

Branding of Territorial Speciality Products : A Case of Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the production and marketing problems faced by 200 farm families who grow Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal, a local geographical indication (GI) brinjal variety. A status analysis of current marketing methods was made through exploratory design using focused group discussion and face to face interview of farmers. Besides using the traditional 4Ps of the marketing mix, this paper discussed policy, people, and public relations as add-on determinants of the marketing mix specific to local speciality products. Information collected directly from farmers through face-to-face discussion was on parameters related to efficacy, applicability, and marketability of Udupi Mattu Brinjal. Branding strategy interventions suggested in this paper took the shape of a branding framework which will help position Udupi Brinjal in rural households and will concur with the objectives laid down by the Indian Foreign Trade Policy (2015-20) of giving marketing impetus to geographical indications in India.

Keywords : marketing strategy, branding of geographical indications (GIs), territorial speciality guaranteed (TSGs)

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The enactment of the GI Act in India was primarily intended towards the identification of any goods, be it agricultural, manufacturing, or natural as originating or manufactured, in the territory of a country, or any region, or a locality, or a geography, where a given quality or characteristic of such goods is attributed to that locality or region. The ownership and evolving nature of such goods is also attributed to that region. The GI is a name, term, mark, sign, symbol or a combination of them, primarily introduced to protect the interests of the manufacturers or producers of such goods from free riding to create product differentiation and develop unique identity (Aggarwal, Singh, & Prashar, 2014). GIs can be owned by association of individuals, producers, or organizations, or any other governing authority by or under any law for the time being under force (Gopal, Nair, & Babu, 2007). The right to use GI is vested upon any member of such community producing such goods.

Established under the Trade Marks Act, 1999, the geographical indication (GI) is used as a vehicle to convey an assertion of quality and uniqueness that is attributable to the goods' location of origin. Nations use GI as a legal means of protection offered to goods with unique characteristics. The European Union has established systems by introducing the concept of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). This regulated system has multiple objectives,

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which includes improving farmer's income, satisfying consumer demand by offering high quality products, and ensuring diversification of agricultural production (Di Fonzo & Russo, 2014). In the United Kingdom, protection is availed using registration via trademarks; while in France, a multifaceted regulation is used to protect special origin products. The USA favors the laws relating to trademarks and patents over GIs for commercial use. Removal of information asymmetry between the producer/manufacturer that gives a sort of quality assurance to the consumer is the supreme advantage that the GI mark commands (Bramley, Bienabe, & Kirsten, 2009). In Asia, territorial specialties were protected under the framework of unfair competition laws, consumer protection, and food standards before the introduction of the GI concept. The definition of the applicability and traceability of GIs in countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Jordan, and Singapore is very much in conformity with the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. The GI related regulations of the Republic of Indonesia is almost in the lines of the TRIPS agreement along with additional regulatory elaborations on geographical environment factors, the factors of nature, the people or the combination of both (Gopal et al., 2007).

In India, the term 'Geographical Indication' encapsulates the component 'goods' which is capable of classification into agricultural goods, naturally growing or manufactured, or handicrafts, and also comprises of industry inclusive food stuff under section 2 (1) (e) of the Geographical Indications Act, 1999 (Registration and Protection also referred as 'Act'). Section 2 (1) (g) of the Act defines the term 'Indication' under the context geographical indication as a figurative representation used to convey the geographical origin of the goods to where it applies (The Gazette of India, Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, GI Act, 1999). The 'good' or 'product' for the sake of trade or commercial use may be named after the country, region, or locality, so long as the reputation of the good or product should pertain to that specific region or locality. Several case studies conducted in India concur with the view that the main motivation for the producers to seek for GI status has been the expectation on enhanced brand value and protection from duplication (Nanda, Barpujari, & Srivastava, 2013 ; Rangnekar, 2004).

The vast social and cultural diversity in India gave rise to the growth of multiple products, which make several products eligible for the GI mark. However, the farmers or producers who grow or manufacture these products do not have the wherewithal to go towards registration or beyond. The ability to mobilize an association is dampened by the lack of financial resources and team work. The registration of GIs should be backed by a strong protection mechanism. Most of the associations are small (members) and do not have the financial strength to fight legal battles related to infringements. Besides, the efforts of the government to promote these products in domestic as well as international markets have been limited.

The study encompassing worldwide literature on branding and marketing efforts towards GIs support the conclusion that marketing efforts for Indian GIs can be enhanced to unlock their true potential. This paper is motivated by a small group of marginal farmers in Mattu village who grow 'Mattu Gulla,' a local (*Solanum Melongena* Linn) brinjal variety, awarded with the GI mark for the word 'Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal' grown in GPS coordinates of 13° 20' 27.1716" N and 74° 44' 31.7112" E in Mattu village of Coastal Karnataka, a Southern state in India. Field visits were conducted by us to understand the existing marketing mechanisms used by farmers and agents for Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal. Besides highlighting the GI framework in India and discussing the functional similarity of GIs and brands, this work echoes the branding strategies that can be applied to leverage the true market potential of Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal.

GIs as Brands

GIs are granted to producers of communities as a right and hence have to essentially exhibit attributes similar to brands, thus ensuring that they maintain high levels of quality worth the price charged. In definitive marketing parlance, brands are names, symbols, terms, or signs, or a combination of them, which help in the easy identification of products of one seller and allow him/her to distinguish products belonging to a competing

variety/product. Thus, the basic function of identification performed by GIs is similar to those of brands. For consumers, brands influence choice patterns and simplify decision making (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Due to product qualities unique to a particular geographical location, GIs are expected to perform the functions of brands in the field of marketing. All organizations who have unique GIs registered in the names of producer, associations, or boards stand to gain from the protection available if they develop branding initiatives to leverage the true market potential of such products.

