

Factors Affecting the Pricing Decisions in the Tattoo Industry

Priya Sengupta & Shawn Langford

K.C. College of Engineering and Management Studies & Research, Thane

Abstract:- This article intends to understand the factors affecting the pricing decisions in the tattoo industry. It has been taken into account that the tattoo studios are responsible for setting the price of the tattoos based on various factors. Considering that Mumbai has seen an increase in the number of tattoo studios and artists over a span of a decade, this paper focuses on highlighting the shift in the pricing decisions.

Keywords:- Tattoo, Price, Pricing Decision, Mumbai, Tattoo Parlor, Tattoo Artist, Tattoo Studio.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Tattoo” as a word comes into existence from the Tahitian “Tatu” which translates “to mark something”. Worldwide, cultural aspects and traditional beliefs have passed on inking to portray religious beliefs, war memories, tribal origins etc. For e.g.:-The Maori tribes in New Zealand tend to have tattoos on the chin part of their face, it helps them to differentiate their tribal community. In some countries woman get tattoo designs to portray their skill sets for e.g. cooking, music, stitching etc. If a woman has a tattoo reflecting her skill set of being a skilled weaver her status as prime marriageable material increases.

Similarly some warriors had their body tattooed to give general information about their origin, religion, culture, kingdom etc. This was important due to unfortunate death rates during war and identifying soldiers would be easier with the symbols on their body.

Numerous articles stated and argued about the origin and history of tattoo which originally backs to 12,000 BC. Earlier articles highlighted the expansion of Egyptian Empire through which the art of tattooing spread well. In India, the “Banjara Community Woman” tend to have tattoo design on their face and neck.

II. CHANGING TRENDS IN TATTOO INDUSTRY

This paper highlights the changing trend of tattoo industry considering “Mumbai region” which is also known as the Bollywood City. Entertainment industry influences the current youth tremendously and creates a style statement for them. Some movies use tattoo symbols to explain the characters in negative roles or the villain being a part of a

secret society. For instance, Hollywood has quite often depicted the Yakuza, using tattooing as a form of initiation.

Bollywood action movies depict power and authority through the role played by actors like Ajay Devgn in the movie Singham. The Lion Tattoo on the actor’s chest in the movie Singham symbolizes strength and power equivalent to the King of the jungle.

Today, this industry is one of the fastest growing industries that has unfortunately been unable to garner as much respect as other similar skill sets such as makeup artists. Festivals like Navaratri have boosted the business of tattoo artists not only in the permanent tattoo segment but also in the temporary ones. Marriages and festivals have opened an avenue for the budding artist to earn a decent source of income through art, which in turn has seen the steady rise in the number of tattoo studios around the city.

III. FACTORS AFFECTING PRICING DECISION IN TATTOO INDUSTRY

With the influx of tattoo artists over the years, it would only make sense that the art now require a well-trained artistry. Many of the tattoo studios now include training apprentices. This in itself leads to more tattoo artists entering into the industry. What must be taken into consideration is that, with the increase in the number of highly skilled, tattoo artists, there now exists competition.

As is the case with other service based industries, tattoo work can now be seen bifurcating their market into a more premium segment as well. With this the pricing decisions have seen a change now involving more independent variables. Such as:

- 1) Skill and experience of the artist
- 2) Complexity of the tattoo
- 3) Colour of the ink
- 4) Body placement
- 5) Custom design
- 6) Geographical location
- 7) Size of the tattoo
- 8) Popularity of the artist and studio
- 9) Tattooing tools

Using the above independent variables, the pricing is done either by setting price for the whole piece of art or by the hours taken to complete the design.

IV. SKILL AND EXPERIENCE OF THE ARTIST

Considering that tattoo is an art, it is only reasonable that the artist be given his due for his talent and artistry. Most tattoo artist device their pricing on the basis of the intricacy of the design provided by the client. It has been observed that, to bring a more heightened sense of originality to the tattoo, the artist almost always suggests a custom design. This design, is made on the basis of the client’s idea, which is then sketched onto paper by the artist. Here, in most cases, the tattoo artist explains how the tattoo could get more intricate, therefore leading to a longer duration for the process. In this situation, it is not just the originality of the

piece that is taken into consideration, but also how long the artist would have to spend with the tattoo.

