



Reinterpreting Batik for Gen-Z Fashion: A Contemporary Approach to Indian Textile Traditions

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ABSTRACT

Batik is a traditional wax-resist textile technique recognised for its distinctive patterns, surface effects and cultural significance. This study explores how Batik can be reinterpreted for contemporary Gen-Z fashion through textile experimentation, colour and motif development, and modern garment silhouettes while acknowledging the cultural identity of the technique.

The research adopts a design-led approach combining secondary research, an online consumer questionnaire involving 11 respondents, practical textile experimentation and fashion design development. The questionnaire examines respondents' familiarity with Batik, preferences for contemporary garments and factors that may influence purchase interest. The practical component comprises four cotton-fabric samples developed through three technique categories: crackle Batik, hand-drawn Batik and wooden-block wax-resist Batik. Two hand-drawn samples explore different motifs and colour combinations.

The research findings indicate varying levels of familiarity with Batik among the respondents. Handmade and sustainable appeal and unique, modern patterns were identified as factors of interest. Eight of the 11 respondents indicated that they would definitely or probably consider purchasing Batik garments in contemporary silhouettes. These exploratory findings informed the development of Wax & Wonder, a six-look fashion collection based on the concept Quiet Forms, Bold Resist. One look was selected for physical construction: a golden-beige asymmetrical sleeveless top paired with a pink wrap-style skirt featuring small Keri motifs.

The study demonstrates how design-led reinterpretation can connect a traditional textile technique with contemporary garment design. The small convenience sample and absence of direct artisan interviews or craft-cluster visits limit the extent of the conclusions; therefore, the findings are treated as preliminary.

Keywords: Batik, Generation Z, Indian textile traditions, contemporary fashion, textile experimentation, wax-resist dyeing, fashion design.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

India has a diverse textile heritage shaped by regional identities, craft knowledge, materials, techniques and artistic practices. Traditional textiles communicate more than visual decoration: they carry information about place, community, making processes and cultural expression. In contemporary fashion, these textile traditions can provide a source of design



exploration through the reinterpretation of motifs, colour, surface, proportion and garment construction.

Batik is a wax-resist textile technique in which selected areas of fabric are covered with wax before dyeing. The wax resists the dye, allowing the protected areas to retain a contrasting colour or ground. The process can be repeated to build layers of colour and pattern. Depending on the method of wax application, Batik can produce drawn lines, repeated motifs and irregular crackle effects.

The visual language of Batik offers opportunities for fashion design beyond the use of a traditional all-over print. Pattern scale, placement, negative space, contrast and the relationship between patterned and plain fabric can be considered during garment development. This study investigates these possibilities in relation to contemporary fashion for Gen-Z consumers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Traditional textile techniques have cultural and artistic value, but their translation into contemporary fashion requires careful consideration of changing clothing preferences, visual appeal, comfort, material suitability and cultural context. The design problem addressed in this study is how Batik's resist-dyeing characteristics and visual identity can inform contemporary garment concepts for Gen-Z without treating the technique merely as surface decoration.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

Aim: To explore how traditional Batik can be reinterpreted through textile experimentation and contemporary garment design to create fashion concepts relevant to Gen-Z consumers.

To study Batik as a **traditional** textile surface-design technique and understand its visual characteristics.

To investigate preliminary awareness of Batik and fashion preferences among selected respondents.

To explore the design possibilities of Batik through textile experimentation on cotton fabric.

To translate selected Batik-inspired patterns and design directions into contemporary garment concepts.

To develop a cohesive six-look fashion collection and construct one selected garment.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Published craft and museum resources describe Batik as a resist-dyeing process in which wax is applied to selected areas of cloth before dyeing. The Australian Museum's explanation of the Batik process provides a general account of wax application, dyeing and wax removal. The Saint Louis Art Museum and the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, provide collection and educational contexts for understanding Batik textiles and their visual characteristics. These sources are useful for explaining the process, while region-specific claims about Indian practice require sources focused on the relevant Indian craft context.

For Madhya Pradesh, Asia InCH documents Batik and wax-resist dyeing on cloth in the region. The Government of Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain district handicrafts information and the



MP Trade Portal document Bhairavgarh/Ujjain's printing tradition. The Intellectual Property India GI Registry records Ujjain Batik Print as a registered Geographical Indication. These sources establish a regional context for discussing Batik in Madhya Pradesh. The present project relies on documented sources and does not claim direct field verification of current artisan practices.

Research on Generation Z and sustainable fashion provides a wider context for investigating younger consumers' attitudes. Prashar and Kaushal (2025) examine influences on sustainable fashion choices among Generation Z consumers in India. Masserini, Bini and Difonzo (2024) compare the inclination of Generation Z and Generation Y to purchase sustainable clothing. Such studies caution against assuming that interest in sustainability automatically results in purchase behaviour; design, communication, value and willingness to pay also require consideration.

