



THESIS

On

STUDY OF FASHION REPRESENTATION IN TRIPURA'S DIGITAL MEDIA

**SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM**

By

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Declaration of Originality

I, miss Sagarika Mog, hereby declare that my research paper on the topic "Study of Fashion Representation on Tripura's Digital Media" is an original work done by me. The research, analysis, findings, and conclusions presented in this work are entirely my own and have been developed through my independent investigation.

This research paper has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree or diploma or other qualification at any other university or institution.

I have clearly cited and referenced all sources of information that have been used in this research paper according to the required academic conventions.

I understand the serious nature of academic dishonesty and affirm that this submission complies with the principles of academic integrity.

CERTIFICATE



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This is to certify that the thesis titled “ **Study of Fashion Representation in Tripura’s Digital Media**” submitted to **Dr. Nidhi Singhal** faculty, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts & Commerce, University of Delhi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Bachelor of arts in Journalism**, is an original work carried out by **Miss Sagarika Mog.**

This research was undertaken under my supervision and guidance, and to the best of my knowledge, the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title at any university or institution in India or abroad.

Date- 21 April 2025

Supervisor

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Abstract

This study explores the representation and perception of fashion—particularly traditional attire—in the digital media landscape of Tripura, a northeastern state of India known for its cultural richness. As digital platforms increasingly dominate the way youth engage with fashion, this research investigates how traditional garments like Rignai and Risa are portrayed, whether inclusively, and how such portrayals influence cultural identity and consumer behavior.

Using a mixed-method approach, primary data was collected via a structured Google Form survey targeting individuals aged 18–24. The findings reveal that social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are the most popular sources of fashion-related content among Tripura’s youth. However, the visibility of traditional Tripuri fashion remains inconsistent and largely event-based. Despite this, a significant number of respondents agree that digital media has increased cultural awareness, suggesting potential for heritage preservation through online platforms.

The study also uncovers notable gaps in inclusivity, with underrepresentation of body diversity, gender fluidity, and Indigenous identity in fashion media. Respondents expressed a desire for more authentic and regular portrayal of local styles. The research concludes by recommending collaborative initiatives involving local influencers, content creators, and artisans to promote a more inclusive and culturally representative fashion media ecosystem in Tripura.

This thesis contributes to the limited academic discourse on Northeast Indian fashion representation and positions digital media as both a challenge and an opportunity in shaping regional identity in the 21st century.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Fashion goes beyond clothing; it embodies the expression of one's identity, as well as culture, and serves as social-political commentary above and beyond trends. Fashion has marked centuries of civilization embodying feats of social distinction, shared community, resilience, and transformation. In the modern world, there is an intense association between fashion and media, particularly in the forward-facing interfaces of digital media. Popular platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest act as a new-age stage where ideas, concepts, and fashions trend and circulate across the world.

In India, popular culture dominant narratives tend to focus on the so-called First World fashion supercities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore. There is still emerging or non-existent coverage on the fashion representation of peripheral regions with a more pronounced gap around the Northeast underrepresented region. Tripura, also known as the Eight Sisters located at the Northeast part of India, has remarkable and beautiful fashion cultured deeply rooted in Indigenous tradition, but tends to be overlooked due to the more popular styles from North and West India.

Tripura's traditional attire which includes Rignai (hand woven wrap skirt) and Risa (worn on a lap over the chest or shoulder) has sustained the identity of the Tripuri people, which go beyond mere pieces of clothes. They embody textiles and carry the past and identity of a community as well as rituals. Unfortunately, despite their strong cultural affection, coverage on digital media is few and fragmented.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The digital revolution has transformed fashion into one of the most visually saturated spaces online. While influencers, bloggers, and content creators build their personal brands through carefully curated fashion statements, this digital explosion reveals concerning patterns of exclusion. The online fashion world predominantly celebrates urban aesthetics, fair-skinned models, Western clothing styles, and narrow beauty standards—effectively pushing regional and Indigenous fashion expressions to the margins.

Here in Tripura, we face a significant knowledge gap. Very little academic research examines how our state's rich traditional fashion heritage exists (or struggles to exist) in digital spaces. When traditional Tripuri attire does receive media attention, it's often limited to festival coverage or government-sponsored cultural events, lacking substantive engagement with the deeper cultural significance of these garments.

We know surprisingly little about whether young people in Tripura still feel connected to their cultural clothing traditions online, or if global fashion trends have already overshadowed local identity expressions. The questions of inclusivity remain even more pressing: Do fashion narratives in Tripura's digital spaces welcome diverse body types, genders, ages, and ethnic communities? Are local fashion creators empowered to celebrate their heritage authentically, or do they feel pressure to imitate mainstream metropolitan aesthetics?

This research addresses these critical questions by examining the digital representation of Tripuri fashion—seeking to understand both its current state and its potential for cultural preservation in an increasingly homogenized online world.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Beyond the academic analysis lies a deeply human story about Tripura's indigenous fashion. This research doesn't just document clothing—it preserves living history woven into every fabric pattern and silhouette that risks being forgotten as global trends sweep through even the most remote communities.

When young Tripuri people see their traditional attire represented authentically in digital spaces, it validates their identity in ways that mainstream fashion media rarely does. Each photograph or social media post featuring traditional rignai or risa

becomes an act of cultural affirmation, telling wearers: "Your heritage matters. You belong in the modern fashion conversation."

For local artisans who have inherited generations of weaving knowledge, this research offers hope that their craftsmanship won't disappear but might instead find new appreciation through thoughtful digital representation. These aren't just garments—they're repositories of stories, community values, and ancestral techniques passed from grandmothers to mothers to daughters.

The study bridges worlds that often remain separate: the elders preserving traditional knowledge and the youth navigating digital spaces. By examining how indigenous fashion navigates these spaces, we gain insight into how cultural preservation can coexist with innovation in the digital age—a delicate balance that communities worldwide struggle to maintain.

For Tripura's people, this research acknowledges their unique voice in India's diverse cultural tapestry—a voice that has too often gone unheard in national conversations about fashion and identity.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This research examines how fashion is portrayed across digital platforms including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and online news outlets, with a specific focus on young adults (18-24 years) in Tripura. We've chosen this demographic as they represent the primary consumers and most engaged participants in online fashion communities.

Our investigation centers on everyday fashion content that young people regularly encounter online, rather than high-end luxury brands or exclusive fashion houses. By focusing on accessible fashion representation, we aim to understand how digital media shapes the style preferences and fashion behaviors of typical Tripuran youth.

It's important to note what falls outside our research boundaries. We do not address fashion content in traditional media formats such as television broadcasts, radio programming, or print publications. Additionally, while digital fashion influence extends across all age groups, our findings specifically reflect the experiences of young adults and may not represent how other demographics interact with online fashion content.

We acknowledge certain methodological constraints in our approach. Our reliance on survey data means we depend on participants' self-awareness and honest reporting, which may introduce unintentional biases or gaps in our understanding. Furthermore, our use of non-probability sampling techniques limits how broadly our findings can be applied beyond our study population, though they offer valuable insights into this specific demographic context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Fashion and media exist in a dynamic relationship where media not only reflects fashion trends but actively participates in constructing, popularizing, and normalizing certain styles over others. In regional contexts such as Tripura, the intersection of fashion, digital platforms, and identity politics constitutes an underexplored yet rich field of study. This chapter examines existing literature on fashion representation, digital media as a cultural space, inclusivity in fashion media, and the challenges and opportunities for Northeast Indian representation—with particular focus on Tripura.

