

Weaving Digital Identities: The Convergence of E-Commerce, Fashion Branding, and Cultural Legacy of Banaras Brocades in Shaping Body Positivity

Seema Nagrath^{1*} Dr. Pooja Gaba Adlakha²

Lecturer at DSEU Kasturba Sector-9, Dwarka, New Delhi-110077^{1*}

*E-mail: seema.nagrath@dseu.ac.in

Abstract: Today, the sense of e-commerce, fashion branding, and cultural heritage is rebuilding the modern discourse of the body. This study investigates the impact of digital platforms on perceptions of body image through the lens of heritage textiles, specifically the Banaras brocade tradition under the ODOP (One District One Product) initiative. This research shows how traditional craftsmanship is incorporated with modern representation to promote inclusivity and self-acceptance by looking at the importance of heritage textiles in creating it. E-commerce makes it easier to access, while fashion branding incorporates all kinds of beauty standards that allow for more storytelling inclusion. Algorithms can reinforce unattainable ideals within online fashion ecosystems, but they can also cull fashion content algorithmically. The Banaras brocades are the One District One Product (ODOP) under which they have a tradition of craftsmanship and heritage. Based on heritage and innovation, their adaptation in digital fashion spaces celebrates all body types and finds a balance between body positivity. The themes of digital branding representation, psychological impact on heritage textiles, and how the beauty perception of the consumer is changing are qualitatively investigated in this study. The results show that combining traditional crafts with cultural identity in digital fashion branding can increase self-esteem and inclusivity while at the same time enabling the positioning of heritage crafts as a medium for 'body positive' narratives. ODOP (One District One Product) in regional e-commerce, branding, Banaras brocades, and the way the beauty norms and diversity are brought about in the fashion industry are being reshaped by embracing diversity and ethical storytelling.

Keywords: Digital Fashion Branding, E-Commerce and Body Positivity, Heritage Textiles and Inclusivity, Banaras Brocades in Modern Fashion, Social Media and Consumer Perception.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Fashion has always been one of the significant indicators of people's personalities and cultural values, as well as a means of impacting change in society. Now that e-commerce and digital branding affect fashion, demand increases, which results in the globalization of fashion and the importance of textiles and heritage crafts. Despite appreciable progress, virtual fashion environments appropriated by a broad range of people have painted the picture of beauty within the frames of neotraditional models of body aesthetics, excluding those who do not fit such standards. Banaras brocades that craftsmen from Varanasi in India have produced are a part of the history of fashion.



Fig 1.1: Banarasi Brocades (Source: pinterest.com)

These are known for weaving silks, gold and silver zari work, and enriched motifs, and are being marketed under one District One Product (ODOP) campaign [1]. This concept helps in the revival of regional art as it encourages the use of local handicrafts in retail and online stores. Nevertheless, meaningful fabrics such as Banaras brocades, despite having a long-standing in the fashion industry, are

poorly featured in the logo of digital fashion as well as in this theory of fashion inclusion. On the other hand, we can highlight the effects of the global body positivity, which has forced companies to reconsider stereotypical views on the representation of beauty. It is also established that modern clothes brands incorporate various diverse models of body, ethnic, and gender representation into their products. However, it is crucial to note that the potential heritage textiles bring in terms of body positivity and inclusiveness have not received much attention [2]. Therefore, this research proposes to fill this gap by analyzing how e-commerce, fashion branding, and historical textiles, such as Banaras Brocades, influence the impression of body image and self-esteem.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The study discusses the effects that digital fashion branding and e-commerce have on body positivity by focusing on Banaras brocades. This is fostered in an attempt to discover whether or not heritage textiles can act as a means through which diversity as well as tolerance as well as acceptance of cultural differences within the current society can be achieved.

The research also looks at a specific area of epidermal and cultural relevance concerning the effects that traditional craftsmanship has on the consumer and what branding methods can improve the keeping of cultural legacy with resultant body positivity.

The key research objectives are:

1. To analyze the role of e-commerce in improving access to heritage textiles while promoting inclusivity.
2. To investigate how fashion branding influences body image and self-esteem among consumers.
3. To assess consumer perceptions of Banaras brocades in digital fashion spaces.
4. To explore how heritage textiles can be positioned as a tool for body-positive storytelling.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does e-commerce enhance accessibility and representation in heritage textiles?
2. What role does fashion branding play in shaping body image, self-esteem, and inclusivity?
3. How can Banaras brocades be positioned as a medium for promoting body positivity in the digital era?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This paper aims to evaluate the perception that participants have of fashion branding, body positivity, and cultural materials. Related to that, it analyses the consumers' interactions with Banaras brocades on e-platforms and assesses the options for inclusiveness made by e-shops. The work adds to the realization of how cultural fashion can be used in digital branding and for the improvement of the fashion industry.

1.5 Structure of the Report

The report has six sections as mentioned below. In the literature review section that comes after this section, its authors analyze features like digital fashion branding, body positivity, and the ODOP campaign. The method used in the study is explained in the methodology, which is succeeded by the analysis and results sections that elucidate survey results. In the last section about the implications of the findings, the new results are explained and compared with the earlier comparable studies, and the major issues are outlined. Lastly, it concludes with fashion brands, e-commerce platforms, and policymakers.

2 Literature Review

2.1 E-Commerce and Digital Fashion Branding

2.1.1 The Rise of E-Commerce in Fashion

E-commerce has brought great change in the fashion sector of the fashion industry through consumers' treatment of brands and purchasing of fabrics. Besides, online fashion stores have made different fashion products easily available to customers through the help of the internet, irrespective of their geographical location. The transition towards digital retailing has given an impulse to the growth of e-fashion, which by 2023 will make about 27 % of the total share in overall fashion retail [3].

