

Brand positioning in the development of local specialty products: A case study of the Ha Long shrimp floss collective trademark in Quang Ninh

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Abstract:

Collective trademarks (CTMs) are increasingly recognised as strategic instruments for upgrading local specialty products; however, empirical evidence from the consumer perspective in emerging economies remains limited. This study examines how consumers perceive and evaluate Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh and how these perceptions shape its brand-positioning potential under a CTM framework. A survey of 200 consumers in Ha Long, Hai Phong, and Hanoi in 2023 was conducted using a structured questionnaire covering brand awareness, perceived quality, packaging and traceability, communication channels, CTM awareness, and willingness to pay. CTM governance (quality control, traceability, and institutional coordination) is incorporated as a key analytical dimension. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and one-sample t-tests, complemented by a SWOT analysis. The results show that perceived quality is the core strength, supporting a 10-15% price premium, while weak brand recognition, inadequate packaging and traceability, and limited communication constrain positioning. The study highlights that effective brand positioning requires the alignment of product quality, CTM governance, and strategic communication.

Keywords: brand positioning, collective trademark, Ha Long shrimp floss, intellectual property, specialty product branding.

Classification numbers: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

1. Introduction

In the context of deepening globalisation and accelerating market integration, brand building has become a critical strategic instrument for enhancing competitiveness, achieving differentiation, and increasing the value of local specialty products. Beyond its conventional function of identification, branding is now regarded as a strategic intellectual asset that embodies the product's reputation, cultural identity, and economic value [1]. Collective forms of intellectual property (IP), including collective trademarks (CTMs), certification marks, and geographical indications (GIs), have increasingly been recognised as key mechanisms for strengthening value chains, protecting community interests, and expanding the market reach of region-based products [2, 3].

International research demonstrates that IP-based branding not only generates competitive advantage but also plays a fundamental role in rural development, value chain upgrading, and the preservation of traditional knowledge. Cases such as Darjeeling tea, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, and Café de Colombia show that effective legal protection and stringent quality governance can lead to premium prices, enhance producers' bargaining power, and contribute to sustainable livelihoods [3, 4]. Theoretically,

brands rooted in cultural identity are conceptualised as forms of "cultural assets" that enable communities to resist name misappropriation and maintain authenticity [2, 5]. At the same time, well-designed IP systems reduce transaction costs and facilitate institutional coordination within the value chain [1].

In Vietnam, alongside the implementation of the "One Commune, One Product" (OCOP) programme, research on branding and IP at the local level has expanded significantly. Most studies focus on evaluating the economic impacts of OCOP [6], analysing the role of geographical indications for key products such as Phu Quoc fish sauce, Buon Ma Thuot coffee, or Thai Nguyen tea, or assessing policy frameworks for regional brand development. Q.N. Vu, et al. (2025) [7] further demonstrated that intellectual property factors shape consumers' purchase decisions for collective-branded Ha Long shrimp floss. However, existing studies remain largely descriptive, emphasising policy perspectives rather than the operational mechanisms and strategic implications of CTMs in brand positioning. Notably, empirical investigations into how consumers perceive, recognise, and evaluate local specialty products as a basis for brand positioning remain limited.

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The case of the collective trademark “Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh” - a long-standing specialty closely associated with coastal culinary culture and community knowledge - illustrates the common challenges faced by local specialty products in Vietnam. Despite possessing strong cultural identity and significant market potential, the product has yet to receive adequate legal protection and lacks a unified branding strategy. As a result, it faces risks of counterfeiting, name misappropriation, and declining market credibility. This situation highlights a substantial gap between the product’s intrinsic value and its current brand image, underscoring the need to better understand how consumers recognise, perceive, and evaluate the product.

Accordingly, this study focuses on analysing consumer perceptions and evaluations of key brand-related dimensions of Ha Long shrimp floss, including brand awareness, perceived quality, packaging and labelling, traceability, communication channels, and awareness of collective trademarks. Examining these dimensions not only reveals existing challenges in product governance and development but also provides an empirical foundation for proposing targeted solutions to strengthen brand positioning and enhance the value of this local specialty product.

