Innovations

A Structural Analysis of Channel Selection among Tribal Vegetable Growers of Sundargarh: Preferential Antecedents and Mediating Affinity

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Abstract: *Development of tribal people is most essential element of developing tribal areas and that can be possible by enhancing their earning capacity. In this regard tribal products must be made marketable ad must increase sale, which ultimately need better channel members for transportation and sale. But, the selection of channel members from the prospective of tribal people must be studied for better accessibility and better channel relationship.* ***Purpose of the study-*** *This study intent to examine the preferential factors of tribal vegetable farmers that helps in selection of channel member for marketing and sale. This study also aimed to find the mediating role of affinity for selection of channel members.* ***Research Methodology-*** *The study followed causal research design. Primary data is collected from 494 tribal farmers across four strata of Odisha through self-structured questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling was carried out using SPSS Amos for analysis of relationship among the dependent and independent variables.* ***Findings of the study-*** *The study found that affordability, accessibility and affordability are the factors that helps to prefer the channel member for logistics and transportation, which also helps in sales and marketability. The study found that the affinity factors have a mediating role on the selection of channel members for marketing and transportation of tribal vegetable products.* ***Research implication-*** *The channel members can use this research finding to understand the preferential factors that encourage the selection of channel members and how the channel members behave hospitable in order to gain faith and work from tribal vegetable farmers.*

Key words: *Logistics, channel members, tribal farmers, tribal products.*

JEL Classification: Q10, R40.

1. Introduction

India cannot grow, if a major portion of Indian population remains in the poverty. The tribal population in India constitutes 8.6% of the total population amounting to 104 million people as per the census 2011, which was 8.2% in 2001. There is a positive growth in the population of tribal people in India but it was unfortunate that around 40.6% of tribal population remains under the marked poverty line unlike 20.5% in other case (Narain, 2019). These tribal population are deprive of food, basic health facilities and live under very under privileged atmosphere (Sinha, 2022). With this condition, the development of this community cannot be expected. Many states in India contain tribal population but the tribal population in India has not been noticed any major changes in terms of development(Dung dung & Pattanaik, 2020). The tribal population in India was isolated physically and socially without any communication channel like internet and telecommunication, which is essential for development of any class of people (Tao, 2021). No significant trade, commerce and banking activities were noticed with regard to tribal population in India. The main source of their income tends to be from agriculture and forestry products (Muga, 2022)but which turns to be insufficient and in some case remain unsold due to least marketability and inaccessible to the logistic channel members(Singh et al., 2021).

The acute food shortage in the world, which leads to food crisis, showed the importance of agriculture and allied activities to the world(Galt, 2013). Although India is sufficient for its food requirements but contribution from 8.6% of the total population is highly essential. But it has been noticed that in the absence of marketability of products and absence of channel members, the tribal population suffers to sell their products (Donkor & Hejkrlik, 2021).So it has been essential for the policy makers to make policies for better structural placement of logistic infrastructure and channel members.

Unlike any other sector, the logistic and channel members preferences in supply chain differentiate with attitude of the tribal people and this attitude are influenced by traditional factors, cultural and tribal ethical conduct along with cognitive factors (Orengo Serra & Sanchez-Jauregui, 2021). The tribal people considered being simple, trust worthy, loyal and sticking to their tribal code of conduct, which makes them different from other labors in any other sectors of the economy. So the channel members must understand the core values of the tribal people, which guide for selection of channel member and logistic infrastructure.

The tribal development can only be possible with cohesiveness from the entire stake holders, which includes tribal people, customers of their products, government, logistics partners and channel members(Ngango et al., 2022). A better logistic

system can only be sustainable, if cohesiveness is maintained among the members and the tribal peoples. This study emphasized to find the factors which affects the cohesive attitude within the trial people to prefer the channel members, so that these preferential factors must be given due consideration while making partnership with the tribal farmers.

This study made to confirms the impact of different factors like affordability; accessibility and acceptability affect the selection decision of the channel member. The affinity feeling among the tribal farmers towards the channel members also influence the selection decision of channel members.

Problem Statement

"Can preferential factors like affordability, accessibility and acceptability is influential while making channel member preference decision along with mediating influences from the affinity factors?

Objective of the study:

1. To find the preferential factors that affects the selection of logistic channel members.
2. To find the direct and indirect impact of preferential factors on the selection of logistic channel members.
3. To find the mediating impact of affinity factor in the relation between the preferential factors and selection of channel members.

