Unraveling the Impact of Geographical Indication on Consumer Preferences for Handloom Products

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Handloom products represent an emotional significance in addition to their utilitarian function. It reminds us of the artistic skills and cultural uniqueness that exist in our nation. GI registrations have been granted to the handloom segment to protect the artists and maintain the authenticity of weaving. Due to a lack of knowledge about GI tag handloom products, consumers often face a dilemma when deciding whether or not to buy handloom products when other power-loomed fabrics are available. This study addresses the research gap by examining the factors contributing to consumers' willingness to buy Champa's silk handloom products with GI tags. People generally associate the Champa region with the production of kosha silk. This study has brought in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a base to develop a theoretical model for determining the intention to buy handloom products with GI tags. Using a convenient sampling approach, the researchers

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targeted potential handloom consumers as a demographic concern. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed; out of those, 197 were deemed suitable for further study. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) evaluates the behavioral characteristics of consumers while making purchases. The models were evaluated using the SmartPLS4 software. The findings showed that price veracity and consumer trust have a considerable positive impact on attitude. The handloom products with GI tags build potential trust among consumers on handloom products. Handloom store retailers should take the initiative to make consumers aware of the authenticity of their products, which prominently include GI certification labels on handloom items.

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, the textile sector has been an economic mainstay for many years. Handloom production is mainly a decentralized cottage business in rural areas and is powered by manual looms. In terms of providing for people's livelihoods in India's rural areas, it ranks higher than the agricultural sector and substantially impacts the nation's economic growth. Many traditional industries, including the handloom sector, are moving their operations online to ensure continued development and sustainability [1]. The craftsmanship of weavers in India's handloom fabrics is a glimpse into the richness of Indian culture. The handloom industry plays a significant role in the national economy because of its unique qualities, such as the ability to cope with short production cycles, maintain high-quality standards, foster innovation, and cater to the requirements of export markets [2]. GI certificates have been granted to various businesses and sectors in India, including agriculture, handicrafts, textile, and manufactured goods. The protection of GI in handicraft goods is of the utmost significance since it not only helps workers make a living by ensuring that their work is unique but also protects the authenticity of the handicrafts altogether. Any manufacturer can use a GI label within the defined area because it specifies the region of origin for the product [3]. Discerning the authenticity of handloom fabric poses a significant challenge for consumers, particularly those who prefer traditional fabrication methods. The situation becomes even more difficult because competing products use power looms that closely resemble handloom products. The handloom products are of higher quality than the imitated handloom products, even though the imitated handloom products have a similar appearance [4]. GI potentially solves this issue by differentiating handloom fabrics from similar fabrics. The TRIPS agreement has placed more emphasis on geographical indications, which fall under intellectual property. GI functions as a legal mechanism that establishes a formal link between a product and the specific geographic region in which it is produced. This association enhances the product's reputation and thus brings advantages to all organizations involved [5]. GI is recognized for its ability to improve the distinctiveness and authenticity of a product, allow manufacturers to command higher prices, and serve as a means of differentiating their goods from counterfeit alternatives [6].

Despite the rising acknowledgment of the relevance of GI in the protection and promotion of traditional goods such as handloom textiles, there is still a gap in knowing the exact influence that GI has on consumers' preferences. Although there have been studies investigating the impact of GI on consumer perceptions and buying behavior in general, there is a dearth of research that delves into the impact of handloom products in particular. This research intends to address this gap by conducting an in-depth examination of how the GI label influences consumers' choices for Champa's handloom products.

This raises the primary research questions of our study, which are:

1. How does Geographical Indication (GI) impact consumer preferences for handloom items;
2. What factors affect their buying decisions?