GI Framework in India

India's definition of GI, considering its developing economy status, is a comprehensive one, which includes a wide variety of products such as rice, tea, vegetables, fruits, natural goods, handicraft materials, silk sarees, chappals, etc. classified as products with special importance in terms of consumption utility for consumers and vehicle for commercial value creation for producers and manufacturers. India's Foreign Trade Policy Statement 2015-20 (Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2017) has observed the function of marketing and branding of GI products as an area of key focus, both in domestic and international markets, that is intended to lead to expansion of existing markets and creation of new markets. India felt that most of its products have true commercial potential and it is necessary to provide protection to these products by making it a part of the TRIPS agreement.

The TRIPS agreement conveys legal protection to GI products in other member countries, if a particular product is ensured protection in the country of origin. The first GI in India was registered in the year 2004. Since then, 311 GIs have been registered with the Geographical Indication Registry, Chennai as on March, 31, 2018. At present, Karnataka State has been the frontrunner in the registration of GIs with 40 registrations, followed by Maharashtra (30), Tamil Nadu (28), and Kerala (27) (Geographical Indication Registry, Chennai, March, 2018). Out of these registrations, more than half (63%) are accounted by handicrafts, 29% by agri-based products, followed by manufactured goods, and food stuff. Natural goods as a new category of GI was introduced by registering Makrana Marbles in the state of Rajasthan in 2015.

Review of Literature

Earlier studies on branding strategy towards GI products focused on awareness campaigns through word of mouth, hoardings, TV and radio advertisements. Brand positioning is based on local beliefs, culture, or traditions of the local people (Dogra & Ghuman, 2008). A separate marketing strategy is required for GI products. The areas of product differentiation, consumer behavior, and integrated marketing strategy need further study. GIs can be leveraged through product differentiation (Anson, 2012). Individual firms who have protection with intellectual property rights (IPRs) have the incentive to innovate market products and encash the benefits associated with success. Stronger the level of property protection rights, greater the incentives for producers to create geographically differentiated agricultural products (GDAPs).

Stronger property right protection enhancing efforts is welfare enhancing for GI producer organizations. Any extension in the property rights protection rules given to producer organizations will lead to control over supply and increase in the number of GDAP organizations (Lence, Marette, Hayes, & Foster 2006). The governing body should improve the value chain coordination, mitigate internal and external free riding, and enhance quality conformance (Barcala, González - Díaz, & Raynaud, 2013). Many small producers take their products to international markets by highlighting the merits of designation of origin, hoping that marketing with the support of the mark will do the trick. However, the proliferation of designation of origin may only create doubts in the international consumers, eventually working against the producer organizations. To leverage the benefits of the designation of origin mark, the producers should formulate tailor-made marketing strategies according to the

needs and motivation of specific consumer segments (Adinolfi, De Rosa, & Trabalzi, 2011).

Information asymmetry creates a situation where the manufacturers are aware of the unique characteristics of the GI product; whereas, the consumer is not. Manufacturers who maintain good quality products may be vulnerable to unfair competition from competitors who may have not so good quality products and sell at the same price. Producers must implement strategies to increase the reputation of GI products (Aggarwal et al., 2014). Branding efforts in India to market GI products internationally has been weak. Although, products like Darjeeling tea was registered as a GI product with a distinct visual identity logo of protection in markets abroad under the Madrid agreement (International Registration of Marks of 1891), the move did not yield good outcomes as the registered owners did not pursue the attempts of registering the brand under the Madrid agreement.

Qualitative Methods and Materials

Branding and marketing efforts of select and popular GI products worldwide were studied through existing literature. The marketing practices of select GIs like Columbian Coffee (www.cafedecolumbia.com), Darjeeling Tea, Andhra Handicrafts (Venkateswarulu, 2004), Chanderi Sarees, Kota Doria Sarees, Pochampally Ikat Handloom, Ceylon Tea, Kanchipuram Silk Sarees (Gopal, et al., 2007), Gemlik Table Olives (Dokuzlu, 2016), Cava Sparkling Wine (Chamorro, Rubio, & Miranda, 2014), Designation to Tirupathi Laddu (Banerjee & Naushad, 2010), and European geographical indications (Barcala et al., 2013) provide deeper insights on branding strategies used by marketers to leverage the effects of the region of origin of GI products. A comprehensive survey of literature was helpful in studying the best practices followed by producer/producer groups of GIs in various parts of the world, and the learnings were extracted to suit the local context. Literature review was supplemented by discussions with experts working in the area of horticulture marketing (Raghurama, 2005) in Udupi District.

National Horticulture Board (NHB) and Zonal Agriculture Research Station (ZARS) are state run agencies engaged in the promotion and research activities of agriculture products in Udupi District. Deliberations with the experts/members of these two state functionaries were helpful in understanding the processes involved in the production and sales of Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal, the interlinkages existing between different players, the problems faced by Mattu farmers, and the marketing activities undertaken so far (Roy, 2012). The district is also well-known for 'Udupi Jasmine,' a shining example of the jasmine economy, conferred with GI, and is modelled as a community-based enterprise (CBE) (Peredo & Chrisman, 2004). The members of the Jasmine association provided relevant information on the interlinkages existing in the supply chain and successful marketing practices adopted in the sale of jasmine in local markets (Handy, Cnaan, Bhat, & Meijs, 2011).