Research methodology

The present study followed the philosophy of interpretivism using a deductive approach. A causal research design is used to find the effect of the independent variable and mediating variable on the dependent variable. Cross-sectional data are collected from 494 tribal farmers from 4strata of Odisha by using a stratified random sampling method. The population in this study is the tribal vegetable farmers from Odisha, as Odisha is one of the prominent tribal populated states. Observed variable are taken from different literatures and self-structured questionnaire was made to collect the responses. The observed variables represent the latent constructs, which are affordability (AFO), accessibility (ACC), acceptability (ACP), affinity (AFF) and the preferences of channel member (PCM) are based on the existing literature and the interrelations are established from the pre-existing literature. The affordability (AFO), accessibility (ACC) and the acceptability (ACP) are the primary preferential factors (PFA) as shown in the study through 2nd order confirmatory factor analysis. Both conceptual and empirical studies are taken for the above said relationship building. The questionnaire was designed with 15 questions related to preferential factors, 5 questions related to affinity factor and 3 questions related to preferences of

channel member. All responses of the 23 questions were measured by 5-point Likert scale. Covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) is applied by using Statistical Package for the Social Science-23v (SPSS-23) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). The model explains that the factors which are extracted by 1st order confirmatory factor analysis are the affordability (AFO), accessibility (ACC) and acceptability (ACP) factors. The above three constitute the preferential factor (PFA) as shown in the measurement model. The model again explains that the preferential factor affect directly to the preferential selection of channel member and also have indirect mediating impact through the affinity factors. Model fitting parameters is test to find the best fit. The parameters are CMIN/DF, GFI, RMR, AGFI, PGFI, TLI, IFI, CFI and RMSEA, which are tested. The validity and reliability is tested for the latent construct. The internal consistency or the reliability is checked by scale reliability test on the basis of the value of Cronbach's alpha and through composite reliability. The accuracy or the validity of the latent construct was tested through convergent validity and discriminant validity The convergent validity is tested through cross loading technique and discriminant vality is tested through the value of average variance explained (AVE). Common method biases are tested through Herman's one-factor test. The inter-relationship was identified and validated through literature.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1 (H1)- The different preferential factors (PFA) significantly affects the preference of channel members of the investors (PCM).

Hypothesis 2 (H2)- The different affinity factors (AFF) significantly affect the preference of channel members of the investors (PCM).

Hypothesis 3 (H3)-The different preferential factors (PFA) significantly affects affinity factors (AFF) of tribal people.

List of Variable for Measurement Model

Table 1. Sources and variable taken in the questionnaire for data collection and for analysis in the measurement as well as structural model.

Table 1.			
Sl.	**Observed Variables**	**Latent Constructs**	**References**
1	AFO-1- I will prefer middleman who can purchase bulk quantity of vegetable at a time	Affordability	(Aramyan et al., 2021; Badraoui et al., 2020; Henriksson
2	AFO-2- I will prefer middleman who charges less transportation cost		

3	AFO-3- I need better price for my farming goods		et al., 2021; Jiao et al., 2020)
4	AFO-4- Return on my investment has to increase year by year		
5	AFO-5- I need partnership investment from middleman for growing vegetables		
6	AFO-6- Credit facility from middleman can be a great thing		
7	ACC-1- Middleman must report on quick calls	Accessibility	(Cortiñas et al., 2019; Goyal, 2020; van Heck et al., 2022)
8	ACC-2- Middleman can able to come to remote location or place of farming		
9	ACC-3- Channel member must have knowledge about the e-logistic facility		
10	ACC-4- Can help the tribal farmers to store product		
11	ACC-5- Can help in procurement of seeds and fertilizers		
12	ACP-1- The channel member must support the farming	Acceptability	(Barr & Reid, 2014; Cheo et al., 2022; Ouma et al., 2020)
13	ACP-2- The channel member must create brand value for tribal product		
14	ACP-3- Land lease facility must be provide by the channel member to create tribal agricultural products		
15	ACP-4- Channel member must explore new market to sale tribal agricultural products		
16	AFF-1- The should be coordination between the farmers and the channel members	Affinity	(Erwin & Sturm, 2022; Greaves, 2021; Suresh, 2010)
17	AFF-2- Interaction between the farmers and channel members is necessary for farmers		
18	AFF-3- Channel members must respect the culture and traditions of the tribal people		
19	AFF-4- There has to interpersonal trust between the channel member and tribal farmers		
20	AFF-5- The farmers and tribal people must behave friendly and cordially.		

