

Exploring the Marketing Communication Strategies for the Upliftment of Rural Women Farmers in Odisha: A Study of an Empirical Sequential Method

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
SEM, Rural women farmers, Communication Strategies, Influence Factors	Several studies have been conducted to uplift the rural women farmers in Odisha. Still now an evaluation is required to determine the most efficient communication methods for reaching out to rural women farmers in the agricultural sector of Odisha. This study explores the efficient implementation of communication methods by women farmers in rural regions of Odisha. This study aims to identify the most successful factors to uplift the rural women farmers through marketing communication strategies to improve agricultural productivity. This study also tries to measure the impact on rural women farmers by integrating three major factors of rural women farmer's improvement: i) Effective Communication Methods, ii) Capacity Building and Training, iii) Partnership and Collaboration, into a conceptual framework grounded in empowerment model to improve communication and support for rural women farmers in Odisha. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) methods were employed to evaluate the study's hypotheses.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a crucial role in the rural economy of Odisha, with women farmers being integral to agricultural productivity, food security, and rural lives. A significant number of women participate in the agricultural sector, and rural women farmers have numerous hurdles related to their farming endeavours, including restricted market access, insufficient financial literacy, and a lack of marketing acumen, compounded by socio-cultural obstacles (FAO, 2018). Marketing communication has transformed into a potent tool for addressing these difficulties by enhancing visibility, establishing market connections, and encouraging women farmers to construct sustainable agribusinesses (Kumar & Mishra, 2020).

Marketing communication strategies encompass the various networks and methods employed to convey offers to a market, including traditional media, digital media, word-of-mouth, social media marketing, and direct customer involvement (Kotler & Keller, 2019). Numerous marketing communication strategies can assist women farmers in Odisha in engaging with consumers, obtaining superior market prices, and diminishing reliance on intermediaries. The converse is represented by rural farmers who, owing to the digital revolution and the advent of e-commerce platforms, now possess unfettered access to remote areas and global markets (Choudhury & Sahoo, 2021). Women farmers will have the opportunity to augment their income through the proper implementation of these techniques, thereby achieving financial independence and contributing to the socio-economic advancement of their communities.

Social media marketing constitutes a crucial commercial communication strategy for rural women farmers. They can utilize social media marketing for product promotion, brand identity establishment, and real-time client interaction. Women farmers utilize platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp Business, and Instagram to display their items through diverse images, customer recommendations, and live videos to entice purchasers (Singh & Patel, 2022). Community radios and local newspapers have significantly contributed to informing farmers about market trends, government initiatives, and optimal agricultural practices in regional languages such as Odia (FAO, 2020). These outreach strategies ensure efficient information distribution to farmers with restricted access to digital technologies



Moreover, capacity-building initiatives focused on financial literacy, branding, and product positioning would equip women farmers with the essential abilities to implement marketing communication strategies (Mohanty, 2021). The collaboration with governments and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) will further strengthen women's access to markets by providing collective bargaining power and reducing logistical challenges. The Odisha government's initiatives, such as "Mission Shakti", which seek to empower rural women through financial and marketing assistance, have significantly contributed to this area (Government of Odisha, 2022). The marketing communication tactics have numerous prospects; nevertheless, hurdles to their implementation include limited digital literacy, elevated transit expenses, and inadequate infrastructure.

There are tremendous opportunities in a marketing communication strategy, but there are challenges, such as limited digital literacy, high transportation costs, and inadequate market infrastructure (NABARD, 2021). Therefore, it should have a multi-stakeholder approach involving government agencies, NGOs, private sector participation, and the community. An ecosystem supporting women farmers through marketing can unleash the rural economy's potential and initiate gender-inclusive development in Odisha. Thus, the present study investigates the marketing communication strategies that can uplift rural women farmers of Odisha, documenting best practices and case studies with policy recommendations for a more sustainable and equitable agricultural sector.

