

## **Branding of Agricultural Commodities / Products for Adding Value**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*India is an agricultural powerhouse of the world. Diversified agricultural products are produced in India. Now a day's consumers are health conscious and they are looking for exceptional quality fruits, vegetables and processed food along with safety. There is increase in demand for labeled products, which is a result of increased disposable income of Indian people. The present production and marketing structure in rural areas is mainly traditional and it deserves the focused attention of all the stakeholders. The main purpose of this paper is to examine the strategies for enhancing the income of farmers using branding as a tool. The study is entirely based on secondary source of data which is collected from primary research that is relevant to branding of agricultural produce. Branding adds value to products simply because consumers generally believe that known branded products have better quality or more attributes than unbranded products. Branded items are generally able to earn a higher price for the producer and can lead to brand loyalty. Branding at the firm/corporate level, is probably the easiest and most extensively of the branding methods available for the agricultural products. Farmers can work with modern retail formats to promote and sell their farm produce. This will help farmers to get reasonable price for their farm produce. If the products are properly labelled then it helps consumer in reducing the search costs, which leads to obtain a price premium. The development of branded food will assure consumers of its freshness, healthiness, quality and traceability. There exist a tremendous potential to exploit the situation for the benefit and upliftment of farmers.*

**Keywords: Agriculture, Farmers, Agricultural Produce, Marketing, Branding**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

India is a global powerhouse of agriculture. Agriculture in India is the source of livelihood to large portion of the population directly or indirectly. India's prosperity is predominantly linked to the growth in income in the agriculture sector of the economy. Indian farmers' future is dependent on the success of the agriculture sector. India has been always known for producing diversified agricultural products and has the potential of being the biggest country with the food and agricultural sector. Fruits and vegetables are available throughout the year due to the presence of diverse agro climatic conditions and long growing seasons.

Agricultural commodities are unique and Fruits and vegetable from different plants have different shapes, colour, taste and quality. Fruits and vegetables are often relatively unprocessed and do not have clear brands associated with producers or suppliers. Food processing in India has tremendous potential and can be a growth

vehicle for stimulating demand at global and national level. Thus, in view of the importance of fruit and vegetables in the agricultural economy of India, their production and marketing deserve the focused attention of all the stakeholders.

Small-scale farmers are producing fruits and vegetables which are seasonal and they can sell it by spot without directing production at the requirements of the market. Philosophy of many small and marginal farmers is “production first and then look for the market to sell it”. They never analyze the market upfront, not making any arrangements for contract farming and they are not producing what consumers exactly want (Boehlje, 1996; Fairbairn, 2003). Farmers are facing problems in marketing their farm produce. They do not have proper access to markets because of poor roads; poor infrastructure of market, excessive regulation and presence of middlemen for selling the farm produce (Bansal, 2011).

Agriculture in India is the source of livelihood to large portion of the population directly or indirectly. Farming is becoming unprofitable as more than one-third of the farmers are engaged in farming due to compulsion rather than choice. More than 40 percent of farming households feel that given a choice they would take up some other career. Farmers are committing suicides even in agriculturally prosperous areas.

The present production structure in rural areas is mainly traditional and farmers produce the agricultural products without keeping in mind the consumers demand and raw products without grading and standardizing. According to Dr. Shanmuga Sundaram, Deputy Director General (Research) of the Asian Vegetable Research and Development Centre, Taiwan, vegetable production is beneficial because it provides 2 to 3 times more job/hectare than rice. If one wants to reduce the poverty in India and uplift socioeconomic condition of our farmers, it is imperative that their farm produce is properly graded and branded. Today, we need to produce world class packaged agricultural products, as consumers in India as well as across the globe have become quality and brand conscious. Recently The United States Department of Agriculture has taken decision to grant market access for Indian Mangoes, this has paved way for export of mangos from India to US.

There is increase in demand for labeled products, which is a result of increased disposable income. As income rises, consumers search for food products that appeal to more than just their basic need for a safe, affordable source of calories. Three important recent trends in the food industry include the widening separation between agricultural producers and food consumers, higher food safety concerns, and increasing household disposable income (WEMC, 2005).

