

## **Branding as a strategy for marketing agriculture and agro-based industry products**

(Penjenamaan sebagai strategi pemasaran produk pertanian dan industri asas tani)

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Keywords: branding, marketing strategy, agriculture and agro-based products

### **Abstract**

Brand is one of the important elements in marketing a product. Nevertheless, branding of an agriculture product is relatively new and still in an infant stage. It is also very challenging for a firm to brand its agricultural products. This study is aimed to examine the entrepreneurs' perception towards agricultural brand, such as the criteria in branding their products, to identify relationships between brand indication and marketing strategy, and to understand the value of the agricultural brand. This study used a qualitative research method. Specifically, a focus group discussion was carried out to gather information from 15 entrepreneurs who were involved in producing and marketing agricultural products. The study found that the entrepreneurs associated brand with the identity, quality and image of a product, and represented the firm. Brand increases its product competitive advantage and opens the doors of hypermarkets and supermarkets across the country and enables the products to be exported globally. Firms employ a different strategy when branding their products, such as using different brands for different markets or one brand for all markets. In conclusion, brand helps entrepreneurs to expand their products in the domestic and global markets.

### **Introduction**

Brand has become a critical issue in businesses. Brand works by facilitating and making more effective choice processes from the consumers' perspectives. Brand from the manufacturer's perspective, on the other hand, adds value to a product and eventually increases a company's profits. Manufacturers commonly use brand as their strategy to market their products. Brands differentiate their products from those of competitors. However, the effect of brands on consumers may be underrated by farmers. Farmers underestimate the role of brands in adding value to agricultural products,

and how they can differentiate a product of farmer A to that of farmer B.

Agricultural produce is unique. Fruits and vegetables from a plant have different shapes, colours, tastes and overall quality. They are also perishable and have a short shelf life. In another situation, farmers from different regions produce similar fruits, such as the watermelon. Watermelons produced by different farmers look identical with their green skin and round shape. It is very difficult to differentiate watermelons produced by farmer A or farmer B, even though the fruit may differ in terms of its sweetness, redness and crunchiness. Farmers may add value to their agricultural produce

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to differentiate them from the produce of others. One of the ways to differentiate agricultural produce is by branding them. Brands allow farmers to position their agricultural produce according to its quality, size or physical appearance.

Given the understanding of the agricultural brand is still limited, this study focused on the agricultural food context to understand the brand issue. This issue becomes crucial as the number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that offer agricultural food produce in the markets keep increasing every day. The competition among SMEs becomes stiffer, and their survival in the business is dependent upon their strategies.

The objective of this study was to examine entrepreneurs' perceptions towards agricultural brand, such as their decision making criteria in branding their products, to identify (if any) likely relationship between brand indication and marketing strategies, and to understand the value of agricultural brand. It is hoped the study would provide more understanding with regards to the SME's perceptions and opinions on agricultural brand in general, and their decisions on branding their produce.

### **Brand concept**

The word brand is derived from the word 'brandr', which means 'to burn', by which owners of livestock mark their animals to identify them (Kotler 2003). The term 'brand' is extremely rich and meaningful in different context, not only from academia, but also from the business world. Different people look at a brand differently, and thus, there is no universal definition of brand. Scholars and practitioners attempt to develop lucid and specific definitions of the term emphasizing a number of its aspects, such as its functionality as a legal instrument, a logo, a company, a shorthand, a risk reducer, an identity system, an image, a value system, a personality, a relationship contributor, an added value and an evolving entity (De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo

Riley 1998). The most common definition of brand is 'a name, symbol, design or some combination of them, which is used to identify the products of a particular organization (Baker 1999). In general, brand can be categorised based on its uses or functions (Hankinson and Cowking 1995). They categorised brand into six mainstreams of thought: visual/verbal triggers, positioning, added value, image, personality and perceptual appeal approaches. Based on these definitions, brand creates a new product image, determines the use of a product or identifies the quality of a product. A brand can differentiate one product from another.

