

## BRANDING KERALA TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFT MARKET: IMPLICATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

\*Arya Reghunathan, \*\*Dr. S Sajeev

### Abstract

Handicrafts serve as powerful cultural symbols, representing the heritage, identity, and artistic traditions of communities. In Kerala, traditional handicrafts not only preserve the region's rich cultural legacy but also contribute significantly to the local economy, particularly within the tourism sector. With the evolving consumer landscape shaped by digital access and growing demand for authenticity, the relevance of geographical indication—especially in the context of Geographical Indication (GI)—has become increasingly vital. Geographical indication offers a promising technological solution to ensure the authenticity, traceability, and branding of traditional handicraft products. This study aims to explore the role of geographical indication in branding Kerala's traditional handicraft market. Specifically, it assesses the relevance of geographical indication in enhancing brand recognition, expanding market access, protecting product originality, and reinforcing cultural identity. Furthermore, the study evaluates the direct and indirect implications of geographical indication, including its ability to prevent counterfeiting, improve product credibility, increase demand, and sustain a premium pricing structure rooted in cultural value.

**Keywords:-** Geographical Indication, Implication, Culture and Heritage, Handicraft, Branding, Cultural Identity, Traditional Value.

*H*andicrafts reflect the cultural heritage and traditions of communities, valued for their authenticity and artistic appeal. As popular souvenirs, they embody stories and skilled craftsmanship, making branding essential not just for

commercial gain but for preserving cultural identity.

With rising demand driven by lifestyle changes and a preference for handmade items, the handicraft sector holds growing economic importance. However, the digital era brings both opportunities and

\*Arya Reghunathan, Research Scholar, I.M.G, Trivandrum University of Kerala, Kerala, India,  
E-mail: aryareghunathan@gmail.com .

\*\*Dr. S Sajeev, Professor, I.M.G, Trivandrum, University of Kerala, Kerala, India,  
E-mail: facultyimgssdr@gmail.com

challenges - while access to information has improved, ensuring authenticity is more crucial than ever. The Indian handicraft industry is projected to grow significantly, with a market size expected to reach USD 8,198.5 million by 2033. Amid this growth, adapting to technology is vital. This study explores the role of geo-tagging in branding Kerala's traditional handicrafts, focusing on its potential to enhance authenticity, traceability, and market positioning.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Geographical Indication (GI) is a form of intellectual property right that protects the origin of a product, ensuring its authenticity and preventing imitation or misrepresentation (Tanweer Alam Sunny & Patel, J.K., 2024). Beyond safeguarding the originality of products, GI also serves as a powerful tool for preserving and validating the cultural and traditional identity of a community. Downes (1999) emphasized that both trademarks and geographical indications act as effective marketing incentives, particularly for products rooted in traditional knowledge. More specifically, GI contributes to the protection of biodiversity and traditional practices.

Koul and Ahuja (2001) further argued that legal mechanisms like trademarks and GIs help manufacturers defend against counterfeit and low-quality imitations. They warned that unregistered or duplicate products can misrepresent or dilute the cultural and traditional essence associated with authentic goods. Thus, geographical indications and intellectual property rights are seen as essential safeguards for preserving the integrity of

such products. In this context, the present study investigates the relevance of geographical indication in the branding of Kerala's traditional handicraft market.

### 1.2 Review of Literature

Literature shows that Geographical Indication (GI) effectively protects the cultural and traditional value of handicrafts, especially in tourism. Handicraft items with unique designs tied to specific geographic regions often gain strong reputations due to their distinctiveness and origins. (Agarwal & Barone, 2005). Studies highlight that effective branding of traditional products depends on strong intellectual property rights (IPR) support, including trademarks and Geographical Indications (Wadehra, 2010). The American Marketing Association (2013) defines a brand as a unique identifier that differentiates goods or services and fosters customer loyalty. Geographical Indication serves as a key tool to enhance transparency, provide valuable consumer information, and build brand identity and trust. This is particularly important in the handicraft sector, where GI registration improves product information accessibility. Accordingly, this study examines the impact of GI on branding and market value of Kerala's traditional handicrafts.

### 1.3 Objectives

1. To explore the relevance of geographical indication in the branding of Kerala's traditional handicraft market.
2. To assess the implications of geographical indication in Kerala's traditional handicraft market.

## 1.4 Research Design and Sampling Techniques

The study used a descriptive and analytical research design, drawing on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data came from relevant literature, while primary data were collected from handicraft manufacturers and sellers operating in tourist areas of Thiruvananthapuram district. Using purposive sampling, participants with direct experience in the traditional handicraft market were selected. The Cochran formula determined a sample size of 384 respondents, equally divided between manufacturers and sellers for balanced analysis.

