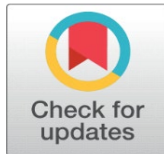
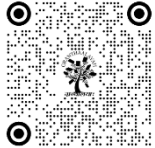


GEN Z AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF GI- TAGGED HANDLOOM AND TEXTILE PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Geographical Indication (GI) tags protect and recognize products with unique qualities tied to their geographical origins, offering a critical means of preserving cultural heritage while empowering artisans and fostering rural economic growth. In India, with 470 GI-certified products, the handloom and textile sector hold immense potential. However, limited consumer awareness, counterfeit goods, and weak marketing strategies undermine the market potential of these products among younger demographics, particularly Gen Z. Generation Z is born between 1996 and 2010 and are considered the most diverse generation in terms of ethics, race, and ethnicity. They are also considered to be the welcoming and open-minded generation. Through a comprehensive, mix-method research, this study explores Generation Z's awareness, perceptions, and preferences regarding GI-tagged handloom and textile products. It highlights that while GI tags enhance authenticity, reputation, and premium pricing, their success depends on effective branding and consumer education. Survey findings reveal that although Generation Z values sustainability and cultural heritage, many remain unaware of GI tags. Those familiar with the tags are influenced by factors like regional pride and authenticity in their purchasing decisions. Challenges include misinformation and counterfeit products, underscoring the need for better consumer outreach. Recommendations focus on leveraging digital platforms, modernizing designs, and enhancing marketing to resonate with this tech-savvy, value-driven generation. Digital platforms play a pivotal role, with Generation Z relying on e-commerce and social media for shopping. Innovative marketing approaches, such as storytelling and influencer partnerships, can boost the appeal of GI-tagged products and bridge the gap between artisans and younger consumers, ensuring the sustainability and recognition of India's textile heritage. Furthermore, the willingness to pay a premium for GI-certified items signals an opportunity to position them as sustainable, high-value alternatives.

Keywords: Geographical Indication (GI), Handloom, Textiles, Gen Z, Awareness, Cultural Heritage, Marketing, Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

India's rich cultural heritage is woven intricately into its traditional crafts, textiles, and handlooms. These creations are not merely products but embody centuries of regional artistry, skills, and techniques passed down through generations. Geographical Indication (GI) tags, a kind of intellectual property protection, play a vital role in safeguarding these unique products. Products with Geographical Indicator (GI) tags are unique and valuable due to their connection to a specific place of origin and traditional techniques. [Udayan and Achari \(2022\)](#)

GI tags link products to their geographical origins, recognizing their distinct qualities and preserving the cultural and natural factors that define them. In a globalized world, GI certification is not only a testament to a product's authenticity but also a significant tool for ensuring economic and cultural sustainability. However, for the success of Geographical Indication (GI) products, consumer understanding and acceptance are essential, as consumers increasingly prioritize quality and are willing to pay a premium for it. [John \(2023\)](#)

Generation Z also known as Gen Z, which comprises people born between 1996 and 2010 has grown as a solid force within the consumer segments. [Mehta \(2024\)](#) They represent a tech-savvy, socially conscious, and increasingly influential demographic in the consumer market. This group is characterized by a preference for sustainability, authenticity, and products that tell a story. Gen Z is shifting the consumer landscape with their unique behaviours and values. As of 2024, Gen Z has a total spending capacity of \$860 billion and their global spending capacity is estimated to touch \$12 trillion by 2030, making them a formidable economic power. (Gen Z Trends 2025: What Marketers Need to Know, 2024) However, limited awareness of GI tags among this demographic poses challenges for the growth and recognition of India's heritage crafts in modern markets.

