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**CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATED (GI) TAGGED PRODUCTS AND PURCHASING PROCLIVITY THROUGH DIGITAL MODE**

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**Abstract**

The emergence of Information Technology and e-commerce has brought about a drastic change in the field of business. The Internet brings the whole world into a single market and reaches even the tiniest, especially in rural areas, from the most modern to the most of traditional products. Geographical Indication (GI) products are primarily authentic traditional handicrafts and agricultural products originating from a specific geographic region. All GI products are linked to rural areas where farmers and artisans inherit the family business and production methods. It acts as a major source of income for the rural economy. India is currently renowned with 370 GI tagged products and is covered as an element of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). This paper aims to increase the scope of these traditional products in the e-commerce platform, thereby unlocking its commercial potential.

The aim of the study is to identify Consumer Preferences towards Geographical Indicated (GI) Tagged Products and Purchasing Proclivity through Digital Mode. Primary data was collected from 112 respondents who were those consumers of GI products offline. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the consumers. The study indicates that incorporating the suggestions and using effective promotion methods on various e-commerce platforms can result in an increase in sales, employment opportunities, and the standard of living of producers, thereby leading to sustainable rural development. Though it is a relatively new concept in Indian markets, these traditional authentic products from rural areas can reach a wider range of consumers and explore huge market avenues that will contribute to domestic income to achieve a 5 Trillion economy.

**Keywords:** Geographical Indication (GI) Products, Intellectual Property Right (IPR), e-commerce, Digital Mode, Sustainable Rural Development

**1. INTRODUCTION**

India being an agrarian economy, consists of a large array of GI-tagged agricultural and handicraft products to which it owned its glory. A geographical indication (GI) is defined in the TRIPS Agreement as a sign which identifies a good as originating in the territory of a member, or a regional locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation, or other characteristics of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin (WTO definition). According to IBEF, India is touching \$ 200 billion market opportunities through online platforms, and the Indian e-commerce platform is overtaking the US. This boom of E-Commerce has paved a new way for e-retailing and phigital stores, attracting even small farmers and artisans to reach wider consumers. Ecommerce act as an excellent opportunity to promote the 370 region-based GI tagged products, thereby strengthening the rural and urban linkages. As a part of the "Atmah Nirbar Bharat Scheme" and "Make in India initiative," the Government Of India recommended pushing up the locally manufactured traditional and authentic products in online platforms and for modern trades enabling the producers to reap the maximum gains. GI tagged products on various e-commerce platforms with more government aids to farmers and artisans increase sales and employment opportunities, which in turn increases the standard of living, thereby leading to sustainable rural development. Thus, this study focuses on consumers' preference and willingness for Geographical indicated products in e-commerce platforms.

## 2. GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATED (GI) PRODUCTS – FACTS AND FIGURES

The study conducted by Intellectual Property Right Chair (*A Report on year 2019 Geographical Indications in India*, 2019) pinpointed that compared to 2018, Indian Geographical Indicated products registration witnessed a hike, from Coorg Arabian Coffee to Kaji Nemu. In 2019, Irish coffee from the foreign category was the only product to be registered as GI in India.

### Geographical Indicated product in 2019

Agricultural products (16) are registered more in the year 2019 than handicrafts products, followed by textiles and foodstuffs

### State-wise registration in India from April, 2004 - 2020

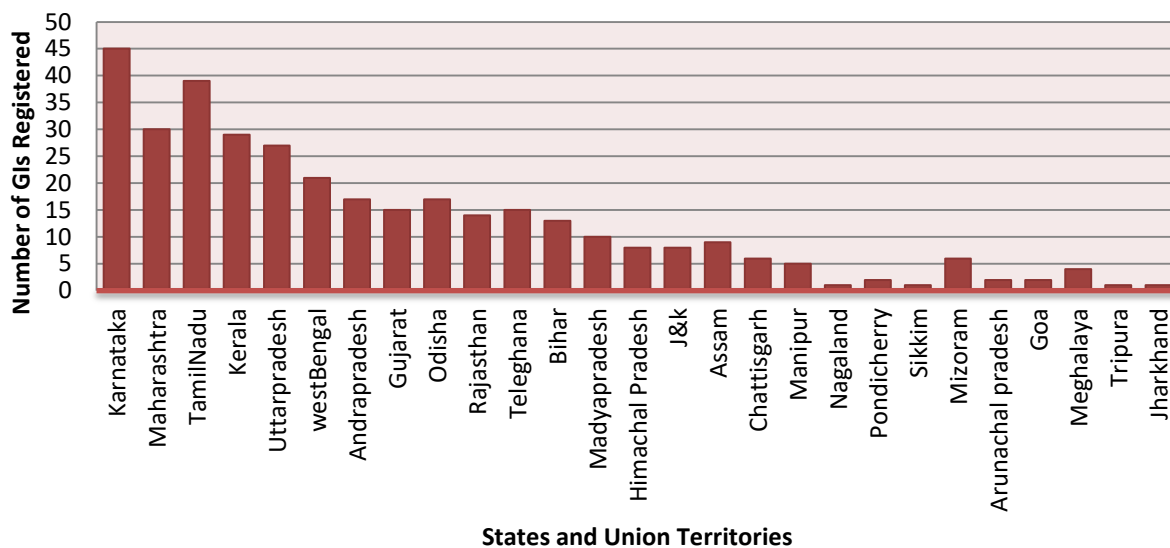
The chart represented below depicts the total Registered GIs of different states and union territories. Karnataka has the highest number of 45 GI products, from handicrafts to manufactured products, followed by Tamilnadu 39 products, Maharashtra 30 products, and Kerala 29 products. Currently, a total of 370 products in India are Geographical Indicated Tagged products from April 2004-2020 as per Geographical Registry of India.

