



Constraints Associated to Geographical Indication Usage: Experts and Producers Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The benefits associated with Geographical Indications (GI) are largely underutilized by most of the registered goods in India, with few exceptions. Therefore, an exploratory study was conducted with experts in the field of GI and also with producers of the GI registered agricultural and food products of Tamil Nadu in order to find reasons for poor GI usage and constraints perceived by the producers of the registered goods. The experts (n=14) reported, lack of awareness among producers about the GI and its benefits, lack of awareness among consumers about the uniqueness and originality of the good, and the absence of quality maintenance mechanism in the registered territory as reasons for poor usage. According to the producers (n=241), lack of awareness, narrow price difference between GI products and their non-GI counterparts and consumer's preference for low price over quality were the top constraints that pull the producers from using GI.

INTRODUCTION

Geographical Indication (GI) is the indications provided to a product which has specific characters viz, originality, reputation and uniqueness which are essentially attributed to the geographical territory on which the product is produced (Giovannucci, 2009). GI is associated to many benefits; these benefits can be related to social, economic and environment development of the region (Olivia, 2008; Bramley & Kirsten, 2007; Echols, 2003); thus it has the potential to achieve sustainable development in the region (Belletti et al., 2017). These benefits are subjected to usage of GI by the producers of the registered GI product. As per the information available on the GI registry website, so far, India has registered around 430 goods under five broad categories, 300 more new goods are waiting to be registered and many more have the potential to be registered (Nanda et al., 2013; Press Trust of India [PTI], 2013; Samaddar & Samaddar, 2010). Except few famous goods (Example: Basmati rice and Darjeeling Tea), many of the Indian GI goods lack brand image even inside India (Das, 2010). Though

reasons for poor GI usage are attributed to lack of awareness among the stakeholders; the claim lacks empirical evidence. The reasons can be the constraints that are the pulling factors which influence a person's decision to not engage in an activity. Studies on constraints related to GI in Indian circumstances are very limited or unavailable. Hence, the studies of constraints across the world were reviewed and summarized here. Faria (2010) in their study at Brazil found some major difficulties in GI registration process as, insufficient investments and actions from government side, lack of organizations among the producers, individualist culture in business, necessity to increase public awareness on G.I. as an IPR and bureaucracy. Another study in Portugal found the reasons why agricultural firms do not adhere to the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) /Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) systems as, the economic and transactions cost of certification, the heavy bureaucracy related to the certification process, the small price difference in the prices between PDO/ PGI products and standard products within the same reference market (Rodrigo et al., 2015). Das (2006) reported the constraints in enforcement of rights of

Indian GI products in other countries as, technicalities involved in the registration process in various countries, exorbitant expenses involved in appointing a watch dog agency to get information on misappropriation and huge financial resources needed for fighting legal battles in foreign lands. Though these studies deal with the constraints in registration and maintenance of GI, they do not reflect the specific issues in India. And, the recent studies of constraint analysis in farming sector in India had focused on various issues like, entrepreneurship, adoption of technologies, use of ICT and covid-19 induced lockdown, but not GI (Kobba et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2022; Gupta et al., 2020; Chandran et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021). Therefore, the present study was conducted in order to explore the specific constraints associated to GI usage in Indian scenario.

METHODOLOGY

For the study, exploratory sequential mixed method design was used. Qualitative research approach was used to capture the constraints in GI usage. Thematic analysis with the interview notes and verbatim of 10 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 3 Focused Group Discussions (FDGs) was conducted to identify the broad themes and its related statements which are to be included in the quantitative study. The captured constraints were quantified from both experts in the field of GI and the producers of GI registered agricultural and food products. The selection of experts was made based on a strict criterion of having minimum five years of professional experience in GI in particular and IPR in general. The expert's response was captured using a questionnaire sent through email and social media. The primary producers of GI registered agricultural and food products were selected from Tamil Nadu as the state had more number of GI applications and had more agricultural to food products ratio at the time of the study (Geographical Indications Registry, n.d.). Out of registered agricultural and food products in the state, five products (3 Agricultural goods and 2 Food products) namely, Eathomozhy Tall Coconut, Kodaikanal Hill Garlic, Virupakshi Hill Banana, Srivilliputtur *Palkova* (a dairy product) and Kovilpatti *Kadalaimittai* (a sweet made of groundnut), were selected randomly. In each product, the sample of respondents was selected based on the Snowball Sampling Technique to make the sample size of 241. The constraints were documented in three point continuum of Very Severe (3), Severe (2) and Not Severe (1) and ranked based on Weighted Mean Score (WMS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative thematic categorization of constraints in GI usage

Thematic classification of constraints associated to GI usage, which were derived from the qualitative study, is presented in the Figure 1. The obtained constraints were categorized under four main themes viz, individual, institutional, market and product related. Most of the producer's individual constraints were related to their view on the business and their perception towards GI. The Second theme of institution related constraints were about the producer's unmet expectation from proprietor and government organizations. The third theme of market related constraints were



Figure 1. Thematic categorization of constraints in using GI

about the producer's view towards the produce market and the customer/ consumer. And finally, the product related constraints explain the producer's view on the product which they produce and its characteristics.