21	PCM-1-I will prefer channel member instead of selling product directly in the market	Preference for Channel Member	(Caldas & Christopoulos, 2021; Comini et al., 2022; Confente et al., 2021)
22	PCM-2- I am satisfied with the facilities provided by my channel member.		
23	PCM-3- The current channel members satisfy my requirements in selling my products		

Sample and Respondent Profile

SI	Variable	Respondent
a.	Age Group *(Below 20)*	9
b.	Age Group *(21-30)*	265
c.	Age Group *(31-40)*	97
d.	Age Group *(41-50)*	69
e.	Age Group *(51-60)*	48
f.	Age Group *(Above 60)*	6
g.	Gender *(Male)*	342
h.	Gender *(Female)*	152
i.	Qualification *(Below Standard 5)*	21
j.	Qualification *(Under Matriculation)*	164
k.	Qualification *(Above Matriculation & Below Intermediary)*	207
l.	Qualification *(Above Intermediary)*	102
m.	Monthly Income *(Less than Rs. 5000)*	189
n.	Monthly Income *(5001-10000)*	80
o.	Monthly Income *(10001-15000)*	114
p.	Monthly Income *(15001-20000)*	64
q.	Monthly Income *(20001-25000)*	37
r.	Monthly Income *(Above 25001)*	10

Literature Review

70% of India's population stays in the rural part of the country. So development of rural areas is imperative for growth of the economy. India's rural part is often divided into different region based on caste, creed and ethnicity. Major ethnicities among them are schedule caste of people and the schedule tribes that live in different parts of it. India's governments have taken many steps for development of these tribes and bring them to the main frame of Indian societal culture. Yet the person of this ethnicity tends to stay in their local periphery and hardly indulge in

occupation mainly other than farming. So development of this clan needs support for their agricultural and allied activities. Due to lack of knowledge and financial information, they were exploited (Altenbuchner et al., 2016). So, inclusive support, cooperation and development is needed in order to improve the livelihood of the people (Fikar & Leithner, 2021).

The tribal people are more indulged in agricultural sector for their earning but yet to find better standard of living from their earning out of the agro sector. This is mainly because of exploitation of channel members and disability to sale to ultimate buyers. So a generous and effective channel members and marketing channel must present viewing the requirement and preferences of the tribal farmers for inclusive and sustainable growth (Nxumalo et al., 2019). The requirements might be rational in nature and behavioral or attitudinal in nature (Comini et al., 2022)g. The study found many preferential factors that affects the selection of the channel members are the affordability, accessibility and the acceptability factors(Caldas & Christopoulos, 2021), where the farmers being human, are affected by the affinity factors for their channel and channel members selection. The rational preferential factors like affordability, acceptability and the accessibility are the results of cognitive dimensions and the affinity factors are the result of the affective components, which create attitude and this attitude ultimately deicide the channel members selection procedure. Financial literacy can be more beneficial for the tribal people. Efforts must be made to educate the tribal relating to finances and its utilization for a sustainable future stance (Nanda & Samanta, 2018).

Preferential factors and selection of channel members

The basic preferential factor that affect the cognitive side of any tribal brain towards selection of logistic channel members are the affordability factors, the acceptability factor and the accessibility factors. The transformation of channel members to network coordination has been the changing perspective for the distribution management (Andersson et al., 2015). The new preferences of the tribal people does not limit with the good payment but coordination and channel management for better customer reach and visibility of tribal farm products (Gadde, 2020). The changing required expects versatile ability of the channel members not just to help financially but requires collaboration, accessibility and emotion based ethical support (Zhijing, 2021). The channel members with information like the weather forecast, credit availability and government support are given more priority as these impact the farms' productivity (Henriksson et al., 2021)and increase acceptability of channel members among the farmers. Cooperation and co-innovation is the new requirement of the tribal people in regard to the support of the channel members (Fieldsend et al., 2021). Innovation in terms of products and value chain is needed for future growth of the tribal people. Channel members can act as financial

agencies for giving integrated financial support and the value chain for higher production and branding the tribal products (Patil et al., 2016). Feedback and information sharing must be introduced by the channel members, so that transparency can be maintain and social values can be delivered as per the feedback of the customers (Gelderman et al., 2020). Supply chains with the idea of agro tourism can influence the communication between the farmers and consumers for a sustainable relationship (Choenkwan et al., 2016).

Affordability and selection of channel members

The financial position of the tribal people often seems to be very perilous. Many of the tribal people considered to be in the zone of below poverty level, which mean, they do not have enough for their basic necessities. In this regard the major aspect, while selection of the channel member depends on the affordability factors, which includes, better prices for their product from the channel member, less carriage cost for transportation, bulk purchase for ample sell and higher return on their investment. (Düvel, 1994) illustrated that the tribal community and the leaders support those, who can give better return for the tribal products along with collaborations.(Kumar & Jain, 2002) found from their study that better prices for their product attracts the tribal people and bring leniency towards their selection decision. Feasible analysis must be done by the channel member to find suitable price for the tribal product. In this way channel member can procure better earning for the tribal people (Herman, 2021). Collaboration among the channel members and the producers always helps in producing more products and can help to make more profitable business (Badraoui et al., 2020). Financial collaboration as well as logistics and storage collaboration not only help the tribal farmers to make more farming product but also can help in storage and sending the products to ultimate consumers with least time, so that product perishing nature of farm products can be avoided. The channel members with waste reduction mechanism and tech oriented operating procedure not only reduce the food wastages but can give a better return on long term scenario (Aramyan et al., 2021). So technology sound channel members can improve the earning capacity. Financial support like credit facility and help in acquiring water facilities and seeds at an affordable rate also make the rural household to trust and accept the channel members (Jiao et al., 2020).

