



# Marketing Approaches for Consumable Agro-based Industry Products: Comprehensive Case Studies from Indian Agro Business Models

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** From a business perspective, a marketing approach can be described as a comprehensive set of action plans designed and executed by an organization to achieve its strategic objectives. In rapidly evolving markets characterized by innovation, globalization and intense competition, designing an effective marketing strategy is increasingly complex and dynamic.

**Methods:** The study adopts a qualitative case-study approach to examine marketing practices in selected Indian agro-based industries. Secondary data from reports, policy documents and institutional publications were analyzed to understand prevailing marketing structures and distribution systems. The area of study covers Maharashtra state, focusing on key agro-based clusters where raw produce is cultivated and subsequently processed into final consumable products. These clusters include regions specializing in production, aggregation, processing and distribution within the agro-industry value chain. The study covered key agro-based clusters across selected regions, including Dhule, Pune and Kolhapur for chilly powder processing; Gondia and Gadchiroli for rice mills; Pune and Aurangabad for fruits and vegetables processing; and Nagpur and Jalgaon for raw pulses processing, representing diverse agro-industrial activities. Marketers often face challenges such as the risk of their strategies being replicated or improved upon by competitors. Therefore, sustained competitive advantage requires continuous innovation, brand positioning and adaptive channel management.

**Result:** This research paper delves into case studies from select Indian agribusiness models, examining their strategic marketing approaches for promoting the end-user products. The findings highlight key developmental trends in distribution efficiency, branding, value addition and packaged product expansion within India's fast-moving consumer agro-based sector. Specific examples include the marketing strategies for products such as chili, rice, fruits, vegetables and pulses.

**Key words:** Agro processing and finished products, Agro-based industries, Marketing channels, Marketing strategy, Supply chain management, Value addition.

## INTRODUCTION

### Marketing strategy for agro based products

Marketing consists of series of activities to make sure that the marketers and the needs of their customers and are getting value in return. In agribusiness, marketing plays a particularly critical role due to perishability, seasonality, price volatility and fragmented production structures.

Marketing has an important pivotal role to play in the company success and failures. Companies relying their focus on their marketing strategy has an advantage because they recognize the current need of the market and keep customers in line with them. On the other side the companies which are not doing so with their services and products towards marketing are at a disadvantage.

Marketing is an important business for any organization. The organizations can endeavor to grow their services and products appealing to their customers and aim to serve them differently from others in the global market.

Efficient team work and a well-planned strategy are important for a marketing campaign to be successful. The organizations should identify the potential customers and try to focus on them.

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According to Professor Malcolm McDonald, a leading expert in strategic marketing, "The key concept of marketing involves aligning a company's abilities with customer desires to fulfill the goals of both sides (The Malcolm McDonald Academy, 2023)".

### Strategic marketing method

In relation to business, the marketing strategy can be defined as a course of action executed and adhered to by the organization to meet its specific goals.

Kotler (2000) states that “Marketing strategy is the marketing rationale through which the business unit aims to attain its marketing goals.” A marketing strategy involves determining the business’s marketing budget, marketing mix and marketing distributions based on anticipated environmental and competitive factors.

In the present age, as the market evolves rapidly, new innovative ideas emerge daily. Competitions and other challenges also determine the marketing strategy. Therefore, marketing is not merely simple; it’s quite intricate to understand. The strategy devised by the marketers might already be implemented by other organizations or could be developed and executed in the future by different companies in a more advanced and effective manner than the current plans of the marketers based on the market’s present situation. By adopting the right strategy for the market, a company can make its products or services highly sought after by customers and consumers.

The traditional marketing mix framework consisting of product, price, place and promotion plays an important role in developing an effective marketing strategy (Business Fundas, 2023). The 4 P’s of marketing used for developing a marketing strategy are illustrated in Fig 1.

Effective marketing and a well-designed strategy facilitate rapid and stable business growth. It is a crucial component of business that enables the company to boost its productivity and offers customers valuable insights regarding the product. A company can enhance its marketing approach by analyzing the consumers. The research examines elements influencing overall business and provides recommendations to assist marketers in promoting their products effectively.