## II. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Nowadays consumers are health conscious and they are looking for exceptional quality food, safety and service from the food industry and they're increasingly interested in knowing about the products they buy and procedure of producing. Health-conscious consumers are willing to pay extra for foods they believe to be fresh, nutritious and wholesome. Consumers want to develop a closer relationship with the farmers who are producing for them. Because of consumer awareness there is increase in demand for food from non-conventional practices.

Agricultural products of various types are produced in India and the marketing of all these products is a complex process. There are several complexities involved in agricultural marketing because agricultural produce are perishable, which is important element of risk. Because of complex marketing process farmers are facing many challenges, due to which they are unable to earn good profits from their farm produce. It is essential to improve

the status of small farmers by increasing their farm productivity through making use of modern farming techniques and commercialization of their agricultural activities. Profitability from the farms can be enhanced by helping farmers to improve their marketing practices and by expanding their market access. This will help to reduce price spread between farmers and the consumers.

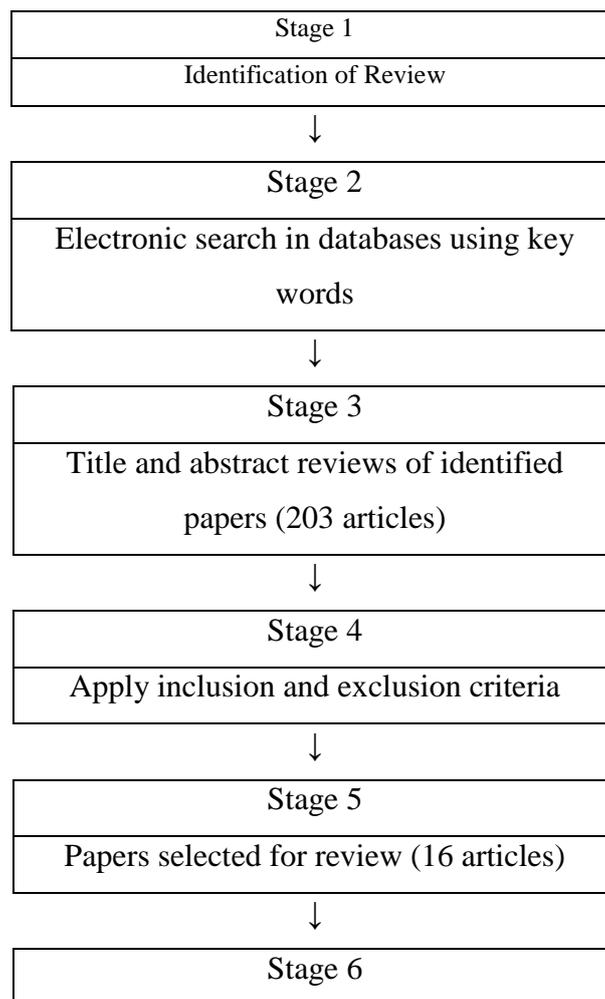
### III. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

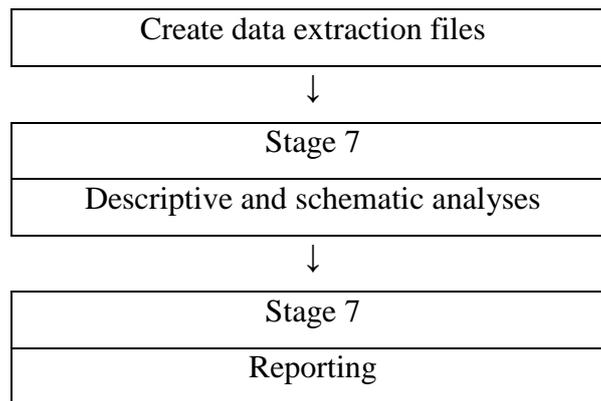
The main purpose of the paper is to find out suitable marketing system for agricultural produce so as to give proper reward or return to the efforts of the Indian farmers and to examine the strategies for enhancing the income of farmers using branding as a tool. It includes strategies as well as suggests policy initiatives that can lead to increase in the productivity, production and profitability of Indian farmers.

### IV. METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

It is a secondary research which involves collection of information from summary, collation and/or synthesis of existing research on branding of agricultural commodities or produce. The study is entirely based on secondary source of data which is collected from primary research that is relevant to branding of agricultural produce.