([http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writereaddata/Portal/Images/pdf/GI\\_Application\\_Register\\_10-09-2019.pdf](http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writereaddata/Portal/Images/pdf/GI_Application_Register_10-09-2019.pdf))

Karnataka and Kerala are only states which consist of both agricultural and Handicraft products.

Source:[http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writereaddata/Portal/Images/pdf/GI\\_Application\\_Register\\_10-09-2019.pdf](http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writereaddata/Portal/Images/pdf/GI_Application_Register_10-09-2019.pdf)

**Total GIs Registered from April 2004-2020**



## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The few Literature reviews in the area of GI products, consumers preferences and purchasing trends using digital platform is carried out below -

(Rangnekar, 2004) The linkage geographical indication and intellectual property rights are highly correlated. It emphasised the need for more marketing and promotion strategies for these products in developing countries to reach wider markets. Studies by (Dhamotharan & Selvaraj, 2013) (Menapace et al., 2009) (Slade et al., 2019) indicate the consumer preference to purchase geographical indicated products for a premium price as a symbol of quality and geographical origin. GI acts as a marketing tool for producers and is a positive instrument. Just granting gi for products serve as a vehicle for the development rather than a marketing tool(Calboli, 2015). According to (Dr.Ruppall W Sharma & Shraddha kulhari, 2015), E-commerce acts as the best platform to promote GI-tagged products across India. ICT's role creates a larger acceptance of GI tagged Udupi jasmine. Consumers are highly willing to buy online due to their freshness and customer service, thereby increasing farmers' income(D'souza & Joshi, 2020).GI is mostly associated with rural areas, and thus

with effective promotion, can sustain economic activities and rural development (Dogan & Gokovali, 2012). The use of GI and strategies for appreciation pertain to employment and commerce. The GI as a quality single or way of describing the product is an emerging issue (Agarwal & Barone, 2005)

#### **4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In this digital era, with an increased customer response for e-commerce created a new digitalised market made a noticeable difference between traditional and online marketing. Even in the present scenario of Covid -19, the e-commerce platforms withstand, enabling a safe delivery of needed products to customers. So it's high time for the government to take geographical products to the online platform so that it aids the farmers and artisans to stabilise income and livelihood in the rural areas. Internet is accessible from every corner of the world, making sales easier on digital platforms for all traditional products. Major studies pinpointed high customers' willingness to purchase authentic and traditional GI products but have a huge chance of duplication. The studies conducted by WTO at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (Dr. Ruppel W Sharma & Shraddha kulhari, 2015) pinpointed that Ecommerce is the best platform to promote Indian GI products. The study also added that the government lacks the post-registration activities of marketing and a proper database for GI tagged products. The Department Of Promotion and Internal Trade 2020 introduced a norm as a part of a promotional initiative to display GI tagged products for sales along with the mandatory logo in various e-commerce platforms like Amazon, Flip kart, and snap deal. With the suggestions of this study, the e-commerce platforms and government can understand the ways to increase sales of these products online and to create a fast bounce in promotional activities.

#### **5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study is focused on the consumer preference and willingness and usages of geographical indicated products in e-commerce platforms. For the survey purpose, registered Geographical Indicated products manufactured in the central zone of Kerala-Palakkad, Idukki, Thrissur, and Ernakulum are considered. The findings of the study enable various e-commerce platforms to effectively bring more GI products online, thereby leading to more sales of traditional authentic products.