Agricultural marketing in India is not just a system of trade but a reflection of how farmers connect with markets under real-world constraints. In many cases, farmers depend on long marketing chains involving several intermediaries, which tends to reduce their final share in

the consumer price. Research indicates that differences in marketing efficiency often arise due to variations in infrastructure, access to markets and the structure of distribution channels (Kumar, 2020). A similar pattern is observed in the present study, where commodities such as chilli, rice, pulses and processed products move through multiple layers before reaching the end consumer, influencing both price and profitability.

The effectiveness of marketing systems also depends heavily on how well supply chains are organized. A coordinated supply chain helps ensure that products move smoothly from farms to consumers while minimizing losses and delays. Evidence from agribusiness research suggests that better planning, improved logistics and stronger linkages among stakeholders can make marketing systems more responsive and efficient (Singh and Kaur, 2021). In line with this, the study points out that strengthening distribution networks and reducing unnecessary intermediaries could improve outcomes for both producers and consumers.

To effectively sell products, marketers need to identify and target specific groups that are interested in what they offer.

To trade the product effectively, marketers need a solid comprehension and should focus on a particular demographic that will find their product appealing.

### Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To analyze the current marketing strategies employed by the fast-moving consumer agro-based industry in India.
- To examine the various marketing channels utilized by agro-based industries for the promotion and distribution of selected products.
- To highlight and summarize the key advancements in the marketing of fast-moving consumer agro-based industry products in India.



Fig 1: The 4 P's of marketing used for developing a marketing strategy.

### Sample of the study

This study is focused on the following consumable agro-based industry products in the state of Maharashtra:

- Raw chilli to industry processed chilli powder.
- Raw rice to industry processed rice.
- Fruit and vegetables industry processing.
- Raw pulses to industry processed pulses.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Various management scholars and economists have addressed the issues of agro-based industries and there growth. Very less attention is paid in exploring sustainable business proposition for agro-based industries to grow in the area of marketing.

Thus there is a need to understand the wide range of variables associated with the marketing aspect of business. In future it will help to understand the agro-based industries and at a very micro level so that the same can be implemented at macro level.

Table 1 represents the research design adapted in this study.

The study is designed by the authors to understand various marketing functions in agro-based industries. It mainly focuses on the distribution of agricultural produce and its role in market efficiency. The research follows a qualitative marketing approach to analyze real-world practices. Marketing-based techniques are used to interpret distribution systems and channel structures.

The study focused upon the various agro-based industries and their different products in India which can be restructured with the support from marketing function and certainly will develop of new marketing strategies, so that they can be more competent to face the new challenges in the era of cut throat competition.

#### Case # 1: Raw chilli to industry processed chilli powder

Historically chilli is considered as one of the highly important commercial spice crops and it is widely used universal spice also named as wonder spice. Different varieties are grown for different uses, such as vegetables, pickles, spices and condiments. Chilli is an inseparable and important ingredient in many different cuisines around the world as it adds heat, flavor, aroma and color to dishes. The Indian chilli is believed to be world famous for two important commercial attributes: its color and its heat.

Farmers who produce agricultural products are scattered in remote villages, while consumers live in

suburbs and urban areas. The product must reach the consumer for ultimate use and consumption. There are various agencies and authorities through which this product enters and reaches the consumer. Therefore, the market or distribution channel is defined as the path followed in the direct or indirect transfer of ownership of a product on its way from the manufacturer to the end consumer or industrial user. Thus, a product distribution channel is the route taken by ownership of goods on their journey from producer to consumer or industrial user.

Processed chilli powder marketing channels by industry: marketing channels have a huge impact on the marketing costs which include transportation, commissions, etc. as well as the market margins made by middlemen such as distributors, commission agents, wholesalers and retailers. Thus, the price to be paid by the consumer and the share thereof received by the farmer-producer are determined by a particular market channel. A good or efficient channel is considered to be the channel that makes the product available to the consumer at the lowest price while delivering the largest share to the manufacturer.

Below are the marketing channels through which chillies are sold in India.

Different marketing channels play a crucial role in the distribution and promotion of processed chilli powder products. The various channels of marketing for processed chilli powder are illustrated in Fig 2 (Agricultural Marketing Information Network, n.d.). There are 5 different channels used to market the chilli powder in the state and across the country in India.