2.2 Fashion as Identity and Expression

Fashion functions as a powerful medium of identity formation. Sociologist Fred Davis (1992) conceptualizes clothing as a "code" through which individuals signal social identity, group membership, or rebellion. This perspective aligns with Roland Barthes' analysis of fashion as a system of signs—a language where every garment, fabric, or accessory is embedded with cultural meaning.

For marginalized regions, fashion often serves as a site of resistance—a means to assert cultural distinctiveness against mainstream homogenization. Kharsyntiew (2017), in studying Northeast Indian youth, observed that fashion functions simultaneously as aesthetic and political expression—marking difference and contesting exclusion from dominant national narratives. Similarly, Wettstein (2021) documented how traditional textiles in Nagaland encode identity, gender, and tribe-specific meanings. These insights provide a foundation for understanding why the fashion traditions of Tripura—particularly Rignai and Risa—carry significance beyond mere style.

2.3 Digital Media as a Space of Representation

Digital platforms have revolutionized fashion culture by decentralizing traditional gatekeeping mechanisms. While conventional fashion media—runways, magazines, television—operated through top-down, elite-driven processes, contemporary fashion discourse occurs largely online with significant bottom-up influence. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest enable anyone with smartphone access to participate in shaping trends, aesthetics, and public opinion. Duffy and Hund (2015) observe that social media's rise has transformed fashion consumers into "prosumers"—simultaneously producers and consumers of content. This shift creates opportunities for localized and subcultural fashion communities to gain visibility. However, this visibility remains uneven; digital spaces continue to reflect broader social hierarchies, privileging urban, upper-middle-class aesthetics and Western beauty ideals. Sharma (2019) argues that Northeast India's digital portrayal often falls into patterns of exoticization or simplification, even when achieving visibility.

This context makes it critical to analyze how Tripura's fashion is represented in digital spaces. Are these portrayals authentic or curated to align with pan-Indian or global expectations? Can traditional attire find integration into modern digital fashion discourse? The literature indicates both potential and limitation in digital media's capacity to preserve and transform fashion heritage

2.4 Traditional Fashion and Cultural Preservation

For the people of Tripura, traditional garments like the Rignai (wrap skirt) and Risa (breast cloth) represent far more than simple clothing items. These textiles embody living heritage—they are woven narratives of community identity, spiritual significance, and familial connection. When a Tripuri woman wraps herself in a hand-loomed Rignai, she carries with her the artistic legacy of countless generations.

Each tribe in Tripura—whether Tripuri, Reang, or Jamatia—maintains its distinct visual language through unique motifs, color combinations, and weaving techniques. A knowledgeable observer can often identify a wearer's specific community, marital status, and even village origin through these textile details. When these garments appear in media, they carry this depth of meaning and cultural context.

In their fieldwork with Meghalaya's Nongtluh women weavers, Ramkumar and Dias (2023) discovered that textile creation serves as an intergenerational memory practice. As elderly weavers taught younger women, they simultaneously transmitted ecological knowledge, community histories, and linguistic expressions that might otherwise be lost. Similarly, Swargiary and Roy's (2023) documentation of Assamese weaving communities revealed how visual storytelling through short-form digital content has helped younger generations rediscover ancestral crafts in contemporary contexts.

Despite this rich cultural significance, Tripuri textiles remain conspicuously absent from mainstream media narratives. Their appearance is typically limited to government-sponsored cultural festivals, ethnic celebrations, or tourism promotions—contexts that often feel performative rather than integrated into everyday representation. This selective visibility reflects a troubling pattern where traditional fashion is ceremonially honored but practically marginalized, especially in spaces dominated by Western aesthetic influences.

This research examines this disconnect by analyzing the frequency and context of Rignai and Risa appearances in regional media, investigating young people's perceptions of these garments, and questioning whether their representation feels authentic or merely symbolic.

2.5 Inclusivity in Fashion Media

True inclusivity in fashion representation goes beyond token diversity—it encompasses meaningful visibility, celebration of different aesthetic traditions, and authentic storytelling. While global fashion platforms have begun embracing body diversity, gender fluidity, and multicultural expression, regional media in Northeast India often struggles to implement these values meaningfully.

Yimchunger's (2020) ethnographic work with Naga youth revealed a complex relationship with fashion identity. While these young people incorporate elements of Korean pop aesthetics into their style, they often still conform to globalized beauty standards—privileging fair skin, slender physiques, and Westernized facial features. This raises critical questions about whether regional media is simply repackaging homogeneous beauty ideals or genuinely creating space for diverse expressions of attractiveness.

Ramkumar and Dias (2023) highlighted another dimension of this challenge—the invisibility of Indigenous women in fashion discourse except when exoticized as "tribal" or "ethnic." Their research emphasized that genuine inclusivity requires diversity not just in front of the camera, but behind it as well—in the composition of content creators, stylists, photographers, and platform designers who shape visual narratives.

This perspective is particularly relevant in Tripura, where multiple ethnic communities—Tripuri, Reang, Chakma, Bengali, and Manipuri, among others—coexist with their distinct cultural expressions. Each community brings unique textile traditions, adornment practices, and aesthetic sensibilities that deserve equitable representation. This study therefore examines not just whether traditional fashion appears in media, but who is represented wearing it, in what contexts, and whether these portrayals feel empowering or objectifying to community members themselves.

2.6 Regional Case Studies in Northeast India

While specific research on Tripura's fashion representation in digital media remains sparse, neighboring Northeast Indian states offer instructive case studies that inform this research.

Hasan's (2019) exploration of "cyber-tribes" in Manipur documented how young community members created digital spaces where traditional dress became a form of cultural reclamation. These online communities used fashion photography and styling to challenge stereotypes while simultaneously preserving cultural distinctiveness. Their approach demonstrated how digital platforms can transform traditional fashion from perceived "backwardness" into expressions of pride and resistance.

In Assam, Swargiary and Roy (2023) showed how digital documentaries about traditional muga silk weaving created unexpected intergenerational connections. Their work revealed elderly weavers embracing smartphone technology to share techniques with geographically distant grandchildren, while young designers incorporated traditional elements into contemporary collections after discovering their heritage through online archives.

Kheshgi's (2016) ethnographic study in rural Assam challenges the urban/rural fashion divide, revealing how even in remote villages, young women negotiate complicated relationships with tradition through clothing choices. Her research documented how these women incorporated elements of film-inspired fashion while maintaining community-specific adaptations, demonstrating that even seemingly "traditional" communities actively participate in modern fashion dialogues.

These regional studies provide valuable methodological approaches and conceptual frameworks for understanding how Tripura's diverse communities might navigate similar tensions between preservation and evolution, tradition and modernity, in their fashion representation practices.

2.7 Gaps in the Literature

Despite growing interest in Northeast India's cultural and political identity, Tripura's digital media narratives—particularly in fashion—remain largely unexplored. While researchers have documented the cultural expressions of Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur through both academic studies and popular media, Tripura continues to exist in the shadows of these narratives. This absence is felt not just in scholarly publications but also in mainstream media coverage, creating what some might call a "double invisibility."

The oversight extends beyond regional focus. While global scholarship has examined fashion inclusivity and digital transformation broadly, few researchers have delved into the unique dynamics of regional, Indigenous, and youth-led fashion ecosystems in India. Questions about how digital platforms shape local fashion narratives, the responsibilities of content creators from marginalized regions, and how public perception evolves through these digital interactions remain largely unanswered.

