



THE ROLE OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATORS AND CULTURE CODE ON PURCHASE INTENTION OF CUSTOMERS IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Nowadays, the global competitive environment deals with the quality products so they can attract their consumers and also they can differentiate their products from others. A Geographical Indication (GI) is a name or sign used on products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin. In this paper, we investigate about the consumers' behavioural impact on the purchase decision after consuming the Geographical Indication Products. When it's coming to the purchasing behaviour of a consumer may depends on various factors that may influence the decision making process such as physical pleasure, income effect, price effect, reference group, culture, social class, choice of a product, brand and dealer or store, purchase timing and amount, perception, and post purchase behaviour, etc., All factors are dependent on each other and influence the decision making process of a consumer. But the purchasing of the geographical indication is made by the consumer by their locality, tourism places, obtain information from different sources, have different perceptions, have differing satisfaction levels related to past experience, etc., Thus the purchase decision is dependent on many factors. These factors may be specifically related to products.

Key Words: GI, Customer experience, customer purchase decision, Marketing Management

1.Introduction :

Geographic indications for goods are an indication that identifies agricultural, natural or manufactured goods in terms of their origin or manufacturing in a specific geographic area.¹The goods acquire a reputation in the

market owing to combined efforts of nature and man through processes that have evolved over a significant period of time in history.²However, there are instances where goods from other sources are also sold as genuine goods from a specific area. This is a crime against the people who mastered the cultivation or manufacture of the genuine goods and also against consumers who have taken them as original. In order to check such malpractices a number of regulations have been promulgated at the international and national level. In India the relevant law is the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999 (the GI Act). This study focuses on customers' various shopping motives through Omni-channel adoption and level of attainment of shopping motives. Customers adopt different channels and integrate the evidence to reach the optimal shopping motives (Arumugama & Jayakrishnana, 2020). The Act was enacted to improve the commercial prospects of grown or manufactured output from a specific geographic area. Results are far less than satisfactory owing to inherent deficiencies of the geographical indications (GI) legislation. The regulations provide much inferior protection compared with what is guaranteed to commercial brands under the trade mark route. A need was felt to find a means to assign to such goods a strong visible identity that creates a premium visibility to help them emerge as strong brands, just like the brands protected by trade marks. Brands manage to fend off intellectual property encroachment because they have visually identifiable and legally protectable identity marks protected by trade marks.

Geographical indications (GIs)—a conceptual overview:

GIs signify quality and uniqueness, which is a fundamental characteristic of their origin in a distinct geographical locality, area or

nation. The right to use a GI tag is conferred on a member of the community producing a craft, textile, agricultural product or other qualifying subject-matter by an endowment board, association or any other body that acts as its registrant. An authorised user (member of the community), has the right to further the common cause of his community through the use of the GI tag. sales force to engage in marketing intelligence activities. The major focal point of the present research is to recognize the effect of sports celebrity ads on the purchase intention of the buyers. Both high involvement products and low involvement products have included in the research (Arumugam, Thangaraja; Hameed, S. S; Madhavan, S, 2020) This right does not come to him as a matter of personal entitlement, but as a member of the community, which also imposes restrictions regarding the scope of its use and some conditions to be followed while growing or manufacturing the goods. In contrast, trade marks are confined to the concept of property as evolved in the "theory of individuation", whereby the individual holds the right to own the trade mark.

GIs are significant as they remove information asymmetry by indicating the absence or presence of certain attributes in goods/services on the basis of their reputation. This information is very relevant for markets with imperfect information as it helps to prevail over market failure associated with irregular or lopsided information. Shapiro's model of reputation for such markets (perfectly competitive in terms of competition level but imperfect in terms of information) analysed firms' options concerning quality level of its production while maximising returns. The model studied the interplay between three elements: reputation of firms, consumer learning and the seller's option of product quality.

In cases where precise quality cannot be judged or estimated in advance, consumers take the quality offered by the firm in the past as an indicator of the future level of quality. Over a period of time, this value judgment creates an intangible asset whose worth is given by capitalisation of the future price premium. High-end markets are generally driven by product reputation. The primary objective of this research is to explore the medical representatives' perception towards motivational

measures implemented by selected pharma companies, Chennai city (Arumugam, Subramani, Jan, & Goute, 2019). In such markets customers are willing to pay more if they are convinced about the quality of products. However, firms are compelled to sell the products even below the production cost until the time the firm's reputation is established. Nevertheless, initial investments can be easily recovered by charging a premium once the reputation is established. Consumer learning is thus critical in motivating producers in improving product quality. Reputation reduces information asymmetry and prevents short-term compromises in quality. Charging a premium is also justified since a superior reputation also reduces search costs for the customer.