1.1 Research Background

Recently, there has appeared to be a surge of curiosity about how GI affects buying habits, especially handloom products. The cultural importance, skill, and originality of these goods make them highly sought after in their respective locations. Due to the introduction of globalization and digital transformation, handloom industries

have been confronted with both possibilities and challenges. This is because globalization has made it easier to obtain a large variety of products from different locations. The existence of GI may greatly influence consumers' purchasing choices, who are becoming more aware of the items' origins and quality. Understanding how GI impacts customer views, attitudes, and behaviors may provide light on how to promote and preserve the handloom industry in a highly competitive market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Indian Handloom Textile: A Heritage of Richness

Since the beginning of time, various regions of India have significantly emphasized the handloom industry. Every Indian state has its unique history, and the handloom textiles produced there are renowned for their uniqueness. Indian handlooms have been valuable in bringing some regional specialties to the forefront of international fashion, including Pashmina in Kashmir, Kalamkari in Andhra Pradesh, Bandhani in Gujarat, and Muga silk in Assam [7]. This industry has persisted because of the practice of passing knowledge down through the generations. Indian handlooms offer a wide range of weaves, textures, and designs, from delicate pastels to sturdy bedspreads and from simple to complex, from intricate fabrics to mass-produced items for daily use [8]. The manufacture of handlooms in India has the dual purpose of promoting environmentally sustainable practices and generating job opportunities, particularly in rural areas [9]. It is now time to think that the process of creating a new product involves more than just luck or sporadic inspiration. In today's environment of rapid global change, innovative companies are the ones that bring about constant innovation. Whether they realize it or not, successful innovators employ a repeatable thought process to find new markets, products, and customers in order to manage change strategically [10]. This industry is prominent in the Indian economy, employing the most people after agriculture, and requires little capital investment [11]. Historical records indicate that the handloom textile industry in India is acknowledged as one of the most ancient business sectors globally. The textile industry was a major economic driver for many communities. Varanasi is one such example; it was the textile industry's regional hub from the Mahabharata era through the reigns of the Nandas, Mauryas, and Sungas [12]. Following independence, the government closely monitored the handloom industry since it represented all decentralized operations [13].

2.2 The Allure of Chhattisgarh's Champa Handloom Fabrics

The manufacture of Tussar silk has given Janjgir-Champa recognition that extends beyond India and throughout the world. Many people in rural areas of this state rely on handloom weaving for their living, and the Janjgir-Champa district, in particular, is known for its abundant tasar silk weaving and sales equipment. Several government programmes aim to help these people [14]. The material consists of the most peculiar silkworm. The process of extracting and weaving Kosa silk sarees poses significant challenges. The duration of the process ranges from three to five days. The durability of Kosa silk is exceptional. This particular silk is regarded as one of the most impressive in the world [15]. Five hundred beneficiaries produce silk on 520 hectares of land with a Saja/Arjuna plantation, which is available to make cocoons. Currently, the district provides 45 lakh silk [16].

2.3 Harnessing Geographical Indication for Handloom Heritage

Historically, products have been identified for trading motives based on their geographical origin. The purpose of geographical indications is to provide precise details on the source of a product and its quality attributes. Certain geographical regions or localities possess unique natural and human characteristics that are exclusive to those areas, and these factors affect the product's quality, as shown by the symbol of its geographical origin. It safeguards consumer interests in premium goods and local producers' concerns regarding increased economic returns and the preservation of cultural heritage [17]. Many people started paying attention to the Pochampally Ikat brand when it became the first Indian handloom product to achieve GI designation under the GI Act in 2004 [18]. The Kota Doria fabric was conferred a GI in 2005 because of its unique regional artistry. Later, the Champa silk fabric was also granted a GI in 2010. The handloom mark is an effort by the Indian government to give all handloom goods a common identity. It can promote hand-woven goods and give consumers confidence that what they buy is authentically made in India. Recognizing the importance of preserving the

priceless handloom artifacts and passing them on to future generations, a digital repository of handlooms similar to the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library may be established [2].

