

Assessing the Impact of GI on Kota Doria: Weaver's Viewpoint

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ABSTRACT

India is a culturally diverse country with a wealth of handicrafts derived from tribal peoples and local communities' traditional knowledge, which includes distinct materials, production processes, texture, colour, design and abilities for which each geographical location has its own name and fame. These handicrafts have the ability to alleviate poverty, boost local economies, and improve community bonds. In the field of Intellectual Property Rights, the term "GI" or "Geographical Indication" is becoming increasingly popular. A GI tag is a source of pride for both producers and consumers since it serves as a sign of quality, as well as a guarantee of uniqueness and the protection of rights for all parties concerned. It helps to build and reinforce skills and ethnicities while also aiding and improving society as a whole. The study focuses on the Kota Doria Saree, which is Rajasthan's first GI recognized product. The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of GI certification on Kota Doria weavers' life with respect to the awareness, accuracy of information, demand, sales, profitability and market expansion.

KEYWORDS: *Intellectual Property Rights, Geographical Indication, Culture, Community, Handloom, Handicrafts, India, Kota Doria, Awareness, Economy*

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of this study:

- To provide a brief on 'Intellectual Property Rights'.
- To provide an understanding of 'Geographical Indications' and their present relevance.
- To know the process of GI registration in India.
- To investigate the existing status of GI-registered products in India.
- To look at the level of mindfulness of Kota Doria weavers with respect to its GI tag.
- To assess the impact of GI certification on demand, sales, profitability and market expansion for Kota Doria saree.
- To provide significant recommendations to weavers so that they can viably sell their products in today's competitive market.

Significance of the Study

However, the Kota Doria Saree has been granted a GI in 2005, despite the fact it is still facing unfair competition from a virtually identical fabric produced on power looms from Uttar Pradesh, which is being sold in market as Kota Doria at a considerably

cheaper price. The earlier researches have centered on demographic characteristics, socioeconomic circumstances, supply chain, marketing conditions, problems in the production and sale of Kota Doria. Not much work has been carried out analyzing the post-GI impact of Kota Doria Saree. Based on fieldwork done in November 2021 at Kaithoon, Kota, the current study aims to address this gap by investigating the influence and impact of GI tags on Kota Doria.

Need of GI's In Handloom Industry

Handloom is a time-honored weaving technique that demonstrates India's cultural past and serves as a distinctive symbol of its culture. In India, it is the second largest employment industry after agriculture. As we know that Indian handloom sector is so important to rural livelihoods, therefore it is necessary to safeguard millions of craftspeople from bogus handloom items by stamping a GI tag, so that weavers may gain financially while maintaining their traditional values. Sometimes, it might be difficult to distinguish between cloth made on a handloom and mechanized loom due to which weavers are likely to

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encounter unfair competition from counterfeit items possessing lower quality. This frequently puts the buyer in a predicament, since product "quality concerns" influence a consumer's purchase decision. In such situation, GI certification ensures authenticity, genuineness and aids in the preservation of traditional knowledge too.

Research Methodology

Descriptive and exploratory research methods were employed to attain the aforementioned goals. The study's main goal is to see how GI tags affect Kota Doria sarees. This study was completed successfully using both primary and secondary data. A systematic questionnaire, observation, and personal interview were used to obtain primary data from Kota Doria weavers in Kaithoon village. A total of 30 weavers, including small and master weavers, were questioned by the researcher through simple random sampling technique. Secondary data was gathered from newspapers, journals, articles, working papers, research papers, books, the GI registry website, GI annual reports, and other related websites.

Literature Review

The Indian government has provided an exclusive right to safeguard the originality of inventors'/creators' work in the industrial, scientific, literary, and creative domains. Intellectual property (IP) is designed to encourage growth and innovation by allowing the author a legal right to use his or her creations for a set period of time. The most frequent types of IPRs are copyrights, patents, geographical indications, industrial design, trademarks, and trade secrets.^[29,30] IP right holders can block malicious use of their IP, stop duplicacy, regulate distribution, preserve, lease, or vend their IP.^[4] In current globalization scenario, IP serves to strike a balance between the interests of innovators and the general public, fostering an environment in which innovation, creativity, and invention can thrive and benefit everyone.^[10] To compete in the challenging marketplaces, it is crucial to keep ahead in terms of innovation and creativity. Due to unawareness of IP rights has led to demise of intellectual era in the country because of burial of inventions, monetary loss and severe risk of violation. Hence, the IPR knowledge needs to be widely disseminated in order to foster indigenous inventions and technological achievements.^[19] Following are the different type of IPRs.