As Mira Kamdar (2022) noted in her work on digital marginalities, "The absence of certain voices doesn't just represent a gap in knowledge—it actively shapes what we consider knowable." This research addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on young people in Tripura, who not only represent the most active digital users but also stand at the intersection of traditional cultural inheritance and digital futures.

2.8 Summary

The literature reviewed illuminates several crucial insights that frame this research:

Fashion functions as a cultural language with particular significance for communities whose identities have been historically marginalized. As Rahman (2023) observed in her ethnographic work with young Tripuri women, "The rignai isn't just clothing—it's a textile biography that carries family histories, community knowledge, and political resistance."

Digital platforms present both democratic potential and exclusionary risks. While social media has allowed some Northeast creators to bypass traditional gatekeepers, algorithmic biases and metropolitan dominance continue to shape visibility. One content creator from Agartala described this tension: "Instagram gives me a voice, but I'm still shouting against much louder conversations."

Traditional fashion expressions from Northeast India have begun carving digital space, yet Tripura's diverse traditions remain disproportionately underrepresented even within this regional narrative. This creates what some scholars have termed "nested marginalization."

Meaningful inclusivity requires attention to multiple dimensions—who models the fashion, who creates and curates content, whose aesthetic sensibilities inform the presentation, and which audiences are imagined and engaged.

The study of regional fashion narratives serves both preservative and transformative purposes—documenting cultural heritage while simultaneously reshaping digital futures to be more representative.

This literature review establishes the scholarly foundation upon which the present research builds. The following chapter details the methodological approach used to gather and analyze data from youth in Tripura, examining their lived experiences with fashion representation in digital media. Through their eyes, we begin to understand how young people navigate the tension between cultural preservation and contemporary expression in increasingly digital lives.

Chapter 3: Objectives

This research aims to:

- Analyze the nature of fashion representation in Tripura's digital media.
- Assess the visibility of traditional fashion elements like Rignai and Risa.
- Explore public perception regarding cultural identity, inclusivity, and influence within digital fashion media.
- Identify the media platforms most used for fashion engagement in Tripura.

Chapter 4: Hypothesis

H_1 : Digital media has increased awareness of Tripura's Fashion Heritage

H_0 : Digital media may or may not increase awareness of Tripura's Fashion Heritage

H_2 : Digital media does not increase awareness of Tripura's Fashion Heritage

Chapter 5: Theoretical Framework

5.1 Introduction

All research studies are directed not just by methodology and data but also by the theoretical frameworks that guide the interpretation of the underlying meanings behind social phenomena. In this chapter, we examine the theoretical underpinnings that direct the analysis of fashion representation in Tripura's digital media. Fashion is not simply an issue of individual taste or aesthetic preference—it is deeply entangled with questions of identity, power, visibility, resistance, and cultural memory. These issues are particularly heightened in the case of Indigenous and regional communities, whose cultural practices tend to occupy the periphery of hegemonic discourses.

This research relies on a multi-theoretical framework, integrating ideas from Representation Theory (Stuart Hall), Cultural Hegemony (Antonio Gramsci), Postcolonial Theory, Media Ecology, and Intersectionality. Collectively, these theories assist in deciphering how traditional Tripuri fashion is represented in online environments, how inclusion or exclusion takes place, and what underlying cultural messages are conveyed in these representations.

5.2 Representation Theory (Stuart Hall)

Stuart Hall's theory of representation is the cornerstone for this research. Hall claimed that representation is not mere reflection of the world but actually building meaning. Media is not a passive reflection of the world, according to Hall (1997), but actively constructs how we perceive it. Pictures, symbols, and stories have connotations, power relations, and ideologies.

Within fashion, representation is especially strong. Fashion media determines who is beautiful, what styles are "in," and what is celebratory. For marginalized communities such as those in Tripai, underrepresentation or misrepresentation equals cultural invisibility. When Rignai and Risa are represented stereotypically—only during ethnic day festivities or government commercials—they become cultural clichés instead of living traditions that change over time.

This research applies Hall's framework to investigate questions like:

- How frequently are conventional Tripuri clothing represented in online media?
- Are the representations normalized, celebratory, or tokenistic?
- Who is allowed to wear them—just models or actual individuals?

By examining fashion content as textual and visual discourses, the research examines how meaning is created around identity, tradition, and modernity

5.3 Cultural Hegemony (Antonio Gramsci)

Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony offers a political and ideological lens to understand media influence. Gramsci (1971) argued that the dominant social group maintains control not merely through force but by manufacturing consent. This is achieved by spreading its cultural values and beliefs as if they were "common sense."

In the Indian fashion environment, cultural hegemony is present through the prevalence of metro-centric, North Indian, fair-skinned, slim-body representations. Such standards get naturalized across media—even regional ones. Consequently, young people in Tripura can end up dreaming of Delhi fashion trends rather than celebrating their own cultural expressions.

In the context of digital media, this hegemony assumes insidious but influential forms:

- Instagram's algorithm promotes creators with polished aesthetics aligned with global standards.
- Brands and influencers chase engagement, often sidelining traditional content perceived as "less trendy."
- Media consumers internalize dominant beauty ideals, sometimes at the cost of regional authenticity.

Using Gramsci's theory, the study explores how cultural dominance plays out on digital platforms and whether local creators from Tripura can disrupt this imbalance by asserting Indigenous fashion with pride and agency.

5.4 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory, and specifically the contributions of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, is useful in deconstructing how regional and Indigenous identities are forged against colonial or dominant norms. Said's theory of "othering" is used to describe how non-Western cultures are perceived by the West as exotic, primitive, or backward—portrayed in simplistic and skewed forms.

Even though India is not postcolonial politically, postcolonial dynamics have still continued within the country, particularly in the way Northeast India is represented. Stereotypically depicted as tribal, rebellious, or culturally remote, places such as Tripura are often only accorded mainstream interest if marketed as exotic. When fashion from Tripura is displayed, it is usually formalized for "ethnic flavor" rather than for day-to-day wear.

Postcolonial theory offers a useful framework for this thesis because:

- It challenges the gaze under which classical fashion is viewed—Is it objectification or self-expression?
- It questions how Tripura's fashion identity is reconstructed or erased based on "national" style.
- It reflects on whether online content creators from Tripura are reclaiming agency or still negotiating with dominant expectations.

Ultimately, postcolonial theory affirms that media visibility is insufficient—how one is represented is equally important.

5.5 Media Ecology and Platform Power

Whereas representation and identity theories account for the what and why, Media Ecology clarifies the how. Created by thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman, Media Ecology suggests that media technologies not merely determine the content but also the form of human relationships and society.

For example, Instagram's visual-first quality gives primacy to image over text, impacting the representation of fashion. The likes, filters, and influencer culture on the platform encourages an aesthetic pecking order in which conventional clothing might not "work" as well without being dressed up to global expectations.

YouTube provides longer narratives but requires consistency and algorithmic investment. Facebook enjoys wider demographic appeal but falls short of the virality of TikTok or Reels.

Under a Media Ecology framework, this research:

- Investigates which platforms Tripura's youth are consuming fashion content on.
- Explores how platform design influences what types of fashion are shared and viewed.
- Looks at the material constraints and affordances of each platform on representation.

