

Tattoos and Piercings - Tradition, Fashion or Personal?

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Abstract

Tattoos and Piercings were considered cultural and religious value from eras. Indian tribes especially used these concepts as a tool of identification or segregation. The present tribes in the North-East are known to follow these traditions even today. While such generations do exist, the evolution of inking and piercing resulted in it being a fashion trend where one followed the other with no cultural or religious value being carried. The study aimed to analyze the assumption of growth of tattoos and piercings from a tradition to a fashion trend and now, probably just a personal choice showcasing individual values or beliefs. The survey done on adolescents and young adults resulted in positive reference to this assumption.

Keywords: Tattoos, Piercings, Culture, Religion, Tradition, Beliefs, Indian, Tribes, Fashion

Introduction

Tattoos are permanent skin markings made with ink and needles. After the ink is deposited into the dermis, the wound scabs over and the skin heals, revealing a design beneath the new layer.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, a permanent image, pattern, or word on the skin is created by using needles to put colors under the skin.

Tattooing has been practiced in most parts of the world, though it is uncommon among populations with the darkest skin tones and has been absent from most of China (at least in recent centuries). Tattooed designs are thought to provide magical protection against sickness or misfortune by various peoples, or they serve to identify the wearer's rank, status, or membership in a group. The most common reason for tattooing is for decoration.

Piercing is a type of body modification that involves puncturing or cutting a part of the human body to create an opening through which jewelry or an implant can be inserted.

The term piercing can refer to either the act or practice of piercing one's body or to an opening in one's body caused by this act or practice. It can also, by metonymy, refer to the resulting decoration, or to the decorative jewelry used. Piercings are a common and popular way to style yourself or show off your personality.

Tattoos and body piercings are two forms of body modification that have been popular for centuries. Body piercing dates back more than 5000 years, according to historians. Tattooed skin was discovered in a mummified body from South America dating back to 5000 BC. The social significance of getting a tattoo has changed over time, taking on new meanings in more recent times. Although tattoos have some historical advantages, the negative social effects of the outdated social perception of tattoos still exist. The stigmatization of women with tattoos is one instance of this.

The social inclination toward the tattooing culture has, however, been severely undermined or hardened by social trends that have brought new perspectives. Due to this, tattooing cases in particular societies have either increased or decreased.

The youth, who view tattooing as a current trend, find it to be very popular in today's global society. Tattoos convey personal messages or the wearer's convictions. This stands in stark contrast to the symbolism that tattoos once had in almost every culture on the planet.

In the past, older people preferred getting tattoos and getting their bodies pierced, but today's youth find these practices to be the most fascinating. Till the age of fifteen, piercing and tattooing became less common. As a result, tattooing's purpose and value are declining.

Some nations support tattoos and view them as works of art. However, most Asian nations forbid tattooing and body piercing. As a mark of ownership or as a form of punishment, the Greeks and Romans were known to tattoo slaves and prisoners (Schildkraut, 2004). Some nations used tattoos as status symbols, community tattoos, low cast tattoos, and business identification tattoos. Asian nations place a high value on their cultures, beliefs, and behaviors.

Since tattooing has evolved, it has come under scrutiny and is typically not tolerated in strict or popular cultures. Even though some nations forbid tattooing and body piercing, India does not. In general, most young people get tattoos and body piercings.

Research Methodology

The objective of this study was to analyze the assumption of growth of tattoos and piercings as a tradition to a fashion trend and now, probably a personal choice showcasing individual values and beliefs. The study has first reviewed existing literature to enhance the data on the theme and backed it with a survey to simply understand preferences, answered by a random sample of 100 people in the age group 18-30 years. The survey was conducted through a questionnaire with basic questions about their opinions on tattoos and piercings being a tradition, fashion or a personal choice.

The survey consisted of demographic open-ended questions, three closed ended questions (Multiple Choice Questions) about the topic and one open ended question about what their personal view in general is about the topic.

The conclusions shall be drawn based on the data collected at random and true to this sample assessed by the majority. The reliability and validity of the survey is of face value and limited to the sample.

