

Lack of Post-Registration Exploitation of GI: A Case Study from Bagru and Sanganer Hand- Block Prints

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Abstract

Geographical Indications (GIs) can be used as a powerful marketing tool to differentiate artisanal textile products from mill-made goods by providing authenticity to the products. The differentiation would enable artisan communities to thrive in competitive markets uplifting their economic condition thereby promoting economic development of the geographic area as handicrafts require local materials, traditional knowledge, and artisanal skills. Block-printed textile crafts of Bagru and Sanganer are registered GIs from Rajasthan, however, the artisans of the craft have not exploited their GI status for marketing or product differentiation. This study was conducted with artisans from Bagru and Sanganer to determine their current issues with the value chain and their understanding of GI for their products. The discussions include appropriate pricing, counterfeiting of products, low capital, lack of knowledge about GI and future expectations of the artisans. The discussion builds on creating a future roadmap for the artisans.

Keywords: Geographical Indications; Livelihoods; Marketing tool; Sustainable development; Traditional crafts.

Introduction

Bagru and Sanganer towns in the state of Rajasthan have been important centres for textile printing and dyeing. Historically, textile crafts have had patronage from the rulers of Jaipur who have encouraged these craft centres to flourish. These crafts are well-known locally and internationally. This can be documented as prominent designers Anita Dongre and Ritu Kumar, national brands like Fabindia and Anokhi and international

brands like Tigra Tigra, and The Good Earth have been using Bagru and Sanganer hand-block printed textiles in their collections. The brands market their products emphasizing that the products are made authentically at source by artisans. Textile crafts are a prominent source of livelihood for people living in these geographical locations. The artisans of Bagru and Sanganer highlighted that most people buy hand-crafted textiles because of the aesthetic awareness of consumers and the recognition of distinct motifs and printing styles.

The mass appeal and recognition of these textile styles make them vulnerable to incessant copying as the traditional motif language and colour combination are easily replicable through mediums like screen printing and digital printing. Compromised use of traditional materials for production and rampant use of chemical dyes cause environmental and pollution issues in the geographic location and a loss of livelihood to the artisans.

Consumers are unaware of these nuances and buy products based on aesthetic recognition. They cannot distinguish between products that are screen-printed with chemical dyes versus authentic block-printed products and try to bargain with the producers to decrease the product price or cite the availability of goods with lower prices as an option. This leads to the disillusionment of traditional artisans as they cannot compete in production quantities, production cost or the consumer reach of bigger industries. Their patronage is limited to niche audiences aware of genuine product attributes.

Internationally Geographical Indications (GIs) are used as a pivotal tool to distinguish traditional products made in local regions and industrially made mass-produced products. Countries like France and Italy have successfully carved a niche internationally for products with geographical indications like Champagne and Parma Ham.

The Geographical Indications Act was passed in 1999 and implemented in 2003 in India. Darjeeling tea was the first product from India to get a GI registration. In Rajasthan Bagru prints and Sanganer hand block prints received GI in 2011 and 2009 respectively. This indicates that Bagru has been registered as GI for 13 years and Sanganer has been registered for 15 years. Considering the success story of products with registered GIs internationally, block prints from Bagru and Sanganer could have immensely benefitted from GI protection and improved the socio-economic conditions of the artisans. Despite the protection given to these crafts, the

artisans are unable to command consumer confidence and the right price for their products. Research suggests a slower rate of production, counterfeiting of products and low capital are some of the value chain issues faced by the artisans. A lack of knowledge about GIs amongst artisans and consumers and their effectiveness in mapping the authenticity and origin of the product are other factors. The long-term effect of GIs on artisans and post-registration effectivity for them has not been documented which is an existing research gap. The study analyses and critiques the reasons for the lack of market development for GI-registered products.

Objectives

1. To study current value chain issues for artisans
2. To analyse the current awareness of artisans about Geographical Indications
3. To suggest a roadmap for the effectiveness of GIs for textile products

Review of Literature

According to WIPO, Geographical indications are defined as a name or indication associated with a place that is sometimes used to identify a product. This “geographical indication” does not only say where the product comes from. More importantly, it identifies the product’s special characteristics, which are the result of the product’s origins.’

Barcala (2013) highlights that European countries have successfully projected GIs as respective brands by highlighting the historical aspects thereby improving quality.