India has 470 GI products, including handicrafts, handlooms and agricultural goods, each with distinct regional characteristics. [Udayan and Achari \(2022\)](#) Notable examples include Banarasi silk, Pochampally Ikat, and Kanchipuram sarees, which are celebrated for their craftsmanship and unique characteristics. The Pochampally Ikat became India's first handloom product to receive GI status in 2004, followed by Kota Doria in 2005 and Champa silk in 2010. After being awarded with GI tag certification, these products started coming to the limelight and getting awareness. [Pushpam \(2024\)](#) Despite their potential to command premium prices and penetrate global markets, GI-tagged products often face obstacles, including counterfeit goods, inadequate marketing strategies, and a lack of direct access to consumers. The GI label enhances product authenticity, strengthens bargaining power, and builds brand recognition. However, post-GI marketing efforts, including advertising and distribution, have been limited. [D and Kumar \(2023\)](#) Many rural artisans who create these products are unaware about the GI tags and their benefits. [Kapila and Kaur \(2020\)](#) They are frequently disconnected from contemporary markets, receiving minimal economic benefits from their craft.

The younger generation, particularly Generation Z, is increasingly attracted to sustainable and culturally significant products. They prefer to buy sustainable brands, and they are most willing to spend 10 percent more on sustainable products. Generation Z are the most likely to make purchase decisions based on values and principles (personal, social, and environmental). [Petro \(2021\)](#) They exhibit a growing interest in ethical consumption, supporting artisans, and purchasing items with a story or heritage. GI-tagged handloom and textile products, therefore, align well with these values. However, many young consumers remain unaware of the significance and benefits of GI tags, leading to missed opportunities for both artisans and the market.

Research indicates that consumer education and strategic marketing are critical for expanding the market for GI-tagged products. Awareness campaigns, digital platforms, and influencer marketing have the potential to bridge the gap between traditional artisans and modern consumers. With Generation Z spending substantial time online and relying heavily on social media for shopping decisions, leveraging these channels to promote GI-tagged products could transform consumer behaviour.

The findings of this research are critical for multiple stakeholders. For policymakers, they highlight the importance of aligning traditional crafts with contemporary consumer trends. For marketers and brands, the study underscores the need for innovative approaches to engage younger audiences. For artisans, it sheds light on how better access to informed consumers can enhance their economic and social well-being. As India seeks to position itself as a global leader in sustainable fashion and heritage crafts, the role of GI tags becomes increasingly significant. They not only protect the identity and uniqueness of products but also serve as a bridge between tradition and modernity. Ensuring the sustainability and recognition of GI-tagged handlooms and textiles requires collaborative efforts across sectors, with a particular focus on engaging Generation Z as a key driver of change. This study aims to contribute to this effort by providing actionable insights and recommendations, bridging the gap between heritage and modern consumer aspirations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. GI TAGS - ITS BENEFITS AND AWARENESS

In India, products that naturally have reputations, qualities, or regionally specific traits are legally protected by registration under the Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. These products are known as GI Tagged products. Agricultural, natural, manufactured, handicraft, and food items are the categories for which the products registered under the legislation fall. With the aid of their products' distinctive features, producers can set their market offering apart from that of their rivals. [Babu and Kumaran \(2018\)](#) The Geographical Indication (GI) tag plays a significant role in safeguarding cultural identity by granting formal recognition to indigenous products. Such recognition not only aids in preserving traditional crafts but also protects them against industrial automation, thereby sustaining the economic livelihoods of the artisans involved. [Mishra and Nandita \(2018\)](#) The act of registering a GI tag not only helps preserve these traditional methods, but also helps in ensuring that they are passed down to future generations.

GI products have massive potential to contribute to the economy's GDP and result in the rural area's development. [Udayan and Achari \(2022\)](#) However, consumer awareness of GI tags is crucial for the success of these products. The Indian government has mainly focused on pre-GI awareness initiatives but has not made significant efforts in areas such as advertising, distribution channels, branding and exports. [D and Kumar \(2023\)](#) Despite the increasing recognition of GI products, many consumers remain unaware of the significance of these labels, which hampers the market potential of GI-tagged products. This gap in knowledge is particularly evident among younger consumers who are not familiar with traditional crafts and may lack the necessary education to understand the value of GI products.