Marketing communication acts as a bridge between the producers and consumers and ensures that women farmers are made aware not only of the best farming practices and government schemes, but also of direct access to local and national markets (Kotabe & Helsen, 2020). Rural women are mainly engaged in the cultivation of rice and millet, production of organic farming, etc., and dairy activities in Odisha, but the absence of marketing knowledge and restricted channels of communication do not enable them to reap the benefits. In this case, effective marketing communication strategies would be a means through which women could market their products, secure better prices, and reach larger consumer segments.

Despite these advances, interferences remain: digital illiteracy, infrastructure inadequacies, and gender hindrances. Therefore, a multi-pronged approach that will combine traditional, digital, and policy-led marketing communication strategies is essential for the empowerment of rural women farmers. Communications concerning the marketing of agricultural products are vital to the empowerment of women farmers in rural areas of Odisha, fostering economic independence, social equity, and agricultural sustainability. By using digital facilities, government initiatives, and local marketing strategies, women farmers can overcome the traditional hindrances, avail themselves of larger markets, and earn more. Capacity-building programs, financial literacy, market linkages, and sustainable marketing will ensure that the communication strategies remain impactful for the long-term development of women farmers in Odisha, and these should be the prime focus of upcoming interventions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural marketing in India has experienced significant growth over the past decade, prompting major multinational corporations to exploit this potential market, which comprises 70 percent of the Indian population residing in these areas. There is a discernible shift from urban to rural markets. The causes for this transition are numerous, especially the saturation of urban markets and the rapid increase in the number of rural consumers, outpacing their urban counterparts, etc. Rural marketing can also be viewed as a mechanism for economic development, with initiatives from the government, NGOs, and Self-Help Groups contributing to the advancement of these regions. Additionally, partnerships between corporations and these entities facilitate the enhancement of infrastructure and transportation. Rural marketing poses problems and opportunities for marketers, and a comprehensive grasp of these factors will facilitate the development of more profitable and effective marketing strategies.

Kumar and Dangi provide an analysis of the evolution of rural marketing in India, delineating its phases from 1960 to 1990 and post-mid-1990s. They discuss the initial identification of rural marketing with agricultural marketing, the impact of the Green Revolution, and the subsequent differentiation of rural marketing from agricultural marketing. The rural market is now transforming, as the majority of the population resides in villages and towns. It must comprehend that rural India purchases small quantities, however of high quality. Companies, despite their uncertainty in exploiting the potential of rural marketing, have recognized it as a domain of lucrative growth due to the evolving purchasing patterns of rural consumers.

In the examination of rural marketing within the development paradigm, scholars note that when multinationals initially entered the rural market to engage these consumers, their growth and efforts did not provide the anticipated outcomes. A significant disparity exists between rural and urban economies, and the interpretation of the term 'rural' varies considerably. This lack of clarity must be addressed to facilitate the strategic development of rural-urban connections. In the context of India, rural producers require encouragement and expansion (Vaswani, Aithal, & Pradhan, 2005). The research paper elucidates the factors contributing to the expansion of rural markets and advocates for their consideration as a viable growth area. These factors include a substantial consumer base, heightened awareness among rural consumers, increasing literacy rates, and advancing infrastructure.

Iyer's exploration of rural markets presents both obstacles and opportunities. The concept of rural markets is evolving and is not static in its evolution. To understand rural consumers, it is essential to recognise that their purchasing behaviour differs



from that of urban consumers. The products targeted at these consumers should offer maximum utility. Consequently, marketing strategies employed in urban areas will not be effective unless they are adapted to resonate with rural consumers. Rural Indian customers prioritise their traditional practices and beliefs. Literacy influences effective communication with them, as does the diversity of languages that varies by location (Iyer, 2010). Contemporary research on rural marketing in India indicates that fostering emotional connections and prioritising relationship-building with potential rural clients, along with creating value for them, is advantageous. Rural consumers exhibit greater brand consciousness and lack a propensity for experimentation in their purchasing decisions; therefore, novel communication strategies must be devised to engage them effectively. In rural marketing, the focus should not be solely on the rural market itself, but rather on a mindset characterised as rural. It is essential to reevaluate the misconceptions surrounding rural consumers (Raffidun & Ahmed, 2011).

