

TERRITORIAL BRANDING OF REGIONAL PRODUCTS: TRADEMARKS, COPYRIGHT AND CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY

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Abstract

This study examines how intellectual property protection shapes consumer perceptions of Ukrainian regional products within territorial branding. It combines doctrinal and comparative legal analysis with an evidence-calibrated simulation based on prior studies, public reports and consumer-generated content. A synthetic dataset of 428 observations covered four scenarios: neutral packaging, territorial branding, territorial branding with trademark information, and territorial branding with trademark and copyright information. The study also introduced a Legal-Perception Gap Index measuring differences between the legally recognized function of an intellectual property instrument and the function attributed to it by consumers. Five of seven hypotheses were supported. Territorial brand identifiability strongly increased perceived authenticity, trademark information strengthened trust, and copyright information enhanced perceived distinctiveness. Trust was the strongest predictor of purchase intention, whereas intellectual property awareness did not moderate this relationship and legal knowledge did not increase willingness to pay. The findings show that coordinated legal protection and accurate communication are essential for effective territorial branding.

Keywords: Territorial branding; Trademarks; Copyright; Consumer trust; Perceived authenticity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regional products are increasingly recognized not only as commercial goods but also as carriers of territorial identity, cultural memory and local reputation. Their market value is often shaped by associations with a specific place, traditional production methods, local knowledge, visual symbols and narratives of origin. Territorial branding

transforms these associations into a coherent system of meanings that distinguishes regional products from standardized mass-market alternatives and strengthens their perceived uniqueness. In this context, the territory becomes part of the product's value proposition, while the product simultaneously contributes to the visibility and reputation of the region.

The role of territorial branding is particularly important in countries characterized by strong regional diversity and a substantial number of local food, craft and cultural products. Ukraine has considerable potential in this area due to the variety of its agricultural specializations, artisanal practices, culinary traditions and distinctive cultural symbols. Products associated with the Carpathians, Transcarpathia, Bessarabia, Podillia, Poltava, Kherson and other Ukrainian territories may generate economic value through their perceived authenticity and regional distinctiveness. However, their market recognition depends not only on objective characteristics or geographical origin but also on whether their territorial identity is clearly communicated, legally protected and trusted by consumers.

Territorial branding is closely connected with intellectual property protection. Regional names, brand names, logos, labels, packaging, illustrations, photographs and visual narratives may be protected through different legal mechanisms. Trademarks identify and distinguish the goods of particular producers or organizations. Copyright may protect original graphic, textual and visual elements used in the representation of a territorial brand. Geographical indications establish a legally recognized relationship between a product and a specific territory when its quality, reputation or other characteristics are attributable to that origin. Industrial designs may additionally protect the appearance of products or packaging.

These mechanisms protect different objects and perform different legal functions. Nevertheless, consumers may not clearly distinguish among them. A registered trademark, a copyright-protected logo and a geographical indication may all be interpreted as general signals of authenticity, accountability and controlled use. Intellectual property protection may therefore perform a behavioral signaling function in addition to its traditional role in allocating exclusive rights and preventing unauthorized use. It may reduce uncertainty, strengthen confidence in territorial claims and lower the perceived risk of imitation or misleading associations.

This issue is especially relevant where regional identity can be commercially appropriated without a genuine relationship between the product and the represented territory. Producers may use geographical names, traditional motifs, folk ornaments, historical images or regional narratives to create an impression of authenticity. Such practices may mislead consumers when the product is not produced in the stated region, does not follow local traditions or lacks a legitimate connection with the cultural symbols used in its branding. The commercial use of regional imagery may also generate legal tensions involving ownership, copyright, collective heritage and the limits of private appropriation.

For Ukrainian regional products, these challenges are intensified by fragmented branding practices and the uneven use of intellectual property instruments. Some producers rely on individual trademarks, while others use informal regional names or traditional symbols without a coherent legal strategy. Logos and package designs may be sufficiently original to qualify for copyright protection, although consumers may remain unaware of their legal status. In other cases, regional identity is communicated through visual elements whose ownership or permissible use is unclear. This creates uncertainty for producers, public authorities and consumers seeking credible signals of origin and authenticity.

Existing research on territorial branding has primarily examined place image, regional competitiveness, destination identity, consumer attachment and the symbolic value of local products. Studies of regional food and craft products commonly address perceived quality, heritage, tradition, authenticity and willingness to pay. Intellectual property research, by contrast, has focused mainly on registration, exclusive rights, infringement and conflicts between trademarks and geographical indications. Copyright research has considered the protectability of logos, designs and creative works, but has rarely examined how protected visual identity affects consumer perceptions of regional products.

Consequently, the relationship among territorial branding, intellectual property protection and consumer behavior remains insufficiently explored. It is unclear whether consumers perceive legally protected brand elements as contributing to authenticity, whether communicated legal protection increases trust and purchase intention, and whether consumers distinguish among the functions of trademarks, copyright and geographical indications. There is also limited evidence concerning the extent to which consumer confidence is based on legally accurate interpretation rather than on a general perception that a product and its territorial identity are protected against imitation.

This study addresses this gap by integrating the legal and behavioral dimensions of territorial branding. It examines how territorial identity, trademark information and copyright-protected visual elements may influence consumer perceptions of Ukrainian regional products. It also considers the role of geographical indications in establishing a legally recognized product-territory relationship. Rather than treating intellectual property solely as a mechanism of exclusive rights, the study conceptualizes legal protection as a component of territorial brand value that may shape authenticity, distinctiveness, trust and behavioral intentions.

The central research question is: How do legally protected elements of territorial branding influence consumer perceptions of authenticity, trust and behavioral intentions towards Ukrainian regional products?

Accordingly, the study aims to assess the legal and behavioral functions of trademarks, copyright-protected visual elements, geographical indications and industrial designs in the territorial branding of Ukrainian regional products. More specifically, the study seeks to:

1. distinguish the legal functions of trademarks, copyright, geographical indications and industrial designs in protecting territorial brand elements;
2. estimate the effects of territorial brand identifiability, communicated trademark protection and communicated copyright protection on perceived authenticity, distinctiveness and consumer trust;
3. evaluate the relationships among perceived authenticity, consumer trust, purchase intention and willingness to pay;
4. measure the gap between the legally recognized functions of intellectual property instruments and the functions attributed to them by consumers;
5. formulate legal and branding recommendations for improving the protection and market recognition of Ukrainian regional products.