2.4 Consumer Consciousness Towards Geographical Indication

Dhamotharan & Selvaraj [19] found that consumers are increasingly aware of the quality attributes associated with various commodities available in the market. Consequently, they purposefully make decisions to choose things that closely correspond to their interests and preferences. Recent data indicates a significant surge in consumer demand for GI food items due to many factors. The study of Perrea et al. [20] provided evidence that there is a widespread awareness of GI and a tendency to pick products associated with GIs, which can be attributed to the high reported consumption frequencies. Prathap & CC [21] concluded that a decrease in insufficient information accessibility might stimulate the desire to acquire traditional handloom. The product diagnosticity specified by the GI mark ensures that consumers are adequately informed about the product. Consumers are more likely to buy high-quality goods if they have a favorable opinion of their quality, the degree to which they trust it, and when they feel that the information disparity has been reduced. Basole [22] examined the situation where a proprietor of a sari retail business located situated in the renowned tourist destination hub of Sarnath acknowledged that they were selling power loom fabric as handloom fabric, claiming it to be handcrafted. The proprietor noted that customers often struggle to distinguish between the two fabric types. Albayrak & Ozdemi [23] stated that traditional handicraft brand manufacturing is facing new challenges due to rising customer demands for products with higher safety and quality standards in developed countries. Therefore, GI certification is crucial for establishing the reputation of conventional handicraft goods on the global market and safeguarding them from counterfeit goods. Agarwal & Luniya [24] identified that customers are highly aware of the uniqueness of hand-woven doria patterns, although their understanding of Geographical Indications is significantly limited.

2.5 The Theory of Planned Behaviour Concept

The TPB has been widely employed in academic research to comprehensively analyze and forecast human behaviors, owing to its significant explanatory capacity. This theory proposes that someone's propensity to participate in certain behaviors may be primarily anticipated based on three key elements that shape individuals' behavior: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [25]. Consumers' perspectives on an action are reflected in their attitudes towards it as harmful or beneficial. When it is based on the idea that doing the desired activity may lead to several positive consequences, they will develop favorable attitudes toward their behavior of choice [26]. Subjective norms are a person's opinion about the degree of social pressure to engage in a particular behavior. Individuals who hold considerable importance in our lives, such as parents, spouses, friends, and coworkers, are given priority, and their viewpoints are highly regarded. Perceived behavioral control pertains to an individual's perceived capacity to execute the intended behavior effectively. There is a higher probability that a person will effectively participate in a desired behavior when they possess the requisite resources and opportunities. A person's willingness to show the desired behavior is highly correlated with attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This is because high levels of all three factors are related to high levels of intention [25].

2.6 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the willingness of consumers to purchase GI-labeled Champa silk handloom fabrics, and
2. To analyze the key determinants that impact the consumer's decision to purchase GI-labeled handloom fabrics.

2.7 Theoretical Background

A well-known concept in social psychology, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) seeks to explain and anticipate people's actions. The following elements are said to determine behavior according to TPB:

i. Attitude towards the behavior pertains to an individual's favorable or unfavorable assessment of engaging in specific behavior. One way to quantify it is by asking questions such as:

- Do you believe that engaging in quality consciousness would be helpful?

- In your opinion, how crucial is it to perform price veracity?
- What is your opinion on building customer trust?

ii. One concept is subjective norms which may be defined as the degree to which an individual feels pressured or influenced by others to act in a certain way. One way to quantify it is by looking at:

- The perception of the opinions of significant individuals, such as friends, family, and colleagues, on one's behavior.
- how one perceives the societal expectations that are associated with the behavior.
- Assessment of the extent to which individuals believe their behavior is approved or disapproved by essential individuals.

iii. The perceived behavioral control describes how someone thinks they can control their behavior. Included under this category are elements like self-efficacy and perceived challenges. When determining PBC, it is possible to ask questions such as:

- Are you self-assured in executing the behavior?
- Do you believe external factors beyond your control might impede your capacity to carry out the behavior?
- Can you carry out the behavior, given the available resources and opportunity?

The TPB model includes behavioral intents as a critical component of behavior alongside these three main elements. People's behavioral intentions reveal their preparedness and enthusiasm for a specific action. It is impacted by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control and is seen as a direct precursor to behavior. The following figure explains the relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention related to establish the concept.

2.8 Research Hypotheses

H1: Consumers' attitudes toward GI-labeled handloom products are positively influenced by quality consciousness.

