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Research Article

Women Entrepreneurship and Ambidextrous Approach: An Analytical study of Right-Handed and Left-Handed Lead Self-Help Groups in Uttarakhand

Mahak Makhija[1], Akanksha Rawat[2] and Prof. H C Purohit[3]

[1]Research Scholar School of Management, Doon University, Dehradun

[2]Research Scholar School of Management, Doon University, Dehradun

[3]Dean, School of Management, Doon University, Dehradun

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Corresponding author: Mahak Makhija *(hcpurohit24@gmail.com)

Abstract: India is a country with a rural population, and the majority of its population resides in the villages to achieve the target of Vision Viksit Bharat'by 2047 it is imperative to ensure the development of its villages. The rural economy is run by women, it consists of almost half of the social strata. Rural women are key stakeholders in the economic, social, and sustainable development of a country. A Self- help group (SHG) is an initiative to empower the poor and marginalized section of society started by the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). It helps to provide financial assistance to the entrepreneurs, enhance their capacity and skill to run the entrepreneur, and an opportunity to overcome entrepreneurial obstacles. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural livelihood mission (DAY- NRLM) and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) are major initiatives by Ministry of rural development to alleviate poverty. About 9.98 crore women households have constituted 90.39 lakh SHGs. In the current interim budget of the Government of India for the financial year 2024-25 a unique scheme "Lakhpati Didi" has been launched. It is one of the aspiring schemes under SHGs to provide financial coverage and promote women's entrepreneurship in society. Uttarakhand State Government is also very particular for promotion women entrepreneurship and self-help groups in the State. The success of an SHGs mainly depends on market orientation and dynamic exploratory capabilities. The study focuses on the performance of 250 SHGs working in four districts of Uttarakhand, the performance is measured on market orientation and dynamic exploratory capabilities. This is the first paper to empirically investigating the significant effect of ambidexterity on firm performance. The finding of the study indicates the role of each dimension for promotion of women SHGs in the State.

Keywords: Women Self-Help Groups, Rural Development, Market Orientation, Dynamic Capabilities, Entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

Developed India ―Viksit Bharat‖ is the new journey for the nation in the category of developed country by 2047, the century year of its independence (Suthar. S. R., 2024). The government proposed a roadmap for development is all-round, all-pervasive, and all-inclusive. A medium-term growth strategy proposed by the finance minister focusing on private capital formulation, public-private partnership for green transition, MSME support, sustainable agriculture, targeted education and skill policies (Economic survey 2023-24). The vision is grouped into four major pillars in the 2024 budget: Garib (poor), Mahilayen (women), Yuva (youth), and Annadata (farmer). The strategy aims towards transforming India into a developed country by 2047 in terms of green economy, industry, energy, agriculture, infrastructure services and cities (Solkar and Patil, 2024). The country's inclusive growth, bridges the urban-rural divide, access to education and healthcare, promotes social equality and empowerment of marginalized communities. India is a diverse nation with a rich cultural heritage, rituals, and historical background with wide disparity in socio-economic development (Das, A., 1999; Mundhe, E. 2024). The vision of Viksit Bharat emphasizes the importance of social development for the nation's holistic development. According to the World Bank, around 65% of the population resides in rural areas and relies on agriculture in the absence of employment opportunities (Indwar, 2024). A sophisticated and heterogeneous approach is required to tackle the numerous challenges and take advantage of opportunities in the future in order to drive the socio-economic growth of India. The financial inclusion plan and the self-help group linkage program are major initiatives aimed at enhancing the economic conditions of rural people (Saravanan, V. et. al., 2024). As per the Economic Survey Report of 2022-23, more than 12 million SHGs are registered out of which 88% of SHGs are held by women. SHGs Programme provides loan for various situations like food insecurity (sickness, disease, emergencies, and crises), empowerment of participants, economic independence of rural women, microfinance, and rural development. SHGs contribute in various ways such as training of Swarozgaris, infrastructure development, marketing & technology support, communication level of members, self-confidence, change in family violence, change in saving pattern, involvement in politics, achieving social harmony and justice,