A questionnaire was prepared based on literature review and discussions with experts, and the same was tested for content validity using the knowledge of the experts from market extension cell of the Zonal Agriculture Research Station. Responses were solicited from 60 marginal and small farmers who were members of Mattu Brinjal Growers Association, a community - based enterprise (CBE) (Peredo & Chrisman, 2004) during January - August 2018. The questionnaire had two parts; the first part invited answers to descriptive questions. This section captured critical incidents/specific events related to production, marketing, sale, and supply chain issues (Halder & Pati, 2012 ; Negi & Anand, 2015) came across by Mattu farmers/growers during their daily activities. The second part of the questionnaire solicited responses on the severity of the issues/problems broadly classified as production issues, marketing issues, supply chain issues, and finance issues. The qualitative survey and in-depth interview of farmers gave insights on issues and challenges faced by farmers, and the gaps existing in the branding and marketing efforts critical for exploiting the true potential of Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal. Based on the compilation of responses and subsequent analysis, suggestions have been provided covering different aspects of branding and marketing strategies to leverage the GI status of Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal.

Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal – A Territorial Speciality of Coastal Karnataka

The farmers of Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal were facing threats from Bt Brinjal (Transgenic Brinjal). Bt Brinjal has been developed to give resistance to the brinjal crop against pest invasion, particularly, Fruit Shoot Borer (FSB), an insect pest. The farmers feared that the advent of this new Bt. technology (Kumar, Prasanna, & Shwetal, 2011) will take away the originality of Mattu Gulla, considering its history. Moreover, the farmers were also in financial distress as they were not able to realize a fair price for their crop. The peasants staged a struggle to sustain and approached the Department of Horticulture to represent their case for the award of the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. In April 2011, Mattu Gulla was awarded the GI tag by the Geographical Indication Registry (GIR), Chennai by the Union Government.

The following paras provide the unique characteristics attained by Mattu Gulla resulting in the award of the GI tag :

(1) Statement of the Case : The Department of Horticulture, Government of Karnataka, responsible for the promotion, extension, and development of horticulture, filed an application with the Geographical Indication Registry (GIR), for the grant of the GI status for 'Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal' (*Solanum melangena* Var. *esculentum* Nees.) as a geographical indication in Class 31 of the 'The Geographical Indication of Goods'. The application was filed as a community right by the Mattu Brinjal Growers Association (Case Application to the Geographical Indication Registry, Registration and Protection Act, 1999).

(2) Description of Mattu Gulla : Udupi 'Mattu Gulla' brinjal is green in color with green/white stripes around it. Its fruits are large ovoid with round in shape, slightly pentamerous at the base with unique characteristics of small spines on the stalk. Its seeds are white in colour and many in number, completely filling the locular cavity. Mattu Gulla is cultivated only in a few villages in Udupi District in Karnataka. 'Mattu Gulla' owes its name to 'Mattu village' in Udupi District, as it is mainly cultivated in this village and its neighbouring areas. Brinjal is referred as 'Gulla,' which in Tulu (prevailing language of the local region) means 'round' (Field survey and records of Zonal Agriculture Research Station).

(3) Geographical Area : Mattu village is located about 12 km from Udupi Town, a historical place known for Lord Krishna. The Mattu Brinjal growing areas are spread in longitude of 740 431 0011 - 740 461 0011 and latitude of 130 131 0011 – 130 151 0011. The Mattu Gulla growing areas are just 250 -300 meters from the western sea coastline. Udupi District, with three taluks, namely, Udupi, Kundapura, and Karkala, is 425 km from Bengaluru (also called Bangalore), the capital city of Karnataka (Udupi Pages, n.d.).

(4) History and Folklore : It is believed that saint Vadhiraaja, a reformist seer used to offer food to Lord Hayagreeva (Lord Krishna with horse face) daily. The seer used to close the door and the horse steps up on to his shoulders to eat the food. Vadhiraaja returned with the empty vessels after offering food to the Lord, and this fact enraged the other Brahmins. Being jealous of the achievements of Vadhiraaja, the enraged Brahmins mixed poison with the food that he was offering to the Lord daily. As usual, the Horse came and ate the food fully, leaving no trace of anything left behind. To everybody's surprise, the idol of Lord Krishna turned blue in color. Being guilty, when the Brahmins asked pardon from Vadhiraaja, he gave brinjal seeds to Mattu Brahmins using his divine powers and asked them to sow the same. Later, the Brinjal grown in Mattu was offered to Lord Krishna as naivedya (offering to God later distributed among devotees). Slowly, the bluishness vanished and Mattu Gulla became famous for non-septic and anti-allergic properties. The people of Udupi consider Mattu Gulla as sacred as it was given by the seer and is used for a variety of preparations during the 'Parayaya,' a biennial festival held in the famous Krishna temple in Udupi (Case Application, GI Registry, 2011, Class 31, Registration and Protection Act, 1999). The legend was narrated

by the revered present seer of Sode Mutt Vidya Vallabha Theertha Swamiji during the release of the label for Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal on November 19, 2017 at Mattu village.

(5) Properties and Utility : Mattu Gulla has small spines on the crown of the fruit, and its skin is very thin. It is popular for its unique taste and virtually gets dissolved while cooking when compared to other varieties of brinjal. The users also claim that it is less astringent and less bitter (in comparison to other varieties) with very few seeds. Mattu Gulla's characteristics of retaining its firmness even after cooking adds to its specialty (Case Application, GI Registry, 2011).

(6) Mattu Gulla Preparations : As a vegetable, it is widely used by consumer households in the preparation of dishes like sambar, palya, gojju, and podi. These dishes are prepared during all functions from January to April every year. Udupi Mattu Brinjal was awarded the GI tag (word) in 2011 for its unique taste.

(7) Territorial Speciality : In case the same saplings are planted and grown in other parts of Karnataka, the characteristics like spines on the crown, color, and special taste will not be seen (Field Survey, Mattu).

