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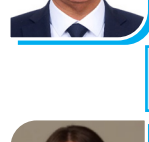
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MARKETING CHARACTERISTICS OF POSITIONING ORGANIC DRIED FRUIT PRODUCTS IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

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Abstract: This study examines the positioning of Uzbek organic dried fruit products in international premium markets. It analyzes the role of certification, eco-branding, packaging, and digital marketing in strengthening consumer trust and product competitiveness. The findings show that certification credibility, sustainable packaging, and premium branding significantly influence consumer perception and purchasing behavior. The study also reveals that many Uzbek exporters still rely mainly on price-based competition, which limits their differentiation in premium markets. Based on the analysis, the article proposes integrated positioning strategies to improve the international competitiveness of Uzbek organic dried fruit products.

Key words: Organic dried fruits; positioning strategy; international marketing; eco-branding; premium market; consumer behavior; export marketing; organic certification; sustainable marketing; brand positioning.

Аннотация: В данном исследовании рассматривается позиционирование узбекской органической сушёной фруктовой продукции на международных премиальных рынках. Анализируется роль сертификации, эко-брендинга, упаковки и цифрового маркетинга в укреплении доверия потребителей и повышении конкурентоспособности продукции. Результаты показывают, что надёжность сертификации, экологически устойчивая упаковка и премиальный брендинг существенно влияют на восприятие продукции потребителями и их покупательское поведение. Исследование также выявило, что многие узбекские экспортёры по-прежнему в основном ориентируются на ценовую конкуренцию, что ограничивает возможности дифференциации продукции на премиальных рынках. На основе проведённого анализа в статье предложены интегрированные стратегии позиционирования, направленные на повышение международной конкурентоспособности узбекской органической сушёной фруктовой продукции.

Ключевые слова: органические сушёные фрукты, стратегия позиционирования, международный маркетинг, эко-брендинг, премиальный рынок, поведение потребителей, экспортный маркетинг, органическая сертификация, устойчивый маркетинг, позиционирование бренда.

INTRODUCTION

The global organic food market is expanding rapidly due to growing demand for healthy and sustainable products. In 2025, it exceeded USD 255 billion, with organic fruits and vegetables among the largest segments. This increases the importance of effective positioning strategies based on quality, safety, and sustainability.

Organic dried fruits are among Uzbekistan's promising export products due to favorable climatic conditions and growing global demand. In premium organic markets, certification, eco-branding, packaging, and digital marketing strongly influence consumer trust and purchasing behavior. Therefore, this study analyzes the positioning of organic dried fruit products in international markets and proposes strategies for improving their competitiveness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Theoretical and empirical studies on organic food marketing emphasize that consumer trust, product quality perception, and sustainability-oriented branding are among the key determinants of competitiveness in premium food markets. Klaus G. Grunert [5] argues that consumers increasingly associate food quality and safety with reliability, transparency, and environmental responsibility. According to his research, purchasing decisions in food markets are no longer determined solely by price and functional characteristics, but also by

symbolic and ethical values connected with sustainability and health protection. This theoretical perspective is particularly important for understanding positioning strategies in organic dried fruit markets, where product authenticity and trust play a central role.

Research conducted by Maria K. Magnusson et al. [6] demonstrates that consumer preference for organic food products is strongly related to perceived health benefits and environmentally friendly behavior. Their study reveals that consumers who are more environmentally conscious tend to show stronger loyalty toward organic products and are more willing to pay premium prices. These findings support the argument that eco-branding and sustainability communication significantly influence the positioning of organic dried fruit products in international markets.

Similarly, Ekow K. Yiridoe, Samuel Bonti-Ankomah, and Ralph C. Martin [7] compared consumer perceptions toward organic and conventionally produced foods and concluded that organic products are generally perceived as healthier, safer, and more environmentally responsible. Their research highlights that certification and production transparency increase consumer confidence and create additional market value. This confirms the importance of certification-oriented positioning strategies for exporters seeking access to premium organic markets.