Investment in reputation translates into a core intangible asset in the hands of the producer/manufacturer which needs protection from duplication or misappropriation under an appropriate legal framework. GIs reflect the reputation developed over a period of time but need protection, and distinguishing marks associated with GIs can provide this if there are provisions to this effect in the laws of the land. GIs are shared by the community of producers/manufacturers who agree to adhere to the code of practice. This results in the institutionalisation of collective reputation. Hence GIs benefit both the producers and the consumers. Consumers benefit as the issues related to information asymmetry are addressed, whereas producers/manufacturers benefit as the collective reputation is guarded as an intangible asset.

GIs serve the interests of other stakeholders in addition to manufacturers/producers. For the manufacturer or producer it is important to preserve and protect traditional knowledge, skills and expertise. The Act allows them to take uncontested commercial advantage of traditional knowledge and skills that the community or area created, refined and transmitted over generations. Consumers benefit from GIs since they help in distinguishing between genuine products and fake ones. Employee engagement has been extensively researched lately as it delivers a positive business outcome. Due to the complex competition prevailing in the automotive industry, maintaining a high-level

engagement among the employees is important for long term business performance. The level of employee engagement can be improved by identifying its drivers. (Arumugam, Vimala, Khuan, & Rasu, 2019) It is this function that takes GIs closer to the concept of branding. Once the GI is registered it must exhibit the attributes of a brand and maintain a high level of quality, worth the price that it demands. For charging a premium price the product should have something which no other similar product offers, evoke a feeling of pride and confidence among its users and emerge as a special regional brand. In the language of marketing, a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them" that helps in identifying products of one seller and differentiate them from those of competitors. Hence the basic functions of identification and differentiation are the same for both GIs and brands.

Branding is important as it extends some unique benefits to both the manufacturer and the consumer. The manufacturer obtains an identity for the product that is legally protected, conveys quality and attributes, fosters loyalty among consumers and allows them to charge a premium. Marketing intelligence is area continuing and interacting structure of people, equipment and procedures that, in combination, gather, sort, analyse and distribute pertinent, timely and accurate information for use by marketing decision makers to improve their marketing planning, implementation and control

of their own information gathering and analysis, there still needs to be a clear focal point of the Marketing Intelligence System responsibility (Arumugam, Thangaraja, 2016). For customers, brands make choice simpler, assure a certain quality level, lessen risk and/or stimulate trust. Brands also enhance the social esteem of the owner or user owing to the prestige associated with them. The story of the evolution of legislation for protecting geographic indicators shows that GIs perform essentially the same functions as performed by brands in marketing.

2.Statement of problem :

Consumers often face a dilemma regarding the purchase decisions of traditional handloom apparel because of the non-availability of information cues that would enable them to

assess the quality of the product. The spread of counterfeit products in the market adds to information asymmetry. The study aims to examine factors influencing purchase intention of traditional handloom apparel that have Geographical Indication (GI).

3.Review of literature:

GIs and brands play similar roles in product differentiation (Deselnicu et al., 2013); thus GIs can be considered capable of providing successful branding of origin and quality which can create a brand pull enhancing the demand for the product (Fotopoulos and Krystallis, 2003; Gangjee, 2017; Verma and Mishra, 2018). Geographic associations of the product can act as quality cues linked to the quality characteristics of the product (Dimara and Skuras, 2003). The two-step structural equation modelling approach is followed to examine the relationship between critical success factors of total quality management implementation and business performance (Arumugam, Thangaraja; Jan, Akbar; Subramani, A. K, 2019). Thus GI label acts as a tool to reduce information asymmetry between producers and consumers because of endorsement of features of geography, quality and reputation of the good by the label (Vinayan, 2017). GI has been introduced to support the authentication of products that tend to have a place of origin coupled with indigenous practices/traits. This also acts as legal protection, where the GI label pre supposes the existence of reputation (Bramley et al, 2009). Also, the GI label serves as an effective instrument to create

□ differentiation among products (Deselnicu et al., 2013).

One of the peculiarities of GI is that, only designated manufacturers will be able to use the registered name, the violation of which attracts legal consequences. From the producer's perspective, promoting products through the GI label will provide assurances to customers about the authenticity of the products purchased by them. GI labels allow the consumers to identify the genuine product in terms of quality and gain trust in the product that meets the needs of a quality-conscious customer. In other words, the diagnosticity of the product is being ensured by the GI label which tends to annihilate the information asymmetry among the buyer and seller in terms of identifying the features of an authentic product. However, producers in the

country are small and unorganised to encash the opportunity of branding in terms of the GI label and concentrate on market presence by differentiating from counterfeit products, reaching out to the quality conscious consumer who prefers a genuine product.