It has been enhanced by popular Internet retailers like Amazon, ASOS, and Myntra that have made way for international purchases of regular textiles, including Banaras brocades. Banaras brocades, the hand-woven fabrics having delicate designs, were for a long time restricted to Indian local stores or departmental stores that deal in handloom items. However, with the help of e-commerce, they are available to all those who like and are ready to buy cultural products but could not get access to these fabrics before. However, as asserted before, heritage textiles are yet to benefit from digital platforms due to the increase in new and famous fast fashion brands [4]. More specifically, considerable efforts should be made to adopt handmade products to the concept of internet sales while preserving the principle of diversity in the brand's identity.

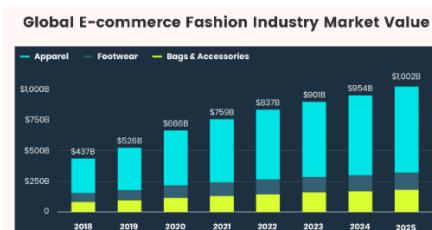


Fig 2.1: Global E-Commerce Fashion Industry Market Value (Source: Clerk.io, 2021)

This bar chart shows that from 2018 to 2025, the global e-commerce fashion industry market value has grown, and apparel, footwear, and accessories will dominate online retail. It is going to cross the \$1 trillion market by 2025 due to digital transformation, globalization,

and changing consumer behavior. Availability of fashion products, especially Banaras brocades, which hold strong heritage value, to consumers globally, not just in the traditional markets but the ever-increasing online space, is another reason for the steady rise of online purchases.

2.1.2 Digital Branding and Inclusivity in Fashion

Branding and fashion are, therefore, vital in determining the kind of impression that consumers are left with concerning their body image as well as inclusiveness. In the fashion industry's history, there was a lack of model body diversity, especially the scarcity of models of color. However, in the recent past, brands have picked up the habit of including diversity in advertising and digital marketing. Currently, even popular brands and clothes with sensitive marketing, such as EQUL, Fenty, Dove, and Aerie, have taken unprecedented measures to break the conventional biases of models' size, skin color, or even disability to seek to paint the true picture of the world [5].



Fig 2.2: Inclusive Representation in Fashion (Source: Peclers Paris, 2023)

The image shows the body diversity and inclusivity of fashion, with models of different body types, ethnicities, and sizes. Fashion branding that advocates body positivity is growing for the encouragement to be self-accepting and working to take down unrealistic beauty standards.

The inclusivity in emerging fashion campaigns is being followed by the growing number of brands routinely adopting inclusivity in their marketing. This means more confidence in the consumer, and that beauty in all forms should exist. This representation, therefore, is highly instrumental in refiguring industry norms and the digital fashion branding story of the brand.

Although the necessity and peculiarities of inclusivity have received increased attention, many brands have been criticized for merely 'performative diversity,' meaning that brands have incorporated minority representation only as an advertisement strategy but did not make any actual modification to change for the better [6]. While there have been advancements in digital branding that also led to improved representation in the fashion industry, algorithms through the use of e-commerce, echo the skinny white woman's ideal body image.

2.2 The Cultural Heritage of Banaras Brocades

2.2.1 History and Craftsmanship

Banaras brocades refer to a collection of fabric products that have an ancient tradition strongly linked to the Indian heritage of textiles, going back even to the Mughal

period. These fabrics are woven to great detail, with the exterior side being embellished with gold and silver zari motifs. Artisanship has gone a long way in Banaras brocades, and most of the artisans have devoted their lives to making them genuine and not imitations.



Fig 2.3: Banaras brocades and sarees craftsman (Source: The Invisible Narad, 2023)

Although technically and culturally, Banaras brocades are from a very long period, used at the end of time for bridal wear, festive occasions, and high fashion markets. In the past few decades, the demand for Banaras brocade has testified to be dynamic in terms of production owing to the trends and competition with synthetic fabrics.



Fig 2.4: Katan Brocade (Source: The Invisible Narad, 2023)

Nevertheless, measures such as the One District One Product (ODOP) program and GI tag have tried to reignite the market for these textiles with domestic and export markets [7], [23].



Fig 2.3: One District One Product (ODOP) Initiative

Banaras brocades are just one image of India's One District One Product (ODOP) initiative that seeks to exhibit regional heritage products. ODOP aims to elevate local economies, maintain traditional crafts, and move heritage textiles into global markets. Through e-commerce and digital branding, ODOP helps its artisans open up to

more people beyond its local boundaries. It is an important effort to make Banaras brocades available not only to more people but equally to promote sustainability, conservation, and economic development in the textile sector.

The program known as the ODOP has been about successful in its function of helping traditional artisans to gain the attention they need to continue practicing their trade, as well as the funding they need to survive. This way, contemporary fashion designers, especially the young ones, have started patronizing Banaras textile manufacturers to combine the past with the present in their fashion creations. Nevertheless, there are some limitations in the digital branding of Banaras brocades, especially in the placement of the fabric in the general e-business arena.

2.2.2 The ODOP Initiative and Digital Transformation

The ODOP has played a major role in the digital promotion of Banaras brocades; the fabrics are now available and listed on major e-commerce websites. The platforms, including Amazon Karigar, Flipkart Samarth, Ajio Luxe, and Invest India (Government portal), have opened dedicated categories for ODOP products to let artisans spread their work more extensively. Digitalization of Banaras brocades not only enlarges the geographical market but also creates a better engagement with the end user on traditional textiles [9].

