

 ISSN (O): 2320-5407 ISSN (P): 3107-4928	Journal Homepage: www.journalijar.com INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR) Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/23705 DOI URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/23705	
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN JEWELLERY CONSUMPTION: A STUDY OF CHANGING PREFERENCES AMONG GENERATION Z IN GUJARAT

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 14 April 2026

Final Accepted: 16 May 2026

Published: June 2026

Key words:-

Jewellery Consumption Behaviour, Gen Z Consumer Preferences, Gold Investment, Fashion and Investment Behaviour

Abstract

This study aims to examine the awareness, perceptions, and behavioural patterns of respondents regarding the selected topic. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from a diverse group of participants, ensuring representation across different demographic categories. The responses were analysed using percentages and comparative methods to identify key trends and patterns. The study finds that a majority of Generation Z respondents prefer lightweight and minimalist jewellery for everyday use, while traditional jewellery remains important for weddings and cultural occasions. Price, comfort, and social media influence emerge as major determinants of jewellery choice. The findings suggest that changing jewellery preferences reflect cultural transformation rather than cultural erosion. The study successfully fulfils its objectives by providing meaningful insights into respondent behaviour and attitudes. The results can be utilised to make informed decisions, improve existing strategies, and address gaps identified during the analysis. Overall, the research contributes to a better understanding of the topic and its relevance in the current context.

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Introduction:-

Jewellery has historically functioned as more than an ornamental object in Indian society; it has operated as a culturally embedded symbol of wealth, identity, continuity, and social structure. Particularly within the Indian context, traditional jewellery—often composed of gold and intricately designed motifs—has been deeply integrated into rituals, festivals, and marital customs, reflecting both economic security and cultural inheritance. In India, jewellery occupies a unique position at the intersection of culture, economics, and personal identity. Beyond its decorative function, jewellery has traditionally served as a store of wealth, a symbol of social status, and an important component of family heritage. Gold jewellery, in particular, has been regarded as both an investment asset and a cultural necessity during important life events such as weddings, festivals, and religious ceremonies. As a result, jewellery consumption in India has historically been shaped by deeply embedded social values and intergenerational traditions.

At the same time, rapid economic development, urbanisation, technological advancement, and increasing global connectivity have significantly transformed consumer behaviour. Younger generations are increasingly exposed to international fashion trends through digital media platforms, leading to changing perceptions regarding aesthetics,

functionality, and lifestyle compatibility. These developments have created a dynamic environment in which traditional cultural practices coexist with modern consumption preferences.

However, the consumption landscape is undergoing a marked transformation with the emergence of Generation Z (approximately 1997–2012), whose preferences diverge significantly from previous cohorts. Unlike earlier generations, Gen Z consumers demonstrate a growing inclination toward minimalist, lightweight, and versatile jewellery forms that align with contemporary lifestyles. This shift is not merely aesthetic but structural. It reflects broader socio-economic transformations such as urbanisation, digital exposure, changing labour participation patterns, and the increasing influence of globalised fashion systems. Within this context, jewellery is no longer confined to ceremonial or investment-based roles but is increasingly integrated into everyday identity expression. This study, therefore, interrogates a central analytical question: Does the declining preference for traditional jewellery among Gen Z signify cultural erosion, or does it represent a reconfiguration of cultural meaning within modern consumption systems?

Literature Review:-

Existing scholarship on jewellery consumption and generational behaviour identifies multiple intersecting drivers of change, particularly among younger demographics. McKinsey & Company (2022) highlights that Gen Z consumers prioritise individuality and self-expression, leading to increased demand for minimalist and personalised fashion products, including jewellery. This represents a shift from inheritance-based consumption models to identity-driven consumption frameworks. Deloitte (2023) further emphasises affordability and utility as key determinants of Gen Z purchasing behaviour. Traditional heavy jewellery, while culturally significant, is often perceived as impractical for daily use, thereby strengthening the appeal of lightweight and demi-fine alternatives. Digital ecosystems play a central role in shaping aesthetic preferences. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) argue that platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest function as “visual economies of influence,” where fashion trends are rapidly diffused through influencer culture and algorithmic exposure. This accelerates the normalisation of minimalist aesthetics. In the Indian socio-cultural context, Banerjee (2019) underscores jewellery’s role as a symbolic carrier of tradition and ritual continuity. However, Singh and Verma (2022) observe a hybridisation trend among younger consumers, who retain cultural attachment while expressing it through modern design reinterpretations. Additionally, lifestyle restructuring—driven by urbanisation and workforce participation—has increased demand for practical and versatile accessories (Kapoor & Kulshrestha, 2021). Sustainability considerations further reinforce this shift, as younger consumers increasingly associate minimalist consumption with ethical and environmental consciousness (Joy et al., 2012). Collectively, the literature suggests not a rejection of tradition, but its recontextualization within contemporary consumption logic.

