

THE POTENTIAL OF LOCAL BRANDING IN THE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF AGRO-PROCESSING INDUSTRIES AND AGROTOURISM IN VLORA, ALBANIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of branding on the economic performance of agricultural-livestock agro-processing industries and agrotourism enterprises in the Vlora region, emphasizing two performance indicators: Performance 1 (revenue growth) and Performance 2 (financial improvement). The research aims to verify the relationship between the agro-processing sector and the development of agritourism by analyzing how branding and the marketing of locally indicated products enhance economic outcomes. Data were collected from over 100 agro-processing industries and agrotourism businesses and analyzed using the STATA software. The findings reveal that branding has a significant positive effect on financial performance, with revenue increasing from 1,111 to 2,593 after implementing branding strategies. Furthermore, the marketing of branded products is linked to a notable rise in tourist numbers—an average of 2,815 compared to 2,640 in non-branded businesses—demonstrating that brand identity strengthens the competitiveness and attractiveness of agrotourism destinations. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of branding analysis within the dual framework of agro-processing and agritourism, highlighting branding as both an economic and cultural lever for rural development. Unlike previous studies that examined these sectors separately, this research provides empirical evidence of branding’s role as a bridge between local product identity and sustainable tourism growth. These results underscore the strategic importance of investing in brand development to enhance rural economic resilience, promote value-added agricultural products, and stimulate regional economic development through the synergy of agriculture, industry, and tourism.

Keywords: Agritourism, Agro-Processing Industry, Economic Performance, Local Brand, STATA



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INTRODUCTION

The agro-processing industries of agricultural and livestock products, together with agrotourism, represent essential factors for the economy of the Vlora district, playing a crucial role in economic development, job creation, product export, and the preservation of local traditions. Nevertheless, these industries continuously face challenges, such as competition from imported products and the absence of a well-defined strategy for market differentiation. In this context, the urgency of this research lies in the need to identify clear and measurable strategies that can ensure the economic growth of the local sectors of agro-processing, agricultural and livestock products, as well as agrotourism. The novelty of this study is associated with the inclusion of local brand indicators as a key variable, by directly analyzing their impact on the economic performance of agro-processing industries and agrotourism a perspective that, until now, has remained rather limited in the domestic literature.

This research aims to explore the impact of branding on the economic performance of agro-processing, agricultural, livestock, and agrotourism industries in the Vlora district. By focusing on two main performance variables, 'Performance 1' and 'Performance 2,' where Performance 1 refers to the influence of branded and unbranded products on revenues and the enhancement of economic performance, while Performance 2 represents an aggregated variable related to sales, revenues, profit, and brand identity, the findings highlight that the commercialization of branded products significantly improves the economic situation of the industries involved in this sector and of agrotourism.

The data analysis, conducted on a sample of over 100 industrial sectors and agritourism businesses, was performed using STATA software, chosen for its advantages over SPSS or other statistical tools. STATA offers considerable flexibility in managing complex regression models, efficiency in processing large data sets and the ability to apply a wide range of statistical tests, increasing the accuracy of the analysis. While SPSS is primarily aimed at inexperienced users and standard analyses, STATA offers a more advanced and professional approach, allowing for more comprehensive and reliable analysis.

The results of the simple and multiple regression models confirm that Performance 1 is significantly dependent on Performance 2, with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.56, indicating that 56% of the variation in Performance 1 is explained by Performance 2. This finding implies that investments in branding not only contribute to the improvement of the economic performance of the analyzed sectors but also stimulate a higher influx of tourists. In this way, this study not only contributes to understanding the relationship between branding and economic performance but also introduces a new and valuable perspective for development policies in these industries, by providing a scientific basis for strategic decision-making at both the local and national levels.

Branding consists of the identification of a product or service by providers, with the aim of differentiating it in the market from other competitors (AMA, 2023). By differentiating a product or service, the branding process influences consumer demand for a number of advantages, such as product quality and usefulness (Tali, Altaf, & Wani, 2021; Asmaningrum et al., 2025; Charlize et al., 2025; Demon & Santos, 2025). In the case of agrotourism, product branding should be focused on conveying intangible benefits in order to influence consumer attitudes (Middleton et al. 2009; Ajadi & Ayanlowo, 2025; Alkilany et al., 2025; Diaz et al., 2025). It turns out that the brand is an important marketing element since it affects the creation of a positive image of the product/service and differentiation in the market, resulting in brand loyalty (Tariq, Khan, & Khan, 2024; Fetmirwati et al., 2025; Hafiz et al., 2025). Given the importance of the brand in conveying the values of products and services, it is recognised as one of the most important assets of businesses (The Times, 2025).