The present study brings these themes together through a small exploratory questionnaire and a practical fashion-design project. Its contribution is a design-led exploration linking documented craft knowledge, cotton-fabric experimentation, consumer responses and garment development. It is not an ethnographic study and does not claim to reproduce an artisan-made regional process.

2.1 Research Gap and Design Opportunity

The study identifies a design opportunity in exploring how the visual properties of Batik—resist lines, contrast, layered colour, repetition and irregularity—can inform contemporary garment design. Rather than assuming a single Gen-Z preference, the project uses a small questionnaire to gather preliminary responses and translates selected design considerations into a collection and one constructed garment.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

A design-led research approach was adopted. The study combines secondary research, primary questionnaire data, studio-based textile experimentation and fashion design development. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the questionnaire responses. The practical work was used to explore visual and design possibilities rather than to establish laboratory-tested performance claims.

3.2 Primary Data Collection

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire consisting of 15 questions. A total of 11 responses were received and analysed. Questions addressed age group, current status, familiarity with Batik, exposure to Batik products, preferred garment categories, silhouettes, colours, comfort, price expectations, shopping preferences and barriers to adoption.

3.3 Sampling and Data Analysis

The study used a convenience sample of 11 respondents. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to describe the responses. Some questions allowed multiple selections; for those questions, percentages are based on the number of respondents selecting each option and

therefore may not total 100%. Because the sample is small and predominantly student-based, the results are exploratory and cannot be generalised to the wider Gen-Z population.

3.4 Secondary Research and Practical Work

Secondary research was used to understand Batik's process, regional context and contemporary relevance. Practical textile experimentation was carried out on cotton fabric. Four samples were developed across three technique categories: one crackle Batik sample, two hand-drawn Batik samples featuring different motifs and colour combinations, and one wooden-block wax-resist sample. The samples were considered in relation to their pattern characteristics and potential application in garment design.

The design-development stage produced six digital fashion looks under the collection title Wax & Wonder. One look was selected for physical construction. No direct artisan interviews or craft-cluster visits were conducted; these are acknowledged as limitations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile and Awareness

Of the 11 respondents, six (54.5%) were aged 19–21 and five (45.5%) were aged 22–30. Nine respondents (81.8%) were students and two (18.2%) were working. In relation to Batik familiarity, five respondents (45.5%) described themselves as somewhat familiar, three (27.3%) were not familiar at all, two (18.2%) had heard of Batik but knew little about it, and one (9.1%) was very familiar. This distribution indicates varied awareness within the sample. Four respondents (36.4%) had seen Batik products but had never purchased them. Three (27.3%) had seen and purchased Batik products, while three (27.3%) had neither seen them closely nor purchased them. One respondent (9.1%) was unsure. These responses show that exposure and purchase are not identical, although the questionnaire does not establish the reasons behind individual purchase decisions.

When asked what could attract them to Batik, six respondents (54.5%) selected sustainable and handmade appeal, four (36.4%) selected unique and modern patterns, and one (9.1%) selected affordability. Ethnic-fusion garments and jackets/overlays were each selected by four respondents (36.4%); shirts/T-shirts were selected by three (27.3%). Dresses and pants/trousers were each selected by one respondent (9.1%). Since respondents could select more than one garment category, these percentages are not expected to total 100%.

4.3 Silhouette, Colour and Purchase Considerations

Fitted silhouettes were preferred by six respondents (54.5%), while four (36.4%) selected loose or oversized silhouettes and one (9.1%) selected draped silhouettes. Indigo and white were selected by five respondents (45.5%), earthy colours by three (27.3%), bright contrasting colours by two (18.2%) and pastels by one (9.1%). The average comfort rating recorded in the thesis was 3.73 out of 5.

Appearance was the main purchase factor for six respondents (54.5%), followed by comfort and quality for four (36.4%) and price for one (9.1%). For a Batik T-shirt, seven respondents (63.6%) indicated a price range of ₹300–₹600, three (27.3%) selected above ₹600 and one (9.1%) selected below ₹300. Five respondents (45.5%) said they would definitely consider purchasing Batik garments in contemporary silhouettes, while another five (45.5%) said

probably; one (9.1%) was unsure. Thus, 10 of 11 respondents expressed definite or probable interest, but this should be interpreted as stated intention in a small sample, not evidence of actual purchasing behaviour.

4.4 Barriers and Design Implications

Lack of awareness was identified as a barrier by six respondents (54.5%). Three (27.3%) associated the barrier with designs appearing too traditional, while limited availability and high price were each selected by one respondent (9.1%). These responses suggest that clear communication of the technique and contemporary product presentation may be useful areas for further investigation. The survey also points to the importance of visual appeal, comfort, quality and affordability when translating Batik into garments.