Literature Gap:-

Despite extensive discourse on consumer behaviour and generational fashion trends, several critical gaps remain:-

1. **Insufficient cultural theorisation:** Existing studies largely adopt marketing or economic perspectives, with limited engagement in cultural sociology or identity theory.
2. **Contextual underrepresentation of India and Gujarat:** Given India’s unique jewellery culture, region-specific empirical studies remain limited.
3. **Overreliance on secondary data:** Few studies employ structured primary survey-based methodologies to capture lived consumer perceptions.
4. **Unbalanced focus on digital influence:** The comparative weight of digital media versus familial and cultural norms remains underexplored.
5. **Lack of integrated behavioural-cultural analysis:** There is limited synthesis between attitudinal shifts and actual consumption behaviour.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating empirical survey data with cultural interpretation to understand jewellery consumption as a socio-cultural process.

Research Questions and Objectives: Based on these literature gaps, this paper will try to find out to what extent the shift from traditional jewellery to minimalist designs among Generation Z in Gujarat represents cultural transformation versus cultural erosion.

Objectives:-

1. To analyse the demographic profile of Generation Z respondents in Gujarat and understand its influence on jewellery consumption behaviour.
2. To examine the purchasing behaviour and consumption patterns of Generation Z with respect to jewellery.
3. To assess the investment perceptions of Generation Z towards jewellery, including awareness of digital gold and modern investment alternatives.
4. To identify the major factors influencing jewellery purchase decisions among Generation Z.
5. To evaluate whether the changing jewellery preferences of Generation Z reflect cultural transformation or cultural erosion.

Research Methodology:-

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design, aimed at understanding both behavioural patterns and underlying perceptions associated with jewellery consumption among Generation Z. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture preferences, attitudes, and behavioural tendencies related to jewellery usage. The target population comprises Gen Z individuals aged 16–28 years in Gujarat. A convenience sampling technique was employed due to accessibility constraints, with a sample size of approximately 100–200 respondents to ensure sufficient variability in responses. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions, behavioural questions, and attitudinal statements measured using a five-point Likert scale. The data was analysed using Percentage analysis for identifying distribution patterns, comparative analysis for examining variations in responses across different categories along with the likert scale evaluation for measuring attitudinal intensity. This analytical approach enables descriptive insights into the evolving jewellery consumption behaviour of Generation Z. This mixed analytical approach enables both descriptive and relational insights into the evolving consumption landscape.

Result and Analysis:-

Firstly, this paper will analyse the **basic demographic analysis** of the respondents-

Occupation of Respondents:-

Most respondents are students, followed by working professionals and business individuals. This shows a strong representation of young and economically active individuals, which influences the preference for practical and *affordable jewellery options*.

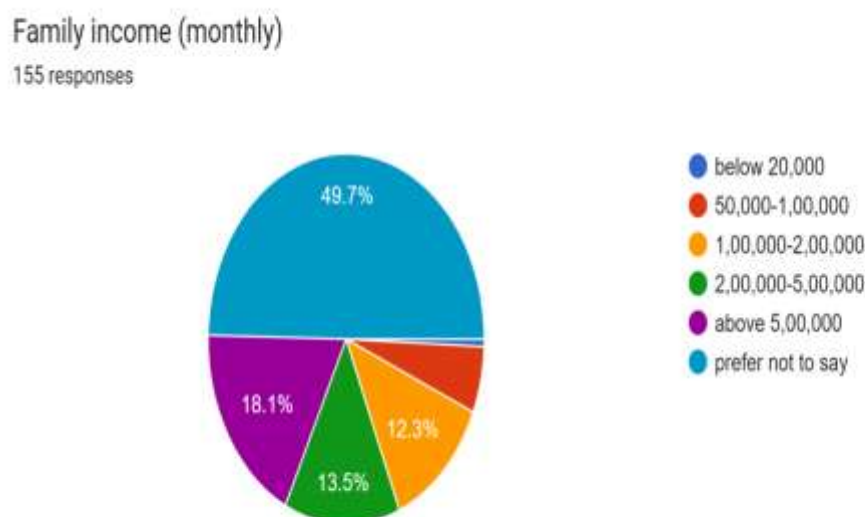


Figure 1 – Occupation distribution (Source: Primary Survey)