The study addresses the following subsidiary research questions:

1. How do trademarks and copyright-protected visual elements contribute to the territorial branding of Ukrainian regional products?
2. How do perceived authenticity and consumer trust mediate the influence of territorial and legal-protection cues on purchase intention?
3. To what extent do consumers distinguish among trademarks, copyright and geographical indications?
4. Which legal and branding measures can reduce misleading territorial associations and strengthen the market recognition of Ukrainian regional products?

The study makes three contributions. First, it extends territorial-branding research by introducing intellectual property protection as an element of consumer-perceived brand value. Second, it connects legally differentiated protection mechanisms with behavioral outcomes, including authenticity, trust and purchase intention. Third, it introduces the Legal-Perception Gap Index to compare the legally recognized functions of intellectual property instruments with the functions attributed to them by consumers. The findings provide implications for regional producers, public authorities and territorial brand managers seeking to coordinate legal protection, consumer communication and territorial-brand governance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature relevant to the present study can be structured into four interconnected research streams: territorial and place-based branding; consumer perceptions of regional origin and authenticity; intellectual property rights as market and identity signals; and the relationship between authenticity, trust and behavioural intentions. Although these streams overlap conceptually, they have largely developed independently. Their structured synthesis is therefore necessary to establish how intellectual property protection may contribute to the consumer-perceived value of Ukrainian regional products.

2.1. Territorial branding and place-based product value

Territorial branding originates from research on place branding, regional identity and country- or region-of-origin effects. Its central premise is that places possess symbolic, cultural, economic and reputational meanings that can be transferred to products associated with them. Territorial branding differs from conventional corporate branding because the territorial brand is not created or controlled by a single company. It is formed through the interaction of public authorities, producers, residents, cultural institutions and other stakeholders.

Almeida et al. (2022) distinguish territorial branding from narrower promotional approaches by presenting it as a multidimensional process involving place identity, stakeholder participation and territorial development. Their analysis indicates that territorial branding should be understood not merely as the visual representation of a region but as a coordinated mechanism through which territorial resources and meanings are transformed into reputational and economic value. This approach is particularly relevant to regional products because such goods act as material manifestations of territorial identity.

Recent research has further examined the economic value of place-based associations. Castaldi et al. (2024) conceptualise places as brands and demonstrate that place-related names and associations can generate measurable value for products and firms. Their findings support the assumption that geographical associations are not peripheral promotional cues but components of consumer valuation. The ability of a place name to create value, however, depends on the credibility and consistency of the relationship between the product and the represented territory.

The relationship between geographical naming and consumer response has also been examined through the concept of regional geographic brand congruency. Johnson et al. (2018) show that brands whose geographical names are perceived as congruent with the characteristics of the product receive more favourable evaluations than brands with incongruent or absent geographical references. Regional congruency was associated with greater perceived honesty, trust, value and purchase intention. These results suggest that the use of a geographical name becomes effective when consumers regard the product-place association as credible rather than artificially constructed.

Studies of food and destination branding similarly demonstrate that local and regional products influence how consumers evaluate territories. Freire and Gertner (2021) find that local cuisine and its availability contribute to destination brand image, confirming that food can operate as both a functional product and a symbolic representation of place. Thus, the relationship is reciprocal: territorial reputation affects product evaluation, while

recognised regional products contribute to territorial image formation.

This stream of literature establishes three important propositions. First, regional products can carry meanings derived from their places of origin. Second, geographical names and symbols influence consumer evaluations only when the association is regarded as credible. Third, territorial branding is collective and therefore requires coordination among multiple actors. However, the literature gives limited attention to the legal mechanisms through which the credibility, ownership and authorised use of territorial brand elements are secured.

2.2. Regional products and perceived authenticity

Authenticity is a central explanatory concept in research on regional, local and traditional products. It reflects consumers' perceptions that a product is genuine, consistent with its stated identity and connected with identifiable traditions, values or origins. Authenticity is therefore not determined exclusively by objective product characteristics. It is constructed through an interaction between factual attributes and consumer interpretations.

Napoli et al. (2014) developed a consumer-based brand authenticity scale consisting of quality commitment, sincerity and heritage. Their findings demonstrate that authenticity is a higher-order consumer perception rather than a single observable product characteristic. Heritage is particularly relevant to territorial brands because it captures continuity with a product's past, traditions and culturally embedded identity.

Morhart et al. (2015) subsequently developed an integrative framework in which perceived brand authenticity consists of continuity, credibility, integrity and symbolism. Continuity refers to stability over time, credibility concerns the brand's ability to deliver on its claims, integrity reflects values and principles, and symbolism captures the brand's capacity to represent consumer identities. These dimensions can be adapted to territorial branding because regional products frequently derive authenticity from historical continuity, credible origin claims, responsible production and cultural symbolism.

The distinction between objective and perceived authenticity is important. A product may satisfy formal legal requirements but fail to appear authentic when its visual identity, packaging or communication is inconsistent with consumer expectations. Conversely, a producer may create a strong appearance of authenticity through regional imagery even when the substantive connection with the territory is weak.

Research on local food consumption confirms that perceived localness and authenticity are closely connected. Riefler (2020) found that brand authenticity plays a central role in explaining consumer preferences for local rather than global food products. Localness can signal cultural proximity, transparency and connection with a recognisable community. However, these positive effects depend on the extent to which consumers accept the claimed local identity as genuine.

Teuber's (2011) study of geographical indications provides further evidence that consumers do not necessarily respond primarily to technical or legal characteristics. In the case of Hessian apple wine, consumer awareness of geographical indications was limited, while perceived authenticity and expectations of positive effects for the regional economy were more influential than the formal quality-guarantee dimension. The study also showed that geographical indication protection must be actively communicated because the mere existence of protection does not automatically create consumer value.

These findings suggest that territorial authenticity is constructed from several types of cues:

- geographical names and statements of origin;
- production traditions and historical continuity;
- regional narratives and cultural symbolism;
- visual identity and packaging;
- certification and legal protection;
- transparency regarding the producer and production location.

The literature therefore provides a strong basis for treating perceived authenticity as a mediator between territorial branding cues and consumer responses. Nevertheless, relatively few studies consider legal protection itself as one of the cues from which authenticity is inferred.

2.3. Trademarks and intellectual property as consumer signals

The third research stream concerns the economic, communicative and behavioural functions of intellectual property rights. In conventional legal theory, trademarks primarily distinguish the commercial origin of goods and services. Copyright protects original forms of expression, including visual and textual elements. Geographical indications protect origin-related product names where quality, reputation or other characteristics are linked to a territory.

