

Representation and Misrepresentation of Indian Culture in International Fashion

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ABSTRACT

The global convergence of the fashion community has allowed designers all over the world to merge different interrelating cultures such as those of India to globalized fashion trends. This study encompassed an analysis of the portrayal of Indian culture depicted or represented in international clothing. It examined both scenarios, realistically authentic representation, and misinterpretation. The paper studied the extent to which Indian cultural elements have been represented internationally and how have they been perceived by the Indian community along the timeline of globalization.

This study used a blend of qualitative and quantitative techniques. The study was done in 4 phases. The first phase was the content analysis of sample cases for representation. In the second phase, topic modelling of 456 comments was done with the help of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA). In the third phase sentiment analysis of the comments was done using VADER library in Python to interpret the tone of the comments. In the fourth phase, the frequency of occurrence of articles covered from the timeline of 2000 to 2024 was analyzed with the PANDAS library in Python. The results of the four phases were finally correlated to form a final timeline of the occurrence of the various themes in the findings.

The findings indicated the prevalence and kinds of elements incorporated that were of Indian cultural origin from phase 1 of the study. Five major themes were incurred as a result of topic modelling. The sentimental analysis inferred the dominance of negative comments. Phase 4 found the increasing trend of the articles over the years.

This paper explored the implications for various industry stakeholders, for example, designers, marketers, and policymakers suggesting strategies of responsible and meaningful cultural representation without running many risks of misappropriation. This study fills the gap in the studies of cultural appropriation focusing on India. This research can further lead to future research that aims at forming policies, accountability measures, cultural evolution, and studying the emergence of hybrid identities.

Keywords: Cultural Representation, Fashion Globalization, Cultural Appropriation, Cultural Mixing, Indian Cultural Elements

INTRODUCTION

There has been widespread criticism of the fashion industry's practices to misrepresent and disregard the cultures of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (Jones, 2021). This criticism is magnified in the age of social media, where people openly voice out their opinions. The increasing focus on cultural appreciation, equity, diversity, and inclusion demands for a careful examination of these issues (Jones, 2021). Cultural appropriation mostly occurs when elements of marginalized cultures are borrowed without understanding or respecting the culture from where it is borrowed (Lee, 2013). This leads to the commercialization of meaningful symbols and hurts sentiments leading to disempowerment. On the other hand, cultural appreciation promotes collaboration and mutual respect, imparting more meaning to contemporary fashion. This paper explores the multifaceted representation of Indian culture within the international fashion industry, with an in-depth examination of both instances of representation and misrepresentation also known as cultural appropriation. This study draws upon insights into instances of the mixing of cultures, the in-depth study of literature that connects different communities, global trends, and the inherent challenges and opportunities presented by cross-cultural exchange (Kalkreuter, 2020) (Kalkreuter, NaN) (Sood, 2024). Examining various case studies provides insight into how international fashion can navigate the fine line between collaboration and appropriation, ultimately leading to a more conscientious approach to cultural representation in an excessively interconnected world. The study fills the gap by focusing specifically on the Indian community and culture. It investigated the nuances and facets of cultural derivations and appropriation within the fashion industry. It accounted for the impact on ethnic identity, and ethical issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture in fashion

The advent and prevalence of globalization is the result of increased cultural diversities and many communities being inspired by each other in designing different products, advertisements, and marketing. This has resulted in escalated cultural diversity in brand offerings and consumers (Hao et al. 2016). Cultural representation—mixing symbols from two or more different cultures simultaneously—has become an increasingly relevant and crucial phenomenon (Chiu et al. 2011). Culture mixing involves the coexistence of cultures in the same space, at the same time, and can span from examples in which multiple cultures are merged to bringing forward different cultures with significant convergence (Piancazzo, 2023). Cultural representation in fashion cannot be categorized as a neutral act; it is inherently interwoven with the dynamics of power. All stakeholders in the supply chain—designers, brands, and media—often Command notable power over how culture is perceived and understood (Hansen, 2019). This control can lead to both accurate and respectful representations and, conversely, to harmful stereotypes and misinterpretations (Hansen, 2019). For example, the inclusion of traditional clothing

elements can either celebrate cultural heritage or bring it down to a mere aesthetic element, depriving it of its essence and significance (Batsakis, 2018) The concept of authenticity becomes central in these cases where the purpose and repercussions of the representation must be examined in detail critically (Ireson-Doolittle, 2015). The fashion industry's potential to portray and project ethnic heritage can either strengthen existing stereotypes or question prevailing narratives (Lenard, 2019).

Cultural Appropriation vs. Cultural Appreciation

An in-depth differentiation between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation is required to be projected so that the brands and designers can make essential steps toward a positive direction. Cultural appropriation often involves the acquiring or adaptation of components of a historically minority culture by members of the superior culture, commonly without understanding the cultural significance or respecting their original context. This can be offensive and harmful, as it is often inclusive of the manipulation and capitalization of cultural heritage for profit or aesthetic purposes, not taking account of the cultural significance of the appropriated elements (Vnsk, 2021). Contrarily, cultural appreciation takes into account a respectful engagement including the celebration of cultural heritage, recognizing its value and significance. An earnest effort is required to understand the cultural context and to engage with the community in a meaningful way (Jones, 2021). Concerns about power imbalances, lack of communications and permissions, and the potential for presenting harmful stereotypes are seen to be rising because of the ethical implications of cultural appropriation (Mwangi, 2023). Cultural appropriation can be comprehensively understood by examining the historical context, power dynamics, and the potential for harm caused by it (Gamble, 2023). In addition to this, a respectful acknowledgment of the source culture and a commitment to avoiding exploitative practices is required to represent the culture properly (Cherid, 2021). Table 1.1 highlights the key points of differences between cultural appropriation and cultural representation. This table is derived from the literature (Young, 2005; Matthes, 2016; Hall, 1997; Ahmed 2012).

Table 1.1. Difference between appropriation and representation

Aspect	Cultural Appropriation	Cultural Representation
Focus	Inappropriate use or exploitation of culture.	Ethical and accurate representation of culture.
Sentiment	Mostly negative, resulting in harm and disrespect.	Often positive, focusing on progress and inclusivity.
Drivers	Controversies in fashion, and social media rages.	Advocacy, involvement, diversity movements.
Examples	Native American prints, Use of Japanese cultural elements.	Equitable collaborations, and precise portrayals in films and media.

