

'GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION' AS A STRATEGY FOR MARKETING OF HANDLOOM PRODUCTS: EVIDENCE FROM SAREE INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Geographic indication of goods, a part of intellectual property rights, identifies the location of a commodity. Various categories may be used to categorise these things, such as agricultural, natural commodities, manufactured goods, food items, textiles, and handicrafts. Sarees are one of the nation's more well-known and pricey handcrafted goods. The current study intends to investigate the market potential and efficiency of the Indian handloom saree business. The product comparison demonstrates that every brand has its own marketing plan. Additionally, the prices of these sarees vary widely between brands and are not uniform.

Keywords: Marketing strategy, Handloom products, GI, Saree industry

Introduction

The handloom industry, one of India's most significant unorganised economic sectors, employs 3,522,512 people nationwide (Handloom Census, 2019-20). This business has a long history of creating finely crafted products that honour and maintain the vibrant Indian culture. The handloom industry produces sarees, kurtas, shawls, ghagra cholis, lungies, bedspreads, and other traditional textile apparel. The industry also manufactures contemporary products like bed linens, curtains, kitchenware, decorative furniture, rug durries, and western attire. The handloom industry in India benefits from having a less capital-intensive, environmentally responsible, power-efficient, and flexible manufacturing method.

The relationship between a product's quality and place of origin is best demonstrated by its geographic indication (GI). It sought to address the issue of market-wide knowledge asymmetry. Because of this, purchasers frequently have limited knowledge about the

products' quality and advantages. However, the manufacturer or seller is fully aware of the product's quality and longevity compared to other comparable products on the market. By certifying the products' quality and advantages, GI Tag avoids any potential confusion that could result from this. The Indian government also gives GI tags for handloom products and other products.

Sarees rule the Indian clothing and apparel industry as the most popular item of clothing for ladies in the country. 43.5 percent of India's total fabric consumption for the domestic apparel and garment market was consumed by this clothing sector. In 2017, the retail value of women's wear in India was estimated to be around INR 122,600 Crore, with sarees alone accounting for nearly 33 percent of that total or INR 38,000 Crore. A compound annual growth rate of 6 percent between 2018 and 2023 is due to an increase in saree demand from various segments across the country. Moreover, the Indian saree market is anticipated to rise to 61,700 billion in Financial Year 25. As such, the saree market in Surat and Rajkot is predicted to be around 80,000 crores, and many other markets in India, including those in Kancheepuram, Mysore, Kota, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Mysore, Kolkata, and Madhya Pradesh, should be worth between 75,000 and 1,45,000 crores. Additionally, handloom goods like bed linen, table linen, kitchen linen, bathroom linen, floor coverings, embroidered textile materials, curtains, etc., are made for export markets in Karur, Panipat, Varanasi, and Kannur. Indian handloom exports from April 2021 to February 2022 were Rs. 1,693 crores.

In India, a handloom saree typically costs Rs 1,475. In 2018, India exported 11301330 handwoven sarees for \$0.97 million. Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Canada are the top three importers of Indian handloom sarees (\$0.21 million, \$0.19 million, and \$0.7 million, respectively). There are approximately 40 unique indigenous handloom saree varieties in India. However, in 2018, India imported handloom sarees worth \$12.39 million, mainly from Bangladesh (6.48 million) and other nations. Textiles for the home make up more than 60% of India's handloom exports. The current article aims to examine the capacities of these sarees to enhance their market share by evaluating the characteristics and commercial potentials of five GI-tagged handloom sarees that have been mainly chosen.

Literature Review

Natural and human elements connected to the topography of a particular location play a role in identifying the geographic origin. GI protects against misinformation and duplicate products. It also gives the producers the right to prevent the use of the name of their product for low-quality or fake products (Vinayan, S.,2012). India implemented the Geographical Indication Act of 1999, which provided legal protection for manufactured, natural, and agricultural goods with a specific geographic origin. The capacity of GIs to effectively mark products' origin and quality can lead to a rise in customer demand for the product. (Verma & Mishra, 2018).