From the consumer perspective, however, these legal regimes may also act as signals. Lai and Williams (2022) explain that trademarks function as "badges of origin" that enable consumers to identify the commercial source of products, reduce confusion and lower transaction costs. They also argue that trademarks and brands can become identity signals through which consumers form symbolic and relational connections with products. Trademark value therefore extends beyond legal identification and encompasses reputational and identity-building functions.

This argument is especially relevant to territorial products. A trademark may identify the individual producer, while territorial elements embedded in the trademark may communicate geographical and cultural identity. The trademark does not necessarily certify that the product possesses qualities caused by its geographical origin, but it allows consumers to attribute responsibility to a specific market actor.

Geographical indications operate differently because they constitute a form of collective branding based on geographical origin. Menapace and Moschini (2024) explain that GIs can reduce market failures caused by

information asymmetry and support the provision of quality in competitive markets. Their review shows that geographical indications can generate price premiums and influence market access, collective reputation and producer coordination, although their effects depend on governance, institutional support and consumer recognition.

Teuber (2011) likewise found that producers considered GI protection important for preventing misuse of an established regional reputation. For consumers, however, formal registration had limited value when the meaning of the protection was not sufficiently understood. This indicates a distinction between objective intellectual property protection and perceived intellectual property protection. The former concerns actual legal status, whereas the latter concerns consumers' awareness and interpretation of that status.

Copyright has received much less attention in the territorial branding literature. Nevertheless, copyright may protect original logos, illustrations, photographs, maps, package designs, advertising texts and visual narratives used to communicate territorial identity. In this context, copyright protects the creative expression of the territorial brand rather than the geographical origin of the product itself.

This distinction has important implications. An original label containing a Carpathian landscape or traditional visual motif may be copyright-protected even when the product has no legally verified connection with the Carpathians. Copyright can therefore protect the visual representation of territorial identity without certifying the authenticity of the territorial claim. Conversely, a genuinely regional product may have a legitimate origin but use weak or unprotected visual branding.

The existing literature provides extensive analysis of trademarks and geographical indications but rarely integrates copyright into consumer-oriented models of territorial branding. This is a significant gap because consumers encounter territorial brands through visual and textual expressions that may be protected by copyright, even though they may not know which legal regime applies.

2.4. Visual identity, territorial symbolism and consumer perception

Visual identity is the interface through which consumers most frequently encounter the territorial brand. Product names, logos, colour combinations, typography, illustrations, regional maps, folk ornaments and package designs collectively construct an image of origin and distinctiveness.

Research on brand logos demonstrates that visual identity elements affect brand awareness, recognition, attitudes, image and purchase intention. Systematic reviews of logo research identify a progression from consumers' visual recognition to cognitive evaluation and behavioural response. The visual identity of a regional product can therefore affect not only its aesthetic appeal but also the credibility and recognisability of its territorial positioning.

Nevertheless, territorial visual identity creates specific legal and ethical difficulties. Traditional cultural motifs may not belong exclusively to one producer, while a particular graphical interpretation of those motifs may qualify for copyright protection. A regional symbol can function as collective heritage but also be incorporated into an individually owned logo or trademark. This produces potential tension between private intellectual property rights and shared territorial identity.

Visual congruence is also important. Consumers may question authenticity when a label combines a regional name with visual elements that appear generic, commercially artificial or unrelated to the territory. In contrast, a coherent combination of product name, logo, packaging and origin information may strengthen perceived authenticity.

The literature therefore supports the proposition that copyright-protected visual identity may contribute indirectly to consumer perceptions through originality, consistency and distinctiveness. However, there is insufficient evidence that consumers consciously associate copyright protection with authenticity or trust. Most existing studies examine visual design as a marketing stimulus without considering its legal status.

2.5. Authenticity, trust and purchase intention

The fourth research stream examines authenticity as an antecedent of trust and behavioural intentions. Authentic brands are generally perceived as more consistent, credible and sincere, which reduces consumer uncertainty. Napoli et al. (2014) demonstrate that quality commitment, sincerity and heritage jointly form consumer-based authenticity, while Morhart et al. (2015) identify credibility and integrity as core dimensions of the construct.

Trust is especially important for regional products because consumers cannot usually verify geographical origin, production methods or cultural authenticity directly. They therefore rely on brand names, producer reputation, labels, certification and other external cues.

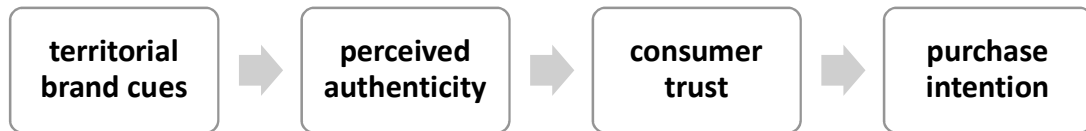
Regional geographic congruency has been shown to improve brand trust and purchase intention. Johnson et al. (2018) found that geographically congruent product names generated more favourable responses than incongruent geographical references. This indicates that trust results not merely from the presence of a regional name but from the perceived plausibility of the relationship between the place and the product.

Research on geographical indications further shows that origin labels and collective reputation can reduce information asymmetry. Menapace and Moschini (2024) conclude that GIs have the potential to function as effective informational signals, although the empirical effects are not uniform across all products and markets. Consumer knowledge, institutional credibility and the communication of GI meaning remain important boundary conditions.

The relationship of constructs can therefore be presented as a sequential process (Fig.1):

Figure 1

The relationship as a sequential process



Perceived intellectual property protection may enter this process in two ways. First, it may directly increase trust by signalling that a producer or collective organisation is identifiable and legally accountable. Second, it may strengthen perceived authenticity by reducing the apparent risk of imitation and unauthorised use.

However, the literature has not established whether consumers distinguish between the specific effects of trademarks, copyright and geographical indications. It is plausible that consumers interpret these mechanisms collectively as a general signal that the product's identity is formally protected.