A transition from urban to rural consumers is occurring as urban markets have become saturated in recent years. It has been observed that banking and credit issues, combined with market research and cultural disparities, constitute significant hurdles in rural marketing. To succeed in rural marketing, marketers must comprehend the mindset of rural consumers and establish a connection with them. To distribute products to these consumers, it is essential to create direct contact, which can be achieved through “haats” and “melas”. An exemplary instance is a “mandi”, including multiple villages from which individuals converge to purchase their products. Promotion necessitates delivery through audiovisual mediums that are readily comprehensible to the audience (Patel, 2013).

The opportunities presented by rural India for business platforms arise from the growing awareness of rural consumers, facilitated by the increasing number of internet users. The problems encountered in penetrating the rural market include the transportation of items to remote locations, the presence of underdeveloped regions, and issues related to the storage of production (Kumar & Dangi, 2013). Marketers targeting rural markets must deliberately devise their communication methods to ensure comprehension by consumers, with regional languages playing a crucial role (Shrama, 2013). The study reveals that while engaging with rural consumers, it is essential to build awareness and provide demonstrations for enhanced understanding. To address transportation distribution difficulties, organisations must utilise vans as a mode of transport and employ sales personnel willing to operate in rural areas for enhanced market penetration (Rani & Shrivastav, 2014).

Rural marketing in India and many other developing countries is increasingly intricate and challenging to comprehend. It recommends improving the comprehension of rural consumers regarding the products offered to them. Rural markets do not experience rapidly evolving trends instead brand awareness and market presence significantly affect their purchasing behaviour. Before a product launch, any company should do trial testing to gain insights and assess audience response (Singh, 2017). Thomas's study indicates that a comprehensive grasp of the marketing environment is crucial for the successful implementation of a marketing strategy in marketing management. The author emphasizes that no two villages are alike, hence each needs specific attention and understanding (Thomas, 2013).

Singh and Kumari et al. (2020) assert that in India, women constitute the bedrock of society and are an essential element of the rural and agricultural economies. They engage in many methods of sustenance and substantially contribute to domestic, allied, and agricultural development. These activities encompass agricultural cultivation, familial caregiving, animal husbandry, culinary preparation, rural entrepreneurship, commercial engagement, and domestic maintenance. Research by Nandi & Nedumaran (2021) indicates that if women attain equal access to fundamental resources and services, including credit, land, training, and representation in decision-making, their contributions to agriculture and its productivity could significantly increase. Nayak (2022) asserts that a study on the influence of media on agricultural development in Nabarangpur, Odisha, indicates that mass media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, and the internet, are crucial for informing farmers about new knowledge and technologies. The selection of communication media is vital in a country such as India, which has a low literacy rate.

Research Gap

After going through the above literature review, the following research gaps have been identified.

An assessment is necessary to identify the most effective communication strategies for engaging rural women farmers in Odisha's agricultural industry.

There is a lack of research to examine the influence of legal frameworks and Government support systems that may enhance the effectiveness of marketing communication strategies designed to empower rural women farmers in Odisha.

There is insufficient study about the impact of social networks on the adoption of marketing messages and the acceptance of innovative techniques by rural women farmers in Odisha.

Conceptual Model

The following conceptual framework is developed to empower rural women farmers in agricultural activities and economic advancements in Odisha, addressing the identified research gap. It can assess the influence of communication strategies to empower rural women farmers. The conceptual model has five major factors for assessing the effective use of marketing communication strategies: i) Digital Social Media Marketing, ii) Community-Based Marketing, iii) Influencer and Word of Mouth Marketing, iv) Traditional Media and Visual Marketing, and v) Collaboration with NGOs and Govt. Initiative. Three



other major factors for the uplift of rural women farmers: i) Effective Communication Methods, ii) Capacity Building and Training, and iii) Partnership and Collaboration. This conceptual model aims to assess the influence of all elements that would directly impact the effective utilization of marketing communication strategies. The impact of all aspects can be measured both individually and collectively on communication strategies and will demonstrate the study's hypotheses.