### **Business strategy**

All organisations are faced with the need to manage their strategies as a way to distinguish them from their competitors. In general, strategy is the direction of an organisation over the long term period through its configuration of resources to meet stakeholders' objectives and to meet customers' needs. It is where the organisation is heading for a long-term period, and how a business can perform better than the competitors in those markets. Basically, every company uses three levels of strategies (Johnson and Scholes 1997). Firstly, a corporate strategy that is concerned with the overall purpose of the company. It is usually stated in the company's vision and mission. Secondly, a business unit strategy that is concerned more on how a business competes successfully in a certain market. This refers to strategic decisions on the choice of products, the choice of markets and the way a business is carried out. The third level is an operational strategy that focuses on the company's resources, processes and people. It is how the company uses its resources, manages the business and handles its people.

A business strategy refers to the choice of decisions which is influenced by current environment and future situations. It is about 'strategic decisions' that answer

all three levels of questions: what is the stakeholder's expectations, what products should be sold in certain markets, and what resources should be used to carry out the business? The main concern of a strategy is about trying to achieve some advantage for the company over the competitors. The strategic decision must also take into consideration the resources that the company has, the environmental issues, such as the political, economical, sociological and technological ones, in which the company operates. In other words, business strategy is how a company competes in the market successfully.

### **Brand as a business strategy**

Brand is a valuable asset to a company. Companies recognized branding as one of the strategies for competitive advantage (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman 2005) by differentiating a product from other competitive products (Rio et al. 2001). Consequently, branding has a positive impact on a company's performance (Dodds et al. 1991). Furthermore, marketing literature indicated that developing a strong brand is important to bridge between companies and customers. Companies use branding as part of their business strategies to enhance their market position that determines their survival (Kay 2006). Brand represents the identity of a company. It conveys messages to consumers on products that the company produces and deals in the market.

A strong brand strategy can be a big advantage. Successful branding also creates brand equity, the amount of money that customers are willing to pay just because it is of a certain brand. In addition to generating revenue, brand equity makes the company itself more valuable over the long term.

Different companies use different branding strategies. In a first approach, Kotler (2002) identifies three main choices when it comes to brand name strategy: line extensions, brand extensions and

multi brands. Line extensions consist of introducing additional items in the same product category under the same brand name, such as new flavours, forms, colours, added ingredients and package sizes. The vast majority of new products are actually line extensions. Yet, extensions may lead to the brand name losing its specific meaning - a phenomenon called 'line-extension trap'. A line extension obviously works best when it takes sales away from rivals, not when it cannibalizes the company's other items.

Brand extensions imply using an existing brand name to launch new products in other categories. A recent trend in corporate brand-building is corporations licensing their names to manufacturers of a wide range of products. Brand-extension strategy offers many of the same advantages as line extensions, but if the new product disappoints buyers, their respect for the company's other products is damaged. In some cases, the brand name may be inappropriate to the new product or the brand name may be diluted, when consumers no longer associate a brand with a specific product.

Multi-brand strategy consists of introducing new brand names in the same product category (usually by trying to establish different features, appealing to different buying motives, locking up more distributor shelf space, or protecting its major brand by setting up flanker brands) or in new product categories. Ideally, a company's brands within a category should cannibalize the competitors' brands and not each other, or at the very least, net profits from multi-brands should be larger despite some cannibalism.

### **Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research paradigm because research on agricultural brand is considered new in the Malaysian context. The exploratory research aims to understand why companies brand their agricultural produce and how branding of agricultural products could add value and

eventually increase a firm's competitive advantages. Specifically, this study used a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion aims to collect information and insights from small numbers of people who are involved in the subject under study. The findings from the focus group cannot be generalised statistically, but it represents the general information or insight that can be used for a further study.

A focus group discussion is a meeting of individuals, usually 6 – 15, brought together for a more or less open-ended discussion about an issue. This qualitative research tool provides a subjective, but not statistically valid, understanding of the larger community's attitudes. This focus group involved 15 entrepreneurs from the agriculture sector, and the discussion was moderated by a senior research officer from MARDI. The main purpose of the focus group discussions was to explore the entrepreneurs' perceptions towards branding their products, the reasons for branding the products, and to what extent brand can add value to their agricultural products. A secondary purpose was to explore how important a brand was as a strategy for marketing agricultural products. The discussion was divided into three sections: the respondents' understanding and perception towards brand, how they brand their products and how they used brand in marketing their products for domestic and export markets. The issues and challenges of branding were also discussed.

