

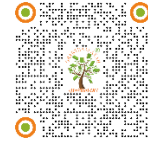
Original Article

## A STUDY ON ADAPTATION OF WARLI ART MOTIFS INTO CONTEMPORARY TEXTILE DESIGN FOR FASHION APPLICATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Warli art is one of the most prominent tribal art forms of India, originating from the Warli tribe of Maharashtra. Recognized for its simple geometric forms, monochromatic palette, and depiction of nature, rituals, and community life, Warli art reflects indigenous knowledge systems and deeply rooted cultural narratives. Traditionally executed using white pigment on earthen brown surfaces, this art form serves as a visual language that communicates social values, beliefs, and harmonious coexistence with nature.

In recent years, the fashion and textile industry has shown increasing interest in incorporating traditional art forms into contemporary design practices as a means of promoting sustainability, cultural preservation, and ethical design. This study explores the adaptation of Warli art motifs into contemporary textile design for fashion and lifestyle applications. The research process involves systematic motif extraction from traditional Warli paintings, followed by stylization and design development while retaining the essence and symbolic significance of the original art form. Both traditional and modern textile techniques such as hand block printing, screen printing, embroidery, and digital printing are explored for motif application on various fabrics.

The study further evaluates the design potential, relevance, and acceptance of Warli-inspired textiles through visual analysis and user feedback. Findings indicate that Warli motifs, when sensitively adapted and thoughtfully placed, enhance the aesthetic appeal of contemporary fashion products while maintaining cultural authenticity. The research focuses on motif extraction, stylization, design development, and application through traditional and modern textile techniques. The study also evaluates the relevance, acceptance, and design potential of Warli-inspired textiles in contemporary fashion. The findings indicate that Warli art motifs, when thoughtfully adapted, can successfully enhance modern fashion and lifestyle products while preserving cultural authenticity.

**Keywords:** Warli Art, Tribal Motifs, Textile Design, Fashion Applications, Sustainable Fashion, Motif Adaptation

### INTRODUCTION

India's diverse social structures, belief systems, and regional identities are reflected in the textile and fashion heritage that has developed over centuries through a dynamic interplay of art, culture, and craftsmanship. In addition to being practical, traditional textile practices were intricately linked to social hierarchies, cultural rituals, and communal life. Particularly, tribal art forms serve as potent visual narratives that record indigenous communities' sociocultural, spiritual, and ecological ties. Through symbolic imagery and stylized representation, these art forms convey collective memory, identity, and indigenous knowledge systems.

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Among India's numerous tribal art traditions, Warli art is one of the oldest visual expressions still in existence. It originated with the indigenous Warli tribe of Maharashtra. Warli art is renowned for its minimalistic geometric shapes, linear human figures, and rhythmic compositions. Scenes from everyday life, farming operations, celebrations, and ceremonial occasions are usually depicted. The simplicity and abstraction of Warli motifs not only convey profound symbolic meanings but also offer numerous possibilities for reinterpretation in applied design domains such as textile and clothing design.

Rapid industrialization, mass production, and globalization have drastically changed how people consume fashion in recent decades. These modifications have increased market reach and accessibility, but they have also contributed to the marginalization of indigenous craftsmen and traditional art forms. Fast-fashion methods and standardized designs sometimes ignore handcrafted value and cultural authenticity. On the other hand, in order to produce goods that are meaningful, sustainable, and deeply anchored in culture, modern fashion design has increasingly looked to indigenous and heritage-based art forms as sources of inspiration.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1 (Bag)**

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2 (Bag)**

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of incorporating traditional art forms into contemporary design to preserve cultural heritage has been highlighted by earlier research [Jain \(2018\)](#). Scholars like [Ghosh \(2016\)](#) point out that tribal art motifs' symbolic abstraction and repeating geometry give them an innate flexibility. According to [Kumar \(2019\)](#), the authenticity and sustainability of indigenous art-inspired apparel have led to its global acceptability.

The methodical use of Warli themes into fashion textile design, however, has received little scholarly attention.

Over the past 10 years, scholarly interest in the incorporation of indigenous and tribal art forms into contemporary design has grown, especially in the context of textiles and apparel. The potential of tribal themes as a source of artistic inspiration and cultural sustainability in contemporary design has been emphasized by a number of scholars.

