

A STUDY OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS KHADI PRODUCTS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This study undertakes an in-depth exploration of college students' preferences for Khadi products, with a keen focus on the various factors that shape their purchasing behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes toward this traditional Indian fabric. Khadi, celebrated for its handwoven craftsmanship, is not only a textile but a symbol intricately tied to India's rich cultural heritage and commitment to sustainability. Despite its historical significance, the allure of Khadi among younger consumers remains under-examined, necessitating a closer look into their preferences.

The research aims to assess the value college students place on Khadi, considering elements such as its sustainability, the ethical production processes involved, its cultural significance, practicality in everyday use, affordability, and its relevance in current fashion trends. To gather meaningful data, a survey methodology is employed, reaching out to students from diverse academic disciplines. This structured questionnaire aims to capture a spectrum of insights into their levels of awareness, purchasing habits, and personal preferences regarding Khadi clothing and accessories.

Additionally, the study delves into the impact of socioeconomic backgrounds, brand perceptions, and environmental considerations on students' choices and purchasing decisions. The outcomes reveal notable patterns in the acceptance of Khadi among the youth, identifying both challenges that need addressing and opportunities that exist for these products within the youth market.

Ultimately, the findings offer valuable insights for manufacturers, retailers, and policymakers striving to position Khadi as a sustainable and fashionable alternative to mass-produced textiles. This research not only enhances the understanding of Khadi's relevance in contemporary consumer culture but also sheds light on its significant influence on the sustainable fashion choices made by today's young people.

Keywords: Consumer, Consumer Preferences, Khadi as a Brand, Products, Types of Khadi Products

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Introduction:

Khadi holds a deep connection with India's freedom struggle, symbolizing pride for all Indians. The Khadi movement focused on rejecting foreign products, particularly cotton, and promoting domestic alternatives. Even after independence, khadi remained linked to politics, predominantly worn by political figures and followers of Gandhiji. Also known as

'Khaddar', khadi is a hand-spun and hand-woven fabric intended to complement agriculture and serve as a vital component of a self-reliant economy. This familiar hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, made from cotton, silk, or wool, has experienced numerous challenges. For centuries, it has been a fundamental cottage industry in this ancient land. Our study examines khadi clothing preferences among college

students, exploring trends and their choices through the lens of Textile Clothing and Human Psychology. Despite being our national fabric, khadi is less favored by the younger generation due to its lack of luster and modern appeal. We aim to gather insights into students' preferences.

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand awareness of Khadi products, including their origin, benefits, and significance in Indian culture and heritage among college students.
2. To identify preferences of specific Khadi products (such as clothing, accessories, home textiles, etc.) by college students, and what factors influence their choices (e.g., price, quality, design, eco-friendliness).
3. To explore students' perceptions regarding the quality, value, and ethical considerations of purchasing Khadi products, such as sustainability, handmade craftsmanship, and supporting local artisans.

Problem Statement: Khadi, a traditional handwoven fabric deeply rooted in India's cultural and historical fabric, holds significant value as a symbol of sustainability, ethical production, and national pride. Yet, despite its rich heritage and growing global interest in eco-friendly and sustainable fashion, the popularity of Khadi among younger consumers—particularly college students—remains underexplored. College students, as an important demographic with heightened awareness of sustainability, ethical consumerism, and contemporary fashion trends, represent a crucial market segment for Khadi. However, there is a limited understanding of the factors that shape their attitudes, perceptions, and purchasing decisions regarding this traditional fabric. While Khadi is known for its environmental benefits, craftsmanship, and cultural relevance, its current positioning in the youth market remains unclear. Several challenges may contribute to this gap in

market acceptance, including issues of affordability, the perceived lack of contemporary fashion appeal, and limited awareness of its sustainable qualities. Furthermore, while ethical consumption has gained prominence among younger generations, it is uncertain whether these consumers connect Khadi's heritage and ethical production processes to their own purchasing decisions.

Scope: The study aims to delve deeply into the behaviors and preferences of a vibrant and youthful consumer segment, providing valuable insights that can inform marketing strategies. By understanding this group's motivations and buying habits, the research could play a significant role in advocating for sustainable and locally-produced goods, particularly highlighting products like Khadi. This focus on environmentally friendly and regionally crafted items not only supports local artisans but also fosters a greater awareness of sustainable consumption practices among consumers.

Literature Review:

1. Prashar, O. (2023), study assessed young people's understanding of khadi in Panipat, Haryana. It found that 62% viewed khadi as financially unviable, although 56% were familiar with cotton khadi and appreciated its comfort. Khadi, made from cotton, silk, or wool, is a symbol of national pride with political significance. While it supports local economies and job creation, khadi faces challenges such as easy crumpling, high maintenance costs, limited production, and difficulties in public promotion.
2. Yadav, D. et al. (2022), the study examines factors affecting consumer awareness of Khadi products in the Delhi/NCR region, based on a survey of 171 respondents using a structured questionnaire. It identifies and classifies 37 research items into six key variables: advertisement, purchase intention, price, authentication/quality consciousness,

consumer knowledge, and source of information, which collectively explain consumer awareness levels regarding Khadi products.