The brand is built using a name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of them. According to Kolter, the brand "is a name, term, symbol, design, or combination of them, which is used to identify and differentiate products/services in businesses in order to differentiate them from their competitors" (AMA, 2025). Aaker states that a brand "is a set of assets (name, design, and logo) associated with a distinctive sign that enhance or diminish the value of the product/service" (Aaker, 1991). The brand, in addition to differentiating and attributing value to the product, has the ability to encourage consumption of the product (Kantar 2022; Hagad & Riah, 2025).

One of the most important elements of a brand is the name as a special marketing strategy (AMA, 2022). One of the effective competitive advantages is the brand name when it is well chosen, because it has the potential to convey information about the quality of the product and the meaning of the brand (Rua, 2022). According to Dawar and Parker, it is advisable that the brand name should be more strongly

associated with the price of the product since it can affect the price and the desire to buy (Dawar et al., 1994; Islami et al., 2025; Jackson & Alfaki, 2025).

The four main features that should be taken into consideration when creating a brand name are: Ability to be memorised and remembered in the long term; Ability to differentiate the product/business from the competitor; Ability to convey the utility offered; Flexibility, so that it can be used for possible future expansions by agro-processing businesses/industries (Turley & Moore, 1995). According to Pratesi and Mattia, “the brand has its own expressive capacity; it is a set of symbols, tangible and intangible, that influence the formation of its personality” (Backstory, 2024). From the statements of Fiocca, Marino and Testori, “The brand represents for companies and consumers an element that stimulates and connects between what the company is able to offer and what consumers perceive and want” (Shagyrov & Shamoii, 2024; Klinaku et al., 2025; Le & Aye, 2025).

The expressiveness of the brand can be found in: Brand identity; Brand positioning; Brand image (Hinge, 2025). Brand identity is determined by its unique features, while the quality perceived by consumers for the brand affects the formation of the image, while the brand positioning affects the hierarchical ranking of the business in the market (Gentile, 2019; Shams, 2024; Linh et al., 2025; Mor, 2025). The main elements that affect the identification and visibility of the brand are its name and symbol (Hinge, 2025; Nisa et al., 2025; Rahajo & Kumyat, 2025). According to Achenbaum, the main function of the brand is interpreted as “The difference between a branded product and a non-branded product is made by the consumer's perception of the characteristics, the name with which it is identified, the meaning and the business that operates with it” (Iazzi & Santovito, 2016). From the analysis of the theoretical framework on marketing (Cozzi et al., 2004; Williams, 2022), it is evident that the brand performs different functions depending on its referent subject, both in the case of the consumer and in the case of the provider.

The function of the brand for the consumer consists of (Pastore et al., 2006; Williams, 2022): Guarantee; Personalisation; Orientation; Symbolisation; Practice. While for the providers, the brand performs the following functions: Strengthening the consumer segment; Reinforcing the value of the product; Favouring competitors; Influence on the internal audience; Influence on the external audience: Codeluppi claims that the above-mentioned functions do not limit the role of the brand since it is distinguished by its relational nature, which is exercised in different directions, as follows: To consumers, acting as a link between the consumer and the product; To the business/industry and its products; Between consumers, that is, the relationships that they as individuals have with each other; To other brands operating in the market” (Betti, 2008).

RESEARCH METHOD

After identifying the low economic performance of the agro-processing sector in the Vlora region, Albania, the decision was made to analyse the causes of this situation. This was done through an assessment of the attitudes and interests of entrepreneurs and managers in these businesses towards locally branded products. The study targeted 103 industries and agritourisms, which were selected based on their willingness to engage (Bhatta, & Ohe, 2019). The study sample included 23.3% olive oil processing industries, 23.3% milk processing industries, 26.2% meat processing industries, 17.5% wine processing industries and 9.7% agritourism. All participants were from the Vlora region. The questionnaire was distributed via the Google Forms platform. The data collection process began in November 2023 and ended in August 2024, resulting in the completion of 103 questionnaires.