2. Literature review

Research on branding, intellectual property (IP) protection, and the development of local specialty products increasingly demonstrates that brand value lies not only in product quality but also in its cultural, economic, and institutional functions. From a marketing perspective, a brand serves as a market signal that reduces information asymmetry, enhances differentiation, and shapes consumer expectations [8]. For region-based products, branding further operates as a “language of identity”, conveying cultural narratives, traditional knowledge, and community heritage [9, 10].

A substantial strand of the literature focuses on collective forms of IP such as CTMs, certification marks, and GIs. A. Marescotti, et al. (2017) [11] argue that CTMs and GIs not only generate commercial value but also contribute to preserving traditional knowledge and maintaining cultural diversity. S. Cavagnero and S. Giordano (2022) [12] further emphasise that linking products to origin creates “symbolic value”, enabling producers to access premium market segments. In the agricultural sector, CTMs have been shown to increase farmers’ income, strengthen bargaining power, and reduce dependence on intermediaries [13].

Another line of inquiry highlights that the effectiveness of CTMs largely depends on CTM governance and related institutional arrangements. J. Neilson, et al. (2018) [13], in their study of Gayo coffee (Indonesia), demonstrate that the benefits of GIs are realised only when supported by stringent quality control, stakeholder consensus, and

equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms. These findings align with arguments that CTMs require clear legal frameworks, transparent standards, and coordinated institutional management to prevent free-riding behaviour and protect brand value [12].

In Vietnam, the 2022 Intellectual Property Law defines CTMs as marks used to distinguish the goods or services of members of an organisation from those of non-members. This legal framework has facilitated the development of community-based brands, particularly within the national OCOP programme. Recent studies show that CTMs and traceability systems positively influence consumer trust, perceived quality, and loyalty [14, 15]. At the firm level, CTMs and GIs have been associated with improved business performance, though challenges remain regarding management capacity and utilisation levels [16]. Research on OCOP also highlights the essential roles of CTM governance capacity, communication strategies, and institutional coordination in enhancing the impact of CTMs on rural development [7].

Despite the growing body of literature, most studies focus on policy frameworks, governance models, or macro-level economic effects of CTMs and GIs. Research adopting a market-oriented perspective specifically examining consumer recognition, perceptions, and evaluations of products associated with collective trademarks remains limited. For the case of Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh, no systematic study has yet explored how consumers perceive brand identity, evaluate perceived quality, assess packaging and traceability information, or understand the necessity of collective trademark protection. This gap is particularly significant to be addressed because consumer feedback constitutes the most direct and practical foundation for designing branding strategies and improving CTM management in practice.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design and data collection

This study employs a mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess brand positioning and identify key factors influencing the development of the collective trademark “Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh”. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, supplemented by a limited number of open-ended items to contextualise consumer perceptions and expectations.

A total of 200 valid responses were collected between November and December 2023 from three selected market areas: Ha Long - Quang Ninh (production and local consumption market), Hanoi (major urban consumption market), and Hai Phong (coastal consumption market). Given the exploratory and market-oriented nature of

the study, convenience sampling was applied to ensure feasibility while capturing diverse consumer insights [17].

The questionnaire was developed based on prior studies on regional branding and specialty product development [18] and refined through expert consultation to ensure contextual relevance. It covered key dimensions including brand awareness, perceived product quality, packaging and labelling, traceability, communication channels, collective trademark awareness, and willingness to pay. These dimensions collectively capture the core determinants of brand positioning from a consumer perspective.

3.2. Scale development

Measurement scales were derived from well-established theoretical frameworks in branding and consumer behaviour research. Indicators for brand awareness and perceived quality were adapted from Keller's Customer-based Brand Equity (CBBE) model [8]. Items related to Packaging, labelling, and traceability reflect the literature on brand identity systems and information signalling in agri-food markets [19], while communication-related items draw on integrated marketing communications theory [8].