The findings informed the design direction but were not treated as a fixed description of all Gen-Z consumers. In particular, the preference for indigo and white was noted as a survey response, while the collection explored a different colour palette through the researcher's own design choices.

5. TEXTILE EXPERIMENTATION

5.1 Overview of Samples

Four cotton fabric samples were developed to explore different approaches to traditional Batik and wax-resist dyeing. The experimentation included Crackle Batik, Hand-drawn Batik, Conventional Wax Stamping and Conventional Wax Dipping. Each sample involved a different method of wax application, allowing the study to examine variations in resist patterns, surface effects and colour development. The experiments provided a practical understanding of how different wax-resist methods can be explored and adapted for contemporary fashion applications.

Sample	Technique	Exploration focus
1	Crackle Batik	Irregular crackle-like surface pattern
2	Hand-drawn Batik	First motif and colour combination
3	Conventional wax dipping method of Batik	Dipping fabric directly into melted wax before dyeing
4	Conventional wax dipping method of Batik	Dipping fabric directly into melted wax before dyeing

The crackle sample explored the irregular lines and surface effects associated with cracked wax. The hand-drawn samples allowed individual motif development and comparison of two visual directions. The wooden-block sample explored the use of a repeated motif and the possibility of more structured pattern placement. The available thesis documentation describes these technique categories, but detailed measured results—such as dye fastness, wash durability, wax penetration or repeat accuracy—were not established through formal testing and should not be claimed.

5.2 Comparative Interpretation

The three technique categories offer different visual possibilities. Crackle Batik can create irregular texture and a more spontaneous surface. Hand-drawn Batik provides flexibility in motif shape, scale and placement; the two samples in this study demonstrate how different



motifs and colours can create distinct outcomes within the same technique. Wooden-block wax-resist application can support repeated motifs, borders and more ordered arrangements. These observations informed the consideration of patterned and relatively plain fabric areas during garment development.

6. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT: WAX & WONDER

6.1 Concept and Visual Direction

The fashion collection is titled Wax & Wonder and is guided by the concept Quiet Forms, Bold Resist. The concept explores the balance between the traditional character of Batik and a contemporary fashion language. It emphasises clean silhouettes, considered colour combinations and selective placement of motifs rather than covering every garment with extensive pattern.

6.2 Collection Development

Six digital fashion looks were developed from the concept, using the textile experimentation and preliminary consumer findings as design references. The collection explores how Batik-inspired surface patterns can be incorporated into contemporary clothing through motif placement, colour, proportion and garment form. The six-look collection represents a design-development outcome; it does not establish that all six looks were physically produced.

6.3 Selected Physical Garment

One design was selected for physical construction. The final garment consists of a golden-beige asymmetrical sleeveless top paired with a pink wrap-style skirt featuring small Keri motifs. The design uses a relatively restrained top with a patterned skirt to create visual balance and direct attention to the textile detail. The completed garment demonstrates one way in which a traditional motif can be introduced into a contemporary two-piece silhouette.

7. CONCLUSION

This study explored the reinterpretation of Batik for Gen-Z-oriented fashion through secondary research, a small consumer questionnaire, cotton-fabric experimentation and garment development. The questionnaire revealed varied familiarity with Batik among the 11 respondents. Handmade and sustainable appeal and unique, modern patterns were frequently selected as factors of interest. Ten respondents indicated that they would definitely or probably consider purchasing Batik garments in contemporary silhouettes. These findings provide preliminary indications only and should not be generalised to the wider Gen-Z population. The practical component developed four cotton-fabric samples across three technique categories: crackle Batik, hand-drawn Batik and wooden-block wax-resist Batik. The two hand-drawn samples explored different motifs and colour combinations. These experiments supported the visual direction of the Wax & Wonder collection, comprising six digital looks and one physically constructed garment. The final garment paired a golden-beige asymmetrical sleeveless top with a pink wrap-style skirt featuring small Keri motifs. The project demonstrates the value of connecting research and textile exploration with applied fashion design. It suggests that Batik can be explored through contemporary silhouettes, selective motif placement and considered colour relationships while acknowledging the technique's cultural significance. The study does not claim to reproduce



authentic regional artisan production; rather, it presents a designer-led exploration informed by documented sources and studio experimentation.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The questionnaire involved only 11 respondents and used convenience sampling. The sample was predominantly student-based, and the results cannot represent the preferences of all Gen-Z consumers. The study did not include direct craft-cluster visits or artisan interviews. In addition, the practical work was a design exploration and did not include formal laboratory testing of colour fastness, wash durability, long-term wear or production scalability. Future research could involve a larger and more diverse consumer sample, direct collaboration with Batik practitioners, detailed documentation of regional processes and formal testing of fabric performance. Wear trials and structured feedback on the completed garment could also help evaluate comfort, fit, styling versatility, care requirements and consumer response.

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