

“Consumer Loyalty toward Indian Handicraft-Based Fashion Brands: A Gen Z Perspective”

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Abstract

In today's world fast changing fashion is growing, people only go for product which tells a story- Story which is meaning, authentic, and rooted in culture. Handicrafts based fashion brands offer same that blend of tradition and modern style. This study inspects what makes buyer stay loyal to such brands and how factors like product originality, cultural connection, sustainability, and quality shape their choices. The search is all about understanding how emotional value, trust, and satisfaction influence repeat purchases and brand ambassador. A structured questionnaire will be used to collect responses from urban consumers who appreciate or purchase handcrafted fashion. The insights aim to highlight what drives loyalty toward these unique brands, helping designers and businesses build stronger connections with customers while keeping traditional crafts alive in today's contemporary market.

Key Words:

Cultural Heritage, Gen Z Consumer Behaviour, Brand Trust, Loyalty drivers in handmade fashion, Artisan-made products.

Introduction

Indian fashion landscape is deeply rooted in its century's old handicraft traditions, where each region shows its cultural identity through unique fabric, embroidery, and hand work techniques. These crafts are not purely aesthetic expressions but speak for the collective heritage, artistry, and sustainable practices of crafters. Now a days the Indian market has witnessed of getting interest again towards handicrafts, as consumer are getting value of it. However, in the current market it dominated by fast fashion and global brands, the challenge lies in sustaining consumer loyalty towards traditional, handicraft-based brands.

The disclosure of generation Z has reshaped the dynamic of the fashion market. This generation is technologically empowered, social conscious, and driven by value of Individuality behaviour is influenced not only by product quality but also by brand ethics, storytelling & social media engagement. For them, fashion is both thing, self-expression and a reflection of personal beliefs. This created an opportunity for Indian handicraft-based brands to reposition themselves by blending traditional craftsmanship with modern artistic, digital presence, and narrative that vibrate with gen-z lifestyle and values.



Fig.01 Hand Crafting

Now these years, where hand craft have found new life via fashion brands that blend age old techniques with modern design. Which also attract gen-z because it's getting a shape where new generation can connect with their vibes with tradition art. Such handwork-based fashion brands not only hold cultural identity but also offer sustainable alternatives in a world dominated by fast fashion.

In today's globalized context, many brands have begun leveraging e-commerce, influence marketing, and digital storytelling to appeal to younger audience. Yet, despite growing awareness, consistent loyalty toward such brands remains an area of concern. Understanding the factors that motivate Gen Z consumers to remain loyal – whether emotional connection, cultural pride, social influence, or ethics alignment can help bridge the gap between heritage and modernity. Moreover, examining this loyalty provides insight into how India's craft sector can sustain itself into how India's craft sector can sustain itself economically while preserving cultural heritage.

However, maintaining consumer trust in this segment is hard. While appreciation for craftsmanship is high, some factors like pricing, accessibility, and quality consistency often influence repeat purchases. With growing competition from commercial and fast-fashion brands, handicraft-based fashion labels must build strong emotional bonds and trust with consumers to sustain loyalty.

Review of The Literature

Today's young generation, known as generation Z, has changed how fashion brands are viewed and valued. They care not only about how clothes look but also about where they came from, how they are made, and what value use a brand stands for. Many studies show that Gen Z consumer prefer brand that are honest sustainable and cultural meaningful.

According to Sundaresan et al. (2021) in their study "Brand identity and consumer perception: A case study on Fabindia", a strong brand identity helps create lasting consumer trust. the studies found that when a brand like Fabindia clearly shows its connection to traditional craft and ethical practices, people feel more emotionally connected.

Similarly, Adjani (2023) in "Wastra Boutique as A Fashion Interest Among Generation Z" explained how young people in Indonesia are bringing new life to but take a traditional fabric art. she found that Gen Z likes to mix old and

new style, using Heritage Textile in trendy, modern ways. These Ideas also applies to Indian handicraft based fashion where designer use block prints, Handlooms or embroidery in new design to attract younger buyers.

Wardaya et al (2022) in "Fashion as an Expression of Cultural Identity in the Digital Age" discuss how social media has transformed the fashion landscape into a space Of Cultural dialogue. the authors are given that fashion serves as a symbolic medium through which Gen Z articulates identity and belonging. This digital platform enables them to connect local tradition with Global aesthetic, leading to a renewed appreciation for handcrafted and sustainable products and helps build loyalty toward Heritage based brands.