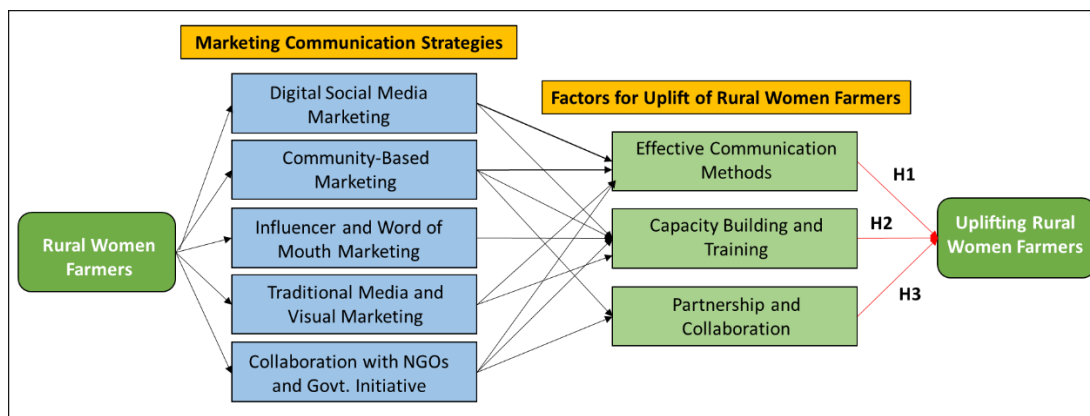


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model for Uplift of Rural Women Farmers

3. METHODOLOGY

This section of the study offers a concise summary of the many phases of research included in this study. The study aimed to examine the various underlying factors and their influence on the advancement of rural women farmers by analysing existing literature and our conceptual model. Primary data were obtained by structured questionnaires, observations, focus group discussions, and interview schedules to assess and validate the hypotheses. A five-point Likert scale was employed to evaluate the impact of rural women farmers. The questionnaire was structured and divided into sub-concepts and informal expressions. The principal variables were used in marketing communication strategies to examine their impact on women's empowerment factors, acting as the mediating variable, and to uplift rural women farmers as the dependent variable. The questionnaire comprises four sections and 45 questions, encompassing this study.

A random sampling method was employed to choose the rural women farmers for the study. Eight hundred fifty (850) questionnaires were distributed across 14 selected districts Balasore, Bargarh, Bolangir, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Raygada, Sambalpur, and Sundargarh of Odisha. The 628 sample data were collected. The required sample data was the computation formula indicated below necessitates a minimum sample size of 384.

$$\frac{\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2}}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2 N}}$$

Sample Calculation = Where N = population size, e = Margin of error (5%), z = z-score

The statistical tools are used to demonstrate the hypotheses. The study used the methodology for data management, advanced analytics, and multivariate analysis to evaluate data reliability and construct validity. The observed variable for each construct has been developed using the scale obtained from surveys. The overall reliability and validity were evaluated using "Cronbach's Alpha." The interconnections among the constructs using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were analysed and confirmed for all hypotheses.

Objective

To explore the marketing communication strategies aligning with different factors to uplift rural women farmers in Odisha.

To examine the impact of marketing communication strategies on uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha.

To demonstrate the different factors to uplift rural women farmers in Odisha.

Hypothesis

H1o: There is no significant impact of Effective Communication Methods for uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha.

H1a: There is a significant impact of Effective Communication Methods for uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha.

H2o: There is no significant impact of Capacity Building and Training on uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha.

H2a: There is a significant impact of Capacity Building and Training on uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha.



H3o: There is no significant impact of Partnership and Collaboration on uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha.

H3a: There is a significant impact of Partnership and Collaboration on uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha.

Data Analysis and Findings

The researcher performed a quantitative analysis of the data. The 628 sample data were collected from above mentioned selected districts. It used factor analysis to evaluate the usefulness of the questionnaire's form after gathering and assembling the pre-study data. The KMO and Bartlett's spherical tests were performed before the factor analysis. The principal component analysis was successful since the KMO test result was 0.894, which was close to 0.9 and demonstrated that there was no discernible variation in the degree of correlation between the variables.