Literature Analysis

According to MacFarlane (2019) despite having a similar illegal tattoo history, South Korea, China, and Japan all have differing legal rules regarding the practice today. China has limited restrictions on body art, whereas South Korea has the harshest laws that require a medical doctorate to lawfully get a tattoo. Through observational fieldwork in Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai, and Beijing as well as interviews with locals, this paper analyzes this intriguing disparity. With the help of younger generations, a new tattoo culture has gained popularity, and this essay aims to illustrate how it relates to the degree of democracy and progress in each nation. A new, younger generation with better access to the internet and the outside world has been able to adopt a tattoo culture unrelated to earlier trends, even though a strong societal stigma towards the art is still there because of the past criminal connection. In East Asia, tattoos are less about rebellious self-expression—which could pose a threat to authoritarian political structures—and more about the emergence of a modern society and a youthful middle class, unburdened by decades of poverty. The growing number of people with tattoos may not be as much of a symbol of a vibrant counterculture as it is of a modern, globally connected society.

According to the article given by Henley Porath (2021) the long-term historical development of body modification in East (Northeast and Southeast) Asia, from the "naturalistic" practices of the 20th century, such as cosmetic surgery, which aim to leave no visible evidence of change, to the intentionally transformative prehistoric practices, such as tattooing and tooth blackening. The contemporary postmodern resurgence of transforming body styles is also discussed. The global backdrop of Asian trends is explored, and comparative international figures on the prevalence of cosmetic surgery are offered. The remainder of the article discusses significant interpretational issues. How much of the current cosmetic surgery boom in Asia reflects modernity's universal processes and experiences, and how much does it reflect culturally unique aspirations and developments? What extent do contemporary Asian beauty ideals and practices—particularly the nearly universal demand for pale skin—deviate from native customs, are the results of colonialism, are manifestations of Western cultural hegemony, or are the results of a more comprehensive, cosmopolitan globalization? The study's conclusion explores the likelihood that the recent expansionary trend in cosmetic body alteration would continue unabated or run into strong opposition in Asian countries.

According to Guth (2000) body marks, physiognomy, and costume were crucial factors in establishing identification and highlighting otherness in the colonial world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where photography frequently served as a tool of visual surveillance and codification. Photographers working for British colonial officials in India amassed extensive dossiers of the diverse ethnic groups that make up the subcontinent, classifying them according to their distinctive physical characteristics and garb. Even though Japan was never a part of a European colonial empire, European commercial photos from the same era essentialized Japanese alterity in the shape of samurai and geishas, demonstrating that Japan was not immune from these cultural practices. Later, as Japan built its own empire, the government then embraced photography as a powerful new tool for recording and categorizing ethnic minorities both inside its borders and across Asia.

According to Thomas, Nicholas, Anna Cole, and Bronwen Douglas Tattoos are a typical component of contemporary fashion and expression, whether extensively adorning a biker's arms or tucked cutely and subtly above one's ankle. Although it may seem outdated, this permanent ornament has ancient and far-off origins in Oceania, where it was practiced for many years before being passed down to Western mariners. This collection provides an interesting look at the early cultural contacts between European and Pacific civilizations related to tattoos as well as the Western world's increasing acceptance of tattoos up to the present. Additionally, it is the first book to examine the development of tattoos in Oceania in-depth. The pieces in this collection first describe the intricate cultural exchanges between Oceania and Europe that led to sailors, whalers, and explorers returning home with tattoos. They then explore how missionaries and the colonial state influenced local tattoo customs and how tattoo culture has since evolved, both in the West and the Pacific, before moving on to concerns regarding encounter, representation, and exchange. Anyone interested in the history of tattoos, Oceanian culture, or native arts will find this unusual and fascinating history to be well portrayed.

According to Mohapatra, (May 2013) Ancestral tattoos have been utilized for a long time as an image of all humankind. Ancestral tattoos were the main tattoo plans that consistently graced the substance of the earth. It analyzed the ancestral tattoos as a feature of ancestral social-social life and the justification behind wearing tattoos, the various sorts and the cycles of making tattoo plans and its consideration, the critical of tattoo as connected with culture and custom, and a glance at tattoo in the new thousand years. Ancestral images shift, purposes behind inking were by and large something similar; going from marriage and

transitional experience. In ancestral networks of Odisha all kinds of people like to tattoo their bodies and kids however youthful as 5 years seem to be found with tattoo blemishes on their bodies and faces.