Therefore, unveiling, through digital storytelling, the stories that Banaras brocades tell while also creating new and progressive Indian body positive stories. This piece of information means that brands can help change the context of Banaras brocades in fashion by presenting them with models of different sizes in modern outfits. Nevertheless, there are still difficulties in achieving the appreciation of the overall digital marketing procedures as diverse and inclusive as they profess to be. Specifically, brands must shift from truly 'skin-deep' and be socially inclusive to communities that have been left out of fashion.

2.2.3 Sustainable ODOP Handloom and Handicrafts Products in Varanasi

The One District One Product (ODOP) initiative has emerged as a transformative policy to promote regional craft industries and enhance the economic sustainability of artisans and weavers. Nagrath and Grover (2023) highlight that Varanasi, known for its rich tradition of handloom weaving and handicrafts, has seen a significant shift in its commercial landscape due to the integration of e-commerce platforms [21]. This digital transformation has eliminated middlemen, allowing artisans to directly sell their products to a global consumer base, thereby increasing profit margins and sustainability.

A SWOT analysis conducted in the study identifies both opportunities and challenges in the sector. The strengths lie in the uniqueness, heritage value, and intricate craftsmanship of Banaras brocades, which remain in high demand in luxury and cultural fashion markets. However, challenges include a lack of financial support, inadequate digital literacy among artisans, and competition from fast fashion industries. The study argues that government support, market access, and sustainable branding are critical for preserving the craft's authenticity.

Furthermore, the ODOP initiative aligns with the broader goals of economic empowerment and rural entrepreneurship [21].

The integration of modern packaging, branding, and online sales strategies enhances the marketability of Banaras brocades and other traditional crafts. The research underscores that revitalizing handloom and handicrafts through sustainable innovation and global branding is essential for ensuring the long-term survival of Varanasi's textile industry.

Thus, the study provides valuable insights into how ODOP can serve as a model for sustainable craft revival, ensuring artisans remain economically independent while preserving India's rich textile heritage.

The article "Banarasi Silk Gets GI Recognition" [21] discusses the milestone of Banarasi silk receiving the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, a designation meant to protect its authenticity and preserve its rich legacy. The GI recognition ensures that only products woven in Varanasi and its adjacent districts can be legally marketed under the label "Banarasi Brocades and Sarees." This move helps to safeguard weavers and artisans from counterfeit products and industrial imitations that dilute the exclusivity of handwoven Banarasi textiles. The article highlights that the GI tag is expected to benefit over 1.2 million people connected to the industry, offering them a more stable livelihood and increasing global recognition of this historic craftsmanship. However, the challenge remains in effective implementation and awareness, as enforcement mechanisms need to be strengthened to prevent fraudulent use of the Banarasi silk identity.

The second article, "Varanasi: A Traditional Hub for Small Industries in the State" [21], provides a broader historical and economic perspective on Varanasi's role as a textile hub. It traces the origins of its weaving traditions back to the Vedic period, with major transformations occurring during the Mughal era when Persian and Indian techniques merged to create the exquisite brocade and silk weaving industry.

2.3 Body Positivity and Inclusivity in Fashion

2.3.1 Evolution of Beauty Standards

Beauty has changed in the decades from the strict definitions to the Western standards of beauty to the contemporary perspectives on it. Specifically, the body positivity movement that has been sparked after the development of the negative effects of the thin-ideal advertising campaign has called for a change in the representation of diverse body types in the fashion media.



Fig 2.4: Evolution of beauty standard (Source: Murtas, 2023)

This picture illustrates, in a beautiful way, the change of beauty ideals between different cultures and periods of time, how fashion and beauty have changed. Art and culture, as well as the portrayal of beauty in social influences, have defined what is considered beautiful. This evolution underlines the power of fluidity of beauty norms in the digital realm of digital fashion branding and e-commerce to redefine body positivity and inclusivity. Knowing how these have played out puts a lens on current pursuits to realize better diverse representation in fashion.

In today's world, people appreciate brands that embody the ideas of diverse inclusion, as several publications have pointed out that exclusive marketing promotes brand popularity among consumers [10]. Yet some vices once initiated by activists are believed to have been hijacked by fashion industries in an attempt to hug the trend. It is thus possible to argue that the message of body positivity as a social movement has been lost due to its commercialization. Brands should adopt diversity as a foundational tool, different from what is seen in limited promotion strategies in the form of campaigns.

2.3.2 The Role of Social Media in Fashion Diversity

The proposition of body positivity has been made possible by social media, that allowed underrepresented groups to influence fashion industries. Sites like TikTok and Instagram have provided people, especially minorities, with opportunities to produce content about their real-life experiences, thus making them feel included. Popular topics like #BodyPositivity and #InclusiveFashion have millions of posts that prove the need for accurate representation. Social media has influenced fashion diversity owing to innovations within the principles of independent brands.

These brands engage in direct-to-consumer selling and keep physical retailers outside of their sphere of operation to prominently feature plus-sized fashion [11]. However, the use of social media further presents some ethical issues of visibility, mainly surrounding algorithms. Research has found that platform algorithms favor conventionally attractive influencers; thus, perpetuating beauty standards of beauty in spaces that are supposed to be progressive.

2.4 Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the literature on the following three areas: e-commerce and fashion branding, and body positivity about Banaras brocades. Evaluations have been made towards the incorporation of digital fashion branding concerning body positivity, with prejudices still existing, namely, the inequalities of how it is implemented in digital fashion branding. Banaras brocades opened quite a potential to represent the modern ethnic noble fashion where people of all genders, sizes, and ethnicities can look stunning [12]. However, their presentation should be done very carefully on social media, not to promote elitism. The next chapter will describe and explain how these themes were investigated and the surveying research methodology, data collection techniques, and analytical method employed in this study.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research for this project is designed using a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods to analyze the strategic integration of e-commerce, fashion branding, body positivity, and Banaras brocades. It is important to know how digital fashion branding and heritage textiles affect the perception of slimness or obesity. The strengths are based on the fact that combining quantities with themes offers a broader perspective on the consumer attitudes points that emerged from the study. In its approach, the research employs description and explanation to determine the interactions people have with e-commerce and fashion branding concerning their self-identity and body image [13].