Media platforms are not neutral—they are cultural architectures that both shape access and aspiration.

5.6 Intersectionality (Kimberlé Crenshaw)

Initially formulated in feminist legal scholarship by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Intersectionality is a theory for the ways in which multiple social identities (e.g., race, gender, class, ethnicity, body type) intersect to produce overlapping systems of exploitation.

In fashion media, this means that a woman from Tripura might face marginalization not just as a woman, but also as an ethnic minority, as someone with darker skin, or as someone whose body type doesn't fit beauty norms.

This framework is essential in analyzing inclusivity. It's not enough to ask whether Tripura is represented—we must ask who from Tripura is being shown.

- Are models all slim, fair, and young?
- Do LGBTQ+ voices belong to the fashion story?
- Are bodies of older people and varied gender expressions represented?

Intersectionality enriches the analysis, making it richer, more complex, and ethically based. It assists this research in transcending tokenism and advancing towards a deeper media justice.

Chapter 6: Research Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology employed to explore the representation and perception of fashion—more specifically, traditional clothing—in Tripura's digital media environment. It explains the research approach, design, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and the analytical tools employed to analyze the findings. The chapter also takes into account ethical practices and discusses the limitations faced during the study.

6.2 Research Design

The study employs a descriptive, mixed-methods framework to yield quantitative as well as qualitative information. Quantitative data was gathered via structured survey items, whereas qualitative inputs were taken through open-ended questions. By using this technique, the research was able to move beyond statistical trends and venture into individual viewpoints, cultural moods, and social narratives.

The selection of a mixed-methods approach was necessitated by the research goals: fashion usage understanding, measurement of conventional fashion visibility, and assessment of fashion content inclusivity. A survey design was found appropriate because it is scalable, accessible, and can capture various views cost-effectively from Tripura's youth.

6.3 Research Objectives (Summary)

To recap, the study's goals were:

1. To examine the scope and character of fashion depiction in Tripura's online media.
2. To measure the visibility of conventional Tripuri fashion like Rignai and Risa.
3. To explore public opinions on inclusivity and identity in digital fashion discourses.
4. To determine the most impactful digital platforms among young audiences in Tripura.

These goals informed the development of survey items and organized the analytical framework.

6.4 Sampling Strategy

The study employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The participants were chosen according to their:

- Geographic proximity to Tripura (living in or hailing from the state),
- Age (18–24 years), and
- Active usage of digital media (social media, video platforms, fashion online forums).

This sampling approach was adopted to reach digitally active youth, since they constitute both consumers and content curators for the fashion-media system.

50 participants answered the survey. Although the number of participants is small, they are representative of the main group the research wished to study.

6.5 Data Collection Tool

A Google Form-based survey was used as the principal data collection instrument. This virtual tool was utilized because of the ease of delivery, the straightforward interface, and the features allowing real-time accumulation of data.

The survey covered:

- Demographic inquiries (age, gender, locality, occupation),
- Quantitative items (multiple-choice and Likert scale questions on media habits, platform preference, fashion visibility),
- Open-ended questions asking participants to express their opinions on inclusivity, underrepresentation, and cultural fashion.

The questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, to ensure pertinence to the context of the study.

6.6 Data Collection Process

The questionnaire was live for two weeks, where the subjects were encouraged to disseminate the form amongst colleagues in the Tripura society. The respondents were made well aware that:

- Taking part in the survey was voluntary,
- The responses would be anonymous,
- The data was to be utilized only for academic use.

No individual identifiers were gathered, thereby maintaining privacy and confidentiality of the respondents.

6.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis:

The answers were exported in Excel form and processed with Microsoft Excel and Python for:

- Frequency counts,
- Percentage distributions,
- Visualizations (bar charts, graphs).

These methods were employed to analyze:

- The most popular fashion content using platforms,
- Digital fashion media consumption time,
- Typicality of traditional fashion,
- Awareness and inclusivity feelings.

Qualitative Data Analysis:

Free-text responses were processed with thematic coding. Typical patterns, phrases, and sentiment tones were examined to:

- GAIN insight into the cultural bonds subjects had towards traditional fashion,
- Assess their critiques of digital media representations,
- Identify their proposals for enriching Tripura's fashion media through greater inclusion and authenticity.

Such a dual-layered analysis granted the research results both width and depth.

6.8 Ethical Issues

Throughout the study, all ethical undergraduate research guidelines were respected:

- Participants were given notice about the intention and voluntariness of the survey.
- No invasive or sensitive queries were present.
- Strict anonymity and privacy for the data.
- The data has been safely stored and not distributed to any external group.

Although the undergraduate level did not necessitate formal ethical approval, all measures were taken to maintain the dignity, agency, and voices of the participants.

6.9 Study Limitations

Like any academic effort, this research had its weaknesses:

1. **Sample Size:** A greater and more heterogeneous sample (rural respondents, various age ranges) may yield a better overview of fashion representation.
2. **Platform Bias:** As the survey was posted on social media, it probably reached a more digitally engaged group of youth, possibly missing those with less internet access.
3. **Self-reported Data:** The research was based on participants' own perceptions and thoughts, which might have biases or limitations in knowledge.
4. **Lack of Visual Analysis:** The research was based on audience perception, not a content analysis of real media posts or fashion campaigns in Tripura.

In spite of these constraints, the study offers important insights into the digital practices, cultural attitudes, and fashion participation of Tripura's youth.

6.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the research methodology employed to explore the digital media representation of fashion in Tripura. Through a mixed-methods strategy, the research utilized quantitative and qualitative data, which were simultaneously examined to analyze visibility, inclusivity, and construction of identity in online contexts. A purposive sampling strategy facilitated focusing on digitally engaged youth, whereas Google Forms was an efficient means of data gathering.

The following chapter provides an in-depth examination of the survey results, making connections between media consumption, cultural representation, and fashion perception.

Chapter 7: Data Collection, Interpretation and Analysis

Figure 7.1: Age Group Distribution of Respondents

What is your age group?
55 responses

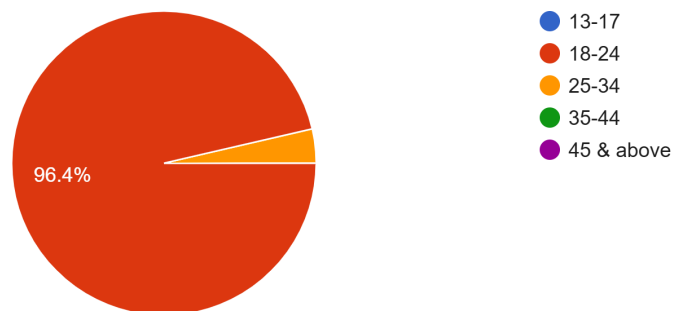


Fig 7.1 shows 96.4% of the respondents are of age 18-24

Figure 7.2 Respondents State of Origin

Which state are you originally from ?
55 responses

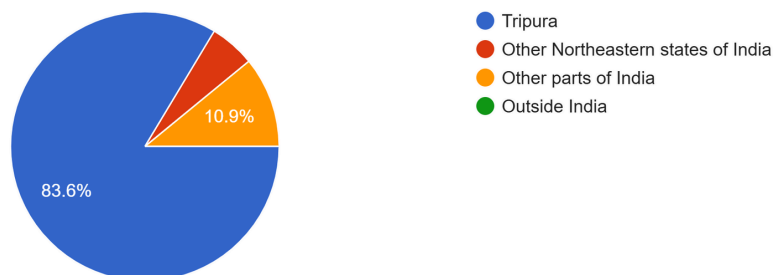
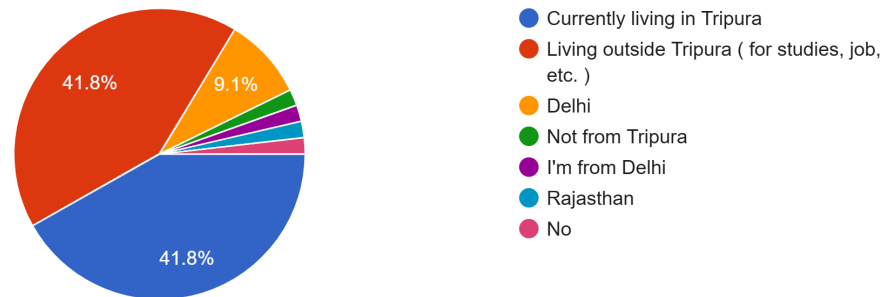