#### Case # 2: Raw rice to industry processed rice

Rice milling is a crucial procedure in post-production, as it involves the removal of the husk and bran layers to create clean, edible white rice devoid of impurities. The milling of rice typically relies on customer preferences, which in turn influences the number of milling processes the rice undergoes.

Worldwide, rice milling industries have expanded over the years in the United States, primarily because rice serves as the main food in many countries and is consumed almost daily, particularly during significant events. Luckily, as there has been no substitute for rice, this is a business that will likely thrive for an extended period.

Milling production can facilitate the employment of many workers, contributing to economic growth and raising the per capita income of employees and their dependents. Although this industry is lucrative, it is also extremely competitive, as an increasing number of entrepreneurs recognize the advantages this type of business offers as a valuable investment.

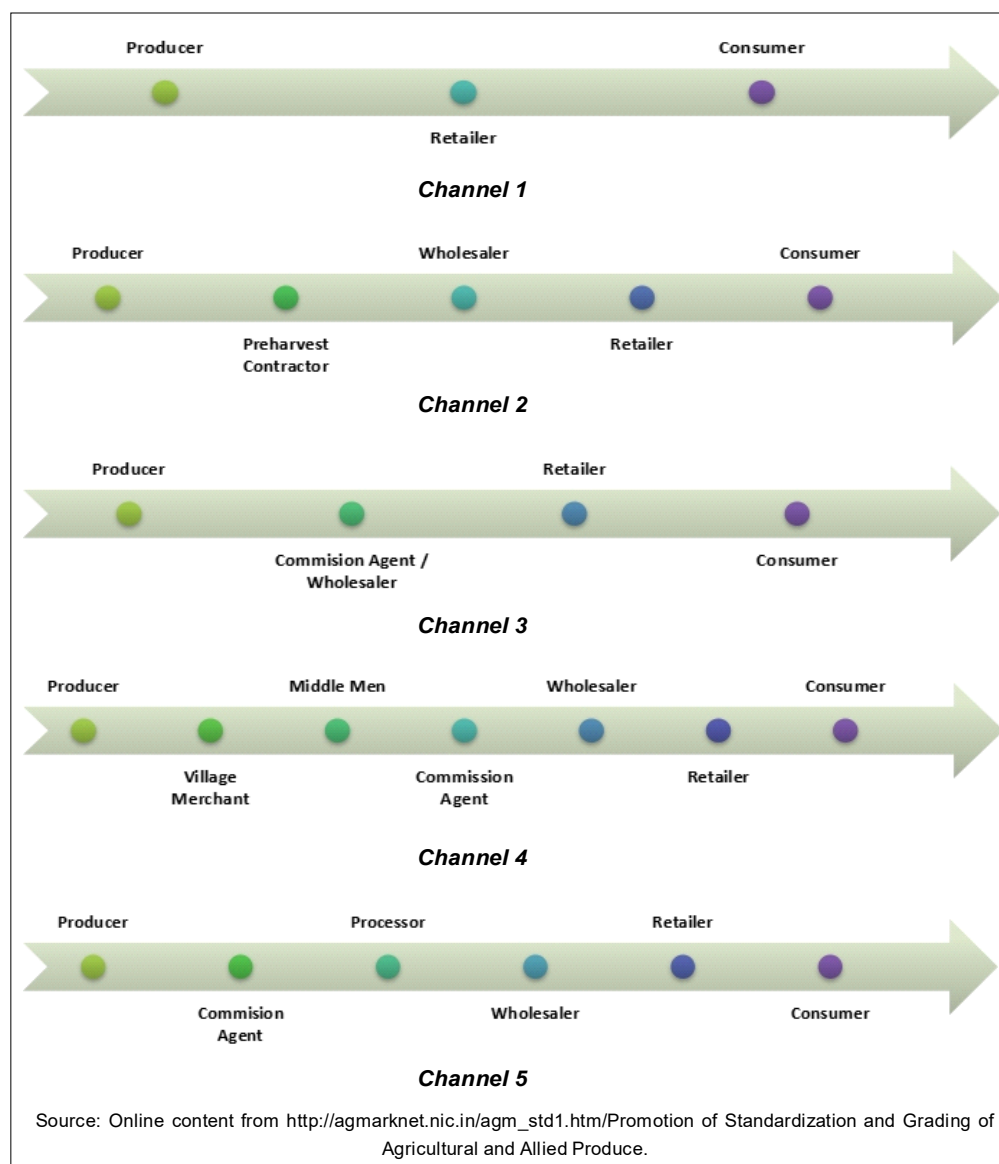
The increase in local rice farms has resulted in a rise in rice mills throughout the country to fulfill the needs of the rice farm owners.