community action, sustainability, accountability, equity within SHGs, defaults and recoveries of loans, and financial sustainability (Sundaram, A. 2012). In the current interim budget of the Government of India for the financial year 2024-25 a unique schemes ― Lakhpati Didi has been launched. It is one of the aspiring scheme under SHGs to provide financial coverage and promote women's entrepreneurship in society. Ambidexterity is a prominent theory to flourish the Self help group performance for short-term and long-term perspectives. This theory proposed the relationship between exploration and exploitation to improve firm performance (Menguc and Auh 2006). Dynamic (Exploration) and marketing (Exploitation) capabilities are two different approach of ambidexterity associate with betterment of firm performance. Sustainability of a firm depends on exploitation of its current strength as well as exploring new area for expertise (He & Wong, 2004). Ambidexterity is hard to maintain jointly as exploitation and exploration are two contrary capabilities (David, 2016). On the basis of empirical studies, few researches have been reported that dynamic and marketing capabilities positively influence firm performance (He & Wong, 2004). The synergistic relationship between dynamic and marketing capabilities with the firm performance, SHGs is a powerful initiative for uplifting the marginalized people and sustainable development to accomplish the ultimate goal ―Vision Viksit Bharat.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ambidexterity

March (1991) proposed organisation learning using knowledge to manage its present activities (exploitation) and generate new possibilities (exploration) to gain competitive advantage (Tirado, et. al., 2019; Junni et. al., 2013). The term organisational ambidexterity was coined by Tushman and O'Reilly in 2004 which referred to the ability of an organization to pursue both ―incremental (exploitative) or discontinuous (explorative)‖ innovation for sustain success over a period of time. Incremental innovations concentrated on exploiting existing capabilities for profit on the other hand, discontinuous innovation focused on exploring new opportunities for growth. Further, Evolutionary change as increment in structure, process and culture for short term success. Simultaneously, Revolutionary change as discontinuous environmental change for long term success (Junni et. al., 2013). Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) stated ambidexterity significantly mediates the relationship between contextual features pertaining to stretch, discipline, support, and trust and performance. The study takes into consideration the goal of achieving alignment and adaptability. Each perspective describe the two form Dynamic capability and marketing capability ambidexterity concept exploitation is old certainties and exploration of new possibilities of risk taking.

From the past studies we can conclude that, capabilities of a firm helps to achieve its strategic goals by integrating knowledge and skills with the resources of firm. Grant, (1996), described capabilities as the ability to perform organisational processes to enhance efficiency and performance. Further, deploying assets between people and other resources in order to develop capabilities. Although, distribution of resources between two variables (exploration and exploitation) is always challenging for any organisation (March 1991).

Dynamic Capabilities

Teece et. al. (1997) enlisted dynamic capabilities as the firm's ability to adapt, integrate, and reconfigure through internal and external environmental changes to identify new opportunities. The resource based view (RBV) is the foundation of dynamic capabilities to enhance the resources and capabilities of firm (Wang & Ahmed, 2007). Dynamic capabilities proceeding behavioral focused on integrate, reconfigure, renew, and recreate its resources and capabilities to achieve sustainability and competitive advantage (Catherine L. Wang and Pervaiz K. Ahmed, 2007). In changing environment, sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring are three special capabilities which make firm more challenging and dynamic (Randhawa, et., al., 2020). Dynamic capabilities enables the explorative competency of a firm which constitutes adoption, absorption and innovation of capabilities which motivates it to create, expand, modify and restructure its strengths hence, attaining competitive advantage in the market (Tirado, et. Al., 2019). The key elements of dynamic capabilities are: adaptive, absorptive, and innovative capabilities.

- **Adaptive capability** is an important drivers of dynamic capabilities. Adaptive capability enables a firm to deal with the dynamics of environment and achieve firm performance. The study by Gibson and Brikinshaw (2004) proposed to measure adaptive capability by managements' way of dealing with the shifts in the market i.e., if it promotes addressing challenges and its responsiveness towards market evolution. Also, these capabilities respond to external forces focused on reconfiguration of resources and processes (Zhou & Li, 2009).
- **Absorptive Capability:** The capability and knowledge identified in adaptive capability is brought into operationalization in absorptive Capabilities. Hence, this dimension promotes usage of knowledge. Absorptive capability emphasizes learning based ability to recognize external information and implication it to innovative activities. Daellenbach, (2005) conducted a study on oil and gas firms of Canada, where findings reveal that higher absorptive capability leads to higher performance. Whereas, low absorptive capability brings drawback. Here, absorptive capability refers to the competency of the firm to learn, process and transform information to firm-embedded knowledge (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990).
- **Innovative capability:** Schumpeter (1934) proposed five dimensions of innovation namely, development of new product/service, development of new method of production, identification of new market, new

source of supply, and development of new form of organisation. Innovative capability means competency of a firm to operationalize any of the above mentioned five dimensions to attain strategy advantage (Wang & Ahmed, 2007). Innovative capability creates a link between the existing Innovativeness of the firm and opportunity available in the market related to the new product or market (Hou 2008). Adaptive capability, absorptive capability and innovative capabilities are the three main component of the dynamic capabilities.

