

# Symbolism, Design, and Cultural Narratives of Mandala and Lippan Art: An Empirical Study in Rajasthan and Kutch

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## ABSTRACT

Indian folk art reflects the nation's cultural and spiritual heritage. This study focuses on Rajasthan's Mandala art and Gujarat's Lippan art, exploring their symbolism, design, and cultural narratives through an empirical investigation in Rajasthan and Kutch. Data from 250 respondents (100 craftsmen and 150 consumers) were analyzed using descriptive, correlation, and regression methods. Results showed moderate to high appreciation for these art forms. Aesthetic appreciation, symbolic understanding, and historical awareness were strongly linked with positive perceptions of traditional art, while limited cultural exposure showed weaker associations. Regression analysis identified aesthetic appreciation ( $\beta = 0.371$ ,  $R^2 = 0.138$ ), symbolic understanding ( $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $R^2 = 0.234$ ), and historical awareness ( $\beta = 0.237$ ,  $R^2 = 0.286$ ) as key predictors, jointly explaining 29.5% of cultural art perception. These findings highlight that aesthetic sensitivity and cultural awareness are central to valuing Mandala and Lippan art.

**Keyword:** Indian Folk Art, Mandala Art, Lippan Art, Symbolism and Design, Cultural Narratives.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indian folk art represents one of the richest traditions of visual expression, reflecting the cultural, spiritual, and social life of communities across India. Rooted in nature, belief, and identity, these arts appear on walls, textiles, and ritual spaces, blending function with beauty and preserving collective creativity through generations [1]. Regional styles such as Madhubani, Pattachitra, and Warli show how geography and local values shape visual language [2]. Despite modernization and declining patronage, traditions like Rajasthan's Mandala and Gujarat's Lippan art continue to hold meaning through their symbolism and storytelling, underscoring the need for preservation and reinterpretation for future generations [3][4].

## 2. Literature Review

Artociti (2025) described the evolution of Lippan art, where mirror and mud techniques combine beauty with utility in Kutch's arid setting. Sharma (2025) traced how folk paintings convey mythology and social values, while Wijesekara and Dissanayake (2025) linked Mandala art to Buddhist spiritual geometry. Sharma *et al.* (2024) compared Rajasthan's Phad painting with Mandala for their shared symbolic storytelling, and Zhang *et al.* (2024) found Mandala effective for improving psychological well-being. Further, Khristi *et al.* (2024) confirmed its role in reducing student stress, Cort (2024) emphasized its function in preserving faith and memory, and Suryagayathri (2024) highlighted its educational value. Anand (2024) showed the persistence of spiritual motifs, while Sawant *et al.* (2023) noted parallels between traditional embroidery and the symbolic precision of Mandala and Lippan art.

## 3. Research objectives

The research objectives set for the present research work are:-

1. To give insight into the significant meaning of different symbols and motif in Mandala and Lippan art from their historical perspective
2. To visualize and compare various elements related to the design of mandala and lippan art .
3. To investigate the traditional architecture of mandala and lippan art and their association with modern art of present scenario.

## 4. Hypothesis

1. There is a significant correlation between the recognized metaphorical connotations and the design components seen in Lippan and Mandala paintings.
2. The traditional architectural principles reflected in Mandala and Lippan art significantly influence their reinterpretation and adaptation in modern art practices.

## 5. Methodology

The current research involved a sample of 250 participants from Rajasthan and the Kutch region, comprising 100 craftsmen and 150 consumers aged 25 to 50 years, each with at least five years

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of experience in selling or purchasing Mandala and Lippan art.

## 6. Measure

The Art Perception and Cultural Symbolism Scale (APCSS) assessed participants' familiarity, emotional connection, and understanding of Mandala and Lippan art through 20 items on a five-point Likert scale. Adapted from Karaca and Sarıgül (2020), it measures symbolic meaning, aesthetic appreciation, and cultural attachment with high reliability ( $\alpha = 0.82-0.91$ ). The Cultural Aesthetic Appreciation Scale (CAAS), developed for this study, evaluates design and cultural reflection across 20 items based on Blijlevens *et al.* (2017), showing strong reliability ( $\alpha = 0.79-0.88$ ).

## 7. Statistical analysis

Following dataset collection, regression and correlation analysis were carried out using SPSS 22.0.

