

BRANDING KERALA TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFT MARKET: IMPLICATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

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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.

Handicrafts 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

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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 handcraft 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 ^a |
| RG3 | Accessing geographical location | .470 | .021 | Stress-II | .01775 ^a |
| RG4 | Expanding the market | .737 | -.371 | S-Stress | .01417 ^b |
| 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 | -1.00 | .154 | | |
| B4 | Premium price | 1.153 | .670 | | |
| B5 | Cultural and traditional values | -.169 | -.304 | | |
| B6 | Hand made | -1.06 | -.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+ β .183rg + β .453db+ β .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 | t | Sig. |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 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 + β .183rg + β .453db+ β .132ib
- 7. Rejection of Null Hypothesis: The null hypothesis (H₀ : 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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