Choudhary and Pargai (2023) looked at using computerized design tools to incorporate Warli motifs from Central Western Indian tribal art into textile items. Their research showed how using digital tools, traditional motifs may be converted into creative, modern designs that improve marketability, promote sustainable development, and preserve indigenous art forms.

Gupta, Kumari, and Patel (2023) applied developed designs to clothing such kurtis, palazzos, and dupattas, with a particular focus on Warli motif adaptation through needlework. Their findings confirmed the viability of Warli visual language for fashion applications by demonstrating that visually produced motifs had significant promise for commercial textile items and were well liked by evaluators.

Khandekar (2019) investigated how globalization has affected the development of Warli tribal art in a more comprehensive cultural analysis, emphasizing how commercialization and shifting socioeconomic circumstances have altered its traditional iconography and practice.

## ORIGIN AND VISUAL LANGUAGE OF WARLI ART

Roots in roughly 2500–3000 BCE, Warli art is among the oldest and most durable types of Indian tribal art. It originated in the Sahyadri ranges of Maharashtra it has been long been practiced by the Warli tribe, an indigenous group initially associated with the flora and fauna. Warli art developed as a community-based visual expression with the strong roots in the celebration, spiritualistic and Social life, in opposite to the classical art forms created under the Royal conservation. Traditionally, a white pigment made from the rice paste, water and gum added to a red or brown earthen background to create Warli paintings on the interior and exterior walls of mud homes.

Warli art's highlights the minimalistic and symbolic abstraction also define its visual language. Basic geometric shapes, such as squares, triangles, and circles, are used to form compositions. These shapes are inspired by daily life routine and natural elements. The circle represents the aspect of life and is symbolic of celestial body like the sun and moon. The square, are represented as the chauk, is a holy or ritual area connected to fertility and worship, whereas triangles are mostly utilized to represent mountains, trees, and the human torso, significantly shows stability and growth. Human and animal figures that are expressive and energetic are produced by combination of these geometric shapes.

White motifs are mostly painted on earthy brown or reddish backgrounds in Warli art, and usually employs a monochromatic color scheme. This use of color emphasized on form, rhythm, and movement with enhancing its visual clarity. A sense of harmony and continuity is formed throughout the surface by the repeating and rhythmic arrangement of line, stick-like human and animal shapes. Agricultural activities, hunting scenes, village life, ceremonial, festivals, and the famous Tarpa dance which represents the communal harmony and group celebration which are among the themes that are frequently shown in this culture.

Warli art is structurally appropriated for textile surface design, whereas patterns needs to be repeatable, scalable, and clear. Warli motifs are more relevant for modern textiles and fashion products by maintaining its cultural identity because of their geometric natural and narrative quality, that make it easy to adapting to form repeated patterns, borders and its placement.

Figure 3



Figure 3 (Cushion Cover)

Figure 4



Figure 4 (Cushion Cover)

Figure 5



Figure 5 (Cushion Cover)

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The use of simple geometric shapes, such as squares, triangles, and circles, offers a solid structural base that transfers quickly to fabric surfaces. Triangles, which symbolize mountains and trees, add solidity and rhythm, while circles, which represent the sun and moon, communicate continuity and cosmic ways. The square serves as a focal theme and is frequently understood as the holy or central area (chauk). These geometric shapes are perfect for borders, all-over prints, placements, and panel patterns in layout of textile designs since they allow for simple repetition, scaling, and modular organization.

The monochromatic color scheme, which typically consists of white pigment on ochre or clay brown backgrounds, improves contrast and visual very clarity. This restrained color palette complements design principles that emphasized sustainability and minimalism. Such palettes are affordable for printing and dyeing procedures in textiles, and they also provided room for reinterpretation; designers can keep the traditional contrast or modify it by using natural dyes, neutrals, or modern tones without sacrificing the art form's uniqueness of its design.

Textile surfaces are a perfect fit for the linear representation of human and animal figures, which are made up of straightforward brush strokes and triangle shapes. These figures preserve visual lightness while involving a feeling of movement and narrative. They are appropriate for methods including screen printing, block printing, embroidery, and digital printing because their rhythmic repetition throughout the cloth increases surface density. Although, the linear quality ensures clarity even at lower resolutions, which is crucial for clothing and its recreational items.

