

# Marketing Growth Dimensions of Agri-entrepreneurship: An Empirical Study in Ganjam District of Odisha, India

Monalisha Chakraborty<sup>1,\*</sup>, Prasanta Parida<sup>1</sup>, Nirmal K Mandal<sup>1</sup>, Srilata Patnaik<sup>1</sup>, Subhomita Chakraborty<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>KIIT School of Rural Management, KIIT University, India

<sup>2</sup>College of Arts and Science, New York University, USA

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**Abstract** The growth of marketing is considered one of the key drivers for agricultural business growth, and therefore it represents a high priority for entrepreneurs. However, the determinants of marketing growth are still unclear to them in terms of achieving increased profits. The study aims to investigate the relationship between marketing growth dimensions and the agricultural entrepreneurship among agricultural entrepreneurs in Ganjam District of Odisha, India. The study utilized a quantitative research design to collect and analyze data. The research was conducted in the district of Ganjam, by collecting data using a structured interview schedule administered to 139 agricultural entrepreneurs who owned enterprises. The data were analyzed using both Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS V24) and Smart PLS (V4) software. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method was used to conduct the analysis. The study's hypotheses were confirmed by the results, which showed a strong relationship between product development, innovation, partnerships, branding, and marketing growth, leading to business growth and improved profitability in Ganjam. The hypotheses were supported by statistically significant results at a confidence level of 99% and  $p < 0.001$ , and the path coefficient is 0.251, 0.131, 0.139, 0.499 between the aforementioned variables and marketing growth, positively. The study provides several important

academic results, for example, it indicates the presence of a strong impact of innovation on marketing growth, which adds to existing literature and encourages agricultural entrepreneurs to benefit from the available resources for innovation in agricultural fields. Additionally, the study addressed the implications of its findings and future directions for research.

**Keywords** Agri-entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Marketing Growth, Product Development, Innovation, Branding

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## 1. Introduction

Around 750 million people in 185 countries are engaged in creating businesses, with agriculture accounting for 18.5%, agricultural industry for 27.03%, industrial services for 43.14%, and knowledge-based services for 6.8%, indicating that agriculture is three times higher than knowledge-based services (Figure 1). Consequently, humanity faces a significant challenge in establishing businesses, as an increase in agricultural activities is accompanied by a low level of knowledge-based services. Specialization in agricultural goods and services must be

coupled with progress in various knowledge domains. In order to attract more customers, it is necessary to develop resources, equipment, and physical assets. This requires additional effort and training for workers and managers to create a competitive advantage for any commodity or profession [1].

Accurately identifying and understanding market needs significantly impact innovation and facilitate its implementation in terms of products and services. Therefore, the impact of venturing into agricultural entrepreneurship on innovation is significant. In-depth market knowledge of the entrepreneur helps in finding ways to continue developing their business. Consequently, effective knowledge management within the company leads to an increase in innovation [2].

The success of agricultural marketing depends on the return on investment [3]. However, given the various challenges facing agricultural marketing in India, such as the lack of market information, the problem of market intermediaries, the absence of appropriate technologies for producing competitive products, and the shortage of financing, returns may decrease. This may result in a shift towards volatility in investment returns and risks associated with fluctuations in agricultural commodity prices [4].

The Indian government has introduced several initiatives to enhance agricultural marketing, including the following prominent ones:

- 1) The Electronic National Agricultural Market (eNAM): this is an electronic portal that connects Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and creates a unified agricultural market in India. The portal provides information on agricultural products, their prices, offers, and payment settlements, thereby reducing transaction costs. Over 73 lakh farmers, 54,000 commission agents, and more than 1 lakh traders have registered on the eNAM platform [5].

- 2) The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY): one of the main objectives of this program is to achieve a 4% annual growth rate in the agricultural sector by encouraging investment in agriculture and related sectors through a range of strategies aimed at maximizing farmers' returns. The program provides support for various agricultural marketing activities, including the development of infrastructure, cold storage facilities, markets, and more [6].
- 3) The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY): it aims to improve the utilization of irrigation water through the provision of a range of innovative solutions to farmers and the direct implementation of water distribution and agricultural advisory activities. Suitable irrigation facilities can contribute to improving access to markets and reducing production costs and post-harvest losses [7].
- 4) The Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) is a legally constituted committee that regulates the trade of various agricultural, horticultural, and livestock products. This enables farmers to market their products more effectively, promotes competition, and supports the creation of the One District One Product project for agricultural products [8].