3. Anusuya, Dr. D. et al. (2016) study examines the impact of Khadi and village industrial products on customer satisfaction in Coimbatore District, India, emphasizing the role of village industries in economic development and employment. Introduced by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920, the Khadi program aimed to boycott foreign goods and promote self-sufficiency. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) classifies industries in rural areas with specific parameters. The study also explores the development of these industries in Tamil Nadu since 1961. Additionally, Shivaji Sarkar (2000) critiques the limited employment generated by the Khadi sector and advocates for its modernization to create a global impact.
4. Sriram, S. et al. (2023), The researcher studied that Khadi is a traditional Indian garment with a rich history that spans the Vedic period, the Mughal era, and the British colonial period. It is closely associated with the concepts of home rule, self-sufficiency, and the freedom movement, particularly through Mahatma Gandhi. The paper discusses its evolution from a symbol of freedom to a fashionable fabric, highlighting the involvement of contemporary designers. It addresses the decline of Khadi post-independence and the strategies that have led to its recent revival, focusing on its potential as a sustainable fashion solution and the changing perceptions that have influenced its production and sales.
5. Kitey, Prof. S. S. et al. (2024). This study investigates how young people in Seloo Town perceive Muslim-Khadi products, emphasizing the cultural and historical importance of Khadi in India's independence movement. It also tackles the insufficient research on youth opinions regarding

these products in smaller towns and aims to offer insights into their preferences and buying habits.

6. Dhawale, J., Khot, A. et al. (2023), The researcher studied that khadi is a hand-spun and hand-woven fabric with a significant tradition in India, representing nationalism and independence. Popularized during the fight for independence by Mahatma Gandhi as a means to boycott British goods, it continues to symbolize India's heritage. Khadi's sustainable production, utilizing natural fibers and traditional methods, appeals to those who prioritize eco-friendliness and ethical practices. Managed by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), it is used for various products, including clothing, household items, and accessories, making it an important part of India's cultural legacy.

Research Gap: While existing studies provide valuable insights into various aspects of Khadi, including its historical significance, consumer awareness, cultural importance, and its role in economic development, there remains a significant gap in understanding the preferences and purchasing behaviors of college students, particularly in the context of Khadi's appeal as a sustainable and fashionable fabric among younger generations. The studies reviewed, examined several important aspects of Khadi, but they often focus on broad demographics, specific geographic regions, or historical perspectives, without delving deeply into the current attitudes and buying habits of young consumers.

Methodology: This research employed a descriptive design to explore college students' preferences for Khadi products in the Mumbai area. A convenience sampling method was used to gather primary data from 54 respondents from different institutions, who completed a structured questionnaire assessing demographics, awareness, preferences, and purchasing habits.

The data analysis encompassed descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as inferential statistics, such as correlation and regression analysis, to uncover relationships between variables. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire truthfully and promptly.

Findings:

Section A: Demographic information

1. The total sample of 54 respondents are considered in this study, out of which maximum 72 % of respondents are in age group of 18-20 , 24% of respondents are in age group of 21-23, and minimum 2% of the age group are from 24-26 & above 26.
2. The 80% of respondents are female and 20% of the respondents are male.
3. The 76% of respondents are in commerce course, 9% of the respondents are in arts course, 6% of respondents are in engineering or technology course and 4% of respondents are in BMS course.
4. Maximum 39% of respondents yearly spending is Rs 1000- Rs5000, 33% of respondents yearly spending is Rs 5000- Rs 10000, minimum 14% of respondents yearly spending is above Rs 10000 and remaining 13% respondents yearly spending is below Rs 1000.

Section B: Awareness and knowledge of khadi products

1. The 78% of respondents are somewhat familiar to khadi products, 17% of respondents are very familiar to khadi products and 6% of respondents are not familiar to khadi products.
2. The 67% of respondents are using khadi clothing, 28% of respondents are using khadi accessories, 9% of respondents are using khadi home furnishings, 16% of respondents are using khadi skincare products, 6% of respondents are using khadi stationary and 13% of respondents are in none of the above category.

3. The 52% of respondents have heard about khadi products from family/friends, 15% of respondents have heard about khadi products from university, 24% of respondents have heard about khadi products through social media and 4% of respondents have heard about khadi products from school.

