

The Impact of Branding on Agricultural Products

Pritha Chaturvedi*, Sumit Kumar Sinha**

ABSTRACT

Branding has become a vital element in the agricultural industry, enhancing the marketability and perceived value of agricultural products. This article examines the role of branding in differentiating agricultural goods, fostering consumer trust, and creating market competitiveness. By leveraging packaging, labelling, and certifications (organic, fair trade, non-GMO), branding helps producers move away from commodity-based competition and adds unique identities to their products. The study highlights how branding allows farmers to command premium prices and align with consumer demands for transparency, sustainability, and ethical sourcing. However, small-scale producers face challenges due to limited resources, making it essential to explore strategies like collective branding and digital marketing. This article provides insights into how branding can elevate the value of agricultural products and drive sustainable market growth.

Keywords: Agricultural Branding, Product Differentiation, Consumer Trust, Certifications, Premium Pricing, Sustainability, Collective Branding, Agricultural Marketing

INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly evolving global marketplace, branding has emerged as a key tool for agricultural producers seeking to differentiate their products and appeal to discerning consumers. Traditionally, agricultural products have been treated as commodities, where competition largely revolved around pricing. However, the advent of branding has changed this dynamic, allowing agricultural goods to be marketed based on attributes like quality, sustainability, and ethical sourcing. As consumers become more conscious of what they purchase—seeking transparency, environmental responsibility, and product origin—the role of branding has expanded significantly.

Branding not only provides a means of communicating these values but also helps build trust and loyalty, fostering long-term relationships between producers and consumers. Additionally, strong branding enables agricultural producers to command premium prices for their goods by emphasising unique qualities such as organic certifications, local production, or fair-trade practices. With increased competition from both local and global markets, agricultural branding is no longer a luxury but a necessity for producers seeking sustainable growth.

Despite the benefits, branding in agriculture poses challenges, especially for small-scale farmers and producers who may lack the resources or expertise to develop and sustain a brand. This article explores the impact of branding on agricultural products and provides insights into how producers can leverage branding strategies to thrive in the competitive marketplace.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the role of branding in differentiating agricultural products in the market.
- To evaluate the impact of branding on consumer trust and loyalty toward agricultural products.
- To examine the influence of certifications and labelling on the pricing and marketability of agricultural goods.
- To identify the challenges faced by small-scale producers in implementing branding strategies and explore potential solutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding has become an essential strategy for agricultural producers to enhance the visibility and perceived value

* Assistant Professor, ICFAI University, Jharkhand, India. Email: prithachaturvedi@iujharkhand.edu.in

** Assistant Professor, ICFAI University, Jharkhand, India. Email: sumitsinha@iujharkhand.edu.in

of their products in competitive markets. This literature review explores the existing body of research on the impact of branding on agricultural products, focusing on the role of branding in product differentiation, consumer behaviour, pricing, and the challenges faced by small-scale producers.

Branding as a Differentiation Tool

Agricultural products are traditionally viewed as commodities, where price is the primary competitive factor. However, branding helps move beyond this price-centric competition by creating unique identities for products. Aaker (1996) emphasises that branding enables differentiation by attributing qualities like origin, ethical production methods, and sustainability, which resonate with specific consumer segments. Similarly, Kotler and Keller (2012) highlight that strong brands allow producers to communicate product attributes that can't be easily replicated by competitors, fostering long-term consumer loyalty. Research by Papu and Quester (2006) confirms that in the agricultural sector, well-branded products significantly outperform their generic counterparts in terms of consumer preference.

Consumer Trust and Perception

Trust is a critical factor in the agricultural industry, where consumers seek assurance about the quality, safety, and ethical production of the food they consume. Studies by Jahn, Schramm, and Spiller (2005) suggest that branding, especially when tied to certifications such as organic, fair trade, and non-GMO, plays a pivotal role in building consumer trust. Research shows that clear branding can communicate product transparency, such as the method of production, origin, and sustainability credentials, which are increasingly important for modern consumers (Grunert, 2005). This is further supported by Roininen, Arvola and Lähteenmäki (2006), who found that branding combined with labelling, significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions, particularly in the organic food sector.

The Role of Certifications and Labelling

Certifications like organic, fair trade, and geographical indications (GIs) have become integral to agricultural branding. According to Belletti et al. (2015), these labels

not only differentiate products but also signal quality and ethical production practices to consumers. Belletti's research also underscores that consumers are willing to pay a premium for certified agricultural products, which enhances the value proposition for producers. The combination of certifications with branding has been shown to provide a competitive edge in both local and global markets (Louviere, 2001).