The moderator explained the purpose of the focus group discussion and highlighted the rules that the participants should follow during the session. The participation in the focus group discussion was on a voluntary basis, where they can participate throughout the discussion or leave in the middle of it. The participants were also allowed to answer their telephones, leave the room for a breather or go to the toilet. They were also informed that all of them had equal chances to speak and there was no right or wrong answers. They were encouraged to give

ideas and share their opinions without any interference. The discussion was recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The contents of the discussion were analysed using the NVIVO Software, where frequent contents and key words were gathered to identify the trend.

## **Results and discussion**

### ***Brand perception***

The word 'brand' was very common to all respondents. Basically, the respondents to a brand as an identification of a product. They were aware and understood what a brand was all about. In general, brand is associated with three classifications: i) as an identification of a product, ii) as an indication of the performance of a product, and iii) as a marketing strategy. The following discussion focused on the entrepreneurs' perceptions towards branding agricultural products.

### ***Brand as an identification of a product***

In general, most participants agreed upon the categorisation, whereby the introduction to the product would include the name, the logo, the ownership, the type, the use and the identity of the products. Firstly, the group discussed the name of the product. This could be the company's name or a name thought up by the company. In their opinion, a unique name would be easily remembered by consumers, and it should give instant recall for them to go for the products. Hopefully, a customer who has a need for a product will think of the name first. The name may also stand for diversified products and represents the best in the market. Most of the participants in the group had agreed that a brand was more important than the company's name. It is also possible for a company to have several brands or logos for its products and a specific brand to penetrate certain markets. The logo also plays a vital role in their businesses. A logo is a pictorial representation of a brand for a product or merchandise. It may uniquely portray the

company's name and designed in such a way that buyers would immediately recognise it. The power of a brand, the name and any associated logo help the mind with pre-purchase decision making. The logo can be regarded as a status symbol to some customers, and this too plays a part in the selling of a product. *"The right choice of a logo to your company helps to attract the consumers,"* said one of the participants. Another added, *"just look at McDonalds: the alphabet M can be used to make a mark, which is a strong reminder to the people around the world and which can penetrate into the global market."*

Participants agreed in the discussion that the ownership of a product seemed to be as important to consumers when comparing brands. *"Buyers will often ask for the company's name rather than the brands that it is manufacturing,"* explained one of the participants. This, however, is dependent on the type of products that are fabricated. An established company name need not be promoted as much as the brands themselves – it can easily be remembered. It is tacit knowledge that established companies will presumably have branded products that stand for quality and the fulfilment of consumers' purchasing wishes. Besides that, the type of products found in the market takes many forms. They may come as agricultural produce or they are agro-based products. The former are fresh or treated farm produce like vegetables, fruits and livestock, and the latter would also include food which are packaged or come in loose forms, drinks that are bottled in plastic or glass, and

other products that are the result of some agricultural activities. The opinion of most of the participants is that fresh produce need not be branded. However, these products can be introduced into niche markets, for example, to be sold in high-end malls.

Purchasing power also plays a role in the selling of products, as an example, an affluent consumer may not think much about paying for a higher priced product if he or she thinks that it is well worth buying, and more so if the product comes with a well-known brand. Participants are aware of the situation that nowadays people are more selective in choosing products that would be well suited to their diets. Products come in various forms in the context of agriculture and the agro-based industries. Food for the masses is the one that comes immediately to mind. Health foods are also now in style because of the awareness of consumers towards wellness and a healthier lifestyle. Branded health products fetch a lucrative price in the market and with an increased urban population, and these form a high percentage of the purchases.