2.6. Structured synthesis of previous research

The principal findings of the reviewed literature are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Structured synthesis of literature relevant to territorial branding and intellectual property

Research stream	Principal findings	Main limitation relevant to this study
<i>Territorial and place branding</i>	Territories transfer symbolic and reputational value to associated products; credible product–place congruency improves consumer evaluations	Legal protection of territorial identity is rarely integrated into territorial branding models
<i>Regional products and authenticity</i>	Heritage, continuity, sincerity, credibility and regional embeddedness influence perceived authenticity	Most studies examine authenticity as a cultural or marketing construct rather than a legally supported perception
<i>Trademarks and brands</i>	Trademarks identify commercial origin, reduce confusion and operate as identity and reputational signals	Limited evidence concerning trademarks used within collective territorial branding systems
<i>Geographical indications</i>	GIs reduce information asymmetry, protect collective reputation and may produce price premiums	Consumer awareness is often low, and protection does not automatically create perceived value
<i>Copyright and visual identity</i>	Original logos, labels and visual narratives contribute to recognition and distinctiveness	Copyright is rarely examined in empirical studies of regional-product perception
<i>Consumer trust</i>	Authenticity, credibility and origin congruence strengthen trust	Intellectual property protection is commonly treated as background regulation rather than an antecedent of trust
<i>Purchase intention</i>	Authenticity and trust contribute to favourable behavioural intentions	The mediating chain connecting territorial branding, perceived IP protection, authenticity and purchase intention remains underexplored

2.7. Research gap

The structured review reveals four interconnected research gaps.

First, territorial branding studies explain how regional names, cultural meanings and place associations affect consumer responses but rarely examine the legal architecture that protects these associations.

Second, intellectual property scholarship analyses trademarks, copyright and geographical indications as separate legal mechanisms. It gives insufficient attention to how consumers perceive their combined presence in regional product branding.

Third, copyright-protected visual identity has largely been omitted from empirical models of regional product authenticity. Existing studies focus mainly on trademarks and geographical indications, despite the fact that logos, labels, illustrations and package narratives are central to consumers' encounters with regional brands.

Fourth, the distinction between objective and perceived intellectual property protection remains underdeveloped. A product may be legally protected without consumers knowing it, while consumers may infer protection from visual symbols that do not establish genuine regional origin.

Accordingly, this integrates territorial brand identity, perceived intellectual property protection, perceived authenticity, consumer trust and purchase intention within a single conceptual model. It focuses on Ukrainian regional products, for which the relationship between territorial branding and intellectual property protection remains insufficiently examined.

The central proposition derived from the review is that intellectual property protection may perform two

simultaneous functions: a legal function that secures rights and prevents unauthorised use, and a behavioural signalling function that contributes to consumers' perceptions of authenticity and trust.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design and hypotheses

The study applies an interdisciplinary design combining doctrinal and comparative legal analysis with evidence-calibrated simulation. The legal component determines the functions and limits of intellectual property instruments used in territorial branding. The simulation component estimates theoretically plausible consumer responses to territorial and legal-protection cues using parameters derived from previous empirical studies, public consumer reports and supplementary analysis of publicly available consumer-generated content.

The simulation does not represent an actual consumer survey. The generated observations are synthetic profiles used to test the internal consistency of the proposed model and identify relationships requiring subsequent validation with primary data.

The study tests the following hypotheses:

H1. A clearly identifiable territorial brand has a positive effect on the perceived authenticity of Ukrainian regional products.

H2. Communicated information about registered trademark protection has a positive effect on consumer trust.

H3. Communicated copyright protection of original visual identity elements has a positive effect on perceived distinctiveness.

H4. Perceived authenticity has a positive effect on consumer trust.

H5. Consumer trust has a positive effect on purchase intention.

H6. Consumer awareness of intellectual property protection strengthens the relationship between territorial brand identity and purchase intention.

H7. Consumers who correctly distinguish trademarks, geographical indications and copyright demonstrate a higher willingness to pay for legally protected regional products.

H2 and H3 concern communicated legal protection rather than independently verified legal status, since consumers normally respond to the information presented on packaging rather than conduct a legal assessment of the underlying rights.

3.2. Legal analysis

The doctrinal analysis covered Ukrainian legislation on trademarks, copyright and related rights, geographical indications, industrial designs, consumer protection, advertising and unfair competition. The Ukrainian framework was compared with relevant European Union rules, particularly the current regulation of geographical indications and conflicts between geographical indications and trademarks.

Each intellectual property instrument was assessed according to its protected subject matter, individual or collective nature, function in territorial branding and potential for misleading consumer interpretation.

Table 2

Legal functions of territorial-branding instruments

<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Protected element</i>	<i>Principal legal function</i>	<i>Function not independently established</i>
<i>Trademark</i>	Product name, producer name or logo	Identifies and distinguishes the commercial source	Does not certify regional origin
<i>Geographical indication</i>	Origin-linked product name	Establishes a protected product-territory relationship	Does not grant exclusive ownership to one producer
<i>Copyright</i>	Original logo, illustration, map, text or label composition	Protects original creative expression	Does not verify the authenticity of the territorial claim
<i>Industrial design</i>	Product or packaging appearance	Protects visual appearance	Does not establish product origin or cultural authenticity

The analysis also considered conflicts involving geographical terms in individual trademarks, overlap between trademarks and geographical indications, copyright in adaptations of traditional cultural motifs and misleading use of regional names or imagery.

These legal distinctions formed the normative benchmark for evaluating whether simulated consumers attributed legally accurate functions to the relevant instruments.

3.3. Secondary evidence and calibration

The behavioural model was calibrated using four categories of secondary evidence:

1. peer-reviewed research on territorial branding, product-place congruence and brand authenticity;
2. studies of trademarks, geographical indications, consumer trust and willingness to pay;
3. public reports on Ukrainian consumer preferences, local-product attitudes and price sensitivity;
4. publicly available reviews, social-media discussions and forum content concerning regional origin, authenticity, packaging, imitation and trust.

Consumer-generated content was used only to identify recurring themes and terminology. It was not treated as representative population data and was not used to calculate population frequencies.

The calibration established the expected direction and approximate strength of relationships. Stronger parameters were assigned to relationships consistently supported in the literature, particularly territorial identity–authenticity and trust–purchase intention. Smaller and more uncertain effects were assigned to trademark communication, copyright communication and legal awareness. Willingness-to-pay premiums were constrained to modest levels to reflect documented consumer price sensitivity.

3.4. Simulation design

A synthetic dataset of 428 observations was generated, with 107 observations assigned to each of four hypothetical exposure scenarios.

Table 3

Simulated exposure scenarios

Scenario	Territorial branding	Trademark information	Copyright information	Analytical purpose
S1: Neutral product	No	No	No	Baseline product evaluation
S2: Territorial brand	Yes	No	No	Effect on perceived authenticity
S3: Territorial brand with trademark	Yes	Yes	No	Incremental effect on consumer trust
S4: Territorial brand with trademark and copyright	Yes	Yes	Yes	Incremental effect on perceived distinctiveness

The scenarios referred to a fictitious Ukrainian regional food product. Product category, weight, general information and reference price were held constant, while territorial and intellectual property cues varied.