#### **6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To analyse the consumers enthusiasm in the purchases of Geographical Indicated Tagged Products online
- To identify the preferences of Geographical Indicated (GI) product among the consumers through digital applications
- To design and develop the strategies to improve the sales of GI tagged products in e-commerce platforms

#### **7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

##### **(a) Sample design and size**

Multi-stage sampling technique is adopted for this particular study. In the first stage, based on region-wise, the central zone of Kerala-Palakkad, Idukki, Thrissur, and Ernakulum was selected. In the second phase, registered Geographical Indicated products of respective districts were chosen, comprising from agricultural to handicrafts products. In the third phase, data were collected from consumers, who purchased at least one Geographical Indicated Products offline so that to understand respondents preference and willingness to buy in e-commerce platforms. The sample size of 112 was randomly chosen.

##### **(b) Statistical tools**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data collected. SPSS IBM Version 27 was applied for the study.

**(c) Sources of Data Collection**

Primary data was collected from 112 consumers of Palakkad and Trissur districts using Google forms; the respondents were consumers who purchased GI tagged products offline. And the secondary data includes articles, GI registry website, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) journals, newspapers, online sources, reports of geographical indication portals, and various research papers.

**8. RESULTS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION**

The study emphasised to investigate the consumer's willingness to purchase, and the most preferred geographical Indicated tagged products to buy online. The present research also focused to identify the factors that consumers consider while purchasing GI Tagged products through various e-commerce platforms

**Demographic profile of consumers of GI Tagged products**

The demographic pattern plays a prominent role in understanding the consumers of Geographical Indicated products so to develop an effective promotional strategy for marketing.

**Table – 1: Gender Wise Consumers Age Groups**

Age	18-26 years	26-35 years	35-41 years	41years above	and Total
Male	4 (3.6%)	28 (25.0%)	8 (7.1%)	6 (5.4%)	46 (41.1%)
Female	14 (12.5%)	31 (27.7%)	17 (15.2%)	4 (3.6%)	66 (58.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 (16.1%)</b>	<b>59 (52.7%)</b>	<b>25 (22.3%)</b>	<b>10 (8.9%)</b>	<b>112 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Survey Data, September – October, 2020; N=112

**Inference:** From the tables1, it is observed that 52.7% of respondents were between the age group 26-35 and 22.3% belongs to the age group between 35-41.16.1% constitutes the age of 18-26 where only 8.9% of respondents are 41 and above. It is also evident that more female consumers (58.9%) than males (41.1%)

**Table – 2: Occupation across prevailing Educational Qualification**

Occupation	Self-employed	Agriculturist	Homemaker	Service sector	Others	Total
Undergraduate	4 (3.6%)	3 (2.7%)	6 (5.4%)	5 (4.5%)	3 (2.7%)	21 (18.8%)
Postgraduate	11 (9.8%)	2 (1.8%)	7 (6.3%)	14 (12.5%)	17 (15.2%)	51 (45.5%)
Professionals	8 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.6%)	10 (8.9%)	22 (19.6%)
Others	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.6%)	4 (3.6%)	1 (0.9%)	8 (7.1%)	18 (16.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 (21.4%)</b>	<b>9 (8.0%)</b>	<b>17 (15.2%)</b>	<b>24 (21.4%)</b>	<b>38 (33.9%)</b>	<b>112 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Survey Data, September – October, 2020; N=112

**Inference:** Based on education, most of them are Post Graduates (45.5%) and professionals (19.6%). Nearly 21.4% of consumers are self-employed and are employed in service sector. Homemakers constitute 15.2% and agriculturists 8.0%.

**Table – 3: Monthly Income across prevailing occupation**

Income	Below 20000	21000- 30000	31000- 40000	Above 41000	Total
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Self-employed	8 (7.1%)	12 (10.7%)	4 (3.6%)	0 (0.0%)	24 (21.4%)
Agriculturist	1 (0.9%)	6 (5.4%)	2 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (8.0%)
Homemaker	10 (8.9%)	6 (5.4%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (15.2%)
Service sector	4 (3.6%)	13 (11.6%)	3 (2.7%)	4 (3.6%)	24 (21.4%)
Others	16 (14.3%)	14 (12.5%)	4 (3.6%)	4 (3.6%)	38 (33.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b> <b>(34.8%)</b>	<b>51</b> <b>(45.5%)</b>	<b>14</b> <b>(12.5%)</b>	<b>8</b> <b>(7.1%)</b>	<b>112</b> <b>(100.0) %</b>