The sellers need to understand the factors that consumers consider while making decision to purchase traditional handloom apparel. There are similar studies in the context of food safety and quality systems which have looked into traceability systems. (Thangaraja, 2015) Neuromarketing focuses on relationship between consumer's subconscious mind and the behavior. Those are the factors that decide the brand preference. FMCG sector in India is highly brand oriented, so application of neuro marketing in FMCG sector would help the marketing experts to make better use of their brand decisions. However, most of the studies in the traditional handloom context concentrate on the demographic variables that lead to consumer willingness to pay a premium price and purchase intention and studies related to legal issues and concerns regarding the protection of intellectual property (Rahmah, 2017; Vats, 2016). A study on branding and marketing of GI products in India explored the gaps in unlocking the commercial potential of GI products found that GI products marketing faced challenges in terms of limited consumer awareness and the absence of brand building and visibility (Sharma and Kulhari, 2015).

Product quality can be viewed by consumers at different levels. Quality conscious customers look for attributes of quality when it comes to the purchase of products. A quality consciousness consumer can be observed as a utilitarian shopper who strives to find the best quality in products (Sprotles and Kendall, 1986). Quality consciousness consumers also tend to be brand conscious and place more trust in the performance of trusted and advertised brands (Rubio et al., 2014). In the context of traditional handloom apparel purchase, consumers can depend upon GI certification labels which could serve as cues for inferring quality specifications, which in turn can influence consumers' purchase intentions. (Arumugam, Thangaraja, 2016), Distribution channels play a pivotal role in marketing by performing a number of vital distribution functions. Firms rely mostly on their marketing

channels to generate customer satisfaction and to achieve differentiation over competition. Also, the quality of GI products invariably depends on the place of production (Rahmah, 2017). Bernués et al. (2003) analysed the role of information cues in assessing meat quality and shaping the attitude of purchase. The study identified characteristics of quality-oriented consumers as one who sought more information on traceability. Quality conscious consumers search for information regarding product quality before making any purchase decision which could be served by such a label.

3.2 Consumer Purchase intentions:

Consumers generally show less confidence in identifying the originality of a product. Credence attributes in products make it difficult for consumers to judge product quality (Buaprommee and Polyorat, 2016). GI labelling authenticates the product providing visual identification marks such as trademark facilitates recognition of an authenticated product. (Arumugam, Thangaraja, 2016) Marketing intelligence will help the banks as well as the customers to use the technological innovations adopted by banks in an effective manner there by attracting customers. The study conclude that both the public and private sector banks compete each other in terms of attracting and retaining customers by providing comfort and luxury services such as mobile banking, online banking etc. (Arumugam, Thangaraja, 2014) Applications and systems of supermarket towards marketing intelligence that becomes vital and many organizations recent times concentrate highly on this way. This can be regarded as an extrinsic cue that supports consumers in taking a purchase decision. GI label can thus be regarded as a cue that asserts consumers about product quality. This will enable reducing the risk of purchasing an inferior good which does not meet consumer expectations of quality, thus increasing trust in the product (Choe et al., 2009). Consumers who are likely to associate GI labelled products with higher quality are likely to develop trust that will lead to purchase intention (Menozzi et al., 2015; Buaprommee and Polyorat, 2016). The study probes the direct effect of quality consciousness, product diagnosticity and perceived information asymmetry on purchase intention.

4. Research Methodology:

Data collection

The study was done among durable products customers in the south western region in India. The respondents were selected by purposive sampling and data collection was done by administering a questionnaire. To ensure that respondents have interest and involvement in usage of traditional durable products, two questions regarding consumer durable products usage and purchase were asked as inclusion criteria. Accordingly, those who had purchase experience and were in the habit of using handloom apparels were selected as respondents of the study. The study was conducted with various famous durable consumer products companies in southern state of tamilnaidu. The study interviewed customers using popular GI certified companies. After a brief study description of GI labels, the eligible participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire. In addition to the variables, demographic information was sought during the survey. The questionnaire was distributed among 300 respondents for which 240 responses were received (response rate of 71%).

Measures:
The questionnaire contained statements of selected dimensions with a seven-point and five-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The proposed conceptual model of the study comprises six constructs. All the constructs were measured using scales (containing multiple items) adapted from the previous literature and were modified to suit the context of the purchase of traditional handloom apparel.