Lastly, it is the identity of the products. Products may be identified by the uniqueness of its brand, its logo and other characteristics required by consumers. The choice of packaging, style, presentation and make up will evoke a range of values of the products for consumers. An established brand is difficult to change radically, but it can be reviewed, refined and updated to keep up with customer demands. *"Take as an example a brand from Europe that can last even for a century by using the same*

Table 1. Brands used by food product firms

Owner's name	Commodity's name	Combination of owners' names
Saadiah	Pittaberry	Omarkane
Izyan	Golden Noni	Omardeli
Brahim's	Nona Manja	
Ayran	Madu Kausar	
D'Mas	Malaysian Noni	
HMS		

*brand name alone,”* said by one of the participants. *Table 1* shows some brands used by agricultural firms.

Many entrepreneurs use their names or combination of names as their brand. They believe that the name has a special value and can attract certain segments of customers, especially the Muslim. For example, the Saadiyah brand is associated with Muslim products and this brand provides confidence to Muslim customers. Some firms prefer to use the commodity name as the brand. The Malaysian Noni, for example, indicates the product is the produce of Malaysia and processed with a high quality standard.

### ***Performance of the product***

Participants mostly agreed or had a similar opinion when discussing the image of the product. For them, the brands in the mind of consumers work by the relationships that are set up in their heads. A bad experience with a brand can be added to these associations and leave an indelible mark in their minds. A company brand needs to be maintained by reminding people of its values and by consistently supporting it. The actions of the company and those of everyone in the business must match the brand once it is established.

One participant explained, *“When you look at Dunhill, they produce only the finest and when they introduce another product, people already have the mindset that this is a real good thing because of the image that Dunhill has brought”*. The same goes with the quality of the product. Quality speaks for itself in any product available in the market. Consumers will go for quality in every aspect of their life, and this also goes for anything that they buy. A brand that is associated with quality is easier to sell than that which is unknown. Companies must therefore have campaigns or promotions to advertise the quality of their products whether they are manufactured or fresh. As an illustration, one of the participants explained, *“Consumers will always go for a quality product and it is more crucial for*

*the international markets, especially the western or North American ones”*. They are more likely to associate image with quality. This shows that there is awareness of how important image and quality are to their businesses and how to interpret the meaning of these words.

When discussing acceptance by consumers, it is human nature that anything that is good is acceptable. Thus, in the case of branding, a product must have characteristics that are good in all instances to ensure the worthwhile acceptance of consumers. The brand has a place in the mind through experience, be it visual, audio, touch, taste or smell. The very core of a brand is that it is trusted and hence accepted by consumers. The experience of trust will be translated into consumer loyalty. *“Having bought something (a branded product), we would have tasted it and thus we would know whether it is good or not. We tend to repeat purchases if we love the product”* said one of the participants.

Another aspect of performance is the trustworthiness of the product. Participants mostly agree on the statement made by the facilitator that customers must have faith in the products that they buy. If they feel that the brand stands for something of quality, nothing will stop them from buying these products. A customer base must be set up following this trustworthiness and this will lead to the acceptance of consumers towards a product. This in turn will lead to the development of the product into diverse brands from a single one. This brand extension will ensure a company’s fruitful expansion into the market. *“We look at Nestle for example: consumers are willing to buy any product from Nestle because of its established name”*, explained one of the participants.

Lastly, the lifestyle of consumers also dictates the performance of a product. People are now more health conscious and with better jobs and good remunerations, they will go for high-end products. It is to the benefit of companies that deal with

health foods, supplements, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and the like to take advantage of this situation to come out with these products. Branding here plays an important part in selling them. Brands that cater for the lifestyle of buyers can even penetrate the global markets. The 'Halal' logo can be made available in the Arab countries and elsewhere, and even exotic local foods can penetrate the Western world, not to mention other international markets. One of the participants said that *"Urban people do not mind spending money on organic products that they know are much higher priced than conventional ones. This is the new market and it is a booming business"*. Another participant stated that *"the market for high end products is still not huge in Malaysia, in other words, it is still a niche market compared to other parts of the world"*.