Consumer awareness of collective trademarks was operationalised following studies on collective marks and geographical indication systems, which conceptualise CTMs as institutional mechanisms that enhance consumer trust and protect collective reputation [9]. Willingness-to-pay items were constructed based on value-based pricing theory and contingent valuation approaches [20].

Detailed theoretical justifications, scale operationalisation, and item wording are provided in Appendix A and the methodological note to improve readability and avoid redundancy in the main text. The final questionnaire was tailored to local consumption conditions and the specific attributes of Ha Long shrimp floss.

3.3. Data analysis methods

Survey data were analysed using SPSS 22.0 software. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise sample characteristics and assess consumer awareness, attitudes, and evaluations of the "Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh" brand. Mean values, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were used to provide an overview of market perceptions.

In addition, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted to systematically assess internal and external factors affecting the development of the collective trademark. Strengths include product quality and cultural reputation; weaknesses relate mainly to packaging, branding, and institutional coordination; opportunities arise from growing demand for local specialty products and supportive policy frameworks; while threats stem from counterfeiting risks and market competition.

The integration of quantitative survey results with SWOT analysis provides a concise yet multidimensional analytical framework, enabling the study to link consumer-based evidence with strategic recommendations for CTM governance, policy development, and long-term brand enhancement. For terminological consistency, this study uses the term CTM governance to refer to the institutional, regulatory, and operational mechanisms governing the use, protection, and collective management of collective trademarks.

4. Results

4.1. Overview of the survey sample

A total of 200 consumers from Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, and Hanoi - each of whom had previously purchased and consumed Ha Long shrimp floss - participated in the survey. The demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the sample are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the survey sample.

Indicator	Unit	Result
Average monthly income	VND 1,000/month	11,386
Gender - Male	%	29.5
Gender - Female	%	70.5
Educational attainment - High school	%	81
Educational attainment - College/University	%	17.5
Educational attainment - Postgraduate	%	1.5
Age group 18-25	%	22
Age group 26-45	%	58
Age group 46 and above	%	20

Source: Author's survey data.

The findings indicate that respondents had an average monthly income of approximately 11.386 million VND, reflecting a relatively high level of purchasing power suitable for premium local specialty products. Female consumers accounted for 70.5% of the sample, emphasising their crucial role in household food purchasing and decision-making. Regarding educational attainment, the majority of respondents had completed high school education (81%), while 17.5% held college or university qualifications and 1.5% held postgraduate qualifications, corresponding to an average of 12 years of schooling and indicating a consumer base with moderate to relatively high levels of education. In terms of age structure, respondents aged 26-45 constituted the largest group (58%), followed by those aged 18-25 (22%) and those aged 46 and above (20%); this segment is typically characterised by stable income, strong product awareness, and extensive access to information, and therefore represents the principal consumer group for local specialty food products. Taken together, these demographic and socioeconomic characteristics provide an appropriate

empirical basis for analysing consumer perceptions and designing effective brand positioning strategies, communication campaigns, and market development initiatives tailored to the target consumer segment.

In addition to profiling the sample, the survey examined several core dimensions relevant to brand development, including brand awareness, the ability to differentiate Ha Long shrimp floss from competing products, perceived product quality, packaging and labelling evaluation, consumer perceptions regarding the necessity of CTM protection, and the effectiveness of communication and promotional channels.

4.2. Survey results

The survey of 200 consumers of Ha Long shrimp floss in Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, and Hanoi examined brand awareness, the ability to distinguish Ha Long shrimp floss from similar products produced elsewhere, perceived product quality, packaging and labelling evaluation, the perceived necessity of collective trademark protection, and the effectiveness of communication and promotional channels. The results for brand awareness are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistical results for the brand awareness scale.

Variable code	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Mean diff.
BA1 - I have previously heard about Ha Long shrimp floss	3.45	1.04	6.119	<0.001	+0.45
BA2 - I can recognise Ha Long shrimp floss through its packaging/labelling	3.01	0.97	0.146	0.884	+0.01
BA3 - I can distinguish Ha Long shrimp floss from similar products	2.08	1.32	-9.857	<0.001	-0.92
BA4 - I know clearly the origin of Ha Long shrimp floss	2.14	1.15	-10.576	<0.001	-0.86

Source: Author's survey data.