We have characterized the various stages of the systematic review as follows:





**Source:** Adapted from Malviya and Kant (2015) and further refined as per our study needs

## V. FINDINGS

### 5.1 Branding

The word brand is derived from the word “brandr” means burn. The owners of the livestock weremarking their animalsby burn so as to identify them easily (Kotler, 2003). Brand means ‘a name, design, logo,symbol or sometimes combination of all of them, used to identify a particular organization’s product (Baker, 1999). Brand is a mixture of both emotional and functional attributes; therefore we have to look at it from pure product basis (Laxmi et.al. 2015). Branding a product adds value by differentiating the product, making it stand out from the other items onthe market, and by conveying additional information about the attributes of the product beyond appearance. The increased demand for labeled products is also a result of increased disposable income. As income rises, consumers search for food products that appeal to more than just their basic need for a safe, affordable source of calories (Cowee and Curtis, 2016).

Branding also adds value to products simply because consumers generally believe that known branded products have better quality or more attributes than unbranded products. Another merit of branding is the sense of pride or community that can be experienced by the producer from successfully creating a brand identity (Giddens et al., 2002). A brand is a manufacturer’s or seller’s promise to the customer to deliver consistently a specific set of features, benefits and services. It helps to create a loyal customer, who is ready to buy the product repeatedly. Ultimately it helps to give an edge over competition.

Branded items are generally able to earn a higher price for the producer and can lead to brand loyalty, which leads to a strong customer base and the ability of the producer to better serve the needs of the market. Branding is going deeper than marketing. Brand personality and message is communicated by marketing, advertising, and other promotional activities. But brand is comprised of your message, your personality and voice. Branding is the process of establishing these traits. A brand distinguishes product or service from its similar competitors (Docherty).

The brand become successful only when it delivers consistently, clearly defined and appealing offering, which are different from its competitors. Branding cannot work in isolation but it is combination of name, logo and company terms. Differentiation or its personality is the main ingredient which makes a brand successful.While creating a brand we have to go through the ritual of mapping consumer needs, market segmentation, product differentiation and finally brand communication.

## 5.2 Branding of Agricultural Products

An effective marketing strategy for agricultural products is branding. It helps to bridge the firm with their customers by identifying the product. This is possible only through the uniqueness of the brand by its logo, name, type, and use of the product (Haimid et. al., 2012). Quality of the product is more important and brand can assure that quality is associated with the product. Branding is not just glossy advertising. Branding efforts must combine with marketing efforts and expertise. Effective organization, an efficient supply chain, and good financial resources are there, then and then only branding will create consumer demand.

Only because of association of product with quality, it is accepted by the consumers. Farmers receive good prices for their farm produce according to quality of the produce. Proper branding of products ensures that the branding is an incentive to improve quality. It also helps to safeguard consumers against adulteration of products. Branding strategies have become an important part of agricultural marketing (Pay et. al., 1996).

For most of the agricultural products, there is no remarkable perceived difference in the eyes of the consumers. If products fail to differentiate in the eyes of the consumer then a market remains commodity driven. Thus, we can say, for a consumer, all varieties of sugar or rice or wheat are perceived to be the same and therefore should command almost similar price. However, as commodity markets become more competitive and over-saturated because of oversupply in domestic market and inflow of imported produce, prices are depressed and more competition among the producers and sellers increases. This has led to an increasing demand for branding of agricultural products. It significantly contributes to profit making among agricultural producers and marketers (Ngozi, 2012).

Companies use branding and the consumers' ability to identify brands to improve sales in four ways: to market new products, to protect market position, to broaden product offerings, and to enter new product categories. The majority of small agribusiness owners make their branding debut by repackaging their existing products under the name of their farm, ranch, organization, or business to promote brand recognition and to encourage the spread of experience attributes through word of mouth. Successful brands offer a range of defined repeatable emotions to the consumer and it appeal on an intangible level. Commodities are not brands and offer no such emotional intangible benefits or security (Giddens et al., 2002).

Successful differentiation in products should be based upon genuine differences, branding needs to extend beyond the basic product. The company who is seeking to brand the products needs to see a broader perspective; it has to look at the entire experience which it offers to potential customers. If anyone product is similar to other products then buyers cannot be convinced of its superiority over other products. However, farmers, corporate sector and all related agencies who are marketing agricultural produce have recognized the fact that in the future there is paradigm shift from offering commodity in simple form to differentiated goods and services to the consumers. Branding of the produce is one of the fundamental methods of differentiation.