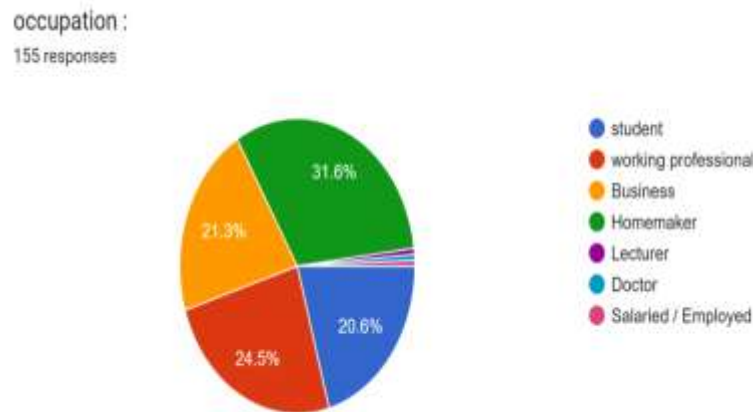


Figure 2– Income distribution (Source: Primary Survey)

Income Level:-

The income levels vary significantly, with respondents spread across different income groups. This diversity allows for a broader understanding of how purchasing power impacts jewellery preferences, particularly the shift toward affordable and lightweight jewellery.

Next, this paper will deal with the second objective of the paper to study the behavioural pattern of the respondents:-

Jewellery purchasing pattern:-

The majority of respondents indicated that they purchase jewellery. This highlights the continued relevance of jewellery in consumer lifestyles, although the nature and purpose of purchase may be evolving.

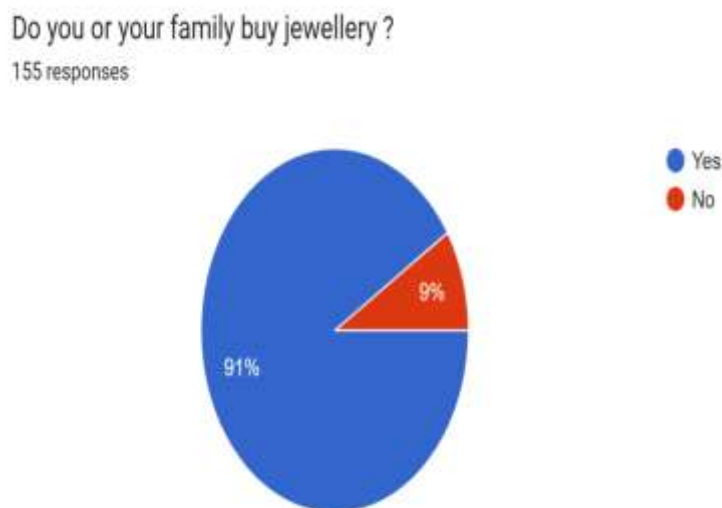


Figure 3– Jewellery purchasing behaviour (Source: Primary Survey)

Frequency of Purchase:-

Most respondents purchase jewellery occasionally or only during special occasions such as weddings and festivals. This indicates that jewellery is increasingly becoming occasion-based rather than a regular purchase.

How often do you buy jewellery?

155 responses

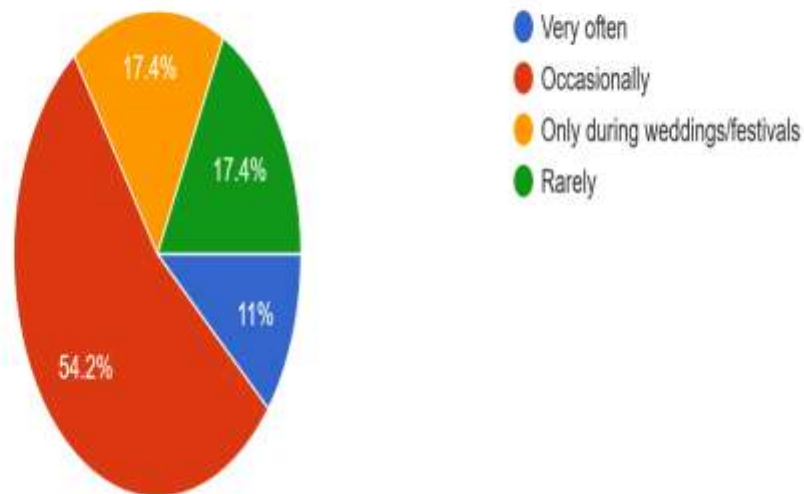


Figure 4 – Frequency of buying jewellery (Source: Primary Survey)