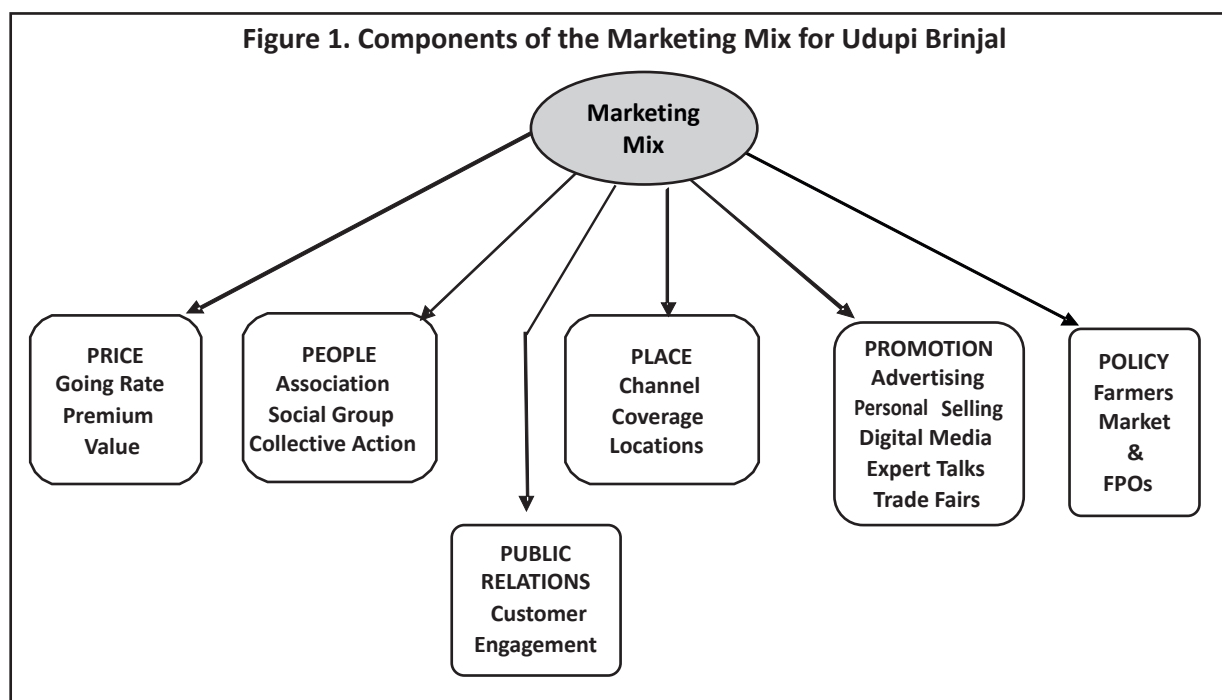
(8) Climate and Soil Pattern for Cultivation : The unique status of Mattu Gulla is particularly due to its cultivation practices and typical soil characteristics. Well-drained silt loam and clay loam and warm humid climate prevailing in the coastal area with an annual rainfall of 3900 - 4300 mm is the requirement for its cultivation. The crop duration is from November to April with staggered harvesting. About 4-5 fruits make a kilogram depending upon the size of each fruit and realize about ₹ 100 for Grade 'A' fruit. This price is considered premium when compared to other variety grown in Udupi District. A good harvest and a quality output without pest attack proliferate the financial position of Mattu farmers (Muthuswamy et al., 2014).

Gulla Brinjal : A Status Analysis Using Marketing Mix

Though Mattu Gulla is satiating the taste buds of local households since long, there is no time-tested marketing strategy that can fetch remunerative prices for its growers. Having a history of 500 years, its growing and marketing progressed as a community-based enterprise that has enough loose ends to tighten. The GI tag has partially enabled the farmers to ward off the challenges in its marketing from look - alikes (other local varieties) as the efforts to promote it by leveraging its brand value have been limited. Given this setting, marketing of Mattu Brinjal as an agricultural product is a challenging task, as it has to address various marketing issues (Badi & Badi, 2011) such as existence of middlemen, processing, grading, packing (Halder & Pati, 2012), packaging, transporting (Negi & Anand, 2015), and labelling. Further, a brief outline of the marketing activities currently adopted by Mattu farmers is discussed using the marketing mix (Figure 1).

(1) Price : The going rate pricing is the most commonly practiced strategy in the local markets as the Mattu farmers have no control over the market price. The price of Mattu Brinjal is fixed based on the pricing of competing brinjal variety plus a premium value per kilogram assigned to its special territorial status, which is decided by the governing body of the Mattu Brinjal Growers Association.

(2) Place : The distribution channel of Mattu Gulla is made of farmers, wholesalers, agents, and retailers before it moves to the consumer. Its market coverage is limited to the local households of Udupi District, with limited quantity being transported to Mumbai (state of Maharashtra) and Bangalore (state of Karnataka) by local brand loyals. Few such brand loyals also carry the produce to Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The Agriculture Produces Market Committee (APMC) yards operated by the State at three taluks and weekly vegetable markets set up at six



prominent villages (total villages - 267) of the district are preferred locations identified for direct sale by Mattu farmers.

(3) Product : Of late, a shift in focus towards product as an important element in the marketing mix was observed (November 2017), when Mattu Brinjal Growers Association decided to categorize the produce into different grades. The assortments are categorized into three different grades, where the premium (GRADE A) variety is big in size and superior in quality (with no pest attack) compared to the other two grades (B & C), which are smaller in size. Every unit of the premium variety, which is labelled as 'GRADE A,' carrying the GI logo (brand) of the growers association, facilitates easy identification of the product from other local brinjal varieties. Mattu Brinjal has thorns on the crown and has green and white stripes. These two attributes allow product differentiation (Badi & Badi, 2011).

