

KHADI: THE FABRIC OF INDIA'S FREEDOM, EVOLUTION, AND CULTURAL LEGACY

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Abstract:

The rising popularity of sustainable and eco-friendly fashion has brought traditional fabrics like Khadi into the spotlight. However, despite its historical and cultural significance, Khadi apparel struggles to gain popularity among Gen Z- a demographic known for its evolving preferences and influence on market trends. Understanding the barriers that hinder their purchase decision is crucial in today's context, where bridging the gap between tradition and modern consumer expectations can redefine Khadi's role in the global fashion industry. While a variety of garments, including salwar suits, shirts and skirts, are crafted from Khadi fabric. Still, in the present time, many people have an outdated reputation about the khadi and give very little consideration to it. Thus, this study aims to assess awareness about khadi among Gen Z and also understand the barriers hindering the purchase decision of Khadi apparel. A sample of 119 respondents from Gen Z, aged 12- 27 years, from Thane region was selected for the study. This study explores these barriers, provides insights to help reposition Khadi as a desirable, accessible and relevant choice for the younger generation.

Keywords- Khadi, Khadi apparel, Gen Z, barriers, purchase decision

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Introduction:

Khadi is a cloth which gained fashionability from the Swadeshi Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. According to the Khadi & Village diligence Commission Act 1956, “khadi means any cloth woven on a handloom from cotton, silk or woolen yarn- handspun in India or from the combination of any two or all of similar yarns.” It has gained recognition as a unique cloth with artistic significance. Khadi is a brand itself and represents itself as a symbol of tone- reliance. It isn't simply a fabric but a narrative of India's history and heritage.

Gen Z, generally defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, is a generation characterized by its digital generation, global exposure, and a growing sense of environmental and social knowledge. While Gen Z is generally inclined towards sustainability and eco-

friendly products, it's also heavily told by fast fashion trends, digital marketing, and the vacuity of trendy, affordable druthers. Understanding Gen Z's buying behaviour is crucial because they are a significant consumer group, with growing purchasing power, influencing market trends across industries. As a result, the relinquishment of traditional products like Khadi faces several walls, ranging from comprehensions of Khadi as outdated or impracticable to issues related to availability, pricing, and fashion applicability.

Understanding the factors that hamper the relinquishment of Khadi among Gen Z is pivotal for promoting its growth and integrating it into ultramodern consumption patterns. This study aims to explore these walls, probing not only the lack of mindfulness and interest but also the artistic and profitable factors that help Khadi from getting a

mainstream choice for youthful consumers. By relating these challenges, the study seeks to offer perceptivity into implicit strategies for revitalizing Khadi's image and adding its relinquishment among Gen Z. This exploration will explore the perception of Khadi among Gen Z, fastening on walls in espousing khadi. The findings of this study could contribute to the development of marketing strategies, product inventions, and policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the relinquishment of Khadi in contemporary requests, particularly among youngish consumers.

Review of Literature:

1. Parul Gill, Poonam Malik, Nisha Arya and Neelam Yadav (February 2023) this study explored that as young people continue to seek environmentally friendly and socially responsible fashion options, it is likely that the popularity of Khadi will continue to grow, and that it will continue to play an important role in the cultural and economic landscape of India.
2. Gaytri, Alka Goel and Sakshi (August 2022) have studied the preference of khadi among youth researchers. Researchers have collected data from a total one hundred females between 21-31 years and data has been analyzed by using frequency and percentage. Study has concluded that youth preferred khadi fabric but due to some reasons such as lack of variety and lack of trendy garments in Shri Gandhi Ashram, khadi fabric popularity decreased. In this study it is indicated that, though the khadi has been used from ancient times, again it is getting popular among the youth of Uttarakhand.
3. Monika Rohilla and Anamika Gautam (July 2022) have studied the perception of young consumers on khadi. This study analysed the knowledge and awareness level of youth regarding the khadi fabric in the district of Panipat, Haryana. The study carried out the relationship between characteristics of both buying behaviour and its acceptability among youth. authors have concluded that consumers were having a positive attitude toward khadi. It was noticed that along with comfort, youth prefer fashionable clothing that is relatively cheap.
4. PriyankaRaghani and Dr. Jigna C Trivedi (September 2021) this study has focused on the challenges faced by the Khadi marketers in selling the Khadi Apparels. The purpose of this study was to find out the reasons for the non-acceptance of Khadi, to identify the problems faced in selling Khadi garments and to promote Khadi as a fashion fabric. Authors have concluded that the marketers selling Khadi can increase its sales when it has a lot of variety, available at affordable price and good designs.
5. PriyankaRaghani and Dr. Jigna C Trivedi (November 2020) has conducted research to study the literature related to khadi Pre and Post-Independence. Researchers have concluded that the literature is historic in nature and lacks empirical evidence. It is suggested in study that there is a lot of scope of empirical studies for deducing reasons for lack of its acceptance among consumers.
6. Pradnya P. Ambre and Sugandha Lad (July 2017) has studied Khadi awareness and promotions among youth and attempts have been made to discover the awareness about khadi among college youth and also to promote khadi as a fashion fabric. The study revealed that khadi can no more be neglected and it is soon becoming a fashion symbol.
7. Anandi Sarkar (January 2017) has studied the performance of the Khadi sector in India. This exploratory study highlighted the performance, strength, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the Khadi sector, and the solution for such challenges. Also recommended that proper channelization and utilization is one of the components for achieving growth economically and