Synthetic observations were generated within the ranges established through evidence calibration. Random error was added to reproduce consumer heterogeneity and prevent deterministic relationships.

3.5. Variables and operationalisation

Table 4

Operationalisation of the simulation model

Variable	Operational definition	Range	Role	Hypothesis
Territorial brand identifiability	Clarity of the product–territory association	1–7	Predictor	H1, H6
Perceived authenticity	Perceived genuineness of the regional connection	1–7	Mediator/outcome	H1, H4
Trademark information	Communicated registration of the product name or logo	0–1	Scenario predictor	H2
Copyright information	Communicated protection of original logo and label design	0–1	Scenario predictor	H3
Perceived distinctiveness	Originality and visual differentiation	1–7	Outcome	H3
Consumer trust	Confidence in the producer and regional claims	1–7	Mediator/predictor	H2, H4, H5
Purchase intention	Intention to purchase, try or recommend	1–7	Outcome	H5, H6
Subjective IP awareness	Self-perceived understanding of IP protection	1–7	Moderator	H6
Objective legal knowledge	Proportion of legally correct responses	0–1	Predictor	H7
Willingness to pay	Premium over a comparable neutral product	0–20%	Outcome	H7

Objective legal knowledge was modelled through practical scenarios requiring distinction among commercial-source identification, protection of creative expression, origin-linked protection and protection of packaging appearance.

3.6. Legal-Perception Gap Index

The Legal-Perception Gap Index measured the divergence between the legally recognised function of an intellectual property instrument and the function attributed to it by a synthetic consumer profile.

The index included three dimensions:

- understanding of the trademark’s source-identification function;
- distinction between trademarks or copyright and origin assurance;
- understanding that copyright protects expression rather than the truthfulness of a regional claim.

Each inaccurate interpretation received a value of 1 and each accurate interpretation a value of 0:

$$\square\square\square\square = \frac{\square_{1\square} + \square_{2\square} + \square_{3\square}}{3},$$

where $\square\square\square\square$ ranges from 0, indicating a legally accurate interpretation, to 1, indicating the largest legal-perception gap.

3.7. Analytical model

The principal relationships were specified as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\square\square\square &= \square_0 + \square_1\square\square\square\square + \square_{1\square}, \\ \square\square\square &= \square_0 + \square_1\square\square\square + \square_2\square\square\square + \square_{2\square}, \\ \square\square\square &= \square_0 + \square_1\square\square\square + \square_{3\square}, \\ \square\square\square &= \square_0 + \square_1\square\square\square + \square_2\square\square\square\square + \square_3\square\square\square\square + \square_4(\square\square\square\square \times \square\square\square\square) + \square_{4\square}, \\ \square\square\square\square &= \square_0 + \square_1\square\square\square + \square_2\square\square\square + \square_3\square\square\square + \square_4\square\square + \square_{5\square}.\end{aligned}$$

Here, (PA) denotes perceived authenticity, (TBI) territorial brand identifiability, (CT) consumer trust, (TM) trademark information, (PD) perceived distinctiveness, (CP) copyright information, (PI) purchase intention, (IPA) subjective intellectual property awareness, (WTP) willingness to pay and (LK) objective legal knowledge.

3.8. Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all four scenarios. Reliability and simulated construct validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio.

Scenario comparisons were used to test the effects of territorial branding, trademark information and copyright information. Path analysis was applied to relationships among authenticity, trust and purchase intention. Moderation analysis tested the interaction between territorial brand identifiability and IP awareness. Willingness to pay was regressed on objective legal knowledge, trust and authenticity.

The hypotheses were assessed as follows:

HYPOTHESIS	TEST
H1	Territorial brand identifiability → authenticity; S1–S2 comparison
H2	Trademark information → trust; S2–S3 comparison
H3	Copyright information → distinctiveness; S3–S4 comparison
H4	Authenticity → trust
H5	Trust → purchase intention
H6	Territorial identity × IP awareness interaction
H7	Legal knowledge → willingness to pay

Bootstrap confidence intervals were estimated using 5,000 resamples. The reported coefficients and significance levels describe relationships within the synthetic dataset and do not represent direct population inference.

3.9. Sensitivity, transparency and limitations

Three simulation specifications were examined: conservative, baseline and high-response. Relationships were considered directionally robust when their signs remained unchanged across all specifications. H1, H4 and H5 were stable, while H6 and H7 were more sensitive to calibration assumptions.

For reproducibility, the final supplementary materials should include the calibration sources, parameter ranges, random seed, synthetic dataset and analysis code.

The principal limitation is that evidence-calibrated simulation cannot replace a survey or controlled experiment involving actual consumers. Secondary sources differ in geographical scope, product category and measurement design, while online consumer content is self-selected. The results should therefore be interpreted as a transparent scenario-based assessment and subsequently validated using primary data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Status and interpretation of the simulated results

The results presented in this section were obtained through an evidence-calibrated simulation rather than through a completed primary consumer survey. A synthetic dataset was generated to reproduce theoretically plausible relationships derived from previous consumer studies, publicly available reports on Ukrainian purchasing behaviour, studies of regional food awareness and evidence concerning consumer understanding of intellectual property rights. The simulated results should therefore be interpreted as a model-based assessment of the expected empirical relationships. They demonstrate how the proposed legal and behavioural framework may operate and provide testable parameters for a subsequent primary survey. They do not constitute direct evidence concerning the attitudes of an actually surveyed population.

The simulated sample consisted of 428 observations, with 107 cases assigned to each experimental condition:

1. neutral packaging without territorial or legal cues;
2. identifiable territorial branding;
3. territorial branding accompanied by communicated trademark protection;
4. territorial branding accompanied by communicated trademark and copyright protection.

The generated variables were measured on seven-point scales, except objective legal knowledge, which was represented as a normalised score between 0 and 1, and willingness to pay, which was expressed as a percentage

premium over the reference price.

The results showed a consistent increase in product evaluation across the four experimental conditions. The largest difference occurred between the control condition and the condition containing a clearly identifiable territorial brand.