Brand increases competitive advantage of the product and one can sell their farm produce through hypermarkets and super markets across the country and it will also enable the product to be explored globally (Haimid et al., 2012). The relatively low level of use of brands in agricultural and horticultural marketing is explained by the biologically variable nature of production, and the consequent inability of producers to deliver a product which is consistent with respect to the attributes of importance to consumers (Ngozi, 2012).

### **5.3 Current Scenario of Branding of Agricultural Products**

Though, today most of agricultural products are being branded in India, there exist a tremendous potential to exploit the situation for the benefit and upliftment of our farmers. Today farmers are facing the challenge of how to differentiate their products, so that consumers will accept it and award premium status and price in their farm produce/ products. Therefore it is essential to implement a concentrated strategy that will focus on creating real value for those consumers who are ready to pay for it and a brand strategy is mainly based on differentiation of product. India could well emerge as the food factory of the world with the opening up of world markets and the reduction of subsidies in the western world. It is essential to look at the world markets and examine what they are demanding for and then offer them branded agricultural products.

Traditionally farmers were supplying agricultural produce to wholesale markets. But now a day modern food chains are there and because of these chains there is increasing importance on branding, distribution and services. Branding of agricultural produce may be an answer to get higher price for our nation's agricultural products at the global and national level. Branding help to create consumer demand and thereby giving farmers leverage in negotiations with large number of buyers. Branding strategies have become an accepted part of marketing activity and it is the norm for manufactured and processed food products to be offered to consumers as branded products. The increased demand for labeled products is also a result of increased disposable income. Farmers do not understand the role of brands in adding value to agricultural products that is why they underestimate it. Branding is important for the marketing of commodities, fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants from India. The majority of small agribusiness owners make their branding debut by repackaging their existing products under the name of their farm, ranch, organization, or business to promote brand recognition and to encourage the spread of experience attributes through word of mouth (Giddens et al., 2002).

### **5.4 Ways of Branding**

#### **5.4.1 Branding at the firm/corporate level**

Branding at the firm/corporate level, is probably the easiest and most extensively of the branding methods available for the agricultural products. There are numerous examples from the marketing world for successful agricultural commodities. Some of the brands in India that are selling agricultural commodities/vegetables products are Safal peas, Mother dairy milk, Annapurna Namak, Shagun Sugar, Annapurna Atta, Aashirwaad atta, Safal peas, Parag Milk, Nestle fruit % dahi (Curd/Yoghurt), Nestle Milk, etc. Thus, with there is lot of scope to sell branded vegetables, fruits, commodities like rice, pulses, etc. The recent decision [18] of Spices Board of India, to promote spice cultivation by floating a company that will market branded spices under the favorite brand in an effort in right direction to ensure cooperatives and farmer that grow these spices get a good price for their produce. Branding of commodities will offer additional value both to the consumers and the producers. Branding will lead to commodity differentiation and hence enable consumer preference. (Singh, 2016).

#### **5.4.2 Branding Through Value Addition**

Transforming a product from its original state to a more valuable state is called value addition. It is the process of increasing the economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity. Farmers can create value

by focusing on the benefits associated with the agricultural product or service that arise from quality, functionality, form, place and time.

Value can be added to the agricultural produce through the certification of producers and processors. Through certification people will know that the producer or processor has met the necessary guidelines to be certified. Setting up good post-harvest infrastructure will help to retain the quality of the agricultural produce.

### **5.4.3. Retail Branding**

Organized retailers help farmers for branding the commodities. It also helps to add value to the products. When branding at a farm level is not possible then, go for branding at a point of sale is a way of creating a brand. For other products, branding at a store level is inferior to manufacturers' brand. But for agricultural produce store, brands are of superior quality, because of this retail branding is going to pick up in future and organized retail mainly sell food and food related items. Due to FDI in retail and changes in APMC act in future there will be a closer relationship between producer (farmer) and retailer. Retail branding will become an important way of branding agricultural commodities.