According to Ghosh (June 2020) Inking is thought of as a "visual language," which engraves social characteristics on the skin of the proprietor. This paper attempts to investigate the significance of tattoos in ancestral life as a social legacy, through a contextual analysis in two Santhal towns to and whether there is any age and sex wise perceptual contrast regarding inking. An engaged gathering interview was conducted in Balipara and Phuldanga towns of the Birbhum Locale, West Bengal, India to comprehend the status and meaning of inking among the Santhals living there. Spellbinding insightful exploration technique has been embraced to depict various styles and examples, materials used to ink the body, and fantasies and convictions woven around this fine art. Inking, as an ancestral workmanship, is losing its importance: to keep this custom alive, the market fragment and its suitable systems must be recognized to lean toward conventional ancestral tattoo plans to forestall their termination.

According to Laumann & Kluger, June (2018) Tattooing and body puncturing date back to early developments. In the past they were utilized during commencement customs or as a sign of societal position. Not just has inking been utilized for clinical purposes, design, and to stamp bunch connection yet in addition to distinguish lawbreakers, detainees, and slaves and for discipline. Then again, body penetrating has a more restricted history, although there is proof, in old social orders, of its utilization in the delicate ear cartilage, lower lip, and nasal septum for the inclusion of beautifying pieces, as well as its utilization in the genital region for sexual hindrance or joy. It was barely seen before the end of the 1980s in the high-level world. As a rule, it is even more normal among ladies than men. These two types of body change might have different basic inspirations as less than 33% of those with tattoos and a big part of those with body piercings have the other. Empowered by present day complex strategies and the shortfall of a far reaching effortlessly perceived drawback, the two exercises have become progressively normal in everyone. Concern has expanded connected with related social and clinical issues in the US and Europe. This has prompted expanded administrative endeavors, frequently not upheld, in numerous nations connected with the inking and body penetrating of minors; the data, composed and verbal, given to clients preceding the movement; the preparation and foundation of tattooists; the organization and sterility of materials embedded into the skin; and the cleanliness of the studios.

According to Rachel A Carmen, Amanda E Guitar and Haley M Dillon (2012), various investigations have discovered that puncturing and inking the body is an inexorably pervasive pattern in modern mainstream society; nonetheless, this isn't just a cutting-edge practice. Proof of different types of body ornamentation has been found in human social orders going back millennia. Although earlier research has zeroed in on the expected connections between different character qualities and the probability of piercing or inking the body, few have moved toward this point according to a transformative viewpoint. For example, the general inspirations for getting tattoos and piercings have would in general fall into similar three classifications for hundreds of years: (a) an image of a significant previous occasion, love, or kinship, (b) bunch membership, and/or (c) a marker of singularity. We contend that these inspirations are essentially general ways of behaving for an extreme transformative explanation: the propagation of one's qualities. In this article, we propose two new theories about the starting points of body ornamentation. To start with, in our "human material" speculation, we propose a connection between body ornamentation and the human species' authentic utilization of representative ideas. Second, in our "raising the stakes" speculation, we propose that the consistent ascent in prominence of inking and piercing in Western culture has happened because of bigger populace densities and progressions in health care, which has driven people to look for

new and remarkable presentations of wellness (i.e., body ornamentation). We then conclude with general models in mainstream society to show the proposed extreme evolutionary reasoning behind body ornamentation.

Survey Results

Out of the sample of 100 individuals belonging to the age group 18-30 years old, 12% were adolescents (18-20 years) while the remaining 82% were adults (21-30 years).

The results were charted as follows using pie charts named under Figure 1.0, Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2:

Do you have a tattoo/s or wish to get it done?

100 responses

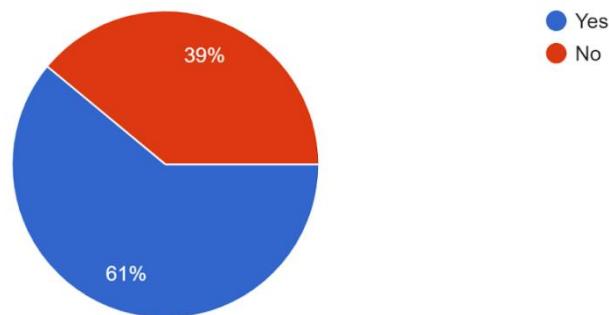


Figure 1.0

Do you have a piercing/s or wish to get it done?