Cultural Borrowing

The process of cultural borrowing can be a significant accelerator for creativity and innovation, inculcating cross-cultural exchange and improving the global fashion landscape (Mwangi, 2023). However, ethical considerations are one of the most important factors, respectful borrowing requires clear approvals, equitable rewards, and authentic collaboration with the source culture (Tran, 2020). Cultural borrowing can easily be transformed into cultural appropriation, with potentially damaging consequences in the absence of these elements. (Peters, 2020). The use of culturally significant elements without proper acknowledgment disrespects the culture from which they are taken (Shirke, 2024). Meaningful cultural exchanges and value recognition are cornerstones of ethical borrowing that can move beyond simply "borrowing" to mutual respect and proper representation (Lorusso, 2019).

Collaborative Partnerships

An appropriate way towards a promising path of ethical and sustainable cultural engagement is collaborative partnerships between fashion brands and cultural communities. Mutually beneficial outcomes, fostering cultural understanding, economic empowerment, and the creation of innovative and authentic products are the results of these partnerships (Lee, 2013). Successful collaborations involve a genuine commitment to mutual respect, shared decision-making, and fair compensation for the contributions of the cultural community (Freire, 2022). Such collaborations can empower cultural communities by providing economic opportunities and enabling them to control the narrative surrounding their heritage (Zanu, 2024). Examples of successful collaborations demonstrate the potential for these partnerships to create authentic and meaningful products that resonate with consumers while also upholding ethical standards (Bang, 2022). However, the creation of such partnerships requires careful consideration of power dynamics and the potential for exploitation (Cruz, 2022). A thorough understanding of the cultural context and a commitment to transparency and accountability are essential for ensuring the success of these collaborations (Bang, 2022).

Concept	Connotation	Perceived Characteristics	Source
Cultural Borrowing	It refers to the behaviour of a cultural subject selectively imitating and applying the different or missing cultural elements in another external culture. Borrowing may be either overall imitation and copying, or partial deletion, supplementation, and reconstruction for specific purposes.	Proactive Innovative Positive	Machani and Kebeya, 2022; Ko and Yim, 2023
Cultural Appropriation	One cultural group borrows elements from another cultural group without permission, especially those with symbolic significance and special value. In this process, the history, tradition, meaning, or symbols of the original cultural group are often overlooked or distorted. The occurrence of cultural appropriation can be active or passive but involve situations in which consumers perceive the brand as using elements from another culture in a disrespectful, unfair, or exploitative way.	Passive Exploitative Negative	Matthes, 2019; Lin et al., 2023; Cruz et al., 2024
Cultural Mixing	It means presenting symbols from two or more different cultures simultaneously. This encapsulates the coexistence of cultures in the same space and, at the same time, can range from instances in which multiple cultures are merely presented together to the presentation of different cultures with substantial overlap. It is a simultaneous presentation of cultural symbols from different groups. The symbols can cue the same cultural schema that are culturally congruent, or cue different cultural schemas that are culturally incongruent.	Diversified Coexisting Integrated Congruent Incongruent	Torelli and Ahluwalia 2012; Nie and Wang, 2021; Nie et al., 2022

Fig 1.1 Definitions of concepts taken from (Vnsk, 2021)

Figure 1.1 represents the accurate definitions, derived from the literature, for the concept of representation. The table is taken from the extensive literature review done by Vnsk, 2021.

Themes derived from the literature of cross-cultural representation internationally

1. The absence of meaningful collaboration and fair compensation can transform these designs into exploitative acts of appropriation, undermining the cultural significance of the patterns and motifs (Vnsk, 2021).
2. Religious Symbols and Clothing in Fashion (Piancazzo, 2023)
3. The Representation of Specific Cultural Groups in Fashion Campaigns (Batsakis, 2018)
4. The Commodification of Traditional Crafts in Fashion (Waaka, NaN)
5. Blackfishing and the Commodification of Blackness (Cherid, 2021)
6. The Use of Cornrows and Other Black Hairstyles (Mehdi, 2020)

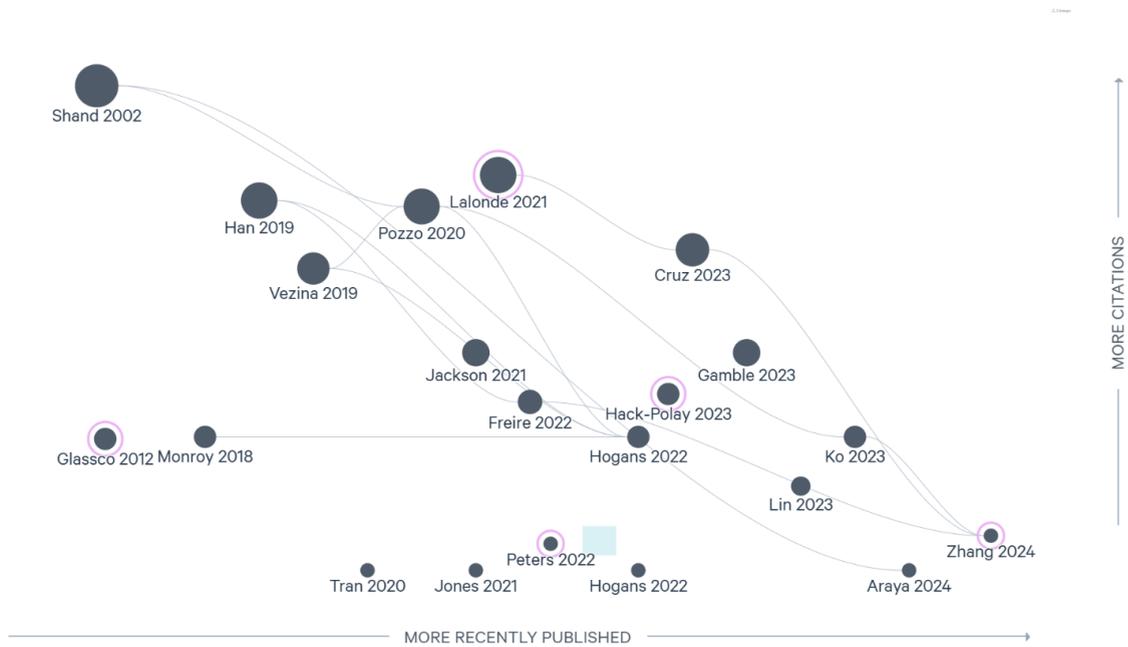
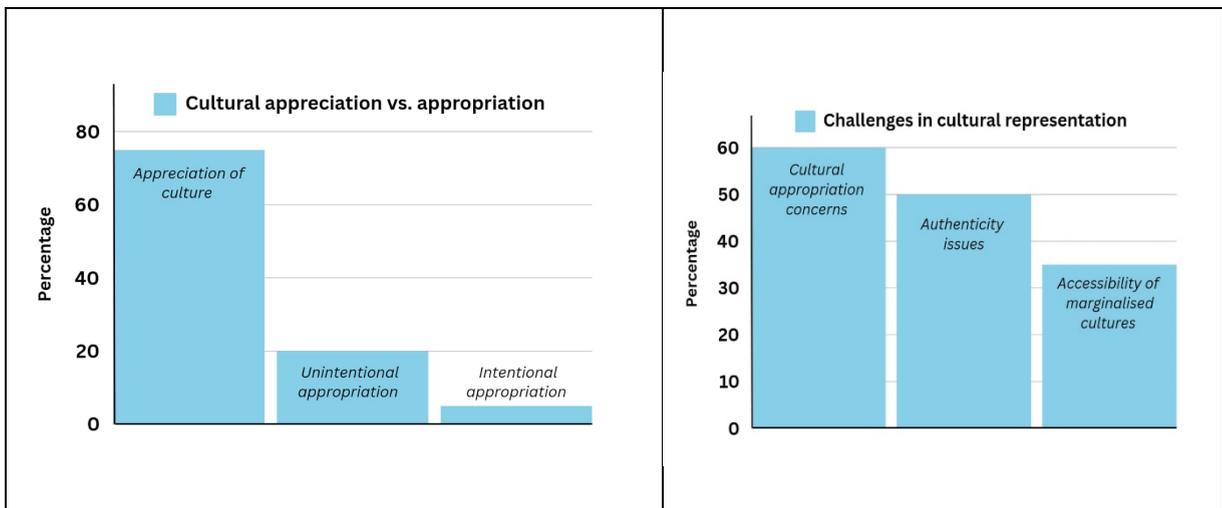