Accessibility and selection of channel members

Most of the tribal people still live in the difficult terrain like mountains and jungles areas of remote India. Sometime the accessibility is a larger problem for those tribal people. So the accessibility has been another issue for the tribal farmers, which needed to be dealt with. Farmers preferred channel members, those, who can deliberately reach to the remote areas, can procure at the harvesting time without

any sort of delay as there is almost no facilities to store the product in the remote places(Goyal, 2020). Tribal farmers also prefer the channel members with storage facilities, so that surplus products must be stored to release in the scarcity time. Tribal people mainly trust those, who helps them for getting their livelihood requirements (Shit & Pati, 2012). So the channel members can gain trust by helping them to get seeds for farming and fertilizers. So, people must try to outreach to make professional attempts to improve the livelihood of the tribal people, especially farmers for a sustainable future (Singletary et al., 2016). Searching new market help the farmers to sell large amount of product to a large mass of people. The channel members must take initiation to search markets other than regular to boost sell of tribal farmers (Pomare, 2018). Sometimes a non-commercial conversation is needed time to time between the channel members and tribal people, so that trust deficit can be reduced and the tribal people can feel that the member is more accessible (Pathak & Pathak-Shelat, 2017).It's not only the physical presence of channel member matters for the tribal farmers but electronic presence and responsiveness to their query also concerns them. In this way the people who are accessible through electronic forms and through internet are seems to be more accessible. The members must also make the tribal people sounder in the electronic medium of communication to enhance the communication and accessibility (Roy, 2006). The omni-channel behavior of the channel members at store as well as in online platforms to have product accessibility will enhance its reach to the customers (Cortiñas et al., 2019). This omni-channel behavior attracts the tribal farmers as they can sell their products through the channel members to a wide variety of customers. Export logistic infrastructure must be there with the channel member for better visibility and better accessibility from producers and consumers (Olyanga et al., 2022).The channel members with digital supports can create reports, blogs and chats can also reach max customers within less time and with cost efficiency (van Heck et al., 2022). These channel members can also be seen as great marketers of tribal farming products.

Acceptability and selection of channel members

The simple living of the tribal people made them vulnerable to modern challenges, so they need support from the channel members to support them financially, technically and also to marketable their product by creating a brand out of the product, so that their sell can be sustainable (Barua et al., 2021). Sometimes they need finances for farming, land leasing and explore new market to sell their tribal product. This support system from the channel members enhances the acceptability of people for the channel members on a long run. (Vieira, 2010) evidenced from his study that relationship must prevail between the farmers, middleman and ultimate consumer for creation of brand for better marketability, which ultimately helps in

sells(Barr & Reid, 2014). So, relationship showing the affinity value must be built for greater reach among the consumers. Making the farmers financially stable and technically sound is a must step for the channel members for development of farmers in long run (Kalantari & Akhyani, 2021). Farmers often choose people, with better financial and technical knowledge (Raj, 2013). The credibility of the channel members in the society and in the market often raises the acceptability chances. So customer relationship and customers perfection in the society is also a parameter for farmers to select the channel members (Meir & Scott, 2007). People with supporting hands for the community development often seen with a hopeful eyes, so the channel members must support tribal livelihood development for better visibility among them (Cova & Cova, 2002). The channel members who helps in livelihood diversification are also trusted by the tribal people (Sanga & Ranjan, 2014).Branding the tribal product will make them more visible in the competitive market and more acceptable in public (Taute & Sierra, 2014). The channel member, who acts for branding the tribal products taken as important partners (Ruane & Wallace, 2015). Prosocial attitude among people are turned to be more acceptable and become good leaders (Cheo et al., 2022). So the channel members must posses prosocial attitude to lead the tribal people and create better livelihood for them. The channel members with innovative developing transport facility and marketing factors are mostly accepted by the farmers so that they can sell more (Ouma et al., 2020). The service quality from the channel members is also very important for its acceptability and preferential perception of the tribal farmers (Restuputri et al., 2021).