The descriptive element serves to describe consumer behavior, whereas the explanatory element points to the existence of reasons for specific perceptions of body positivity and fashion liberalism. In this study, the author integrates quantitative analysis of survey data and qualitative analysis of the available literature to establish whether heritage textiles such as Banaras brocades can have positive representations of bodies in fashion branding on digital platforms.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection tool for this study is structured questionnaires that seek to elicit the respondents' impressions, sentiments, and experiences on the branding of fashion, self-image, and diversity. The type of questions that are used includes closed and open questions, thus enabling the gathering of information on all areas of interest. The questionnaire was administered electronically using Google Forms, and participants were sourced from the World Wide Web, fashion-specific forums, and groups and companies on professional networking sites.

The survey has six questions in its layout in the format of sections [14]. The first part of the questionnaire concerns the sex, age, and occupation of the respondents to determine their attitudes towards fashion branding and body positivity. Section two deals with fashion and body image, and what the participants think about the impressions fashion has on self-image and body image. The third and last section focuses on e-commerce and again addresses the scarcity of diverse body reports in the media. The fourth part focuses on popular social media and fashion influencers, thus discussing the role of the content that is consuming and shaping consumer perception about beauty standards [15].

3.3 Sampling Method and Participants

The convenience purposive sampling technique was used as a guide to make certain that the respondents were interested in fashion, digital branding, and heritage textiles. The target sample is 232, which helps gain insights from a more diverse population of consumers, as it is ineffective to rely only on a few numbers of respondents. The participants are of different ages and working backgrounds, such as employees working in the private sector and in the government sector, as well as those who are

small business owners, and students [16]. This is done to coincide with achieving research diversity in consumer groups, thus offering an understanding of fashion branding and body positivity.

The result of the study also revealed that the age and occupation of the respondents painted a picture that could help explain fashion engagement and perception towards digital branding. The most significant number falls in the present day's 25-35-year group because people in this age bracket are among the most active on social sites and fashion-conscious. This perception is even higher among the age brackets of 35-45 and 45-55 participants, mainly in the discussion of heritage textiles and cultural fashion branding.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

The two primary forms of survey analysis, quantitative and qualitative, enhance the understanding of survey findings. An assessment of the Likert scale responses, which consisted of the agreement levels on the statements regarding fashion branding, body positivity, and diversity, was done using descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, and mean scores [17].

The findings are enlisted in bar charts, histograms, and pie charts that can be easily understood by consumers as a summary of their attitudes. In the qualitative part, the open-ended responses were analyzed based on the themes and pattern analysis. Some of the common major issues discussed were the relevance of values and freedom of expression through dressing, the drawbacks of digital marketing in supporting diversity, the mental effects of such a positive portrayal, and customers' awareness about Traditional fabrics such as Banaras brocades.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres undertake certain measures towards ethics to respect the participants' rights and confidentiality. Before answering the questions of the survey, all the respondents were read and explained about the objectives of the research, their willingness to participate in it, and their anonymity. There was no identification of participants, so all the answers given were kept confidential and anonymous.

To reduce bias while answering the questionnaire, none of the questions were phrased in an insightful manner, which may make participants answer in a way that fits into the researcher's presuppositions [18]. Also, the gathered information was kept safe and disclosed only to the study, thus eliminating the possible misappropriation of the data. The study also followed standards for data management and reporting; hence the results were reported without any distortions.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

However, there are inevitable drawbacks that must be noted, despite the overall reliability of the work. The first drawback of this study is the sample size; though it is diverse, it may be considered small when compared to the expansive market of fashion consumers. This leaves the specifics and comparisons achievable for specific groups that are urban and particularly active in the digital sphere for e-commerce fashion branding.

The second limitation is connected with the participants and the use of self-report questionnaires; the participants may have given only the answers they considered correct, but not the opinions that reflect the truth. Moreover, the research is concerned only with Banaras brocades as a particular heritage textile, which also hinders the generalizability of the findings with regard to other traditional fashion sectors. The conclusions may not generalize the result for all the heritage textiles of the world; therefore, future studies must examine different traditional fabrics and their culture more deeply to enhance the knowledge of heritage fashion branding across cyberspace.

4 Data Analysis & Findings

4.1 Respondent Demographics

The demographics of the participants play an important role in analyzing their perceptions of fashion branding, body positivity, and diversity. 233 respondents were filling in the survey from different age groups and occupations, with fashion savvy from different backgrounds. These demographics are significant when it comes to translating interest in fashion, social media presence, and cultural fabrics.

4.1.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

This bar graph shows the age of interviewed people with a focus on the most active age groups in the discussions regarding fashion branding, fashion e-commerce, and the body positivity movement. This shows that respondents in the age group 18-25 are the most active, and 95 of them participated in the study, while the 45-55 age group comprised 55, and the 25-35 age group comprised 32 respondents. It is also appropriate that the middle-aged and elderly generations, 35-45 years (21 respondents) and 55-65 years (26 respondents), are both very active. Low involvement from people aged 16-18 and particularly 17-year-olds indicates that the younger age group adequately represents the population.

The findings that emerged from this experience suggest that young and middle-aged folks are the most engaged in digital fashion and inclusiveness.