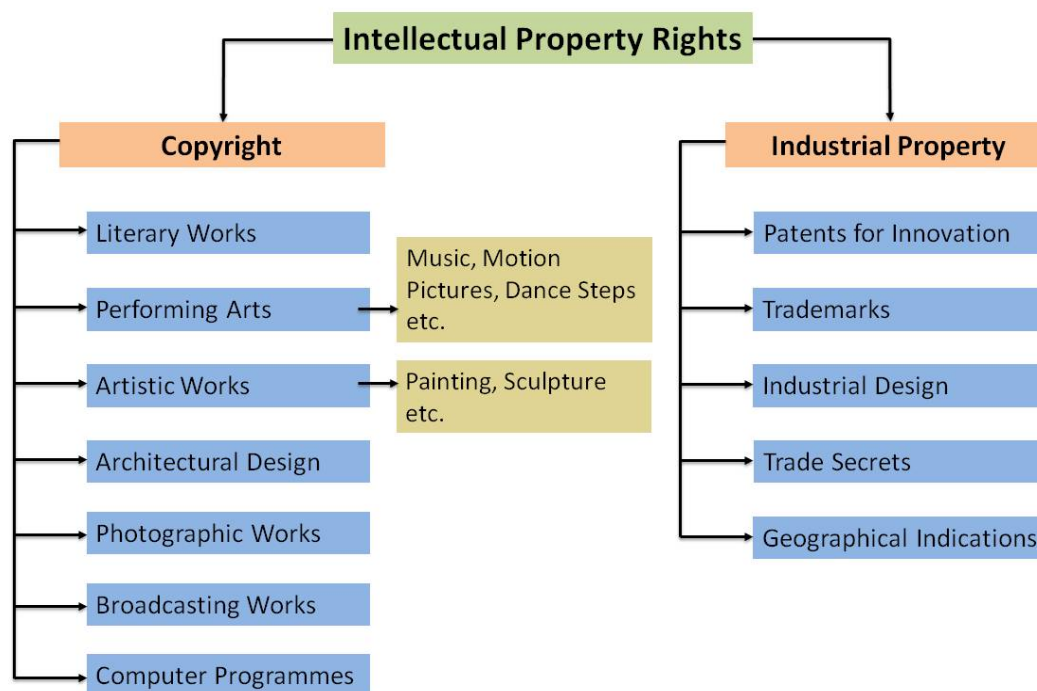


Figure 1 Classification of IPR

Introduction to GI

The term 'Geographical Indications' (GI) was established by the TRIPS Agreement (WTO1994).^[21] In September 2003, India enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999.^[18]

According to World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), "A *Geographical Indication* is

a label that comes on goods which have a specific geographical origin and also have attributes or an image linked with that origin".

According to Indian law, "GIs are a type of mark that aids in the identification of natural, or industrial products as originating or manufactured in a specific region of a country, where some

attributes of these kind of goods are self-evident to its root, and, in the case of such goods, either the entire operation or a part of the process must be accomplished at the same place." [31]

The notion "GI" is becoming increasingly popular as a method for preserving and promoting traditional knowledge across the globe because they act as a mechanism that helps communities promote and protect markets for their handicrafts by differentiating them from competing products, allowing manufacturers to build a reputation and goodwill around their products in order to command a higher price. [21,33] It gives manufacturers the right to restrict a third party from using the 'name' if their product does not meet certain criteria. [37]



Figure 2: Logo – "GI" of India

Source: https://dpiit.gov.in/sites/default/files/GI_Guideline_Finalised.pdf

Agricultural, food, wine, spirit beverages, handicrafts, handloom, and industrial goods are all examples of these. The Darjeeling tea was the first product in India to receive a GI label in 2004. [9] The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry unveiled the logo and slogan for India's GI. This tag is granted by the GI Registry; part of Ministry of Commerce & Dept. of Industry Promotion & Internal Trade. The Controller General of Patents, Design & Trademarks, who also serves as the Registrar of GIs, is in charge of enforcing the Act. [9] In India, GI protection is granted for a period of ten years, after which it can be renewed indefinitely. [16] Evidence implies, however, that the usage of other genetically similar notions such as 'Appellations of Origin,' 'Designations of Origin,' and 'Indications of Source', was common long before the industrial revolution as they utilized names of locations and distinctive marks for a wide range of items like Florida oranges, New Zealand lamb, Murano glass, Swiss watches, and Bukhara carpets etc. [21]

GI legislations' need is due to twofold: first, it is meant to safeguard the nation's historic crafts & traditionally grown natural products from counterfeit items; second, a product's global recognition can significantly raise exports & provide an economic

benefit to the country. [11] The following are some of the advantages of registering a GI.



Figure 3 Potential Benefits of Geographical Indications

The scope of protection under Article 22 is divided into three parts:

1. Preventing the public from being misled by imitated signs/ imitations.
2. Protection for trademarks used in ways that are unfair to rivals.
3. Rejection or abrogation of trademarks containing potentially confusing indications. [22]

GI has been classified into two groups based on European Union geographical designation schemes.