Based on the extensive and impressive portfolio of the tattoo artist, the client would then be inclined to spend an exorbitant amount on the tattoo, with the hope of being “branded”. By this point, the client isn’t concerned with the fact that he/she would be charged by the hour. The idea here is that, not unlike, visiting professors in colleges, tattoo artists charge for their skills and knowledge of the domain. It can be stated that this variable can be highly lucrative for the tattoo artist.

V. COMPLEXITY OF THE TATTOO



Fig 1:- Intricate Sleeve Design

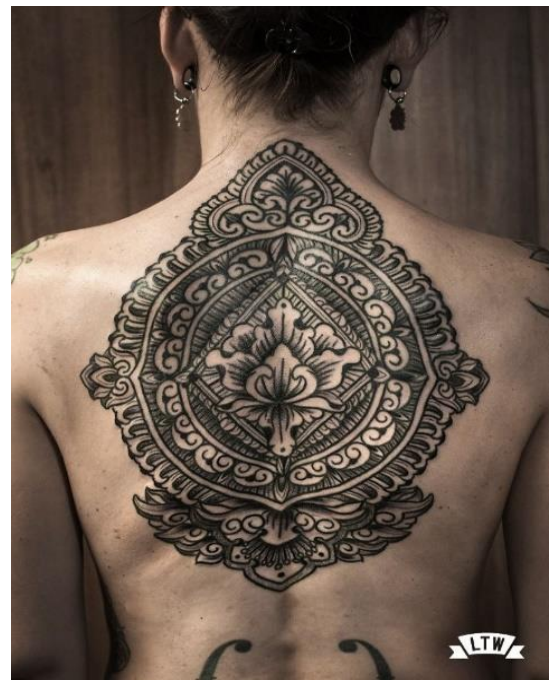


Fig 2:- Intricate Back Design

Intricate and complex tattoo designs require a lot more focus and attention to detail, which in turn leads to more room for error and therefore is seen as quite a risky endeavor.

The complexity of the design, brings on issues like:

- Ink Smudging over the years
- Errors while inking, if the lines are too close to each other
- Fatigue of the artist due to the long hours spent in the procedure

The above mentioned issues can lead to the tattoo artist considering it risky, since even the slightest of errors can have an immensely negative impact on his reputation and would hence affect his business and brand worth. Considering the risk involved, the tattoo artist prices his work accordingly.

Clients are usually convinced with the price after the risks involved of having such intricate designs explained to them.

VI. COLOUR OF THE INK

S. No	Colour	Materials Used in Tattoo Pigments
1	Black	Variants of Iron Oxide
2	Brown	Ochre
3	Red	Cinnabar, Cadmium Red, Iron Oxide, AS - Pigment
4	Orange	Cadmium Selenosulfide
5	Flesh	Ochre mixed with clay
6	Yellow	Cadmium Yellow, Chrome Yellow
7	Green	Casalis Green
8	Blue	Cobalt Blue
9	Violet	Manganese Violet
10	White	Titanium Dioxide

Table 1:- Color of Pigment and its Constituents

A lot goes into the pigments used in tattoo inks. Most designs require the basic black or gray colors to fill the piece. However, once a while there comes along a client who is interested in a more colorful piece, which would demand more of the artist’s time.

Certain colors require mix of different pigments. For this, the artist would have to take time off in the middle of his process, in order to mix the pigments so that the mixture is ready for inking. Certain pigments are also comparatively expensive, which would cost the artist more.

VII. Body Placement

The placement of the tattoo, depends largely on the client, which can be hectic for the artist. The client usually

requests locations on their body which can hurt more than they expect. This is can cause the following issues:

- Due to pain in the target location, the client would request breaks from the process which would hinder the creative flow of the artist.
- Any movement during the process (caused due to pain) can lead to the distortion of the design.
- Certain designs cannot be placed in certain locations due to size constraints.

The artist prices the tattoo based on the fact that the location selected would require a lot more attention and care to not only make sure the tattoo looks like the source, but also that the client experiences as little pain as possible.