H2: Consumers' attitudes toward GI-labeled handloom products are positively influenced by price veracity.

H3: Consumers' attitudes toward GI-labeled handloom products are positively influenced by consumer trust.

H4: Consumers' attitudes toward GI-labeled handloom products are positively associated with consumers' purchase intention.

H5: The willingness to buy handloom items labeled with Geographical indications is favorably influenced by subjective norms.

H6: The willingness to buy handloom items labeled with GI is favorably influenced by perceived behavioral control.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a purposive sampling technique. A well-organized survey questionnaire was distributed among potential handloom consumers of Chhattisgarh state. A Likert scale was used to structure the questionnaire, where a score of 1 indicates strongly disagree, and a score of 5 indicates strongly agree. The researchers focused on potential handloom buyers as a demographic concern and adopted a convenient sampling technique. A total of 250 questionnaires were handed out. Of them, 197 individuals answered the survey questionnaire, meeting the minimum criteria for conducting relevant statistical data analysis. Obtaining the reliability estimates from a big enough sample can help reduce statistical error. Research has shown that a sample size of 100 is necessary for a valid reliability study [27]. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) assesses the behavioral characteristics of consumers while initiating purchases. The models were evaluated using the SmartPLS4 software [28].

3.1 Findings and Analysis

The descriptive data pertaining to the profiles of the respondents are shown in Table 1. Among the 197 persons surveyed, 75 (38.1%) identified as male, while 122 (61.9%) identified as female. 91 (46.2%) identified as aged between 18-25 years, 49 (24.9%) as between the ages of 26 and 35 years, 22 (11.2%) as between the ages of 36-45 years, 27 (13.7%) identified as aged between 46-55 years, and 8 (4%) were above 55. The monthly income of respondents was categorized into different income levels where 45 (22.8%) respondents had an income of 10,000 or less, and 37 (18.8%) had an income between 10,001 and 20,000. 28 (14.2%) respondents had an

income of 20,001-30,000, 15 (7.6%) had an income of 30,001-40,000, 24 (12.2%) had an income of 40,001-50,000, and lastly, 48 (24.4%) respondents had an income of more than 50,000.

3.2 Assessment of Measurement Model

The study items were assessed for reliability and validity using PLS 4.0. The assessment of item reliability encompasses two distinct measures, namely Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. For the purpose of establishing the instrument's reliability and validity, a series of tests were conducted to assess its convergent and discriminant validity. All items with factor loadings over 0.70 in the PLS assessment model are considered good predictors (Cockcroft & Russell, 2018). The result shows factor loadings of all items with values around 0.8 and 0.9. Since

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability for each scale were above 0.70, we can say that they are all reliable, which was around 0.9, as depicted in Table 2. The square roots of AVE established the convergent validity of all items employed in the research with scores equal to or greater than 0.70, as shown in Table 2.

Three methods were used to evaluate the reflective constructs and show discriminant validity. The first is a heterotrait-monotrait method, the second is a fornell-larcker method, and the third method is cross-loading.

Table 3 is about the HTMT method, where all the values are below 0.8, which passed the discriminant validity criteria because threshold values should be lower than 0.85 or 0.9. If it is above 0.9, then there is a validity issue in the construct items.
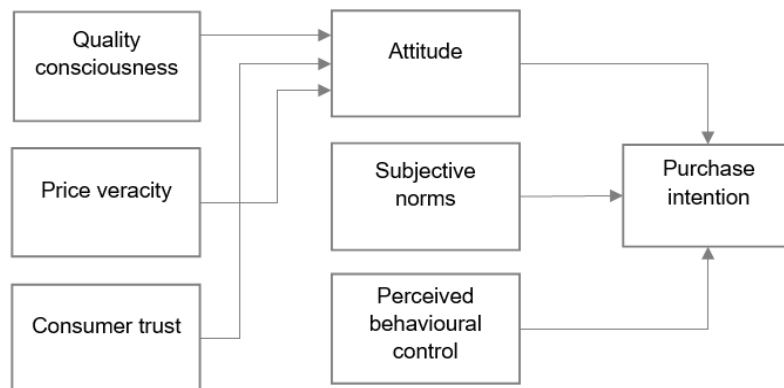
Fig. 1. The TPB research model
Source: Authors' compilation