Despite all these initiatives, the agricultural marketing sector is plagued by several problems resulting from 1) low productivity of agricultural crops, 2) lack of awareness among agricultural entrepreneurs regarding the use of available technology in India, 3) poor infrastructure resulting in inadequate transportation and communication, 4) limited law enforcement, and 5) limited access to finance. Consequently, these factors lead to the failure of agricultural marketing. Developing the agricultural marketing sector is a natural process, given that agriculture in India is the backbone of the economy, employing over 170 million people [9].

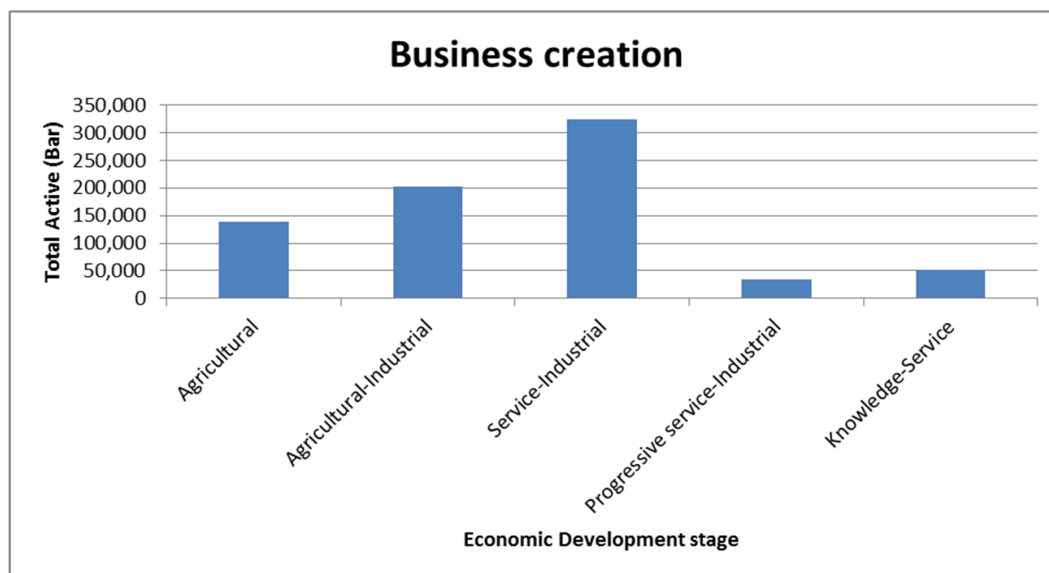


Figure 1. Total business creation in the world [1]

Cereals	Vegetables and Fruits
Farmer-consumer	Farmer-consumer
Farmer-village trader-consumer	Farmer-processor-consumer/exporter
Farmer-wholesaler-retailer-consumer	Farmer-primary-wholesaler-processor-consumer
Farmer-village trader-wholesaler-consumer/export	Farmer-primary-wholesaler-secondary wholesaler retailer/consumer
Farmer-wholesaler-miller-processor-wholesaler-retailer consumer	Farmer-pre harvest contractor-primary wholesaler-secondary wholesaler-consumer
Farmer-government agency (FCI)-fair price shop-consumer	

Source: [11]

**Box 1.** Agricultural marketing channels in Odisha

In the state of Odisha, located in Northeast India, the Agricultural Produce Market laws were implemented in 1956 under the name of the OAPM Act. At that time, there was only one market committee, which has now increased to 65 committees. The OAPM Act and its associated rules have been amended several times during the years 1974-1975-1984-1996-2005-2007. Several institutions have been established to regulate the agricultural market, including the Directorate of Agricultural Marketing, the Odisha State Agricultural Marketing Board (OSAMB), and the Regulated Market Committees (RMCs) [10]. The Box 1 which was created by the World Bank report in 2007 illustrates the marketing channels for agricultural products in the state, particularly for field crops, fruits, and vegetables.