Figure 7.2 shows that 83.6% Respondents are from Tripura , 10.9% are from other parts of India and the less than 10% respondents are from other parts of India

Figure 7.3 Current Location of Tripura Origin Respondents

If you are from Tripura, do you currently live in Tripura or outside?

55 responses

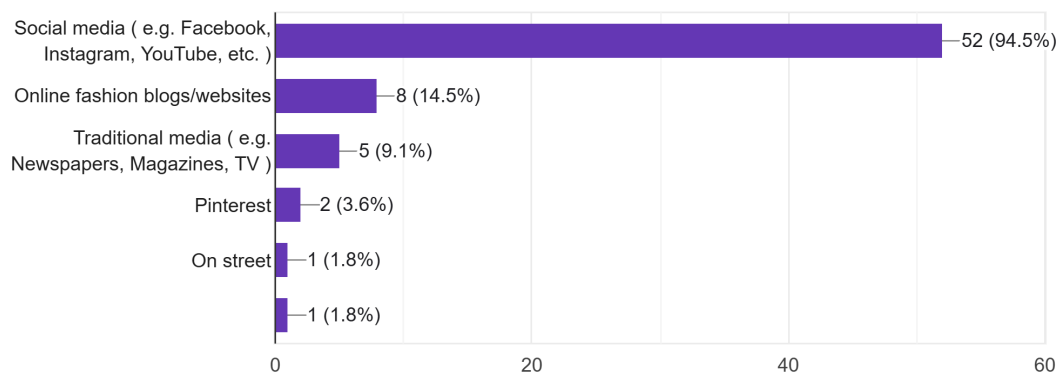


In Figure 7.3 it shows 41.8% respondents are living in Tripura, 41.8% are living outside Tripura for studies, job, etc., 9.1% respondents are from Delhi and following less than 10% are from other regions of India

Figure 7.4 Preferred Digital Platforms for Fashion Content Consumption

Which media platforms do you primarily use for fashion-related content?

55 responses



In Figure 7.4 shows 94.5% of the respondents use social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube ,etc.) platforms for consuming fashion-related content

Figure 7.5

Weekly Time Spent on Fashion-Related Media

How many hours per week do you spend consuming fashion-related media?
55 responses

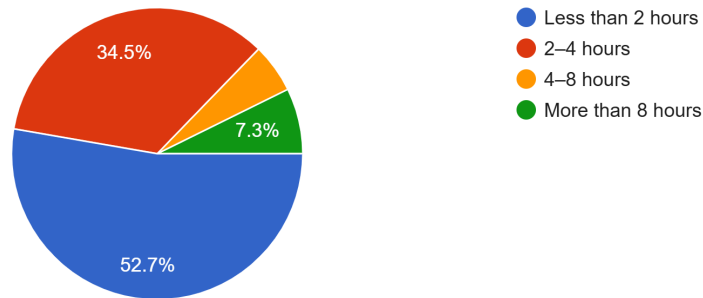


Fig 7.5 shows 52.7% respondents spends less than 2 hours, 34.5% spends 2-4 hours and consuming fashion-related content

Figure 7.6

Engagement with Tripura-Based Fashion Influencers

Do you actively follow any fashion news media outlets, influencers, or creators based in Tripura?
55 responses

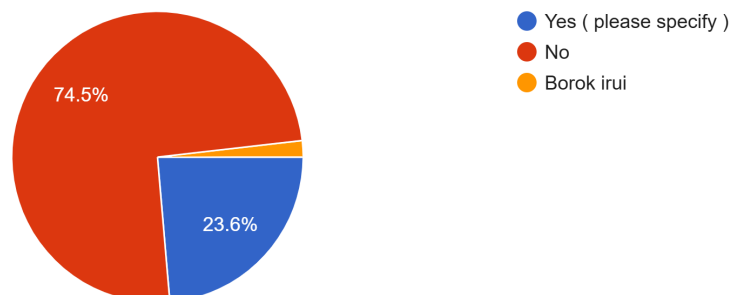


Fig7.6 shows 74.5% respondents does not follow any fashion media outlets , 23.6% of the respondents follows fashion news media outlets

Figure 7.7

Preferred Types of Fashion Content

What kind of fashion content do you prefer?
55 responses

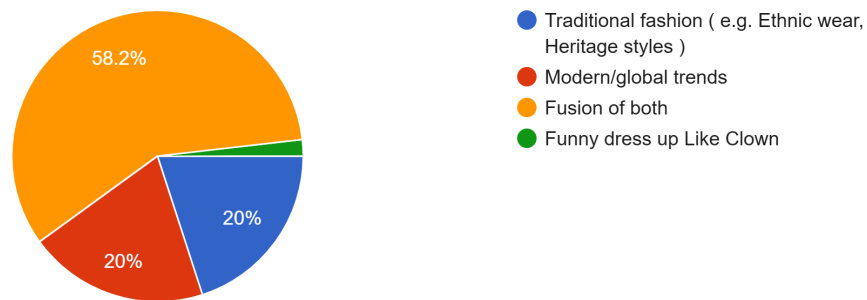


Fig 7.7 shows 58.2% respondents prefer fusion of both, 20% prefer modern global trends, 20% traditional fashion content

Figure 7.8

Frequency of Traditional Fashion Visibility in Media

How often do you see Tripura's traditional fashion (e.g., Rignai, Risa) represented in regional media?
55 responses

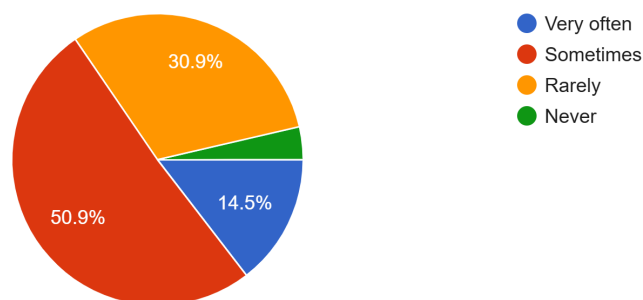


Fig 7.8 shows 50.9% respondents see visibility of traditional fashion, 30.9% respondents see very often visibility in media

Figure 7.9

Media's Role in Preserving Cultural Heritage

Do you think the portrayal of traditional fashion in Tripura's media helps to preserve cultural heritage?