Table 1. Demographic profile

Variables		Numbers	Percentage
Gender	Male	75	38.1
	Female	122	61.9
Age	18 – 25	91	46.2
	26 – 35	49	24.9
	36 – 45	22	11.2
	46 – 55	27	13.7
	Above 55	8	4
Monthly income	10,000 and less	45	22.8
	10,001 – 20,000	37	18.8
	20,001 – 30,000	28	14.2
	30,001 – 40,000	15	7.6
	40,001 – 50,000	24	12.2
	More than 50,000	48	24.4
Total		197	100

Source: Authors' compilation

Table 2. Results of the measurement model

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
ATT	ATT1	0.944	0.932	0.934	0.956	0.880
	ATT2	0.949				
	ATT3	0.921				
PBC	PBC1	0.940	0.937	0.939	0.960	0.888
	PBC2	0.949				
	PBC3	0.939				
PI	PI1	0.886	0.918	0.919	0.948	0.859
	PI2	0.943				
	PI3	0.951				
CT	CT1	0.934	0.916	0.916	0.947	0.856
	CT2	0.928				
	CT3	0.914				
PV	PV1	0.879	0.912	0.915	0.938	0.792
	PV2	0.902				
	PV3	0.874				
	PV4	0.904				
QC	QC1	0.950	0.945	0.947	0.960	0.859
	QC2	0.906				
	QC3	0.919				
	QC4	0.931				
SN	SN1	0.946	0.957	0.962	0.972	0.920
	SN2	0.965				
	SN3	0.966				

Source: Authors' compilation

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait measurement for discriminant validity

	ATT	PBC	PI	CT	PV	QC	SN
ATT							
PBC	0.768						
PI	0.668	0.620					
CT	0.563	0.515	0.437				
PV	0.582	0.632	0.677	0.496			
QC	0.557	0.602	0.503	0.680	0.683		
SN	0.608	0.632	0.679	0.534	0.552	0.403	

Source: Authors' compilation

Table 4. Fornell Larcker measurement for discriminant validity

	ATT	PBC	PI	CT	PV	QC	SN
ATT	0.938						
PBC	0.718	0.943					
PI	0.616	0.575	0.927				
CT	0.522	0.477	0.400	0.925			
PV	0.538	0.586	0.619	0.452	0.890		
QC	0.524	0.566	0.468	0.633	0.633	0.927	
SN	0.575	0.600	0.640	0.499	0.519	0.384	0.959

Source: Authors' compilation

Table 4 shows that each construct correlates more with itself than any other construct, which is the square root of its AVE. Here, ATT has a higher correlation with ATT itself, and all their below constructs are smaller in value. Likewise, it follows the same for other constructs.

Table 5 depicts that each item exhibits a greater outer loading on its own construct compared to any other constructs. Here, the items of ATT constructs have a higher value of their own construct compared to the other constructs. Likewise, it follows the same for other constructs.