2.2. EMPOWERMENT OF ARTISANS

Awareness regarding GI tags remains limited among artisans, with many unaware of their existence or the benefits associated with them. It is essential, therefore, to assign GI tags directly to the communities responsible for safeguarding these indigenous products, empowering them through support in the application process and enhancing their knowledge. Rural communities' marketing infrastructure, which is their weakest link, has to be reinforced through capacity-

building and focused assistance. In order to empower and institutionalize these caretakers and guarantee that they directly benefit from the intended outcomes, awareness-raising is essential. [Kapila and Kaur \(2020\)](#) GI-tagged products are typically crafted by rural artisans and producers residing in interior regions. However, the economic benefits derived from these products often fail to reach the producers themselves. It is important for any producer to know the consumers' preference for the development of effective strategies aimed at expanding the domestic market for these products. [Udayan and Achari \(2022\)](#)

Weavers often face exploitation due to the absence of standardized pricing mechanisms for their products, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation by master weavers or contractors. Such exploitation is forcing the weavers to switch to other ways of livelihood. Furthermore, a significant limitation in India's export scenario is the lack of direct interaction between artisans and exporters. They lack market information and do not have access to consumers, eventually, leading to gap in demand and supply. Artisans seldom know the market demand miss on the major profits. [Mishra and Nandita \(2018\)](#)

2.3. CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND PREFERENCES

A thorough understanding and acceptance of Geographical Indication (GI) products by consumers are fundamental to their success. With rising consumer consciousness regarding product quality, there is an inclination towards premium-quality goods, for which consumers are often willing to pay higher prices. [John \(2023\)](#) Even if consumers are increasingly conscious of the quality associated with GI products, a significant portion remains unaware of the existence of GI labels and the specific significance they carry. This gap in knowledge is particularly evident among younger consumers who are not familiar with traditional crafts and may lack the necessary education to understand the value of GI products. Consumers tend to associate higher prices with superior quality, though this can lead to issues with counterfeit products being sold under false claims. Enhancing consumer knowledge about the origins and attributes of GI products can increase their marketability and help reduce the sale of fake products, making it critical for producers to educate consumers on the benefits and authenticity of GI goods. Also, the information known to consumers, which is provided from the market acts as a marketing tool and influences consumers' preference of quality products.

A major portion of the traditional handloom textiles in India are made in the form of sarees - Banarasi sarees and Pochampally Ikat Sarees to name a few. Younger Indian women, influenced by Western trends, are moving away from traditional sarees, leading to a decline in demand for Sarees. They now prefer contemporary designs and cost-effective options, but producers have been slow to adapt to these changing tastes, resulting in minimal innovation in design, colour, and packaging. [Mishra and Nandita \(2018\)](#)

Since the lack of effective consumer education, especially in urban markets, remains a significant hurdle, there is a strong requirement of strengthened implementation, better retailer-consumer awareness, and smarter branding. Along with all these timely design interventions in accordance to the consumer preferences can enhance the value and effectiveness of GI tags.

2.4. THE ROLE OF GEN Z

Generation Z plays a significant role in the promotion and sustainability of GI-tagged products. Being digital natives, they prefer the convenience of online

shopping over the traditional brick-and-mortar store. Product features, price and personalization impact their purchase decisions. Gen Z is also a generation that gives a lot of importance to values like social justice, inclusiveness, altruism, transparency and truthfulness. They prefer sustainable and eco-friendly products that support ethical consumerism. They prefer brands that are authentic and align with their values. [Perugu and Sajanapwar \(2024\)](#) Thus making GI tagged products, an appealing choice to them. Also, with the increasing spending power of Gen Z combined with their set of values and beliefs they are more likely than previous generations to pay a premium for products that are authentically sourced and have positive social and environmental impacts. This generational preference creates a significant opportunity for GI products to tap into a growing market of conscious consumers.