Affinity factors and selection of channel members

The tribal peoples are very much emotionally driven. They tends to believe those, with whom they are emotionally connected. They affection between the tribal and the channel members must flourish, which ultimately affect the selection decision of the channel members. The people with supporting objectives to save the forest and the tribal lives are trusted by the tribal people. So people, who win trust create affinity factor, with whom the tribal people often to have business with(Suresh, 2010). As tribal people are low in their educational background, so educating or making them aware about the trends outside of their living zone are the needs for those. In this regard those, who can educate them are often trusted, which even create affinity among them (Mitra & Singh, 2008). The channel member must know the tribal ethics, tribal feeling to find the favors and businesses from the tribal people (Goulding et al., 2013). A sense of membership or a sense of belongingness among the tribal people develop a sense of reliability towards channel members(Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). Preferences of a person change with its emotional value. So, a decision with emotional value is treated as firmed decision (Greaves, 2021). So it is necessary for any channel member to create affectionate relationship to make business relation

sustainable. Emotions often create respect; build trust, nurture sympathy and empathy, which strengthen any relation (Erwin & Sturm, 2022). The tribal people are considered to be more emotional and can build value based relationship with those persons with similar traits. Channel members must create a conducive environment to reduce perceived risk, so that the brand value of the tribal products and the channel members credibility to stay intact (Confente et al., 2021). Farmers participation is also required in the supermarket channels and production technology to build trust and cordiality to improve efficiency (Rao et al., 2012).

Empirical analysis and result

In both explorative factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, the reliability which represents the internal consistency and the validity which represents the accuracy of the latent variable or the factor must be tested before testing their relationship. The study tested the reliability through scale reliability and composite reliability and the values for the both parameter must be above .70, which represent 70% reliable. The standardized Cronbach's Alpha, which is a measure of scale reliability, is found to be .916, which means the scale is 91.6% reliable, taking the 23 observed variables. The factor analysis was used to explore 5 factors out of 23 variables using the dimension reduction technique by the help of principle component analysis and rotated component matrix. The five factors are the affinity factor (AFF), the preferences of channel member factor (PCM) and the affordability factor (AFO), the acceptability factor (ACP) and the accessibility factor (ACC). Each factor extracted, posses Eigen value more than one. The sample adequacy is tested by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics and its shows that the data is 91.4% adequate as the value is 0.914

Table 2 Validity of Constructs of the Measurement Model

Scale Items of the Constructs	Literature Sources	Standardized regression weight	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	AFF	PCM	PFA
Affinity (AFF)	(Erwin & Sturm, 2022; Greaves, 2021; Suresh, 2010)		0.868	0.573	0.244	0.892	**0.757**		
AFF 1		0.734							
AFF 2		0.772							
AFF 3		0.839							
AFF 4		0.535							
AFF 5		0.861							
Preference	(Caldas &		0.769	0.532	0.181	0.823	0.399	**0.729**	

of Channel Members (PCM)	Christopoulos, 2021; Comini et al., 2022; Confente et al., 2021)								
PCM 1		0.874							
PCM 2		0.653							
PCM 3		0.636							
Preferential Factors (PFA)	(Aramyan et al., 2021; Badraoui et al., 2020; Cheo et al., 2022; Cortiñas et al., 2019; Goyal, 2020; Ouma et al., 2020)		0.777	0.544	0.244	0.828	0.494	0.425	**0.738**
AFO		0.743							
ACP		0.571							
ACC		0.869							

CR—Composite Reliability, AVE—Average Variance Extracted, and MSV—Maximum Shared Variance.

The confirmatory factor analysis was used to find the connection between variables(Hoyle & Isherwood, 2013). The measurement model (figure 1) was drawn on the basis of 2nd order factor analysis, where the affordability factors (AFO), acceptability factors (ACP) and the accessibility (ACC) factors merged to form a common constraint known as the preferential factor (PFA). Another parameter to test the reliability of the latent variables, the composite reliability or the CR values is found to be 0.868 for affinity factors, 0.769 for preference of channel member factors and 0.777 for preferential factors, which is above the accepted values as shown in the table 2 (Gefen et al. 2000; Hair et al. 2017; Sani et al. 2019). The above values in table 2 are taken for sufficing the reliability and the validity of the constructs (PFA, PCM and AFF). The validity of the constructs are also tested on the basis of the convergent and discriminant validity. From the rotated component matrix, it was found that the cross loading values of the observed variables give high loading to its respected construct and less to others.AVE and MSV are used to measure the convergent validity of the above-mentioned constructs, which shows that the observed variables converge to their respective factor(Marsh et al., 2004). For validation of the model requires the AVE value to be above 0.500 for each factor(Almén et al. 2018; Hair et al. 2012). The AVE of AFF, PCM and PFA are 0.573, 0.532 and 0.544, respectively, which are above 0.50. The maximum shared variance

value (MSV) , should be less than AVE value for the factor validation (Almén et al. 2018; Byrne 2010; Hair et al. 2012). To find the common method bias (the common method variance), Harman's one-factor test was used (Harman 1961) to ensure the validity of all the extracted factors (Sharma et al., 2009).The cumulative percentage of extraction sum of squared loading is 36.22%, which is below 50%, which shows that there is no common method biases (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