The theme contents of Warli art, revolves around the everyday life of Rural agriculture, festivals, marriage rituals, hunting scenes, Daily life scene and especially the Tarpa dance added strong storytelling value to this cultural significance. When it applied to textiles, these themes are transformed fabrics into narrative surfaces rather than the decorative elements of art piece. Such as storytelling appeals to the contemporary consumers who seek knowledge of cultural depth, authenticity, and emotional connection in fashion and lifestyle products.

Although, the structural simplicity, rhythmic geometric shapes, limited colour palette, and narrative richness.

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6 (Western Dress)**

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7 (Western Dress)**

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To examine the symbolic implications of traditional Warli art motifs
- 2) To research how Warli motifs are modified for textile design
- 3) To assess if Warli-inspired designs are appropriate for use in modern fashion
- 4) To evaluate Warli art's contribution to ecological and culturally conscious design

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology, structured as follows:

- Secondary Data Collection: Warli art, textile design, and fashion related to studies academic journals, books, museum archives, theses, and online resources
- Motif Selection and Analysis: Form, repetition, and scale are all employed to recognize and enhance traditional Warli motifs.
- Design Adaptation: Using textile techniques including digital printing, hand block printing, screen printing, embroidery, and resist dyeing to apply motifs.
- Application Analysis: Assessment of Warli-inspired designs in apparel, jewelry, and lifestyle items.

## ADAPTATION STRATEGIES FOR TEXTILE DESIGN

Adapting Warli art for contemporary textiles requires maintaining cultural integrity while aligning with modern aesthetics.

- Stylization and abstraction of motifs: Designers can simplify or reinterpret traditional Warli figures without losing their symbolic identity through the stylization and abstraction of elements. Modern aesthetics and a variety of applications, including prints, needlework, and woven surfaces, can benefit from the elongation, scaling, or confinement of human and animal forms to basic lines.
- The development of patterns through symmetry and repetition makes Warli motifs more versatile for textiles. Symmetrical arrangements provide balance and visual harmony, while repeated motifs produce rhythmic all-over patterns. By ensuring functional continuity across clothing, borders, panels, and accessories, these methods meet the demands of industrial production.
- Experimentation with color palettes beyond traditional monochrome Warli designs are able to link with current trends in fashion by experimenting with color schemes that go beyond traditional color schemes. The addition of earthy tones, blues, pastels, or subdued brights allows for greater market variety and seasonal relevance without diminishing cultural value, while the conventional white-on-brown palette maintains authenticity.
- Warli designs are able to link with current trends in fashion by experimenting with color schemes that go beyond traditional color schemes. The addition of earthy tones, blues, pastels, or subdued brights allows for greater market variety and seasonal relevance without diminishing cultural value, while the conventional white-on-brown palette maintains authenticity.
- Integration of warli art motifs ensures relevance within modern fashion systems. Warli motifs applied to structured jackets, fluid dresses, or textured fabrics like khadi, silk, and linen create a dialogue between tradition and modernity. These strategies allow Warli motifs to function effectively within modern fashion systems.

## FASHION APPLICATIONS OF WARLI-INSPIRED TEXTILES

Warli-based textile designs have found relevant across multiple fashion products:

- Ethnic Wear: Sarees, kurtas, dupattas etc.
- Contemporary Wear: Western Dresses, co-ord sets, jackets
- Accessories: Bags, Footwear, Scarves, Jewellery, Belt
- Lifestyle Products: Upholstery, Curtains, Cushion cover, Rugs, Carpets

Such applications demonstrate its versatility and commercially visibility of Warli art in fashion markets.

## WARLI ART AND SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Warli art inherently supports sustainable fashion principles through:

- Emphasis on handcraft products and slow production of articles.

- Comparison with natural dyes and eco-friendly materials.
- Promotion of artisan livelihoods.
- Preservation of incorporeal not capable of being cultural heritage

The integration of Warli art into fashion to encourages ethical consumption and cultural acceptance.