Several producers don't have any their online presence. Some may have websites which only provide basic features and are not updated regularly. Most of the times, GI is not mentioned. Additionally, the internet and digital media have not been used to increase brand exposure and connect with more customers. Although certain products, including as handicrafts and handlooms, are sold on a few websites, there is no specific strategy for utilizing e-commerce platforms to connect with consumers, and most of these websites do not offer them as unique GI products. [Sharma and Kulhari \(2015\)](#) Gen Z's proficiency with social media and digital platforms can amplify the visibility of GI-tagged products. By sharing content about these products, collaborating with influencers, and using platforms like Instagram to tell the stories of artisans and their crafts, this demographic can help create global awareness and demand for traditional Indian crafts

2.5. MARKETING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite their unique advantages, GI products face marketing challenges, such as limited reach and weak consumer awareness. Challenges include limited consumer knowledge, inconsistent pricing, and the absence of innovation in product design and branding. [Mishra \(2021\)](#) Geographical Indications (GIs) don't automatically boost sales; their market potential relies on buyers recognizing and valuing the product's origin. Developing a successful GI requires significant time, resources, and a strong marketing strategy. [Mishra \(2021\)](#) However, Gen Z's preference for digital shopping and their influence on trends provide a unique opportunity to bridge this gap. By leveraging digital platforms and focusing on storytelling, brands can effectively connect GI-tagged products with younger consumers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using mix method research via surveying respondents who identify as Gen Z (between the age of 18 – 28). The questionnaire was prepared to test the qualitative and quantitative aspects of this research, and was circulated online using convenience sampling technique. Quantitative data was collected through questions related to personal income and clothing expenditure to identify measurable consumption patterns. Additionally, qualitative insights were obtained to explore participants' perceptions of GI tags, levels of awareness, anticipated responses, and individual attitudes.

In total, 116 respondents filled the survey, out of which 63% were females, 34.5% were males and 2.5% did not prefer to say. 55.2% people out of the respondents belong to the age group of 18-21, 33.5% from age group of 22-25 and

9.5% between 26-28 years of age. A majority of them (53.9 %) belong to the Fine Arts and design background, second majority being Science and technology (20%) followed by Business Administration (10.4%) and Finance and Commerce (7%). Other 8.3% comprised of various fields like Medicine, Law, Psychology and International Politics.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This section explores Generation Z's awareness, perception, and purchasing behavior concerning GI-tagged handloom and textile products. By analysing survey responses, it identifies key trends and factors influencing their buying decisions, offering insights into how these products resonate with modern consumer values.

4.1. AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF GI TAGS

Figure 1

Are you aware of Geographical Indication (GI) tags on handloom or textile products?

116 responses

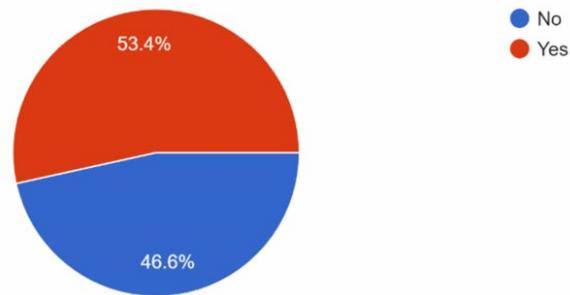


Figure 1 Awareness of GI Tags on handloom or textile products

The survey results indicated that nearly half (46.6%) of respondents were unfamiliar with GI tags for handloom or textile products. Among the 53.4% who were aware, a notable majority (56.45%) were from Fine Arts and Design backgrounds, suggesting an industry-specific awareness.

Figure 2

If yes.. Where did you first hear about GI tags on handloom or textile products?

67 responses

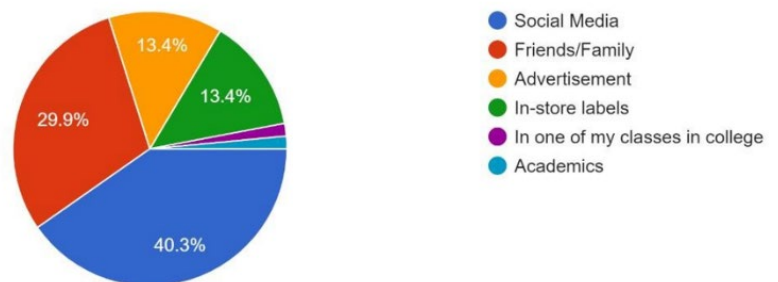


Figure 2 Medium of Awareness of GI Tags on Handloom or Textile Products

Gen Z is the first generation that was born with the internet, and are known to be the digital natives. Therefore, it was seen that social media emerged as the

leading channel for raising awareness (40.3%), followed by word-of-mouth recommendations from family and friends (29.9%). Traditional mediums like in-store labels and advertisements show potential in spreading awareness, while formal education at colleges and universities was found to have a minimal impact.