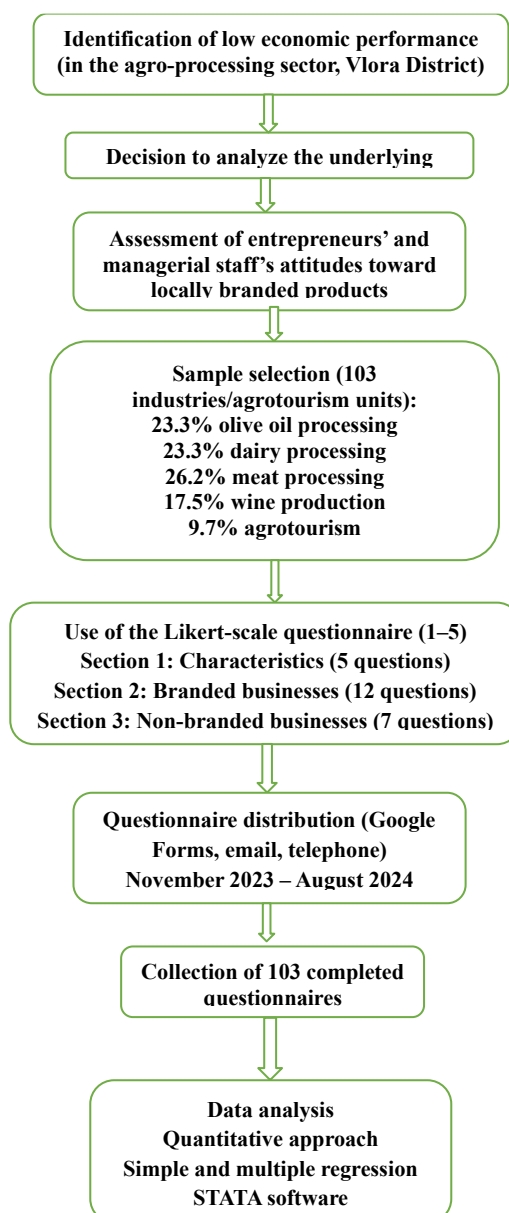


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Research Process in the Agro-Processing and Agrotourism Sectors of Vlora District

To analyse the data collected from agro-processing industries and agrotourism in the Vlora Region, the economic model of simple and multi-factorial regression was applied while the research results were processed with the STATA program. To collect information from representatives of industries and agrotourism, a questionnaire with closed questions according to the Likert scale was used, where the answers were from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire was organised into three sections: 1) The first section included 5 questions on the specific characteristics of the industries; 2) The second section included 12 questions for businesses that had integrated the brand, focusing on the role of the brand in sales, increasing consumer demand in agrotourism, strengthening identity, the impact on profit margins, as well as barriers that hindered the branding of agricultural and livestock products; 3) The third section included 7 questions for those businesses that had not yet implemented the brand, focusing on staff perceptions of the impact of the local brand on sales, demand for products, the number of consumers and tourists, and the barriers that hindered branding. Requests for information were sent to industries and agritourisms via emails and phone calls, using their contacts published on the internet.

The study of the collected data was carried out through a quantitative approach. The method applied in this case study is the econometric model of simple and multifactorial regression (Osmani, 2017; Saindah, 2025). The program used for data analysis was STATA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical Analysis/ Influence of Branding on the Performance of Agrotourism and Agro-Processing Industries

The following results describe an analysis of the attitudes and perceptions of decision-makers in the agro-processing sector of agricultural and livestock products and agro-tourism regarding the impact of branded products on improving the economic performance of businesses involved in this sector. The aim is to assess the role of branding with local indicators on sales, income, profit margin and improving the economic performance of these businesses. Different groups are used to analyse factors such as profit, sales, number of tourists, identity, and how the implementation of the brand affects profit margins. This five-dimensional analysis examines the opinions of managers regarding the role of branded products with local indicators in improving the economic performance of the businesses involved. Also, to analyse the role of branding in the economic performance of agricultural and livestock agro-processing industries, two variants of the performance variable were used as follows:

Performance 1: is the economic performance of agro-processing and agro-tourism industries that is directly obtained by combining Variable X9 for those with a brand: “Do branded products affect the income and improve the economic performance of agro-processing and agro-tourism industries?” , variable X17 for those without a brand: “Do you think branded products will affect the increase in income and improve the economic performance of agro-processing/agro-tourism industries?” and from the answers to each of the questions of the variables

Performance 2: Sales, income, profit and identity are undoubtedly indicators of a business's performance. Based on this fact and based on economic theories from aggregation through averaging the variables identity, sales, revenue and profit (X1, X2, X3 and X4 for those with a brand and X13, X14 and X15 for those without a brand), a new aggregate performance variable was created, which was named Performance 2.