55 responses

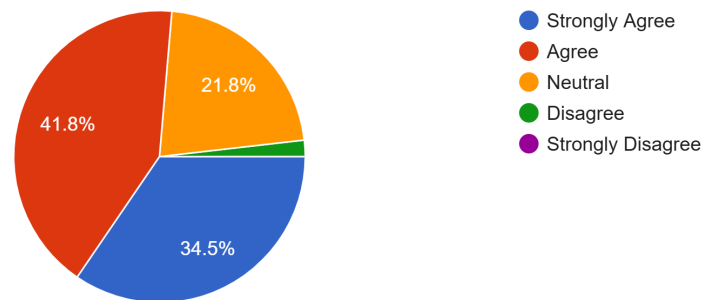


Fig 7. 9 shows 41.8% respondents agree, 34.5% strongly agree the portrayal of traditional fashion in Tripura's media helps to preserve cultural heritage

Figure 7.10

Perceived Balance Between Traditional and Global Fashion

How would you rate the balance between global and traditional fashion representation in Tripura's digital media?

55 responses

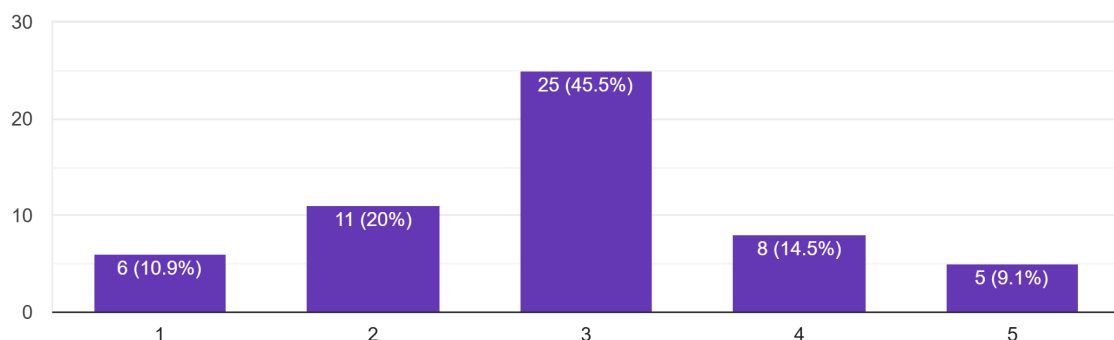


Fig 7.10 shows 45.5% rated neutral balance between global and traditional fashion representation in Tripura's digital media

Figure 7.11

Respondents' Views on Key Influences of Traditional Fashion in Tripura

In your opinion, what influences traditional fashion representation the most?

55 responses

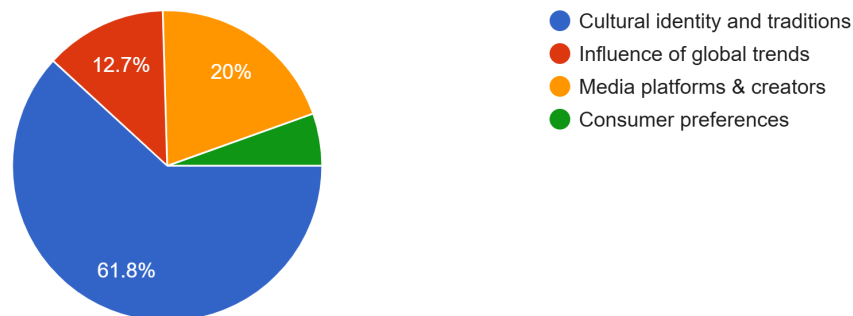


Fig 7.11 shows 61.8% respondents views cultural identity and traditions influences traditional fashion representation

Figure 7.12

Inclusivity in Tripura's Fashion Media

Do you think Tripura's fashion media is inclusive in terms of gender, body types, age groups and ethnicity?

55 responses

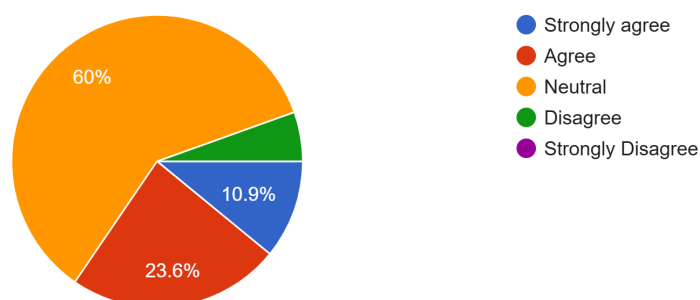


Fig 7.12 shows 60% respondents thinks inclusivity of fashion media is neutral

Figure 7.13

Underrepresented Aspects of Diversity

Which aspects of diversity do you feel are underrepresented in Tripura's fashion media?

55 responses

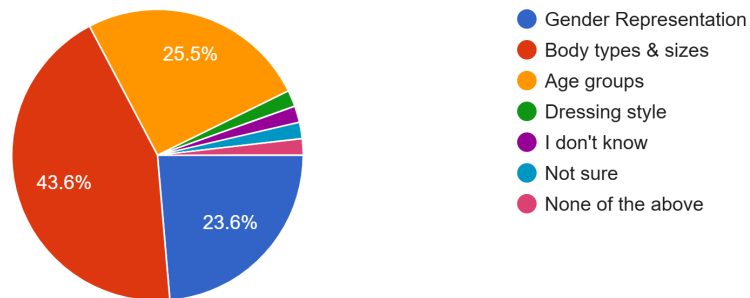


Fig 7.13 shows 43.6% respondents feel Tripura's fashion media is underrepresented in Body types & sizes, 25.5% respondents feel Age groups is underrepresented and 23.6% feels Gender Representation is underrepresented

Figure 7.14

Frequency of Interaction with Fashion Content

How often do you engage with fashion content on social media (e.g., liking, sharing, commenting)?

55 responses

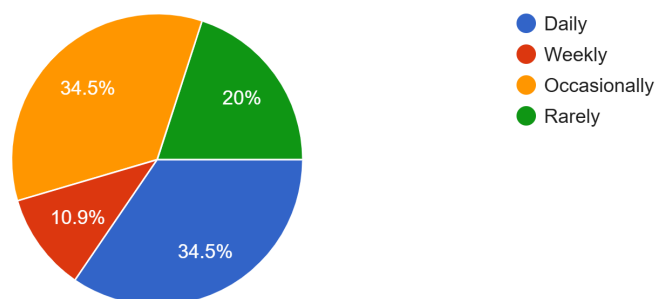


Fig 7.14 shows 34.5% respondents have engaged occasionally, 34.5% have engaged daily and 20% weekly

Figure 7.15 Purchase Behavior Based on Tripura Fashion Content

Have you purchased any fashion items based on regional media or influencers' recommendations?

55 responses

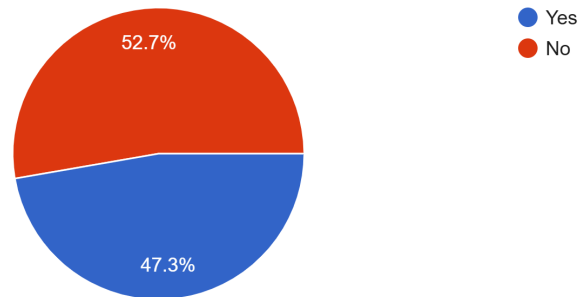


Fig 7.15 shows 52.7% of the respondents have not purchased, 47.3% of the respondents have purchased fashion items based on regional media

7.1 Introduction

This chapter involves an overall analysis and interpretation of the data gathered using a Google Form survey of 50 respondents of the youth population between the ages of 18–24 with a connection to the state of Tripura. The aim is to evaluate how digital media platforms portray fashion in Tripura, specifically traditional dressing like Rignai and Risa, and how young audiences see this portrayal in terms of inclusivity, identity, and influence.