### **Marketing strategies**

Participants from the focus group discussion were asked about their marketing strategies. They were aware of the importance of branding for their products. It can be concluded that a product has a better chance of being sold when it is represented by a brand that acts as an icon for it to be recognised by consumers. A brand needs to be known in the minds of customers and potential customers. A brand as an icon has to be known by enough people so as to enhance the saleability of a product. A reputation is not sufficient to ensure this, so a brand is necessary to remind customers of the company or organisation for its products and services and the needs and solutions it provides. However, there are other elements that are as important as branding that has been discussed. Firstly, there is innovation. An established product is difficult to be changed fundamentally, but it is still possible to review its performance, to make it more refined, and to bring it up to date with current situations. The proposed image and perceptions should be taken into account to change a brand or to make innovations on it. Products must be checked through

customer research, with a professional marketer to help make the change. Customers should agree to the innovated brand and its values. Innovation will make a product more acceptable to clients who need something newer and trendier.

The trademark itself brought about a lengthy discussion. A trademark is necessary for a company to distinguish its products or services from those of its competitors. This may take the form of a design or a symbol, that is, the brand, and is usually protected by registration. All participants unanimously agreed that it is an important part of branding. A brand is synonymous with the company's trademark, and is usually a unique design by which a customer can easily remember the product.

Attractiveness should also be in their strategies to support their brand because the allure of a product will bring about the willingness of consumers to purchase it. The product has to be attractively packaged to attract a potential buyer's attention. This can be in the form of the packaging, design of the logo, the colours used and other value added presentations. The positive aspects of the product can be a source of attraction to it. The way the company talks about the product, how it writes about the product and how the product is sold can also contribute to its attractiveness.

Lastly, the noteworthiness of a company also contributes to the brand itself. This would depend on its commitment to provide the best for its customers. Several exceptional actions to be taken up would be in suggesting new products or services where the company should see to it that they fit the brands and cater for the needs of consumers. A brand can motivate, make training simple, and set up standards which can be controlled and maintained. Companies should have expert and professional marketing assistance to develop and define a brand. Customer research should be implemented for a brand to be developed, and the perception and image

must be matched to the business operation of the company.

### ***Branding as a marketing strategy***

The group discussion had brought about an understanding of the importance of product branding amongst participants. This was with reference to the manufactured products of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Product branding for fresh produce, however, had a contrary response from the group. A lot of disagreement was heard from participants. The group nonetheless had come up with issues concerning the branding exercises that had to be addressed.

A majority of the participants was made up of SMEs, thus the topmost topic of discussion was the importance of their products. The SMEs provided consumers with cheaper and usually quality products which were at par or might be better than those manufactured by big name companies. It was up to these SMEs to promote the products by proper branding and promotion to attract customers into buying them. The mindset of the people had to be influenced into accepting these products and only then could they be profitable entities.

Fresh produce was evident everywhere in Malaysia whether locally produced or imported. Fresh produce direct from farms were sold without any brand names and were available almost everywhere. They would come in loose forms or in packages to cater for the needs of the consumers. Thus, no difference could be determined for their origin or quality. Participants considered them not to be as important as manufactured products as far as branding was concerned. However, the advent of organic fresh produce, and in view of their increasing popularity, branding for them was quite important and necessary. They formed only a niche market in Malaysia and for the moment their presence was not so competitive with other products. Nevertheless, the growing trend of accepting organic products might see a change of this scenario.

The price of branded products was another bone of contention for consumers. Participants were of the opinion that branded products tended to be higher priced and some might be available only in designated outlets. Different outlets might have different prices for the same product. Basically, consumers were the varying factor. Different consumers might prefer different outlets, thus, this would lead to high-end outlets having higher prices for their goods and the more popular ones with more customers having lower prices. Participants were also of the opinion that depending on the location of the outlets, prices would vary.

The quality of branded products had been taken for granted by most consumers as suggested by participants. There was no problem for consumers to buy anything as long as it had a brand name. They associated brand names with quality. Thus, it was for the good of SMEs to create a memorable brand and had it established for consumers' acceptance.

Touching on the cost of packaging and promotion, it had been estimated that for branded products, there would be an increase of about 10% for those companies of the SMEs. However, this would also lead to a price increase of about 10 – 20%. In other words, branding added the cost and the value to a product, in which the difference between the price and the cost will determine additional profit margin of it.