Table 1. Impact of performance 2 on the number of tourists

Commerce	Performance 2	Average of NrTouristKons
No brand	1	2.000
	2	2.610
	2.33	2.667
	2.5	3.000
	2.67	2.833
	3	2.500
Unbranded Total		2.640
With brand	2	2.857
	2.25	2.786
	2.33	3.000
	2.5	3.000
	2.75	3.000
	3	2.000
With brand Total		2.815
Total		2.815

From the above data, it results that the marketing of branded products has a positive impact on the number of tourists, with a higher average (2.815) compared to the non-branded marketing (2.640). This shows that brands create higher interest for tourists. From these results it is proven that investing in branding improves performance and increases the number of tourists, thus bringing a useful strategy for the development of tourism activities.

Table 2. Impact of performance1 on the number of tourists

Commerce	Performance1	Average of NrTouristKons
No brand	2	2.370
	3	2.792
Unbranded Total		2.640
With brand	2	2.400
	3	2.909
With brand Total		2.815
Total		2.815

The above data confirm that the marketing of branded products has a stronger impact on attracting tourists compared to the marketing of unbranded products. Also, these results demonstrate that there is a positive correlation between the number of tourists and performance, which indicates that the increase in the number of tourists affects the level of performance.

Table 3. Income level before and after branding in agro-processing and agrotourism industries, by industry and area

Industry	Zone	Average of Comes before	Average of Next
AGT	Rural	1.429	3.000
	Urban		
AGT Total		1.429	3.000
MI	Rural	1.000	2.333
	Urban		
MI Total		1.000	2.333
QU	Rural	1.000	2.000
	Urban		
QU Total		1.000	2.333
VE	Rural	1.000	2.429
	Urban		
VE Total		1.000	2.444
VU	Rural	1.000	2.600
	Urban		
VU Total		1.000	2.600

The average revenues before brand implementation are 1,111 and after brand implementation are 2,593, reflecting an overall increase following brand implementation for all industries included in the study. This indicates that brand implementation has a positive effect on revenue improvement across all agro-processing and agro-tourism industries, as also demonstrated in the study by Zheng et al. (2024). The above data confirm that investments in brand implementation lead to economic growth and support for local producers, a result also validated by Chaturvedi and Sinha (2025).

Table 4. Impact as average rating of branding on agritourism performance (variable X6 number of tourists and X9, as well as X16 and X17, industry performance and AGT)

Industry	Zona	Impact on the number of tourists		Impact on the promotion of AGT	
		Branded industry	Brandless industry	Branded industry	Brandless industry
AGT	Rural	3.000	3.000	2.714	2.500
	Urban				
AGT Total		3.000	3.000	2.714	2.333
MI	Rural	2.667	2.842	2.667	2.421
	Urban				

Industry	Zona	Impact on the number of tourists		Impact on the promotion of AGT	
		Branded industry	Brandless industry	Branded industry	Brandless industry
MI Total		2.667	2.750	2.667	2.478
QU	Rural	3.000	2.526	2.000	2.579
	Urban	2.500	2.000	2.000	2.500
QU Total		2.667	2.476	2.000	2.571
VE	Rural	2.857	2.833	2.714	2.571
	Urban	3.000	2.500	2.000	2.500
VE Total		2.889	2.750	2.556	2.556
VU	Rural		2.571		2.214
	Urban	2.600	2.600	3.000	2.400
VU Total		2.600	2.579	3.000	2.263
Total		2.815	2.640	2.630	2.453

The research data regarding the average brand impact on the number of tourists results in 2.815 for branded industries and 2.640 for non-branded industries, which proves that branded industries provide a higher impact. It is also demonstrated that the average impact on the promotion of AGT is 2.630 for branded industries and 2.453 for non-branded industries, highlighting the importance of branding in the promotion of tourism. From these data, it is evident that branded industries have a stronger impact on the number of tourists and on the promotion of agritourism than non-branded industries. This proves the importance of developing brands and marketing strategies to increase the number of tourists in this sector.

Regression models for the impact of branding on economic performance

-Simple Regression - Performance1 vs. Performance2

Dependent variable: Performance1

Independent variable: Performance2

Linear model: $Y = a + b \cdot X + e$

The econometric model used for the processing of the data is the simple linear regression model, where:

1. Performance1 is the dependent variable.
2. Performance2 is the independent variable.

The linear model is represented by the formula $Y = a + bX + e$, where:

1. a is the intercept (the value of Y when X=0),
2. b is the coefficient that shows the effect of Performance2 on Performance1,
3. e is the error term (the unexplained part of the model).