Co-variance based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) is used to find the relationship but before the structural model the measurement model is tested to be in accordance with the model fit parameters. The other parameter for a good measurement models are the CMIN/DF value, the RMR value, GFI, AGFI, PGFI, NFI, IFI, TLI and RMSEA values(Marsh et al., 2004; Raykov et al., 1991). The Chi-squared value or the CMIN/DF value is 1.97, which should be under 2(Schreiber et al. 2006;Almén et al. 2018). The Root-Mean-Square Residual (RMR) is 0.055, which should be under 0.060(Hu and Bentler 1999;Arbuckle 2007), the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is 0.928, which should be above 0.900 (Almén et al. 2018;Schreiber et al. 2006). The Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.912, which should be above 0.900 (Hu and Bentler 1999;Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993)and the Parsimony-Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI) is 0.753, which should be above 0.750 (Schreiber et al. 2006;Tanaka 1987). The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is 0.935, which should be above 0.900 the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) is 0.967, which should be above 0.950, the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.962, which should be above 0.950(Hu and Bentler 1999;Schreiber et al. 2006)and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.967, which should be above 0.950 (Hu and Bentler 1999;King et al. 2000). The Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.045, which should be under 0.050 (Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006). These values are in accordance with accepted norms.

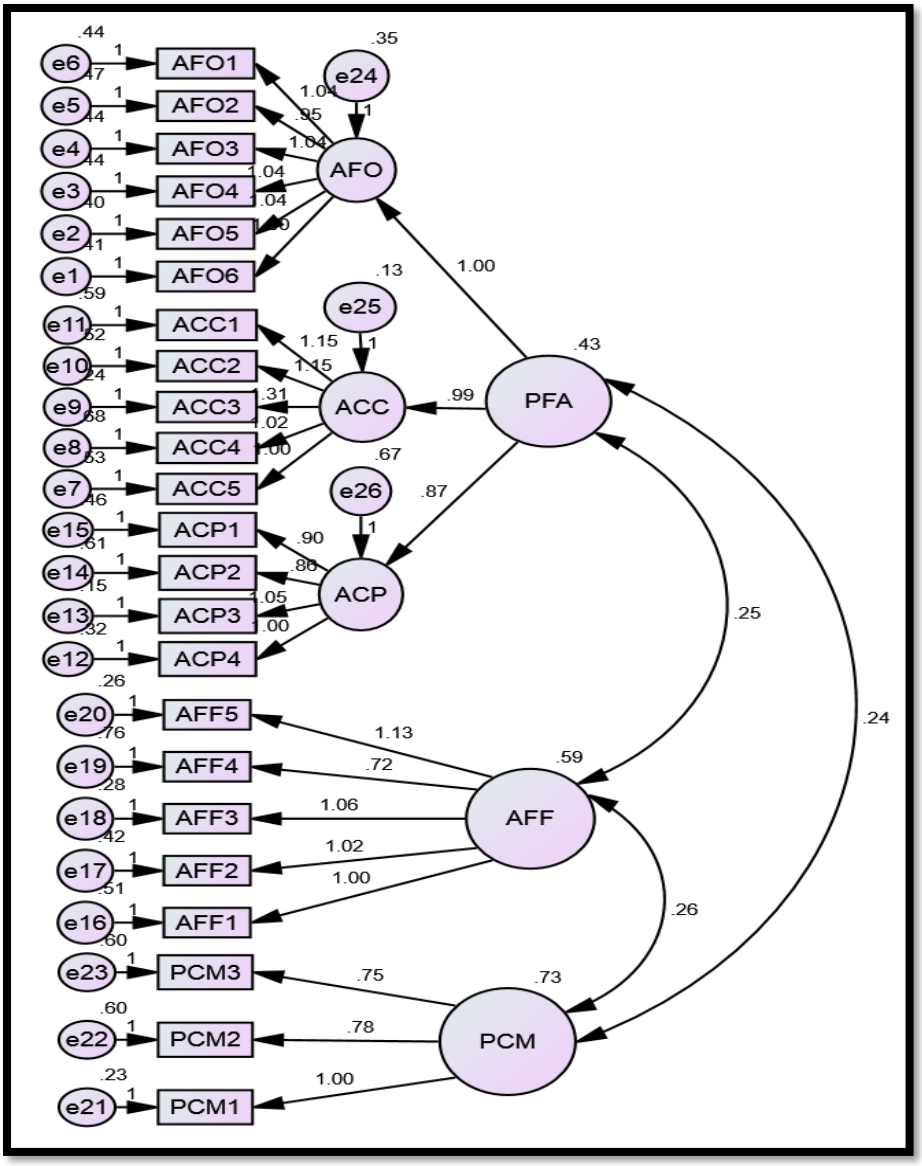

Figure 1

As the measurement is correct, the study can go for the structural model. The structural model is used to find the relationship between variables and more precisely the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The mediating impact of the mediating variable is also tested through the structural model. The structural model showed the direct effect of the preferential factors on the preferential selection of the channel member, the mediating impact of the affinity factors on the channel member selection decision and the impact of preferential factors on the affinity factors.