Quality consciousness was measured with three items (e.g. “it is important to me to buy high-quality products”) adopted from [Ailawadiet al. \(2001\)](#). Product diagnosticity was measured with three items (e.g. “I expect the GI label to help me carefully evaluate traditional handloom products”) adapted from [Choeet al. \(2009\)](#). Perceived information asymmetry was measured using two items (e.g. “GI label system reduces the degree of information gap on the “quality of traditional handloom products”) between the producers and the consumers”) adapted from [Choeet al.\(2009\)](#). Perceived quality was measured with three items (e.g. “The likely quality of traditional handlooms with GI label is high”) adapted from [Yooet al. \(2000\)](#). Product trust was measured with three items (e.g. “I trust traditional handlooms with GI label”) adapted from [Choeet al.\(2009\)](#). Purchase intention was measured with three items (e.g. “I intend to increase the frequency of purchasing traditional handlooms with GI label”) adapted from [Choeet al. \(2009\)](#).

Data analysis

The analysis used structural equation modelling because the conceptual model consists of more than one dependent variable which cannot be simultaneously tested with multiple regression analysis. After assessing the reliability and validity, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out. Chronbach’s alpha was calculated to establish construct reliability and convergent validity was established by average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR) and standard loadings of each item to respective latent construct

Factor	Item	Standard loading	Cronbach’s alpha	AVE	CR
Product diagnosticity (PD)	PD1	0.800	0.892	0.740	0.895
	PD2	0.864			
	PD3	0.851			
Quality consciousness (QC)	QC1	0.738	0.819	0.603	0.820
	QC2	0.788			
	QC3	0.792			
Perceived information asymmetry (PIA)	PIA1	0.720	0.833	0.715	0.834
	PIA2	0.718			
Perceived quality (PQ)	PQ1	0.857	0.912	0.791	0.919
	PQ2	0.881			

	PQ3	0.841		
Product trust (PT)	PT1	0.900	0.920	0.8010.92
				3
	PT2	0.886		
	PT3	0.875		
Purchase intention (PI)	PI1	0.790	0.849	0.6870.86
				7
	PI2	0.678		

(Hair et al., 2010). By comparing the square root of AVE and the inter-construct correlation coefficient, discriminant validity was ensured (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Analysis proceeded down to establish the measurement model fit and further structural model fit was confirmed. Further path analysis was carried out to examine the causal relationships hypothesised in the study. The proposed hypothesis of mediation was analysed using Process Macro (Hayes, 2017).

Analysis and results

Reliability and validity of the measurement model

Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations and correlations were examined. The measurement model was estimated using (CFA) using AMOS 23. Finally, the structural equation model was used to explore relationships between the six latent constructs including quality consciousness, product diagnosticity, perceived information asymmetry, perceived quality, product trust and purchase intention. Cronbach’s alpha for the constructs of the study was found to be above 0.7, establishing construct reliability. Convergent validity of the constructs was measured using AVE and CR. AVE was greater than cut-off value of 0.50 ranging from 0.603 for quality consciousness to 0.801 for perceived quality; and CR values ranged between 0.820 and 0.919, greater than the cut-off value of 0.70 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2014).

The study brings out the factors that influence a consumer’s intention to purchase traditional handloom apparel. This has been investigated in the framework of the principal–agent theory where information asymmetry forms the basis of consumers’ decision-making of purchase of the product. The structural model reveals that various factors including quality consciousness, product diagnosticity, perceived information asymmetry, perceived quality and product trust have a significant influence on consumers’ decision to purchase traditional handloom products. The authentication label that offers GI certification effectively works as a cue

that reduces the information asymmetry of the buyer.

The study has validated the conceptual model based on principal–agent theory. It was found that GI certification labels can be effective in reducing information asymmetry in the marketplace which will assure the consumer about the expected quality of the product that will lead to purchase intention. Though such studies are available in food quality literature, this is the first study carried out in the context of GI certified handlooms. The model validates the significance of variables including quality consciousness, product diagnosticity, perceived information asymmetry, perceived quality and product trust in conformity with the results in food quality contexts. The direct relationship between quality consciousness, perceived diagnosticity and perceived information asymmetry on the purchase intention was found to be insignificant.