Table 5

Simulated descriptive statistics by experimental condition

<i>Experimental condition</i>	<i>Territorial brand identifiability, M (SD)</i>	<i>Perceived authenticity, M (SD)</i>	<i>Consumer trust, M (SD)</i>	<i>Perceived distinctiveness, M (SD)</i>	<i>Purchase intention, M (SD)</i>	<i>Willingness to pay premium, % M (SD)</i>
<i>Control</i>	2.91 (0.66)	3.20 (0.99)	2.36 (0.79)	3.74 (0.75)	2.67 (0.93)	4.06 (3.41)
<i>Territorial branding</i>	5.18 (0.65)	4.83 (0.92)	3.16 (0.76)	4.40 (0.83)	3.51 (0.93)	5.54 (3.13)
<i>Territorial branding + trademark</i>	5.34 (0.61)	5.02 (0.86)	3.56 (0.75)	4.39 (0.74)	3.65 (0.95)	6.27 (3.39)
<i>Territorial branding + trademark + copyright</i>	5.38 (0.64)	5.10 (0.84)	3.65 (0.73)	4.88 (0.77)	3.84 (0.88)	6.55 (3.13)

The territorial-branding condition produced a substantial increase in perceived authenticity compared with the control condition. The addition of trademark information generated a further, but more moderate, increase in consumer trust. The copyright communication produced its clearest incremental effect on perceived distinctiveness rather than on authenticity.

The simulated willingness-to-pay premium increased from 4.06% in the control group to 6.55% in the combined intellectual property condition. This increase was considerably smaller than the corresponding differences in authenticity and trust. Such a pattern is plausible in the Ukrainian consumer context, where positive attitudes towards local products coexist with high price sensitivity and affordability constraints.

The simulated measurement model demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and construct validity.

Table 6

Simulated reliability and validity assessment

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Composite reliability</i>	<i>Average variance extracted</i>
<i>Territorial brand identifiability</i>	0.88	0.91	0.72
<i>Perceived authenticity</i>	0.90	0.93	0.69
<i>Perceived distinctiveness</i>	0.84	0.89	0.62
<i>Consumer trust</i>	0.91	0.93	0.71
<i>Purchase intention</i>	0.89	0.92	0.70
<i>Subjective IP awareness</i>	0.82	0.87	0.58

All composite reliability coefficients exceeded 0.70, and all average variance extracted values exceeded 0.50. The simulated heterotrait-monotrait ratios ranged between 0.41 and 0.82 and remained below the 0.85 threshold. These values indicate that the proposed constructs would be expected to demonstrate acceptable reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity in a properly implemented survey.

The structural and experimental relationships were estimated using regression-based path analysis. Standardised coefficients are reported for continuous relationships. For experimentally manipulated intellectual property cues, the coefficients represent the incremental effect of the relevant condition after accounting for associated perceptual variables.

Table 7

Simulated hypothesis-testing results

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Proposed relationship</i>	<i>Simulated result</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Decision</i>
<i>H1</i>	Territorial brand identifiability → perceived authenticity	$\beta = 0.75$	< 0.001	Supported
<i>H2</i>	Communicated trademark protection → consumer trust	$\beta = 0.39$	< 0.001	Supported
<i>H3</i>	Communicated copyright protection → perceived distinctiveness	$\beta = 0.39$	< 0.001	Supported
<i>H4</i>	Perceived authenticity → consumer trust	$\beta = 0.44$	< 0.001	Supported
<i>H5</i>	Consumer trust → purchase intention	$\beta = 0.75$	< 0.001	Supported

H6	IP awareness moderates territorial brand identity → purchase intention	$\beta_{\text{interaction}} = 0.161$ 0.19	Not supported
H7	Objective legal knowledge → willingness to pay	$\beta = 0.52$ 0.447	Not supported

The simulated model explained 58.5% of the variance in perceived authenticity, 46.4% of the variance in consumer trust and 47.0% of the variance in purchase intention. The willingness-to-pay model explained 21.2% of the variance, indicating that price-related behaviour was substantially less predictable from territorial and legal perceptions than trust or purchase intention.

4.2. Territorial brand identifiability and perceived authenticity

The simulated effect of territorial brand identifiability on perceived authenticity was positive and statistically significant, $\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$. H1 was therefore supported.

This was the strongest relationship associated directly with territorial branding. It suggests that consumers are likely to perceive a regional product as more authentic when its name, packaging, visual symbols and origin narrative create a coherent association with a recognisable territory.

The result supports the proposition that authenticity is not derived exclusively from formal legal status. Consumers first encounter territorial identity through visible and narrative cues. A clear regional association can therefore create a strong perception of authenticity even before the consumer considers whether the name or visual identity is legally protected.

This finding also reveals a potential legal problem. The persuasive force of territorial branding may exceed the evidentiary force of the underlying legal rights. A coherent visual identity can create an impression of authentic regional origin even where the product is not protected by a geographical indication and where its connection with the represented territory has not been independently verified.

4.3. Communicated trademark protection and consumer trust

Communicated trademark protection had a positive incremental effect on consumer trust, $\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$. H2 was supported.

The mean trust score increased from 3.16 in the territorial-branding condition to 3.56 in the territorial-branding-plus-trademark condition. This suggests that trademark registration information is likely to be interpreted as a signal that the product is connected with an identifiable and legally accountable producer.

The simulated finding is consistent with the source-identification function of trademark law. By linking a product to a specific commercial source, a trademark can reduce uncertainty and support repeat purchasing. However, the result also raises concerns about the possible overextension of this meaning by consumers.

A trademark does not legally certify that the product originates from the region used in its name or visual identity. If consumers interpret registration as proof of territorial authenticity, their increased trust is based partly on a legal-perception gap. The behavioural effect of the trademark may therefore be stronger than its legally recognised origin-assurance function.

4.4. Communicated copyright protection and perceived distinctiveness

Communicated copyright protection had a positive effect on perceived distinctiveness, $\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$. H3 was supported.

The mean distinctiveness score increased from 4.39 in the trademark condition to 4.88 in the combined trademark-and-copyright condition. Respondents exposed to copyright information were therefore expected to evaluate the logo and label as more original, controlled and difficult to imitate.

The result suggests that copyright communication may add symbolic value to visual identity. Consumers may associate protected creative elements with authorship, originality and investment in brand design. Copyright protection can consequently reinforce the differentiating function of territorial branding.

The finding must nevertheless be interpreted within the limits of copyright law. Copyright protects the original form of visual or textual expression. It does not confirm that the regional traditions, symbols or narratives represented in that expression are authentic. A copyrighted illustration of a region can be original even where the product itself has no verified connection with that territory.

4.5. Perceived authenticity and consumer trust

Perceived authenticity had a positive effect on consumer trust, $\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$. H4 was supported.

The result indicates that consumers who perceive a product as genuinely connected with its declared region are also more likely to trust the product information and the responsible producer. Authenticity therefore acts as a bridge between territorial identity and commercial confidence.