Therefore, in order to effect changes in the growth of the market, particularly for agricultural entrepreneurs who are facing the challenges previously mentioned, it was necessary to study the specific variables that drive growth in the agricultural market, such as product development, innovation, partnerships, and brand identity.

Upon studying the relevant literature, it becomes apparent that there is a research gap regarding the scarcity of studies that link the specific variables driving market growth to the growth of agricultural entrepreneurship. Thus, this study constitutes a contribution to the existing literature on agricultural entrepreneurship, as its results provide a connection between product development, innovation, partnerships, and brand identity, which can be considered important factors in the growth of agricultural entrepreneurial ventures. One of the key contributions of this research is the process of preparing the entrepreneurial market and building new knowledge.

The main objective of the study is to identify the marketing growth variables that are directly linked to the growth of agricultural entrepreneurship. Among the important research questions that will be addressed are: 1) Does product development have a positive impact on the growth of agricultural entrepreneurial ventures in Odisha? 2) To what extent does innovation affect the growth of agricultural entrepreneurial ventures in Odisha? 3) Do partnerships have a positive impact on the growth of

agricultural entrepreneurial ventures in Odisha? 4) To what extent does brand identity contribute to the growth of agricultural entrepreneurial ventures in Odisha?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Agri-Entrepreneurship Marketing Dimensions

Until now, there is no widely accepted definition for the dimensions and practices of entrepreneurial agricultural marketing. However, several concepts of entrepreneurial marketing have been proposed by Sadiku-Dushi et al. [12]. Entrepreneurial marketing is defined as marketing that is carried out by project managers or entrepreneurs [13], or as the identification of opportunities to acquire profitable customers [14]. It is also interpreted as the interconnected aspects that lead individuals to exhibit behavior that motivates them to promote their products or services using new ideas that create value [15]. Entrepreneurial marketing can also be characterized as a type of marketing that is associated with risk-taking, proactivity, and seizing opportunities [16], or as the creation of customer value through the use of creative ideas and immersion in the market with a network of relationships and absolute flexibility [17]. It may also be defined as a set of processes that use a unique approach to create and deliver value [18], or as the process by which individuals pursue opportunities in changing market conditions with limited resources [19]. Entrepreneurial marketing can also be seen as a combination of proactivity and innovative activities that create value for customers, entrepreneurs, and their partners [20].

The practice of entrepreneurial agricultural marketing involves a set of interrelated dimensions that collectively provide value to the customer, incentivizing them to purchase agricultural products. These dimensions have been adopted based on a review of studies related to agricultural entrepreneurship and marketing, as proposed by Sriviboon, [21], Dinis [22] Haimid et al. [23], and Rehman [24].

The authors discovered that entrepreneurial agricultural

marketing involves a closely interconnected set of dimensions, including product development, innovation, branding, and partnerships. This study focused on these dimensions and their impact on marketing for agricultural entrepreneurs.

## 2.2. Product Development and Innovation

Cooper [25] categorized the elements of product development into three categories. The first category involves developing product features to present a compelling value proposition to the customer. The second category is committing to a product development strategy, such as creating a climate and organizational decisions by the entrepreneur and conducting ongoing research to improve the product. The third category pertains to the type of tools, mechanisms, or methods used for product development.

The term innovation encompasses the use or non-use of technology. In developing countries, it involves the process of utilizing available technologies, imitating or copying characteristics of other products, or adopting new organizational strategies, practices, or business models from other companies' such as business model innovation, organizational innovation, or marketing innovation [26].

## 2.3. Partnership and Branding

Mohr and Spekman [27] defined partnership as a strategic relationship among companies aiming at achieving common objectives and mutual benefits that are difficult to achieve if the company works alone. Therefore, from an entrepreneurial perspective, the main motivation for forming partnerships is to gain a competitive advantage in the market.

A brand represents information that facilitates the consumer search process, accelerating the purchase decision-making process. It evokes in the customer's mind the presence and performance of a specific product or

service. Thus, developing a brand has become an important task for marketers and entrepreneurs. Many of them seek new branding strategies that create differentiation in the customer's comparison of products or services offered by different entrepreneurs [28].