Preferred Type of Jewellery:-

Gold remains the most preferred type of jewellery among respondents, followed by diamonds, silver, and artificial jewellery. This reflects the continued dominance of gold due to its cultural and investment value, while alternative options are gaining popularity.

What type of jewellery do you buy most often?

155 responses

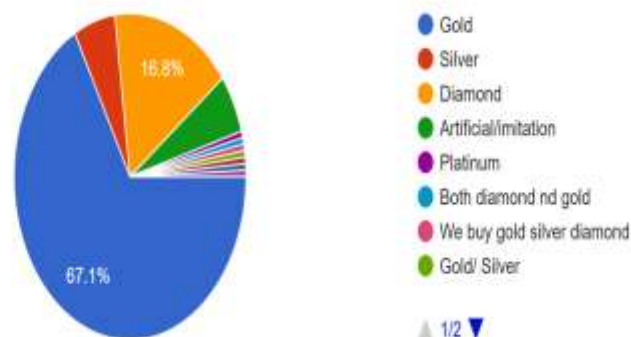


Figure 5 – Type of jewellery preferred (Source: Primary Survey)

Purpose of Buying Jewellery:-

The primary purpose of purchasing jewellery is investment, followed by fashion and tradition. This shows that jewellery is viewed both as a financial asset and a fashion accessory, indicating a shift toward multi-purpose usage.

Do you think people today prefer minimal/light jewellery over heavy jewellery?
155 responses

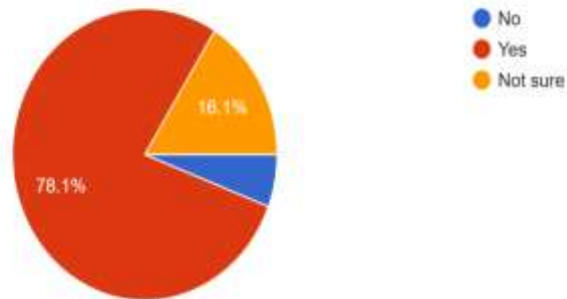


Figure 6 – Purpose of purchase (Source: Primary Survey)

Considering Jewellery an Investment:-

A large proportion of respondents consider jewellery an investment. This highlights the enduring importance of gold and precious metals as a secure financial option, especially in uncertain economic conditions.

Do you think people today prefer minimal/light jewellery over heavy jewellery?
155 responses

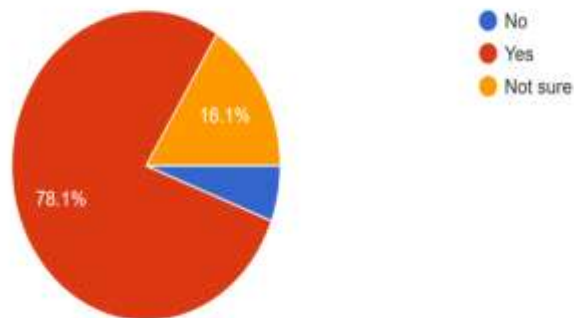


Figure 7 – Perception of jewellery as investment (Source: Primary Survey)

Preference for Weight of Jewellery:-

The majority of respondents prefer lightweight jewellery. Approximately 72% of respondents preferred lightweight jewellery, while only 28% preferred heavy traditional jewellery. This reflects changing lifestyle needs, where comfort and practicality are prioritised over traditional heavy designs.