This has led to increased competition among rice mills as they aim to capitalize on every competitive edge, primarily

**Table 1:** The research design frame.

Research factor	Methodology of research
Emphasis	Understanding the various marketing functions.
Features	Distribution of the produce.
Techniques used	Marketing based qualitative research.

(Source : Research Factor and Methodology Created by Authors).



**Fig 2:** Channels of marketing for processed Chilli powder.

by providing additional related services and consistently enhancing their customer service.

A different trend involves opening additional storage facilities in various locations, allowing customers distant from the mills to avoid concerns about their products being stored far away. This provides an advantage over their products stored so far away. This is a competitive edge over most rice mill production businesses. Following is the marketing channel adapted by the rice milling units in India.

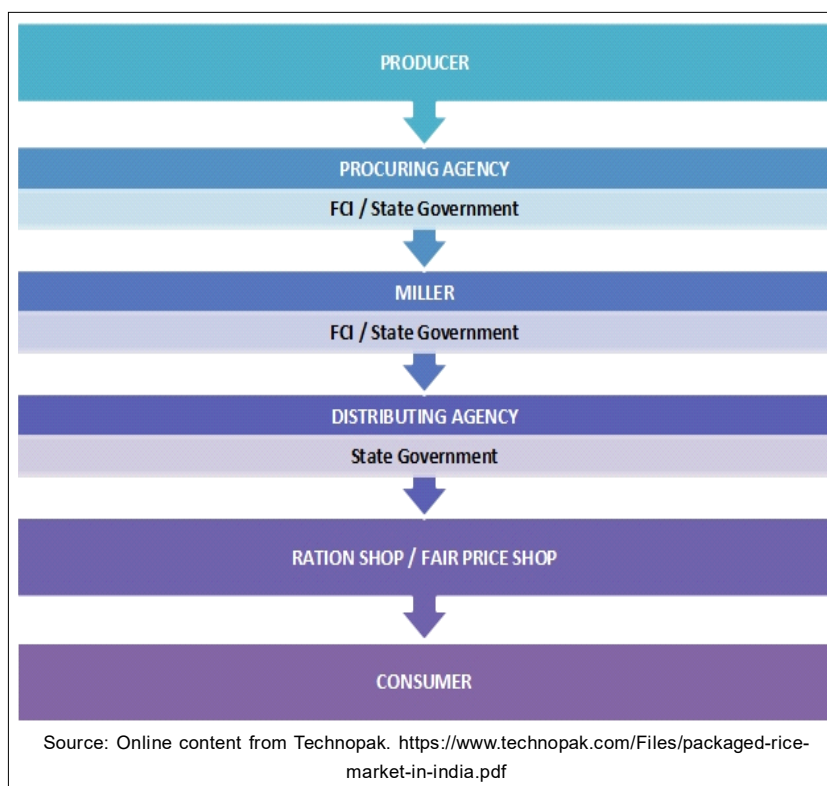
#### **The key developments in marketing so far towards the success of rice milling units**

The increasing popularity of packaged rice is due to the greater convenience and simplicity of getting clean, high-quality rice compared to the more labor-intensive process

involved in buying rice traditionally from wholesale markets or rice mills. Efficient distribution channels are essential for improving the market reach of rice milling units. The channels of marketing for rice milling units are illustrated in Fig 3 (Technopak, n.d.).

The rising middle-class population, which includes more double-income households, is willing to spend extra on basic food items like rice.

This is due to hectic schedules and time constraints, which enhance the importance of quality and health. This trend is also accelerating the expansion of the packaged rice sector in India. Achieving market penetration with improved distribution while staying cost-effective presents another obstacle for companies aiming to strengthen their market position and enter new market segments such as low-income group communities.