Factor Analysis

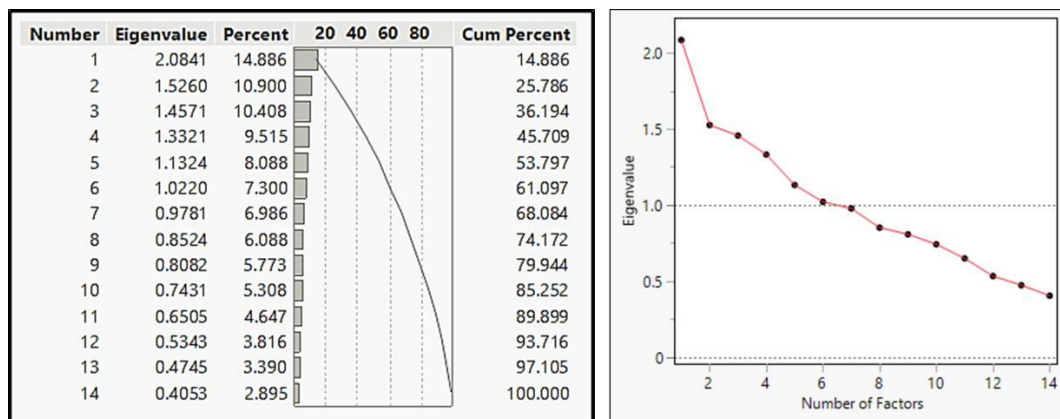


Figure 4.1: Eigenvalue and Scree Plot.

According to the factor analysis test, the findings were greater than 0.7, suggesting that the factors had a high capacity to explain the variables. After extracting nine components, the cumulative variance is nearly 60% at 79.944%. As a result, proper research on this topic was carried out using a formal questionnaire for the study.

Table 4.1: Rotation Matrix

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9
Q1	0.665201								
Q2	0.796241								
Q3	0.794191								
Q4	0.763829								
Q5	0.746267								
Q6		0.716267							
Q7		0.849904							
Q8		0.836713							
Q9		0.773758							
Q10			0.985748						
Q11			0.779523						
Q12			0.768095						



Q13			0.865295						
Q14				0.965659					
Q15				0.767941					
Q16				0.809300					
Q17				0.794223					
Q18				0.680300					
Q19					0.680300				
Q20					0.739816				
Q21					0.868267				
Q22					0.906013				
Q23						0.688383			
Q24						0.780116			
Q25						0.856125			
Q26						0.819828			
Q27						0.755224			
Q28							0.835891		
Q29							0.856721		
Q30							0.795068		
Q31							0.788383		
Q32								0.787303	
Q33								0.684223	
Q34								0.787571	
Q35								0.865700	
Q36									0.780116
Q37									0.856125
Q38									0.819828
Q39									0.904556

Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity among the variables was tested using the VIF values. Table 4.2 below displays the findings, from which one can see that the VIF values between the variables are all below 3, suggesting no major multicollinearity between the variables in this study's model and the dependability of the results.

Table 4.2: Multicollinearity test

Variables	Uplift of Rural Women Farmers VIF
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Effective Communication Method (ECM)	1.3056
Capacity Building and Training (CBT)	1.2341
Partnership and Collaboration (PAC)	1.2522

SEM Model Fit Analysis

The Model fit measures are Goodness of Fit (GoF) and R^2 scores were used to assess the predictive control of the model in this study. GoF indicators come in three levels: the lowest is 0.1, the medium is 0.25, and the highest is 0.36. The GoF is a key sign of the PLS model's goodness of fit; hence, when the model structure is simple or the sample size is small, the value of GoF should be more than 0.1 when the model complexity is medium or the sample size is medium, the value of GoF should be more than 0.25 and when the model is complex or the sample size is large, the value of GoF should be more than 0.36. With a GoF of 0.625, this model fits the data acceptably. The R^2 number, on the other hand, reflects how well the exogenous latent factors account for the variations in the endogenous latent variables. To show excellent predictive power, the Q^2 value is the main measure of the future prediction capacity of the model and should be more than 0. This value reflects the capacity of the structural model to forecast every endogenous latent variable. The need for predictive capacity was met as the outcomes from the blindfolding algorithm's Q^2 computation indicated that all endogenous variable's Q^2 values were notably higher than 0 concerning their predictive power.