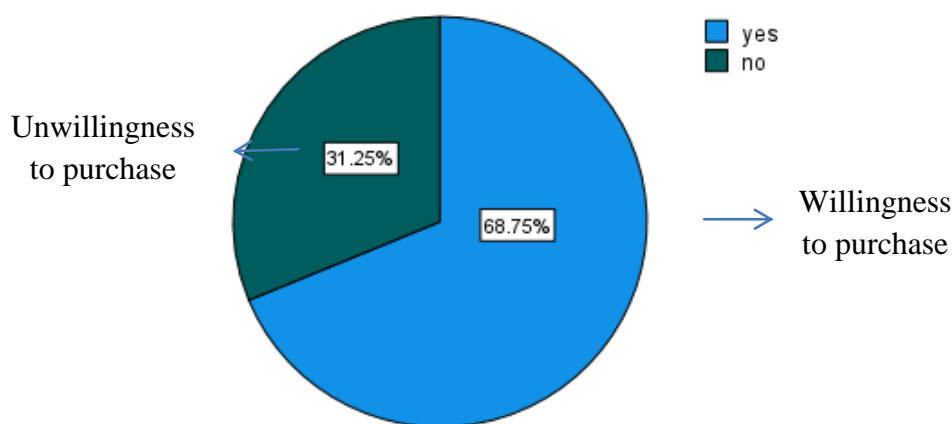
Source: Survey Data, September – October, 2020; N=112

Inference: On the basis of income, about 45.5% of consumers were earning Rs 21000-30000, 34.8% below 20000, 12.5% range between 31000 to 40000, and 7.1% constitutes consumers having income above 41000

#### Willingness of consumers to purchase Geographical Indicated products online

Chart – 1: Consumer willingness to purchase GI tagged products in E-commerce

Consumers willingness to purchase GI tagged products in E-Commerce platforms



Source: Survey Data, September – October, 2020; N=112

The depicted chart explains the consumers' willingness to purchase Geographical Indicated products online. Out of 112 respondents, 77 consumers (68.75%) were ready to buy the product, which is more than half, and 35 consumers (31.25%) were unwilling to purchase. From this, it is evident that a larger proportion of consumers are ready to buy, thus reflect a higher scope of GI traditional product sales in various e-commerce platforms.

#### Consumers purchase preference of Geographical Indicated products online

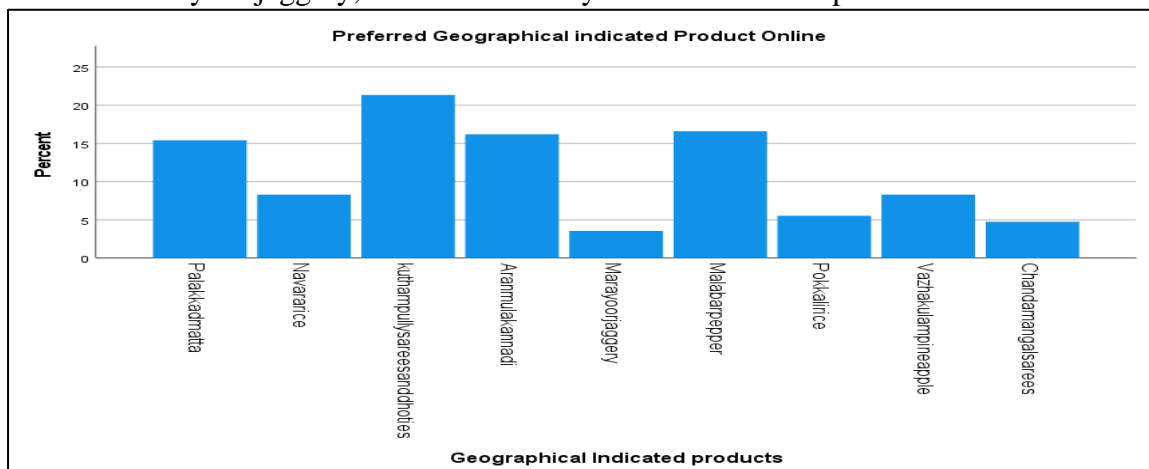
In this study, 77 consumers from table 1 who were willing to purchase Geographical indicated products were asked to choose products they prefer to buy online from a set of registered Gi tagged products of Kerala (central zone)

**Table – 4: Preferred Geographical Indicated products in Digital platforms**

Geographical indicated Tagged products of Kerala (Central Zone)	Count	Column N %
Palakkad Matta	39	50.6
Navara Rice	21	27.3
Kuthampully Sarees and Dhoties	54	70.1
Aranmula Kannadi	41	53.2
Marayoor Jaggery	9	11.7
Malabar Pepper	42	54.5
Pokkali Rice	14	18.2
Vazhakulam Pineapple	21	27.3
Chandamangal Sarees	12	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: ([http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writereaddata/Portal/Images/pdf/GI\\_Application\\_Register\\_10-09-2019.pdf](http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writereaddata/Portal/Images/pdf/GI_Application_Register_10-09-2019.pdf)) Estimation based on survey, N=77