The results indicate that although consumers were generally familiar with the product name (BA1), they were unable to recognise it through packaging (BA2) and struggled to distinguish Ha Long shrimp floss from other competing products (BA3). Consumer knowledge about the product's origin was also notably low (BA4). These findings highlight substantial deficiencies in the brand identity system, which weaken product recall and restrict the brand's ability to establish a distinct market position.

Brand awareness varied significantly across regions: recognition was highest in Ha Long (54.3%) and lowest in Hanoi (22.6%), suggesting that the product's visibility and presence outside the production locality remain limited. Furthermore, only 28.5% of respondents reported being able to differentiate Ha Long shrimp floss from similar products based on sensory attributes or packaging. Most consumers stated that they were "uncertain about the product's origin", mainly due to insufficient information on packaging or the

prevalence of unverified products falsely labelled as "Ha Long" without legal authentication.

Table 3. Statistical results for the perceived quality scale.

Variable code	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Mean diff.
PQ1 - The product has a rich and distinctive flavour	3.98	1.02	13.588	<0.001	+0.98
PQ2 - The product has a natural, unadulterated colour	3.65	0.89	10.329	<0.001	+0.65
PQ3 - The product is fine-textured, uniform, and consistently high quality	4.01	1.10	12.985	<0.001	+1.01
PQ4 - I feel assured about the product's quality when using it	4.07	0.94	16.098	<0.001	+1.07

Source: Author's survey data.

The analysis reveals that consumers hold consistently positive evaluations of the quality of Ha Long shrimp floss (Table 3). All items in the perceived quality scale have mean scores significantly higher than the neutral midpoint ($p < 0.001$), indicating strong agreement across respondents. The attributes rated most favourably were the product's distinctive flavour (PQ1) and its stable, uniform texture (PQ3). Natural colouration (PQ2) and the sense of safety and confidence when consuming the product (PQ4) also received high levels of agreement. Overall, perceived quality emerges as one of the strongest value dimensions of Ha Long shrimp floss and constitutes a core foundation for its brand-positioning strategy in the specialty food market.

Consistent with these findings, 72.0% of consumers rated the product as "good" or "very good". Positive attributes frequently mentioned include rich flavour (69% agreeing or strongly agreeing), natural colour (58%), and fine, uniform texture (61%). However, only 11.5% of respondents reported feeling "completely assured" about product quality in the absence of a recognised trademark or verified origin label. This underscores the direct linkage between brand credibility and consumers' perception of safety and quality.

The results for the packaging, labelling, and traceability scale are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Statistical results for the packaging, labelling, and traceability scale.

Variable code	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Mean diff.
PK1 - The packaging is attractive and professional	2.84	1.03	-2.198	0.029	-0.16
PK2 - Information on the packaging is clear and complete	2.91	0.98	-1.299	0.195	-0.09
PK3 - The product has an anti-counterfeit seal/CTM label	2.67	1.12	-4.167	0.001	-0.33
PK4 - The product includes a transparent QR traceability code	2.54	1.15	-5.657	<0.001	-0.46

Source: Author's survey data.

The results show that all four variables (PK1-PK4) have mean values below the neutral midpoint of 3. For PK1, PK3, and PK4, the differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that consumers hold generally unfavourable perceptions regarding packaging professionalism, information transparency, and particularly the presence of anti-counterfeit and traceability features.

These deficiencies constitute one of the major weaknesses directly affecting consumer trust and the product's brand identity. Although 89% of respondents reported purchasing Ha Long shrimp floss with some form of packaging or labelling, only 36% rated the packaging as "agree" or above. The majority described the packaging as "below average", "lacking essential information", or "unprofessional". Moreover, 31% of sampled products had no QR code or traceability label, and many displayed only handwritten product names. Such shortcomings undermine consumer confidence and significantly restrict the product's ability to enter modern retail channels such as supermarkets or e-commerce platforms.