**Fig 3:** Channels of marketing for rice milling units.

Regional players possess a competitive advantage over larger brands thanks to their strong distribution network, which targets not only “kiranas” or local stores but also employs multilevel marketing alongside a consumer-to-consumer marketing strategy to enhance their market reach. These players aren’t heavily investing in branding; nonetheless, they provide comparatively better margins to kirana owners to promote their products. Their offerings are comparatively affordable in relation to larger brands and cater to the financial capacities of the middle and lower economic classes.

Larger companies must create a business model that allows them to broaden their reach and thrive in this fierce competition. The rise in raw material costs is another significant barrier that restricts any price hikes for products while also tightening profit margins. This is subsequently increasing the price of a lunch/dinner plate for the end consumer, who may then consider switching to relatively cheaper alternatives.

The increasing demand will propel innovation in the packaged rice sector, leading to improved product options and the anticipated arrival of global brands.

The packaged rice market in India is developing and as it progresses, it will provide insights into consumer product awareness, recognize brand loyalty, comprehend consumer purchasing behavior and create products that delight the taste buds of Indian consumers, particularly in the ready-to-eat category.

### Case # 3: Fruit and vegetables industry processing

Fruits and vegetables are produced seasonally, but the market requires products throughout the year. For many decades, this problem of matching product availability with consumer demand was solved in two ways:

- Selling fresh products during harvest and shortly thereafter processing the rest to meet demand during the rest of the year.
- The key developments in marketing so far towards the success of processing fruits and vegetable units.

As technology improved and consumer incomes increased, it became possible to provide fresh produce year-round. American consumers now expect fresh tomatoes, strawberries and sweet corn every month of the year. In addition, a strong demand remains for processed fruits and vegetables.

#### Fresh markets

Increased consumer incomes and year-round demand for fresh produce force retailers or their representatives to establish buying points both in different growing areas of the United States and in foreign countries. Some retailers contract with fresh fruit and vegetable packers throughout the year, who in turn may contract with growers. Large-scale purchasing agreements and practices allow packers to receive sufficient quantities of individual products.

Large fresh fruit and vegetable packers can contract with producers in different growing areas to ensure the



availability of fresh fruit and vegetables every week of the year. These packers usually only take orders in areas with a large number of growers. In addition, they mainly contract with the largest farmers, even in regions with concentrated production. Some packers deliver by growing the goods themselves. Large retailers and packers are unlikely to buy directly from a single small producer, especially one located in a remote production area.

As a small producer of fresh fruit and vegetables, you may consider selling direct to retailers. While some chain stores and independent retailers offer programs for buying fresh local produce, such shops and programs are not common. You need to develop your marketing system. Consequently, you must become a grower, packer and wholesaler.

### Processing markets

To stay competitive, Processors need to keep unit costs down, so processing is usually done by large companies. Many small local processors found it difficult to compete with these companies and went bankrupt. Effective marketing channels are crucial for improving the distribution and value addition of processed fruit products. The channels of marketing for processed fruits are illustrated in Fig 4 (Global Action on Poverty, n.d.).

Processing and value addition further play a meaningful role in improving farmers' livelihoods. By transforming raw produce into higher-value products, farmers and agribusinesses can access better pricing and more stable demand. Existing research supports the idea that value-

added products contribute not only to higher income but also to employment generation and rural development (Yadav *et al.*, 2021). The findings of this study echo this perspective, particularly in the case of processed agro-products that show stronger market performance.

Processors conclude agreements with producers about their raw material requirements. In the last twenty to thirty years, most processors have moved their factories to the main production areas. There are only a few processing plants left in the Northeast.

Therefore, it can be difficult to identify processors interested in sourcing from small producers. If the processor wants to buy, insist on a purchase contract with the processor before planting the crop.

### Case # 4: Raw pulses to industry processed pulses

Pulses are an essential part of Indian diet as they are a dominant source of protein. Pulses are "the poor man's meat" because the consumption of dairy and animal products is very low among the poorest segment of both rural and urban India.

Pulse crops are used as green manure and contribute in improving soil health. Therefore, pulses contribute in improving human health as well as conserving soil through their nitrogen fixing properties. The vital role played by pulses in the agriculture system and in the diets of people makes it an ideal crop for achieving food and nutritional security, reducing poverty and hunger.