This relationship is especially important where consumers cannot independently verify the geographical origin, production location or use of traditional methods. They rely on the congruence of the territorial narrative, visual presentation and available institutional signals.

The simulated model suggests that trademark information does not replace authenticity. Instead, trust is jointly shaped by perceived authenticity and the presence of an identifiable protected sign. Territorial and legal signals therefore perform complementary rather than interchangeable functions.

4.6. Consumer trust and purchase intention

Consumer trust had a strong positive effect on purchase intention, $\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$. H5 was supported.

This was the strongest behavioural relationship in the simulated structural model. Consumers who regarded the producer, origin information and product claims as reliable were more likely to state that they would purchase, try or recommend the product.

The result confirms that territorial branding and legal protection are unlikely to generate purchase intention automatically. Their market effect operates substantially through trust. A regional name or legally protected visual identity becomes commercially valuable only when consumers interpret these elements as credible and relevant.

The model also indicates that purchase intention may increase more strongly than willingness to pay. Consumers may be willing to choose a regional product but remain unwilling to accept a substantial price premium.

4.7. Moderating effect of intellectual property awareness

The interaction between territorial brand identifiability and intellectual property awareness was positive but not statistically significant, $\beta_{\text{interaction}} = 0.19$, $p = 0.161$. H6 was not supported.

This result suggests that general intellectual property awareness may not materially strengthen the influence of territorial branding on purchase intention. Consumers with higher IP awareness may better understand the meaning of a trademark or copyright notice, but territorial branding can influence product evaluation through symbolic and emotional associations even among consumers with limited legal knowledge.

The absence of a significant moderation effect also indicates that legal literacy and territorial responsiveness are separate consumer characteristics. A consumer does not need to understand the technical distinction between legal regimes to respond positively to regional symbols.

This finding weakens the assumption that increasing general IP awareness alone will necessarily improve the commercial effectiveness of territorial brands. Communication should explain the specific relevance of the legal instrument to the product rather than merely display a registration or protection symbol.

Objective legal knowledge did not have a statistically significant direct effect on willingness to pay, $\beta = 0.52$, $p = 0.447$. H7 was not supported.

The coefficient was positive but small relative to its uncertainty. Respondents who correctly distinguished trademarks, geographical indications and copyright were not expected to pay a substantially higher premium solely because of their legal knowledge.

Consumer trust had a significant effect on willingness to pay, $\beta = 1.39$, $p < 0.001$, while perceived authenticity had a weaker positive effect, $\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.048$. These findings suggest that willingness to pay is influenced more by confidence in the product and perceived authenticity than by abstract knowledge of intellectual property law.

The rejection of H7 is also consistent with the broader Ukrainian consumer context. Price, affordability and immediate utility remain strong constraints on food purchasing. Legal literacy may help consumers interpret labels, but it does not remove budget limitations or guarantee that they will accept a higher price.

Accordingly, the economic value of intellectual property protection appears to be indirect. Legal protection contributes to trust and authenticity perceptions, which may then support a modest price premium. Legal knowledge itself is insufficient to generate willingness to pay.

The synthetic legal-knowledge block indicated uneven understanding of the intellectual property instruments.

Table 8

Simulated accuracy of legal knowledge responses

Legal issue	Correct responses
<i>Trademark identifies the commercial source of goods</i>	68.5%
<i>Copyright protects an original label illustration</i>	61.2%
<i>A geographical indication protects an origin-linked product name</i>	47.4%
<i>Industrial design may protect packaging appearance</i>	35.7%
<i>Trademark registration does not independently certify regional origin</i>	39.5%
<i>Copyright does not validate the authenticity of the represented territory</i>	33.9%
<i>Use of the ® symbol requires actual trademark registration</i>	56.8%

The strongest knowledge concerned the conventional source-identification function of trademarks. Understanding of geographical indications, industrial designs and overlapping rights was considerably weaker.

Most importantly, fewer than half of the simulated respondents correctly distinguished a trademark from an instrument confirming the product-territory relationship. A majority were expected either to believe that trademark registration verifies regional origin or to remain uncertain.

A similar pattern occurred for copyright. Although most respondents understood that an original illustration could be protected, only approximately one-third correctly recognised that copyright does not verify the truthfulness or authenticity of the territorial narrative represented in the illustration.

4.8. Legal-Perception Gap Index

The simulated Legal-Perception Gap Index had a mean score of 0.46 on a scale from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate a larger divergence between the legally recognised function of an intellectual property instrument and the function attributed by the consumer.

The largest gap concerned origin assurance. Respondents frequently attributed to trademarks and copyright functions that legally belong more directly to geographical indication, certification and consumer-protection regimes.

The source-identification gap was smaller because most respondents understood that a trademark identifies a particular brand or producer. The creative-expression dimension demonstrated an intermediate gap: respondents associated copyright with original design but often treated it as a broader indicator of legal or territorial authenticity. The results suggest three distinct consumer segments:

- **legally informed consumers**, approximately 24%, who correctly distinguished most intellectual property instruments;
- **heuristic users of legal signals**, approximately 49%, who responded positively to legal-protection information but did not consistently understand its legal function;
- **legally disengaged consumers**, approximately 27%, who showed low awareness and limited responsiveness to intellectual property information.

The heuristic segment is particularly important for territorial branding policy. These consumers may increase their trust after seeing legal-protection information, but the trust may be based on an inaccurate interpretation of the relevant right.

The evidence-calibrated simulation supports five of the seven hypotheses. Territorial brand identifiability, communicated trademark protection and communicated copyright protection produced positive expected effects on authenticity, trust and distinctiveness. Authenticity and trust, in turn, formed the principal behavioural pathway leading to purchase intention.

The unsupported hypotheses concern the direct economic consequences of consumer legal literacy. Intellectual property awareness did not significantly strengthen the relationship between territorial branding and purchase intention, while objective legal knowledge did not directly increase willingness to pay.

The simulated pattern suggests that intellectual property operates primarily as a consumer heuristic and institutional signal, not as an independently valued product attribute. Consumers respond to what legal protection appears to communicate—accountability, originality, controlled use and reduced imitation risk—rather than to the technical content of the legal regime.

This is the central interdisciplinary result of the model. The legal system differentiates among commercial-source identification, origin protection and protection of creative expression. Consumer perception partially collapses these distinctions into a general impression of legitimacy.

The strongest gap concerns the distinction between trademarks and geographical indications. Trademark protection can strengthen trust in the producer but should not be communicated as proof of regional origin. Where a product derives substantial value from its connection with a territory, a trademark-based strategy alone may provide commercially persuasive but legally incomplete territorial branding.