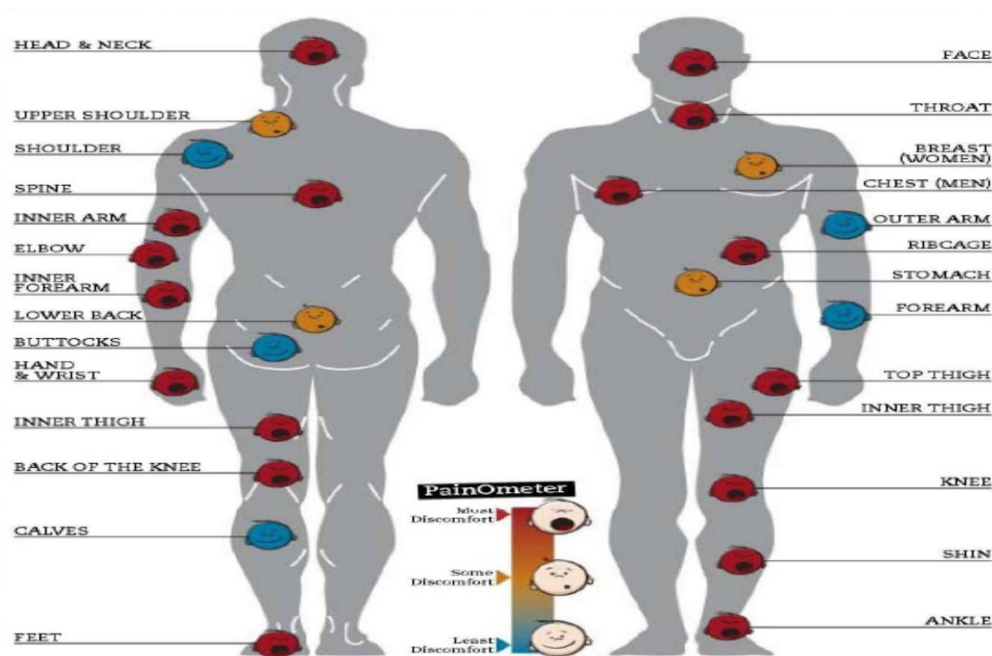


Fig 3:- Painful areas for get a Tattoo

VIII. CUSTOM DESIGN

A custom design can be defined as a design specifically made for a particular client. This is a variable that seems equally beneficial to both, the client as well as the artist. The client explains to the artist, what is expected, and the artist in turn, converts those thoughts to art on paper. The process of giving a physical form to an idea and converting that into body art, establishes uniqueness of the tattoo, and as per the studio policies, cannot be shared with other clients. This uniqueness and originality leads the artist to use this variable as leverage for pricing.

IX. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The Geographical location of a tattoo studio too determines the price of the tattoo. This can be stated considering Mumbai as the location. Mumbai is bifurcated into Central, Harbour and Western sub areas. These areas further reflect various demographic factors and its impact on consumer behavior. Tattoo Studios are generally independent ventures run by the tattoo artist.

S. No	Name of the Tattoo Studio	Location	Branch Line of the Mumbai Railways	Price Range
1	Ace Tattoo and Art Studio	Colaba	Central Line	Rs. 5000/hr onwards
2	Hearts and Spades Studio	Sanpada	Harbour line	Rs. 600/sq.inch
3	Lilly’s Fine Tattoo	Ghatkopar	Central line	Rs. 350/sq.inch
4	Anstice Tattoo Hub	Dombivili	Central Line	Rs. 250/sq.inch
5	Iron Buzz	Bandra Linking road	Western Line	Rs. 7000/hr onwards
6	Alien Tattoo	Malad	Western Line	Rs. 6000/hr onwards

Table 2:- Tattoo Studios with Location and Rate

The above table is based on the price difference in Mumbai region. Price varies based on the location of the Studio. Furthermore, individual artist take the liberty of deciding whether to charge on hourly basis or as per the size of the tattoo. This location even reflects the economical strata and status of the consumer based on his residential location.