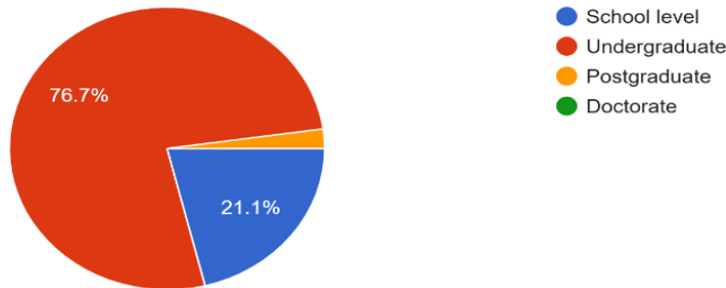
**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study’s conclusions show that, the right design interventions, in Warli art motifs successfully adapted to modern textile design. A variety of textile techniques, including block printing, screen printing, embroidery, digital printing and weaving are made possible by its structural simplicity of Warli art form, which are based on the combination of triangle, circle and line. Its versatility, motifs can be used in a various product categories, such as clothing, home furnishings, and lifestyle products.

The study also based on how design techniques like colour exploration, stylization of motifs, repetition and it improves the visual appeal while preserving cultural heritage and integrity. Warli art motifs are having much relevance in today’s sustainable fashion industry because it work good with the natural fabrics and sustainable production techniques. Warli art motif are most accepted and liked by the audience and have higher market value because of the consumers highly preference for sustainable, handcrafted and culturally rooted fashion.

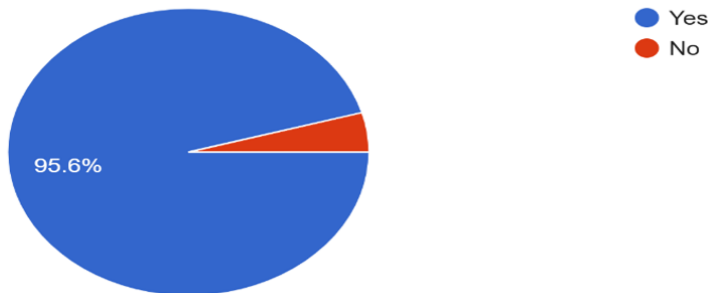
**Educational Qualification**

90 responses



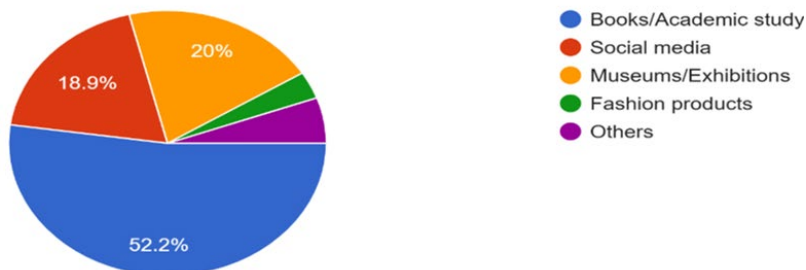
**Are you aware of Warli art?**

90 responses



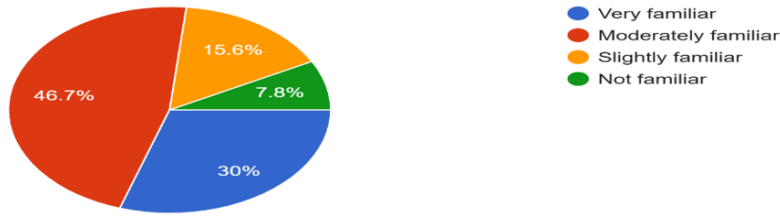
**Source of awareness about Warli art**

90 responses



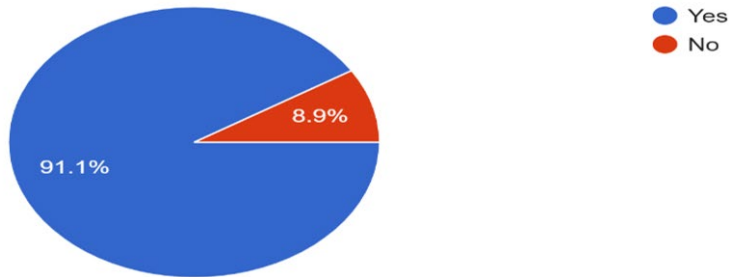
How would you rate your familiarity with Warli art motifs?