Compared to previous generations, do you think jewellery designs are:
155 responses

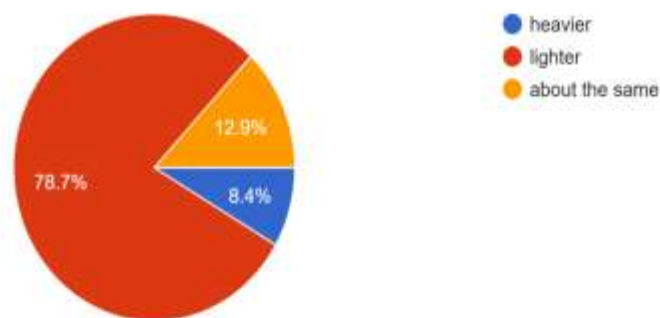


Figure 8 – Preference for lightweight vs heavy jewellery (Source: Primary Survey)

Preferred Design Style:-

Minimalist and simple jewellery designs are preferred over heavy traditional styles. This indicates a growing trend toward subtle elegance and everyday wearability. The preference for minimalist jewellery among Gen Z supports the findings of McKinsey & Company (2022), which identified individuality and self-expression as key drivers of youth consumption behaviour. Similarly, the influence of social media observed in the present study aligns with Djafarova and Bowes (2021), who highlighted the role of Instagram in shaping fashion-related purchasing decisions.

Which jewellery style do you prefer?
155 responses

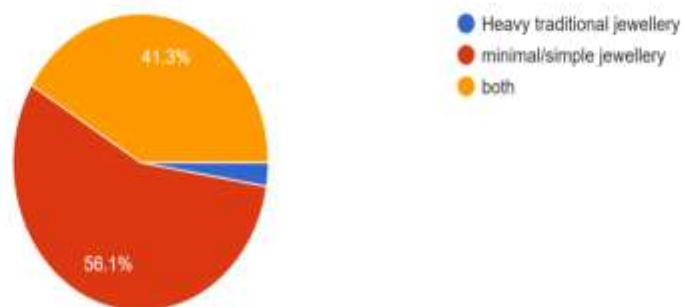


Figure 9 – Design preference (Source: Primary Survey)

Usage of Jewellery:-

Most respondents prefer jewellery suitable for daily wear or comfort, rather than exclusively for traditional occasions. This highlights a shift toward integrating jewellery into everyday fashion.

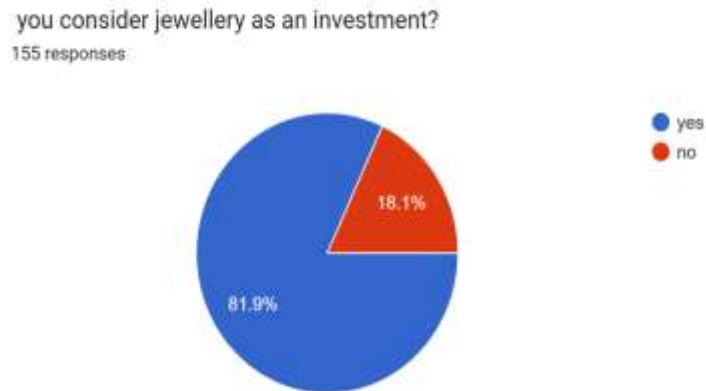


Figure 10 – Usage pattern (Source: Primary Survey)

In the next section, in the third objective, the paper deals with the investment awareness of the respondents. To have a clear concept regarding their awareness, the following questions were asked of the respondent.

Awareness of Digital Gold / Modern Investment Forms :-

A majority of respondents are aware of modern investment options such as digital gold. This indicates increasing financial awareness and adaptation to technological advancements in investment methods.

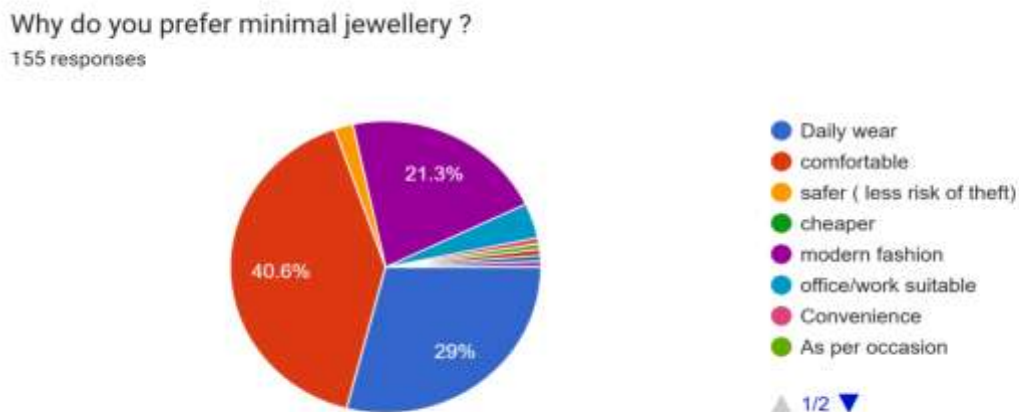


Figure 11 – Awareness level (Source: Primary Survey)

Preferred Investment Form:-

Respondents prefer investing in gold coins, bars, and digital gold rather than heavy jewellery. This suggests a separation between jewellery as fashion and gold as an investment.