## 2.4. Marketing Growth

In his book published in 1968, Forrester [29] discussed the topic of market growth and its relationship with investment. He considered that market growth is linked to a set of policies that guide the decision-making process. These policies allow for the construction of a hierarchical system model, through which problems can be identified, difficulties can be addressed, and solutions can be sought. Marketing activities have been linked to financial performance and company value for marketing customers. Companies invest significant resources in improving their marketing capabilities, and scholars agree that company performance is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon primarily linked to marketing growth, and consequently profit growth [30]. In 2016, Bianchi and Mathews [31] wrote about online marketing and how it provides significant returns for entrepreneurs and companies by increasing the rate and speed of transactions, reducing transaction costs, and improving communication and information exchange efficiency.

## 3. Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

After conducting a comprehensive review of the literature, a conceptual model (research model) has been developed, which represents the relationship between variables with each other (Figure 2). The following section includes an explanation of how the hypotheses of this study were developed.

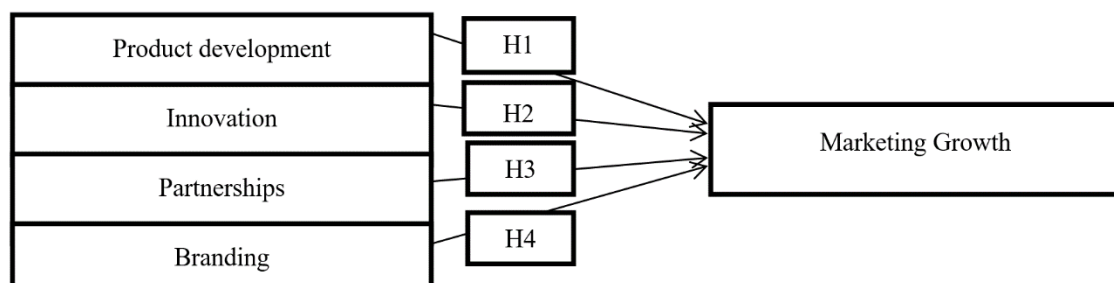


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the research

### 3.1. Product Development and Marketing Growth

Krishnan and Ulrich [32] conducted an excellent literature review on the importance of product development and its relationship with marketing and growth. They identified three models of product development, including marketing management, operations, and engineering design. The authors noted that product development is a decision made by the company over time and involves several questions, such as: 1) What technology will be used for development? 2) Who will be responsible for development? 3) What are the product variables? This decision-making process aims to achieve successful commercial marketing. It can be hypothesized that:

**Null hypothesis 1:** product development has a negative impact on marketing growth.

**Alternative hypothesis 2:** product development has a positive impact on marketing growth.

### 3.2. Innovation and Marketing Growth

It is not necessary to innovate marketing in order to increase productivity but its presence plays an important role in growth. The ability to commercially improve products requires innovative marketing activities. The integration between the presence and absence of technology as important drivers of growth is crucial in improving a company's productivity. The productivity advantage directly associated with technology is related to human resources and their ability to use this technology to improve production and, therefore, marketing [33]. It can be hypothesized that:

**Null hypothesis 2:** innovation has a negative impact on marketing growth.

**Alternative hypothesis 2:** innovation has a positive impact on marketing growth.

### 3.3. Partnership and Marketing Growth

Organizational relationships between entrepreneurial firms, or what is known as partnerships, attract attention in the field of strategy. There is a wide range of motivations for pursuing strategic partnerships, including accessing complementary resources, gaining market power, and acquiring legitimacy for new institutions and competencies. Cooperative activities lead to changes in the market and internal resource conditions of the company [34]. It is surprising that there are few studies that have addressed the topic of partnerships and their relationship to marketing, which has prompted the inclusion of this variable among the research variables as an important addition to marketing studies. It can be hypothesized that:

**Null hypothesis 3:** partnership has a negative impact on marketing growth.

**Alternative hypothesis 3:** partnership has a positive impact on marketing growth.

### 3.4. Branding and Marketing Growth

It is important to work on branding the product and marketing it through advertising, packaging, and media, as creativity in branding influences future marketing. A branding campaign should emphasize the quality of work for the customer, which can be done through promotional offers, home publications, and charitable events, at a low cost, and as an effective means to promote the brand [35]. It can be hypothesized that:

**Null hypothesis 4:** branding has a negative impact on marketing growth.

**Alternative hypothesis 3:** branding has a positive impact on marketing growth

## 4. Research Methodology

The present study relied on a quantitative research design that employed a structured interview schedule to collect data. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain necessary information for achieving the research objectives, which included topics such as product development, innovation, firms, branding, and marketing growth. Furthermore, this approach facilitated the verification of relationships among these variables.