The popularity of branded products also depended on the location of the outlets. Urban consumers, perhaps with an affluent lifestyle and being more aware of their health and wellness, would more likely go for branded products. This might not be so for the rural people who would purchase goods according to their affordability and only out of necessity. The participants were of the opinion that brands should carry the image of the manufacturer and they must promote this, to attract those consumers who would go for brands that were popular, reliable, and known to be trustworthy.

As had been previously mentioned, popular products sell, no matter where they were sold if the brand was in the mindset of consumers. This must be taken advantage of for SMEs to benefit from their undertakings.

The group had estimated that the time taken for the establishment of a brand will be about 10 years. This would include the creation of its design, registration and application to the products, and finally its introduction to consumers. Once this had been done, the products would have to be promoted and advertising campaigns carried out for them to be accepted by consumers. This was estimated to take about three years.

Participants had also discussed the marketing channels that could determine the acceptance of brands. Marketing channels would be determined by the popularity of the products. High end malls and supermarkets would go for established and popular brands while some SMEs sold their products whether they are branded or not, to retail stores and other markets. It was also discussed that the manufacturer would not be in control of the prices of their products. This would depend on the outlets that were selling them. Prices, especially of branded products, will be determined by the whims of these outlets. They were usually higher than the ex-factory prices for them to make a profit.

Participants had argued on the importance of branding for their products if they were to progress further. They had clarified that the name of the company could also be the brand of the product. This was because some of them were of the opinion that consumers could better remember the name of the company rather than the brand. However, not everyone of those present had agreed with this.

There were also participants who suggested that brand names could be changed to suit the markets that were to be exploited, for example, the Middle Eastern markets and others. Their opinion was that the brand name stood for some sentiments in some countries. A brand that had Islamic

characteristics, for instance, would certainly be easily acceptable in Muslim countries, but this would not be so in the western world, and vice versa when the brand had a western moniker. Some participants had agreed that a suitable brand name would give a good impression to consumers, but there were others who thought otherwise. There were members of the group that had used different brands for their products according to the suitability and the target markets. The position of the products on display was also important to ensure the continuity of their sale. This meant that the products must be placed in a prominent position to attract the attention of customers when they went shopping in supermarkets or even in the retail stores. Finally, they had also stressed the importance of the attractiveness of the presentation and the promotion of their products. *Table 2* shows some perceptions of the participants with regards to branding as a marketing strategy.

### **Issues and challenges**

The group discussion also touched upon the role the government had to play to enhance product branding in the small and medium enterprises. Developing a brand takes time, money and a lot of effort on the part of the entrepreneur. Ideas and assistance should be forthcoming from the government so that the prospects of a brighter future are there for entrepreneurs. The participants discussed the issues and challenges that the government would be facing to overcome problems of the branding of products with several suggestions being put forward. One of the participants said that *“The government should advise us on how to go about getting the IP (Intellectual Property) to work in their favour when problems involving the IP appear overseas”*. This was with regards to one of his products being imitated in another country and the owner could not do anything about it. Other issues raised by the participants were on the challenges in branding the agricultural products as stated in *Table 3*.

Table 2. Perceptions of participants about branding as a marketing strategy

Those who agreed	Those who did not agree
<i>'Sorry to say that I have used my own name which is in Malay but I have succeeded in selling my products in 7 different countries.'</i>	<i>'If we used a Malay name, we can never penetrate the overseas markets, especially those in Europe.'</i>
<i>'In my opinion, I will use my company name in every one of our products even though they have their own names. For me, this is our strategy to attract customers because they can see our company name on the products.'</i>	<i>'Based on my experience, when I export my products, people are more likely to go for my company name rather than the brand that I put on them. So for me, I prefer to use my company name as a brand for my products.'</i>
<i>'For me, when I choose the name Saadiyah for my brand, I know that in Malaysia, Muslims will believe in my product and my ambition is to penetrate the Arab market. By using this name, I am sure it will be more acceptable there.'</i>	<i>'The brand name will carry your image. For example, Blackberry and Nike have no connotation of religion or boundaries. People from all over the world would accept them. Using an Islamic name would deter people from the west who have qualms about it because of the current world situation. It is different with Japanese names because people tend to associate them with quality.'</i>
<i>'I prefer my product display or placement to be horizontal rather than vertical because it can attract consumers to buy it.'</i>	<i>'For me, packaging is more important because people will be attracted to it more than the brand itself, which is of lesser importance.'</i>