Table 5. Cross-loadings of items

|	ATT	PBC	PI	CT	PV	QC	SN
ATT1	0.944	0.661	0.574	0.430	0.511	0.486	0.506
ATT2	0.949	0.675	0.579	0.574	0.539	0.513	0.561
ATT3	0.921	0.683	0.582	0.459	0.462	0.474	0.549
PBC1	0.668	0.940	0.565	0.435	0.599	0.498	0.579
PBC2	0.701	0.949	0.543	0.501	0.551	0.583	0.559
PBC3	0.660	0.939	0.515	0.412	0.501	0.521	0.557
PI1	0.612	0.605	0.886	0.410	0.576	0.470	0.506
PI2	0.560	0.508	0.943	0.322	0.565	0.415	0.616
PI3	0.544	0.489	0.951	0.381	0.581	0.418	0.654
CT1	0.474	0.453	0.360	0.934	0.411	0.588	0.478
CT2	0.496	0.437	0.373	0.928	0.431	0.586	0.471
CT3	0.478	0.435	0.376	0.914	0.412	0.581	0.435
PV1	0.462	0.493	0.541	0.422	0.879	0.571	0.463
PV2	0.484	0.543	0.565	0.417	0.902	0.552	0.478
PV3	0.451	0.536	0.540	0.398	0.874	0.610	0.417
PV4	0.515	0.513	0.557	0.377	0.904	0.525	0.485
QC1	0512	0.539	0.451	0.616	0.614	0.950	0.369
QC2	0.451	0.503	0.414	0.575	0.592	0.906	0.370
QC3	0.496	0.534	0.436	0.573	0.576	0.919	0.331
QC4	0.480	0.522	0.432	0.580	0.562	0.931	0.353
SN1	0.561	0.564	0.595	0.493	0.480	0.376	0.946
SN2	0.561	0.604	0.663	0.457	0.543	0.379	0.965
SN3	0.530	0.555	0.577	0.487	0.464	0.346	0.966

Source: Authors' compilation
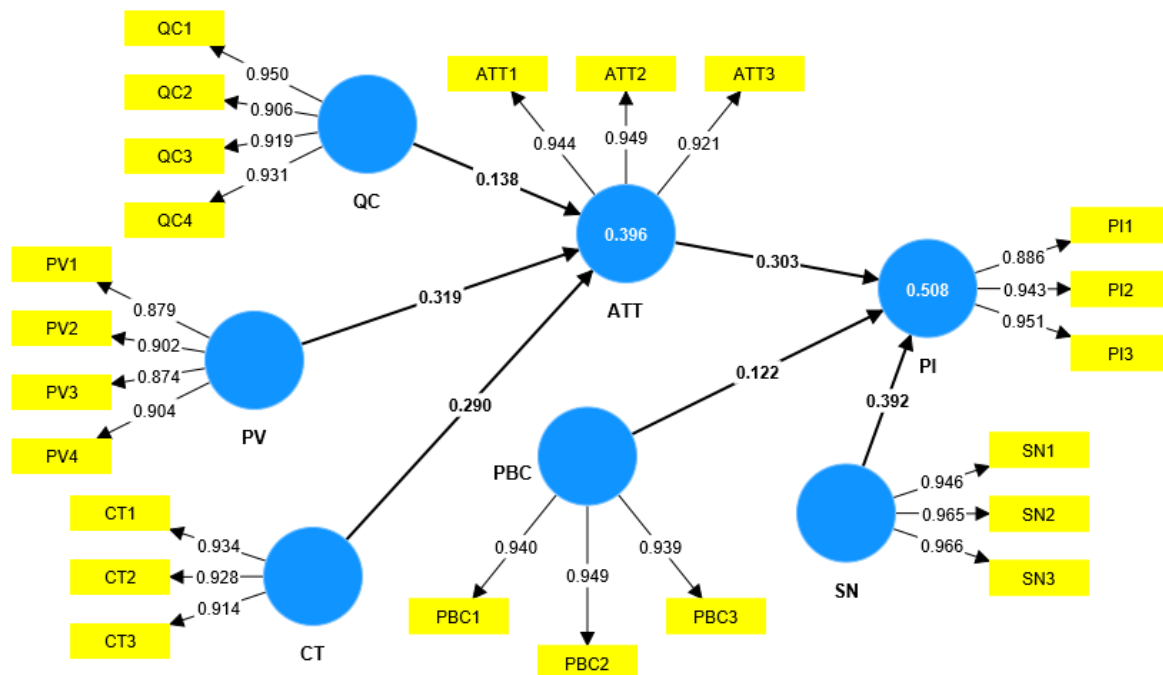
Fig. 2. Measurement of the TPB model
Source: Authors' compilation