In the following, it is analyzed whether and how much Performance2 influences Performance1:

Table 5. OLS Regression Results for the Effect of Performance2 on Performance1
 Model 1: OLS, using observations 1-103
 Dependent variable: Performance1
 Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors, variant HC1

	Coefficient	Std. Error	z	p-value	
Const	0.421688	0.168856	2.497	0.0125	**
Performance2	0.886811	0.0590761	15.01	<0.0001	***
Mean dependent var	2.679612	S.D. dependent var	0.468908		
Sum squared resid	9.770756	S.E. of regression	0.311031		
R-squared	0.564334	Adjusted R-squared	0.560021		
F(1, 101)	225.3398	P-value(F)	1.80e-27		
Log-likelihood	-24.85091	Akaike criterion	53.70182		
Schwarz criterion	58.97128	Hannan-Quinn	55.83613		

The model results are as follows:

$$\text{Performance1} = 0.421688 + 0.886811 * \text{Performance2} + e$$

From the above, we interpret the regression coefficient and the coefficient of determination. $b = 0.88$ shows that when performance 2 increases by one unit, performance 1 will increase by 0.88. $R^2 = 0.56$ (coefficient of determination) shows that 56% of the variation in performance 1 is attributed to identity, while 44% is attributed to other factors.

We also promote the hypothesis regarding the significance of the model.

H_0 : The model is not significant (equivalent to performance2 does not affect performance1).

H_a : The model is significant (equivalent to performance2 affecting performance1).

From the table we see that $F_{\text{actual}} = 225.3$. With 95% certainty and degrees of freedom, we find the critical value from Fisher's table and compare them with each other. $F_{\text{critic}} = F_{\alpha, (k-1) : (n-k)} = F_{0.05; 1; 101} = 3.84$. The actual value turned out to be greater than the critical one ($225.3 > 3.84$), which means that the base hypothesis is rejected; the alternative one remains. Otherwise, we can also judge the above model by probabilities.

This model shows that Performance1 as a direct variable (performance of agro-processing industries and agro-tourism, the union of X9 and X17) depends on Performance2 (performance of agro-processing industries), a calculated variable that is the result of averaging variables X1, X2, X3 and X4 for branded industries and variables X13, X14 and X15 for those without brands. Indirectly, these variables determine the performance of agro-processing industries (performance2). Branding makes these variables have a high value; therefore, indirectly, branding increases the performance of agro-processing industries and agro-tourism. Therefore, the hypothesis is proven with a probability very close to 1 (significance level 0.0000). From the above, it is proven that improving the economic performance of agro-processing industries in terms of branded products stimulates demand for agro-tourism and improves its performance.

The results of the study show that branded products with local indicators have a positive impact on the economic performance of agro-tourism businesses and agro-processing industries, increasing the number of tourists and improving profit margins. This is in accordance with Polaj (2024), who demonstrates that branding of local products improves sales, revenues, and brand identity in the Vlora region (Polaj, 2024). Branding contributes to product differentiation and the consolidation of consumer trust. Zheng et al. (2024) show that branded products create loyalty and enable higher prices for products of exceptional quality, while Chaturvedi and Sinha (2025) emphasize the role of branding in creating a strong identity and increasing competitiveness. However, brand implementation presents various challenges. Ma and Qiao (2024) highlight that the benefits of a regional brand are often not distributed equally along the supply chain, while Zheng et al. (2024) emphasize the need for strategies such as collective branding and digital marketing to overcome resource limitations. Based on the data analysis of this study and existing publications, it is confirmed that branding is an effective instrument for improving economic performance, product differentiation, and the development of agro-processing and agro-tourism industries.

CONCLUSION

The study proved that the branding of products with local indicators has a significant and positive impact on the improvement of the economic performance of the agro-processing industries and agro-tourism in the district of Vlora. The results showed that, Branding significantly increases the revenues of businesses, from 1.111 to 2.593, improving the financial situation of the industries involved. Branded products attract more tourists (2.815 compared to 2.640), stimulating the demand for agro-tourism. There is a strong positive correlation between the number of tourists and the economic performance, which demonstrates the important role of branding in increasing the visibility and attractiveness of the products. The econometric analysis confirmed a strong relationship between Performance₁ and Performance₂, showing that for every increase of Performance₂, Performance₁ increases proportionally.

The above results are in full coherence with the objective of the research, showing that the development of local brands is essential for increasing economic performance, stimulating the demand for agro-tourism, and strengthening the sustainability of this sector. Based on the above results, future studies can focus on Analyzing the long-term impact of branding strategies on the sustainability of the agro-processing industries of agricultural and livestock products and agro-tourism. A comparative study between different regions to identify the most effective branding practices. Exploring the role of digital marketing in increasing the visibility of local products.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1 creates articles and creates instruments and is responsible for research, author 2 analyzes research data that has been collected, author 3 assist in research data analysis, instrument validation, and input research data.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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