In the words of Dogan and Gokovali (2012) GI can act as a rural development strategy and can create viable opportunities for regional development, thereby making rural population beneficiaries in society and development as it would also help in their income generation activities.

As per the GI Journal published by the Government of India on January 19, 2024, there are 547 registered GIs in India. The registration can be done for 10 years and can be renewed for subsequent periods of 10 years. In 2011 and 2009 respectively Bagru and Sanganer hand-block prints received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag from the Government of India through a State Government initiative through Rajasthan Small Scale Industries

Corporation (RSSIC).

According to Niti Ayog's 12th 5-year plan, one of the agenda is to 'strengthen the current IP Regime and Systems to Leverage IP is required for the creation of India's intellectual capital.' The plan cites China as a case study of developing a country's intellectual property system.

National Handloom Policy Report (2017) indicates that 'the six states of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam, together account for 65% of all rural handloom and handicraft establishments in India. Handicrafts are also a pillar of the rural economy in India, and if strengthened and sustained will stem the flood of rural-urban migration.'

In June 2019, The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) of the Government of India launched a common GI logo to be used across all GI-based products from India. This initiative is taken to identify a common origin from India collectively for the registered products increasing consumer confidence and visibility for these products globally. The initiative will help genuine producers against counterfeiters of the product.

Despite the immense potential to thrust and uplift the rural economy, there are numerous issues due to which GIs have not been explored post-registration. According to Conejero and Cesar (2017) implementation of collective strategies requires good governance and institutional capacities as the value of a GI product is influenced by the 'structure of the local community, group reputation, group heterogeneity, way of local governance, control system, entry barriers, etc.' which poses significant challenge for GI's in India as most of them are concentrated in rural areas where education about GI's is rather low and the societies are often fragmented leading to a lack of consensus by all the stakeholders of the community.

Isha Foundation reported in their blog that Sanganer is home to about 3,000 artisans who are involved in this type of printing. Their observation concludes 'although having achieved the Geographical Indication tag, the craft is being threatened by faster and contemporary methods such as screen printing, and excessive use of synthetic dyes that make authentic Sanganeri prints rare and expensive.'

According to a leading handicraft retailer and craft preservation organization Gaatha Handicrafts there are numerous day-to-day challenges faced

by the Chippa community in Bagru and Sanganer which have impacted the production process of crafts and the livelihood of the traditional artisans of the craft. In both Baru and Sanganer craftsmen have adopted cheaper and more easily available raw materials, that includes the usage of chemical dyes in abundance and the usage of natural dyes only for specific orders.

Research Framework

The research framework consists of the utilisation of primary and secondary research sources.

Primary Research: Primary research was done with the artisan units of Bagru and Sanganer using an interview schedule. The schedule was developed in both English and Hindi language for ease of understanding of the artisans.

The interview schedule consisted of open-ended and multiple-choice questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The questions consisted of the following information:

General Information of the respondents- name, age, unit name of the respondents

Value chain questions- turnover of the unit, product mix, marketing medium and current issues faced by the artisans.

GI awareness - Awareness of GI, usage of GI for marketing, and incentives required from the government.

Secondary Research: Secondary research consisted of government reports from the last ten years which mention crafts, livelihoods and GI. The reports are studied to see the status and support given by the government to the textile artisans.

Selection of Locale of the study: The study was conducted in the following geographical areas of Rajasthan. These defined areas have textile crafts which have been granted GIs.

Sanganer Hand- Block Print: Sanganer District

Bagru Print: Bagru, Jaipur District

Selection of Sample: Area sampling technique was used for sampling as the craft is specific to the geographic location.

Sample Size and Survey Method: The sample size for the manufacturing units was taken as 5% of the total population of the hand-block printing manufacturing units registered under the geographical region. In Sangner, 5% of the total units were 32 units. In Bagrua sample size of 5% was 17 units.

Interview Schedule was used to collect data from the artisans as it was convenient for the artisans to discuss each aspect of their business, and they could initiate dialogue which was pivotal in getting qualitative data from them which proved useful in data interpretation and analysis.

Result and Discussion

The artisans were mostly from the Khatri or Chhipa community. The respondents mostly do job-working for retailers or wholesalers with a few of them also retailing their products.

The types of businesses owned by the artisans are provided in Table 1.