100 responses

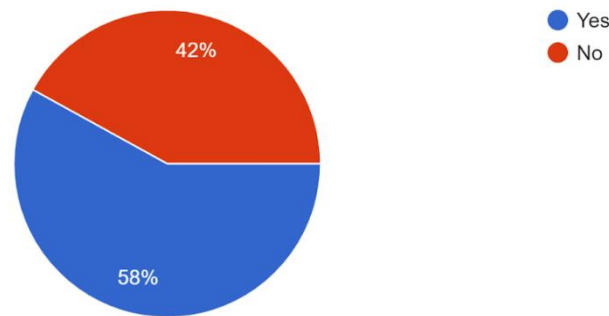


Figure 1.1

What are your views about tattoos and piercings?

100 responses

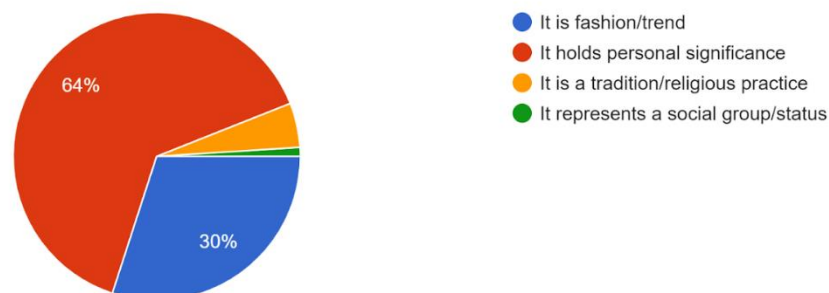


Figure 1.2

Discussion

The survey aimed to study the evolution of tattoos and piercings, examining their growth from traditional and cultural practices to fashion trends, and now potentially as personal choices that showcase individual values and beliefs. The survey was conducted on a sample of 100 randomly selected individuals aged 18-30 years.

With reference to Fig 1.0-1.2, the results clearly indicate a significant portion of the population, with 61% of respondents either having or preferring to get a tattoo and 58% either having or preferring to get a piercing, regardless of traditional beliefs. This finding suggests that tattoos and piercings have become mainstream and are not heavily influenced by cultural or religious motivations among this age group.

Furthermore, the survey revealed that 64% of respondents believe that tattoos and piercings hold personal significance. This majority view underscores the idea that these body modifications are now seen as expressions of individuality, personal values, and beliefs. In contrast, 30% of respondents consider tattoos and piercings as fashion trends, indicating that while personal significance is paramount for many, a substantial number still view these practices through the lens of contemporary fashion.

A negligible percentage of respondents see tattoos and piercings as tied to tradition, religious practices, or representations of culture or group identity. This shift highlights the evolving perception of body modifications, moving away from their historical and cultural roots to more personalized forms of self-expression in modern society.

Conclusion

The literature on tattoos and piercings reveals a dynamic evolution from traditional and cultural practices to modern expressions of personal identity. MacFarlane (2019) highlights the divergent legal frameworks and cultural perceptions in East Asia, showing how younger generations have shaped a new tattoo culture less about rebellion and more about modernity and personal expression. Similarly, Henley Porath (2021) discusses the historical development of body modification in East Asia, emphasizing the influence of modernity and globalization on beauty standards and practices, while Guth (2000) explores the colonial use of body marks for identification and cultural representation, highlighting their role in power dynamics. In addition, studies like those by Thomas, Cole, and Douglas trace the origins and cultural exchanges of tattoo practices between Oceania and Europe, examining the impact of colonial powers on local customs. Mohapatra (2013) and Ghosh (2020) focus on the cultural significance of tattoos in tribal communities, noting the need to preserve traditional designs amidst modernization. These studies underscore the deep-rooted cultural heritage and social significance of tattoos in various communities.

Modern perspectives by Laumann and Kluger (2018) and Carmen, Guitar, and Dillon (2012) highlight the resurgence of tattooing and body piercing in contemporary society, driven by advanced techniques and changing attitudes. They explore the motivations behind body ornamentation, suggesting that these practices serve as markers of significant events, group membership, and individuality. Overall, the literature supports the conclusion that tattoos and piercings have transitioned from traditional and cultural symbols to modern expressions of personal values, reflecting broader societal trends and individual identity formation in an interconnected world.

Meanwhile, the results and statistics showcase how the generations now believe the significance of tattoos and piercings are barely of tradition, culture or religion; slightly still a fashion trend and mostly just of personal value. While this is true to the sample it can fairly be generalized due to random selection. According to this statistical data with respect to the present generation (adolescents and young adults) the

assumption of growth of tattoos and piercings as a tradition to a fashion trend and now, probably a personal choice showcasing individual values and beliefs, is proved.

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