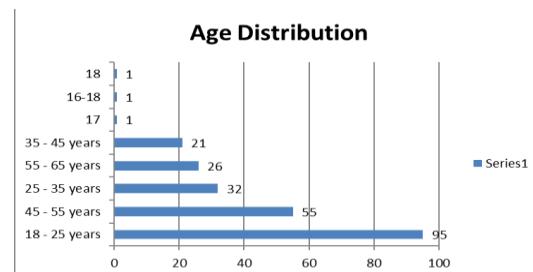


Fig 4.1: Age Distribution of Survey Respondents

4.1.2 Gender Distribution

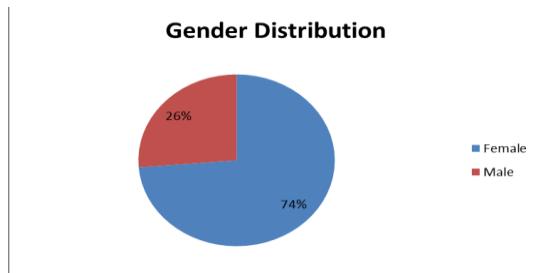


Fig 4.2: Gender Distribution of Survey Respondents

It will also be evident from the gender pie chart that 74% of the participants in the survey were female, while 26% were male. Thus, the proportion of female respondents is much greater than males, which can be associated with more active responses to the material about fashion branding, body positivity in social media, and e-shopping.

This corroborates other studies that have pointed out that women are relatively the most active users in fashion and are the first to open conversations regarding diversity and body image in the fashion online realm. A relatively smaller number of male respondents does, however, speak of increasing attention paid by men to the issue of diversity in fashion.

4.1.3 Occupational Background

Occupation	Count
Business Owner	15
College student	1
College student	1
Entrepreneur/Freelancer	19
French teacher	1
Fresher	1
Government Services	1
Govt employee	1
Higher Study	1
Home maker	1
Non-working	61
Pensioner	1
PhD student	1
Pursuing diploma	1
Retired	1
Salaried Professional	105
Students	5
Student	13
Student	1
Students	1

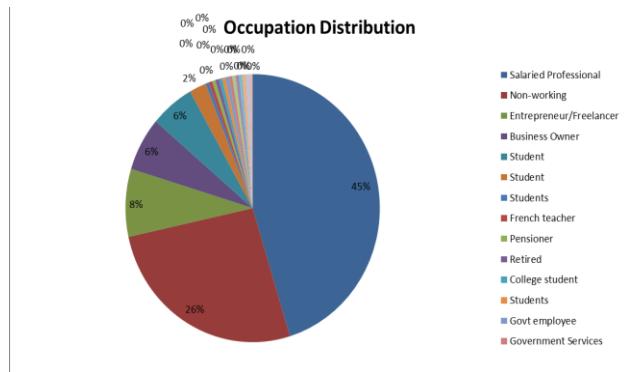


Fig 4.3: Occupation Distribution of Survey Respondents

Above is a pie chart presenting the distribution of the occupations of the respondents, which shows the different occupations of the people who are involved in fashion branding, e-commerce, and body positivity. This, the largest segment (of salaried professionals 45%) shows a great representation of individuals in structured employment. Among them, 26 percent are those without a job, i.e., homemakers, former employees, and the unemployed. Entrepreneurs/freelancers (8%) and business owners (6%) showcase independent professionals' engagement in fashion discussions. Students and government employees each have a small representation in other categories. This diversity in occupation represents the diversity of viewpoints on fashion branding, inclusivity, and the digital behavior of consumers based on different professional backgrounds.

4.2 Fashion and Body Positivity Perceptions

The study examined the state and usage of fashion branding and digital content that affect one's self-esteem and body image. The questionnaire used by the respondents was a Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, which indicates the subjects' views about the role of fashion in body image and self-perception.

4.2.1 Fashion's Role in Self-Esteem and Confidence

It is now a well-accepted fact that fashion can play an essential part in one's self-esteem and confidence. Of women and girls, 73% said that fashion can be used as a tool for assertion and will agree or strongly agree with the statement. This fact confirms that fashion helps a person adopt his or her personality and be comfortable with their body image. Of the surveyed participants, 68% said that fashion can reduce conformity to societal beauty standards and include everyone.

4.2.2 Influence of Fashion Advertisements on Body Positivity

Most respondents fully approved of the advertisements with diverse body types; 71% stated that such advertisements enhance positive body image, and 61% of the respondents said that models that resemble them increase their confidence levels. Still, 58 percent of the respondents claimed that they experience pressure to provide

and signify their compliance with the standards of beauty established by fashion brands.

4.2.3 Social Media and Fashion Influencers

The fashion influencers on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube also influence body image significantly, where 66% of the respondents claimed that following fashion influencers raises self-esteem, and 79% believe that social media has a strong determinant in body positivity advocates.

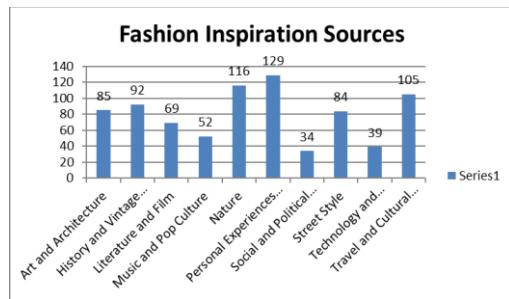


Fig 4.4: Fashion Inspiration Sources of Respondents

This bar chart depicts the kind of fashion inspiration common with the surveyed participants. Significant influences include social and political movements (129) and their political-psychological reflection; personal sentiments (116) and feelings; traveling and cultural exposure and experience (105). Two more popular choices are art and architecture (85 participants) and history and vintage fashion (92 participants).

On the other hand, it received moderate responses with music and pop culture (52) and street style (34). These specify that cultural, historical, and personal narratives have played a role in the responses, and reflect change from conformity to individuality and social consideration in fashion.