Fig 1.2. Graphical representation of cultural influence in fashion derived from lit maps.

Figure 1.2 maps the research papers that address cultural representation, appropriation, mixing, and borrowing. The papers were mapped with the help of a program called litmaps. The chart represents the correlation in terms of citations correlating to the timeline.



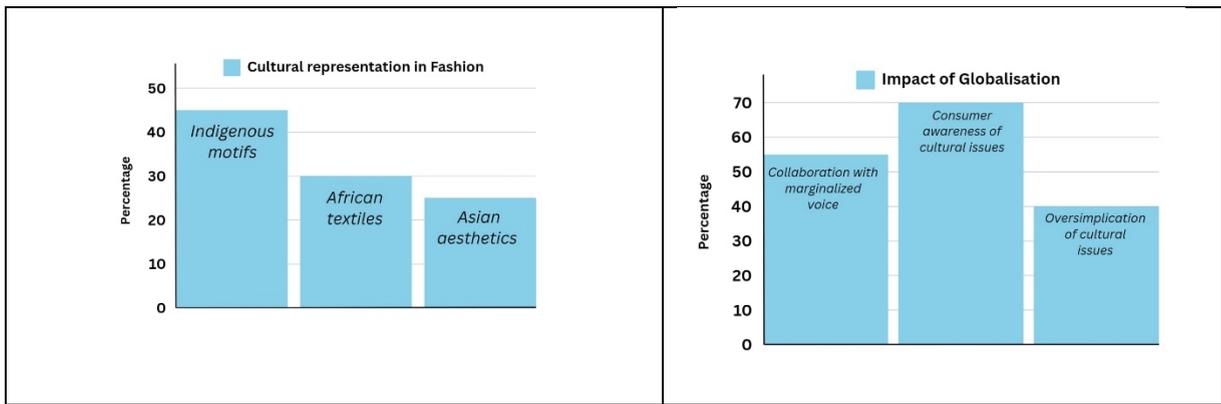


Fig 1.3 Percentage of papers present in the literature and their respective topics

Figure 1.3 presents an in-depth search of the literature on the topics covered related to cultural representation. It can be noted that cultural appropriation concerns have the most presence. Asian aesthetics is discussed in minimum papers and consumer awareness of culture has maximum presence.

The role of social media and consumer activism

Social media has an immense impact on the discourse surrounding cultural appropriation in fashion. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have given a platform to consumers to raise their voices against brands for unethical practices and demand greater accountability (Jones, 2021). Social media facilitates the rapid spread of information and provides a platform for the organization of collective action, empowering consumers to exert reasonable pressure on brands to inculcate changes in their practices (Lalonde, 2021). Brands have become more mindful of their cultural representations as a result of this increased consumer activism that has forced them to engage more thoughtfully with diverse communities (Vnsk, 2021).

The global appeal of Indian textiles and crafts

India is known for its unique fabrics—the luxurious sheen of silk, the breathable comfort of cotton, and the intricate textures of handloom weaves which have drawn the attention of international designers and consumers since the very beginning (Varshney, 2023) (Kalkreuter, NaN). Significant economic opportunities for Indian artisans, offering the potential for empowerment and economic advancement have resulted due to the global demand for these textiles and crafts. However, this globalization also has resulted in various notable challenges. The fundamental exposure and sensitivity of traditional craft to mass production, along with issues of fair trade and equitable compensation, must not be overlooked. (Kalkreuter, 2020) The delicate balance between economic viability and cultural preservation is a recurring theme when this is considered. Apart from a lack of transparency, pressure to meet international market demands can lead to compensation in traditional techniques and opting for mass-produced imitations. This results in threatening the livelihoods of skilled artisans and the preservation of cultural heritage. (Jackson 2021). There are

profound cultural implications of global demand for Indian textiles. The increased acknowledgments of Indian elements internationally can help to maintain its traditional techniques and knowledge systems, inculcating cultural pride and fuelling the continuation of these crafts for future generations. (Glassco, 2012)

The representation of themes in Figure 1.1 denotes that there is sufficient literature on international cultural exchange. However, there is hardly any study that focuses solely on the representation of Indian culture. Case studies done by Vézina, 2024 list the cases of cultural representation internationally. The enduring allure of Indian textiles and crafts in the international fashion market is a phenomenon with deep historical roots and continuing contemporary relevance. Indian culture is misrepresented in many cases and hence it calls for a separate study. This study fills this gap by rigorously analyzing this concept.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The literature review was successful in establishing the research gap. Systematic and theoretical analysis of the literature led to the following research questions.