Table 5 presents the statistical results for the communication and information access scale.

Table 5. Statistical results for the communication and information access scale.

Variable code	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Mean diff.
MC1 - Awareness through word-of-mouth	3.42	1.07	5.551	<0.001	+0.42
MC2 - Awareness through traditional markets/ retail shops	3.11	1.02	1.525	0.129	+0.11
MC3 - Awareness through social media platforms	2.36	1.14	-7.939	<0.001	-0.64
MC4 - Effectiveness of producers' communication activities	2.48	1.09	-6.744	<0.001	-0.52

Source: Author's survey data.

The results show that word-of-mouth and traditional retail channels are the primary sources of product awareness (MC1 and MC2>3), highlighting the continued dominance of informal and conventional communication pathways. In contrast, both social media channels (MC3) and communication efforts by producers and cooperatives (MC4) received significantly lower mean scores, with strong statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate substantial weaknesses in digital communication and modern marketing activities for Ha Long shrimp floss.

Meanwhile, the level of customer awareness of collective trademarks is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Statistical results for the collective trademark awareness scale.

Variable code	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Mean diff.
CT1 - I understand the concept of collective trademarks	4.12	0.83	19.083	<0.001	+1.12
CT2 - CTMs help increase consumer trust	4.32	0.78	23.930	<0.001	+1.32
CT3 - CTMs help prevent counterfeiting	4.41	0.75	26.588	<0.001	+1.41
CT4 - I am willing to prioritise products with CTMs	4.27	0.82	21.905	<0.001	+1.27

Source: Author's survey data.

All four CTM awareness variables (CT1-CT4) have exceptionally high mean values (>4.1) with strong statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), indicating a very high level of consumer recognition regarding the necessity of establishing a collective trademark. These results align with the broader survey finding that 98% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed on the importance of developing a CTM for Ha Long shrimp floss. The most frequently cited reasons include preventing counterfeiting and protecting consumer rights (59% agreeing or strongly agreeing).

Table 7 demonstrates customers' willingness to pay.

Table 7. Statistical results for the willingness-to-pay (WTP) scale.

Variable code	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Mean diff.
WTP1 - Willing to pay a higher price if the product carries a CTM	3.88	0.97	12.831	<0.001	+0.88
WTP2 - Willing to pay a higher price if the product includes traceability information	3.94	0.93	14.294	<0.001	+0.94
WTP3 - The current price is appropriate given the product's quality	3.52	0.88	8.354	<0.001	+0.52

Source: Author's survey data.

The results indicate that consumers demonstrate a strong willingness to pay a premium for Ha Long shrimp floss when the product includes a collective trademark and transparent traceability features. This finding is consistent with the overall survey results, which show that 61.3% of consumers agreed or strongly agreed that they would pay 10-15% more if the product were CTM-certified,

Table 8. SWOT matrix for the development of the collective trademark "Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh".

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
- Shrimp floss is a traditional specialty product deeply rooted in Ha Long's culinary culture. - High product quality, positively rated by consumers (pleasant taste, natural colour, fine texture). - Readily available supply of wild-caught local shrimp, offering a competitive edge over farmed shrimp. - A large number of small-scale producers can potentially be organised into cooperatives to form the basis for a collective trademark.	- Weak brand recognition; consumers have difficulty distinguishing it from similar products from other regions. - Lack of standardised packaging; absence of QR codes for traceability; many products are hand-packed. - Fragmented production system with no unified standards for processing or quality assurance. - Absence of a competent legal entity to register, manage, and protect the collective trademark rights.	- Policy support from national programmes such as OCOP, intellectual property protection, and trade promotion. - Growing consumer demand for local specialties and increased awareness of traceability and food safety. - Strong potential for market expansion through tourism, e-commerce, premium gift markets, and supermarket channels. - Feasibility of developing a sustainable value chain if product standards and trademark usage regulations are established.	- Market distortion caused by the widespread presence of counterfeit or low-quality products falsely labelled as "Ha Long". - Limited awareness and engagement among some producers, coupled with low levels of community cooperation. - Supply instability due to fluctuations in marine shrimp availability, impacted by climate and environmental factors; rising production costs. - Increasing pressure to comply with stricter requirements on packaging, certification, and food safety, which raise input costs and hinder competitiveness for unprofessional producers.