A comprehensive review by Jolly Rana and Justin Paul [8] examines the determinants of consumer purchase intention for organic foods. The authors identify health consciousness, environmental concern, trust, product availability, and social influence as the primary factors affecting organic food consumption. They also emphasize that digital marketing and communication technologies are becoming increasingly important for shaping consumer perceptions and expanding market reach. This approach provides an important conceptual basis for analyzing the role of e-commerce and digital branding in the international positioning of Uzbek organic dried fruit products.

The premium nature of organic products has also been examined by Leila Hamzaoui-Essoussi and Mehdi Zahaf [9], who studied Canadian consumers' willingness to pay higher prices for organic food products. Their findings indicate that consumers associate premium prices with higher quality, food safety, environmental sustainability, and ethical production practices. This demonstrates that premium pricing functions not only as an economic mechanism, but also as a positioning instrument that signals superior product value in international organic markets.

The theoretical foundations of positioning and brand management are extensively discussed by Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller [10]. According to their marketing management framework, effective positioning requires creating a distinctive image and value proposition in the minds of consumers. They emphasize the importance of integrated marketing communication, product differentiation, and emotional branding for achieving long-term competitive advantages. These concepts are directly applicable to organic dried fruit exports, where certification, packaging, sustainability communication, and digital visibility jointly shape consumer perceptions.

Branding theory developed by David A. Aaker [11] further highlights the strategic role of brand identity, brand equity, and consumer associations in strengthening market competitiveness. Aaker argues that strong brands create trust, emotional attachment, and perceived quality advantages that cannot easily be replicated by competitors. In the context of organic dried fruit products, eco-branding, sustainability storytelling, and authentic origin communication can therefore become important instruments for building long-term brand value and improving international market positioning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applies a qualitative marketing research approach based on comparative analysis, secondary data analysis, and marketing observation. Scientific articles, market reports, certification guidelines, and institutional publications on organic food markets, consumer behavior, branding, and export marketing were reviewed.

Comparative analysis was used to identify differences between conventional and organic dried fruit products in terms of certification, packaging, branding, and consumer trust. In addition, selected organic dried fruit brands on Amazon and Alibaba were observed to evaluate packaging design, eco-labeling, digital branding, and sustainability communication. The collected data were interpreted thematically to determine key positioning factors influencing international competitiveness.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis shows that consumer behavior in premium organic markets is increasingly shaped by trust, sustainability, and certification reliability rather than only price. According to FiBL (2025), the global organic food market exceeded 145 billion euros, reflecting the growth of environmentally conscious consumer segments.

Uzbekistan's exports of fresh and dried fruits have also increased significantly, rising from USD 700 million in 2021 to nearly USD 1.3 billion in 2025. This indicates growing international demand for Uzbek fruit products.

Observations of Amazon and Alibaba show that products with eco-friendly packaging, visible certification labels, and professional visual branding attract greater consumer attention and achieve stronger premium positioning. Demand for organic dried fruits is also increasing in the European Union, the United States, and Asian markets. Table 1 presents the market size, dried fruit share, annual growth rate, and major import directions in key international markets (Table 1).

Table 1. Demand Dynamics for Organic Dried Fruit Products in the European Union and Other Major Markets¹

Region	Organic Market Size (billion USD)	Share of Dried Fruits (%)	Annual Growth Rate (%)	Major Importing Countries
European Union	65	6.5	8–10	Germany, France, Netherlands
USA	70	7	9–11	Domestic U.S. market
China	15	5	12–14	Domestic Chinese market
UAE	2.5	8	10–12	UAE, Saudi Arabia

The table shows that the United States and the European Union are the largest markets for organic dried fruits, while China and the UAE also demonstrate growing demand. These trends indicate the need for Uzbek exporters to strengthen certification, product quality, and premium-oriented marketing strategies.