The study's primary goal is to examine the market expansion tactics used by handloom saree producers. Although the chosen saree makers have GI tags, their marketing strategy, market positioning, and weaver attitudes differ. Similar to this, there is a subtle distinction between the saree weavers in the northern and southern Indian states; the former is more or less independent, whereas a group or work employs the latter as a unit. Most studies on the GI handloom business focus on consumer perception and purchasing intentions. The marketing of handloom textiles, particularly sarees, is concentrated on business potential. Though GI tags provide authenticity, the lack of post-GI planning and implementation is a problem in attaining full commercial potential (Verma & Mishra, 2018). It is argued that the GI tag cannot solve the market problem related to political economy (Basole, 2015). A cost-benefit comparison of GI products reveals that though GI provides unique branding, brand building through marketing increases the cost (Mishra, 2022). The GI-labeled Sarees, however, gain from the rising popularity and variety of designs among international fashion designers. Once more, the handloom weavers received clear financial aid from the government, letting them continue in business (Priyanka & Vimala, 2021).

Discussion

In India, handlooms are sold in various methods, including wholesale, brick-and-mortar retail, online retail, export, and local sales. Directly and indirectly, handloom sari weavers sell to wholesale and retail stores. Similarly, to that, they sell straight to clients as needed. This marketing method is regarded as conventional and less successful, though. Direct product sales to customers and other dealers gave purchasers an advantage because deals were typically closed at a lower price. However, the wholesalers' dealers sell the goods through their physical stores at a margin greater than 100%.

The quality and originality of the goods are guaranteed by the GI label, which in turn draws in additional customers. Additionally, it increased the manufacturers' bargaining strength and ability to insist on the product's legitimacy. Regarding post-GI product registration, the Government of India has made mostly pre-GI awareness-related efforts while making noticeably less effort in areas like promotion, distribution channels, branding, and exports. According to international surveys, most items successfully command a premium price and establish a distinctive brand in the global market by capitalising on regional or geographical connotations. Five Handloom Saree brands in India with GI tags are randomly chosen from among the 40 to discuss product details, pricing, and marketing plans.

Kanjeevaram Sarees: The unusual appearance of Kanjeevaram sarees is due to the use of gold-dipped silver thread woven on the finest silk. These sarees are known for their durability, weight, and high cost because of the Zari embroidery. When the silk and zari are heavier, it is believed that the quality is higher. The Kanjeevaram saree is a product of India that offers GI protection. The Geographical Indication (GI) mark stipulates that a Kancheepuram saree's zari must contain 0.6 percent gold and 57.5 percent silver. The Tamil Nadu government reduced this to 40 percent silver and 0.5 percent gold to simplify its producers' lives.

Along with changing the design and color, the Kanjeevaram saree's creators departed from the customary material production method. The 18-month experiment that resulted in the invention of linen-blended Kanjeevaram was made possible by the development of a new fabric. Experimenting with motifs is another strategy for promoting sarees. Some of the Pallava architecture themes in Kanjeevaram sarees include the peacock, jasmine bloom, two-headed bird, and Swan. They also alter their patterns in response to shifts in fashion. The Kanjeevaram brand of sarees has developed into a premium one.

Balaramapuram Sarees: This famed saree was produced at Balaramapuram, a neighbourhood in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The Kings of Travancore fostered Balaramapuram's weaving industry. Balarama Varma, the former king of Travancore, reigned throughout the first 200 years of Balaramapuram's weaving existence. The best kasavu fabric is produced by the weavers of Balaramapuram. The weavers wrap thread by hand

individually to interlace with the weft wound in tiny pirns. Different weft designs are woven using easy washable vegetable colours. Rib weave is used for the zari in the fabric's cross border, which is worked with the help of a treadle and other cords. The cross border of the product has a series of horizontal ribs thanks to this weave. Moreover, the thread density of the Saree is higher than other similar sarees.

This fabric is the first handloom item in Kerala to be given GI protection. The new marketing strategy for Balarama Puram Sarees includes turning the weaving villages into their selling hub. Unlike in prior years, weavers are keen to work with designers. Balaramapuram Sarees' weavers are proficient enough to adapt to new patterns without changing the loom. Furthermore, they produce on demand for weddings and festivals.

Kuthampully Sarees: The distance between the village of Kuthampully and the city of Thrissur is only about 50 kilometres. Between 1200-1700 AD, weavers from Tamil Nadu weavers immigrated to this region and began producing these sarees. Jacquard is used to weaving the pallu and extra weft of the Saree. 'Street sizing' technology wraps round and uniform thread, giving the saree a highly clear surface devoid of projecting fibres. Moreover, it maintains a less starchy finish to get a softer touch. Designer sarees from Kuthampully are known for their peacock, flower, Lord Krishna, and kathakali patterns. The warp and weft for the kasavu are taken from Selma and Tamil Nadu, and the kasavu is brought from Surat in Gujarat.

