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A study on marketing and branding strategies for promoting organic farming in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The present study investigates the critical role of marketing and branding strategies in the promotion of organic farming in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. As a region marked by arid climatic conditions, low rainfall, and recurrent droughts, Anantapur presents unique challenges for conventional agriculture, making it a promising candidate for the adoption of sustainable organic farming practices. The study focuses on understanding the socio-economic background of organic farmers, evaluating the branding and marketing approaches adopted, and identifying the major constraints inhibiting the growth of organic farming. The research was conducted using purposive sampling methods in selected mandals and villages within the district. Data were collected through structured interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews, involving a total of 100 farmers engaged in organic practices. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze socio-economic data, while the Garrett Ranking Technique and SWOT analysis were employed to identify key challenges and strategic opportunities. Findings reveal that while there is growing interest in organic farming, critical issues such as lack of certification support, limited access to organized markets, insufficient promotional efforts, and low consumer awareness continue to hinder widespread adoption. Additionally, farmers expressed a need for cooperative branding models, improved training, and policy support to help build consumer trust and improve market linkages. The study concludes with recommendations that include strengthening institutional frameworks, expanding branding and marketing education, and enhancing infrastructural facilities. These strategic interventions are essential to transform organic farming from a niche practice into a mainstream livelihood option in Anantapur.

Keywords: Organic farming, marketing strategies, branding, consumer awareness, sustainable agriculture, market linkages, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh

Introduction

Organic farming has emerged as a viable and environmentally sustainable alternative to conventional agriculture, offering multiple benefits such as improved soil health, reduced dependency on chemical inputs, and enhanced biodiversity. In recent years, there has been a growing trend toward organic farming globally and nationally, driven by increasing consumer awareness of health, environmental sustainability, and food safety. In the Indian context, the organic sector is witnessing significant growth; however, its progress in arid and semi-arid zones like Anantapur remains limited due to various constraints. Anantapur district, situated in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh, is predominantly a dryland area characterized by erratic rainfall, frequent droughts, and limited irrigation facilities. Agriculture in this region is primarily subsistence-oriented, with crops such as groundnut, millets, pulses, and fruits like mango and custard apple being grown under low-input conditions. These characteristics make Anantapur a suitable candidate for organic farming, particularly due to the natural alignment of its farming systems with organic principles. Despite this potential, the adoption and success of organic agriculture in the region depend largely on effective marketing and branding strategies that can create awareness, enhance value realization, and ensure market access.

This study aims to fill the existing knowledge gap by examining the current marketing and branding practices among organic farmers in Anantapur. It also identifies the key socio-economic characteristics of these farmers, the constraints they face, and the opportunities available for improving organic agriculture through strategic interventions.

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By analyzing both primary data from farmers and secondary data from official sources, the study provides actionable insights and recommendations to enhance the viability and sustainability of organic farming in this drought-prone district.

Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic profile of respondents in the study area.
2. To examine branding strategies to promote organic farming.
3. To study the marketing strategies to promote organic farming.
4. To identify constraints in promoting organic farming in the study area.

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methodological framework adopted for the study. It details the procedures followed for the selection of the study area, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and the tools and techniques used for data analysis. The methodology was carefully chosen to ensure that the study objectives are effectively achieved, and that the data obtained is valid, reliable, and relevant to the research problem.

Selection of the District

Out of the 26 districts in Andhra Pradesh, the present study was undertaken in Anantapur district, which is part of the Rayalaseema region. Anantapur is characterized by an arid climate, erratic rainfall, and frequent droughts, making it one of the most ecologically vulnerable districts in the state. Agriculture in the region is primarily rainfed and dryland-based, and farmers are heavily reliant on natural resources. In recent years, due to environmental degradation and the increasing cost of chemical inputs, there has been a growing interest among farmers in sustainable agricultural practices, including organic farming. Crops such as groundnut, millets, and pulses have seen rising adoption of organic methods. Given these conditions and developments, Anantapur was purposively selected as the study area for its unique agro-climatic challenges and the emerging organic farming movement. This made it a suitable district for assessing the socio-economic and agronomic dimensions of organic farming.

Selection of Blocks (Mandals)

Following the selection of Anantapur district, the next step was the identification of specific Mandal(s) for detailed fieldwork. Anantapur comprises 63 Mandals. A comprehensive list of these Mandals was obtained from the District Agricultural Office. Garladinne Mandal was purposively selected based on the following criteria: Prevalence of organic farming practices (certified or in-transition), Accessibility and logistical convenience for field visits, Support and cooperation from local agricultural officers, Presence of active farmer groups and NGOs promoting organic agriculture. Garladinne Mandal had a significant number of farmers who had adopted or were experimenting with organic farming. Additionally, the Mandal displayed diverse agro-ecological and socio-economic characteristics, enriching the study's data pool.