Effective positioning of organic dried fruit products depends on certification reliability, sustainability image, packaging quality, digital visibility, and product authenticity. International experience shows that successful organic brands rarely compete only through price; instead, they emphasize certified production, transparent origin information, recyclable packaging, attractive retail design, and active digital promotion (Table 2).

Table 2. Factors Influencing the Positioning of Organic Dried Fruit Products²

Factors	Influence on Positioning	Marketing Effect
Organic certification	Increases trust	Premium perception
Eco-friendly packaging	Improves visual attractiveness	Brand differentiation
Digital marketing	Expands international visibility	Consumer engagement
Eco-branding	Strengthens sustainability image	Customer loyalty
Premium pricing	Signals higher quality	Value positioning

The comparative analysis in Table 2 shows that certification, eco-branding, sustainable packaging, digital marketing, and premium pricing jointly strengthen consumer trust, product visibility, and brand differentiation. Exporters applying integrated positioning strategies gain stronger competitive advantages than firms relying mainly on price-based competition.

These findings create important opportunities for Uzbek organic dried fruit exporters to strengthen their positions in premium international market segments.

Alongside the growing export potential of Uzbekistan's dried fruit sector, ongoing improvements in marketing strategies are creating new possibilities to further enhance its international competitiveness. Many exporters are gradually expanding their capabilities to create recognizable brands in premium organic retail markets.

International organic brands actively use eco-friendly packaging, sustainability storytelling, and digital branding to strengthen premium product perception. Similarly, Uzbek exporters are increasingly focusing on improving packaging quality, sustainability communication, and visual differentiation to strengthen their market presence.

The expanding integration of digital marketing is also contributing to greater international visibility. Exporters are increasingly developing multilingual promotion and adapting to international e-commerce standards, highlighting the importance of aligning global positioning practices with the evolving marketing environment in Uzbekistan.

¹ Source: Compiled by the author based on FAO, FiBL, IFOAM, and GlobalData reports.

² Source: Developed by the author based on FiBL (2025), Kotler and Keller (2016), and Organic Trade Association (2025).

International organic dried fruit brands mainly compete through certification, eco-friendly packaging, digital visibility, and strong brand communication. These instruments help create premium value and strengthen consumer trust.

In Uzbekistan, many dried fruit exporters are progressively moving from bulk supply and price-based competition toward value-oriented marketing approaches. Along with the country's strong natural and agricultural advantages, premium packaging, multilingual digital promotion, certification visibility, and brand identity are receiving growing attention and continuous development (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of International Practices and the Uzbek Context in Organic Dried Fruit Positioning³

Indicators	International Practice	Current Situation in Uzbekistan
Market positioning	Premium and value-based positioning	Mostly price-based and bulk export orientation
Certification	Visible EU Organic, USDA Organic, and GlobalG.A.P. labels	Certification exists in some cases, but communication is weak
Packaging	Eco-friendly, modern, and retail-oriented packaging	Simple packaging with limited visual differentiation
Branding	Strong brand identity and sustainability storytelling	Weak brand identity and limited storytelling
Digital marketing	Active use of e-commerce platforms, websites, social media, and reviews	Limited multilingual promotion and weak online branding
Consumer communication	Focus on health, sustainability, origin, and trust	Mostly focused on price, quantity, and basic quality indicators

The comparison shows that the main gap is not only in product quality, but also in marketing presentation, packaging design, digital visibility, and brand positioning. Therefore, Uzbek exporters should move from a production-oriented export model toward a market-oriented premium positioning strategy.

Sustainable packaging and eco-branding significantly influence consumer trust and premium product perception in organic food markets. International organic brands use eco-friendly materials, natural color schemes, and certification-oriented labeling to strengthen perceptions of product quality and environmental responsibility.

Biodegradable, recyclable, and food-safe packaging materials are increasingly used in premium organic markets to support sustainability-based positioning. Such packaging enhances brand differentiation and builds stronger emotional connections with environmentally conscious consumers.