Source: Author's synthesis based on survey data and secondary sources.

equipped with traceability codes, and packaged according to standardised requirements. These insights point to substantial commercial potential if a collective trademark is effectively developed and implemented.

To comprehensively assess the internal and external factors influencing the establishment and development of the collective trademark for Ha Long shrimp floss, a SWOT matrix was constructed. This analytical framework enables the identification of strategic measures to enhance brand value, strengthen competitiveness, and promote sustainable development. The resulting SWOT assessment in Table 8 forms a critical foundation for designing institutional, technical, and communication strategies aimed at supporting long-term brand advancement.

Table 9. Strategic SWOT matrix for the development of the collective trademark “Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh”.

	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
	SO Strategies (Leverage strengths to capitalise on opportunities)	ST Strategies (Leverage strengths to counteract threats)
Strengths (S)	- Leverage product quality and cultural heritage to craft a compelling brand narrative aligned with the OCOP framework and local tourism. - Develop premium packaging and traceability systems to meet growing consumer demand for transparency in specialty products. - Promote e-commerce and tourism gift channels by capitalising on the product's ease of transport and long shelf-life.	- Standardise household production processes to ensure consistent quality and prevent counterfeit or substandard products. - Establish an anti-counterfeiting system with verified QR codes and CTM-branded labels to protect product origin. - Conduct training on the use of community-based intellectual property to raise awareness and protect producer interests.
	WO Strategies (Address weaknesses to seize opportunities)	WT Strategies (Minimise weaknesses to avoid threats)
Weaknesses (W)	- Establish a collective trademark management entity (e.g., cooperative or sectoral association) to centralise oversight and leverage support from OCOP and IP programmes. - Standardise product packaging, design, and quality to enhance competitiveness on e-commerce platforms and in modern retail markets. - Develop an integrated brand communication strategy across both traditional and digital media channels.	- Enforce strict trademark usage regulations to control product quality and protect CTM reputation. - Organise small producers into cooperative models to conduct regular food safety inspections and implement traceability, ensuring compliance with high-standard markets. - Strengthen training in food safety and standardised processing procedures to improve market readiness and mitigate legal risks.

Source: Author's synthesis based on survey data and secondary sources.

Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, a strategic SWOT matrix was developed to identify feasible strategies for building and advancing the collective trademark “Ha Long shrimp floss Quang Ninh” (Table 9). The matrix integrates both empirical evidence and theoretical insights to propose strategic directions for enhancing brand value, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

5. Discussion

The empirical findings of this study reveal several notable insights regarding the current status and strategic potential of the Ha Long shrimp floss brand.

First, perceived product quality stands out as the strongest foundation of the brand. Consumers consistently rated core product attributes, such as distinctive flavour, natural colouration, and uniform texture, at high levels, with all mean scores significantly above the neutral point ($p < 0.001$). Combined with the strong willingness-to-pay results, where respondents were prepared to pay a 10-15% premium for products bearing a collective trademark and transparent traceability information, the findings confirm that perceived quality and authenticity serve as key value drivers. This result is consistent with prior empirical evidence from European GI systems, such as Parmigiano Reggiano and Darjeeling tea, where certified origin and quality signalling significantly enhance consumer trust and price premiums [3, 11]. Similar patterns have also been documented in Asian contexts, including Gayo coffee in Indonesia and regional rice brands in China, where institutionalised IP protection reinforces quality perception and market differentiation [13, 21]. Consistent with signalling theory and the literature on origin-based branding, these results suggest that Ha Long shrimp floss possesses favourable conditions to be positioned as a premium specialty product anchored in cultural identity and regional heritage.