Table: Fashion Inspiration Sources

Fashion Inspiration Source	Count
Art and Architecture	85
History and Vintage Fashion	92
Literature and Film	69
Music and Pop Culture	52
Nature	116
Personal Experiences and Emotions	129
Social and Political Movements	34

Street Style	84
Technology and Futurism	39
Travel and Cultural Experiences	105

4.2.4 Analysis of Fashion's Role in Self-Perception and Social Media Influence

The survey responses give some clarity on how fashion, beauty norms, confidence, and social media play a role in the perception of one's body positivity. A number of them strongly agreed that the empowerment of people and the celebration of body positivity can be achieved through self-expression (132 out of 233 respondents). For example, beauty norms are also considered evolving, 73 of the respondents agree, and 94 strongly agree that fashion is a way of challenging societal beauty standards and accepting different body types.

A number of 140 respondents strongly agree with the statement that wearing clothing that elevates one's physical qualities also leads to a higher level of self-esteem. Nevertheless, a fraction (26 respondents) disagreed, emphasizing that fashion alone might not always help everyone to have a good sense of self-esteem.

Self-Expression Agreement Level	Count
1	18
2	8
3	17
4	57
5	132

Beauty Norms Agreement Level	Count
1	13
2	14
3	38
4	73
5	94

Fashion Confidence Agreement Level	Count
1	15
2	11
3	32
4	34
5	140

Social Media Influence Level	Count
1	13
2	14
3	71
4	71
5	63

4.3 The Role of Banaras Brocades in Inclusive Fashion

In this section, the author evaluates consumer perceptions of modern branding heritage textiles like Banaras brocades. It asks if the respondents perceive digital fashion and body positivity in terms of traditional textiles.

4.3.1 Consumer Perceptions of Heritage Fashion

Of the respondents, 69% said that Banaras brocades could be used in contemporary fashion branding. The reasons cited were stated to be cultural pride, aesthetic appeal, and customization for everyone's body type.

Hence, heritage textiles are also a common choice by many respondents because they provide a sense of inclusivity through their workmanship and artistry as opposed to the body image standards set by the images being promoted by Western beauty ideals.

4.3.2 Comparison by Gender and Age

Compared to women and nonbinary folks were more enthusiastic about heritage textiles than men. Respondents above the age of 35 were also more likely towards Banaras brocades as a timeless fashion choice, whereas the young adults are more into the fusion designs with the traditional patterns fused with modern silhouettes.

4.4 Impact of E-Commerce & Branding on Representation

The second last part of data analysis deals with the study of how digital branding and e-commerce have an

impact on the perception of inclusivity in fashion among consumers.

4.4.1 Fashion Retailers and Inclusivity Efforts

We asked survey participants if the fashion retailers have made a lot of progress in promoting inclusivity. Yet only 62% agreed, most people feeling that inclusivity efforts are empty of substance.

The area of focus that consumers raised was different key expectations from fashion retailers – from expanding size ranges to diversifying models and highlighting brands' ethics in their storytelling. The most common request was to depict less cleaned-up, more everyday consumers as opposed to heavily edited, polished campaign imagery.

4.4.2 Consumer Preferences for Inclusive Representation

For this, respondents were asked to choose factors that shape their trust in fashion brands sharing such messages. The three indicators of inclusivity were found to be diverse models (78%), challenging narrow beauty ideals (64%), and a wide range of body types (72%).

Table 4.2.2: Consumer Preferences for Inclusive Representation in Fashion

Inclusivity Factor	Percentage of Respondents Who Value It
Featuring diverse models	78%
Challenging narrow beauty ideals	64%
Showcasing various body types	72%
Offering diverse sizing options	59%
Promoting multicultural and ethical storytelling	55%

4.2.3 Challenges in Achieving Genuine Inclusivity in Branding

Nevertheless, 57% of the participants agree with the statement that the fashion industry still favors 'traditional' beauty. Although campaigns have been on high concerning diversity, there is still a worry that they might just be a form of tokenism.

It is worth noting that contemporary society is rather cynical regarding brands that use diversity and inclusion as the latest trend instead of fundamentally incorporating it into all aspects of a company's operation.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on insights obtained from the survey on demographic changes, impressions stemming out of fashion branding, the position of Banaras brocades in the diverse fashion industry, and customer expectations from online fashion platforms.

At the top of the page, the paper raises awareness of the fact that although fashion branding has evolved to become more diverse on some level, it is still possible to encounter barriers to meaningful change.

5 Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

This study thus finds that e-commerce, fashion branding, and heritage textiles influence self-esteem, body positivity, and inclusivity in the digital fashion scene.

Being able to log in to access their favorite apparel or fashion at the click of a mouse button, talk about it to their friends, and sometimes even imagine themselves wearing it all are just a few of the ways that fashion today is on the push of an e-commerce button, offering greater accessibility and customization for all, especially for those that look different from the crowd. Yet branding strategies more and more speak of inclusivity, but do so at the cost of beauty standards that are curated by brands and impact the extent to which consumers perceive themselves.

The results of the survey have pointed to fashion as a major period of self-expression, with a vast majority of individuals agreeing that wearing dresses that fit his or her bodies and style of living improves their confidence and self-acceptance.

In addition to that, advertising that includes diverse body types in fashion advertisements improves consumers' body positivity. Though these advancements might seem to be in the pipeline, there are still many respondents who have a hard time resisting conventional beauty standards, which points to the still-existing fight of progressive branding against deeply rooted aesthetic norms.

The massaging effects of social media on body positivity are overwhelmingly widespread, with most of the respondents admitting it is a major factor. Blended in its influence of fashion influencers and digital branding, the platform itself had a dual impact — it allows people to express themselves and represent as much as possible, but on the other hand, it enforces the unattainable through algorithmic curation.