1. Protected Designations of Origin (PDO): Attributes are solely based on the topography and skills of the producers in the producing zone.
2. Protected Geographical Indication (PGI): They must have a trait or reputation that associates them with a certain location, and at least one phase of the manufacturing process must take place there, although the raw materials utilized in the process can come from anywhere. [18]

As with other intellectual property rights such as copyrights and trademarks, registration of geographical indications is not mandatory. It only provides better legal protection for manufacturers and owners in the event of a breach. Any individual cannot file for GI registration; Only a legally formed producer's union, an organization or a society, has the authority to do so. A person may, however, apply to be an authorized user of a registered mark. [11]

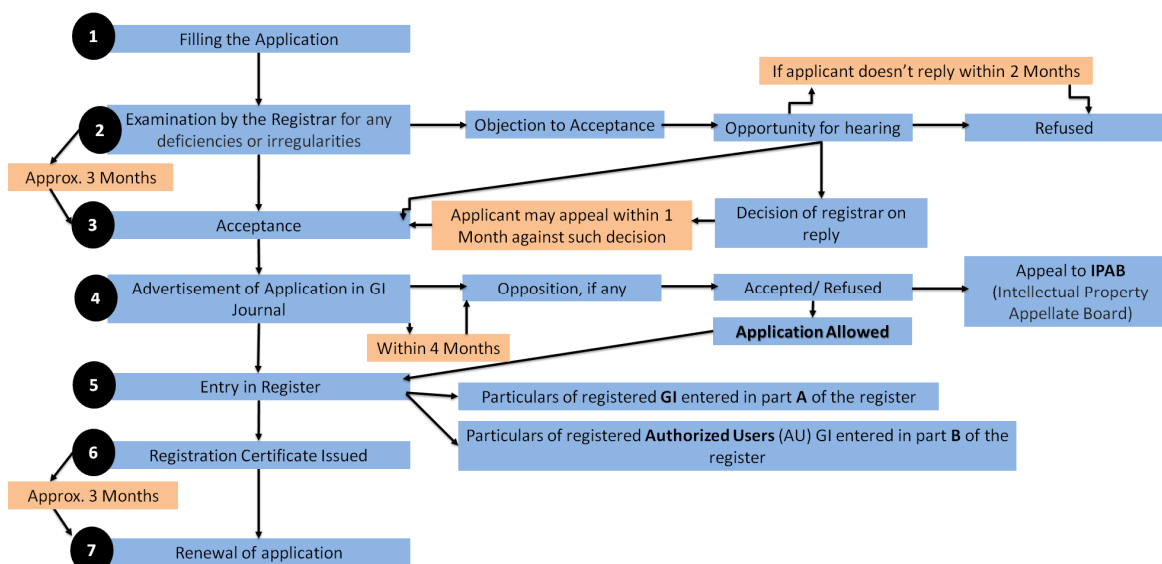


Figure 4 Step-by-Step registration process of GI in India

Present Scenario of GI registration in India as on 31st March, 2019

The submission of applications for protection of various Intellectual Property Rights has been steadily increasing over the years, according to the 'Annual Report - Intellectual Property India (2018-19)'. In 2018-2019, the total number of applications for various IPRs (4,05,324) was greater than the previous year (3,50,546), indicating a 15 percent rise. Except for geographical indications, where there is a modest decline compared to 2017-18, the filing trend for patents, designs, trademarks, and copyright has been growing.

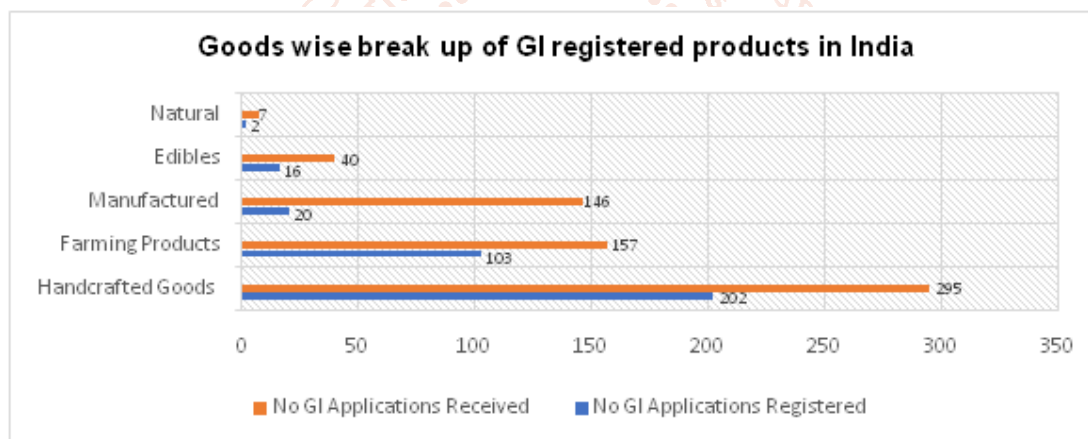


Table 1: GI Registered Products till March 2019
Source: Annual Report - Intellectual Property India (2018-19)