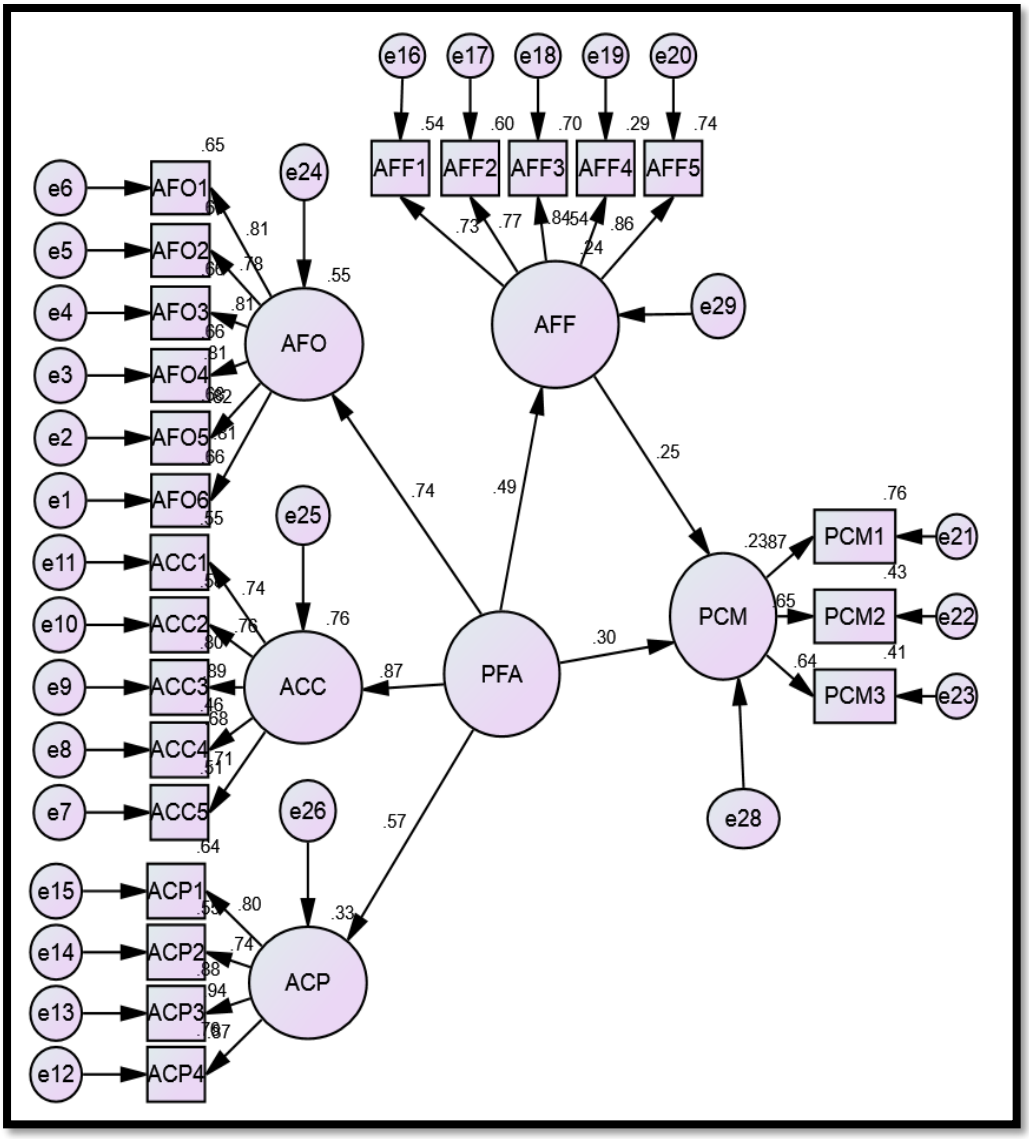

Table 3. Description of Hypotheses Relating to the Structural Model										
Sl. No.	**Hypo-theses**	**Dependence On**			**Estimate**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**	**Standardized Regression Weight**	**Remarks on Hypotheses**
1	H1	PCM	<--	PFA	0.394	0.086	4.570	***	0.301	Supported
2	H2	PCM	<--	AFF	0.278	0.066	4.180	***	0.251	Supported
3	H3	AFF	<-	PFA	0.584	0.071	8.243	***	0.494	Supported

Table 3. Description of Hypotheses Relating to the Structural Model										
Sl. No.	**Hypo-theses**	**Dependence On**			**Estimate**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**	**Standardized Regression Weight**	**Remarks on Hypotheses**
			-							

*** represent .000, which means p value or the significance value is .000.

The preferential factors affect the preferences in selection of channel members by approximately 39% (standardized regression weight is 0.394), as shown in the above table 3, so hypothesis 1 (H1) is supported. The affinity feeling, which shows the affective components have an positive effect of approximately28% (standardized regression weight is 0.278) on the preferential section of channel member as shown in the above table 3, so Hypothesis 2 (H2) is supported. The preferential factors create the feeling of affinity because it affects the affinity factor by approximately 58% (standardized regression weight is 0.584), as shown in the above table 3, so Hypothesis 3 (H3) is supported. All the effects are positive and significant as the significance or the P value is .000, which is under 0.05 (Rebelo-Pinto et al., 2014).