Positive impacts were reported by the respondents for following the inclusive influencers, along with their concerns about filter editing, unrealistic portrayals, and fantasies, sometimes leading to diminished self-esteem.

Findings in the case of heritage fashion, such as Banaras brocades, show how the appreciation of traditional textiles in digital fashion branding is increasing. A good portion of respondents considered Banaras brocades as a versatile and inclusive fashion choice that was all body types, which is capable of adapting to modern aesthetics and cultural identity.

However, perceptions differed by age group, with young consumers wanting a fusion of the contemporary and older people valuing its heritage significance.

5.2 Comparison with Literature Review

These results support research conducted on digital fashion branding's importance and diversity to support the position that e-commerce and branding do indeed affect consumer confidence and body image. Prior works have highlighted the impact of inclusive branding on body positivity, and hence the surveys showed a rise in self-esteem among the Target group that saw diverse fashion adverts.

In the case of social media, such algorithms have been found to uphold beauty standards through the selective promotion of content. Based on the survey, one can come to the conclusion that social networking sites are very effective in handling diversity and inclusion; at the same time, they enforce the standards of beauty as thinner and more attractive through heavily edited and manipulated images.

This works essentially in support of existing similar studies that have claimed algorithmic intrusion in fashion branding to encourage racial and cultural correctness, other than relying on standard oriental aesthetics.

The findings of the research regarding heritage fashion as a significant component of current fashion branding also correlate with the prior studies done in the field. Research has described how it is possible to rework traditional textile material within aesthetic and social digital culture, on the way to diffusing and promoting culture to different parts of the world.

The survey means that the consumer likes the quality and tradition of Banaras brocades but at the same time wants technology when it comes to promotion. The literature also highlights the significance of involving e-commerce for further development of heritage textiles which is also reflected in the respondents' opinions regarding the constantly increasing popularity of online non-authentic fashion.

The only discrepancy between the survey result and the literature is concerning the inclusiveness aspect of branding.

Consequently, it was found that although fashion brands have tried to improve on portraying body positivity, the general public has doubts about the authenticity of such campaigns.

5.3 Challenges & Limitations

However, a number of challenges and limitations should be noted related to this study. That is why one of the potential problems is the bias of subjects in survey participation.

The sample mostly targets persons already in the fashion and digital branding niche; hence, it suggests biased results that may lean toward persons with good digital literacy. Persons who have limited exposure to e-commerce, as well as heritage textiles, may come up with different sentiments that were not covered. Many of the psychological effects of digital branding on self-esteem can therefore not be measured to the fullest.

Although survey data helps to reveal the degree of confidence about branding knowledge, it does not help to prognosticate how branding messages become internalized over time through a psychological examination of the respondents [20]. It may be useful for future research to

conduct qualitative research based on interviews or case-study methodology in order to evaluate more thoroughly the consequences of fashion branding in terms of body image regulation.

The study also focuses on issues and barriers to the evaluation of the impact of inclusive branding initiatives. Despite the answers that recognized the change in digitized fashion representation, further doubt emerges as to whether or not such representation is more than a trend. This poses a problem when trying to identify which of such branding strategies are useful in ensuring genuine and sustainable inclusion of minority groups in the fashion sector.

Another issue is related to the algorithmic approach in news feeds, which dictates how people interact with fashion media. Current algorithms of social media platforms introduce stereotypical indicators of beauty, decreasing one's ability to discover other perspectives. Although this subject is covered in the literature, the survey results indicate that the consumers recognize algorithmic biases, which has led to a debate on ethical Artificial Intelligence in digital branding.

Lastly, an emerging issue that precipitates this study is the understanding of heritage fashion in the new dimensions as shaped by the digital environment. Although the survey reveals that there has been a general awareness of the beauty and value of Banaras brocades, a detailed study of the change is not available. Further research can focus on consumers' incentives in the specified domains of sustainability, cultural identity, and emerging ethics in fashion, respectively.

6 Conclusion & Recommendations

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

The details of this study show a growing association between e-commerce, fashion branding, and body positivity, especially where the topic of heritage textiles like Banaras brocades is concerned. This reasserts the message that e-commerce has greatly facilitated access to heritage fashion, making it possible for traditional expertise to reach the world at large.

In making cultural textiles more adaptable to contemporary fashion trends, digital platforms have increased visibility, customization, and inclusivity. This research brings one of the key insights that body positivity is shaped by the role that fashion branding has.

Inclusivity campaigns have begun to trickle into the advertising landscape, with many of the brands incorporating varying body types in ads, but suspicion from consumers persists about their realness. Not only did respondents agree that looking at fashion advertisements with diverse representation enhances one's self-esteem, but they were also worried about curated beauty standards and content filtering modus.

The inclusion of fresh Banaras brocades in the strategic positioning has opened up unique options for embracing the culture and context of sustainable fashion. The findings indicate that heritage textiles can break past the traditional beauty norms by focusing more on craftsmanship and less on body size or shape.

But bringing them across to modernize would appeal to a younger audience without spoiling the look and feel of the original design and artistic value. This growing

demand for fusion designs of traditional weaves paired alongside the current silhouettes indicates a shift from cultural inclusivity to digital fashion.

6.2 Recommendations

As for the further improvement of digital fashion inclusiveness and promotion of heritage textiles, the following recommendations are provided:

1. E-commerce platforms should actively promote heritage textiles

When it comes specifically to marketing methods, online fashion retailers need to incorporate cultural messaging, sustainable marketing, and sustainable supply chains into their actions.

Digital media targets should reflect the historical aspect, the skillful artwork, and the traditional weaving of local heritage fabrics to appeal to the conscious consumers [19].