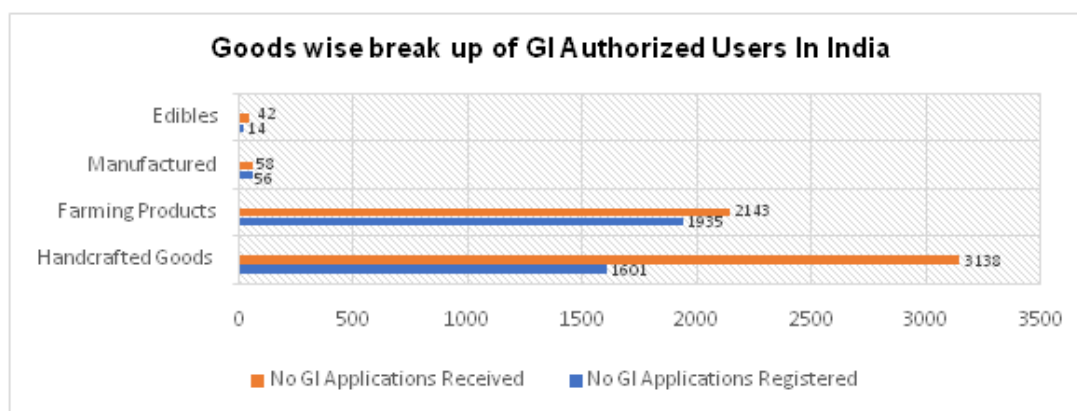


Table 2: GI Authorized Users till March 2019
Source: Annual Report - Intellectual Property India (2018-19)

Table 1 shows that between September 15, 2003, and March 31, 2019, a total of 343 Geographical Indications (GIs) were registered out of 645 applications. From September 15, 2003 to March 31, 2019, a total of 5381 people requested for a GI certificate, however only 3607 were registered as GI Authorized Users, according to Table 2.

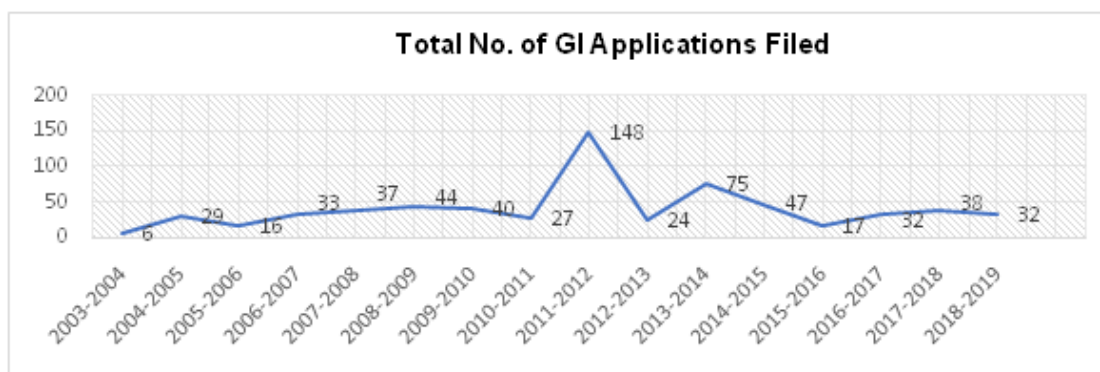


Table 3: Trends in past sixteen years with respect to filing of GI applications for products
Source: Annual Report - Intellectual Property India (2018-2019)

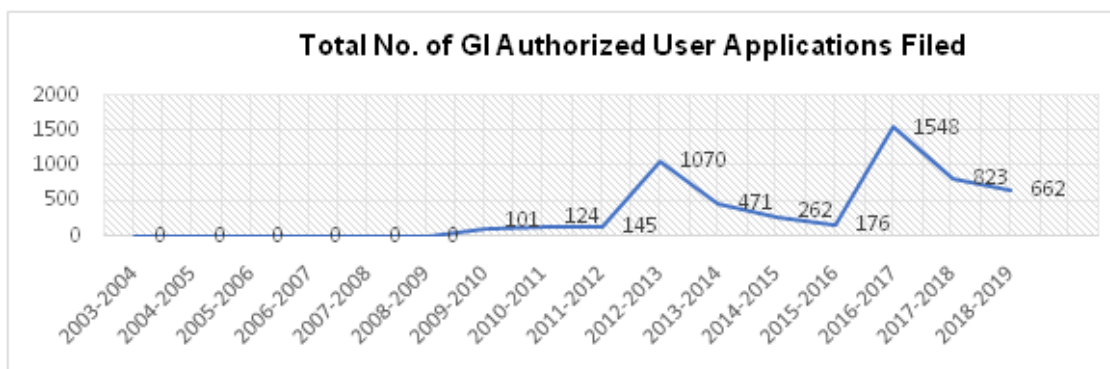


Table 4: Trends in past sixteen years with respect to filing of GI applications for Authorized User Certificate
Source: Annual Report - Intellectual Property India (2018-2019)