Selection of Villages

Upon selection of the Mandal, a list of villages within Garladinne Mandal was obtained in consultation with

Mandal-level agricultural and revenue authorities. Based on predefined criteria—such as the presence of a substantial number of organic farmers, ongoing participation in government or NGO-led organic farming initiatives, and willingness of farmers to participate in the study—5% of the villages in the Mandal were selected. The selected villages offered a mix of small, marginal, and medium farmers, representing varied farming experiences and socio-economic profiles. This approach ensured data representativeness and allowed for comprehensive insights into organic farming practices in the region.

Selection of Respondents

In each selected village, a list of farmers was prepared with the help of local agricultural assistants and village heads. From this list, farmers who had either fully adopted organic farming or demonstrated significant awareness and interest in organic practices were identified. The study employed purposive sampling, as the objective was to specifically assess the knowledge, behavior, and practices of those familiar with or actively engaged in organic farming. An equal number of 25 respondents per village were selected, resulting in a total sample size of 100 respondents across the villages. Efforts were made to ensure inclusivity by selecting respondents across gender, age groups, and landholding sizes. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and interviews were conducted only after obtaining their informed consent.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from the respondents regarding their demographic characteristics, farming practices, income levels, marketing channels, and constraints related to organic farming. The findings provide insights into the socio-economic background of organic farmers, the extent of branding adoption, marketing issues, and key challenges affecting the promotion of organic farming in Anantapur district.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 31	25	25%
32 to 61	58	58%
62 and above	17	17%

Discussion

The data shows that a majority (58%) of organic farmers fall within the 32–61 age bracket. This group represents economically active, middle-aged individuals who are often considered the decision-makers in farming households. Their involvement in organic farming suggests that the transition to sustainable agriculture is being led by those with a balance of physical capability and farming experience. This group is likely to have witnessed the long-term impacts of chemical-intensive agriculture and may be more receptive to alternative practices.

The 25% of respondents under 31 years reflect a positive sign for generational continuity in organic farming. Their presence indicates that younger farmers are entering or continuing in agriculture, potentially bringing with them openness to innovation and digital technologies. However, the 17% of respondents aged 62 and above underscores the

need for training programs tailored to older farmers, who may be slower to adopt new marketing strategies or technology-based interventions.

Table 2: Educational Attainment

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	12	12%
Primary (1st–5th grade)	30	30%
Secondary (6th–10th grade)	38	38%
Higher Secondary & Above	20	20%

Discussion

Education plays a vital role in enabling farmers to understand and implement organic farming practices, including certification standards, record-keeping, and branding techniques. The data reveals that 38% of the respondents completed secondary education, suggesting a moderate level of formal schooling that could support the adoption of written protocols, soil health management plans, and marketing literacy.

The 20% of respondents with higher secondary or college education are more likely to engage with advanced organic certification processes, government schemes, and digital platforms for marketing. Meanwhile, 12% of respondents were illiterate, highlighting the need for visual, vernacular,

and community-led awareness campaigns to ensure inclusive participation in organic initiatives.

Landholding and Income Distribution

Table 3: Landholding Size

Landholding Category	Frequency	Percentage
Marginal (<1 ha)	40	40%
Small (1–2 ha)	35	35%
Medium & Large (>2 ha)	25	25%

Discussion

The landholding pattern indicates that 75% of organic farmers are either marginal or small landholders. This is consistent with national rural trends, where fragmented landholdings often limit mechanization and commercial-scale agriculture. For these farmers, organic farming offers an economically viable alternative that reduces input costs and reliance on external inputs. However, smaller landholdings also present challenges in achieving economies of scale for branding, packaging, and market access. These farmers may struggle to invest in individual branding efforts or certification. As such, cooperative models, such as Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), become essential for scaling their reach and reducing marketing costs.

Table 4: Annual Income Distribution

Annual Income (INR)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than ₹50,000	18	18%
₹50,000 – ₹1,00,000	42	42%
More than ₹1,00,000	40	40%

Discussion

Income is a critical determinant of farmers' ability to invest in inputs, marketing, and capacity building. The data shows a relatively even income distribution, with 42% earning between ₹50,000–₹1,00,000, and 40% above ₹1,00,000 annually. This suggests that a significant portion of organic farmers have financial capacity to invest in basic branding and marketing tools if support structures are in place.