Table 1:

Types of Business Ownership

N = 49

Occupation	Bagru n = 17		Sanganer n = 32	
	f	%	f	%
	Wholesaler	1	6	4
Manufacturer cum wholesaler	7	41	10	31
Wholesaler cum retailer	2	12	3	9
Representative of producer organization	0	0	6	19
Manufacturer	9	53	9	28

The majority of the population of Bagru (53%) are manufacturers followed by manufacturer cum wholesalers (41%). In Sanganer, most of the popu-

lation (31%) are manufacturers cum wholesalers followed by manufacturing units (28%). The manufacturers are involved in job-working for other brands.

Respondents were asked about the mediums of publicity and channels through which the product information is disseminated to the target audiences. The same can be observed from the table.

Table: 2
Mediums of Publicity used by the artisans.

N = 49

Publicity Medium	Bagru n = 17		Sanganer n = 32	
	f	%	f	%
Through Advertisements	3.0	17.6	1.0	3.1
Word of mouth publicity	12.0	70.6	14.0	43.8
B2B marketing	4.0	23.5	2.0	6.3
Through NGO/ trade fairs	3.0	17.6	3.0	9.4
Do not market the products	1.0	5.9	12.0	37.5
Through their own website	0.0	0	3.0	9.4

Bagru is known for its identifiable style of prints, and therefore about 70.6% of respondents rely mainly on word-of-mouth publicity, however, 23.5% of them do opt for business-to-business (B2B) marketing and other means like advertisements, trade fairs, etc. Only 5.9% of respondents responded they do not market their products.

In Sanganer, the opinion was split and 43.8% of the respondents preferred word-of-mouth publicity. 37.5% of the respondents responded they do not market their products. Most vendors that responded to not marketing their products were small vendors who responded that marketing involved significant costs therefore they refrain from the same. 9.4% of respondents responded they conduct marketing activities through Non

-Government organisations (NGOs) or trade fairs. Another set of 9.4% of respondents used other mediums of publicity including online mediums including their website.

Key Challenges and Obstacles to Business: The artisans were asked about some of the key challenges that they faced when conducting the business. For this question, the respondents could also pick multiple options. Some of the key observations as challenges can be observed from the table below.

Table 3

Key Challenges for craftsmen

N=49

Key Challenges	Bagru n = 17		Sanganer n = 32	
	f	%	f	%
Access to finance	14	82.4	6	18.8
Limited Market	9	52.9	7	21.9
Availability of Supplies	3	17.6	6	18.8
Difficulty in Exporting	6	35.3	7	21.9
Limited Skills/Training	4	23.5	15	46.9
Insufficient workers	7	41.2	17	53.1
Lack of Government Support	13	76.5	12	37.5
Opening of Textile Park	7	41.2	-	-
Insufficient Compensation	-	-	-	-
Increased Competition	-	-	6	18.8

As observed from this table there are multiple challenges faced by artisans in day-to-day functioning in both Bagru and Sanganer. These challenges result in artisans not emphasizing enough other aspects of the business increasing consumer confidence and the usage of GI.

In Bagru lack of government support (76.5%) was prominently highlighted as the major obstacle for their business. Access to financing was another major issue that they faced.

In both Bagru and Sanganer, it was observed that the lack of workers and the training of workers was another major challenge (41.2% and 53.1% respectively).

In Bagru another major problem which the artisans faced was the opening of an industrial park as it led to the artisans in the original village of Bagru losing out on potential customers. When the artisans were asked about the possible ways in which the authenticity of their products was mapped by them and by their potential customers. Most of the respondents responded that their customers work on trusting the artisanal units individually. Some of them responded that they use Craftmark with their products to distinguish them from mass-produced products.

Artisans' awareness of GI The artisans were asked about their awareness about GI's and the impact of GI on their businesses. The awareness of GI was high however the awareness of its utility was low indicating that artisans are not using GI to differentiate themselves in the market.

Table 4
Artisan awareness of GI

N = 49

Awareness Status	Bagru n = 17		Sanganer n = 32	
	f	%	f	%
Yes	12	70.6	16	50
No	5	29.4	16	50

Most of the artisans of Bagru (70.6%) were aware of GIs, on the contrary, artisans of Sanganer (50%) had mixed opinions and only half of the respondents were aware of the presence of a GI.

Bagru craftspeople were aware of the presence of GIs, most of them were the original members of the consortium which initiated the granting of GIs and were also unaware of the benefits of GIs. They were also unaware of the renewal benefits and procedures for obtaining the same.