Tables 3 and 4 show that the Registry received 32 GI applications and 908 GI Authorized User Applications from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019, of which 23 GI and 662 Authorized Users were registered. ^[3]

Kota Doria

Rajasthan is known for its ethnic handicrafts and textiles. The Kota Doria cluster is one of Rajasthan's most well-known handloom clusters, with over 1,000 weaver families apparently making Kota Doria fabric for saris (also known as 'Kota Masuria saree'). ^[16] The majority of the weavers are Ansari Muslims. ^[5,24] Oswal was the first community to utilize Kota Doria fabric for clothing. ^[16] In areas like Bikaner, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kolkata, and Mumbai, this texture is in great demand. ^[5] Presently, buyers from south India are a significant market as they are willing to spend a lot of money on sarees. ^[14]



Figure 5: Structure of Kota Doria
Source: Kaithoon, Kota, Rajasthan

Kota Doria fabric is regarded as one of the best hand-woven fabrics, with a distinctive square check pattern known as "Khats". ^[24] The name 'doria,' which means 'thread' in Hindi, emphasizes the saree's exquisite weaving of threads. ^[2] Initially Kota Doria began as a headpiece; pagris (9" wide), then employed as a Dhoti (36" wide) and, later, as a Saree (46"-48" wide). ^[14]

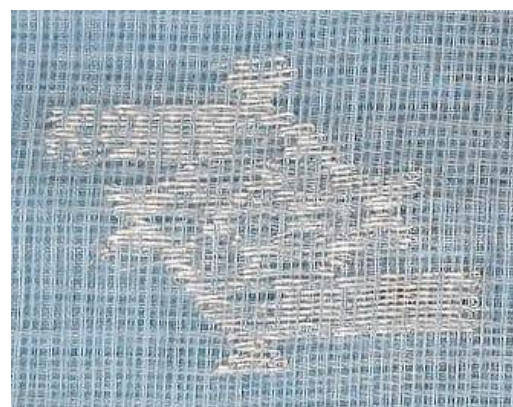


Figure6: GI Tagged on saree
Source: Kaithoon, Kota, Rajasthan.

Doria Sarees are crafted of cotton (imparts suppleness and strength to the fabric) and mulberry raw silk (adds transparency and tenderness) in the foundation fabric. As well as Silver and Gold Zari yarns in the design warp and additional weft. ^[16] The raw material is procured from the following places:

Cotton: Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Mumbai, Maharashtra

Silk: Bangalore, Karnataka

Zari: Gujarat, Surat^[33]

Origin of Kota Doria

Kota Masuria's past is mysterious. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Prince Rao Kishore Singh of Kota, who had also served as a commander in Shah Jahan's Mughal army, bought many weaving families from Mysore to Kaithoon, Kota.^[2] According to the book titled “*Saris of India*” by Ms. Rita Kapoor Chishti & Ms. Amba Sanyal, another belief is that the word refers to the use of Mysore silk in weaving, which pertains to the finest of the square checks—400 khat patterns that look like masoor grains.^[14]



Figure 7: Representation of "GI" tag of Kota Doria in a park at bus stop

Source: Kaithoon, Kota, Rajasthan

GI Registration of Kota Doria

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) began the application procedure for a GI in 2003. It worked to unite weavers & their organizations, such as the *Kota Women Weavers' Organization*, *The Master Weavers' Association*, and other smaller groups in the weavers' villages, under one banner: the *Kota Doria Hadauti Federation (KDHF)*, a registered entity representing all Kota Doria weavers. UNIDO requested support from the Rajasthan Urban Development Authority (RUDA), which is a state government body taking care of rural non-farm development, training the Weavers' Association about federation management and aiding with the GI registration application.



Figure 8: Researcher interviewed female weaver
Source: Talethi Maholla, Kaithoon, Kota

In July 2004, the *Kota Doria Hadauti Federation* submitted a GI application, and in July 2005, it acquired a certificate of registration. Kota Doria was the first product from Rajasthan to be designated as a Geographical Indication.^[24] RUDA and KDHF have worked closely with weavers, master weavers, traders, the business community, as well as other government agencies to enlighten them on the virtues of GIs and develop a strategy to promote the sale of authentic hand-woven Kota Doria Sarees while combating the sale and marketing of Kota sarees manufactured on power loom through meetings, discussions, design & business management workshops, seminars, fashion shows, etc.