Section C: Perception of khadi products

1. The 61% of respondents describe khadi products in good quality, 30% of respondents describe khadi products in very good quality and 9% of respondents describe khadi products in average quality.
2. The 48% of respondents associate khadi in sustainability and eco friendly quality, 26% of respondents associate khadi as high quality craftsmanship quality, 31% of respondents associate khadi traditional/old fashion quality, 9% of respondents associate khadi as expensive quality and 3% of the respondents associate khadi as a comfortable to wear quality.
3. The 38 % of respondents have given 3 star rating for price factor, 25% of respondents have given 2 star rating for quality of fabric factor, 26% of respondents have given 4 star rating for brand image factor, 7% of respondents have given 4 star rating for design/modernity factor and 6% of respondents have given 5 star rating for support for local artisans and rural employment factor.
4. Maximum 50% of respondents have consider khadi products to be fashionable but only in traditional setting, followed by 24% of respondents who are not sure about khadi products, followed by 19% of respondents consider khadi products as very fashionable and 7% of respondents didn't consider khadi products fashionable.
5. The 48% of respondents experienced that khadi is somewhat comfortable but less stylish, 20% of respondents experienced that khadi is much more

comfortable and stylish and 19% of respondents don't have any opinion towards khadi.

6. Maximum 55% of respondents have purchased any khadi products and minimum 15% of respondents have not purchased any khadi products.
7. Maximum 76% of respondents have purchased khadi clothing, minimum 10% of respondents have purchased khadi stationary.
8. Maximum 34% of respondents didn't purchase khadi products due to lack of variety in design, followed by 21% of respondents didn't purchase khadi products because they were not easily available and minimum 15% of respondents were not aware of khadi products.
9. Maximum 37% of respondents prefer to buy khadi from dedicated khadi stores, followed by 32% of respondents prefer to buy khadi from local markets and minimum 9% of respondents prefer to buy khadi from online platforms.
10. Maximum 41% of respondents would encourage you to buy khadi products more frequently due to more fashionable and contemporary design and more variety in products and minimum 4% of respondents would encourage you to buy khadi products because its comfort.

Section D : Attitude Towards Khadi and its Impact

1. Maximum 54% of respondents are supporting khadi products, followed by 35% of respondents are somewhat supporting khadi products and minimum 6% of respondents are not sure about it.
2. Maximum 39% of respondents strongly agree that khadi products support local artisans and promote rural employment followed by 37% of respondents agree the same and minimum 20% of respondents gave neutral response.
3. Maximum 50% of respondents are willing to pay a higher price but only for certain products, followed by 22% of the respondents are definitely willing to pay a higher price for khadi products and minimum

6% of respondents are not sure about it.

4. Maximum 44% of respondents feel that traditional handicrafts like khadi is some important in the modern world followed by 43% of respondents feel that traditional handicrafts like khadi is very in the modern world.

Suggestions: Marketing strategies should prioritize enhancing awareness of Khadi products through the organization of informative seminars and hands-on workshops. These events can serve as platforms to educate potential consumers about the unique qualities and benefits of Khadi, fostering a deeper appreciation for these traditional textiles.

Additionally, utilizing social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok is essential for effectively showcasing Khadi products. By sharing visually appealing content, including engaging posts, videos, and stories, brands can create a strong connection with college students, who are often active on these platforms. Collaborating with influencers or student ambassadors can further amplify outreach and generate buzz about Khadi.

Furthermore, to attract college students, it is crucial to offer trendy designs that reflect current fashion trends while maintaining high quality. Providing these stylish options at affordable prices will make Khadi products more accessible, increasing their appeal among budget conscious students. Incorporating feedback from the target demographic can also help tailor products and marketing efforts to better resonate with their preferences, ultimately driving interest and sales.

Limitations:

1. The research focuses exclusively on the Mumbai region.
2. This research pertains solely to college students.
3. The study is confined to participants aged 18 to 35 years.

Conclusion: The research delved into the preferences of college students regarding Khadi products,

revealing several insightful findings.

Firstly, a growing number of college students are not just recognizing but also valuing the unique qualities of Khadi products. This trend indicates a rising awareness of the cultural and ethical significance behind these handmade textiles.

When it comes to selecting Khadi items, students place a high priority on factors such as quality, comfort, and style. They are looking for products that not only feel good to wear but also embody a sense of contemporary fashion and craftsmanship.

Additionally, many students express a strong commitment to supporting sustainable practices and Indigenous industries. This sense of patriotism influences their preference for Khadi products, as they appreciate their role in promoting environmentally friendly and locally sourced materials.

However, the research also highlights some areas for improvement. Students suggest that enhancing marketing strategies and increasing the availability of Khadi products could significantly boost their appeal. By making these products more accessible and visible, there is potential for a wider acceptance among the college demographic.

Overall, the study's findings can inform targeted initiatives designed to encourage college students to choose Khadi products more frequently, thus fostering the growth of the Khadi industry and reinforcing its significance sustainably.

Recommendations for Future Research:

1. Examine various demographics in this study, which focused on college students from the Mumbai area. Upcoming research might explore khadi product preferences among different groups, such as working professionals, homemakers, and people

from diverse age ranges or regions.

2. Evaluate how social media impacts awareness of khadi products. Social media platforms significantly shape consumer preferences. Future research could explore how social media influences awareness, attitudes, and buying behaviours related to khadi products.

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