Marketing Capabilities

Marketing strategy mainly deals with the customer needs and ensuring its competitiveness. Thus, marketing capability enable firm to monitor market dynamics and identify opportunities, and reduce risk and create sustainable growth. Exercising marketing capability is as important as other functions like research and development and operations. Thus, marketing capability has great impact on firm performance (Krasnikov & Jayachandran, 2008). Vorhies and Morgan, (2005), emphasized marketing capability as a source to achieve competitive advantage. The development of superior marketing capabilities enables firms more strategic in achieving its mission, goals, and strategic objectives with minimum consequences. In marketing perspective, strategic management use resources in the way marketing capability turns into valuable results (Morgan, 2011). Marketing capabilities of the firm is an important source of sustain competitive advantage and achieve better performance (Vorhies & Morgan, 2005). Marketing capabilities can be measured in various forms that affect the relationship between marketing capability and firm performance. The key elements are price, product, channel and promotion capability (Kamboj & Rahman, 2015).

Building on the framework of Kamboj & Rahman (2015), this study disaggregates marketing capabilities into four specific, measurable dimensions that are particularly relevant to the context of rural Self-Help Groups:

- **Price Capability (P):** This refers to the SHG's ability to set, manage, and modify pricing strategies based on market dynamics, competitor actions, and customer value perception (Vorhies & Morgan, 2005). For a women's SHG, this capability moves beyond simple cost-plus pricing. It involves negotiating better rates for raw materials (collective bargaining) and justifying premium rates for value-added products (e.g., organic pickles vs. raw vegetables). In the Uttarakhand context, where middlemen often exploit lack of market knowledge, strong price capability directly protects profit margins.
- **Product Capability (PD):** This is the firm's proficiency in designing, developing, and producing products or services that meet or exceed customer needs (Vorhies & Yarbrough, 1998). For the SHGs in this study (producing eatables, tailoring, or traditional handicrafts), product capability includes quality control, packaging standardization, and adapting products to urban consumer preferences. An SHG that can shift from basic rice to fortified "millet mix" demonstrates high product capability.
- **Channel Capability (CM):** This dimension addresses the firm's skill in managing distribution and logistics to ensure products reach the end-user efficiently (Vorhies & Morgan, 2005). In the rural terrain of Uttarakhand (four districts under study), channel capability is a critical hurdle. It involves overcoming "last-mile" connectivity issues, accessing *mandis* (markets), or establishing direct-to consumer channels like village *haats* or e-commerce platforms (e.g., GeM or Amazon Karigar). Effective channel capability reduces inventory hold time for SHGs.
- **Promotion Capability (PM):** This involves the firm's ability to communicate value, build brand awareness, and persuade customers effectively (Morgan, 2011). For rural women entrepreneurs, promotion capability does not necessarily mean expensive advertising. It includes leveraging word-of- mouth, participating in district-level trade fairs, using simple digital tools (WhatsApp marketing), and effective storytelling regarding the "women-led" or "local heritage" aspects of their products.

FIRM PERFORMANCE

Drawing on the Normative benchmarking theory, higher firm performance can be achieved through operationalizing valuable and unique marketing capabilities. However, this benchmarking could be done by examining individual capabilities separately, also known as functional benchmarking or in a collective manner while creating a set of mutual capabilities known as integrative benchmarking as cited by Fawcett and Cooper, 2001 in Vorhies and Morgan, 2005. Any inter-relatedness between these capabilities helps firm to achieve strategic advantage to overcome competitors. Size of the firm and dynamics of environment does affect the implementation of exploitation and exploration and the firm performance (Menguc & Auh, 2008). Tirado et al., 2019 define capabilities as the skills, knowledge and attitudes of individuals needed to accomplish a task or an activity while implying coordination and cooperation among the resources. Previous literature advocates capabilities as antecedents of the firm's performance (Tirado et al., 2019; Menguc et. al., 2007; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). Parida, Lahti & Wincent, 2016 concluded in their study that a definite choice of exploration and exploitation approach helps achieve a constant performance. RBV theory by Barney, 1991 advocates resources to be valuable, rare, imitable and non-substitutable hence positioning the firm to address a niche industry resulting in decrease in competition whereas increase in performance.