Coordination with the local weavers and designers may go a long way in creating economic sustainability and, at the same time, coming up with genuine native fashion.

2. Fashion branding should adopt body-positive narratives

Fashion is not just about reflecting the current social and behavioral changes but about embodying them to ensure that diverse body types are not just represented but included in the products, advertisements, and virtual interfaces [20]. User-generated content and real-life customer testimonials might help in enhancing authenticity, whereas publicity of features some real-life pictures or unadulterated images might help in eradicating unrealistic beauty standards.

7 References

1. Goyal, A. and Choudhury, J., 2024, October. Exploring the revival of traditional Handloom techniques in contemporary fashion trends, in emerging technologies, and sustainable finance. In *2nd International Conference on Emerging Technologies and Sustainable Business Practices-2024 (ICETSBP 2024)* (pp. 472-485). Atlantis Press.
2. iPladers (2021) 'Made in Banaras: GI Tag in Banaras Brocades and Sarees'. *iPladers Blog*. Available at: <https://blog.ipleders.in/made-in-banaras-gi-tag-in-banaras-brocades-and-sarees/> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
3. Ameen, N., Cheah, J.H. and Kumar, S., 2022. It's all part of the customer journey: The impact of augmented reality, chatbots, and social media on the body image and self-esteem of Generation Z female consumers. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(11), pp.2110-2129.
4. Gupta, J., Sharma, J. and Deodiya, S., 2024. Transformation of brocades: Techniques, trends, and patterns. *Age (Years)*, 18(35), p.21.
5. Vocal Media (n.d.) *Social Media's Influence on Fashion Trends: A Digital Revolution*. Available at: <https://vocal.media/humans/social-media-s-influence-on-fashion-trends-a-digital-revolution> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
6. Escalith, H., 2021, December. Technology E-commerce and Handicrafts: When traditional creators meet 21st Century business models. In *Idb/Intal Workshop on Electronic Commerce for Mercosur Countries* (pp. 6-10).
7. Darwin, H. and Miller, A., 2021. Factions, frames, and postfeminism (s) in the Body Positive Movement. *Feminist Media Studies*, 21(6), pp.873-890.
8. Griffin, M., Bailey, K.A. and Lopez, K.J., 2022. # Body Positive? A critical exploration of the body positive movement within physical cultures taking an intersectionality approach. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 4, p.908580.
9. Vogue Fashion Institute (n.d.) *How Social Media Algorithms Shape Fashion Design Trends*. Available at: <https://www.voguefashioninstitute.com/social-media-algorithms-shape-fashion-design-trends/> [Accessed 22 February 2025].

10. Torossian, R. (n.d.) *Navigating the Future of Fashion Retail Marketing in 2025: Trends Shaping the Industry*. Available at: <https://ronnstorossian.com/navigating-the-future-of-fashion-retail-marketing-in-2025-trends-shaping-the-industry/> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
11. Basnet, S., 2024. E-commerce of handicraft in Finland: customers' and artisan interests and habit to understand the advantages and challenges of e-commerce of handicrafts.
12. Fast Simon (n.d.) *Body Positivity and the Effect on the Fashion Industry*. Available at: <https://www.fastsimon.com/ecommerce-wiki/optimized-ecommerce-experience/body-positivity-and-the-effect-on-the-fashion-industry/> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
13. Top Buttons (2024) 'Embracing Body Positivity through Fashion: Boosting Self-Worth and Confidence'. *Top Buttons*. Available at: <https://www.topbuttons.org/fashion/embracing-body-positivity-through-fashion-boosting-self-worth-and-confidence> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
14. Chaudhary, M., Agarwal, B. and Bhatia, M., 2021. Socio-economic condition of small-scale producers in Varanasi: A case of Banaras brocade and saree.
15. Fast Simon (2024) 'Body Positivity & The Effect On The Fashion Industry'. *Fast Simon*. Available at: <https://www.fastsimon.com/ecommerce-wiki/optimized-ecommerce-experience/body-positivity-and-the-effect-on-the-fashion-industry/> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
16. Lidgren, J. and Major, M., 2021. Social media influencers' impact on consumers' sustainable fashion consumption: A qualitative study on post-millennial consumers.
17. Ge, J., 2024. Influencers marketing and its impacts on sustainable fashion consumption among generation Z. *Journal of Soft Computing and Decision Analytics*, 2(1), pp.118-143.
18. Vandi, A., 2023. Dealing with objects, dealing with data. The role of the archive in curating and disseminating fashion culture through digital technologies. *ZoneModa Journal*, 13, pp.155-168.
19. Onitiu, D., 2022. Fashion, filter bubbles and echo chambers: questions of privacy, identity, and governance. *Law, Innovation and Technology*, 14(2), pp.395-420.
20. Nagrath, S. and Grover, S. (2023) 'Study of Sustainable ODOP Handloom and Handicrafts Products in Varanasi', *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 4(2), pp. 1-10. DOI: 10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2CSDAD.2023.594. Available at: <https://www.granthaalayahpublication.org/Arts-Journal/ShodhKosh/article/view/594> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
21. The Times of India (2009) 'Banarsi Silk Gets GI Recognition'. *The Times of India*, 17 September. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/banarsi-silk-gets-gi-recognition/articleshow/5023601.cms> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
22. The Times of India (2016) 'Varanasi: A Traditional Hub for Small Industries in the State'. *The Times of India*, 30 August. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/varanasi-a-traditional-hub-for-small-industries-in-the-state/articleshow/53925705.cms> [Accessed 22 February 2025].
23. P. Frost, *Miller's Collecting Textiles*, London: Mitchell Beazley Publications, 2000.