### **5.4.4. Making Geographical Indicators as a Brand Building Tool**

Geographical Indicators indicates that the product is originated from a particular geographical area. GI are used to identify various agricultural manufactured as well as natural products. One can make use of GI for branding and marketing their produce especially in overseas market while exporting agricultural produce. GI is applicable to the agricultural produce which has good qualities which are derived from their place of production, soil type and climatic condition. Consumers are to pay higher price for the products which are geographically branded. Geographical indicators can be used an effective branding tool in marketing of agricultural produce. Some of the agricultural produces which is GI registered are Basmati rice, Nagpur orange, Nasik grapes, Kerala cardamom, Assam tea, Malabar pepper. Few agricultural products like Nagpur Orange or Assam tea which have become global products because of their "branded origin".

### **5.4.5. Varietal Branding**

Varietal brands works in different way in agricultural marketing. Brand name can be given to the patented crop variety which is superior and different than existing varieties. The variety owner allows producing and marketing of a particular variety under license and can impose strict quality standards. The benefit to the producer is established market.

### **5.4.6. Packaging of Products**

Packaging provides a means to market products. Proper packaging and branding of agricultural products by farmers would attract more consumers. Designing packaging from a marketing perspective also involves brand recognition. Brand recognition occurs when a consumer can identify a brand by its attributes. Packaging helps for ensuring longer shelf life of fresh fruits and vegetables. It remains fresh, juicy and delicious from harvest to store. Packaging materials helps to improve manufacturing process and do three packaging functions: proper ventilation, product protection and water loss reduction. It is very cost effective and provide optimal brand placement. Fruit and vegetable packaging is responsible for ensuring fresh fruit and vegetable. Shelf life of the fruits and vegetables can be improved by packaging and it helps to maintain it fresh, juicy and delicious from harvest to store.

## 5.5. Benefits of Branding Agricultural Produce

### 5.5.1 Help to Increase Profit

Branded products are accepted by the customers and they are ready to pay more for it. It helps to increase sale and to get more profit from farm produce. Ultimately it gives good returns to the efforts of the farmer.

### 5.5.2 Help for Product Differentiation

Due to branding farmers can differentiate their farm produce from others produce. A brand provides a valid reason for the customer to buy a particular product. It helps to get good return to the farmer from the farm.

### 5.5.3. Help to Convey Value

Consumers always think that branded products are of good quality, more reliable and give better value for money as compared to non-branded products. Consumers are ready to pay more for ty branded products. Number one brand always demand more price premium as compared to number two and three.

### 5.5.4. Helps to BuildBrand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is important for profit generation. Loyal customers do repeat purchases and they also help to increase referral sale. Making existing customers loyal is more important and less expensive than developing new customers. Branding helps tomake customers more loyal.

### 5.5.5 Helps to Build Pride for Producer

Branded products invoke a sense of pride in producer, marketer, and distributor and also for those who are associated with branded products.

## 5.6 Issues Related to Branding

It is very important that consumers must have a positive experience with the product, then and then only they will associate the name or brand with a highquality and satisfying product. The premiums obtained from high-end differentiated products can result in substantial increase in profitability for any company, individual or nation that is engaged in trade of agricultural commodities. However, before we go for branding of agricultural produce, there are some major issues that need to be discussed. These are:

- (1) What is the Opportunity and can we define it properly in terms of Size, Trend, and Geography?
- (2) What do we bring to the party? e.g. Technology, Scale, and Commercial Expertise; (3) What is the Sustainable value proposition in consumer terms?
- (4) What is our business model for generating demand, ensuring supply, and managing Customers' relationships?
- (5) When do we balance growth with profitability?
- (6) Do we have the people to build a foods business?

## 5.7 Challenges Associated with Branding of Agriculture Produce

### 1. Value conscious consumers

Indian consumers are very value conscious. They are always searching for quality product with lower price. Psychology of Indian consumer is that branded products are very costly. According to them branded

products are products with attractive label and package. They never think about branded products as products with quality assurance.

## 2. Thinking of Indian Retailer

Indian retailers gain the trust of the customers by giving good service to the customers and well as by maintaining good relationship with customers. Hence they never think about necessity of branded products. But now a day this trend is changed and people are also realized importance of branded product because of its quality.