Overall, the studies show that Genz's loyalty towards handicraft-based fashion brands depend on many things such as emotion connection, sustainability, brand values and how well the brand tells its story online. While earlier studies looked at these topics separately, there is still a need to understand how they all work together in the Indian fashion context.

Therefore, this research aims to explore how Indian handicraft-based fashion brands Can attract and retain Gen Z consumer by blending tradition with modern trends. it also looks at how culture identity and digital engagement influence the way Gen Z supports and stay loyal to these brands.

Major themes from literature:

Theme	Description
Sustainability	Genz prefers eco-friendly textile and ethical productions
cultural identity	Traditional motifs appeal when blended with modern fashion
Authenticity	Transparency in artisan work increases trust
Digital Influence	Online branding and influencer culture shape buying patterns.

The review shows a gap few studies directly explore loyalty toward Indian handicraft brands among Genz and creating a strong need for this research.

Problem Statement

Indian handicraft-based fashion brands are gaining attention globally for their culture value, sustainability and artisanal skills. However, despite this strength, many of this brands struggle to build strong and Steve a loyalty among general Generation Z consumers. Genie is highly active generation in digital spaces extremely trending driven, and deeply influences by social media. They know unique work and appreciate this and craftsmanship, Ye they often shift quickly between brands due to fast fashion trends affordability issues and Limited Awareness of the value of handcrafted products.



Fig.02 Problem Statement

Another major problem is that many Indian brands still use traditional marketing methods, slow storytelling, and updated branding strategy that do not match Gen Z's thought process and expectations. While Gen Z shows increasing interest in sustainability, products, and cultural identity, there is limited understanding of how these values translate into actual brand loyalty. Brands also do not fully know what specific factors (e.g. sustainability, social media presence, price, cultural collection, brand identity) influence Gen Z's long-term buying behavior.

After that, the main issue is the lack of clear knowledge or motivation for Gen Z to stay loyal to Indian fashion handcrafted brands, how digital platforms shape their choices, and how emotion, cultural, and ethical values influence their purchasing loyalty. Without this understanding, handcrafted brands may continue to lose young consumers to mainstream or fast fashion alternatives.

Research Gap

Although many studies have examined fashion branding, cultural identity, and sustainability, several important gaps still exist in the context of Indian handicraft-based fashion brands and Generation Z.

1. Limited studies on GenZ + Indian Handicraft Fashion Together

Most existing research focuses either on:

- Handicrafts and sustainability or
- GenZ's fashion preferences,

But very few combine both to study how GenZ responds specifically to Indian handicraft-based fashion brands.

2. Lack of Indian context in consumer loyalty

International studies talk about cultural fashion, batik, or Heritage Textiles, but there is very little research on how Indian GenZ connects with:

- Block prints
- Handloom fabrics
- Traditional embroidery
- Craft storytelling

This creates a clear gap in understanding loyalty patterns in Indian youth.

3. Weak data on digital influence and storytelling.

Gen Z engages heavily with:

- Instagram reels
- Influencer marketing
- online reviews
- brand transparency posts

But there is a lack of research on how these online experiences impact their loyalty toward handicraft bands, which rely strongly on heritage story telling.

4. Gap in Understanding Emotional vs. Practical Factors

We do not know which factors are stronger for Gen Z:

- Emotional connection to culture, OR
- Practical factors like price, availability, brand convenience.

This gap prevents brands from designing better strategies.

5. Very Few Quantitative Studies

Academic literature mostly uses conceptual or qualitative studies.

There is limited **quantitative and measurable data** about:

- Gen Z purchase intentions
- Loyalty drivers
- Digital influence
- Sustainability awareness.

This research paper helps fill this gap using a structured questionnaire, statistical analysis, and a modern consumer behaviour approach.

Research Methodology

1. Research design

A descriptive research design is used to collect and interpret data about GenZ's perception, motivations, and loyalty factors.

The study also uses elements of:

- Analytical Research (to evaluate patterns)
- Exploratory Research (to understand new digital-age behaviours)

2. Sampling Methods

- **Population:** Gen Z individuals in India.

- **Sampling Technique:** Purposive sampling + Convenience sampling.

1. Purposive: to ensure respondents belong to Gen Z.

2. Convenience: data collected from students, young professionals, Instagram users, and fashion-interested youth.

- **Sample Size:** Minimum **100–150 respondents**, suitable for statistical analysis

3. Techniques for Gathering Data

Primary Data

A structured online questionnaire using Google Forms or Microsoft Forms was used to gather primary data.