Table 6. Coefficient of determination

	R-square	R-square adjusted
ATT	0.396	0.387
PI	0.508	0.500

Source: Authors' compilation

Table 7. Hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path coefficient	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T - statistics	P - value	Decision
H4	ATT -> PI	0.303	0.285	0.146	2.076	0.038	Accepted
H6	PBC -> PI	0.122	0.129	0.125	0.974	0.330	Rejected
H3	CT -> ATT	0.290	0.284	0.103	2.825	0.005	Accepted
H2	PV -> ATT	0.319	0.321	0.112	2.844	0.004	Accepted
H1	QC -> ATT	0.138	0.143	0.114	1.209	0.227	Rejected
H5	SN -> PI	0.392	0.404	0.087	4.530	0.000	Accepted

Source: Authors' compilation

3.3 Coefficient of Determination Assessment

This model's explanatory power may be quantified by calculating the R-square statistic which is equivalent to the amount of variation that can be assigned to each of the model's endogenous variables (Shmueli & Koppius, 2011).

Table 6 shows that the R-square values are between 0 and 1, which fulfilled the measurement criteria, and the greater value depicts higher explanatory power. Here, PI has a higher R-square value, indicating great explanatory power.

3.4 Assessment of Structural Model

A structural model assessment was carried out to test the relationships of 6 hypotheses. Table 7 displays the outcomes of the hypotheses.

The above table shows that four hypotheses are accepted as they have a favorable association with specified variables. The path coefficient values discovered that the items of CT and PV attributes greatly influence ATT constructs, impacting purchase behavior. Furthermore, SN attributes have a significant influence on PI. These results indicate that the GI tag positively impacts handloom consumers.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The outcomes of this research analysis are aligned with the TPB approach because attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the three essential components of the theory of planned behavior that significantly influence customers' purchasing decisions. The results imply that in the future, consumers will continue to purchase GI-labeled handloom products if they have a high degree of these attributes. This study shows that price veracity (0.319) and consumer trust (0.290) have a considerable positive impact on attitudes. Consumers place high importance on cost considerations when purchasing handloom fabrics due to their high price, which may be a possible reason for this phenomenon. The handloom products with GI build a potential trust among consumers on handloom products. These attitudes of price veracity and consumer trust greatly influence purchase intention. The subjective norms with a coefficient of 0.392 emerged as the following significant determinant of the purchase intention for GI-certified Champa silk handloom products. It was hypothesized that consumers are more influenced to purchase certified clothing from premium fabrics. However, the study's findings contradicted this assumption as it was determined that quality consciousness did not have a substantial impact. Also, an insignificant correlation was discovered between perceived behavioral control and purchase intention.

The results of this research add to a more in-depth knowledge of GI's influence on consumers' choices, particularly about handloom items. Combining qualitative insights and quantitative research led to the identification of several significant recurring trends. GI had a substantial impact on how consumers perceived handloom items. Survey participants were more inclined to

buy handloom goods marked with a GI label. They believed these products were more genuine, culturally important, and of superior quality than those without a GI label. This is consistent with other research suggesting that GI might signal authenticity and quality, hence increasing customer trust and confidence in the product. People with a significant interest in cultural heritage and ecological consumption were more likely to favor handloom items labeled with GI. These data indicate that different groups of consumers respond differently to GI. This highlights the need to use customized promotional techniques and advertising to convey GI's benefits to different target markets effectively.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

When it comes to handloom products, it is important to collaborate with weavers' groups that are registered with the GI and marketing experts to jointly develop captivating stories. To improve interactions with consumers and know their perceptions, it is important to include weavers in the telling of stories in order to express the cultural value and workmanship that lies behind each product. In order to emphasize the value of GI for handloom products, it is important to invest in specific marketing initiatives. For the purpose of attracting customers who place a high value on authenticity, quality, and cultural heritage, GI-labeled products should be highlighted.

It is important to examine the efficiency of the current GI policies and regulations in terms of their potential to foster the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of handloom enterprises. It is important to evaluate the difficulties associated with their implementation, the viewpoints of stakeholders, and the possible regions for policy development in order to maximize the beneficial effects of GI for both consumers and weavers.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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