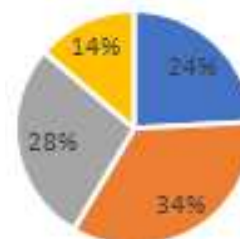
Figure 9: Researcher interacting with master weaver, Mr. Mohd. Nashruddin Ansari (National Awardee)

Source: Kaithoon, Kota, Rajasthan

Data Analysis and Interpretations

The present study was carried out on “Impact of GI tag on Kota Doria”. The data were collected from 30 satisfied random sample respondents by supplying the questionnaire. The data were analyzed by using simple pie diagrams on the bases of age, Awareness regarding IPR, GI and its benefits, Accuracy of information, demand, earnings, consumer buying behavior, profitability and market expansion etc. *Below are the responses of Kota Doria Weavers:* Gathered data was examined in basic tables and showed in pie charts using percentage calculations.

Age Group of Respondents

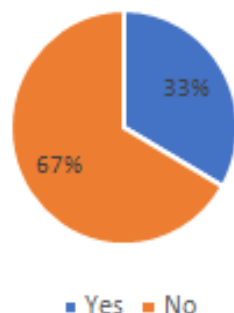


■ 15-30 yr. ■ 31-45 yr. ■ 46-60 yr. ■ 61-75

According to the above table, 24 percent of weavers were between the ages of 15 to 30, 34 percent of the weaving community is between the ages of 31 to 45,

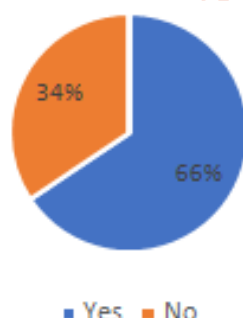
28 percent of weavers were between the ages of 46 to 60, and 14 percent of weaving responders were between the ages of 61 to 75. Apparently younger respondents were enthusiastically involved in weaving as it was handed over to them traditionally. It was noticed that there was a gradual decline in the practicing of weaving with increase in age.

Are you familiar with the term "Intellectual Property"?



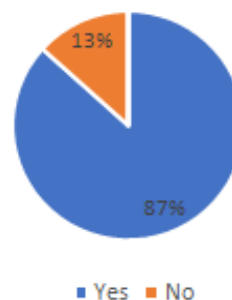
From the above table, it is obvious that due to a lack of understanding and awareness, just 33% of weavers (mostly master weavers) were aware of the phrase "Intellectual Property," while 67 percent of weavers (Small weavers) have never heard of it.

Have you ever heard of "Geographical Indications"?



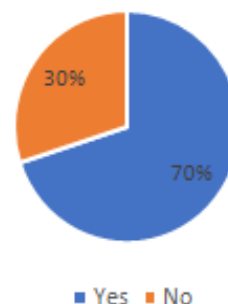
According to the data above, 66 percent of weavers, both small and master weavers, had heard of "GI" (Geographical Indication). While 34% of weavers are completely oblivious of the situation. During the interviews, the researchers discovered that the majority of the respondents were not actually aware of GI, but when asked about the "Saree Logo" and "Kota Doria Nagri" (visual presentation of Kota Doria's GI tag in a park, main bus stop, Kaithoon_ reference picture is displayed on page no. fig. no 6), somehow, they were able to relate but couldn't properly express their thoughts about the logo. However, the truth is that the respondents have incomplete information and are not properly aware of the various benefits of Geographical Indication.

Do you know that Kota Doria is GI certified?



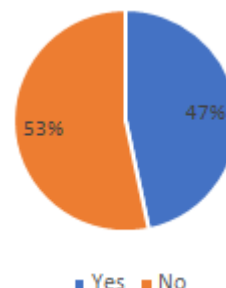
According to the statistics above, 87 percent of weavers were aware that Kota Doria had been certified as GI, whereas 13 percent were clueless.

Did you find GI certification beneficial for Kota Doria articles?



According to the aforementioned chart, 70% of the weavers believed that GI certification was helpful for Kota Doria since it offers affirmation to the buyer about the product's quality standards, origin, authenticity, as well as the ability to evoke the readiness to pay a premium. In contrast, 30% of those polled disagreed. Furthermore, master weavers spoke about one drawback, they mentioned that sometime the small weavers forget to weave GI logo in saree, due to which they face problem in selling the product if they sell it then they have to sell it on less price as the consumer is now aware about the GI logo and its significance.

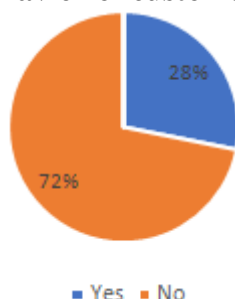
Is GI tagging have any effect on your earnings?