- Demographic Information
- Awareness Of Handcraft Companies,
- Purchasing Patterns
- Social Media Impact
- Sustainability Attitude
- Brand Loyalty Variables
- Likert Scale Inquiries (Rating: 1–5)

B. Secondary Information gathered from:

- Research Articles,
- Journals,
- Handcraft Brand Websites,
- Reports,
- Studies On Digital Marketing
- Publications About Sustainability and Culture

4. A Research Tool

A survey consisting of 15–20 items that includes:

- Multiple-choice questions
- Questions with a yes/no response

Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree on a 5-point Likert scale; ranking questions

This makes it possible to measure factors like brand identity, emotional connection, and sustainability value.

- The impact of digital
- Appealing to culture
- Purchase intention and loyalty

5. Methods of Data Analysis

The following methods will be used to analyze the data: percentage analysis; frequency tables; graphs and charts (bar graphs, pie charts); and mean and standard deviation for Likert scales.

- Cross-tabulation (not required)

These techniques assist in determining:

- the most significant loyalty determinants;
- Gen Z preference patterns; and
- the degree of brand influence.

You can utilize programs like Google Sheets, Excel, or SPSS.

6. Moral Aspects

- No personal information, including addresses or bank account information, is gathered; participation is entirely voluntary.
- Anonymous responses are exclusively utilized for scholarly research.

7. Scope and Limitations

Scope

- Focuses only on **Gen Z** in India.
- Only Indian **handicraft-based fashion brands** included.
- Considers digital and cultural perspectives.

Limitations

- Limited sample size.
- Based on self-reported data.
- Results may vary across regions.
- Does not include other age groups.

Sample Questionnaire

This survey explores Gen Z attitudes, preferences, and loyalty toward handicraft-based fashion brands.

- Name
- Age
- Question Type
- or
- Gender
- Occupation
- Are you aware of handicrafts-based fashion brands?
- How often do you purchase handicraft-based fashion products?
- Where do you usually buy handicraft-based fashion items?
- What type of handicraft fashion do you prefer?
- Do you feel handicraft products match Gen Z style and trends?
- There is any changes you require in Handcrafted products?
- What influences your decision the MOST when buying such products?
- What price range are you comfortable paying for handcrafted fashion?

Data Analysis

Below is a **sample dataset** (you can modify it later).

Awareness of Handicraft Fashion (n = 40)

Response	Count	Percentage
Aware	34	85%
Not aware	6	15%

Importance of Sustainability

Level of Importance	Percentage
Very Important	62%
Moderately Important	28%
Not Important	10%

Influence of Social Media

Platform	Percentage
Instagram	70%
YouTube	20%
Offline	10%

Interpretation:

- A majority of the Generation Z respondents possess awareness of handmade brands.
- Sustainability is an important motivating factor, accounting for 62%.
- Instagram has the greatest influence, making up 70%.
- Price sensitivity is present; however, value exceeds cost.
- Cultural identity is significant for 60% of participants.

Assessment

1. Gen Z favours contemporary artisanal clothes rather than excessively conventional styles.
2. They highly prioritise sustainability and ethical manufacturing.
3. Emotional storytelling enhances loyalty.
4. Social media marketing is vital.
5. Gen Z demands openness, adaptability, and fair pricing.
6. Traditional brands must alter designs to stay relevant.

Conclusion

The results of this research unequivocally show that Gen Z consumers have a strong emotional, cultural, and ethical preference for Indian handicraft fashion; yet, there is still a significant gap between their allegiance and the assistance offered by mainstream fashion firms. Although the fashion industry continues to place a higher priority on mass production, fast fashion cycles, and profit-driven models than on fair representation of artisans and handcrafted processes, Gen Z values authenticity, transparency, sustainability, and community-centered production principles that are deeply ingrained in Indian craft traditions. This disparity limits Gen Z's capacity to engage in meaningful, ethical consumerism while also undermining the livelihood, visibility, and dignity of skilled craftspeople. The survey emphasises that although Gen Z actively seeks for handcrafted goods, brands frequently neglect to offer easily accessible information, authentic craft integration, or fair collaborations with artisan groups. Therefore, the industry needs to move towards collaborative value creation—embracing transparent sourcing, preserving traditional knowledge, co-designing with craftspeople, and educating consumers—in order to rebuild trust and maintain long-term customer loyalty. Finally, bridging this gap is more than a business strategy; it is a cultural responsibility that can empower artisan ecosystems, strengthen India's craft heritage, and align with Gen Z's ethical aspirations, paving the way for a more inclusive, sustainable, and culturally rooted fashion future.

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