Table 3. Issues and challenges on branding agricultural produce

Issues and challenges	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital for promotion</li> <li>• Price competitiveness (with foreign and store brands)</li> <li>• Preservation of product quality</li> <li>• Consumer capabilities</li> <li>• Cost of raw materials (e.g. sugar)</li> <li>• Substitute materials (e.g. honey)</li> <li>• High cost of undergoing Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)</li> <li>• Copycat or imitation products from other firms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional assistance will be helpful for entrepreneurs to promote their products</li> <li>• Technical assistance from the government is much needed for participants in the branding of their product</li> <li>• Facilitation of accreditation procedures (e.g. Halal, GMP)</li> <li>• MyiPo – a good campaign or promotion on the part of this agency is of great help to owners of intellectual property as it regulates and supervises matters relating to it</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

Brand is one of the effective marketing strategies for agriculture products. It bridges firms with their customers through the identification of the product. This is accomplished through the uniqueness of the brand by its name, logo, ownership, type and use of the product. Quality is of utmost importance for a product and its association with a brand can assure its acceptance by consumers. The brand can also form an

image of a product, and thus be attractive to consumers, through the choice of packaging, style and presentation. A brand that is easily identified through these criteria will be in the mindset of consumers to help them in making pre-purchase decisions.

Firms use different brand strategies for different markets: line extensions, brand extensions and multi brands. Line extensions consist of introducing additional items in the same product category under the same

brand name, such as new flavours, forms, colours, added ingredients and package sizes. Some firms use different brands for different markets or segments, while others use one brand for all markets. Specific brand name for certain markets, such as an Islamic name for targeting Muslim markets and an English name for the international markets can be a good strategy. Notwithstanding these strategies, branding serves as a very important aspect of the saleability of a product.

Entrepreneurs should strive to make their brands acceptable through innovative refinements and updates of the performance of their products. Similar strategies are true for the domestic and global markets. Thus, through proper strategies, brands should depict products that are noteworthy as well as trustworthy in the eyes of discerning consumers. These actions can be further enhanced by assistance from the government in promoting the products of entrepreneurs in the form of advice on Intellectual Property (IP) application, in the technical aspects for the branding of products and the facilitation of accreditation procedures. The marketing of agriculture and agro-based products could be improved and promoted through branding.

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## **Abstrak**

Jenama ialah satu daripada elemen penting dalam pemasaran produk. Walau bagaimanapun, penjenamaan produk pertanian secara relatifnya masih baru dan di peringkat awal. Penjenamaan produk pertanian juga sangat mencabar. Produk pertanian, khususnya buah-buahan dan sayuran dikeluarkan oleh banyak firma dan mereka adalah produk yang homogenus. Kajian ini bertujuan menilai persepsi usahawan terhadap jenama produk pertanian, termasuklah bagaimana mereka menentukan kriteria menjenamakan produk pertanian, mengenal pasti (jika ada) hubungan antara penentuan jenama dengan strategi pemasaran, dan untuk memahami nilai jenama pertanian. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif. Secara khususnya, kaedah Fokus Perbincangan Kumpulan telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data dan maklumat daripada 15 orang usahawan yang terlibat dalam pengeluaran dan pemasaran produk. Kajian ini mendapati, usahawan mengaitkan jenama dengan identiti, kualiti dan imej produk, dan mewakili firma. Jenama meningkatkan daya saing dan membuka ruang pemasaran produk ke pasar raya dan pasar raya besar di dalam negeri, dan membolehkan produk dieksport ke pasaran global. Firma menggunakan strategi yang berbeza apabila menjenamakan produk mereka, sama ada menggunakan jenama yang khusus untuk sesuatu segmen pasaran, atau satu jenama untuk semua pasaran.