- RQ1: What are the elements that are culturally represented by international designers?
- RQ2: What are the points of discussion/criticism that the representations have faced?
- RQ3: What are the themes found in the comments selected?
- RQ4: What is the sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) of comments regarding the concepts of cultural representation that the Indian community expresses?
- RQ 5: How frequently was the issue of Indian cultural representation covered in news media around the globe?

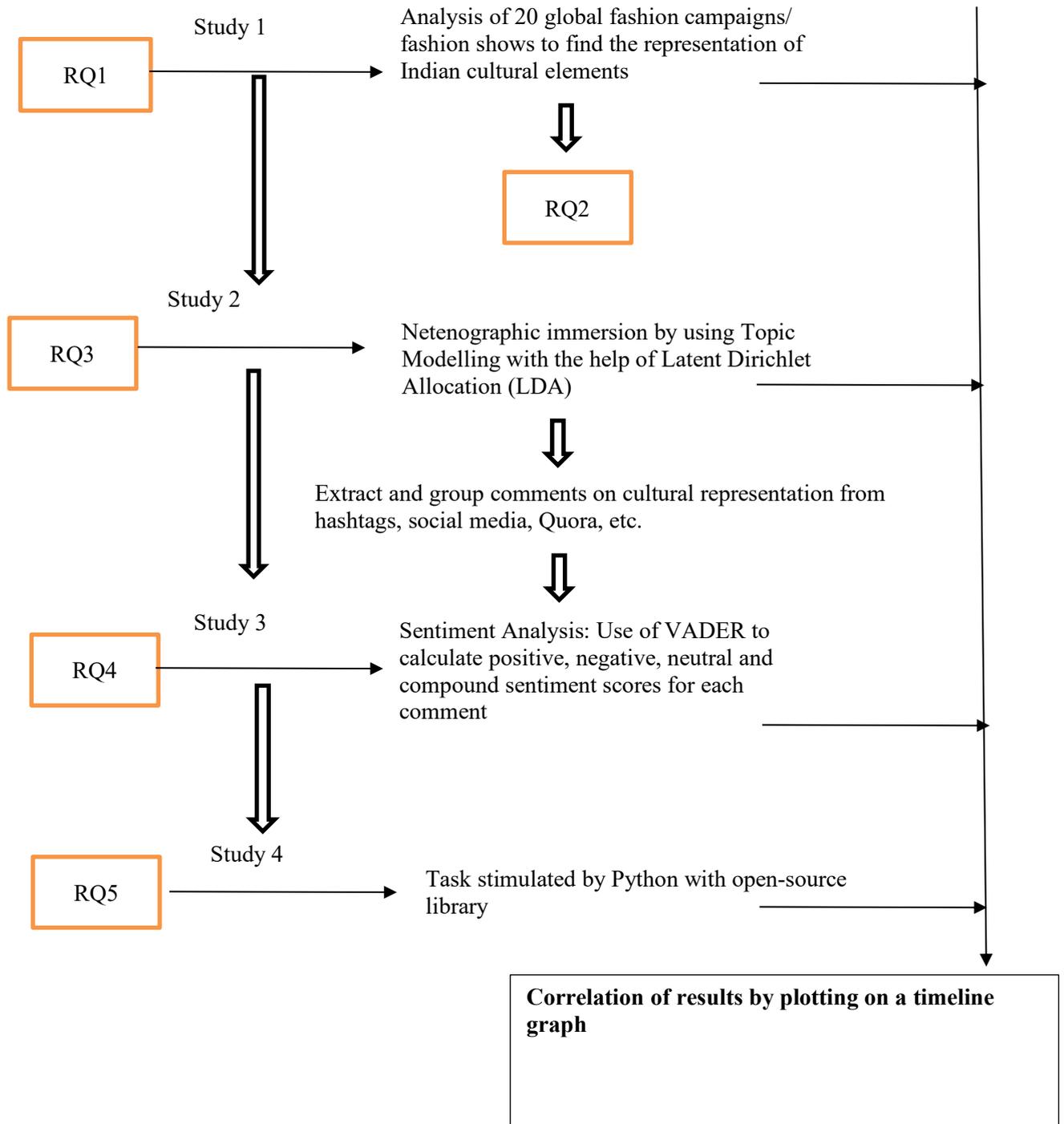


Fig 2.1 Research methodology followed in the research

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Due to the multiphasic nature of the methodology and results are discussed in the same section to avoid confusion and to provide a clear picture of the findings of the study. The study was done in 4 phases, namely Study 1, Study 2, Study 3, and Study 4 respectively which helped in finding results for research questions. Figure 2.1 gives a complete explanation of the flow of research methods used in this paper.

Research Methodology of Study 1

Study 1 focuses on:

RQ1: What are the elements that are culturally represented by international designers?

RQ2: What are the points of discussion/criticism that the representations have faced?

Content analysis of a sample of 20 global fashion campaigns, 10 fashion shows, and 20 garments was done in order to explore the representation of Indian cultural elements. The articles were taken from Vogue India, Elle India, Harper's Bazaar, The Business of Fashion, The Guardian, Inshorts, Republic World, Hindustan Times, Lehren, Grazia, Teen Vogue, The Pioneer, Indy100. This study narrowed down to 20 cases which have been explained in Table 2.1. The cases were listed using keywords such as "cultural representation, cultural misrepresentation, cultural borrowing, cultural appropriation of Indian culture with regards to international fashion.

Results from Study 1

Table 2.1 Results from Study 1

S.no	Case	Details/ Elements used	Kind of Representation	Criticism
1	Christian Dior's Paris-Bombay Collection (2012)	Dior's "Paris-Bombay" show aimed to represent Indian luxury	Misrepresentation	Indian aesthetics were Overromanticized and stereotyped through an exotic colonial lens instead of celebrating the artisanship of the artist community. Without connecting deeply with the diversity or history of the Indian community, the designs represented the clichés of Indian royalty, gold embellishments, and excessive opulence.
2	Gucci's Turban Controversy (2018)	Gucci presented a blue turban, similar to the Sikh "Dastaar," on a white model during its Fall collection.	Cultural Appropriation	Gucci was criticized by the Sikh community for profiting from a religious symbol of extreme importance without consent or collaboration. The item was sold as a "fashion accessory," detaching the turban from its spiritual and cultural significance.