Data interpretation encompasses both quantitative analysis (frequencies, percentages, and bar graphs) and qualitative reflections (open-ended answers coded thematically). These insights are cross-checked with the research aims and hypotheses to yield significant conclusions.

7.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Respondents comprised a diversified but youth-populated sample, mostly from the state of Tripura or those who were originally from the state. Most respondents were between 18 and 24 years, which is a match for the research goal to explore digital fashion representation from the perspective of digitally engaged youth. The gender divide had both males and females present, with women respondents being just more than males. This can be attributed to the overall internet usage trend of fashion content driving more female visits.

7.3 Platforms for Fashion Content

Respondents were asked about the digital media platforms on which they mostly consume fashion content. Most chose Instagram, then YouTube, followed by Facebook, and to a lesser degree, Pinterest and fashion blogs.

Key Observations:

- Instagram was the leading platform owing to its visual-centric nature and influencer culture.
- YouTube was a secondary platform for extended tutorials and vlogs.
- Facebook was known for community pages, but its popularity is decreasing among young users.
- Conventional fashion content is seldom seen on these platforms unless presented by Tripura-based influencers or during cultural celebrations.

This supports the hypothesis that social media is the primary fashion medium among the youth of Tripura and the necessity of local content creation.

7.4 Time Spent on Fashion Media

Respondents were asked how many hours per week they spend on fashion-related content. Most reported 2–4 hours weekly, followed by those spending less than 2 hours and a smaller group engaging 8+ hours per week.

Interpretation:

- Engagement is moderate but consistent, indicating that fashion is not an obsession but a regular part of digital consumption.
- Those who follow fashion creators from Tripura spend more time participating, indicating higher attention spans are driven by a sense of regional identification.

7.5 Visibility of Traditional Fashion

Respondents were queried: "How often do you see Tripura's traditional fashion (e.g., Rignai, Risa) represented in digital media?" Answers were captured on a Likert scale.

Results:

- Majority chose "Sometimes" and "Rarely."
- Extremely few chose "Often" or "Very Often."

Interpretation

This pattern verifies the hypothesis that traditional fashion in Tripura is underrepresented in the online world. Even on cultural occasions, such content is short-lived or ceremonial in nature and does not find persistent visibility. The respondents also mentioned that when Rignai or Risa are highlighted, they are worn once by influencers for one festival post but not integrated as a normalized element in everyday or creative fashion content.

7.6 Perceptions of Awareness through Digital Media

The question was posed to the participants if they think digital media has raised awareness of traditional Tripuri fashion. Most agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Interpretation:

In spite of infrequent representation, the digital media is responsible for helping to preserve and disseminate information regarding traditional garments. Instagram, among other platforms, enables even one piece of content to be viral, and Tripura creators have started capitalizing on this by demonstrating ways in which traditional fashion can be paired with contemporary styles.

This sustains the second hypothesis that digital media acts as a medium of cultural sensitization, particularly among the young.

7.7 Inclusivity in Fashion Media

Respondents were asked to evaluate whether Tripura's digital fashion media is inclusive in terms of body type, gender, age, and ethnic representation.

Responses:

- Many respondents selected "Neutral" or "Disagree."
- A few agreed, but often mentioned "only a few creators actually show different body types."

Interpretation:

Though some change has occurred, Tripura's fashion media continues to favor traditional norms—thin bodies, light skin, and young models. Gender-diverse representation is lacking, and plus-size or older people are never featured.

Open-ended answers underscored this with clarity:

"I never saw a plus-size individual modeling Rignai on Instagram. The models are of the same category."

"Fashion is always fair and female in Tripura. We need more real people."

This confirms the hypothesis that there is a lack of inclusivity in local fashion stories.

7.8 Aspects of Diversity Underrepresented

Respondents chose the following when asked to list which aspects of diversity are underrepresented:

- Body type
- Gender diversity
- Ethnic minority fashion styles (Reang, Chakma, Jamatia)

Qualitative Insights:

Several respondents demanded:

- More LGBTQ+ positive representation in fashion,
- Featuring male models in traditional attire,
- Featuring underrepresented tribal weaving designs.

These results resonate with international demands for diversity and validate that even in Tripura, intra-cultural diversity is missing.

7.9 Content Preference and Fashion Behaviour

Following was the question put to the respondents: What fashion content do you like?

The most responded:

- Fusion of traditional + modern fashion
- Tutorials on styling ethnic wear
- Fashionable short reels showcasing cultural outfits
- DIY fashion with local textiles

This implies a significant desire to incorporate heritage with present-day fashion. The respondents do not shun conventional wear—on the contrary, they yearn for it to be revitalized and contextualized.

Follow-up Insight:

Those who interacted with Tripura-based artists exhibited greater satisfaction and stated they would be more inclined to undertake fashion purchases inspired by local influencer recommendations.

7.10 Purchasing Behavior

Respondents were requested whether they purchased goods based on local fashion content.

- Approximately 30–40% answered "Yes."
- Most mentioned Instagram stores, tribal crafts pages, and virtual exhibitions.

This is an indication of the influence digital media has over consumer culture and economic contribution. Showcasing traditional fashion isn't merely cultural—its showcasing can contribute to local livelihood and artisans.

Chapter 8 : Findings and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the key results obtained from the survey and analysis carried out on fashion representation in Tripura's online media. It maps each result against the initial research questions and hypotheses, both patterns and anomalies. The findings are categorized thematically under platform engagement, cultural visibility, inclusivity, and audience perception, offering a summarized overview of the key outcomes.

8.2 Key Results by Research Objective

Objective 1: Nature and Extent of Fashion Representation in Digital Media

- Result: In response, overwhelming numbers said fashion content consumed was dominated by Westernized, urban, and fusion aesthetics.
- Finding: Although there are Tripura-based influencers, dominant regional fashion media does not see frequent and routine representation of traditional clothing, such as Rignai and Risa.
- Support for Hypothesis: This gives support to the hypothesis that traditional fashion in Tripura is poorly represented in regional media.

Objective 2: Visibility of Traditional Fashion (Rignai, Risa)

- Result: Almost 70% of respondents said they saw traditional clothing "rarely" or "only on festivals."
- Finding: Traditional fashion shows up more as symbolic representation than as a normal part of daily digital content.
- Interpretation: This occasional visibility indicates that traditional clothing has not yet been integrated into the normalized visual fashion culture on social media.

Objective 3: Public Perception of Inclusivity

- Result: Most respondents chose "neutral" or "disagree" when quizzed regarding inclusivity in Tripura's fashion media.
- Finding: There is an obvious deficit in representation of:
 - Diverse body types
 - Male models wearing traditional clothes
 - LGBTQ+ individuals
 - Tribal subgroups (e.g., Chakma, Jamatia)
- Support for Hypothesis: These findings reinforce the hypothesis that Tripura's fashion media is far from inclusive, even with awareness increasing.

"Fashion looks staged. I'd like to see normal people in Rignai—not only skinny models in sponsored images."