What is the most important factor influencing your jewellery choice?

155 responses

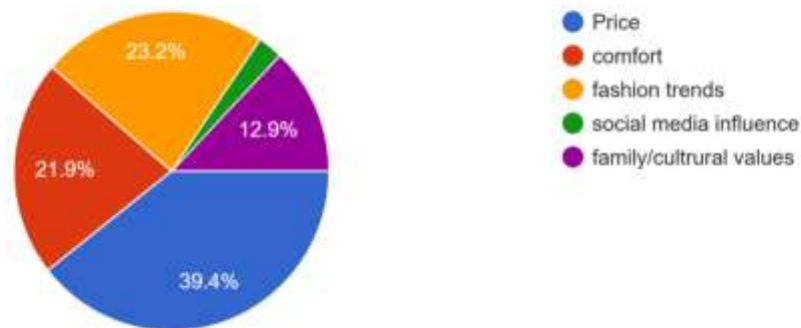


Figure 12 – Investment preference (Source: Primary Survey)

In the following section in the fourth objective, the paper deals with the influencing factors for purchasing by respondents:-

Factors Influencing Purchase Decision:-

Price emerges as the most significant factor influencing purchase decisions, followed by comfort, fashion trends, and cultural values. This indicates that economic considerations play a dominant role in shaping consumer choices.

Do rising gold prices affect jewellery purchases in your household

155 responses

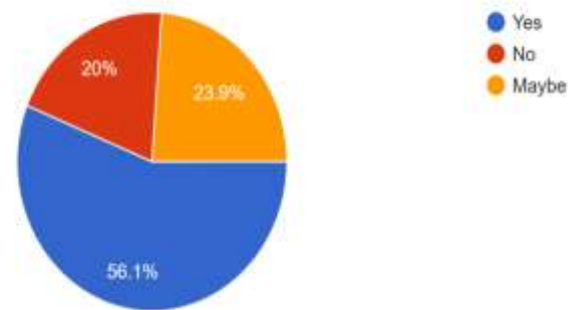


Figure 13 – Key influencing factors (Source: Primary Survey)

Do You Prefer Jewellery for Daily Wear?:-

A considerable number of respondents prefer jewellery for daily wear, provided it is lightweight and comfortable. This supports the growing demand for minimalist jeweler

Minimalist jewellery represents :
155 responses

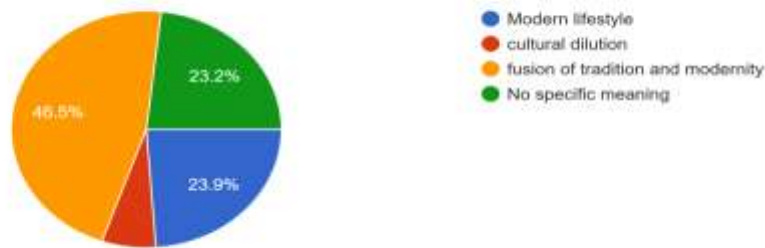


Figure 14 – Daily wear preference (Source: Primary Survey)

Lastly the paper deals with the last objective, that deals with the opinion of respondents on Cultural Change:- While asking for their opinion regarding the change in tradition, the responses indicate mixed opinions, with many believing that jewellery trends represent a fusion of tradition and modernity rather than complete cultural loss. This suggests an evolving but not disappearing cultural significance.

Wearing less traditional jewellery means loss of cultural value.
155 responses

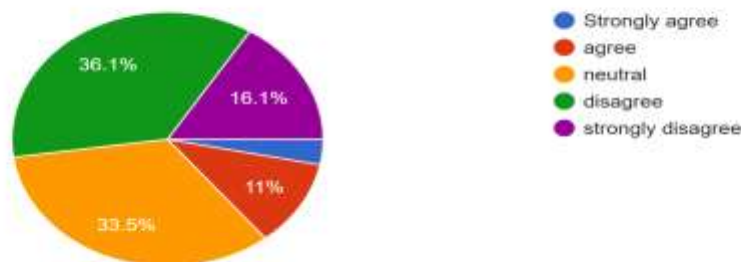


Figure 15– Cultural perception (Source: Primary Survey)

Impact of Modern Lifestyle:-

Most respondents agree that modern lifestyle changes influence jewellery preferences. Busy routines and changing fashion trends encourage the use of practical and versatile jewellery.