Certification systems such as EU Organic, USDA Organic, and GlobalG.A.P. perform not only quality assurance functions, but also important trust-building and positioning roles in international organic markets. Certified products are generally perceived as safer, healthier, and more environmentally responsible than conventional alternatives.

However, certification alone is not enough for sustainable market success. It should be supported by clear certification communication, premium packaging, branding, and digital marketing strategies.

The rapid growth of international organic food markets has increased the importance of value-based positioning strategies. According to FiBL, the global organic food market exceeded 145 billion euros in 2025, while demand for sustainable and premium-quality food products continues to rise. Therefore, effective positioning strategies are essential for strengthening the international competitiveness of organic dried fruit exporters.

Premium positioning allows exporters to compete through product value, quality perception, and brand reputation rather than low prices. In organic food markets, premium products are associated with health, safety, natural production methods, and environmental sustainability.

Therefore, Uzbek exporters should emphasize product authenticity, nutritional value, ecological purity, traditional agricultural heritage, and attractive packaging. These elements increase perceived product value and support stronger premium positioning.

Eco-branding is an important strategic tool in international organic markets, as consumers increasingly prefer environmentally responsible brands. Sustainability-oriented branding, eco-labeling, and natural visual design strengthen consumer trust and influence purchasing decisions.

³ Source: Developed by the author based on comparative observations of international organic brands and Uzbek dried fruit export practices.

For Uzbek organic dried fruit exporters, eco-branding can improve international positioning by highlighting natural production traditions and ecological product characteristics. It also supports long-term brand reputation, customer loyalty, and stronger differentiation in premium market segments.

Digital technologies have significantly transformed consumer behavior in international organic markets. Consumers increasingly rely on e-commerce platforms, social media, and online reviews when evaluating organic products. Therefore, digital marketing has become an important component of international positioning strategies.

Platforms such as Alibaba and Amazon help exporters increase global visibility and communicate directly with consumers. However, many Uzbek exporters still have weak online branding and insufficient multilingual digital promotion. Therefore, strengthening digital marketing, social media communication, and e-commerce activities is a key priority for improving the global competitiveness of organic dried fruit products.

Figure 1 presents the integrated positioning model for organic dried fruit products in international markets (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Integrated positioning model for organic dried fruit products⁴

The model shows that certification, eco-branding, premium packaging, and digital marketing jointly strengthen consumer trust and international competitiveness. Thus, integrated positioning strategies are more effective than price-based competition in premium organic markets.

Table 4 presents the main marketing differences between conventional and organic dried fruit products, showing that organic products are more closely associated with premium positioning, consumer trust, certification, and sustainability-oriented marketing (Table 4).

Table 4. Marketing Differences Between Conventional and Organic Dried Fruits⁵

Indicators	Conventional Dried Fruit Products	Organic Dried Fruit Products
Price segment	Medium-market	Premium-market
Target consumers	Mass consumers	Eco-conscious consumers
Consumer trust level	Relatively lower	Higher
Certification requirements	Limited	High
Role of packaging	Functional	Strategic and value-oriented

The comparative analysis shows that organic dried fruit products have stronger advantages in premium international markets. Certification, eco-friendly packaging, and value-oriented branding play a key role in strengthening consumer trust and product differentiation.

⁴ Source: Developed by the author.

⁵ Source: Developed by the author.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study shows that effective positioning strategies play an important role in strengthening the international competitiveness of organic dried fruit products. The results confirm that certification, eco-branding, premium packaging, and digital marketing should be integrated into a unified positioning strategy rather than applied separately.

The comparison of international practices and the Uzbek context shows that the main challenge is the weak transformation of natural product advantages into strong marketing and brand value. Therefore, Uzbek exporters should move beyond price-based competition and adopt integrated value-oriented marketing strategies to achieve stronger positions in premium market segments.

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