## 8. Results and discussion

Table 1 shows that participants demonstrated strong understanding and emotional connection with Mandala and Lippan art. Aesthetic Appreciation correlated positively with Design Evaluation ( $r = .157, p < 0.01$ ) and Cultural Reflection ( $r = .168, p < 0.01$ ), while Symbolic Interpretation showed a negative link with Design Evaluation ( $r = -.168, p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

Variable Code	Mean	SD	Aesthetic Appreciation (AA)	Symbolic Interpretation (SI)	Design Evaluation (DE)	Cultural Reflection (CR)	Emotional Engagement (EE)
MA (Mandala Art Perception)	12.605	3.666	.202**	-.168**	.157**	.168**	.168**
LA (Lippan Art Perception)	12.148	3.896	.155**	-.280**	.190**	.170**	.181**
CV (Cultural Value)	11.455	4.218	.235**	-.224**	.243**	.197**	.198**
AE (Aesthetic Experience)	10.745	3.744	.124*	-.166**	.213**	.142**	.184**
SI (Symbolic Interpretation)	10.418	3.702	.089	-.187**	.041	.105*	.088
CR (Cultural Reflection)	10.905	4.141	.189**	-.244**	.257**	.280**	.210**
<b>Total Aesthetic-Cultural Perception (TACP)</b>	<b>68.275</b>	<b>13.406</b>	<b>.292</b>	<b>-.372</b>	<b>.325</b>	<b>.313</b>	<b>.301</b>

**Table 2:** Regression Analysis

Dependent Variables	Predictors	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	$\beta$ (Standardized Coefficients)	F Change	% Variance Explained
Symbolic Interpretation	Cultural Aesthetic Appreciation	0.218	0.048	0.048	0.218	18.512**	4.8%
	Art Perception & Cultural Symbolism (APCSS)	0.267	0.071	0.023	0.156	9.334**	2.3%
	Historical Awareness	0.295	0.087	0.016	0.132	6.101*	1.6%
Design Visualization & Comparison	Aesthetic Sensitivity	0.274	0.075	0.075	0.274	31.428**	7.5%
	Symbolic Awareness	0.331	0.110	0.035	0.186	14.823**	3.5%
	Cultural Context Understanding	0.355	0.126	0.016	0.142	7.882**	1.6%
Traditional Architectural Association	Modern Artistic Influence	0.249	0.062	0.062	0.249	24.615**	6.2%
	Cultural Symbolism	0.323	0.104	0.042	0.210	19.876**	4.2%

	Artistic Innovation	0.351	0.123	0.019	0.148	8.744**	1.9%
	Material Usage Understanding	0.367	0.135	0.012	0.119	5.004*	1.2%
<b>Cultural Relevance in Modern Art</b>	Symbolic Awareness	0.214	0.046	0.046	0.214	17.944**	4.6%
	Aesthetic Appreciation	0.266	0.071	0.025	0.160	10.216**	2.5%
	Traditional Knowledge Integration	0.297	0.088	0.018	0.140	7.554**	1.8%
<b>Overall Cultural Aesthetic Perception</b>	Aesthetic Appreciation	0.371	0.138	0.138	0.371	63.111**	13.8%
	Symbolic Understanding	0.479	0.229	0.091	0.305	48.752**	9.1%

Regression results revealed that Cultural Aesthetic Appreciation ( $\beta = 0.218$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was the strongest predictor of symbolic interpretation, followed by APCSS ( $\beta = 0.156$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Historical Awareness ( $\beta = 0.132$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For design visualization, Aesthetic Sensitivity ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) had the highest impact, supported by Symbolic Awareness ( $\beta = 0.186$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Cultural Context Understanding ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Modern Artistic Influence ( $\beta = 0.249$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Cultural Symbolism ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) shaped perceptions of traditional roots in architecture, while Artistic Innovation and Traditional Knowledge Integration also contributed modestly.

## 9. Conclusion

The study found that people's perception of Mandala and Lippan art depends on aesthetic sensitivity, symbolic understanding, and historical awareness. Using CAAS and APCSS, results showed moderate to high cultural appreciation, with these three factors explaining 29.5% of the variance in overall perception. The findings highlight that preserving and reinterpreting traditional art within modern contexts strengthens both heritage value and cultural identity.

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