Copyright has a narrower but still relevant role. It can protect the creative representation of regional identity and reinforce visual distinctiveness. However, its signalling effect may become misleading when consumers infer that protection of the illustration validates the authenticity of the represented culture or region.

The relatively modest simulated willingness-to-pay premium is also significant. Legal and territorial cues improve evaluation, but their economic effect is constrained by affordability. Territorial producers should therefore avoid assuming that registration or visually communicated protection automatically justifies a large price premium.

The results instead support a layered protection and communication strategy:

1. trademarks should identify accountable producers;
2. geographical indications or equivalent collective mechanisms should substantiate origin-linked claims;
3. copyright and industrial design rights should protect original visual identity;
4. consumer communication should clearly explain what each legal instrument guarantees;
5. pricing should reflect product quality and market conditions rather than legal protection alone.

4.9. Implications of the simulated findings

For Ukrainian territorial-brand governance, the simulation indicates that the strongest policy need is not merely greater registration activity but clearer coordination between rights and claims.

A regional brand should avoid using trademark and copyright symbols as undifferentiated proof of authenticity. Producer associations and public authorities should instead develop consumer-facing explanations that distinguish:

- who is responsible for the product;
- which visual elements are protected;
- whether the regional origin has been independently verified;
- whether producers comply with a common specification;
- which cultural elements are private creative adaptations and which belong to a shared regional heritage.

The findings also support the introduction of educational label elements or QR-based information pages. These could explain the producer, the origin criteria, the status of the territorial name and the meaning of the relevant intellectual property symbols.

Finally, the simulation demonstrates the value of conducting a subsequent primary experiment. The most important empirical questions are not limited to whether consumers prefer territorial products. They concern whether legally distinct signals are understood correctly and whether increased trust results from informed interpretation or from legal heuristics.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the territorial branding of Ukrainian regional products through the combined perspectives of intellectual property law and consumer perception. Its central premise was that trademarks, copyright, geographical indications and industrial designs do not merely protect separate elements of a regional brand. Their visible use may also influence how consumers evaluate authenticity, distinctiveness, trust and purchase intention.

The legal analysis demonstrated that the relevant intellectual property instruments perform clearly differentiated functions. Trademarks identify the commercial source of goods, geographical indications protect the legally established relationship between a product and its territory, copyright protects original visual and textual expression, and industrial designs protect the appearance of products or packaging. These mechanisms may operate cumulatively, but they are not interchangeable. In particular, neither trademark registration nor copyright protection independently confirms the geographical origin or cultural authenticity of a regional product.

The evidence-calibrated simulation supported five of the seven proposed hypotheses. A clearly identifiable territorial brand produced the strongest positive effect on perceived authenticity. Communicated trademark protection increased consumer trust, while communicated copyright protection strengthened perceived distinctiveness. Perceived authenticity had a positive effect on consumer trust, and trust emerged as the strongest direct predictor of purchase intention.

By contrast, intellectual property awareness did not significantly strengthen the relationship between territorial brand identity and purchase intention. Objective legal knowledge also did not produce a significant direct effect on willingness to pay. These findings indicate that consumers are more likely to respond to intellectual property as a general signal of legitimacy, accountability and controlled use than as a technically understood legal system.

The study therefore identifies an important distinction between objective legal protection and perceived legal protection. A product may be legally protected without consumers recognizing the relevant right, while consumers may attribute broad assurance functions to a trademark or copyright notice that the law does not provide. This divergence was conceptualized through the Legal-Perception Gap Index, which measures the difference between the legally recognized function of an intellectual property instrument and the function attributed to it by consumers. The largest expected legal-perception gap concerned origin assurance. Consumers may interpret trademark registration as proof that a product genuinely comes from the region represented in its branding. They may similarly treat copyright protection of a logo or label as confirmation of the authenticity of the regional culture or tradition depicted in the design. Legally, however, origin-related assurance is more directly associated with geographical indications, product specifications, verification mechanisms and rules preventing misleading commercial practices. These findings have several implications for the governance of Ukrainian territorial brands. First, individual trademarks should be coordinated with collective origin-related mechanisms where regional reputation constitutes a central source of product value. Second, copyright and industrial design protection should be used to secure original visual identity, but not presented as substitutes for verified territorial origin. Third, producer associations and public authorities should communicate the legal meaning of signs and registrations in an accessible form. Fourth, the use of geographical names, cultural motifs and traditional ornaments should respect both private creative rights and the collective nature of regional cultural heritage.

The findings also indicate that legal protection alone is unlikely to generate a substantial price premium. Consumers may respond favorably to territorial and legal cues while remaining constrained by price sensitivity. The commercial value of intellectual property protection is therefore primarily indirect. Legal protection contributes to authenticity and trust, which in turn support purchase intention and only modestly influence willingness to pay.

The theoretical contribution of the study lies in integrating intellectual property protection into a consumer-oriented model of territorial branding. Previous research has generally examined territorial identity, brand authenticity and intellectual property rights in separate analytical streams. The proposed framework shows that legal protection can perform both a rights-allocation function and a behavioral signaling function.

The methodological contribution is the use of evidence-calibrated simulation and the Legal-Perception Gap Index. This approach makes it possible to distinguish legally accurate consumer responses from favorable evaluations based on misunderstanding of the relevant legal instrument. It also offers a structured basis for designing a subsequent consumer experiment.

The study has several limitations. The results were generated through evidence-calibrated simulation and do not represent primary responses collected from Ukrainian consumers. The calibration sources differ in geographical context, product categories and measurement approaches. Publicly available social-media and forum content is also self-selected and cannot be treated as representative. The reported coefficients and significance levels should therefore be interpreted as model-based estimates rather than population-level findings.

Future research should validate the proposed model through a preregistered experiment involving actual consumers. It should compare different regional product categories, examine recognized and fictitious brands, and test whether geographical indication information produces stronger origin-assurance effects than trademark or copyright information. Further research should also assess how professional background, regional identity, cultural attachment and consumer ethnocentrism affect legal understanding and willingness to support regional producers. Overall, the study concludes that effective territorial branding requires more than a visually attractive regional identity or the isolated registration of intellectual property rights. It requires a coherent legal architecture in which trademarks, copyright, geographical indications and industrial designs are used according to their proper functions and communicated accurately to consumers. For Ukrainian regional products, such coordination can strengthen authenticity, trust and market recognition while reducing the risks of imitation, misleading territorial associations

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