Premium Pricing and Market Competitiveness

Branding enables agricultural producers to move away from the low-margin, volume-based commodity markets and into premium pricing models. A study by van der Lans et al. (2001) confirms that branded agricultural products with strong reputations can command higher prices, as consumers perceive them to be of superior quality. This price premium is often linked to intangible factors such as sustainability, ethical production, or local origin, as highlighted by research from Resano, Sanjuán and Albisu (2007), who examined the impact of local branding in the wine industry. Similarly, branding helps agricultural products maintain a distinct position in international markets, where consumer expectations are higher, and competition is stiffer (Jaffee, Henson & Diaz Rios, 2011).

Challenges for Small-Scale Producers

Despite the advantages, small-scale producers often struggle with branding due to limited resources, knowledge, and market reach. Berdegué et al. (2005) found that while branding can help small farmers secure better market access, the cost of developing and maintaining a brand can be prohibitive. The lack of marketing expertise, infrastructure, and capital often limits the ability of small producers to establish a distinct market presence (Trienekens, 2011). Collective branding efforts, such as cooperatives and geographical indication (GI) labels, have been proposed as solutions. Research by Giovannucci et al. (2009) shows that such approaches can help small farmers' pool resources to create strong, regionally recognised brands that compete more effectively in larger markets.

Digital Branding in Agriculture

The rise of digital marketing has opened new opportunities for agricultural producers to brand their products. Several

studies, such as those by Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou (2013), show that digital platforms like social media, e-commerce, and content marketing have enabled small-scale producers to reach wider audiences with lower costs. However, the adoption of these tools is uneven, particularly in rural areas where access to technology and digital literacy is limited (Rutsaert et al., 2013).

Sustainability and Ethical Branding

The growing consumer demand for ethically and sustainably produced goods has added a new dimension to agricultural branding. According to research by Vermeir and Verbeke (2006), sustainability has become a significant differentiator for agricultural brands, as more consumers are seeking products that align with their values. This trend is also reflected in the work of Tey et al. (2018), who found that eco-labels and sustainability messaging are increasingly influential in shaping consumer preferences in the agri-food sector.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research on “The Impact of Branding on Agricultural Products” will employ a secondary research methodology, which involves analysing existing data, reports, academic literature, industry publications, and case studies. By relying on previously published sources, this approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of branding’s impact on agricultural products while addressing the outlined research objectives.

Research Design

A descriptive research design will be utilised to explore and synthesise information on branding in agriculture. Secondary sources such as journal articles, books, government reports, market research studies, and agricultural industry publications will be reviewed. The data gathered from these sources will be systematically analysed to conclude relevant to the research objectives.

Data Sources

The secondary data will be collected from the following sources:

Peer-reviewed articles on branding, marketing, consumer behaviour and agricultural economics will provide theoretical and empirical insights.

Texts on branding strategies, consumer trust, product differentiation, and pricing in agricultural markets will be consulted. Reports from organisations like the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Trade Organisation (WTO), and agricultural marketing agencies will be valuable for understanding market trends, pricing, and branding challenges in agriculture.

Data from agricultural departments and governmental agencies regarding regulations, certification standards, and market reports will be analysed. Studies from market research firms (e.g., Nielsen, Mintel) on consumer preferences, trends in agricultural product branding, and pricing will help evaluate current market practices.

Documented case studies of branded agricultural products and cooperatives will be reviewed to highlight best practices, successes, and challenges faced in branding.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection for this study will focus on the systematic retrieval of relevant secondary information. Specific steps include:

Database Searches: Online academic databases like Google Scholar, JSTOR, Science Direct, and SpringerLink will be used to gather peer-reviewed articles. Keywords such as “agricultural branding,” “product differentiation in agriculture,” “consumer trust in food branding,” “certifications and labelling in agriculture,” and “branding challenges for small-scale farmers” will guide the searches.

Government and Industry Reports: Websites of agricultural ministries, international organisations (e.g., FAO, WTO, USDA), and market research firms will be explored to gather updated data on agricultural branding, market trends, and certification standards.

Content Review: A content review method will be used to extract key findings and information from relevant sources. Information will be categorised based on how it aligns with each research objective.

Data Analysis Methods

The analysis will involve a thematic analysis approach to identify common patterns and trends across the reviewed literature and data. This will involve the following:

Objective 1: To assess the role of branding in differentiating agricultural products in the market.

Sources will be analysed to understand how branding strategies, such as packaging, marketing communications, and unique value propositions, differentiate agricultural products. Industry examples will be used to showcase successful differentiation efforts.

Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of branding on consumer trust and loyalty toward agricultural products.

Research findings on consumer behaviour and trust in agricultural products will be evaluated. Studies on how certifications, transparent branding, and ethical practices influence trust and loyalty will be synthesised.

Objective 3: To examine the influence of certifications and labelling on the pricing and marketability of agricultural goods.

Studies linking certifications (e.g., organic, fair trade, non-GMO) and labelling to premium pricing and increased marketability will be reviewed. Market research reports and academic papers on pricing strategies in the agricultural sector will be examined.

Objective 4: To identify the challenges faced by small-scale producers in implementing branding strategies and explore potential solutions.

Literature on the barriers faced by small-scale producers (financial, technical, and market access) in branding will be analysed. Case studies and reports will offer insights into solutions such as cooperative branding, geographical indications (GI), and government support programmes.

Objective-Specific Methodology

Each objective will be addressed by gathering data that is specific to the particular research question:

Objective 1: To assess the role of branding in differentiating agricultural products in the market.

A comparative analysis of studies examining different branding strategies (e.g., labelling, packaging, and

storytelling) will be conducted. Examples of successful branding from various agricultural industries, such as organic farming and specialty crops, will be reviewed.

Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of branding on consumer trust and loyalty toward agricultural products.

Consumer studies and reports highlighting the link between branding and consumer behaviour will be synthesised. Data on trust-building mechanisms like ethical production, transparency, and certifications will be analysed.

Objective 3: To examine the influence of certifications and labelling on the pricing and marketability of agricultural goods.

Market reports and studies on the economic impact of certifications and labelling on pricing will be reviewed. Data from agricultural sectors like organic and fair-trade goods, where certifications play a key role, will be highlighted.

Objective 4: To identify the challenges faced by small-scale producers in implementing branding strategies and explore potential solutions.

Reports on the branding struggles of small-scale producers, including financial and logistical challenges, will be analysed. Case studies of successful small-producer branding initiatives, including cooperative marketing and regional labelling, will be explored to present practical solutions.

Ethical Considerations

Since the study relies on secondary data, there are minimal ethical concerns. However, proper attribution and citations will be given to all sources used. Care will be taken to ensure that all reviewed data and studies are from credible and reputable sources, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

Limitations of the Methodology

- The study will rely on existing literature and data, which may not cover recent or emerging trends in agricultural branding.
- Secondary data may lack specific regional or local insights, especially concerning small-scale producers.

- Some relevant sources might be inaccessible due to subscription barriers or limited availability in public databases.

Branding has become a pivotal factor in shaping consumer choices and market competition within the agricultural sector in India. From packaging and communication strategies to certification labels, branding influences the way agricultural products are perceived and purchased. This article explores how branding differentiates agricultural products in India, impacts consumer trust and loyalty, and affects pricing and marketability, and discusses the challenges small-scale producers face in adopting branding strategies.

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF BRANDING IN DIFFERENTIATING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE MARKET

Branding in India's agricultural sector is no longer limited to large-scale, processed goods. It now extends to fresh produce, organic staples, and regional specialties, helping products stand out in increasingly competitive markets. Several branding strategies, such as packaging, marketing communications, and the development of unique value propositions, have been key to differentiation.

Packaging as a Differentiator

Packaging plays a significant role in branding agricultural products, offering both aesthetic appeal and functionality. Well-designed packaging can convey important information about the product's quality, origin, and sustainability. In India, companies like ITC have utilised this to great effect in their Aashirvaad Atta range, which includes whole wheat flour. Aashirvaad's branding highlights the product's natural quality and healthy lifestyle benefits through attractive packaging and a strong advertising campaign, helping it dominate a market that was previously flooded with unbranded wheat flour. The importance of packaging is further illustrated by the rise of branded fruits and vegetables. Mother Dairy, through its "Safal" brand, has successfully created a premium brand for fresh produce by focusing on hygiene, quality, and safety. Their branding targets urban consumers, who are increasingly concerned about food safety and quality, differentiating their products from unbranded counterparts sold in local markets.

Marketing Communications and Brand Storytelling

Marketing communications that tell a compelling brand story also help agricultural products stand out in India. With the increasing demand for organic and ethically sourced goods, Indian consumers are becoming more discerning, and brands that communicate their environmental and ethical credentials have an edge. For example, Organic India has built its brand around sustainable farming practices and health benefits. The company emphasises its work with small-scale farmers and its commitment to organic cultivation, which resonates with health-conscious consumers. Similarly, Tata Sampann markets its range of pulses and spices by focusing on purity and traditional processing methods, differentiating itself from other brands in the same segment.