Table 4.3: Degree of Model Fit

Variables	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ²
Digital Social Media Marketing (DSM)	0.786	0.779	0.281
Community-Based Marketing (CBM)	0.856	0.851	0.560
Influencer and Word of Mouth Marketing (IWM)	0.785	0.720	0.475
Traditional Media and Visual Marketing (TMR)	0.816	0.764	0.463
Collaboration with NGOs and Govt. Initiative (CNG)	0.896	0.795	0.564
Effective Communication Method (ECM)	0.843	0.789	0.439
Capacity Building and Training (CBT)	0.985	0.942	0.398
Partnership and Collaboration (PAC)	0.863	0.822	0.447
Uplifting Rural Women Farmers (URWF)	0.831	0.783	0.514

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.074	0.087
Chi-square	2385.316	2450.181
NFI	0.98	1.923

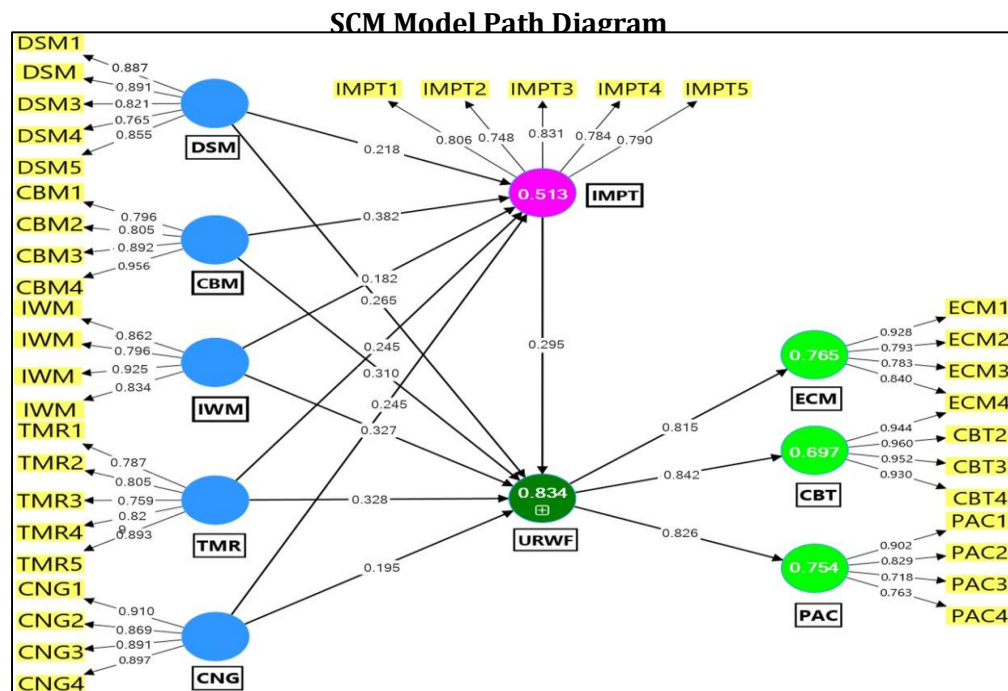


Figure 4.1: SCM Model Path Diagram

Path Coefficients

DSM -> IMPT	0.218
DSM -> URWF	0.265
CBM -> IMPT	0.382
CBM -> URWF	0.310
IWM -> IMPT	0.182
IWM -> URWF	0.327
TMR -> IMPT	0.245
TMR -> URWF	0.328
CNG -> IMPT	0.245
CNG -> URWF	0.328
IMPT -> URWF	0.295
URWF -> ECM	0.815
URWF -> CBT	0.842
URWF -> PAC	0.826