The respondents of Sanganer believed that it is due to the popularity of Sanganer Block prints across the world that their product was in demand

and did not think that the presence or absence of GI made any difference to product sales. It is also noteworthy that the respondents who were aware of GIs in either centre were unaware of its benefits for their craft or business.

The artisans were asked if they were using GI as a marketing tool for their business. The results can be observed from the table.

Table 5
Usage of GI as a marketing tool

N=49

Use GI	Bagru n = 17		Sanganer n = 32	
	f	%	f	%
Yes	1.00	5.9	1.0	3.1
No	16.00	94.1	31.0	96.9

Majority of the respondents of Bagru (94%) and Sanganer (96.9%) disagreed for usage of the GI tag as a marketing tool. The respondents who do not use GI as a marketing tool responded that they were not aware of GI and its utility for their business as the goodwill of the craft was enough for their buyers to purchase the products. However, they also reported that they were facing stiff competition from screen-printed and digital-printed textile industries which are passing off their products as genuine block-printed products. The units were sceptical about advertising the GI status of their craft as they responded that it is not only them but also their consumers who are unaware.

The respondents were informed about the importance of GIs and were given a brief overview of how it has helped farmers in countries like France and Italy to charge a premium on their products. They responded that the government should take appropriate measures and not only educate them on how to use the same for advertisement of their products but also educate the consumers.

Measures and Incentives Required to Increase the Impact and Awareness of GIs: The government plays an important role in granting of GI's and the respondents across all the centres agreed that they would require the support of the government or governing bodies to help them achieve the usage of GIs to their full potential in their business. There are schemes

available from the government including a common GI logo for all GI-registered products, however, the grassroots awareness of government policies is rather low.

The respondents were asked if any of these would be useful for them along with an open-ended option of any other intervention, that is beneficial for them. The respondents were also allowed to answer multiple options if they believed it would be useful for their business.

Table 6

Incentives required by the artisans from the government

N =49

Types of Incentives Required	Bagru n = 17 %	Sanganer n = 32 %
More awareness drive for the consumers	82.4	75.0
Increased subsidy to the craftsmen	58.8	56.3
GI based branding of the product	47.1	21.9
Any other	5.9	9.4

It can be observed from the table that in both Bagru and Sanganer (82.4% and 75% respectively) respondents would like to have more awareness drives for the consumers. The respondents reported that market intelligence would help them effectively implement GI-based strategies in their businesses. The respondents reported they would like the government to give more subsidies to units making authentic products (Bagru at 58.8% and Sanganer at 56.3% respectively) versus the units which use screen printing or digital printing as methods of production. The respondents said that doing so would help them obtain a competitive advantage compared to bigger units which can generate more production. 47.1% of respondents from Bagru and 21.9% of respondents from Sanganer reported that they would expect the government to help them with GI-based branding of their product including issuing of specialized tags and assistance in carving out niche areas in international exhibitions. When the respondents were informed that such schemes already existed for the artisans, they responded that grass-root level awareness and implementation of various schemes would be beneficial for them.

5.9% of artisans of Bagru and 9.4 % of artisans cited other support requirements including assistance in marketing to international markets and taxation of different industries as incentives which could be used to thrust GI-based incentives for the artisans.

Conclusion

The artisans believe that the future for their textile craft is bleak as competition with screen-printed and digital-printed textiles is unsustainable. Artisans face numerous value chain hassles on a day-to-day basis, and they spend less time on product marketing. The retailers and artisans are not fully aware of GI and their benefits and therefore cannot communicate the benefits effectively to the consumers. Despite the presence of a common GI logo, the same is not utilised by artisans. The artisans expressed that they would like the government to create quality control and awareness mechanisms for the optimal utilisation of GIs.

The government has provided incentives and has created mechanisms to develop economic incentives for artisans, especially in the rural sector. Including intellectual property-related development goals in 5-year development plans demonstrates the intentions to incentivise the artisans, however, the development goals need to reach grassroot levels including working towards consumer awareness.

GIs hold immense potential for the preservation of traditional knowledge and the livelihood of artisans. There needs to be a robust ecosystem to address value chain issues faced by the artisans and follow-up on artisans post-registration to fully benefit from the system. It is essential to educate the stakeholders including artisans, consumers and intermediaries involved in the value chain. The government needs to survey the ground level to study the impact of registered GI on artisans. They should initiate quality control and inspection mechanisms for post-registration exploitation of these products with a plan to implement them at the grass-roots level for maximum benefits.

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