Second, deficiencies in brand recognition and authentication remain major constraints. Despite the positive perception of product quality, brand awareness is weak: only 28.5% were able to distinguish it from competing products. The low scores related to packaging, labelling, and traceability - particularly the absence of QR codes and anti-counterfeiting seals - highlight structural weaknesses in the brand identity system. Comparable weaknesses have been observed in several emerging-economy CTM and GI cases, where insufficient visual identity, weak enforcement, and fragmented producer participation undermine the effectiveness of intellectual-property-based branding [12, 14]. Studies on GI products in Southern Europe further show that without standardised labelling and traceability systems, origin brands struggle to translate intrinsic quality into recognisable market

signals [9]. These issues not only diminish consumer trust but also restrict the product's competitiveness in modern retail environments and digital marketplaces, reflecting broader challenges faced by collective brands in emerging economies.

In addition, the findings highlight the critical role of CTM governance in transforming product quality into market-based brand value. Although product quality is highly evaluated, limitations in traceability, packaging, and authentication signals reflect deficiencies in governance mechanisms, particularly in quality control, information standardisation, and stakeholder coordination. This suggests that CTM governance functions as a mediating mechanism that determines the effectiveness of quality signalling and the ability to achieve brand positioning in the market.

Third, institutional expectations and community governance emerge as decisive factors for future development. An overwhelming 98% of respondents recognised the necessity of establishing a collective trademark, reflecting strong market demand for authenticated, origin-verified products. However, international evidence suggests that CTMs only yield sustainable benefits when supported by a capable CTM governance structure, typically a cooperative or producer association responsible for regulating usage, enforcing quality standards, and coordinating equitable benefit distribution. Empirical studies from Europe and Asia consistently demonstrate that weak governance leads to free-riding and reputational dilution, while well-structured CTM/GI institutions enhance collective action and long-term brand value [13, 21]. In this respect, the Ha Long shrimp floss case closely mirrors transitional CTM systems observed in Southeast Asia, where consumer demand for certification outpaces institutional readiness. This highlights the urgency of forming a competent collective body to operationalise trademark governance and align producer incentives.

Taken together, these findings mirror patterns observed in other developing economies: local specialty products often possess substantial cultural and commercial values but fail to fully harness this potential due to insufficient legal protection, weak brand identity systems, and fragmented producer coordination. By situating the Ha Long shrimp floss case alongside established GI and CTM experiences in Europe and Asia, this study strengthens the external validity of its findings and confirms that the challenges observed are systemic

rather than product-specific. The case underscores the importance of integrating value-based marketing approaches with intellectual property protection and community-based CTM governance to convert product distinctiveness into durable competitive advantage.

The results indicate that Ha Long shrimp floss can be effectively positioned as a premium regional specialty brand if three strategic dimensions are simultaneously strengthened: (i) standardising product quality and production processes, (ii) establishing a robust and transparent collective trademark governance system, and (iii) developing cohesive communication and branding strategies grounded in regional cultural narratives. This integrated framework aligns with international best practices in CTM and GI development and offers a transferable analytical model for upgrading local specialty products in other emerging economies undergoing similar institutional transitions.

6. Conclusions and policy recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate that collective trademarks constitute a strategic mechanism for enhancing brand positioning, generating added value, and promoting the sustainable development of local specialty products. The case of Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh illustrates a common pattern: despite strong consumer appreciation for product quality, particularly distinctive flavour, natural attributes, and cultural embeddedness, critical weaknesses remain in brand recognition, authentication systems, packaging professionalism, and CTM governance capacity. These gaps limit the ability of the product to convert its cultural and intrinsic value into sustained market competitiveness. The results affirm that effective brand positioning for local specialties requires a coordinated strategy combining product quality standards, intellectual property protection, and coherent brand communication.

Based on empirical evidence, five strategic policy recommendations are proposed:

First, strengthen the CTM governance framework, including registration, quality control, and enforcement mechanisms. A clearly defined legal and operational structure is needed to regulate product quality standards, production processes, membership criteria, and the rights and responsibilities of trademark users. A robust governance mechanism is essential to ensure product consistency, avoid free-riding behaviour, and maintain long-term brand credibility.