90 responses



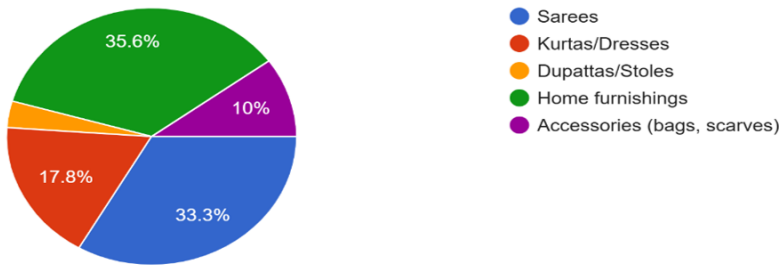
Have you seen Warli art used in textile or fashion products?

90 responses



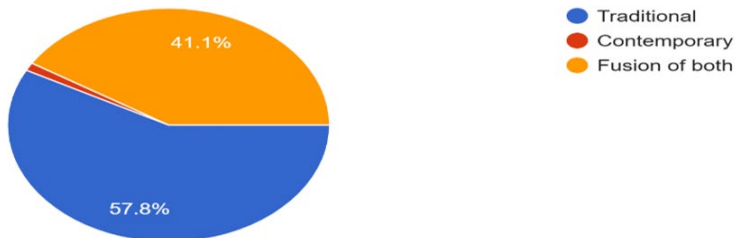
Which products do you think Warli motifs are most suitable for?

90 responses



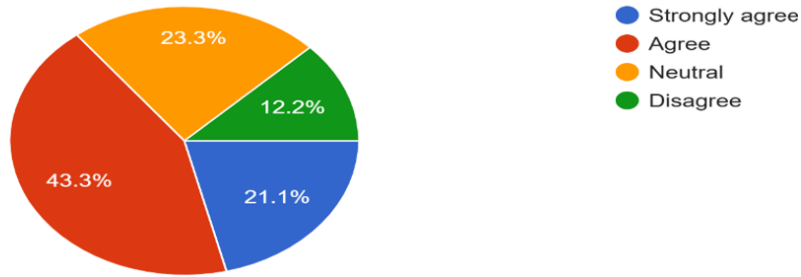
Do you prefer traditional or contemporary adaptation of Warli motifs?

90 responses



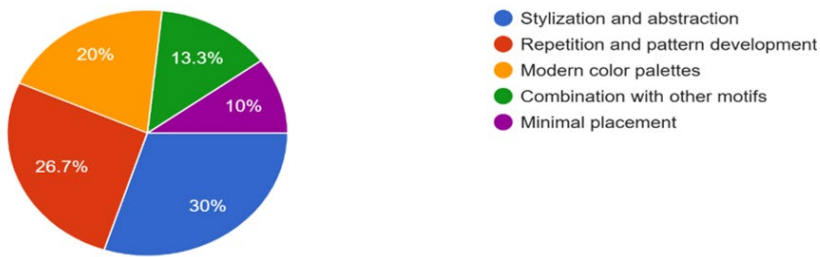
Do you find Warli motifs visually appealing on modern garments?

90 responses



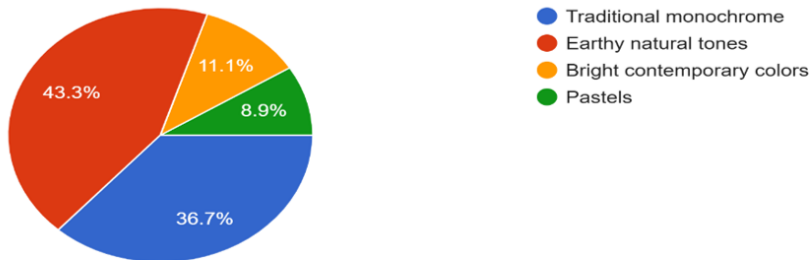
Which design adaptations enhance Warli motifs in fashion?

90 responses



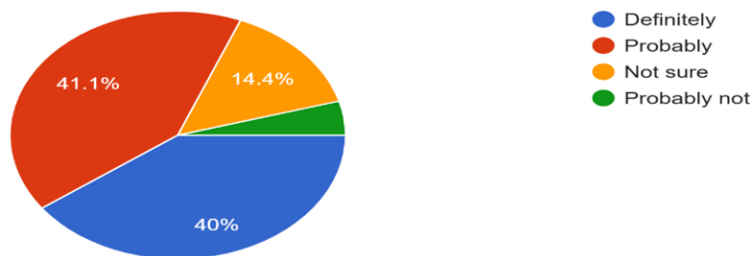
Preferred color palette for Warli-inspired textiles

90 responses



Would you purchase clothing featuring Warli-inspired designs?