Chanderi Sarees: The 12th and 13th centuries were when Chanderi Sarees, from Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh, India, were created. Chanderi silks were initially used to weave khilats. The material was quite expensive. Because, the warp is made of un-degummed mulberry silk yarn with a count ranging from 16/18 to 20/22. While weft is made of cotton yarn in the 100s to 120s. The cloth is translucent because the silk yarn is not degummed. Gold and silver Zari are utilised for warp designs in the border and extra weft designs in the pallow and body. Moreover, pit and frame looms with jala designing technique were used for weaving.

The silk's beauty was revealed by its smoothness, clarity, and fringes stitched with heavy golden thread. The Butis designs on the handloom, which were made with several kinds of needles, are covered with gold, silver, or copper dust. Two weavers must work side by side at the same loom throughout the arduous process of weaving sarees. Previously, only

natural dyes were used to colour the yarn for weaving; currently, both chemical and natural dyes are employed. The full procedure may take more than three days, depending on its complexity.

Banarasi Sarees and Brocade: On the banks of the Ganga River in the eastern portion of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Banaras (officially Varanasi) may be found. The product is made in nearby rural areas and smaller towns in the Varanasi district and neighbouring districts, despite being associated with Banaras city. According to the GI certificate, the four Banaras products are silk brocades, textile items, silk saris, garment materials, and silk embroidery. The three main characteristics of banarasi fabric are, therefore: it is handwoven from silk (silk warp and silk weft), it includes brocade embroidery, and it is made of silk. Finally, there is a collection of customarily acknowledged Banarasi patterns which are locally referred to as 'patterns/designs' (Basole, 2015). Since Banarasi Sarees are only marketed in the domestic market, their marketing technique is distinctive. Additionally, Banarasi Saree marketing focuses on southern state visitors who come to buy the saree. Unlike other sarees, wedding seasons are the focus of bulk saree manufacture. But the Banaras Sarees lost favour with young people.

Attribute	Kanjeevaram Silk and Saree	Balaramapuram Sarees and Fine Cotton Fabrics	Kuthampully Sarees	Chanderi Saree	Banarasi Sarees and Brocade
Thread/colour attribute	Gold (0.6%) dipped silver (57%) thread	Undyed natural cotton yarn, A mix of Gold and Silver	Saree borders, Kasavu handloom	A golden thread, hand-spun cotton yarn	Floral and foliate motifs, design using zari, ornamentation,
Quality	durability, heavy	durability	Medium weight	Light and strong, shiny	Heavy
State	Tamil Nadu	Kerala	Kerala	Madhya Pradesh	Uttar Pradesh
Year of GI Certification	2006	2010	2011	2005	2009
Average Price	15000-30000	30000-60000	500-2000	2000-7000	1500-20000

Source: Secondary data

In a nutshell, the marketing approach for these GI-protected sarees can be summed up as follows: GI tags support the producers' efforts to focus on and increase customer-centric product trust. However, the Saree producer uses word-of-mouth marketing through social

media, flexibility to respond to changing fashion demand, and product quality maintenance to increase sales. Kanjeevaram, in contrast to other saree brands, had a distinctive marketing approach and rose to the status of a high-end south Indian saree brand. Apart from the futuristic side of the GI-tagged Sarees, the absence of uniform prices is one of the problems faced by the manufacturers and buyers. The product comparison reveals that prices for a single brand vary significantly among various weavers. Due to the well-organised manufacturing facilities and the flexibility of the weavers to weave according to demand and designer guidance without changing the loom or method, the price of Kanjeevaram and Balaramapuram sarees is very high. On the other hand, Kuthampully Saree's producers utilise printing and innovative loom technology to create contemporary designs.

Conclusion

The saree is the most popular clothing item for ladies in the country. About 60% of saree consumption in India occurs in rural areas; however, it is projected that high-cost designer sarees are not sold as it sells in an urban area. The demand for silk and designer sarees is developing dramatically due to women in urban regions spending more money on these kinds of sarees. The GI tag bridge the information gap between manufacturers and customers. Therefore, consumers purchase a product with brand value and product non-duplicability that can be connected to its place of origin. The manufacturer can offer an actual consumer the best price for his goods.

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