Based on the analyses, 77 consumers picked at least one GI product, and from the 77 respondents, consumers have chosen a total of 253 different GI products. The most preferred Gi product that consumers wish to purchase online is Kuthampully Sarees and Dhoties. 54 consumers have chosen that constituted 70.1% of total responses.42 (54.4%) respondents preferred Malabar pepper, and 41 (53.2%) consumers selected Aranmula kannadi.50.6% of about 39 consumers were ready to purchase Palakkadan matta online, Navara rice and Vazhakulam pineapple, both being agricultural products were comparatively preferred less.14 respondents have chosen Pookali rice, and 15.6% of total responses selected Chandamangal sarees. The least preferred GI product to purchase online is Marayoor jaggery; it constitutes only 11.7% of total responses from the Central Zone.



Factors consumers consider while purchasing Geographical Indicated products through the e-commerce platforms

**Table – 5: Factors consumers consider while purchasing GI products through the e-commerce platforms**

Sl. No	Factors	1	2	3	4	5
Q1	Detailed description stating the uniqueness of the GI product	1 (1.3%)	0	9 (11.7%)	34 (44.1%)	33 (42.9%)
Q2	The "COUNTRY OF ORIGIN" should be displayed, and "PRODUCT CATEGORY" should be made available in the	0	0	6 (7.8%)	31 (40.3%)	40 (51.9%)

	filters of the online platform					
Q3	GI Logo and quality assurance certificate are mandatory	0	3 (3.9%)	19 (24.7%)	25 (32.5%)	30 (39.0%)
Q4	Geographical details regarding area of production should be mentioned	0	3 (3.9%)	21 (27.3%)	36 (46.8%)	17 (22.1%)
Q5	Original photos and videos	1 (1.3%)	3 (2.7%)	12 (15.6%)	25 (32.5%)	36 (46.8%)
Q6	Notification regarding availability and pre-ordering of GI products	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.3%)	16 (20.8%)	37 (48.1%)	21 (27.3%)
Q7	Price of the GI products will be a concern	7 (9.1%)	14 (18.2%)	25 (32.5%)	23 (29.9%)	8 (10.4%)
Q8	Ease of purchasing the geographically famous products from different states	2 (2.6%)	2 (2.6%)	16 (20.8%)	36 (46.8%)	21 (27.3%)
Q9	Ecommerce platforms have to ensure the authorisation of the sellers	0	0	17 (22.1%)	39 (50.6%)	21 (27.3%)
Q10	Unbiased services	0	0	12 (15.6%)	50 (64.9%)	15 (19.5%)

Source-Survey

data

(N=77)[1=Stronglydisagree,2=Disagree,3=Neutral,4=Agree,5=StronglyAgree]

The "country of origin "should be displayed, and "product category" should be made available in the filters of the online platform(51.9%), original photos and video availability(46.8%) and gi logo and quality assurance certificate are mandatory(39.0%) are the factors that the majority of consumers strongly agree and consider while purchasing online. Detailed information about the uniqueness, geographical details about the area of production, notification of availability and reordering, ease of purchasing, authorisation of sellers, and unbiased services consumers agree to these five factors. The factor of price will be a concern - more consumers have a neutral opinion of 35.5%.

## 9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings noticed in the study are:

- Most of the respondents are female consumers between the age group 26-35 than males. The majority of consumers are earning an income of 21000-30000.
- About 77 respondents (68.75%) are willing to purchase GI products through the e-commerce platforms
- The most preferred product by the consumers to purchase online is Kuthampully sarees and dhoties (category of Handicraft GI product) and Aranmula Kannadi (Handicraft), which are manufactured in small villages of Palakkad district. The least preferred GI Tagged product is Marayoor Jaggery (Manufactured agricultural product) of Idukki district.
- The “Country of origin” and “product category” filters, Original video and photos of GI products, and the GI logo quality certification are the three factors that the majority of consumers strongly agree and consider while purchasing Geographical Indicated products from e-commerce platforms

## 10. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the present study aimed to create a wider scope and potential for GI products in the e-commerce platform. The willingness of consumers to buy traditional authentic products online is very high. Most of the Geographical Indicated products are linked to rural areas. With effective promotion and ties up with various e-commerce platforms create more awareness of traditional products in this market. Government support has to be provided so that indigenous communities get the maximum benefit of commercialisation. To conclude, GI products have the potential to explore the huge Indian market leading to sustainable rural development.

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