Pulses are most commonly consumed in the de-husked form of splits, known as dal. Processing of pulses

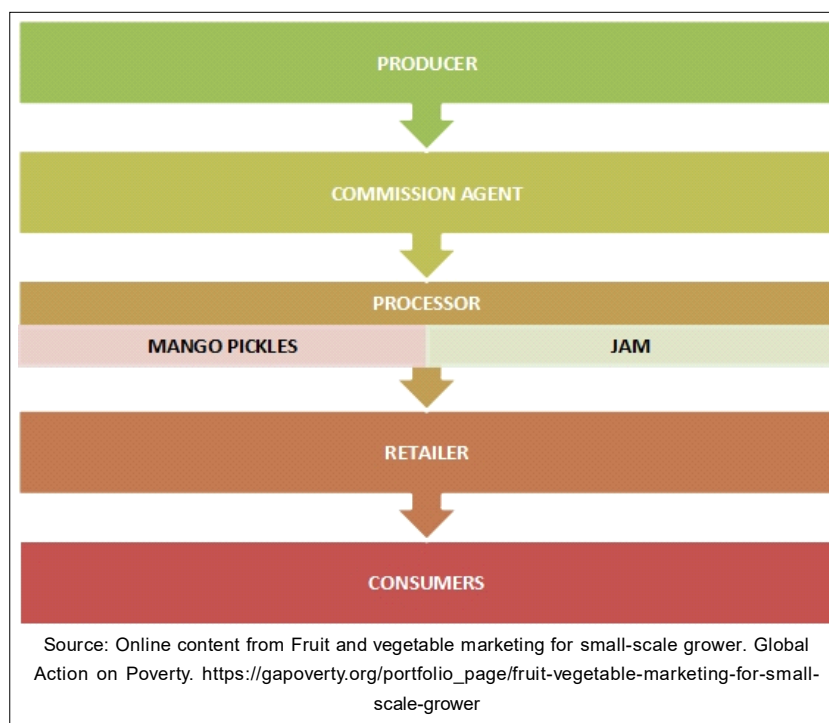


Fig 4: Channels of marketing for processed fruits.



**Fig 5:** Channels of marketing for pulses products.

involves several cleaning and milling processes through which, the husk is removed from the cotyledons and are split to get the edible dal.

### The processing of pulses is done by 2 major processes

#### Primary process

Pulse processing plant consists of a series of milling processes such as cleaning, polishing, grading, splitting and grinding *etc.* The cleaning process of pulses involves removal of dirt, dust, foreign materials, off-sized and damaged grains. The cleaning process is done with the help of drum cleaners, classifiers, de-stoners, magnetic separators and color graders.

In drum cleaners the pulses are fed into a perforated sieve drum which separates any dirt and mud from the pulses. Then the separator classifier removes the under sized, off-sized grains followed by a de-stoner. The magnetic separator is used to separate any ferro-magnetic impurities and foreign substances. Then the pulses are fed through a color sorter where the de-colored pulses are ejected and the uniform grades of pulses are passed on to further processing.

#### Secondary process

The secondary process of pulses includes de-husking, splitting, polishing *etc.* De-husking process improves the appearance, texture, product quality, digest ability of the pulses. De-husking process includes several steps such as pitting, pre-milling treatments. Pitting is a process using an emery roller where the pulses are subjected to an abrasive or refractory action by which the surface of the pulse is scratched to facilitate the entry of oil/ water into the grain during pre-treatment.

Following is the marketing channel adapted by the pulses units in the state.

### The key developments in marketing so far towards the success of pulses processing units

Pulses in India, navigate an extensive supply chain that increases consumer prices. This is typically because of the numerous intermediaries who take their share of the value of the pulses. It is believed that every intermediary in the pulse supply chain retains a minimum of 1% commission from their sales. Efficient distribution systems play a key role in ensuring the availability and market reach of pulse-based products. The channels of marketing for pulses products are illustrated in Fig 5 (IJMBS, n.d.).

The main method of distribution is either *via* wholesalers or retail shops. To withstand intense competitive sales pressure, Indian pulse processors must venture into retailing and understand the importance of developing their own brands and stores to enhance their marketing positioning, conveying both quality and value.