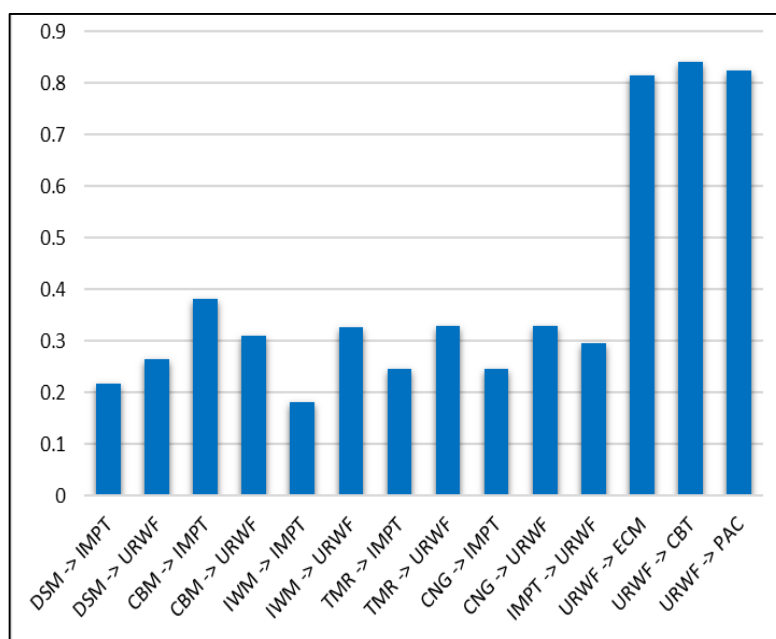


Figure 4.2 Path coefficients

Demonstrated Hypotheses

The Bootstrapping algorithm included in the SmartPLS 4.0 software was used in this study to evaluate a resampled sample of the original 628 data to examine the path test outcomes of the model. The table below shows the outcomes of the hypothesis test.

Table 4.4: Standard Regression Coefficient Test Result

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Statistics	P Value
H1	Impact of Effective Communication Methods for uplifting rural women farmers	0.815	8.641	0.001
H2	Impact of Capacity Building and Training for uplifting rural women farmers	0.842	6.729	0.000
H3	Impact of Partnership and Collaboration on uplifting rural women farmers	0.826	7.731	0.000

The outcomes of the thorough model test are displayed in the table above. Table 4 indicates a path coefficient of 0.815 ($t=8.641$, $p=0.001$, which is <0.05) significant value indicates that the null hypothesis (H1o) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1a) “There is a significant impact of Effective Communication Methods for uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha” is accepted, hence validating Hypothesis 1 (H1).

The path coefficient of 0.826 ($t=7.731$, $p=0.000$, which is <0.05) significant value, indicates that the null hypothesis (H2o) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H2a) “There is a significant impact of Capacity Building and Training for uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha” is accepted, thereby validating Hypothesis 2 (H2).

The path coefficient of 0.842 ($t=6.729$, $p=0.000$, which is <0.05) significant value, indicates that the null hypothesis (H3o) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H3a) “There is a significant impact of Partnership and Collaboration for uplifting rural women farmers in Odisha” is accepted, thereby validating Hypothesis 3 (H3).

4. CONCLUSION

All five features of Marketing Communication Strategies are i) Digital Social Media Marketing, ii) Community-Based Marketing, iii) Influencer and Word of Mouth Marketing, iv) Traditional Media and Visual Marketing, and v) Collaboration with NGOs and Govt. Initiatives are generally impacting for uplifting of Rural Women Farmers. So, it is essential to aggressively support Rural Women Farmers, improve women's human and social capital, and expand women's access to



education. Promoting rural women farmers' empowerment and improving their access to education and resources. There is a sufficient impact of social networks on the adoption of marketing messages and the acceptance of innovative techniques by rural women farmers. The influence of legal frameworks and Government support systems may enhance the effectiveness of marketing communication strategies designed to empower rural women farmers in Odisha.

Intending to build a just, equal, and harmonious environment for the survival of rural women farmers of Odisha. This paper focused on rural women farmers to find how these features influence the uplifting of rural women farmers. The findings of the study offer a fresh reference for future studies. The study, however, has limits because of personal capacity, objective material circumstances, and the epidemic. The criteria for assessing rural women farmers and features affecting i) Effective Communication Method, ii) Capacity Building and Training and iii) Partnership and Collaboration that would directly impact the effective utilisation of marketing communication strategies for uplifting rural women farmers.

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