### 4.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from agricultural entrepreneurs in the Ganjam District of Odisha, India. The target group consisted of small agricultural enterprises located in rural areas. The data related to these enterprises were obtained from the Rural Village Council. Regarding the sampling method, a simple random probability sampling technique was employed. This method allowed for an equal chance for each entrepreneur to be included in the sample. Complete confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis processes to ensure the anonymity and privacy of respondents and their personal information. All other information was used solely for academic research purposes. Out of the 150 interviews conducted with agricultural entrepreneurs, only 139 provided accurate data. This was confirmed by checking the consistency of the responses to about 6 questions using two different methods. It was found that 11 interviews had inconsistent information and were therefore excluded from the study. The correct response rate was therefore 92.67%.

### 4.2. Data Collection Tools

The structured interview schedule was developed with the assistance of several researchers from the KIIT School of Rural Management (KSRM) in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, who are experts in agricultural business. Additionally, researchers from the same KIIT School of Management (KSOM) were invited to discuss the themes of the

interview schedule and ensure its suitability for the current research context and purpose. The demographic section was placed in the first section, while the second section contained a set of phrases that assessed product development, innovation, firms, branding, and marketing growth. Product development was measured using five items, while innovation was measured using seven items. Additionally, partnerships were measured using six items, branding was measured using three items, and marketing growth was measured using nine items. The Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement with each element, with a range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**4.3. Respondent Profile**

The majority of the sample consisted of males, comprising 87.22% of the participants, while females accounted for 12.23%. The participants were further divided into age groups, with 15.83% of the sample being under the age of 30, 46.76% falling between the ages of 30 and 50, and 37.41% being over the age of 50. Furthermore, the total number of individuals employed in the studied sample was 167, and they were divided according to the number of employees working on their projects. Those with 1-2 employees accounted for 76.98% of the participants, while those with 3-6 employees constituted 17.99%, and those with more than 6 employees accounted for 5.04%. This suggests that the majority of the sample

consisted of micro-entrepreneurs.

**5. Reliability and Validity**

The internal consistency of the interview schedule items was deemed acceptable, as indicated by the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliabilities (CR), which exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.7 [36]. Table 1 displays the reliability values for all items, which were highly consistent and exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.5 [37].

Table 1 displays a composite reliability (CR) value of 0.88, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.6 suggested by Hulland [38], as well as an average variance extracted (AVE) value higher than the recommended threshold of 0.40, as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing, [39]. These results indicate the validity of the organized interview schedule items.

**5.1. Correlation Analysis**

To evaluate the validity of the variable's measurement tools used in the study, a correlation matrix was employed. The values in this matrix should be less than 2, and as the correlation increases, it negatively affects the validity of the variables. Therefore, the values should be less than 0.6. Table 2 shows the correlation values, which are less than 0.6, indicating the validity of the variables.

**Table 1.** Measurement accuracy assessment

Research contrasts	Scale item		Cronbach's test		CR	AVE	Factor loadings
	mean	SD	Item-total	a value			
Product Development (5 items)	3.41	0.873	0.159	0.838	0.93	0.76	0.936
Innovation (7 items)	3.51	1.870	0.047	0.623	0.94	0.61	0.824
Partnership (6 items)	3.40	0.757	0.149	0.657	0.90	0.71	0.597
Branding (3 items)	3.70	0.775	0.234	0.336	0.87	0.73	0.769
Marketing growth (9 items)	3.48	0.981	0.224	0.871	0.96	0.63	0.557

Source: data analysis.

Note: SD: standard deviations; AVE: average variance extracted; CR: composite reliability.

**Table 2.** Correlation between the constructs

Research contrasts	Product Development	Innovation	Partnership	Branding	Marketing growth
Product Development	1	-	-	-	-
Innovation	0.123	1	-	-	-
Partnership	0.125	0.223	1	-	-
Branding	0.163	0.101	0.113	1	-
Marketing growth	0.191	0.237	0.204	0.156	1

Source: data analysis.