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

The cultural and emotional value of handicrafts enhances their market appeal, as consumers often prefer them over machine-made products for their authenticity and connection to tradition. This study explores the link between handicrafts and Geographical Indication (GI), aiming to assess how GI can help build a distinctive and authentic brand identity for Kerala's traditional handicrafts.

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

This research article examines the relevance and implications of geographical indication in the branding of Kerala's traditional handicraft products. Furthermore, the study investigates how geographical indication can enhance market opportunities and contribute to the effective branding of these culturally significant crafts.

## 1.7 Pilot Survey and internal consistency

A pilot study involving 50 respondents was conducted to finalize the variables and develop the questionnaire. It focused on the relevance and implications of Geographical Indication and the branding of Kerala's traditional handicrafts. The results showed high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70, confirming the reliability of the selected variables for the main study.

## 1.8 Data Analysis and Discussions

The table 1 is explaining the list of factors and subfactors used to study the objectives of the study. Here, the study was arguing that geographical indication has an effective implication on Kerala Traditional Handicraft products.

The results confirm the questionnaire's validity and reliability, with all core factors—Relevance of Geographical Indication, Direct Benefits, Indirect Benefits, and Branding—showing high Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70. The variance extracted also indicates strong explanatory power, ensuring the constructs effectively address the research questions.

## 1.9 Relevance of Geographical indication regarding Branding Kerala Traditional Handicraft Market

This research employed twelve parameters to evaluate the relevance of geographical indication in branding Kerala's traditional handicraft market. To statistically validate the respondents' opinions, a one-sample t-test was

**Table 1**  
**Internal Consistency and Validity of Questionnaire**

Sl.	Factors	Sub-F	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha-Std.
1	<i>Relevance geographical indication</i>	Brand recognition	.845	.882 (71.24 Per cent Variance Extracted)
		Accessing information	.811	
		Accessing geographical location	.852	
		Expanding the market	.914	
		Exploring differentiation and unique identity	.874	
		Creating loyalty among customers	.825	
		Global reach	.821	
		National and international acceptance	.888	
		Presenting cultural value	.834	
		Possessing traditional back up stories	.899	
		Protecting uniqueness	.901	
		Eliminating copied version of product	.845	
<i>Implication of geographical indication</i>			.845	
2	<i>Direct Benefits</i>	Preventing copied product making	.882	.893 (48.65 Per cent Variance Extracted)
		Reliability and credibility	.839	
		Increasing the demand of the product	.888	
		Spreading cultural and traditional values	.824	
		Sense of Products Quality	.965	
3	<i>Indirect benefits</i>	Branding traditional culture	.911	.854 (45.21 Per cent Variance Extracted)
		Maintain unique features of products	.854	
		Expanding the handicraft items and its geographical indication	.851	
		Cultural respect	.862	
		Maintain premium price structure	.908	
4	<i>Branding</i>	Higher Demand	.911	.924 (51.24 Per cent Variance Extracted)
		Unique features	.547	
		Unique design	.847	
		Premium price	.899	
		Cultural and traditional values	.855	
		Hand made	.809	

*Source: Pilot Survey Collection*

conducted. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was used to examine differences in perceptions between the two sample groups: manufacturers and sellers/shop owners.

The analysis of respondents' opinions on the relevance of Geographical Indication (GI) in branding Kerala's traditional handicrafts, based on twelve parameters using a five-point Likert scale,

Table 2

**Relevance of Geographical indication on Kerala Tradition Handicraft Brand Market**

Relevance of Geographical indication	Group (Sample)				T	p-v		
	Group A		Group B					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Brand recognition	4.75	.596	4.72	.620	.509	.611		
Accessing information	4.52	.677	4.48	.703	.444	.658		
Accessing geographical location	4.70	.694	4.76	.586	-.947	.344		
Expanding the market	4.71	.820	4.78	.721	-.925	.355		
Exploring differentiation and unique identity	4.52	.859	4.61	.740	-1.098	.273		
Creating loyalty among customers	4.66	.624	4.66	.662	.107	.915		
Global reach	4.79	.540	4.78	.555	.080	.937		
National and international acceptance	4.41	.817	4.46	.725	-.710	.478		
Presenting cultural value	4.47	.706	4.33	.741	1.932	.054		
Possessing traditional back up stories	4.80	.563	4.85	.486	-.903	.367		
Protecting uniqueness	4.29	1.138	4.42	.982	-1.173	.242		
Eliminating copied version of product	4.64	.482	4.56	.530	1.403	.162		
One sample t-test $t_{(383)} = 55.856$ , $P-v=.000 < 0.05$								

*Source: Primary Data*

showed a generally positive perception. A one-sample t-test confirmed the significance of these views. Additionally, independent samples t-test results indicated no significant difference between manufacturers and sellers, suggesting both groups agree on the crucial role of GI in branding and marketing traditional handicraft products.