also various policies and welfare schemes to safeguard skilled and qualitative workers will cater in long run growth of the Khadi sector.

8. Satrajeet Choudhury and Anupam Ghosh (June 2016) in this study researchers have used an explorative as well as descriptive research methodology. As shown in the study the correlation analysis shows a very strong relationship between the production of khadi textile and sales of khadi textile, production of khadi textile and employment generated by the khadi textile industry. Researchers have suggested that the khadi textile industry needs to improve their marketing structure and strategies to enhance competitiveness of the entire khadi textile industry, khadi industry must train their existing khadi workers (spinners and weavers) and tie up their functioning with other textile companies to cope up with the current market situation.

Objective of the Study:

1. To understand Gen Z's awareness of khadi.
2. To study the various barriers hindering the purchase decision of khadi apparel among the Gen Z.
3. To evaluate the deferring impacts of barriers such as cost, availability and fashion on Gen Z's decision to purchase Khadi apparel.

Hypothesis:

1. H0 (Null Hypothesis) - There is no significant relationship between awareness of Khadi and the adoption of Khadi apparel among Gen Z.
- H1 (Alternate Hypothesis) - There is a significant relationship between awareness of Khadi and the

adoption of Khadi apparel among Gen Z.

2. H0 (Null Hypothesis) - There is no significant differentiation between the barriers (cost, availability, fashion) hindering the purchase decision among Gen Z.

H1 (Alternate Hypothesis) - There is a significant differentiation between the barriers (cost, availability, fashion) hindering the purchase decision among Gen Z.

Scope of the Study: The study is focused on awareness about the khadi. It also focuses on the barriers hindering the purchase decision of khadi among the Gen Z. Gen Z's are considered to get a detailed knowledge about the khadi and usage. This study aims to provide valuable insights into how Khadi apparel can be better marketed to Gen Z and overcome the barriers to increased adoption.

Research Methodology: The methodology adapted for this study is based on the primary data. The study has tried to assemble the data from 119 respondents via structured questionnaire method, in the Thane region.

Tools & Techniques Used for Analysis: The statistical analysis carried out in the study is being done using MS-Excel. The statistical techniques like Chi-square test, and One-Way ANOVA, simple percentage analysis are being used. Analyzed and interpreted data have been Presented In The Form Of Tables.

Limitations of the Study:

1. The responses from the study have been limited to the Thane region only.
2. The study was limited to Generation z.
3. Time and resource constraint.

Research Analysis:

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Sr.No.	Demographic Profile of Respondents	Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	64	53.8
		Female	55	46.2

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 1 explicitly exhibits that 53.8% respondents are male and remaining 46.2% are female respectively.