4.2. PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR HABITS

Regarding purchasing habits, 72.4% of respondents reported buying handloom products occasionally, with only 14.7% doing so frequently, and 7.8% refraining from such purchases.

Figure 3

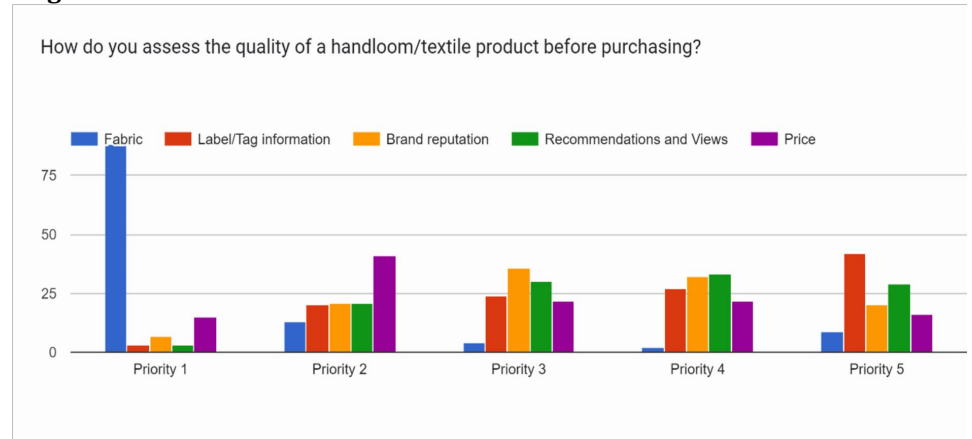


Figure 3 Key Factors Affecting Purchase Decision of Handloom or Textile Products

Factors influencing these decisions included the quality of fabric, label and tag information, recommendations and views, pricing, and brand reputation. Out of which fabric quality being the most decisive followed by the pricing and the brand reputation.

Figure 4

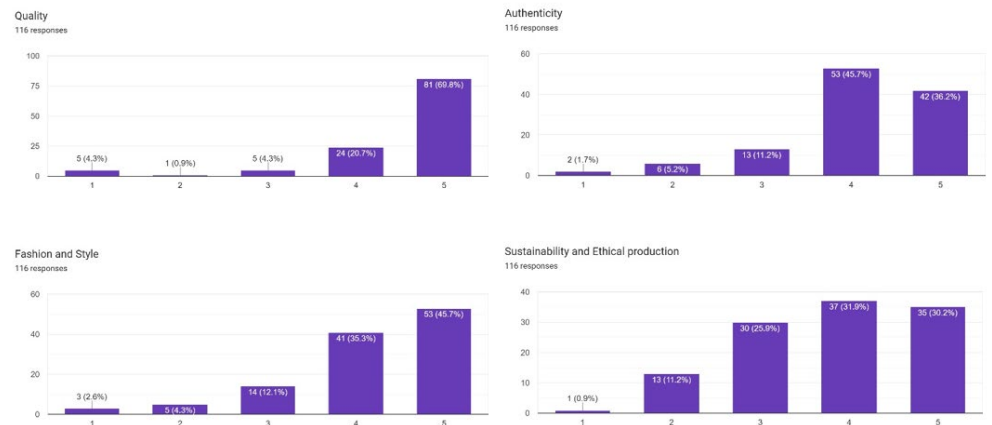


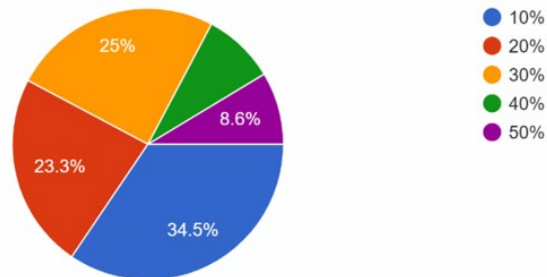
Figure 4 Importance of Factors Influencing Purchase Decision of Handloom or Textile Products

Gen Z respondents demonstrated a preference for products that align with their values, notably sustainability, authenticity, and style. Attributes such as quality, ethical production, and fashion appeal significantly impacted their choices.