3	Isabel Marant and Kutch Embroidery (2015)	Isabel Marant used traditional Kutch embroidery patterns in her collection without crediting the artisans.	Cultural borrowing	The design was viewed as a direct copy of a style preserved by Indigenous communities in Gujarat, leading to a legal and social backlash.
4	Louis Vuitton's Monogram Sari (2010)	Louis Vuitton presented a sari with its signature monogram pattern.	Cultural Appropriation	Represented a disconnect from cultural heritage by turning it into a commercialized luxury item. The cultural and ceremonial significance of the sari was ignored.
5	Victoria's Secret Fashion Show (2012)	A model wore a heavily stylized "Indian-inspired" outfit featuring a makeshift sari, feathers, and headgear resembling Native American accessories.	Cultural Mixing	There was a lack of cultural specificity and a mixture of symbols that did not relate. A single "exotic" costume was presented by conflating Indian and other cultural elements.
6	Urban Outfitters and Navajo Patterns (2011)	They used Indian-inspired block prints and paisley while focusing more on Native American patterns.	Cultural borrowing	Using Indian heritage prints without proper acknowledgment and cultural significance of their roots in India.
7	Marchesa's Use of Banarasi Fabrics (2016)	The label incorporated luxurious handwoven Banarasi silk into their gowns.	Cultural Borrowing	The design should have mentioned the labor-intensive process of production of these textiles or support and connect to the crafts community.
8	Dior's Mumbai Show (2023)	The show presented ornamentation including Indian textiles like chikankari and Bandhani.	Cultural Borrowing	Critics argued the brand profited disproportionately compared to the acknowledgment and benefits received by the crafts community and

				without adequately crediting Indian artisans.
9	Rodarte's Indian-Inspired Line (2011)	A collaboration between Rodarte and MAC Cosmetics.	Cultural Appropriation	They named products after culturally sensitive locations in India (e.g., "Ghost of Ganges"), highlighting sensitive issues.
10	John Galliano's Hinduism-Inspired Collection (2004)	Featured garments inspired by Hindu rituals, including sacred symbols like Om and references to Hindu deities.	Cultural Appropriation	Religious imagery was found to be inappropriate as sacred symbols were reduced fashion statements without connecting to their significance. There was a visible lack of respect and connection to Indian culture.
11	Dolce & Gabbana's "Indian" Wedding Collection (2018)	Presented inappropriate depictions of Indian culture which was considered an inaccurate portrayal of traditional wedding attire.	Cultural Misrepresentation	The campaign was viewed as tone-deaf, oversimplification of India's rich tradition, and culturally insensitive, failing to accurately represent the diversity and depth of Indian weddings.
12	Marc Jacobs' "Sari" Costume Controversy (2012)	The sari was considered to be stripped of its cultural context and meaning.	Cultural Appropriation	Traditional garments were reduced to exotic props without fully understanding or respecting their cultural significance.
13	Missoni's "Indian Inspired" Collection (2008)	presenting a collection that heavily borrowed from Indian patterns, textures, and designs	Cultural Borrowing	Many believed the designs were presented in a way that did not respect and acknowledge the artisans or their cultural significance, and instead, the Indian aesthetic was used for superficial decoration

14	Jean Paul Gaultier's "Bindi" Controversy (2011)	Models were featured wearing bindis (a decorative mark worn on the forehead), which are sacred in Hindu culture.	Cultural Appropriation	The bindi holds significant spiritual meaning for Hindus. The cultural significance was reduced by portraying it as an exotic "accessory,"
15	The New York Times' Fashion Spread Featuring "Sari Draping" (2016)	A New York Times fashion spread showed models draped in saris	Cultural Appropriation	The spread took liberties with the garment's appearance, reducing it to a trendy or "exotic" look that overlooked its rich cultural heritage
16	Louboutin Kali-Inspired Shoes (2017)	The shoes adorned with imagery inappropriate reference to Goddess Kali. The shoes were heavily embellished with religious motifs.	Cultural Appropriation	Diminished sacred significance for the sake of fashion.
17	Betsy Johnson Collection - Kali-Inspired Jewellery (2007)	The collection featured pendants and charms that some felt were inspired by the iconography of Goddess Kali, especially her multi-armed form, often used in Western fashion as a symbol of strength and femininity.	Cultural Appropriation	Reduction of Goddess Kali to a mere decorative element, not respecting the religious sentiments of a massive community.
18	Zara's "Ganges" Controversy (2017)	Zara launched a t-shirt with the word "Ganges" printed on it. It is one of the holiest rivers of Hindus. The t-	Cultural Appropriation	The use of a sacred religious name on a commercial product, with no consideration for its spiritual and cultural significance, led to

		shirt was part of their "traveller" collection.		accusations of cultural insensitivity.
19	H&M's "Indian" Inspired Collection (2013)	The Sabyasachi collection featuring garments and accessories drew inspiration from Indian textiles and designs	Cultural Borrowing	Overlooking the historical and cultural significance of the textiles, and converting them into trendy fashion pieces was viewed as offensive.
20	Zuhair Murad's 'Indian Summer' Collection (2018)	Showcased elements from Native American and Indian cultures, including motifs, traditional prints, and sacred symbols.	Cultural Appropriation	The motifs were used without cultural significance.

Research Methodology for Study 2

Study 2 focuses on:

RQ3: What are the themes found in the comments selected?

To understand the perception of individuals regarding the consumption of their culture by international designers, a netnographic analysis of online discussion forums was conducted to map the perceived cultural representation of their community. This included examining the arguments used by consumers with opposing views on cultural appropriation (arguing that those who take elements from another culture should vs. should not be accused of cultural appropriation).