X. SIZE OF THE TATTOO

Size Of the tattoo is the least important factor considered by the clients which causes last minute confusion as it is up to the artist to explain to the client, the importance of the tattoo size with respect to the location, design as well as cost. Most of the potential tattoo clients are not aware of the fact that the size of the tattoo plays a vital role in the pricing of the entire process. Size of a tattoo ranges from XS-XL if Size charts are used as a guide. For reference:

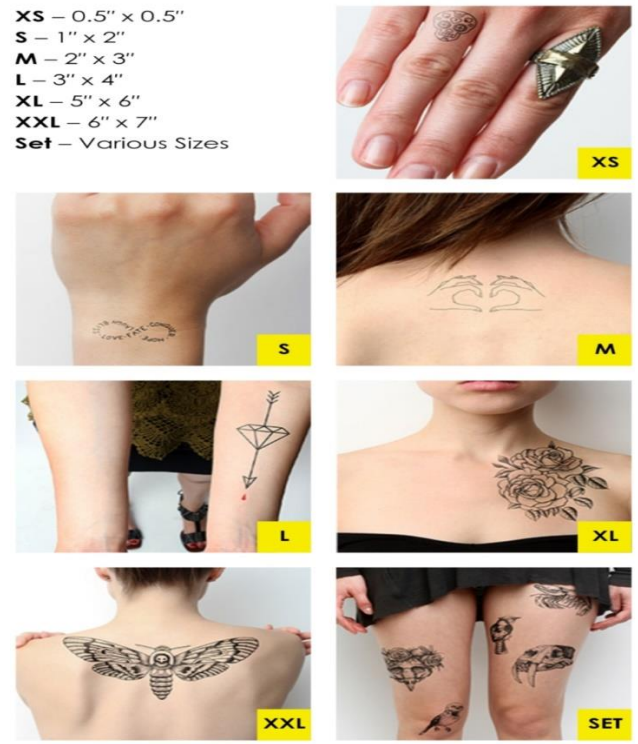


Fig 4:- Tattoo Size Chart

Getting inked cannot be considered as a simple process similar to buying a product, as consumer behavior pattern differs based on their physical appearance. This is one factor which is directly proportional to the size of the tattoo. Design should be proportionate to the surface area of the skin and body part to be tattooed. Size of the tattoo determines the cost of the service. Some clients assume that the image that they refer to online will be the size they will finally get. However, this is a misconception. The tattoo artist helps the client understand the actual size and the location for the design to be placed. This leads to an incremental change in cost, which in turn leads to change in consumer decision making process.

XI. POPULARITY OF THE ARTIST AND STUDIO

For some clients price is not the main factor while deciding on the tattoo, this is because of the emotional importance and the reason behind getting inked. For such category of people, popularity of the artist and studio plays a major role. Customers relate low cost to inexperienced artist and talent and experience artist to a higher cost. As per www.authoritytattoo.com, studios usually take a portion of the artist's income in return for renting studio space and cost of materials used by the artist while at the studio. For a popular studio, popularity of the artist matters a lot because the customers prefer going through the websites for reviews and design portfolios before walking in to the studio. Some studios promote by mentioning the art work designed for a celebrity. This increases trust and is an indirect way of promotion which affects the pricing decision.

XII. CONCLUSION

The tattoo industry is a relatively up and coming service industry which is creating great avenues for the youngsters to pursue a serious career in this area as any other artist. This paper has highlighted the factors which affect the pricing of the service based on variables. Entrepreneurs and potential tattoo studio owners can use this information to hire tattoo artists, plan the finances involved in owning a tattoo studio and deciding on pricing strategies to sustain their position in the competitive market further defining the target audience.

REFERENCES

- [1]. <http://www.powerverbs.com/tattooyou/history.htm>
- [2]. <https://tatring.com/getting-tattooed/How-Much-Will-My-Tattoo-Cost>
- [3]. <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/fashion/tattoo-trends-in-india-2859271/>
- [4]. <https://www.businesstoday.in/magazine/features/tattoo-studios-artists-business-proliferate/story/199802.html>
- [5]. Helmenstine, Anne Marie, Ph.D. (2019, January 17). Tattoo Ink Chemistry.
- [6]. <https://authoritytattoo.com/how-much-do-tattoos-cost/>