Since demand for authentic kota doria goods has increased, 47 percent out of the 30 respondents felt that GI certification of Kota Doria had an impact on their revenues, as seen in the graph above. While 53% of respondents say their monthly income has grown in some way but it is not because of GI. According to them, the increased use of gold and silver zari threads

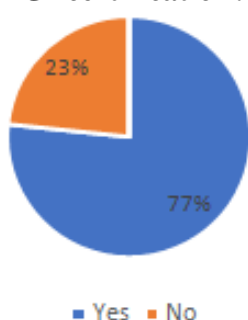
in Kota Doria sarees is the main reason for this, because small weavers may earn more money by selling the saree's unused raw material (zari threads) to jewelers in Kaithoon.

Did GI certification affect the bargaining behavior of customers?



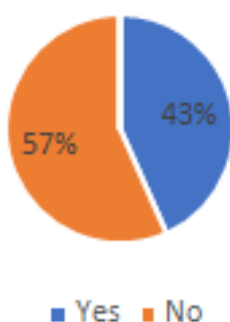
According to the data in the table above, just 28% of weavers believed that GI certification influenced customer negotiating behavior, while 72% said they didn't see any difference in customer bargaining behavior.

Is there a rise in the number of customers since GI certification?



According to the above chart, records speaks that 77 percent of respondents believe that customer satisfaction has improved since Kota Doria's GI certification which resulted in a greater number of customers, where 23% of them did't appear their assent.

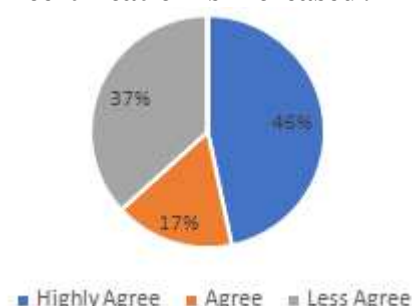
Do you receive a significant sum of money from customers after GI tag?



According to the graph above, 43 percent of weavers believe that GI certification helps them obtain a considerable amount of money from clients due of the increasing demand for authentic hand-woven Kota Doria sarees, while 57 percent do not agree. Because

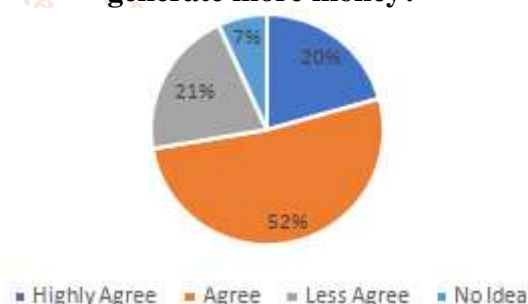
the small weavers suffer due to the domineering presence of Master Weavers, who take the majority of the profits from the sale of these handloom products, leaving little to nothing for them.

Do you accept the level of sales after GI certification is increased?



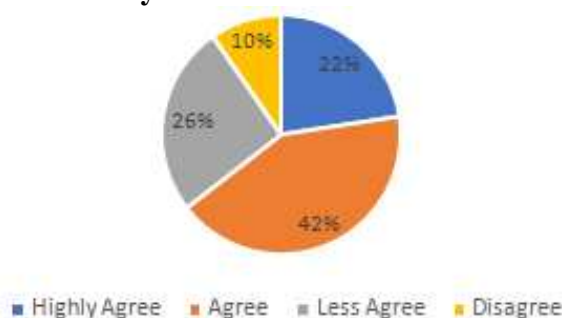
According to the survey, 46 percent of weavers highly agreed and 17 percent weavers agreed that the level of sales after GI improved owing to brand image and affinity for desi products, as well as authenticity. However, 37% of them refused to accept it.

Did you found that GI tagging has helped you generate more money?



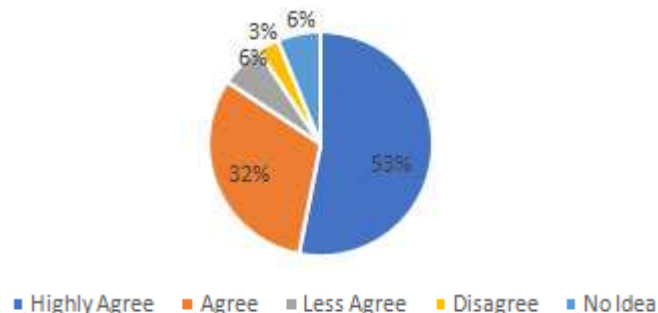
According to the findings, 20% of weavers strongly agreed and 52% of weavers partially agreed that Kota Doria GI tag helps them generate more money because after obtaining the GI tag, master weavers' confidence levels have increased dramatically, and these weavers have enhanced capacities to negotiate for higher prices with national and international buyers. Weavers that use the KDHF logo on their saris may thus charge a greater price. On the other side, although 21% of the people did not entirely agree, 7% of the population had no clue.