The table 3 highlights the direct and indirect benefits of Geographical Indication (GI) in Kerala's handicraft industry, showing general agreement between manufacturers and sellers on its positive impact. A one-sample t-test confirmed this overall consensus. However, independent samples t-test results revealed significant differences in views on specific benefits, such as increased product demand and GI's role in branding traditional culture. This suggests that while GI is widely valued,

perceptions of its benefits vary between manufacturers and sellers based on their roles and experiences.

The table 4 shows that both manufacturers and sellers generally agree that Geographical Indication (GI) positively impacts the branding of Kerala's traditional handicrafts, supported by a one-sample t-test. However, an independent samples t-test reveals a significant difference between the groups regarding whether GI justifies premium pricing, indicating differing views based on their market roles.

The table 5 presents the results of proximity scaling analysis for the individual statements under the categories of relevance of geographical indication, implication, and branding of the Kerala traditional handicraft market. The model's fit indices suggest an acceptable and strong model fit: the normalized raw stress and

Table 3

**Implication of Geographical Indication on Kerala Tradition Handicraft Brand Market**

Factors	Implication	Group (Sample)				T	p-v		
		Group A		Group B					
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Direct Benefit	Preventing copied product making	4.52	.859	4.61	.740	-1.09	.273		
	Reliability and credibility	4.79	.540	4.78	.555	.080	.937		
	Increasing the demand of the product	4.64	.622	4.77	.456	-2.42	.016		
	Spreading cultural and traditional values	4.85	.428	4.88	.381	-.940	.348		
	Sense of Products Quality	4.39	.770	4.34	.756	.534	.594		
Indirect Benefits	Branding traditional culture	4.53	.750	4.37	.817	2.012	.045		
	Maintain unique features of products	4.61	.797	4.56	.832	.605	.545		
	Expanding the handicraft items and its geographical indication	4.69	.631	4.68	.630	.156	.876		
	Cultural respect	4.63	.829	4.64	.773	-.182	.856		
	Maintain premium price structure	4.65	.714	4.68	.664	-.452	.651		

One sample t-test  $t_{(383)} = 41.278$ ,  $P-v=.000<0.05$ *Source: Primary Data*

Table 4

**Branding of Kerala Traditional Handicraft Product Market**

		Group (Sample)				T	p-v		
		Group A		Group B					
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Higher Demand		4.54	.692	4.45	.741	1.095	.274		
Unique features		4.16	.924	4.22	.825	-.582	.561		
Unique design		4.64	.669	4.76	1.412	-1.004	.316		
Premium price		4.74	.642	4.51	.877	2.883	.004		
Cultural and traditional values		4.28	.920	4.18	.954	1.093	.275		
Hand made		4.51	.847	4.46	.924	.521	.603		

One sample t-test  $t_{(383)} = 37.251$ ,  $P-v=.000<0.05$ *Source: Primary Data*

other stress values are close to zero, indicating low error, while the Dispersion Accounted For (D.A.F.) value of 0.93382 and Tucker's Coefficient of Congruence of 0.96635 are both close to 1, confirming a high goodness of fit. The analysis identified key attributes with strong positive preferences among respondents, including brand recognition, geographic origin, traditional stories, counterfeit prevention, reliability, product quality,

market expansion, cultural respect, and premium pricing. These factors are considered crucial by stakeholders for strengthening the market through Geographical Indication.

### 1.10 Impact of Geographical Indication on Branding

Collinearity diagnostics show an eigen value-to-dimension ratio of 9.42, below the threshold of 10, indicating no

Table 5

**Final Coordinates of Relevance of Geographical Indication, Implication, and Branding of Kerala Traditional Handicraft Market**