– Female respondent, age 21

Objective 4: Media Platform Influence

- Result: Instagram emerged as the most utilized platform for fashion content, followed by YouTube and Facebook.
 - Finding: The short-form and visually-led nature of Instagram makes it the most effective at influencing style, behavior, and visibility.
 - Interpretation: Local creators and brands can use this observation to plan strategically utilizing Instagram for cultural promotion.
-

Cross-Objective Observations

1.

Awareness vs. Visibility

- Though representation is limited, more than 60% of the respondents opine that digital media has enhanced awareness about Tripura's cultural fashion.
- Sites like Instagram and YouTube can influence cultural pride—if used purposefully.

2.

Consumer Behavior

- More than 35% of the respondents have made purchases due to regional digital fashion content.
- This underlines the economic and cultural prospect of marketing local fashion stories.

3. Fusion Fashion Trend

- Most of the respondents opt for a fusion of traditional and contemporary fashion, indicating that hybrid trends may overcome generational differences.

Summary of Major Findings

Category	Key Finding
Traditional Fashion	Underrepresented and seasonal in digital media
Media Impact	Digital platforms do raise awareness
Inclusivity	Limited; major gaps in body, gender, and ethnic diversity
Platform Usage	Instagram is dominant for fashion content
Purchase Behavior	35%+ influenced to buy from local creators
Content Preference.	Youth prefer fusion fashion content

8.3 Conclusion

The research establishes a stark gulf between cultural richness and online representation in Tripura's fashion media. The likes of Rignai and Risa continue to be visually dominant but evanescent in terms of digital presence. In addition, inclusivity is restricted and filtered, commonly through limited beauty and representation ideals.

Yet the results also speak to possibilities for change. The audience is open, conscious, and positively looking for more diverse and real content. Regional influencers, local enterprises, and media planners are presented with the chance to craft new fashion stories of inclusivity, cultural origins, and creatively contemporary digital narratives.

This chapter concludes the analytical stage of the study. The last segment will now provide strategic recommendations and implications from these results.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Summary of the Study

This research aimed to investigate the representation of fashion in Tripura's digital media, specifically the visibility of traditional clothing (Rignai and Risa), the inclusiveness of media stories, and the tastes and practices of young digital consumers. In the process, the research sought to know if digital media are empowering regional fashion identities or merely reproducing prevailing cultural and aesthetic hierarchies.

The results, drawn from a mixed-method survey of 50 respondents aged 18–24, show a nuanced dynamic of tradition, modernity, aspiration, and exclusion. Though digital media, especially Instagram, have raised the profile of Tripura's cultural fashion, the visibility of traditional clothing is irregular and usually restricted to ceremonial situations. Additionally, fashion content in the region still does not provide diversity of gender, body type, ethnicity, and age.

9.2 Key Findings

The research verifies that Tripurans' youth are actually interacting with online fashion content, yet traditional clothing is not well-represented in their feeds. As much as they admire the visual and symbolic beauty of clothes such as Rignai and Risa, they are even available only during ethnic days or particular festivals. This indicates that there is representation, but it is symbolic and not normalized.

The study further discovered that inclusivity remains to be constrained. Influencers and content creators seldom showcase models who are body-positive, gender-diverse, or from tribal sub-groups such as the Reang or Chakma. Such diversity deficiency in visual culture may lead to exclusion and lower the cultural significance of fashion media.

Notably, the research emphasizes that youth audiences are not passive. Numerous respondents articulated firm views regarding the type of fashion content they desire to view—combining tradition with contemporary styles, featuring authentic people, and celebrating regional identity without caricature. Approximately 35% of the respondents mentioned that they have made fashion purchases after being exposed to digital content from local creatives. This indicates an expanding cultural economy in fashion that merits support and form.

9.3 Theoretical Contributions

Drawing from Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony, Postcolonial Theory, Media Ecology, and Intersectionality, the research situates Tripura's digital fashion representation within broader systems of visibility, power, and identity. It demonstrates that digital platforms can either reproduce dominant narratives or subvert them, depending on how they are used and who uses them.

9.4 Implications of the Study

This study holds practical implications for several stakeholders:

- For Content Creators: There is significant audience demand for local, inclusive, and heritage-based content. Fashion influencers can capitalize on this by featuring diverse bodies, cultures, and genders.
 - For Educational Institutions: Media and journalism courses in Tripura can incorporate modules on digital storytelling, fashion anthropology, and cultural communication to equip students to be cultural ambassadors.
 - For Policymakers: Findings validate the necessity of state-sponsored initiatives for digital promotion of tribal weaving, traditional clothing, and local fashion entrepreneurship.
 - For Researchers: This thesis completes the knowledge gap in the existing scholarship on Northeast Indian fashion representation yet paves ways for further scholarship on influencer culture, fashion and tourism, and algorithmic bias in media.
-

9.5 Conclusion

In a more globalized world, fashion is not only an aesthetic or commercial one—it's a cultural and political statement. For Tripura, digital media provides a golden chance to tell its own story, regain its identity, and make a visual archive that honors heritage while embracing innovation.

This study does not pretend to resolve the issues of representation but presents a framework for comprehending them, along with concrete proof that Tripura's youth are poised to accept and define a new fashion narrative—one that is grounded, contemporary, and actually representative.

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Appendix

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your age group?

- Under 18
- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35 and above

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / Other
- Prefer not to say

3. What is your profession?

- Student
- Working professional
- Freelancer/Artist
- Other

4. Where are you originally from?

- Tripura
- Other Northeast State
- Other parts of India

5. If from Tripura, do you live in or outside the state?

- Inside Tripura
- Outside Tripura
- Not from Tripura

Section 2: Media Consumption and Fashion Behavior

1. Which media platforms do you primarily use for fashion-related content? (Select all that apply)

- Instagram
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Fashion blogs
- Others (please specify)

7. How many hours per week do you spend consuming fashion-related media?

- Less than 2 hours
- 2–4 hours
- 4–6 hours
- 6–8 hours
- More than 8 hours

8. Do you follow any Tripura-based fashion influencers or creators?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

9. What kind of fashion content do you prefer? (Open-ended)

Section 3: Traditional Fashion Visibility

10. How often do you see Tripura's traditional fashion (e.g., Rignai, Risa) represented in regional media?

- Very Often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

11. Do you think digital media helps in preserving cultural heritage through fashion?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. On a scale of 1–5, how balanced is the representation between traditional and global fashion in Tripura's media?

- 1 – Mostly global
- 2
- 3 – Balanced
- 4
- 5 – Mostly traditional

13. What do you think influences the visibility of traditional fashion the most? (Open-ended)

Section 4: Inclusivity in Fashion Media

14. Do you think Tripura's fashion media is inclusive in terms of gender, body types, age groups, and ethnicity?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. Which aspects of diversity are underrepresented in Tripura's fashion media? (Select all that apply)

- Body types
- LGBTQ+ representation
- Gender diversity
- Ethnic groups (Reang, Chakma, etc.)
- Age groups
- Other (please specify)

16. What suggestions do you have to make fashion media more inclusive? (Open-ended)

Section 5: Fashion Engagement and Influence

17. How often do you engage with fashion content (likes, comments, shares)?

- Very Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

18. Have you ever made a purchase based on content by a Tripura-based creator or fashion post?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe in the future

19. How you feel digital media has increased awareness of Tripura's traditional fashion among youth?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

20. Any additional thoughts or suggestions related to fashion and media? (Open-ended)