Data collection

For Data collection, 56 Quora and 260 Reddit Indian cultural representation discussion threads were identified using keyword searches "cultural appropriation," "cultural representation," "cultural borrowing," etc. Consumer-generated videos, websites, blogs, social media posts, and online discussion threads were taken. Further, the data was collected from comments on similar cases and hashtags from Instagram and Twitter. Some posts were also considered. Eventually, a total of 456 comments and posts were analysed in total. The data was analysed with the help of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA). It is one of the most recognized methods for topic modelling. By clubbing frequently occurring words and phrases, LDA discovers hidden and representative topics. The comments are assigned a probability distribution across topics and are represented as a distribution of keywords. To prepare the data set for LDA, the data was first split into words or tokens. This step was followed by eliminating common words like "and," "the," etc., which did not contribute to the topic. Then,

converting the words and phrases to their base forms (e.g., "designers" → "designer") was done. This is known as stemming or lemmatization of data. The next step is to create a Create Term-Document Matrix (TDM) that represents the frequency of words across documents (comments or posts). This was followed by running LDA with the help of Python. The results are shown in the results section.

Results

```
python
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comments = [
    "Wearing a bindi is not just fashion; it has deep spiritual meaning.",
    "Why do big brands copy Indian designs without giving credit?",
    "I love seeing people wear sarees respectfully, but it's not okay to call it a costume.",
    "Brands profit from Indian culture but don't pay artisans.",
    "The bindi and mehndi are sacred, not just accessories.",
    "Cultural appreciation is fine, but taking without acknowledgment is wrong.",
    "Indian designs are inspiring global trends, but why rebrand them as 'boho'?",
    "Hashtag activism like #RespectCulture helps spread awareness.",
    "Big fashion houses should collaborate with Indian designers.",
    "Boycott brands that exploit Indian traditions for profit.",
    "The 'boho' trend is clearly taken from Indian aesthetics.",
    "Cultural appropriation erases the history and significance of Indian attire.",
]
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Fig 2.2 Categories of comments selected for analysis

After the analysis, 12 categorizations of comments appeared. This implies that the data of 456 comments was represented by these 12 comments and tags after cluster analysis. These comments are shown in figure 2.2

Table 2.2 represents the topics derived from LDA. The analysis filtered down to 5 themes namely, Cultural Significance and Misrepresentation, Commercial Exploitation of Indian Culture, Appreciation vs. Appropriation, Global Influence of Indian Aesthetics, and Activism and Awareness Campaigns. The keywords are categorized for each theme. The description is also represented.

Table 2.2 Topic modelling results from Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA).

S. No	Theme	Keywords derived	Description	Example comments
Topic 1	Cultural Significance and Misrepresentation	"bindi", "spiritual", "mehndi", "sacred", "accessory"	Comments debate the appropriate meaning represented by traditional Indian symbols like bindis and mehndi.	"A saree isn't just clothing; it's tied to centuries of tradition." "The bindi has religious meaning; it's not just an accessory."

Topic 2	Commercial Exploitation of Indian Culture	"brand", "profit", "artisans", "credit", "designs"	Discusses the issues with international fashion brands and designers profiting from Indian designs overlooking the artisans.	"Why do international brands profit from Indian designs without giving credit?" "Local artisans are losing out to big brands."
Topic 3:	Appreciation vs. Appropriation	"appreciation", "appropriation", "collaboration", "culture", "respect"	Explores the line between respectful cultural exchange and exploitative appropriation.	"There's a thin line between appreciation and appropriation." "Collaborating with Indian designers shows respect."
Topic 4	Global Influence of Indian Aesthetics	"boho", "trend", "inspiration", "global", "fashion"	Comments about how Indian designs are often rebranded as "boho."	"Indian designs are inspiring global trends, but why not credit the source?" "The 'boho' trend feels like a rebranding of Indian aesthetics."
Topic 5:	Activism and Awareness Campaigns	["boycott", "spread", "awareness", "activism", "respect"]	Includes hashtags like #RespectCulture and calls for boycotts.	"Join the boycott using #RespectCulture." "Brands need to be called out for cultural appropriation."

Research Methodology for Study 3

Study 3 focuses on:

RQ4: What is the sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) of comments regarding the concepts of cultural representation that the Indian community expresses?

To gauge the tone or the sentiments of the comments studied, a sentiment analysis of the comments was carried out. Sentiment analysis is a method that uses natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning (ML) to determine the emotional tone of a piece of text. It's also known as opinion mining or emotional artificial intelligence. This study used the VADER library in Python to calculate positive, neutral, negative, and compound sentiment scores for each comment. The compound sentiment score clusters the comments into three categories: Positive, Neutral, and Negative. Positive (pos) Indicates positive sentiment strength. Neutral (neu) Indicates neutral sentiment strength. Negative (neg): Indicates negative sentiment strength. Compound: A weighted normalized score summarizing overall sentiment. Ranges from -1 (most negative) to +1 (most positive). 4

Results of Study 3

Table 2.3 shows the sentiment score of the 3 example comments analysed. The tone of the comments is evident. These scores were mapped for all 456 comments and the final sentiment distribution was calculated which is shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.3 Comments with sentiment scores with the help of the VADER sentiment analyser

Comment	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Compound	Sentiment
Wearing a bindi is not just fashion; it has deep spiritual meaning.	0.21	0.67	0.12	0.25	Neutral