What is the main reason for buying jewellery?
155 responses

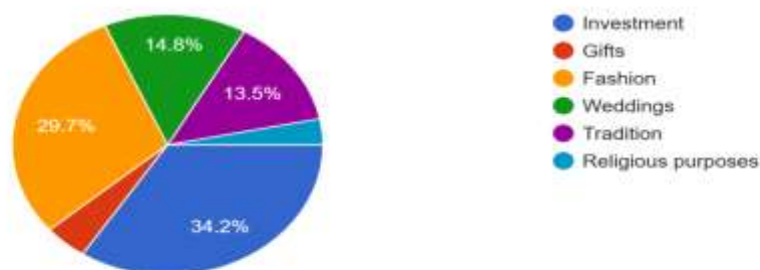


Figure 16 – Lifestyle influence (Source: Primary Survey)

Is Gen Z Redefining Jewellery Culture?:-

A majority of respondents agree that Gen Z is redefining jewellery culture by prioritising comfort, individuality, and minimalism over traditional values. Along with that, most respondents revealed their preference for minimalist jewellery due to its comfort, versatility, and modern appeal, while traditional jewellery is still favoured for special occasions. This highlights a hybrid consumption pattern.

Discussion:-

The empirical analysis of survey responses reveals a clear and multidimensional transformation in jewellery consumption patterns among Generation Z in Gujarat. These findings are best understood not as isolated preferences but as manifestations of broader socio-cultural restructuring.

Shift from Traditional to Minimalist Consumption Logic:-

The data indicates a significant preference among Gen Z respondents for minimalist, lightweight, and versatile jewellery over traditional heavy designs. Traditional jewellery remains associated primarily with ceremonial contexts, particularly weddings and festivals, whereas minimalist jewellery dominates everyday usage. This reflects a transition from occasion-bound consumption to lifestyle-integrated consumption.

Declining Centrality of Investment-Based Value Perception:-

A notable proportion of respondents no longer perceive jewellery primarily as a financial investment or asset class. Instead, value is increasingly defined in terms of aesthetics, comfort, and usability. This suggests a weakening of the traditional association between jewellery and economic security, particularly among younger cohorts.

Strong Influence of Digital Media and Aesthetic Economies:-

Social media platforms, influencer culture, and digital fashion ecosystems emerge as significant drivers of preference formation. Exposure to global fashion trends accelerates the adoption of minimalist aesthetics and reinforces rapidly changing consumption cycles. Jewellery consumption is thus increasingly embedded within what can be conceptualised as a digitally mediated aesthetic economy.

Functionalization of Jewellery in Everyday Life:-

Respondents demonstrate a clear preference for jewellery that aligns with daily routines, professional environments, and educational settings. Comfort, adaptability, and practicality are prioritised over ornamental excess, indicating a functional redefinition of jewellery from ceremonial object to everyday accessory.

Persistence of Cultural Anchoring in Ritual Contexts:-

Despite the rise of minimalist preferences, traditional jewellery retains strong symbolic significance in cultural and ritual contexts. This indicates not a displacement of tradition but a contextual segmentation of consumption patterns, where cultural continuity is preserved within specific domains.

Emergence of Identity-Based Consumption:-

Jewellery is increasingly perceived as an extension of personal identity rather than a marker of familial status or inherited wealth. This aligns with the growing emphasis on individuality, self-expression, and lifestyle branding among Gen Z consumers.

Conclusion:-

The findings of this study reflect a significant transformation in jewellery consumption behaviour among contemporary consumers, particularly among younger generations. The demographic composition of the respondents, dominated by students and economically active individuals, plays a crucial role in shaping the observed consumption patterns. Since younger consumers generally possess comparatively lower purchasing power but higher exposure to changing fashion trends and digital influence, their preferences naturally lean toward affordable, practical, and versatile jewellery products. This demographic structure helps explain the growing inclination toward lightweight and minimalist jewellery designs.