		Dimension		Stress and Fit Measures	
		D1	D2		
RG1	Brand recognition	.485	.077	Normalized Raw Stress	.06618
RG2	Accessing information	-.026	.199	Stress-I	.02725 <sup>a</sup>
RG3	Accessing geographical location	.470	.021	Stress-II	.01775 <sup>a</sup>
RG4	Expanding the market	.737	-.371	S-Stress	.01417 <sup>b</sup>
RG5	Exploring differentiation and unique identity	.526	-.589	Dispersion Accounted For (D.A.F)	.93382
RG6	Creating loyalty among customers	.427	-.244	Tucker's Coefficient of Congruence	.96635
RG7	Global reach	.196	-.040	PROXSCAL minimizes Normalized Raw Stress.	
RG8	National and international acceptance	-.367	.547		
RG9	Presenting cultural value	-.417	-.289		
RG10	Possessing traditional back up stories	.348	.137		
RG11	Protecting uniqueness	-.635	1.055		
RG12	Eliminating copied version of product	.190	.170		
DB1	Preventing copied product making	-.007	-.082		
DB2	Reliability and credibility	.240	.074		
DB3	Increasing the demand of the product	-.277	-.645		
DB4	Spreading cultural and traditional values	-.504	-.005		
DB5	Sense of Products Quality	.182	.770		
IB1	Branding traditional culture	.117	-.251		
IB2	Maintain unique features of products	-.430	.394		
IB3	Expanding the handicraft items and its geographical indication	.005	.416		
IB4	Cultural respect	.241	.332		
IB5	Maintain premium price structure	-.631	-.501		
B1	Higher Demand	.167	-.912		
B2	Unique features	.046	-.510		
B3	Unique design	-.100	.154		
B4	Premium price	1.153	.670		
B5	Cultural and traditional values	-.169	-.304		
B6	Hand made	-.106	-.272		

*Source: Primary Data*

multicollinearity in the data. The square root value of 3.0705 further supports this. Regression analysis reveals that variables related to relevance, direct, and indirect implications are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), confirming that Geographical Indication factors and their benefits positively influence the branding of Kerala's traditional handicraft market.

Regression Equation: Branding Kerala Traditional Handicraft Market  

$$(BKTHM) = 2.343 + \beta .183rg + \beta .453db + \beta .132ib$$

The results show that Geographical Indication (GI) is highly relevant to marketing Kerala's traditional handicrafts and significantly enhances brand recognition. Both direct and indirect

Table 6

**Significant effect of Geographical Indication and Its Implication on  
Branding Kerala Traditional Handicraft Market**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant) 2.343	.533		4.394	.000
RG	.183	.073	-.122	2.513	.012
DB	.453	.057	.385	7.982	.000
IB	.132	.066	.096	1.989	.047

a. Dependent Variable: Branding HP  
b. Predictors: (Constant), RG (Geographical indication), DB & IB (Implication)  
c.  $R^2=.763$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.762$ ,  $F_{(3,364)}=24.434$ ,  $p=.000 < 0.05$

Collinearity Diagnosis	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index
	1	0.924	1.000
	2	.052	4.2153
	3	.061	3.891

*Source: Primary Data*

benefits of GI positively impact branding, supporting its role in advancing the market. Consequently, the null hypothesis - that GI and its implications do not significantly affect branding - is rejected.

### 1.11 Major Findings

1. The questionnaire demonstrated high validity and reliability, with all factors showing strong internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70).
2. Both manufacturers and sellers agreed on the high relevance of Geographical Indication (GI) for branding Kerala's traditional handicrafts, with no significant difference in their perceptions.
3. GI provides both direct (short-term) and indirect (long-term) benefits; however, manufacturers and sellers differed significantly on views regarding increased product demand and cultural branding.
4. GI is recognized as enhancing branding strategies, though opinions

varied between groups on whether it justifies premium pricing.

5. Proximity scaling analysis highlighted nine key attributes - such as brand recognition, cultural respect, authenticity, and product quality - that strongly support GI's role in strengthening traditional handicraft brand identity?
6. Regression analysis confirmed that the relevance of geographical indication (rg), direct benefits (db), and indirect benefits (ib) significantly contribute to branding Kerala's traditional handicraft market, with all p-values below 0.05. Regression Equation: Branding Kerala Traditional Handicraft Market (BKTHM) =  $2.343 + \beta .183rg + \beta .453db + \beta .132ib$
7. Rejection of Null Hypothesis: The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ : Geographical indication and its implications do not have a significant impact on

branding) was statistically rejected, affirming that geographical indication significantly influences branding outcomes.

### 1.12 Major Recommendation

1. Promote GI awareness through workshops and campaigns for artisans and sellers to highlight its benefits for market growth and brand authenticity.
2. Incorporate GI into government and tourism policies to protect traditional handicrafts and ensure product traceability.
3. Encourage the use of digital platforms and e-commerce with GI features to increase visibility and reach global customers while preserving cultural uniqueness.
4. Support premium pricing by educating sellers and consumers on the value of authentic handicrafts.
5. Foster collaboration among artisans, tourism boards, and digital marketers to develop unified, geo-tagged branding for Kerala's traditional handicrafts.

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