Figure 5

How much more are you willing to spend on a handloom/textile product if it has got a GI Tag?

116 responses

**Figure 5 Willingness to Pay a Premium for GI-Tagged Handloom and Textile Products**

A majority were willing to pay a premium for products bearing GI tags: 34.5% indicated a willingness to pay 10% more, 25% were ready to pay 30% more, and 8.6% were open to paying up to 50% more. These findings underline the importance of aligning product offerings with Gen Z's sustainability driven and value-conscious approach.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of data and literature, strategic recommendations are outlined to increase awareness, appeal, and adoption of GI-tagged handloom and textile products among Generation Z. To enhance consumer awareness, academic institutions should be encouraged to use innovative methods to educate students about the cultural importance of GI tags. In retail, visual merchandising can be used to highlight GI-tagged products with engaging displays and informative labels, and the GI certification should be prominently displayed on product tags and marketing materials to emphasize authenticity.

Digital engagement is crucial for market reach. The study suggests collaborating with influencers to create content that showcases products and the artisans who make them. E-commerce integration through dedicated platforms or established marketplaces can provide a seamless way to sell GI-tagged items. The use of interactive campaigns with AR/VR technology could also offer immersive experiences, like virtual tours of artisan workshops, bringing cultural and historical significance to life for consumers.

To appeal to modern audiences, it is crucial to incorporate youth-centric and design-forward strategies. This includes introducing contemporary styles and multifunctional products that align with Gen Z's aesthetic preferences. Collaborations with fashion designers on exclusive, limited-edition collections can bridge the gap between heritage and modernity.

Finally, strengthening artisan linkages is essential for long-term sustainability. Empowering artisans through direct-to-consumer platforms can minimize exploitation and ensure fairer earnings. Providing training in digital marketing and

customer interaction can also equip artisans with the skills to effectively promote their work and build relationships with buyers.

6. CONCLUSION

This study utilized a mixed-method research approach to analyse the awareness, perceptions, and purchasing behaviours of Generation Z (born between 1996 and 2010) regarding Geographical Indication (GI) tagged handloom and textile products. The research reveals that while Gen Z is a powerful and influential consumer group with an estimated global spending capacity of \$12 trillion by 2030, their awareness of GI tags is surprisingly low. A significant portion of the Gen Z respondents surveyed (46.6%) were unfamiliar with GI tags on handloom or textile products. This lack of awareness presents a major challenge to the growth and recognition of India's heritage crafts in modern markets.

The findings, however, also highlight a promising opportunity. The study confirms that Gen Z consumers are value-driven, prioritizing sustainability, authenticity, and ethical production. They are also willing to pay a premium for products that align with these values. The survey found that a majority of respondents were willing to pay 10% to 50% more for a product with a GI tag. This indicates that GI-tagged products, with their inherent qualities of authenticity and traditional craftsmanship, are well-positioned to appeal to this demographic.

The research identifies that digital platforms are the most effective way to reach this tech-savvy generation, with social media being the leading channel for raising awareness (40.3%). The study recommends leveraging these platforms through innovative marketing strategies such as storytelling, influencer partnerships, and interactive campaigns to bridge the gap between traditional artisans and young consumers. Furthermore, modernizing designs and offering contemporary styles can make GI products more appealing and relevant to Gen Z's aesthetic preferences. By strengthening direct-to-consumer platforms and providing artisans with training in digital marketing, the economic and social well-being of the artisans can also be improved. In essence, the success of GI-tagged products in the modern market depends on effective branding and consumer education that resonates with the values and behaviours of Generation Z.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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