One of the most notable findings of the study is the gradual transition of jewellery from being solely a traditional and ceremonial asset to becoming an everyday lifestyle product. Earlier, jewellery in Indian society was strongly associated with social status, weddings, rituals, and family inheritance. However, the present findings indicate that most respondents purchase jewellery occasionally and mainly during special occasions, suggesting a decline in

regular traditional jewellery consumption. At the same time, the increasing preference for daily-wear jewellery indicates that jewellery is being integrated into modern fashion and personal identity rather than remaining confined to ceremonial usage.

The study also demonstrates that gold continues to occupy a dominant position in consumer preference despite changing lifestyle patterns. This confirms the deep-rooted cultural and economic significance of gold in Indian society. However, the nature of gold consumption itself appears to be changing. Respondents increasingly prefer lightweight gold jewellery, gold coins, bars, and digital gold instead of heavy traditional ornaments. This shift reflects the emergence of a more rational and utility-oriented consumer mindset where portability, affordability, and investment security are prioritised over ornamental extravagance.

Another important observation is the dual role of jewellery as both an investment instrument and a fashion accessory. A large proportion of respondents consider jewellery a secure investment option, especially under uncertain economic conditions. This aligns with the traditional perception of gold as a store of value and financial security. Simultaneously, jewellery is also viewed as a medium of self-expression and fashion. The coexistence of these two perspectives indicates that consumers no longer separate financial utility from aesthetic appeal. Instead, modern consumers seek products that fulfil both emotional and economic needs simultaneously.

The preference for minimalist and simple designs further reflects the influence of changing lifestyle structures. Modern lifestyles characterised by professional commitments, mobility, urbanisation, and comfort-oriented consumption patterns discourage the use of heavy jewellery in everyday life. Respondents' preference for comfort and practicality supports the broader theory of functional consumption behaviour, where consumers increasingly value convenience and usability alongside symbolic value. Minimalist jewellery satisfies these expectations by being lightweight, versatile, fashionable, and suitable for multiple occasions.

The findings regarding awareness of digital gold and modern investment forms are particularly significant in understanding the financial behaviour of younger consumers. The high level of awareness among respondents suggests increasing digital financial literacy and adaptation to technological innovations in investment practices. Consumers now appear more willing to separate the investment component of gold from its decorative aspect. This explains why many respondents prefer digital gold, coins, or bars for investment purposes while using lightweight jewellery mainly for fashion and daily wear. Such behaviour reflects the broader digital transformation occurring within financial markets and consumer culture.

Price emerged as the most influential factor affecting jewellery purchasing decisions, followed by comfort, fashion trends, and cultural considerations. This finding indicates that economic rationality increasingly dominates consumer behaviour. Rising gold prices, inflationary pressures, and changing income structures may be encouraging consumers to adopt more cost-conscious purchasing strategies. As a result, consumers are shifting away from heavy jewellery toward affordable alternatives that still provide aesthetic and symbolic satisfaction.

The cultural findings of the study reveal an interesting balance between continuity and change. Most respondents do not perceive modern jewellery trends as a complete rejection of tradition. Instead, they view contemporary jewellery culture as a fusion of traditional values and modern preferences. Traditional jewellery continues to maintain importance during weddings, festivals, and rituals, while minimalist jewellery dominates everyday usage. This hybrid consumption pattern suggests that cultural transformation is occurring through adaptation rather than cultural erosion. In other words, tradition is being reinterpreted within the framework of modern lifestyles rather than being abandoned entirely.

The findings also strongly support the argument that Gen Z consumers are redefining jewellery culture. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z consumers prioritise individuality, comfort, versatility, and personal expression. Their purchasing decisions are influenced not only by cultural norms but also by social media exposure, global fashion trends, sustainability concerns, and evolving gender-neutral aesthetics. This generation appears more interested in symbolic self-expression and functional value than in the traditional display of wealth through heavy ornaments. Consequently, jewellery brands and marketers may increasingly need to focus on customisation, affordability, minimalist aesthetics, and digital accessibility to cater to evolving consumer expectations.

Overall, the study highlights a broader socio-economic and cultural transition within the jewellery market. While traditional values associated with gold and jewellery remain influential, consumer behaviour is increasingly shaped

by modern lifestyles, financial awareness, comfort preferences, and digital transformation. The coexistence of investment motives, fashion consciousness, and cultural attachment indicates that jewellery consumption in contemporary society is becoming more dynamic, hybrid, and individualised.

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