In the specific context of Women Self-Help Groups, "Firm Performance" (FP) is a multi-dimensional construct. While corporate firms measure ROI or market share, SHG performance is measured through a combination of financial sustainability and social impact. Following the

normative benchmarking theory, this study conceptualizes firm performance via four perceptual indicators adapted from Moliner et al. (2018): (1) Achievement of financial targets (profitability and savings), (2) Overall group satisfaction with economic outcomes, (3) Ability to cover operational costs without external debt, and
(4) Perceived success compared to other SHGs in the same district. This perceptual measure is appropriate given that many SHGs do not maintain formal audited balance sheets but have a clear tacit understanding of their financial health relative to their peers.

Considering the previous literature, the present study will attempt to measure ambidexterity in two contexts - dynamic capabilities (exploration) and marketing capabilities (exploitation) and its correlation with firm performance.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis Development on the basis of literature review and conceptual framework

The purpose of this study is to understand the term ambidexterity with combined viewpoint of dynamic and marketing capabilities. This concept highlights the role of capabilities on firm performance. In general, exploitative marketing capabilities are related to short term success of the firm. On the other hand, explorative dynamic capability help for long term competitive advantage. The combination of these two capability makes firm ambidextrous (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007). The dynamic capability draws on resource-based view of the firm aim toward achieving sustain competitive advantage based on firm resources and capabilities (Barney 1991). Further, Teece et. al., 1997 defined as 'the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments'.

Hypothesis Developmen

Based on the conceptual framework merging Dynamic Capabilities (Exploration) and Marketing Capabilities (Exploitation), we develop specific hypotheses linking these dimensions to Firm Performance.

Dynamic Capabilities and Firm Performance

Dynamic capabilities enable an SHG to sense market shifts (e.g., a sudden demand for masks during COVID-19) and reconfigure resources to meet that demand (Teece et al., 1997). In rural Uttarakhand, environmental turbulence (seasonal migration, weather changes affecting raw materials, fluctuating market demand) requires SHGs to be adaptive. Prior studies indicate that while exploratory capabilities are risky, they are essential for long-term survival (He & Wong, 2004). Specifically:

- **Adaptive Capability** allows SHGs to modify production schedules, adjust to seasonal changes, and reconfigure logistics based on market feedback.
- **Absorptive Capability** allows them to effectively utilize government training programs, learn from successful neighboring SHGs, and implement new knowledge.
- **Innovative Capability** allows them to launch new products (e.g., value-added items), adopt new production methods, or identify new market opportunities.

Therefore, we propose:

H1 (+): *Adaptive Capability (AdC) is positively related to Firm Performance (FP) in Women SHGs.*
H2 (+): *Absorptive Capability (AbC) is positively related to Firm Performance (FP) in Women SHGs.*
H3 (+): *Innovative Capability (IC) is positively related to Firm Performance (FP) in Women SHGs.*

Marketing Capabilities and Firm Performance

Exploitative capabilities focus on leveraging existing strengths and current market positions. For SHGs, marketing capabilities are the "day-to-day" engine of revenue generation. According to Vorhies & Morgan (2005), firms with superior marketing capabilities achieve higher customer value, customer loyalty, and ultimately superior financial performance. In the context of this study:

- **Price Capability (P):** SHGs that negotiate better raw material prices (collective procurement) or achieve fair selling prices outperform those that passively accept market rates dictated by middlemen (Morgan, 2011). Better pricing directly improves profit margins and household income for women members.
- **Product Capability (PD):** Consistent product quality, attractive packaging, and adherence to customer preferences lead to repeat purchases and brand recognition (Vorhies & Yarbrough, 1998). SHGs producing standardized products (e.g., uniform stitching, consistent food quality) gain customer trust.
- **Channel Capability (CM):** Finding the most efficient route to market (reducing intermediaries, accessing direct markets, or using government e-commerce platforms) directly increases the SHG's net margin by eliminating middlemen commissions (Kamboj & Rahman, 2015).
- **Promotion Capability (PM):** Effective communication of product benefits (e.g., "organic," "handmade by rural women," "traditional heritage") attracts niche customer segments willing to pay premium prices, thereby enhancing revenue.