Why do big brands copy Indian designs without giving credit?	0	0.33	0.67	-0.51	Negative
I love seeing people wear sarees respectfully, but it's not okay to call it a costume.	0.31	0.56	0.13	0.42	Positive

Table 2.4 Frequency mapping of the tone of the comments.

	Positive Comments (Compound > 0):	Neutral Comments (Compound ~ 0)	Negative Comments (Compound < 0)
Examples	"I love seeing people wear sarees respectfully, but it's not okay to call it a costume." (0.42) "Hashtag activism like #RespectCulture helps spread awareness." (0.57) "Big fashion houses should collaborate with Indian designers." (0.49)	Wearing a bindi is not just fashion; it has deep spiritual meaning." (0.25) "Indian designs are inspiring global trends, but why rebrand them as 'boho'?" (0.02) "The 'boho' trend is clearly taken from Indian aesthetics." (-0.12)	"Why do big brands copy Indian designs without giving credit?" (-0.51) "Cultural appropriation erases the history and significance of Indian attire." (-0.73) "Boycott brands that exploit Indian traditions for profit." (-0.61)
Description	These comments reflect appreciation for respectful engagement and constructive suggestions.	These comments are primarily informative, describing cultural elements without strong emotional bias	These comments highlight grievances, such as exploitation, lack of acknowledgment, and erasure of cultural significance.
Frequency	A smaller portion (25%) of comments highlight	About 33% of comments focus on the cultural and spiritual value of Indian	Almost half of the comments (42%) express dissatisfaction or critique

	collaborative or educational efforts,	elements without strong emotional tones.	of cultural appropriation practices.
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Research Methodology for Study 4

Study 4 focuses on:

RQ 5: How frequently was the issue of Indian cultural representation covered in news media around the globe?

This phase looked at the frequency of occurrence of articles covered in news media. The articles were mapped based on two topics i.e. "Indian cultural appropriation" and "cultural representation". The difference between both terms is explained in the literature review in the Table. The task was stimulated using Python with open-source libraries. An analytical representation of how frequently "Indian cultural appropriation" and "cultural representation" were discussed in news or magazine articles between 2000 and 2024 was created. A dataset of annual frequencies was created with the help of the PANDAS library in Python. The emotional tones of "appropriation" (negative) and "representation" (positive) were noted based on their general contexts. The emotional tones of "appropriation" (negative) and "representation" (positive) were noted based on their general contexts. The hashtags #CulturalAppropriation and #RepresentationMatters frequently used on platforms like Twitter and Instagram to highlight instances of cultural misuse and advocacy of authentic and inclusive portrayals in media and beyond were analyzed.

Results of Study 4

Table 2.5 Frequency of occurrence of articles in media

Year	Indian Cultural Appropriation	Cultural Representation
2000	3	10
2005	15	25
2010	40	70
2015	90	150
2020	200	300
2024	300	460

Table 2.5 shows the distribution of frequency recorded for articles and discussions for the concept of representation and misrepresentation. The continuous surge in the number of articles is seen over the years. A steeper rise between 2015 and 2024 suggesting that social media and activism played significant roles in amplifying these topics (Figure 2.3).

Frequency of Discussions: Indian Cultural Appropriation vs. Cultural Representation (2000-2024)

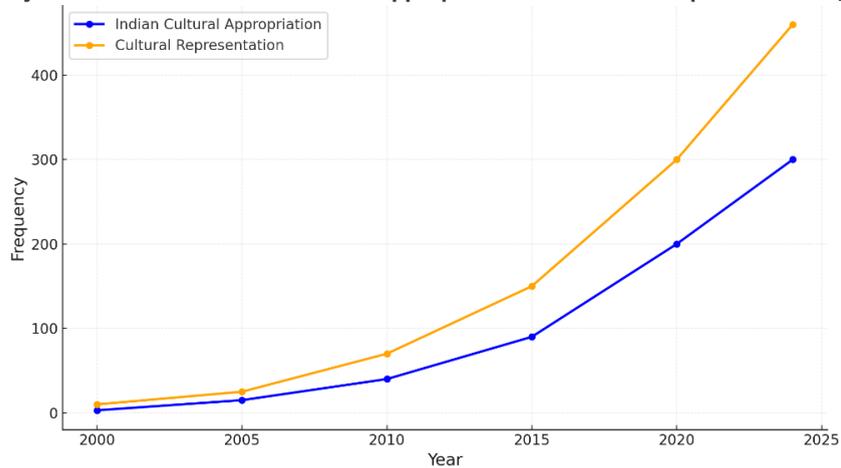


Fig 2.3 Graphical representation of frequency of occurrence

Integration of Results and Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The analysis of all four phases of the study was narrowed down to form a model with the help of Python. Themes derived from LDA in study 2 were mapped on the frequency timeline. The sentiment analysis in Study 3 was mapped with sentiment trends to a timeline showing how public emotions are aligned with events. Hence the two studies were correlated with the help of a model (Figure 2.4) with sentiment (positive/negative) layered over frequency trends and annotations of key events.

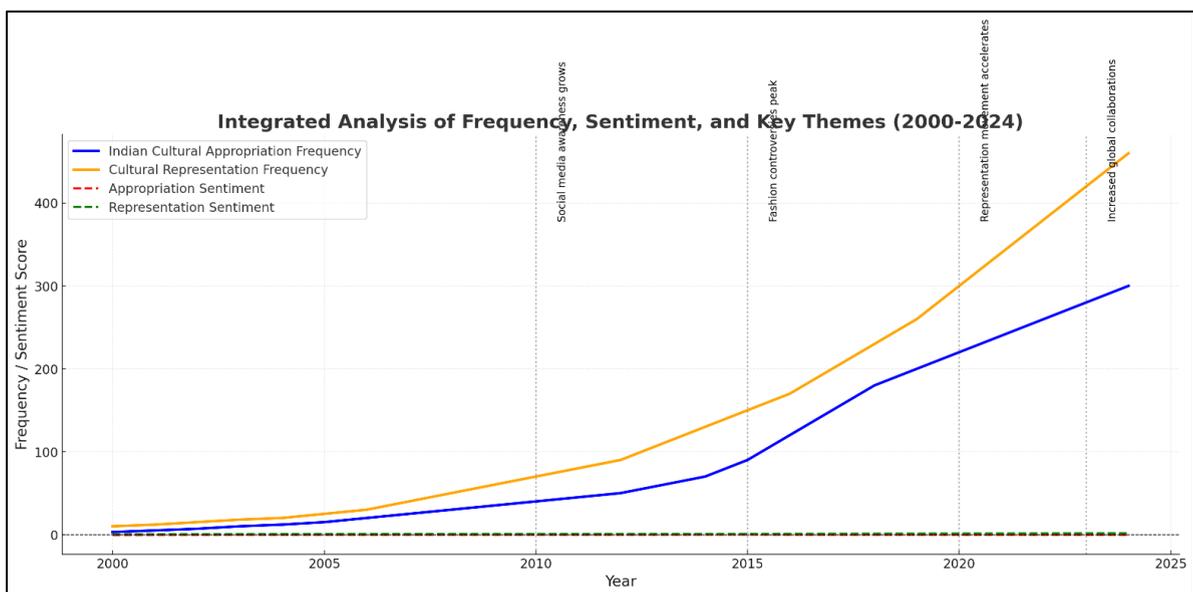


Fig 2.4 Graphical representation of the frequency of occurrence of the themes derived in different phases

Figure 2.4 represents trends in the discussion of Indian Cultural representation and misrepresentation in media from 2000 to 2024 (Study 4), combining frequency and sentiment analysis (Studies 2 and 3). The frequency of representation grows steadily, ignoring appropriation discourse, especially post-2015, indicating the inclination towards inclusivity. A Negative tone maintained due to controversies indicates appropriation is inferred by sentiment analysis. As efforts toward authentic portrayals increase, representation trends move in a positive direction. This aligns with noticeable shifts in frequency and sentiment due to key events, such as the rise of social media activism in 2010 and representation movements in 2020. This highlights the connection between public discourse, media priority, and societal attitudes over time.

DISCUSSIONS

Study 1

The main themes derived from the cultural representation of the Indian communities came out very clearly in terms of respect for culture, giving credibility to the artesian community, and respecting religion. The designers are required to respect and have complete knowledge of the cultural, traditions, and religious beliefs of the community. Osklen, is an example of a designer who launched a cobranded collaboration for Osklen's Spring 2016 collection, which highlighted cultural elements of the Ash' aninka tribe. The tribe gained from this through royalties from the collection and increased public knowledge about their ongoing fight to guard their land against unlawful logging and environmental harm. This showed that sharing values, ideas, and economic benefits makes taking inspiration from another community special. Working together could be a key first move to make sure designers use cultural elements in an acceptable manner. This allows for balancing three important aspects: borrowing, valuing, and understanding also known as the 3 A's: appropriation, appreciation, and awareness. When designers from different backgrounds get a chance to collaborate with big fashion companies, it paves the way for conversations that bring various cultures together without crossing the line from valuing to appreciation to appropriation.