## 3. Need of investment for making brand

Brand building requires an initial investment and dedication, it is costly affair. Only producers, who are having good financial condition, can invest money for building a brand. Because of this reason producers mainly concentrate of supplying food to local community and they never think about branding.

## 4. Structure of Indian Agriculture Market

The system of selling of agricultural produce is itself against branding. That is why they are not allowing any differentiations in the current systems. They want to go by traditional way only and by this way farmers are not getting good returns for their efforts. Because of this farmers are not motivated to produce quality products; if quality products are not produced then they cannot go for branding.

## 5. Land holding size

In India maximum farmers are marginal or small farmers, they are not capable of going for branding of their farm produce. Generally they do distress sale to get money for their basic needs. Farmers are not aware about benefits of branding. Extensive extension work by government and its various departments is essential.

## 5.7 Future of Branding of Agricultural Products

Globalization policies have taken Indian agriculture into the global level and opened up numerous opportunities as well as challenges. In agribusiness there are vast opportunities for value addition, packaging, retailing, and exports of agricultural products with high application of technology and management. Branding, processing, Packaging and differentiated products will ensure that the farm produce gets the right value. Farmers can create brands through organic farming and specialty agricultural produce which command much higher premium pricing. Now days branding strategies have become an accepted part of marketing activity and it is the norm for manufactured and processed food products to be offered to consumers as branded products.

If branding the source (farm) is not easy, then in that case branding can be done at the point of sale. Organized retailers are doing it and adding value to agro products. Farmers can work with evolving modern retail formats to promote and sell their farm produce. It will help them to get reasonable price for their farm produce. If the products are properly labelled then it helps consumer in reducing the search costs, which leads to obtain a price premium. The development of branded food will assure consumers of its freshness, healthiness, quality and traceability.

Modern food chains are giving more importance to branding, distribution and services. Branding of agricultural produce may be an answer to get higher price for our nation's agricultural products at the global & national level. Branding help to create consumer demand and due to branding producers can negotiate with buyers.

Branded agricultural commodities are generally able to earn a higher price for the producer and can lead to brand loyalty, which leads to a strong customer base and the ability of the producer to better serve the needs of the market.

Brand less commodities find it difficult to survive ups and downs of the markets. Hence it becomes necessary to development brands for competing in the market. If branding the source (farm) is not easy, then in that case farmers can go for branding at the point of sale. Organized retails are mainly concentrating on adding value to agro products. Farmers can work with modern retail formats for promotion and sell of their farm produce. It will help them to get reasonable price for their farm produce. If the products are properly labeled then it helps consumer in reducing the search costs, which leads to obtain a price premium. Farmers can assure consumers for product's freshness, healthiness, quality and traceability by developing a brand.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Research has shown that a branding of agricultural produce can be an effective tool for improving farm venture's profitability and sustainability. Branding helps, to differentiate the product, to convey value of the product to customer, to increase profit, to build pride and to make the customers loyal. Branding at the firm/corporate level, is probably the easiest and most extensively of the branding methods available for the agricultural products. The majority of small agribusiness owners make their branding debut by repackaging their existing products under the name of their farm, ranch, organization, or business to promote brand recognition and to encourage the spread of experience attributes through word of mouth.

Profitability can be increased by value addition to the agricultural produce. Value addition is the process of making changes in the product so as to transform the product from its current state to a more valuable state. It is the process of increasing the economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity. Farmers can create value by focusing on the benefits associated with the agricultural product or service that arise from quality, functionality, form, place and time. Value can be added to the agricultural produce through the certification of producers and processors. There are many challenges in developing brands such as commitment for long term, thinking on long term goals rather than short term, identification of the right segment, competitive pricing, brand positioning and promotion of commodity as a category, etc.

To showcase India's food diversity a branding campaign called as 'Incredible India' campaign can be undertaken to show potential of the market. If more investment is made on branding of food and fresh farm products then India can export farm produce and can become one of the world's top five exporters. This will help to generate greater returns for Indian farmers apart from giving assured quality products to the consumers

## VII. LIMITATIONS

Although the research has reached its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. Because of time limit; this research was conducted only on limited references. There is a scope for further expansion of this study and for studying challenges faced by farmers in branding agricultural produce. Detailed cost benefit analysis is not taken into account. Hence this aspect can be considered for future studies.

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