Second, standardise production and upgrade technical and quality-control infrastructure. Uniform production protocols, compliance with food safety standards, adoption of traceability systems, and modernisation of packaging are critical. Implementing QR codes, anti-counterfeiting labels, and transparent traceability records will enhance consumer trust and facilitate entry into supermarkets, e-commerce platforms, and potential export markets.

Third, develop integrated communication strategies to reinforce regional brand identity. Brand promotion should shift from fragmented efforts to a cohesive storytelling approach that emphasises cultural heritage, geographical origin, and traditional craftsmanship associated with Ha Long. Expanding communication through digital platforms, social media, tourism linkages, and experiential marketing can significantly elevate brand visibility and consumer engagement.

Fourth, reorganise the value chain and strengthen production-market linkages. CTM development should be embedded within a more coordinated value chain, in which producers, cooperatives, enterprises, and distributors operate as interconnected partners. A synchronised chain, from raw material sourcing to processing and distribution, will help stabilise quality, reduce transaction costs, and increase value-added outcomes.

Fifth, reinforce state and local policy support. Government initiatives in trade promotion, digital transformation, human capital development, and market access should be aligned to create favourable conditions for CTM-based commercialisation. Supportive policies that encourage innovation, technology adoption, and brand protection activities will play a critical role in improving product competitiveness and market positioning.

In conclusion, brand development for local specialty products should be understood not merely as a marketing function but as an integrated socio-economic development strategy. Within this framework, collective trademarks serve as an institutional tool enabling the transformation of cultural identity, local resources, and traditional knowledge into tangible economic value. With coordinated quality standards, institutional protection, and strategic communication, Ha Long shrimp floss - Quang Ninh has strong potential to evolve into a leading regional specialty brand, contributing to rural economic development, strengthening community livelihoods, and enhancing the international visibility of Vietnamese products.

APPENDICES

Consumer survey questionnaire

A. General Information

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Survey location: ☐ Ha Long ☐ Ha Noi ☐ Hai Phong
3. Age group: ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-45 ☐ 46 and above
4. Educational level: ☐ High school ☐ College/University
☐ Postgraduate
5. Monthly income (million VND): ☐ <7 ☐ 7-10 ☐ 10-15 ☐ >15
6. Frequency of using shrimp floss: ☐ Never ☐ 1-2 times/month
☐ 1-2 times/week ☐ Regularly

B. Survey Items (Likert scale 1-5): 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree.

1. Brand awareness

Code	Item	1	2	3	4	5
BA1	I have heard of Ha Long shrimp floss.					
BA2	I can recognise it via packaging/label.					
BA3	I can distinguish it from similar products.					
BA4	I clearly know its origin.					

2. Perceived quality

Code	Item	1	2	3	4	5
PQ1	Rich, distinctive flavour.					
PQ2	Natural, unadulterated colour.					
PQ3	Fine, uniform texture.					
PQ4	I feel assured about the quality.					

3. Packaging, labelling and traceability

Code	Item	1	2	3	4	5
PK1	Attractive, professional packaging.					
PK2	Clear and complete information.					
PK3	Anti-counterfeit/CTM label.					
PK4	QR traceability code.					

4. Communication and information access

Code	Item	1	2	3	4	5
MC1	Awareness via word-of-mouth.					
MC2	Awareness via traditional markets.					
MC3	Awareness via social media.					
MC4	Producers' communication effectiveness.					

5. Collective trademark awareness

Code	Item	1	2	3	4	5
CT1	I understand the CTM concept.					
CT2	CTMs enhance consumer trust.					
CT3	CTMs prevent counterfeiting.					
CT4	I prefer products with CTMs.					

6. Willingness to pay

Code	Item	1	2	3	4	5
WTP1	Willing to pay more if CTM exists.					
WTP2	Willing to pay more if traceable.					
WTP3	Current price matches quality.					

7. Consumer suggestions

7.1. What should be improved? ☐ Quality ☐ Packaging ☐ Price

☐ Traceability ☐ Other:

7.2. Would you recommend this product? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7.3. Suggestions for CTM development:

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the article.

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