5. Theoretical implications

The findings add to the literature in traditional product marketing with regard to the purchase intention of traditional handloom products with GI certification labels. The study validates factors including quality consciousness, product diagnosticity, perceived information asymmetry, perceived quality and product trust and therefore offers a comprehensive model of consumption of traditional handloom products. Furthermore, the research elucidates the

method through which perceived information asymmetry shapes consumer purchase intention in this context. It was found that perceived quality and product trust mediates the relationship between perceived information asymmetry and purchase intention. Relatively few studies have been carried out in developing economies that examine consumers' responses to GI certified traditional handloom apparel. The study fills this contextual gap by validating a model for purchasing intention of GI certified traditional handloom products in India.

Another implication of our model is the relevance of perceived information asymmetry being the decisive factor in inducing purchase intention. Perceived information asymmetry could be reduced by product diagnosticity where the GI label acts as the information cue that enforces quality attributes in a product. Quality consciousness was also found to have an influence on product diagnosticity implying that a consumer who is quality conscious will have a tendency to search for information cues that would reveal quality attributes in a product. Higher product diagnosticity implies a better evaluation of the product. In the study context, GI certified label awarded by the GI registry under government control guarantees authenticity as the label could be used only by designated producers. So it is likely that quality consciousness can inculcate information-seeking behaviour to ensure the quality of the product which can lead to better product diagnosticity, given that GI label is an information cue that could eventually mitigate adverse selection of inferior products. The findings are in line with the results of [Buaprommee and Polyorat \(2016\)](#) where they found a positive influence of quality consciousness on product diagnosticity. Also, the study reiterates the negative relation between product diagnosticity and perceived information asymmetry as found by [Pavlouet al. \(2007\)](#) and [Choeet al. \(2009\)](#). Further, the study contributes to the theory by establishing the relation between quality consciousness and

perceived information asymmetry. Also, product diagnosticity was found to partially mediate the relationship between quality consciousness and perceived information asymmetry.

Another noteworthy result is the finding that perceived information asymmetry does not directly influence purchase intention. Our study finds an indirect impact of the perceived information asymmetry on purchase intentions via perceived quality and product trust which serially mediates between these relationships. Thus, it implies that a reduction in perceived information asymmetry can increase purchase intention by reinforcement of perceived quality of the product and trust created in the minds of the consumer. Also, a reduction in perceived information asymmetry was found to be partially mediated by product diagnosticity facilitated by the information cue (GI label). The findings are partially in line with the study of [Buaprommee and Polyorat \(2016\)](#) where they found that product trustfully mediated the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention.

6. Managerial implications

The study also offers several managerial implications. Traditional handloom apparel sellers in India can concentrate on the quality conscious consumers who would be concerned about purchasing quality products matching their expectations GI certification label could be upheld as a marketing tool which confirms the authenticity by institutional certification. Product diagnosticity enables evaluation of the product that possesses required quality specifications. (Arumugam, Thangaraja, 2016) The impact of competition in the business environment has compelled many organizations to turn around and start scanning the environment for information, so as to have competitive edge over other similar organization within the industry. Thus GI certification can provide confirmation of quality specifications and the certification offers a legalised compliance and is granted only to designated producers. It evolves from the study that, perceived information asymmetry could be reduced by dependence on the GI certification

label. It reduces the information gap of a quality conscious consumer regarding quality attributes. Hence, the GI certification label can be sought upon by the consumer in his search for information cues to reduce information asymmetry. Further, the reduction of information asymmetry has been found to affect purchase intention as the consumers' perception of the quality will increase which leads to product trust. This is possible when the information asymmetry is reduced, facilitated by product diagnosticity offered by the GI label. The marketers should adopt effective communication strategies to educate consumers about the authenticity of the GI-labelled goods. Consumer confidence and trust in GI certified handlooms can be increased by this strategy. This gives implications for the policymakers. The government should come up with suitable promotional plans for popularising the authenticity of GI certifications as this would be supportive of the traditional handloom sector which is in a declining stage.

7. Conclusion

The study on purchase intention of traditional handloom products in India brings out the antecedents that affect consumer's purchase decisions. The principal-agent theory where the information asymmetry forms as a major deterrent in the consumer's product purchase decision were validated by the study. It was found that reduction in perceived information asymmetry could trigger the purchase intention of traditional handlooms. Such a reduction in perceived information asymmetry could be caused by the product diagnosticity offered by the GI certification label where the consumer will be well informed of the product.

Once the perceived information asymmetry is reduced, perceived quality and product trust is increased which helps the consumer to have a positive purchase intention of a highquality product. Future research may look into other factors such as pricing and promotion which does not come in the purview of this study. Considering the importance of GI certification label in reducing perceived information asymmetry that induces purchase intention of genuine traditional handloom apparel, more emphasis should be given by policymakers for popularising GI label products.

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