Table 2 Aspects of Awareness

Aspect	SA	A	N	D	SD
Self-Initiated Information Seeking	9	25	42	32	11
Traditional Fabric Awareness	9	26	54	22	8
Cultural Importance	5	47	53	9	5
Historical Significance	7	22	51	23	16
Overall Understanding of Khadi	7	28	61	20	3

(Source: Primary Data)

The table indicates that a portion of Gen Z shows interest in actively learning about Khadi, a significant no. of respondents are either indifferent or unwilling to seek out this information on their own. Further it shows a relatively high degree of recognition of Khadi's cultural importance, though there is a significant neutral stance, which could be due to limited exposure or knowledge. It reveals that a large proportion remains unsure or indifferent, highlighting potential gaps in education or exposure to Khadi's significance.

The following hypothesis have been tested to look at the different dimensions of the problem-

H0 (Null Hypothesis) - There is no significant relationship between awareness of Khadi and the adoption of Khadi apparel among Gen Z. (Table 1)

Table no. 3 Result of Chi-square Test

Calculate Value	Table Value	Degree of Freedom	Level of Significance
43.5171	26.296	16	0.05

Calculated value of Chi-square is 43.5171 which is greater than the critical value 26.296 at 16 degree of freedom and 0.05 is the significance level. The critical value is lesser than the calculated value therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Since the null hypothesis is rejected it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between awareness of Khadi and the adoption of Khadi among Gen Z.

Table no. 4 Result of One Way ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between samples	$SSB=3.7703$	$k-1=2$	$3.77032=1.8852$	2.5017	0.0834
Within samples	$SSW=266.7563$	$n-k=354$	$266.7563354=0.7535$		
Total	$SST=270.5266$	$n-1=356$			

$F(2,354)$ at 0.05 level of significance = 3.0212

As calculated $F=2.5017 < 3.0212$

So, H_0 is accepted, hence there is no significant differentiation between the barriers (cost, availability, fashion) hindering the purchase decision among Gen Z. The result of the analysis indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the barriers (cost, availability and fashion) hindering the purchase

decision of Gen Z regarding Khadi apparel. This suggests that these factors are perceived similarly by Gen Z and do not show a significant differentiation in their influence on purchase decisions. Therefore we conclude that cost, availability and fashion have an equally important or similar impact on Gen Z's decision to purchase Khadi apparel.

Findings:

1. The research reveals that a significant portion of Gen Z remains neutral or uninformed about Khadi, indicating gaps in education and exposure regarding its cultural, historical, and traditional significance,
2. The Chi-square test reveals a significant relationship between awareness of Khadi and its adoption, suggesting that increased awareness could positively influence Gen Z's decision to purchase Khadi apparel.
3. The One Way ANOVA results show no significant difference between the barriers of cost, availability, and fashion in hindering Khadi's adoption, indicating these factors are equally influential.
4. This study highlights the need for targeted educational initiatives to enhance awareness and marketing strategies that address the equal impact of these barriers on Gen Z's purchasing decisions.

Suggestions:

1. To increase awareness among Gen Z, targeted educational campaigns should be launched, which could leverage social media, workshops, and influencer collaborations to engage this audience effectively.
2. As the barriers of cost, availability and fashion are perceived similarly, marketing strategies should address these factors by offering affordable pricing, ensuring better availability both online and offline, and creating stylish designs that cater to Gen Z's fashion preferences.
3. To overcome the barriers of fashion and cost, Khadi should be positioned as a sustainable and fashionable alternative to fast fashion.
4. Collaborating with well-known personalities and celebrities who resonate with Gen Z's values, such as sustainability, fashion and cultural heritage, can help the gap between traditional and contemporary fashion.

Conclusion:

This study explored the barriers hindering the purchase decision of Khadi apparel among Gen Z. It found that while some awareness of Khadi's cultural and historical significance exists, a significant portion of Gen Z remains indifferent or uninformed, indicating gaps in awareness. The Chi-square test revealed a significant relationship between awareness and the adoption of Khadi apparel, suggesting the increased awareness could positively influence purchase decisions. The One-Way ANOVA results indicated no significant difference between the barriers of cost, availability and fashion, meaning these factors are perceived similarly by Gen Z. To address these challenges, the study recommends targeted educational campaigns and marketing strategies to bridge the gap between traditional fabric and modern consumer expectations. Moving forward leveraging social media, influencer collaborations and celebrity endorsement can help to better connect with Gen Z. By repositioning Khadi as a sustainable and stylish alternative, these efforts can help make Khadi a more appealing, accessible, and fashionable choice for Gen Z.

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