(4) People : The 'People' element of the marketing mix denotes the participants who play their roles in the supply chain of Udupi Brinjal like farmers, agents, and consumers. Each household specializes in one task and executes that task in the brinjal fields of other households for the good of the community. Thus, tasks are exchanged based on specialization and building an environment for the growth of social capital with trust and information flow. The households are also well connected to the network of agents. The produce is collected by the association for its members, and the same is handed over to agents for its further distribution to markets. The activities of the Mattu Gulla Growers Association are an illustration of collective action, willingness to contribute to a social group representing solidarity. The 'People' element is professed as an important component for the symbiotic functioning of a community-based enterprise (CBE) by theorists on social capital (Handy et al., 2011). However, the strengths of these players engineering the CBE is focused towards completion of tasks assigned to perfection and not considerably on the effort to push sales. Thus, Mattu farmers need training on innovative methods to sell.

(5) Promotion : Various types of promotion methods work as integrative systems to connect producers with consumers. Advertising is mostly done in print media in the form of articles glorifying the brand for its unique

taste. A few farmers opt for personal selling directly to consumers at vegetable markets, and also to retail stores, which in turn sell the produce to consumers. Farmers use their Facebook accounts to promote their produce to consumers using the digital media platform. The Zonal Agricultural Research Station, run by the State Government, organizes direct talks by experts in the area of agri-marketing, highlighting the utility of Udupi Brinjal. The National Horticulture Board, which is set up by the state to promote agriculture in the local region organizes the consumer trade fair for horticulture based products. These fairs particularly promote value-added products made of fruits and vegetables by distributing them as free samples to walk-ins. Value added products of Udupi Mattu Gulla liked fried brinjal, brinjal pickle are special attraction in these fairs (Dogra & Ghuman, 2008).

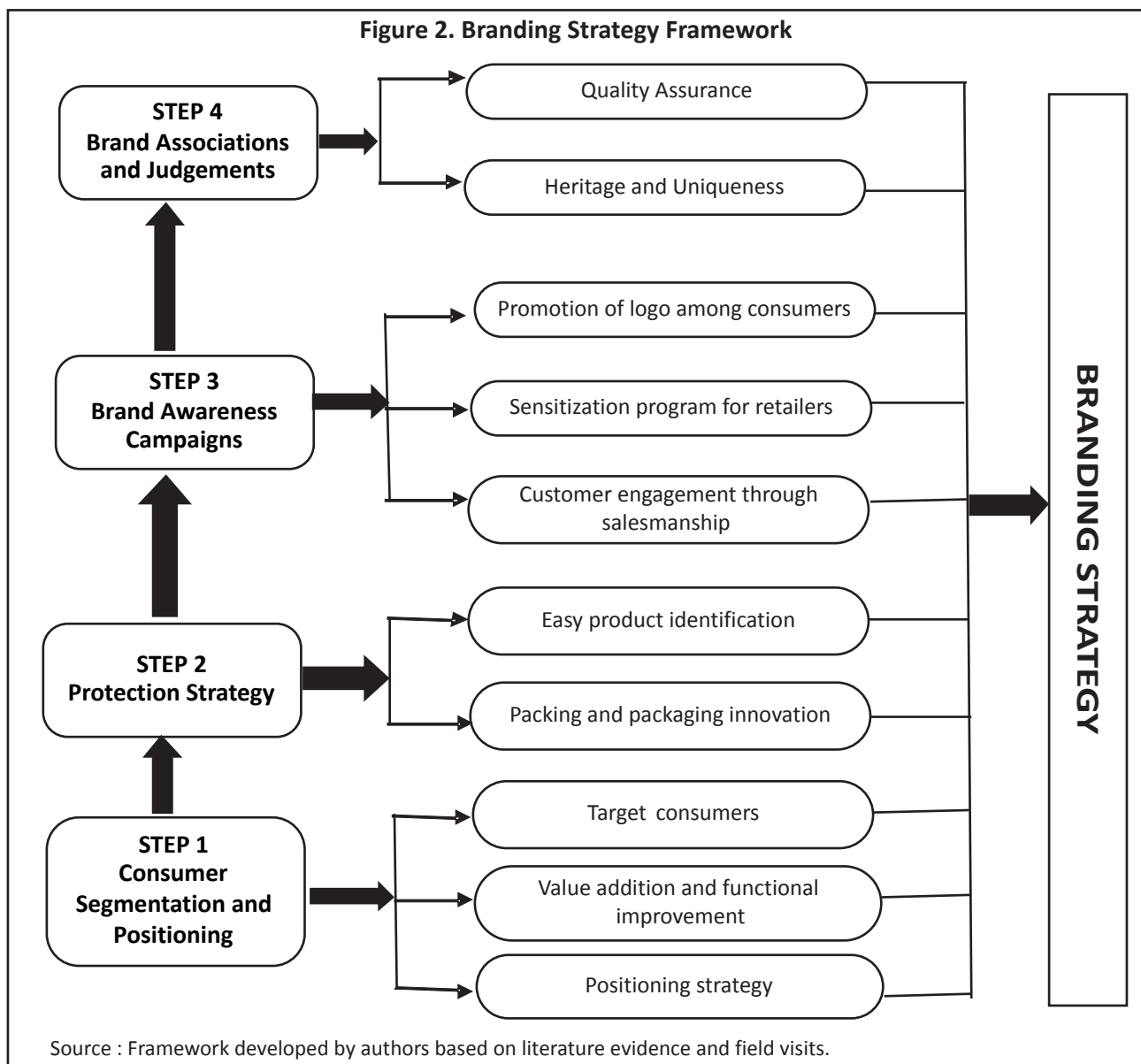
(6) Policy: The Foreign Trade Policy 2015- 20 has identified the marketing of GI products as the focus activity till the year 2020. In this context, the Centre for World Trade Organization (WTO) was given the mandate to bring out an action plan to formulate marketing strategies to increase brand awareness and visibility of GI products both in domestic and international markets. Consistent with the focus and impetus given by policymakers like the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Government of India, National Horticulture Board (NHB), and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to create brand awareness of GI products, a 'Farmer's Market' has been planned in the district to facilitate direct contact between the producers and consumers. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has conceptualized for the Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) a framework that runs on the model of co-operative farming using the Market Development Fund. Mattu Gulla can encash this opportunity of leveraging its commercial potential by taking support from State-run agencies especially set up to lend marketing support to horticulture produces.