Conversely, 18% of respondents earn less than ₹50,000 annually, indicating high economic vulnerability. This group requires targeted subsidies, technical assistance, and linkage to low-cost certification to avoid exclusion from formal organic markets.

Major Crops Cultivated

The dominant crops cultivated by the respondents include: Groundnut, Foxtail millet, Red gram, Mango, Custard apple

Discussion: These crops are particularly well-suited to dryland, low-input organic farming systems. Groundnut and millets are drought-resistant and nutrient-rich, while pulses like red gram naturally enrich soil nitrogen.

Mango and custard apple are perennial fruit crops with good market demand and lower pesticide requirements. These

crop choices align well with ecological principles and offer comparative advantages in organic production.

Branding Practices and SWOT Analysis

Branding Adoption

- Only 8% of respondents used any form of branding.
- 12% had undergone branding or packaging training.
- Just 5% sold their produce under self-made labels.
- 75% expressed interest in cooperative branding.

Discussion

Despite a low level of branding (8%), the fact that 75% of respondents are willing to explore cooperative branding indicates a strong latent demand. Farmers understand the potential of branding to differentiate their produce and capture price premiums. However, the major barriers include lack of technical knowledge, high design and packaging costs, and limited exposure to branding benefits. Investments in community-level training, pilot branding projects, and local cooperatives could help smallholders market their organic produce more effectively. Government schemes and NGO interventions should focus on providing basic toolkits for branding, including label design, storytelling, and digital packaging.

Table 5: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Traditional organic knowledge passed through generations	Limited knowledge of branding and value addition
Dryland crops ideal for organic production	High cost and complexity of organic certification
Opportunities	Threats
Growing urban demand for organic and natural produce	Market adulteration by non-organic sellers
E-commerce and digital marketing platforms	Price fluctuations and lack of price guarantees

Discussion

The SWOT analysis reveals that Anantapur has inherent strengths in traditional knowledge and crop suitability. Market opportunities are also increasing with rising urban demand for organic foods. However, weaknesses like limited certification access and branding inexperience hinder scale and profitability.

The threat from fake organic produce calls for better enforcement and traceability solutions (e.g., QR code labels, certification seals). Price volatility can be mitigated through contract farming models and linkages with stable buyers such as organic retail chains or online grocers.

Marketing Channels and Constraints

Table 6: Preferred Marketing Channels

Marketing Channel	Frequency	Percentage
Weekly local markets	54	54%
Direct-to-consumer sales	25	25%
Through NGOs/FPOs	12	12%
Retail organic stores	5	5%
Online platforms	4	4%

Discussion

More than half (54%) of the respondents rely on weekly local markets, which offer limited margins and are often

saturated with non-organic produce. Only 9% are accessing premium outlets like retail organic stores or online platforms, showing a digital and infrastructural gap. Digital marketing remains underutilized due to poor connectivity, low digital literacy, and mistrust in online payments. There is a need to build digital infrastructure, train farmers in e-commerce, and support e-trade platforms that aggregate smallholders.

Marketing Challenges Faced

- 68% reported low price realization.
- 72% had no access to markets beyond their village.
- 84% were unaware of urban demand or digital marketing options.

Discussion

The majority of respondents face severe marketing bottlenecks. Lack of awareness about premium markets results in undervalued organic produce. Strengthening rural-urban market linkages through mobile apps, SMS-based market updates, and tie-ups with buyers in cities can improve outcomes. Government should promote organic market yards or dedicated spaces within mandis to ensure price transparency.

Constraints in Organic Farming: Garrett Ranking

Constraint	Mean Score	Rank
High cost of certification	72.45	I
Lack of consumer awareness	67.21	II
Absence of local organic markets	61.38	III
Poor access to quality organic inputs	55.76	IV
Limited training and extension support	50.92	V

Discussion

The high cost of certification emerged as the most critical constraint, especially for small and marginal farmers. Organic certification fees, inspection charges, and documentation are perceived as bureaucratic and unaffordable. The second-ranked issue lack of consumer awareness leads to weak demand signals and low price realization.

The absence of dedicated organic markets at the local level limits farmers' ability to differentiate and earn a premium. Poor availability of verified organic inputs such as bio-fertilizers and pest repellents also affects productivity. The fifth-ranked constraint, limited training, suggests a need for continuous farmer education programs via KVKS, NGOs, and mobile-based platforms.

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