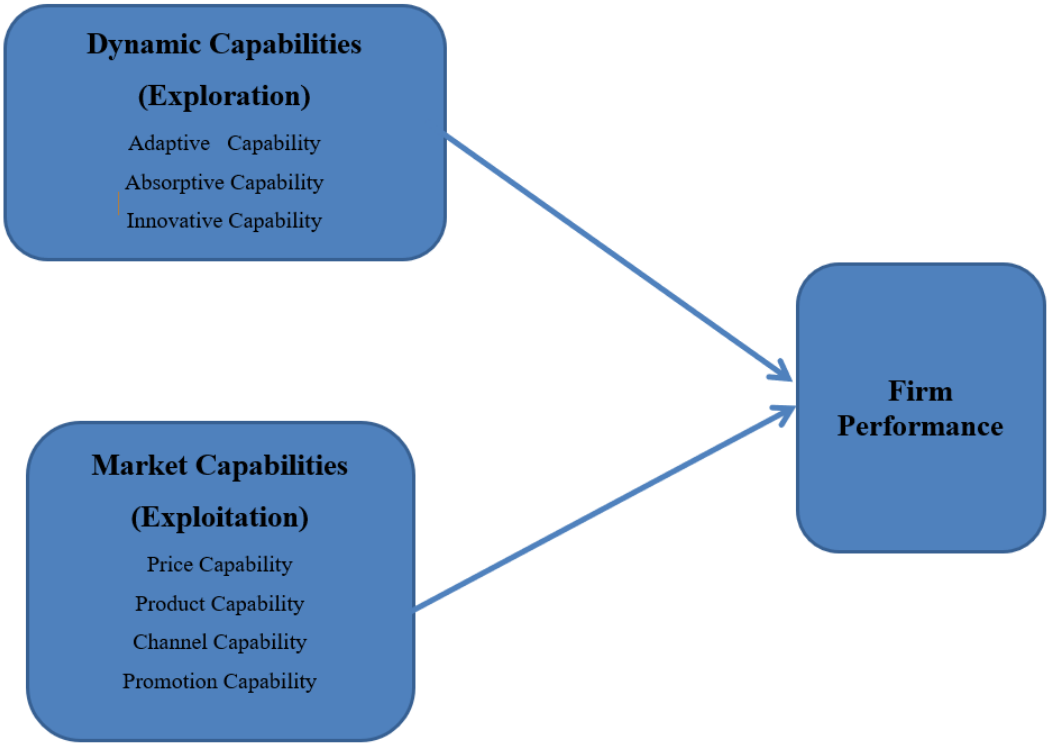
Although Wei et al. (2014) found mixed results for exploration strategies in some contexts, exploitation strategies consistently show a positive short-term to medium-term effect on firm performance. Hence, we propose:

H4 (+): *Channel Capability (CM) is positively related to Firm Performance (FP) in Women SHGs.*

H5 (+): *Price Capability (P) is positively related to Firm Performance (FP) in Women SHGs.*

H6 (+): *Product Capability (PD) is positively related to Firm Performance (FP) in Women SHGs.*

H7 (+): ***Promotion Capability (PM) is positively related to Firm Performance (FP) in Women SHGs***



(Figure 1 shows the model to be analyzed)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population for this study comprised employees of women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) located and operating in Uttarakhand. Printed surveys were distributed to 500 randomly selected employees, either during visits to their offices or at their regular meetings, trade fairs, or exhibitions. Out of the 500 distributed questionnaires, 349 were returned; however, 57 responses could not be used due to missing values or lack of engagement. Therefore, our final sample size was 292, resulting in a response rate of 58%. Data collection took place between February 2024 and December 2024. Table 1 presents the demographics of our sample.

Table 1: Details of SHGs (under study)

Year of Operation		No. of Employees		Name of Product/Service	
0-3 Years	37%	10-15	73%	Dairying	8.7%
4-5 Years	28%	16-20	27%	Cultivation	11.5%
6 Year and Above	35%			Sheep, Goats and Cattle Rearing	9.7%
				Tailoring	7.5%
				Eatables	23.4%
				Manufacturing	27.6%
				Traditional Occupations	11.6%

Measures

A thorough literature review was conducted to identify suitable measurements for the study. This research utilizes seven major constructs: IC, AbC, AdC, CM, P, PD, and FP. These constructs were measured using multi-item scales, which have been previously tested and validated by other researchers in prior studies (see Table 2). Responses to all items were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, with anchors ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 2: Constructs and Measurement Scales

Constructs	Dimensions	No. of Items	Scale

Dynamic Capabilities	Innovative Capabilities (IC)	6	Akman & Yilmaz, 2008
	Absorptive Capacity (AbC)	4	Chen et. al., 2009
	Adaptive Capability (AdC)	4	Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004
Marketing Capabilities	Channel Capabilities (CM)	4	Vorhies and Harker, 1999

Constructs	**Dimensions**	**No. of Items**	**Scale**
	Price Capability (P)	4	Vorhies and Harker, 1999
	Product Capability (PD)	4	Vorhies and Harker, 1999
	Promotion Capability (PM)	4	Vorhies and Harker, 1999
Firm Performance	Firm Performance (FP)	4	Moliner et. al., 2018

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The descriptive analysis for this study was conducted using SPSS version 27. The hypotheses were tested using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach in Smart PLS 4.0.9. The PLS method is particularly suitable for samples based on questionnaires because it does not assume data normality and effectively optimizes the relationships between observed items and latent variables (Ringle et al., 2020).