**Table 3.** Results of the structural equation model analysis

Hypothesized-relationship	Hypothesis	Path-coefficient	P-value	Outcome
PD -MG	First hypothesis	0.251	0.000***	+ and sig
INN-MG	Second hypothesis	0.131	0.000***	+ and sig
PA-MG	Third hypothesis	0.139	0.000***	+ and sig
BR-MG	Fourth hypothesis	0.499	0.000***	+ and sig

The explanations are in the next section, \*\*\* Significance level < 0.001.

Source: data analysis.

## 6. Hypothesis Testing and SEM

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate the compatibility of the results with the standard indicators [40], such as Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (0.63), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (0.954), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) (0.951).

As the results of the CFA were satisfactory, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted to determine the strength of the causal relationships between the variables. The results of the SEM are explained in the Table 3. And it is acceptable, with the following values: CFI=0.923, X2/df = 2.631, TLI=0.932, and RMSEA=0.062.

## 7. Discussion of Results

After analysis results are derived and explained below with each hypothesis:

### 7.1. Product Development (PD) and Marketing Growth (MG) – First Hypothesis

According to the proposed hypothesis, product development has a positive effect on marketing growth. The result was significant and important at a confidence level of 99%, with a positive path coefficient of 0.251. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, indicating the presence of an effect of product development on marketing growth. These findings are consistent with the literature that recognizes product development as a key element in increasing sales of products and thus gaining a good market share, resulting in higher profitability.

### 7.2. Innovation (INN) and Marketing Growth (MG) – Second Hypothesis

Based on the formulation of this hypothesis, a significant and positive effect of innovation on marketing growth was found at a confidence level of 99%, with a path coefficient of 0.131. Therefore, the results are consistent with previous studies on the positive impact of innovation among agricultural entrepreneurs in increasing productivity, marketing growth, and profitability. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was

accepted.

### 7.3. Partnership (PA) and Marketing Growth (MG) – Third Hypothesis

The results showed that partnership had a significant and positive effect on marketing growth at a confidence level of 99% and a path coefficient of 0.139. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted, confirming the inevitability of the results of previous studies that show the relationship between creating new partnerships and alliances in the labor market leading to profitability, with a risk of failure if partners do not comply with partnership conditions.

### 7.4. Branding (BR) and Marketing Growth (MG) – Fourth Hypothesis

Introducing a brand as one of the marketing drivers can be beneficial, as it demonstrates a significant and positive effect on marketing growth at a confidence level of 99% and a path coefficient of 0.499. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. These findings are consistent with the goals of entrepreneurship and growth strategies of entrepreneurial companies, as they have a significant impact on their growth and future profitability.

## 8. Academic Implications

This study is of great significance to academics, as its results demonstrate a statistically significant strong relationship between marketing growth and branding, contributing to the existing literature on the relationship between these two variables. For example, utilizing the brand name in the distribution of entrepreneurial products to different regions can help increase the sales of the products and improve business growth. This can lead to the successful development of agricultural entrepreneurship projects, encouraging others to follow suit.

## 9. Limitations

Several challenges emerged while conducting this study,

including the relatively small sample size and the diversity of types of agricultural entrepreneurship projects. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the results conclusively, despite attempts to cover various aspects through demographic questions and those related to the research topic. For future research, it is recommended to focus on a single type of agricultural entrepreneurship project and increase the sample size to obtain more reliable results. To avoid bias, future studies may consider using technology-based data collection tools, particularly when dealing with the category of agricultural entrepreneurs. Additionally, it is advisable to include more research variables related to entrepreneurial marketing growth.

## 10. Conclusions

The study was conducted with the aim of examining the relationship between marketing growth and its variables in agricultural entrepreneurship in the Ganjam District of the Odisha state in India. The study confirmed the existence of a relationship between product development, innovation, partnerships, brand, and marketing growth among agricultural entrepreneurs. This relationship was described as strong and leading to increased profitability. The academic implications and hypotheses of the research were discussed. Additionally, this study can significantly contribute to adding important and new knowledge to the marketing literature related to agricultural entrepreneurship in India, an area that has been neglected by academics.

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