Do you think sale promotion process has become easy after GI certification?



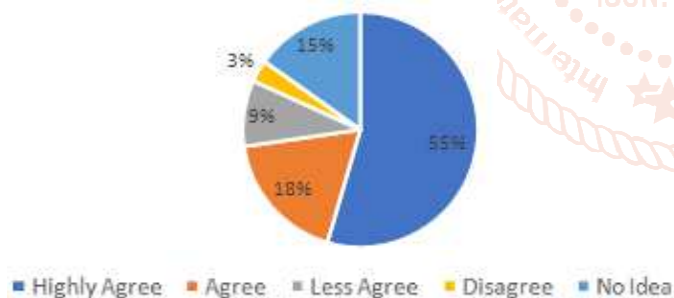
According to the graph above, 22 percent of weavers firmly feel and 43 percent believe that the GI tag has functioned as a strong promotional tool, making the sale marketing process easier after GI certification, while 26 percent do not believe so and the other 10% have no clue.

Did the “GI” label assist in competing with fake Kota Doria, which is built on power looms?



The diagrammatic illustration above shows that the majority of the weavers agree that Kota Doria's "GI" accreditation helps it compete with reproductions made on power looms, with the following proportions: 53 percent strongly agree, while 32 percent partially agreed. Some weavers, on the other hand, had a different viewpoint, which was as follows: 6 percent agreed less, 3 percent absolutely disagreed because fakes and imitations are still accessible on the market, and the remaining 6 percent had no notion.

Do you believe that GI tag can help you expand your export business?



According to the aforementioned findings, 55 percent of weavers firmly feel that GI tags can help them increase their export business, while 18 percent believe that GI tags can help them partially expand their export company. However, 9 percent of respondents were less agreeable, 6 percent were completely opposed to the reality, and the remaining 15% had no notion.

Major findings

It was observed that GI certification labels can help to reduce information asymmetry in the marketplace to some extent by informing buyers of the product's expected quality, which leads to purchase intent. Weaver's knowledge of GI registration is limited, and they are unable to obtain up-to-date information on

their firm. Weavers of the Kota Doria saree are unaware of marketing because it is handled solely by master weavers. As a result, weavers are uninformed of the market and selling price of Kota Doria items, and if they produce them without an order, they do not receive the proper value. Male weavers (small scale) found weaving to be unsatisfactory, therefore they pursued other careers. At the same time, because the weaving of sarees and kota fabric takes place at home, Muslim women who rarely work outside the house find some joy in weaving. Overall GI tag of Kota Doria has a positive impact on its marketing but a lot of efforts still need to put.

Conclusion

According to the findings, this act is still in its early stages since producers are unaware of its socioeconomic advantages and significance. This research also shows that the GI on Kota Doria has only partially safeguarded the conventional market, as imitations are still available. As a result, after GI certification, a minor rise in the number of customers and earnings has been noted since it provides consumers with certainty and hence enhanced confidence in quality. The GI awareness programmes organized by *RUDA* and *KDHF* were beneficial to weavers, but more effort is needed to enhance the level of information among weavers, as the majority of them only knew that GI represents their identity, but they lacked accurate information about the GI tag in terms of its need, benefits, importance, and rights that come with GI certification.

Suggestions

Most consumers nowadays are willing to pay a higher price for GI-registered items because they are concerned about quality. The benefits of GI tags become apparent only when these items are adequately promoted and safeguarded from unlawful duplication. Weavers will need to shift their mindset from traditional to contemporary in order to achieve this, which will include changes in design in response to market demands, the construction of a local brand image, product quality, product innovation, and the use of current technologies in marketing techniques. Workshops, awareness initiatives, and hands-on activities concerning the promotion of GI-tag goods should be held by authorized entities. As majority of the weavers are not much educated, the authorities must keep this fact in mind and design an awareness activity in form of Nukkad Natak, Stage Performance, Puppet Show, play, animated video and storytelling through flyers. Geographical Indications Tagged World Premium Products Pvt Ltd. (GITWPL) established the concept of GI Panchayath, such

Panchayath must be formed for Kota Doria for conceptual clarify amongst the weavers.

Scope for further research

The current research is limited to examining the influence of GI labeling on Kota Doria, with respect to awareness & information accuracy among weavers and market expansion. Consumer demand for GI-certified Kota Doria should be studied to expand the research. Consumer willingness to pay a premium for GI branded items could also be investigated.

Limitations

- The study was limited to the Kaithoon region of Kota, Rajasthan, India
- The study's findings are contingent on the veracity of the information provided by the weavers.
- The research study is confined to solely gathering data from weavers.

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