PLS path modelling employs an iterative algorithm that first evaluates the measurement model. This evaluation assesses internal consistency (composite reliability), convergent validity (including indicator reliability and average variance extracted), and discriminant validity. Afterward, the structural model is evaluated, which includes testing for collinearity among constructs and examining the significance and relevance of the hypothesized relationships between the variables: Innovative Capabilities (IC), Absorptive Capacity (AbC), Adaptive Capability (AdC), Channel Capabilities (CM), Price Capability (P), Product Capability (PD), Promotion Capability (PM), and Firm Performance (FP).

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Analysis, Outer loadings, AVE, and composite reliability measures

Construct	**Items**		**Outer loadings**	**Cronbach's alpha**	**Composite Reliability**	**AVE**	**VIF**
Abc	AbC1 AbC	→	0.881	0.879	0.915	0.730	2.231
	AbC2 AbC	→	0.839				2.240
	AbC3 AbC	→	0.880				2.465
	AbC4 AbC	→	0.816				2.161
AdC	AdC1 AdC	→	0.864	0.844	0.906	0.762	2.035
	AdC2	→	0.864				1.874

	AdC						
	AdC3 AdC	→	0.890				2.212

Construct	**Items**	**Outer loadings**	**Cronbach's alpha**	**Composite Reliability**	**AVE**	**VIF**
CM	CM1 → CM	0.772	0.779	0.858	0.601	1.483
	CM2 → CM	0.760				1.503
	CM3 → CM	0.778				1.597
	CM4 → CM	0.791				1.546
FP	FP1 → FP	0.781	0.753	0.844	0.575	1.557
	FP2 → FP	0.729				1.379
	FP3 → FP	0.810				1.684
	FP4 → FP	0.709				1.392
IC	IC1 → IC	0.676	0.832	0.878	0.546	1.574
	IC2 → IC	0.770				1.855
	IC3 → IC	0.798				1.996
	IC4 → IC	0.781				1.823
	IC5 → IC	0.734				1.767
	IC6 → IC	0.663				1.547
P	P1 → P	0.848	0.840	0.893	0.678	2.319
	P2 → P	0.887				2.642
	P3 → P	0.729				1.473
	P4 → P	0.820				1.836
PD	PD1 → PD	0.846	0.731	0.821	0.536	1.381
	PD2 → PD	0.709				1.470
	PD3 → PD	0.663				1.260
	PD4 → PD	0.699				1.524
PM	PM1 → PM	0.850	0.849	0.898	0.688	1.951
	PM2 → PM	0.854				2.054

Construct	**Items**	**Outer loadings**	**Cronbach's alpha**	**Composite Reliability**	**AVE**	**VIF**
	PM3 → PM	0.804				1.762
	PM4 → PM	0.808				1.892

Note: Innovative Capabilities (IC), Absorptive Capacity (AbC), Adaptive Capability (AdC), Channel Capabilities (CM), Price Capability (P), Product Capability (PD), Promotion Capability (PM), and Firm Performance (FP). Item AbC5 was dropped on account of low loading (0.289).

The PLS model estimated using SmartPLS 4.0.9 requires validation in terms of reliability, convergence, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). The results of these assessments are presented in Table 3. The findings indicate that the model is reliable and exhibits factor convergence, as both Cronbach's Alpha (Cα) and Composite Reliability (CR) are greater than 0.70, which is the reference value according to Hair et al. (2019). To evaluate discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied. The results displayed in Table 4, confirmed that discernible discriminant validity exists among the latent variables and their corresponding measurements.

Table 4: Fornell–Larcker criterion for Discriminant Validity

	AbC	AdC	CM	FP	IC	P	PD	PM
AbC	0.854							
AdC	0.221	0.873						
CM	0.401	0.355	0.775					
FP	0.319	0.642	0.460	0.758				
IC	0.193	0.376	0.320	0.576	0.739			
P	0.176	0.414	0.196	0.521	0.327	0.823		
PD	-0.054	0.042	0.059	0.128	0.075	0.022	0.732	
PM	0.177	0.365	0.372	0.463	0.312	0.452	0.066	0.829

Note: Diagonal elements are the square root of AVEs. Off-diagonal elements are inter-construct correlations

STRUCTURAL MODEL ASSESSMENT

Once the reliability and validity of the proposed conceptual model were confirmed, data were analyzed to evaluate the structural model and test all proposed hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM). Previous studies have advised researchers to check for multicollinearity issues before assessing the structural model, using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for this purpose. Furthermore, the structural model assessment requires examining the significance and relevance of the model's path coefficients, as well as the model's explanatory and predictive power (Hair et al., 2020).