(7) Public Relations : Weekly vegetable markets organized at the village level and retail shops are the two main purchase points for a buy-sell interaction to take place. All season vegetables like beans, cowpeas, cucumber, chilies, and frequently used vegetables like tomatoes, onions, and potatoes take center stage during the consumer-retailer discussions in these purchase points in terms of price, quality, and freshness. Brinjal being a seasonal vegetable is not a frequently discussed vegetable item. The vegetable sellers at the mandi (market) and retail shop owners are not trained on the approaches of nourishing the brand, and they do not involve themselves in efforts leading towards customer engagement and involvement.

Discussions on Branding Strategy Framework – A Stepwise Approach

For products that are deeply rooted in culture, tradition, and geography, branding is an important activity. It is found that the distribution led existing marketing events performed by Mattu farmers do not reverberate unique branding actions. Branding activity allows the producers to achieve market recognition for their products, brings the benefits of product differentiation against competition, and helps gain legal protection (Agarwal & Barone, 2005). Branding strategies based on GI status have been successfully used as a form of market protection and promotion for locally manufactured wine and spirits in the European Union (Bramley et al., 2009). However, adoption of marketing initiatives by Mattu farmers and the state-run marketing agencies would depend upon the prevailing local market environment.

Branding design (refer Figure 2) for local specialty agri-products should be built block by block through a series of steps, with each step acting as a strong foundation for the next step. Specific marketing actions should be outlined for every step. Marketing strategy design for local agri-based GIs should depend on market potential (demand in local, domestic, and international markets) and the production capacity. The growers express their ability to increase production if the demand is consistent. In 2010, the mulching technology was introduced to protect the crop from pest attack. Mulching technology, coupled with the unveiling of GI labels on Grade A variety in November 2017, witnessed a boost in demand. To begin with, the target consumers need to be identified. Udupi



District has 2,53,078 households, out of which 70% of the households are in the rural areas of three taluks. In rural markets in India, the rural consumers identify the brands in their own way, and mostly recall on the basis of symbols and names (Badi & Badi, 2011).

Marketing communication in rural markets can use conventional media like word of mouth, print media, radio and television (78% households had TV), cinema theaters, social media, and outdoor display to create brand awareness among rural consumers.

Traditional media as a marketing medium can organize brinjal mela (festival), can do door to door marketing, folk theatre, wall paintings, and cut outs. As GI is an exclusive right of ownership conferred to the grower's community, word of mouth marketing is an effective strategy. Opinion leaders are an important influence on the rural population. The historical connection of the 'Udupi Lord Krishna Temple' can be used by making the seer of Sode Mutt as an opinion leader and brand ambassador. The seer of this mutt earns respect regardless of affiliation with any community. Unique taste and quality are two dimension scales that are relevant for Mattu Gulla.

Figure 3. GI Mark for Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal



Source: Documents to the Award of GI- Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal - Geographical Indication Registry, Chennai. (Translation of local dialect, Kannada in the above figure to English – Mattu Gulla (Brinjal) Growers Association, Registered.)

Therefore, the brand positioning of Mattu Gulla should be on the basis of 'taste' with the slogan 'Traditional Taste of Udupi' as a part of the logo. This slogan would highlight the penetrable quality of the words 'Traditional' and 'Udupi,' which are two unique selling propositions (USP) for Mattu Gulla Brinjal. The word 'traditional' (heritage) is picked from traditional specialties guaranteed (TSG), which is an alternative term used for geographical indications (GI) by the European Union (EU). The hallmark of Udupi cuisine involves the use of locally available ingredients. Thus, Udupi is a term that represents authentic (satvik-satva or quality) vegetarian cuisine. When used together as a slogan 'Traditional Taste of Udupi,' Mattu Brinjal can be positioned with a distinct brand identity. Digital marketing plan can include the launch of an exclusive website designed for the Mattu Brinjal Growers Association. Digital display on e-portals like exportersindia.com, manipalgrocers.com, and Indiamart.com will enable to leverage the GI brand. Positioning strategy is a crucial part of developing a sustainable competitive advantage for Udupi Mattu Brinjal.

The marketing effort lies in creating a separate and distinct space in the minds of vegetable consumers which can be easily recalled. Positioning can be defined by reference to a number of scales like price, quality, availability, durability, etc. (Palmer, 2009). All brinjal varieties grown and sold are used by consumers to prepare dishes and curry. There is scope to prepare and sell value added products of brinjal. Pickle and vacuum fry can find retail market in the ready-to-eat form. A survey of the retailers positioned at the Agriculture Produces Marketing Committee (APMC) market yard reveal that brinjal pickle and vacuum fry may receive patronage if sold in the ready-to-eat form. Most of the buyers purchase brinjal in the raw form and prepare pickle and fry at home. Value added products of brinjal are not sold in the wholesale and retail market in Udupi district. However, brinjal pickle is a very popular item in the shelf display at municipal market of Goa, a neighboring state, towards the north (refer Figure 4). Functional improvement in the product can contribute to brand building. Every ready to eat variant launched in the market should contain the Udupi Brinjal logo to enable easy product identification. Consumption over a longer period would develop top of the mind brand recall of value added products. To overcome the problem of product identification, the growers decided to use labels on the GRADE A & GRADE B variety of Udupi Brinjal from November 2017. Since then, the growers association revealed that sales have increased by over 30%. However, in certain cases, the retail shop owners mentioned that the labels inserted on the products do not stay for