Discussion

With an intention to find the preferential factors that affect the selection of channel members by tribal farmers and to examine the effect of these preferential factors on their selection decision, the study took two step to reach out for the inferences. Various literature are studied to find the preferential factors that comes to the mind of the tribal farmers before making the decision relating to selection of channel members to find the relationship among them. The literatures and views from experts in this field furnished that, the affordability (AFO), accessibility (ACC), acceptability (ACP) and the affinity (AFF) are the factors that affect the decision taking capacity of the tribal farmers (Leroux et al., 2010), when it comes in relation to selection of channel members. The literatures again suffices that, affordability (AFO), accessibility (ACC) and acceptability (ACP) are the primary preferential factors that directly concerns the selection decision (Pennings & Wansink, 2004) and the affinity factors both directly affect the selection decision as well as have a mediating impact on the relationship between the preferential factors and the preferential decision of channel members (Zhijing, 2021). Here the preferential channel member decision making is taken as a dependent variable, which is affected by the independent variable, which is the preferential factors that composed of affordability (AFO), accessibility (ACC) and acceptability (ACP)

factors. The affinity factor here considered being the mediating variable, that accelerate the impact of preferential factors, while selecting the channel member. The study, from the drawn inferences from the structural equation model and showed that the affordability factors, which enhances earning, credit acquiring capacity (Chandio et al., 2021) and sale (Ibnu et al., 2018), the accessibility factor, which represent the accessible nature, omni presence logistics (Kembro et al., 2018) and support from the channel member and the acceptability factor which represent the marketability and branding capacity creating brand value are the preferential factors (Ranjan, 2017), while making the channel member selection decision. The study again found that the affinity or the affective or the emotional bondage between the channel member and tribal farmers often makes the differences. The emotional bonding with the preferential factors makes a huge impact, while section of channel members. The study showed that the affinity is an important indicator, which amplifies the effect of the preferential factor. So the channel members, those who needs to engage with tribal farmers must concern about the earning of the tribal farmers, should increase the marketability of the tribal products, must support the tribal in their farming, be accessible at their calls, should find new market for the sale of products, should brand the tribal products for high visibility among large number of customers, must have its presence in greater places and lastly must have emotional behavior like respecting to the tribal, understand the tribal life and their ethos for building long term commercial relationship.

Industrial implications, limitation and future research scope

Sustainable livelihood depends on good and continuous earning and the earning depends on the uninterrupted business activities. The business is just not limited to the producer or suppliers and the consumers but in the modern day, the importance of the logistic channels cannot be ignored. So, just not the relationship among the producer and the consumer is essential to examine but the relationship between the channel members and the producer is also imperative to understand, especially in case of tribal farmers. The study will be helpful to the channel members to identify, the factors that is in the mind of the tribal farmers before taking the selection decision for its channel participants. The study will help to understand the affordability factors, the acceptability factors and the acceptability factors, which creates preferential perceptual value among the tribal farmer for the channel member and the affinity factors, which shows the emotional requirement of the tribal farmers, while making the selection decision. So, for a long term and uninterrupted business relationship the channel members must adhere to the required value of the tribal people.

The study is limited to the tribal people of Odisha. It has taken the districts and places with higher density of tribal people. However, difference inferences can be

drawn, while taking samples from other different tribal states. This model can also be tested at different scenarios with different other trial areas and with a greater sample.

6.0 Conclusion

The industry cannot create protracted business relationship by standing in its own ground, continuing with own ideology and fulfilling their own interest. But it should understand the requisite and compliances of each stake holders. The study showed that, unlike any other producers, the tribal farmers are more emotional driven. Their emotional values are most considerable indicators before making any relationship. Along with that they tend to select those channel participants, which can increase their productivity, earning and their livelihood. The farming relation support, the financial support and the support in the way of physical accessibility strengthen their trust for the channel members. The outcome of the study will help the channel member to understand the requirements of the tribal farmers, while selecting them as their channel support. With this understanding the channel member can modify their strategies to engage the business relationship with the tribal farmers and with both their efforts they can uplift the standard of living and can build a sustainable business environment.

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