In the current study, the VIF values ranged from 1.260 to 2.642, indicating no multicollinearity issues (Hair et al., 2022; see Table 3). Next, the hypotheses proposed in the conceptual model were tested using a structural model, focusing on the β values and p-values. The results suggest that AbC ($\beta = 0.087$; $p < 0.01$), AdC ($\beta = 0.351$; $p < 0.01$), and IC ($\beta = 0.134$; $p < 0.01$) have a positive effect on the financial performance of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), thereby supporting hypotheses H2, H1, and H3 respectively.

Similarly, the study confirms a positive and significant correlation between CM and FP, supporting hypothesis H4 ($\beta = 0.286$; $p < 0.01$). Additionally, a positive relationship between variable P and FP is confirmed, supporting hypothesis H5 ($\beta = 0.201$; $p < 0.01$). Finally, the relationship between PD and FP ($\beta = 0.079$; $p < 0.01$) and PM and FP ($\beta = 0.084$; $p < 0.01$) was found to be positive as well, supporting hypothesis H6 and H7 respectively. The findings indicate that higher values of the exogenous variables are associated with higher values of the endogenous variable, FP, in this case. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta (β)	p-value	Result
H1	AdC → FP	0.351	< 0.01	Supported
H2	AbC → FP	0.087	< 0.01	Supported
H3	IC → FP	0.134	< 0.01	Supported
H4	CM → FP	0.286	< 0.01	Supported
H5	P → FP	0.201	< 0.01	Supported
H6	PD → FP	0.079	< 0.01	Supported
H7	PM → FP	0.084	< 0.01	Supported

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to empirically investigate the significant effect of ambidexterity—operationalized through dynamic (exploratory) and marketing (exploitative) capabilities—on the performance

of women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Uttarakhand. The results provide robust support for all seven hypotheses, confirming that both sets of capabilities are critical drivers of firm performance. However, the magnitude of the effects reveals nuanced insights into which capabilities are most pivotal for SHGs operating in a rural, resource-constrained context.

The Dominant Role of Adaptive Capability: The most striking finding is the exceptionally strong positive effect of Adaptive Capability (AdC) on Firm Performance ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.01$). This is nearly three times larger than the effect of Absorptive Capability ($\beta = 0.087$) and significantly higher than any marketing capability dimension. For women SHGs in Uttarakhand—a region characterized by geographical challenges, seasonal migration, and fluctuating market access—the ability to adapt is not just an advantage but a necessity. This finding resonates with the work of Zhou & Li (2009) and extends it to the informal sector. It suggests that SHG leaders who can swiftly reconfigure their resources (e.g., shifting from dairy to poultry during a fodder crisis, or changing product lines for different local festivals) achieve superior performance. Policy interventions should therefore prioritize training programs that build adaptive mindsets and flexible operational planning over rigid business models.

The Strength of Exploitation (Marketing Capabilities): The marketing capabilities collectively demonstrate a strong, positive impact, validating Hypothesis H4 through H7 and the work of Vorhies & Morgan (2005). Within this group, Channel Capability (CM) ($\beta = 0.286$) and Price Capability (P) ($\beta = 0.201$) are the most influential. For rural SHGs, "channel capability" translates to overcoming the last- mile distribution challenge—getting homemade pickles, textiles, or dairy products to buyers in distant mandis (markets) or urban centers. Similarly, "price capability" reflects the group's ability to negotiate fair prices, often against established middlemen. Product Capability (PD) and Promotion

Capability (PM) have smaller but still significant effects ($\beta = 0.079$ and 0.084, respectively), suggesting that while having a good product and promoting it helps, the core challenges remain distribution and pricing.

The Nuanced Role of Exploration (Dynamic Capabilities): While all dynamic capabilities were positive, their effects were more varied. Adaptive Capability is the star. Innovative Capability (IC) ($\beta = 0.134$) shows a moderate effect, indicating that developing new products (e.g., value-added products like fruit jams instead of selling raw fruit) or new production methods does enhance performance, but it likely requires a longer time horizon and more upfront investment. The smallest, yet still significant, effect is from Absorptive Capability (AbC) ($\beta = 0.087$). This suggests that while the ability to learn from external sources (e.g., government schemes, other successful SHGs, training programs) is beneficial, its impact may be diluted by low literacy levels, lack of access to information, or the time lag between learning and implementation. This finding challenges the universal applicability of the absorptive capacity concept (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) in extremely resource-poor settings.