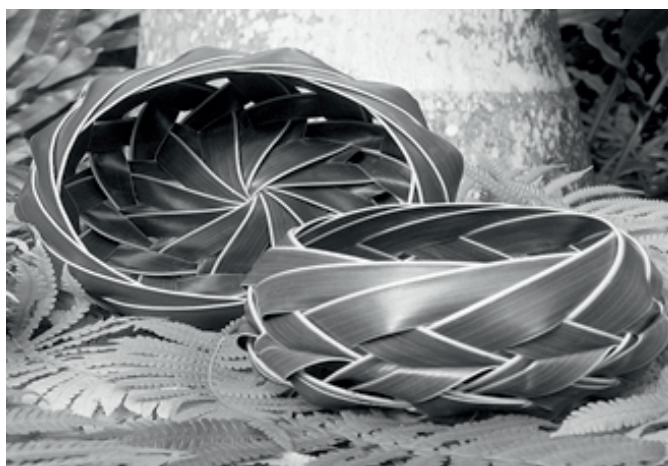
Figure 4. Merchandising Strategy for Agri - Based Value Added Products



Source: Display of Brinjal Pickle at Municipal Market, Madgaon, Goa

long as they are detached from the crop by miscreants who indulge in favoring sales of lookalikes (competing variety) and encourage free-riding. The key aspect of developing a distinct identity for Udupi Brinjal is to maintain standardization across different grades. Quality assurance to consumers should be mainly determined by organic produce, size of the crop, and free from pest attack. The produce that fulfils this criteria should be labelled as GRADE A (premium item) and move along the marketing process. Standardization should be maintained within GRADE A, and this ensures credibility and substance to the brand. The labelling should be done after following the guidelines on labelling for fruits and vegetables in India issued by the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011. Inspection should be made by a member of the producer group, who is familiar with the Udupi Mattu Brinjal identification know-how to control deviation from set quality standards. Agriculture experts can also be appointed for inspection to ensure quality compliance. Any offenders should stand to lose their membership with the Growers Association. In case the retailer misleads the consumer by committing free-riding,

Figure 5. Bags Made of Coconut Leafs as a Proposed Packing Solution for Perishable GIs



Source: Photo taken at the National Institute of Self Help Group Training, Shree Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project on Women Empowerment.

his dealership should stand cancelled for a specific period as decided by the state apparatus or producer group.

A successful marketing and sales promotion strategy needs both packing and packaging of products. Packing is the preparation of a product for storage and transportation, while packaging is considered as the preparation of a product not only for storage and transportation, but also for sale. Thus, packaging necessarily involves an element of promotion as its design needs to consider the buying motives of the consumer. Packaging involves labeling for sales promotion. Packing is not considered as an important function in the sale of Mattu Gulla by the farmers as well as the agents, right from the period of harvest till it reaches the hands of the consumer. Farmer's market and retail storekeepers display Udupi Brinjal in open air, exposing it to sun and dust, resulting in quality deterioration. As a protection plan, bags made of banana leaf or coconut leaf (refer Figure 5) with proper ventilation can be used to preserve Mattu Gulla. At the local level, the idea of using coconut bags has been endorsed as a valuable suggestion by the market extension cell of the Zonal Agriculture Research Station, Government of Karnataka. The packing and packaging design and placement of logo should be developed after consulting and taking technical inputs from the experts of Indian Institute of Packaging to ensure freshness and durability.

The task of preparing these bags can be entrusted to the women empowered self-help groups (refer Figure 5) of the local region. The main objective of the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP) listed (www.iip-in.com) is to provide tailor-made packaging solutions to women entrepreneurs and micro, small and marginal enterprises (MSME). It is also advised to confirm strict compliance in packaging with the regulations laid down by the Food Labelling Regulations of India, 2011. The logo awarded to the product is a tool to leverage its commercial potential. In this connection, the efforts made by the farmers to create awareness of Udupi Brinjal using the logo have been minimal.

The following techniques can be undertaken by the Mattu farmers to promote the GI logo (refer Figure 3) :

- (i)** Labels can be distributed free to all the customers visiting the farmer's markets operating on select days in different localities.
- (ii)** Posters/banners can be inserted on the walls of every retail shop in the district portraying the GI logo to create awareness.
- (iii)** All retailers can be encouraged to use the GI logo on their bill books. The customers carry the bills home and can be easily reminded of the logo during each purchase.
- (iv)** Every letterhead/email (formal communication) of the growers association made to stakeholders should carry the GI logo.
- (v)** At present, labels are pasted directly on the product. It is advised to use labels after packing the product with bags made of coconut or banana leaf and subsequently, labels be pasted on the packs/bags. This will provide aesthetic look and brand feel.

The salesperson's ability to present an idea, product, or service accurately should be convincing. Salesmanship is the passion and enthusiasm to sell the product backed by credible information. Before getting into a conversation with the customer, especially in marketing and sale of vegetables, the salesperson or retailer should have credible information like the date of harvest, grade of the produce, profile of producer/farmer, quality certification, expiry date, production method, etc. An important element of being an effective salesperson is to be able to invite questions, listen to them patiently, and to be able to handle them with credible and relative ease. In Indian markets, the major aspects discussed in a vegetable buy-sell transaction are price and quality (freshness) (Chikkamath, Atteri, Srivastava, & Roy, 2012).