Unique Value Propositions in Differentiation

Agricultural brands that offer unique value propositions often achieve better market differentiation. In India, geographical indications (GI) have been an essential tool in highlighting the unique qualities of certain agricultural products. For instance, Darjeeling tea and Basmati rice are internationally recognised due to their geographic origin and associated quality, fetching premium prices in both domestic and global markets. A report by the Export-Import Bank of India suggests that products with a registered GI have better visibility in the market and can demand a price premium of 20-30% compared to non-GI products. This indicates the importance of branding through GIs as a means of differentiating agricultural goods in India.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF BRANDING ON CONSUMER TRUST AND LOYALTY TOWARD AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Branding plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions, trust, and loyalty toward agricultural products in India. This is especially true in a market where food safety and quality are paramount concerns, and where certifications, transparency, and ethical practices can strongly influence purchasing decisions.

Impact of Certifications on Trust

Indian consumers are increasingly relying on certifications to determine the quality and safety of agricultural products. According to a 2021 survey by ASSOCHAM, 62% of consumers in metropolitan areas stated that they trust products with organic or health-related certifications more than those without them. Certifications such as India Organic, PGS-India, and FSSAI Organic have become essential tools for brands to build consumer trust, especially in the organic and health-conscious segments of the market. Additionally, research by FICCI found that 75% of Indian consumers believe that transparent branding, including detailed information about sourcing, production methods, and certifications, increases their trust in a product. Brands such as 24 Mantra Organic has capitalised on this by providing detailed information on their labels about the farms where the products were sourced and the organic certification standards followed.

Ethical Practices and Consumer Loyalty

Indian consumers are also becoming more loyal to brands that they perceive as ethical and environmentally friendly. A study by Nielsen in 2022 revealed that 52% of Indian consumers were more likely to remain loyal to brands that aligned with their ethical values, such as supporting sustainable farming practices and offering fair wages to farmers. The rise of Fair Trade-certified products in India, such as coffee and tea, demonstrates this trend. Consumers in urban markets, particularly in cities like Bengaluru and Mumbai, are willing to pay premium prices for products they believe are ethically sourced. Fair Trade-certified coffee in India commands a price premium of 15–20%, highlighting the growing consumer preference for ethical brands.

EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF CERTIFICATIONS AND LABELLING ON THE PRICING AND MARKETABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL GOODS

Certifications and labelling have a profound impact on the pricing and marketability of agricultural products in India. They serve as signals of quality, safety, and ethical production practices, which help brands justify higher prices and gain market access.

Organic Certification and Premium Pricing

Organic certifications play a crucial role in allowing brands to charge premium prices in the Indian market. A report by TechSci Research found that organic agricultural products in India often fetch 10–20% higher prices than their conventional counterparts. The Indian Organic Market Report 2022 estimates that the organic food market in India is growing at a 20–25% annual rate, driven largely by rising consumer awareness and trust in certification labels. The certification process under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) ensures that products meet stringent quality standards, which in turn enables brands to market their goods as premium offerings. For example, organic vegetables certified by PGS-India are marketed at higher prices in urban retail outlets, often achieving 15–20% price premiums compared to non-organic produce.

Marketability Through Fair Trade and GI Labels

The Fair Trade label has significantly enhanced the marketability of Indian agricultural products, especially in the global market. Fair Trade India reports that Fair Trade-certified products, such as tea, coffee, and cotton, have experienced substantial growth in sales, both domestically and internationally. In particular, Fair Trade tea from India has seen a 30% increase in exports over the past five years, driven by the demand for ethically produced goods. Similarly, Geographical Indications (GI) have played a pivotal role in enhancing the marketability of Indian agricultural products. Products such as Darjeeling tea, Malabar pepper, and Mysore silk can demand higher prices due to their unique geographic origins. According to a report by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, GI-tagged products from India saw an 18% rise in export earnings in 2022, demonstrating their growing marketability in international markets.

IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALL-SCALE PRODUCERS IN IMPLEMENTING BRANDING STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Small-scale agricultural producers in India face several challenges when it comes to implementing effective branding strategies. These challenges stem from financial

limitations, lack of technical expertise, and restricted market access. However, various solutions are emerging to help these producers overcome these barriers.

Financial Constraints

One of the biggest obstacles small-scale producers face is the high cost of branding. A NABARD report found that 78% of small farmers struggle to access the financial resources required for branding efforts, such as packaging, certification, and marketing campaigns. Without access to adequate funds, small-scale producers often remain confined to local markets, where they cannot differentiate their products or charge premium prices.