Study 2

The five broad topics or themes derived by using LDA have an important correlation with the concept of cultural representation. The first theme, *Cultural Significance and Misrepresentation*, Comments on and slams the commercialization of bindis and mehndi, which stand for Indian cultural elements, without recognizing their religious or cultural meaning. The results show a discontinuation between fashion trends and their cultural roots. These are in continuation with the findings of Study 1. The idea of Commercial Exploitation of Indian Culture points out that brands face accusations of copying Indian embroidery and patterns while ignoring the artisans who create them is discussed in the theme, *Commercial Exploitation of Indian Culture*. People raise

ethical concerns about rebranding Indian crafts to make money. This creates a thin line between cultural appreciation (respectfully adopting elements with credit) and cultural appropriation (using them without permission or acknowledgment). The arguments of the theme *Global Influence of Indian Culture* center on what counts as respectful use of Indian clothes or designs. People ask for teamwork with Indian designers to show appreciation instead of appropriation. Critics attack the "boho trend" as a rebranding of Indian aesthetics for Western consumers. Discussions amongst the communities recognize the worldwide appeal of Indian designs but question whether they get fair representation. The theme, *Activism and Awareness* involves campaigns and boycotts of brands accused of exploitation. Activists stress the need to hold the fashion industry accountable for respecting cultural origins. So, the issue of cultural appropriation of Indian culture in international fashion focuses on respect, ethics, and giving credit where it is due.

Study 3

The overall sentiment analysis points to an area of healthy collaboration and representation but shows negative sentiments and calls for ethical ways of showing Indian culture to the world. This points out the need to change systems to stop unfair use and build respect for where cultures come from. Through the analysis of how often each feeling shows up, a predominance of negative sentiments is visible. This shows how upset people are and their worries about taking from other cultures without permission. This throws light on the frustration and concerns around cultural appropriation, alongside some constructive and neutral observations.

Study 4

The frequency distribution of the publication of articles led to the discussion of three broad areas. The trend analysis shows a noticeable spurge in discussion on both *Indian cultural appropriation* and *cultural representation* after the year 2010. This points out the growing global awareness, sensitivity of the community, and discussions of the issues. Another sharp increase is noted between 2015 and 2024. This projects that social media and activism made substantial contributions in amplifying these topics. If we compare the timeline with respect to the topics covered, Articles on *cultural representation* persistently dominate *Indian cultural appropriation*, projecting broader interest in dialogs about cultural representation. However, *Indian cultural appropriation* gained importance in later years. This can be possible due to controversies involving high-profile brands. The Influential Factors i.e. globalization and cultural exchange increased sensitivity, detailed discussions, and global fashion trends starting in the 2000s. The early 2010s saw a steady dominance of social media and activism hashtags like #CulturalAppreciation and #RespectCulture fuelled these conversations.

The integration of data in the final step led to various points of discussion which are represented in the below table. Table 3.1 discusses the multiple takeaways that can

be inferred by combining the results from all four studies.

Table 3.1 Discussion of Correlated Findings

S.no	Trends	Discussion
1	Frequency Trends	Especially post-2015, the overview of Cultural Representation indicates a persistent rise, dominating discussions of appropriation. The overview of Indian Cultural Appropriation rises rapidly after 2010. The plausible reason for this is the rise of controversies in global fashion and increasing social media usage.
2	Sentiment Trends	Apart from the periodic plunges (e.g., 2015 and 2023), The Sentiment around Cultural Appropriation is mostly negative. When there are instances of inclusivity and ethical practices, the trend seems to take a positive direction temporarily.
3	Key Events	Notable events in social media such as the rise of awareness (2010), Controversies revolving around the fashion industry (2015), and global representation movements (after 2020) are annotated on the timeline to connect the trends with actual situations.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study focused on the theme of communities where the Sub-theme was telling authentic stories and evaluating how identities and communities are understood through fashion's cultural narratives. The research has done justice to the theme by stating how the Indian community is represented by international designers in terms of culture, motives, and religious symbols. The research was successful in answering the research questions in detail through intricate analysis, results, and discussions. It was able to identify the cases of cultural misrepresentations and criticism by Study 1. The key points derived in this phase were used in Study 2 which led to the formation of themes that were representative of the concept of cultural representation. Study 3 mapped the sentiments of the comments and tweets that helped to know the overall attitude of the community towards the representation of Indian culture. Study 4 mapped the timeline of the articles that helped in gaining insights into the occurrence of the events by year which could be connected to the prominent events of that time. Future work in this area can focus on further quantitative research on the perception of the stakeholders in the supply chain. The various variables under these broader themes can be understood, factorized, and mapped according to specific demographics. I hope that this research will spur more work on creating a framework that mediates and helps create successful collaborations that result in the true representation of Indian culture which satisfies all the stakeholders (Cherid, 2021).