On observing the buy-sell interaction in a few outlets locally, it was found that the choice of vegetables and fruits are made by the buyer without any assistance on information received at the display shelf or the billing counter. The retailer answers only if he/she is posed with a few questions. If not, the customer picks the purchase from the display and directly walks to bill them. Of late, More for You, an organized retail super market operated by

the Aditya Birla Group, provides information on price, quality, and variety through boards at point of purchase (POP). In case of local specialities like Udupi Brinjal, the retailer has to make an extra effort by mentioning the date of arrival, the variety on display, and can also offer information on grading based on the consumer's income category, and can entice the customer to purchase by reminding the preparations that can be made by using these unique products. The salesperson can also give comparative pricing of earlier weeks and promote if the price has fallen during that week. Some tips to engage customers through effective salesmanship can be: (a) narrate the story related to its historical importance and feed and nourish the brand ; (b) engage the customer by explaining the possible value-added products that can be made out of Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal ; (c) leverage inputs on Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal given by others.

A sensitization program to identify the product from competing varieties should be designed and delivered to retailers and consumers by the Mattu farmers by taking support from National Horticulture Board, a dedicated state-apparatus established for promotion of horticulture products. The channel partners can be sensitized in the following ways :

- (i) Small workshops need to be conducted for traders, agents, and channel partners on the importance of conformance to quality and the consequences of misuse of the GI mark.
- (ii) Leaflets and fliers carrying points relating to the identification of Mattu Gulla can be distributed by the growers.
- (iii) It may be more effective to issue a circular from the office of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, carrying a message of punitive legal action against any trader or channel partner, who is found guilty of misusing the GI name and selling fake products.

The popular folk theatre in Udupi District is 'Yakshagana.' The show consists of traditional mythological stories. The shows take many hours in the night extending up to the early morning of the next day. 'Yakshagana' consists of 'Mela' (troupe's affiliation to a locality) and 'Prasanga' (the topic of the play) based on which the stories are presented. Coincidentally, Yakshagana and the history of Mattu Gulla have a mythology in common. Mattu Brinjal has a history attached with Sode mutt for over 500 years, while the origin of Yakshagana can be traced with written evidence on an inscription at the Lakshmi Narayana temple in Korugodu of Bellary District in the State of Karnataka in 1556. This folklore which combines music, dance, dialogue, costume, makeup, and stage techniques with a unique style can be used as a media to demonstrate a play involving Lord Krishna and Sode mutt as a small 'episode' in one of the Prasangas.

The branding initiatives for agri-based GIs should start with creating awareness among local households where it is grown. It is a general tendency among households in India to prefer fresh grown local vegetable produces over those transported from neighboring regions. Since 70% of these households are based in rural areas, brand building efforts should commence from rural households.

Managerial Implications

The findings of the study will shift the attention of the policymakers who are responsible for the promotion of horticulture products in India. The focus and discussion become more pertinent if the product is a local speciality. The need of the hour is to lift the spirits of the local farmers and provide technical and marketing support to revive these otherwise fading brands like Udupi Mattu Gulla Brinjal. The future for several locally grown GIs lies in developing marketing strategies that help in gaining acceptance from a wide set of customers in both domestic and international markets. Due to the absence of a well-planned branding framework, the growers and state apparatus responsible for promotion have not been able to create a brand identity in the global marketplace. This stumbling block has been viewed as an opportunity in creating a branding framework than can bring organizations, associations, manufacturers, and growers to create, communicate, and regulate a standard value for global markets.

The State agencies like the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), National Horticulture Board (NHB), Agriculture Food Processing and Export Development Authority (APEDA), and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) should create a marketing agency to liaise between state apparatus and the growers to promote and implement the branding framework (refer Figure 4) at the ground level. This suggestion concurs with the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20 decision of the Department of Commerce, Government of India to provide a marketing impetus to these unique products to leverage their commercial value.

Conclusion

A review encompassing literature of earlier studies with worthy contributions in a similar area is focused upon and categorized mainly on protection (Barcala et al., 2013), free riding, legal framework (Aggarwal et al., 2014), brand equity, brand trust, and brand attachment (Anees & Thyagaraj, 2015), economic analysis, and disconnection between GI mark and market performance (Bramley et al., 2009). Branding strategies evolved on the basis of a thorough understanding of the marketing premise of the growers is the contribution of this paper to the existing body of knowledge. Behavior of the consumers towards purchase action differs based on the geographical segmentation of markets (Kotler, Keller, Koshy, & Jha, 2014). Therefore, marketing mix is designed based on the composition of the local markets.

A distinct brand identity needs to be created through product differentiation using the branding and protection plan. Clear mandates to give impetus to marketing initiatives should be issued to state agencies like Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), National Horticulture Board (NHB), Agriculture Produces Export Development Authority (APEDA), and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to work with local stakeholders. The policy makers are suggested to appoint a marketing agency to network with state agencies and local farmers to implement these plans on ground. Immediate actions should be focused towards drawing the attention of national and international marketing apparatus nominated by the Government of India to promote and create brand awareness in regional and foreign markets. The alleviation of Mattu farmers from financial distress would largely depend on the speedy action plan executed towards the success of brand awareness, protection, and promotional efforts in regional and international markets.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The exploratory nature of this study develops a branding framework from the supply side by interviewing the local farmers. This was done keeping in mind the current marketing realities at the growing area, and the intensity of the prevailing socioeconomic problems encountered by the Mattu farmers. Determinants of branding for GIs can be empirically tested based on consumer preferences towards specific products. Future studies should concentrate on elements of branding from the demand side. Elements of branding (Keller & Lehmann, 2006) based on behavioral experiences like sense, feel, think, relate, and act leading to purchase decisions are gaps for future studies. Moreover, branding strategies for products with special or unique characteristics (especially with GIs) can be tested for originality, reliability, and genuinity as the main elements of consumer perception.

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