90 responses



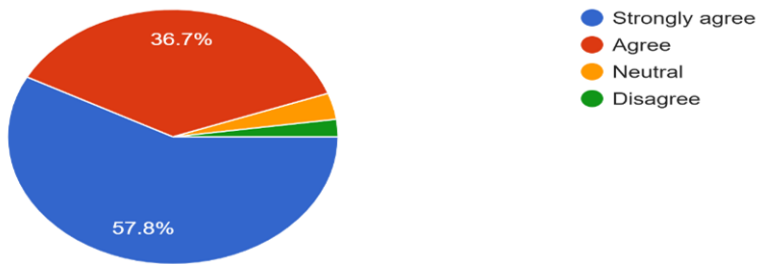
Reason for preference

90 responses



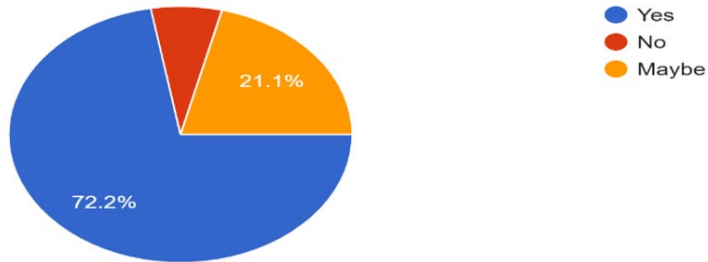
Do you believe Warli art integration promotes Indian cultural heritage?

90 responses



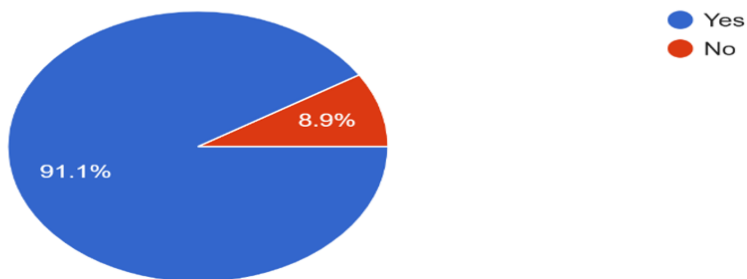
According to you, Warli art should be promoted in contemporary fashion.

90 responses



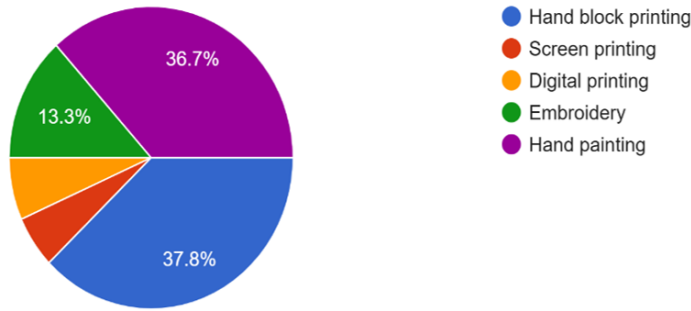
Would you like to see more tribal art-inspired fashion collections?

90 responses



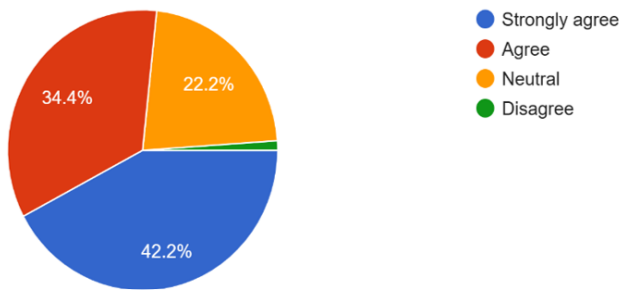
Which textile techniques do you feel are most suitable for adapting Warli art motifs?