Synthesizing Ambidexterity for SHGs: The results empirically confirm the core thesis of Tushman & O'Reilly (2004) that ambidexterity is possible and valuable. Successful SHGs are not purely exploitative (focused only on current products/markets) or purely exploratory (constantly chasing new ideas). The top-performing groups in our sample likely balance the two. For example, they exploit their existing tailoring skills (Product Capability) and local customer base (Channel Capability) while exploring new designs (Innovative Capability) and learning about e-commerce platforms (Absorptive Capability). However, the data strongly suggests that for these SHGs, the path to performance is weighted more heavily towards exploitation and adaptive exploration than towards radical innovation.

CONCLUSION

This study makes a pioneering contribution by empirically examining the ambidexterity theory within the unique context of women's entrepreneurship and Self-Help Groups in rural Uttarakhand. Moving beyond simplistic assessments of SHG success based solely on financial disbursement or repayment rates, this research provides a capability-based framework for understanding performance heterogeneity.

The key conclusions are as follows:

1. Ambidexterity is a Valid Framework for SHGs: The study conclusively demonstrates that the dual pursuit of marketing (exploitative) and dynamic (exploratory) capabilities significantly enhances SHG performance. The "Vision Viksit Bharat" cannot be achieved without fostering this ambidexterity at the grassroots level.
2. Adaptive Capability is the Most Critical Lever: For SHGs facing volatile environmental conditions, the ability to sense, seize, and reconfigure (Teece et al., 1997) is the single most powerful predictor of performance. Policymakers should focus on building this meta-capability above all others.
3. Marketing Capabilities Provide the Foundation for Stability: Effective channel management and pricing power are the non-negotiable basics. Without these, even innovative products will fail. The government's "Lakhpati Didi" scheme can be more effective by linking it directly to market linkage programs (channel capability) and collective bargaining platforms (price capability).
4. Context Matters: The relatively weaker effect of absorptive capability highlights the need for implementation support, not just training. SHGs need handholding to translate external knowledge into actionable internal processes, a finding that has important implications for NRLM's capacity-building modules.

In conclusion, empowering rural women entrepreneurs

through SHGs is not merely about providing capital. It is about systematically building a portfolio of ambidextrous capabilities. By focusing on the specific, context-sensitive mix of dynamic and marketing capabilities identified in this study, Uttarakhand can serve as a model for other Indian states in achieving inclusive and sustainable rural development, thereby contributing meaningfully to the national goal of a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of the study reveal several areas of limitations and should be addressed in future research. First, the term ambidexterity plays an inherent role in improving the firm performance of women SHGs with the help of dynamic and marketing capabilities. The model used in the research is specific with

only these two capabilities. Future research can include other types of capabilities (e.g., technological, networking, or digital capabilities) and dimensions for identifying different market opportunities, new technological skills, and overall business growth for the development of the firm (He & Wong, 2004; Menguc & Auh, 2006; Tirado et al., 2019).

Second, our findings are based on data collected from only the leaders (e.g., presidents or secretaries) of SHGs. As a result, our study does not include the response of every member. A typical SHG has 10- 20 members, and we cannot validate that one leader's response appropriately represents the whole group's perception of capabilities and performance. Future research may include other members of the group with different levels of responsibility or use a multi-respondent design to measure firm performance more accurately (Tirado et al., 2019).

Third, our empirical results are drawn from cross-sectional data, which is a limitation. Therefore, we could not investigate the long-term performance effects of dynamic and marketing capabilities. While statistical analysis of longitudinal data is more complicated and time-consuming, future research should consider a longitudinal approach to measure the causal effect of ambidexterity on firm performance over time (He & Wong, 2004; Tirado et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2014).

Fourth, the study focuses solely on women SHGs in four districts of Uttarakhand, and therefore, we cannot generalize the results to other states or to mixed-gender or male-only groups. We recommend that researchers test these findings across various industries and geographical regions for greater generalization. Upcoming researchers can consider other verticals of the industry, different sectors, and a comparative analysis between states (Tirado et al., 2019).

Finally, while our study measured "firm performance" as a perceptual construct, future research could incorporate more objective financial metrics (e.g., annual surplus, repayment rates, asset growth) to complement the perceptual data and reduce common method bias.

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