Regulations like the package commodity act, weights and measure act and factory act can motivate the pulse processor to engage in retail activities. Thus, this will guarantee the pulse processor to deliver and offer pulses at a reasonable price with high quality to the customers.

Pulses are often eaten whole or split, except for desi chickpea, which is typically used as flour and is increasingly in demand.

The majority of processing units are located in production areas primarily to reduce transport expenses for acquiring raw materials and utilize conventional technology.

Nonetheless, the increasing awareness of health, demand for premium packaged goods and labor shortages encourage processors to adopt modern technology to entice customers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores the strategic marketing practices adopted by selected Indian agribusiness models, with a particular focus on how these strategies contribute to the promotion of end-user products. Drawing upon qualitative case studies from key agro-based clusters in Maharashtra-such as Dhule, Pune, Kolhapur (chili processing), Gondia and Gadchiroli (rice mills), Pune and Aurangabad (fruits and vegetables) and Nagpur and Jalgaon (pulses processing)-the findings provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of agro-marketing in India.

The analysis reveals that Indian agro-industries actively employ the traditional marketing mix framework (4Ps: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion). However, the application of these elements varies significantly across different sectors, reflecting the unique nature of each commodity and its market structure. Staple commodities such as rice and pulses demonstrate a strong emphasis on distribution efficiency (Place). Given their high demand and relatively low product differentiation, these sectors prioritize streamlined supply chains, bulk handling, and extensive market reach to ensure timely availability and cost competitiveness.

In contrast, sectors dealing with perishable commodities such as fruits and vegetables adopt more technology-driven and short-channel marketing strategies. These include cold chain logistics, direct-to-retail or farm-to-consumer models and digital platforms that reduce intermediaries. Such approaches not only help maintain product freshness and quality but also enhance value realization for producers while ensuring better prices for consumers.

A notable trend observed across all sectors is the increasing shift toward value addition and packaged product expansion. Agro-industries are gradually moving beyond raw commodity sales to processed and semi-processed goods, such as chili powder, packaged rice, fruit pulps, and ready-to-cook pulses. This transition reflects a growing awareness of changing consumer preferences, urbanization, and the demand for convenience-oriented products in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment.

Despite these positive developments, the study identifies a critical gap in branding and promotional strategies. Most agro-based enterprises, especially small and medium-scale units, exhibit limited focus on brand building, product differentiation and consumer engagement. As a result, their products often compete primarily on price rather than perceived value, which restricts their ability to establish long-term customer loyalty and premium positioning in the market.

Furthermore, the research highlights challenges such as competitive imitation of strategies, where successful models are quickly replicated without sufficient innovation. This leads to market saturation and reduced competitive advantage. Additionally, issues related to fragmented supply chains, limited access to advanced technology, and inadequate marketing infrastructure continue to hinder the overall growth potential of the sector.

In discussion, it becomes evident that while logistical efficiency and operational effectiveness remain the backbone of agro-marketing in India, there is an urgent need to integrate these strengths with strategic branding, innovation and consumer-centric approaches. Building strong brands, investing in quality assurance, leveraging digital marketing channels and adopting adaptive distribution models can significantly enhance market competitiveness.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights that agro-based industries largely depend on the principles of the 4 P's of marketing to develop effective marketing strategies. Different agro-processed products such as chili powder, rice, fruits and pulses follow varied and complex marketing channels to reach consumers. These channels range from simple producer-consumer systems to multi-level intermediaries involving commission agents, wholesalers, retailers and processors. Each channel plays an important role in ensuring product

quality, availability and price efficiency. Rice and pulse processing units focus more on distribution efficiency and market penetration due to scattered production and high demand. In contrast, fruit processing industries emphasize communication and technology-driven marketing due to perishability and value addition. Across all sectors, branding remains comparatively underdeveloped despite its growing importance. Strong branding strategies can enhance consumer trust, product recognition and market competitiveness. Therefore, agro-based marketers should balance distribution efficiency with effective branding practices. Overall, integrated marketing strategies are essential for improving profitability and consumer reach in agro-based industries.

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## Conflict of interest

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