Technical Expertise and Market Access

Many small-scale producers also lack the necessary technical expertise to develop and execute branding strategies. A FICCI study revealed that 67% of small-scale farmers do not have the skills or knowledge needed for effective branding, particularly in areas such as digital marketing, packaging design, and brand communication. Additionally, limited access to lucrative markets further exacerbates the problem. A 2021 report by ICRIER found that only 20% of small-scale producers in India can access national or international markets. The absence of robust distribution networks and logistical support makes it difficult for small farmers to reach consumers who are willing to pay for branded or certified products.

Potential Solutions: Cooperative Branding, GIs, and Government Support

One of the most promising solutions to the challenges faced by small-scale producers is cooperative branding. In Maharashtra, small-scale mango farmers have formed the Alphonso Cooperative Marketing Federation to collectively brand and market their premium Alphonso mangoes. By pooling their resources, these farmers have been able to access urban markets and compete with larger brands, increasing their profitability. Geographical Indications (GI) also offer small-scale producers a way to brand their products based on regional identity. India has registered more than 370 GI products, many of which are agricultural goods like Nagpur oranges and Kangra

tea. These GIs provide a form of collective branding that helps small producers differentiate their goods and access premium markets, both domestically and internationally.

Furthermore, government support programs such as the One District, One Product (ODOP) initiative are helping small-scale producers develop regional brands. Under this scheme, producers receive technical and financial assistance to market their unique regional products, such as Banarasi Silk and Hyderabad Hale.

CONCLUSION

Branding in the agricultural sector plays a vital role in shaping the competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural products, especially in emerging markets like India. Through the analysis of four key objectives, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how branding impacts agricultural goods and the challenges faced by small-scale producers in adopting these strategies.

Branding strategies such as packaging, marketing communications, and unique value propositions have become essential tools for differentiating agricultural products in the market. Strong brand identities, like Aashirvaad Atta and Mother Dairy's Safal, demonstrate how effective branding can distinguish products from competitors, assuring consumers of quality, hygiene, and superior sourcing. Unique elements such as Geographical Indications (GI) also help differentiate products like Darjeeling Tea and Basmati Rice, enabling them to stand out in the global market. The role of branding, therefore, is not only to distinguish products but also to add value and increase market access, particularly for regional and niche products.

Branding significantly influences consumer trust and loyalty in agricultural products, particularly in markets concerned with food safety, transparency, and ethics. Certifications like India Organic and Fair Trade have proven instrumental in enhancing consumer confidence. Studies show that Indian consumers are increasingly drawn to products that are ethically sourced and sustainably produced, with certifications ensuring quality and health standards. Trust in certifications and transparent branding practices foster brand loyalty, which is reflected in the premium pricing that consumers are willing to pay for certified organic or Fair Trade products. Brands

that prioritise ethical values and communicate them to consumers, such as Organic India, have seen sustained customer loyalty in India's growing organic sector.

Certifications and Labelling: Impact on Pricing and Marketability Certifications and labelling, such as organic, Fair Trade, and Geographical Indications, directly influence the pricing and marketability of agricultural goods. Certified products generally command higher prices due to the perception of higher quality, ethical production practices, and safety. This is especially relevant in India's burgeoning organic market, where products often fetch 10-20% higher prices than conventional items. Moreover, GI-labelled products, like Nagpur oranges or Kangra tea, benefit from regional recognition and heritage, which not only increases marketability but also helps producers access premium global markets. This highlights the critical role that certifications and labelling play in establishing trust, justifying premium pricing, and opening new market opportunities for agricultural goods.

While branding offers significant benefits, small-scale producers in India face numerous challenges in implementing branding strategies, such as financial constraints, lack of technical expertise, and limited market access. These producers often struggle to afford the costs of certifications, marketing, and packaging, which are essential to successful branding. However, solutions such as cooperative branding, Geographical Indications, and government initiatives like ODOP are helping small-scale producers overcome these barriers. Cooperative branding models enable small farmers to pool resources and access larger markets collectively, while GI registration provides a platform for region-specific branding. Government support programs are also providing technical and financial assistance to help small-scale producers compete in the national and global markets. While larger companies have led the way in leveraging branding strategies, small-scale producers are beginning to benefit from cooperative efforts and government-backed initiatives that allow them to compete in increasingly competitive markets. As consumer demand continues to shift towards organic, certified, and ethically produced goods, branding will remain an essential factor for success in the Indian agricultural sector.

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