Experts' perspective

The experts who are working on Geographical Indications have confirmed the lack of awareness among producers as the major reason why GI is less visible in India. Further they agreed lack of consumer awareness as next major reason why GI is not popular in many registered products. Another major concern that

Table 1. Reasons for poor GI usage

S.No.	Reasons for poor GI usage	Percentage
1.	Lack of awareness about GI among producers	100.00
2.	Lack of awareness among consumers	85.71
3.	Dysfunctional proprietor office or inactive proprietor	57.14
4.	Lack of unity among the producers	57.14
5.	Absence of Separate market for GI goods	28.57
6.	Inability to adhere to quality production standards by the producers	42.86
7.	Absence of enough incentives to the producers	42.86
8.	Consumer's preference to price over quality	42.86
9.	Absence of quality and monitoring mechanisms in the GI territory	85.71
10.	Modernization of production methods	14.29

experts flagged is the absence of quality and monitoring mechanism inside the GI registered territory. Though there is a default solution prescribed in the GI rules for the constitution of an inspection committee, these committees are largely not functional in India (Vinayan, 2017). Lack of unity among the producers and inactive proprietor was also reported as major reason for poor GI usage by majority of the experts.

Producers' perspective

The producers' perspective on constraints in GI usage and their perception towards its severity is discussed in Table 2 & 3. The producers have perceived lack awareness about GI and its benefits as very severe constraint or pulling factor that hinders from using GI. This lack of enough details about GI and its benefits was perceived as an equal constraint by producers of the both agricultural and food products (Table 3). The second important constraint that discourages the producers from using GI is absence of premium price or narrow price difference between the GI registered products and non-GI counterparts in the market. The third constraint perceived was the consumer's preference to price over quality. In other words, the market is not segmented with the consumers with different needs.

While lack of awareness among the producers about benefits and absence of premium price or narrow price difference between GI goods and similar non-GI goods were common constraints for both agricultural and food products category, some specific constraints pertaining to each of the product category were observed (Table 3). Considering agricultural products, absence of separate market for the GI good is a primary constraint. The separate market for GI good would enable the genuine producers of the GI commodity to find a fair ground to market their unique and original goods. Also, the separate market would solve the constraint of consumer's preference of price over quality (Ranked 4th) as it makes segmentation in the market and

Table 2. Overall ranking of constraints as perceived by the producers of GI products

S.No.	Statements	WMS	Rank
1.	Lack of awareness about benefits of GI	117.33	1
2.	Lack of unity among the producers/ farmers	86.33	9
3.	Individualism in the business	81.67	12
4.	Absence of necessity to use GI	100	6
5.	Non-conformity & malpractices inside the territory	75.5	14
6.	Importance of GI is unfelt	102	5
7.	Inability to adhere quality standards	65	16
8.	Unavailability of enough skilled manpower	81.67	13
9.	Absence of guidance and facilitation	95.83	8
10.	Dysfunctional proprietor office	86	10
11.	Bureaucracy and red-tapism	55	17
12.	Absence of incentives for production and conservation	99.67	7
13.	Narrow price difference / Absence of premium price	114.83	2
14.	Consumer's preference of price over quality	111.5	3
15.	Absence of separate market	110	4
16.	Perishability of the produce	84.83	11
17.	Absence of proper package (Agricultural goods n=173)	53.33	18
18.	Modernization of method of production	69	15

attracts discerning consumers who can differentiate and consume. Meanwhile, the producers of food products have reported absence of guidance and facilitation for authorized user registration and presence of individualism in the business as the major constraints. Some of the unique constraints that categorically differentiate agricultural and food products are statements 7 and 17. The producer group of these categories differed from each other, in the aspect that producers of food products perceived GI as a necessary market tool

Table 3. Product wise ranking of constraints as perceived by the producers of the GI goods

S.No.	Statements	WMS		Rank	
		Agricultural (n=173)	Foodstuff (n=68)	Agricultural (n=173)	Foodstuff (n=68)
1.	Lack of awareness about benefits of GI	85.0	32.3	1	1
2.	Lack of unity among the producers/ farmers	59.8	26.5	11	6
3.	Individualism in the business	54.8	28.3	13	4
4.	Absence of necessity to use GI	80.0	20.0	6	15
5.	Non-conformity and malpractices inside the territory	52.0	23.5	15	11
6.	Inability to adhere quality standards	40.3	24.7	17	10
7.	Unavailability of enough skilled manpower	56.0	25.7	12	8
8.	Importance of GI is unfelt	80.2	21.8	5	12
9.	Absence of guidance and facilitation	68.7	29.2	8	3
10.	Dysfunctional proprietor office	66.5	19.5	9	16
11.	Bureaucracy and redtapism	37.3	17.7	18	17
12.	Absence of incentives for production and conservation	74.0	25.7	7	7
13.	Narrow price difference / Absence of premium price	84.0	30.8	3	2
14.	Consumer's preference of price over quality	82.7	27.2	4	5
15.	Absence of separate market	84.3	25.7	2	9
16.	Perishability of the produce	64.0	20.8	10	14
17.	Absence of proper package	53.3	NA	14	NA
18.	Modernization of method of production	48.2	20.8	16	13

while the producers of agricultural products perceived GI just as recognition to their product.

CONCLUSION

The lack of awareness of producers and consumers towards GI can be addressed by initiating mass awareness campaigns, presenting GI goods as souvenir in government and corporate functions, and branding GI goods through prominent personalities as GI ambassadors. The absence of price difference and consumers preference to low price over quality can be addressed by increasing awareness of consumers. Therefore, we conclude that increasing the awareness of producers and consumers would definitely address the most of the constraints associated to GI popularization and usage in India. And, as a community's intellectual property right, the GI demands more participation from all stakeholders of the registered product. Hence, it is suggested to improve cohesiveness and collective functioning for institutionalizing GI at field level.

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