90 responses



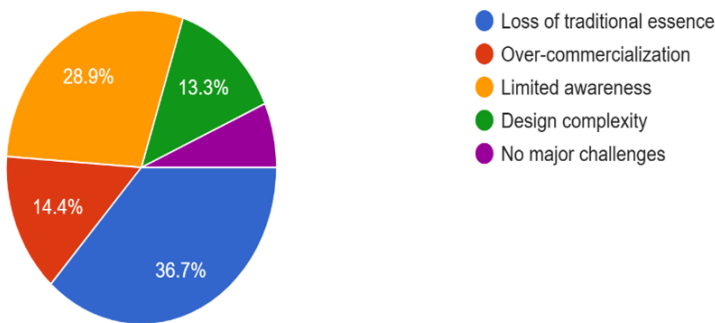
To what extent do you agree that adapting Warli art into fashion adds value to contemporary design?

90 responses



What challenges do you perceive in adapting Warli art motifs into modern textile design?

90 responses



**INTERPRETATION OF SURVEY DATA ON WARLI ART AWARENESS AND APPLICATION**

The survey findings indicate that the majority of respondents possess a relatively high educational background, with undergraduates forming the largest group (76.7%), followed by school-level respondents (21.1%), while postgraduates and doctorates form a very small proportion. This suggests that data largely reflects the perceptions of young, academically exposed individuals, making it relevant for contemporary design and educational contexts.

An overwhelming 95.6% of respondents are aware of Warli art, highlighting its strong cultural recognition. The primary source of this awareness is books and academic study (52.2%), followed by museums and exhibitions (20%) and social media (18.9%). This emphasizes the significant role of formal education and curated cultural spaces in preserving and transmitting knowledge of Warli art, while digital platforms also contribute meaningfully.

In terms of familiarity, most respondents consider themselves moderately familiar (46.7%) or very familiar (30%) with Warli motifs.

The data further reveals that 91.1% of respondents have seen Warli art used in textile or fashion products, confirming its active presence in contemporary design practices. When asked about suitable product categories, home furnishings (35.6%) and sarees (33.3%) emerged as the most preferred applications, followed by kurtas/dresses (17.8%) and accessories (10%).

Regarding design preferences, a majority favor traditional adaptation (57.8%), while a substantial proportion supports a fusion of traditional and contemporary styles (41.1%). This reflected a desire to retain cultural authenticity while allowing scope for modern reinterpretation of product.

Finally, perceptions of visual appeal are largely positive, with 64.4% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that Warli motifs look appealing on modern garments. Although some respondents remained neutral (23.3%), only a small segment expressed disagreement (12.2%), reinforcing the acceptance of Warli art in modern fashion contexts.

#### MARKET DEMAND AND CONSUMER SENTIMENT

- **High Purchase Intent:** There is a strong market for Warli-inspired clothing, with 81.1% of respondents stating they would "Definitely" or "Probably" purchase such items.
- **Enthusiasm for Tribal Art:** A massive 91.1% want to see more tribal art-inspired fashion collections, showing a clear trend toward ethnic and indigenous aesthetics.
- **Cultural Value:** Over 94% agree that integrating Warli art promotes Indian cultural heritage, and 76.6% believe it adds significant value to contemporary design.

#### DESIGN AND PRODUCTION PREFERENCES

- **Color Palette:** Consumers prefer a connection to the roots, flavourist Earthy natural tones (43.3%) and Traditional monochrome (36.7%) over bright or pastel colors.
- **Technique:** Hand block printing (37.8%) and Hand painting (36.7%) are shown most suitable methods for adapting these motifs, emphasizing a preference for artisanal over industrial processes.
- **Motivation:** The primary sources for choosing Warli designs are Cultural connection (46.7%) and Unique design (26.7%), followed by an interest in sustainable/handcrafted products.

#### KEY CHALLENGES

- **Traditional Integrity:** The main concern is Loss of traditional essence (36.7%), suggesting that the consumers want modern fashion, they value originality.
- **Market Barriers:** Limited awareness (28.9%) This remains a significant barrier for broad area for adoption in the fashion industry.

#### CONCLUSION

The study involves that Warli art gives immense potential as in a contemporary textile design idea for fashion products. The adaptation of Warli motifs not preserves an indigenous cultural identity also contributes to sustainable and ethical fashion. Artisans and designers plays a vital role in bridging tradition as well as modernity, ensures that the tribal art forms relevantly in evolving landscape to fashion products.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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