functionalists	Ad-driven and price-sensitive behavior	~20%

This segmentation reveals diverse buyer profiles based on cultural values, economic priorities, and fashion sensibilities. Each group reflects distinct motivations and behaviors in clothing choices. Tradition-Centric Buyers (~36%) - Deeply rooted in rituals, customs, and cultural identity. Prefer ethnic wear and brands that reflect heritage. This is the largest segment, indicating strong cultural continuity. These consumers often shop for symbolic value and emotional connection rather than trendiness. Price-Conscious Pragmatists (~28%) - Prioritize affordability and fabric quality. Practical in decision-making. This group is driven by value-for-money considerations. They are less influenced by branding and more by durability and comfort, making them key targets for budget-friendly and utility-driven apparel. Aesthetic Aspirants (~23%) - Style/image-oriented, global brand preference. Fashion-forward individuals who seek stylish, trendy clothing. They are influenced by global fashion, social media, and celebrity culture. Brand image and visual appeal matter more than tradition or price. Ritual-Occasional Shoppers (~15%) - Traditional wear for special events. These buyers don't wear ethnic or traditional clothing regularly but purchase it for specific occasions like weddings, festivals, or religious events. Their buying behavior is seasonal and event-driven. Cultural Custodians (~31%) - Symbolic, family-led brand awareness. Influenced by family traditions and generational preferences. They value brands that have legacy appeal and often shop based on recommendations from elders or community norms. Symbolism and emotional connection drive their choices. Fabric-First Pragmatists (~26%) - Tailoring and comfort priority. These consumers prioritize comfort, fit, and fabric quality. They often prefer custom tailoring or brands known for breathable, skin-friendly materials. Style is secondary to practicality. Awareness-Led Functionalists (~20%) - Ad-driven and price-sensitive behavior. Highly influenced by advertisements, discounts, and promotional campaigns. They are functional buyers who respond to marketing cues and often make impulsive purchases based on perceived value.

3.6.8 Sentiment analysis

- Positive sentiment toward ethnic brands: 68%
- Neutral: 20%
- Negative: 12%

Respondents often expressed pride in brands that represent tradition, comfort, and regional aesthetics (e.g., Fabindia's handloom legacy, Ramraj's southern symbolism).

The cluster analysis revealed three distinct consumer groups differentiated by symbolic affinity, aspirational intent, and value-consciousness. Each cluster demonstrated nuanced branding expectations—while the symbolic affinity group gravitated toward culturally anchored brands like Biba and Khadi, the aspirational cluster showed preference for global labels with perceived prestige, such as Zara and H&M. The value-conscious cluster leaned into practical, economically priced brands, yet still emphasized quality and longevity over trend. This stratification suggests that branding strategies must cater to multifaceted identity expressions—where one-size-fits-all narratives fall short. For marketers, positioning should be responsive to these psychological drivers: tradition, aspiration, and utility.

Brand loyalty emerged not just as a behavioral trend but a generational dialogue. Older respondents (ages 45+) prioritized emotional resonance and legacy when choosing brands, often highlighting a long-standing trust with domestic labels. Their brand choices functioned as an extension of cultural values—woven into festive occasions and familial rituals. Younger respondents, by contrast, sought novelty, digital engagement, and social symbolism. They evaluated brands through online reviews, influencer associations, and trend alignment. This generational divide underscores the need for hybrid branding approaches—ones that retain emotional depth while embracing contemporary relevance. Apparel branding must therefore operate in two temporal dimensions: honoring the past and adapting for the present.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Insights

Brand preference within Indian apparel consumption emerges as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by cultural heritage, economic accessibility, and aspirational identity. Respondents frequently linked brand choices to culturally resonant elements, including traditional aesthetics such as sarees, handloom fabrics, and symbolic motifs. Awareness of brand storytelling was especially notable among ethnic wear buyers, who associated labels like Ramraj with South Indian customs and Fabindia with artisanal legacy and craftsmanship. Notably, younger consumers demonstrated aspiration-driven purchasing behavior aligned with Western fashion influences, yet retained ethnic components for festivals and traditional occasions, indicating a hybridization of style. The rising influence of private labels such as Westside and Zudio reflects a growing demand for affordability without sacrificing cultural silhouettes—suggesting that economic pragmatism can coexist with culturally expressive design.

Furthermore, the data positions apparel not merely as a commodity but as a vessel for cultural memory. Consumer narratives revealed that garments frequently evoked familial rituals, regional pride, and emotional familiarity. Branding that translates these intangible values into coherent storytelling fosters greater consumer trust and loyalty. This emotional mapping was most pronounced among older respondents, whereas younger buyers prioritized visual identity and digital engagement. The study thus recommends branding strategies that integrate legacy-driven emotional appeal with modern aesthetics and social relevance.

These insights affirm that the intersection of brand identity and cultural sensibility is not linear, but rather interwoven across generational, linguistic, and regional dimensions. Successful branding within the Indian apparel sector must balance visual appeal with emotional depth, aligning products to both individual expression and cultural continuity.

4.2 Discussions

This research reveals that clothing preferences in India go beyond utility or style—they act as living symbols of personal identity, cultural heritage, and emotional memory. The survey responses consistently showed that ethnic wear remains deeply embedded in how individuals express their values, particularly among women and older age groups. Whether it's a saree worn at a family gathering or a kurta chosen for a festival, garments often carry layers of emotional and symbolic meaning.

Statistical tools like PCA, regression, and clustering further underscore how key variables—such as "fabric sensitivity," "brand culture resonance," and "ritual alignment"—shape consumer decisions in nuanced ways. For instance, one cluster identified as "Cultural Custodians" not only preferred ethnic brands like Ramraj or Fabindia, but also actively associated them with familial values and rituals. These choices weren't just about fabric or price—they were about continuity, pride, and a sense of belonging.

Younger consumers, on the other hand, demonstrated a balancing act. They gravitated toward global styles for daily wear, but still chose culturally significant brands for traditional events. This duality suggests that brand preference is not static—it flexes based on occasion, mood, and social context. It's not rejection or assimilation—it's negotiation.

The data also offers practical implications for marketers. Brands like Zudio and Westside gained traction for blending affordability with cultural adaptability, using hybrid cuts and color palettes that resonated across age segments. Meanwhile, brands with strong cultural roots, like Fabindia, retained consumer trust through storytelling and emotional branding.

Clothing, in this light, isn't just worn—it's interpreted. Each choice reflects a dialogue between the self and society. Consumers aren't simply reacting to ads—they're selecting brands that echo who they are, what they value, and the legacies they carry forward. This reinforces that branding culture in India is a living conversation—rich, layered, and emotionally textured.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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