



The Role of Social Capital in Clove Marketing: A Case Study of Rural South Sulawesi

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine clove marketing channels and the impact of social capital in facilitating marketing processes in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. In-depth interviews were conducted with clove producers, intermediate traders, and wholesalers to obtain data for a qualitative case study. The data was evaluated thematically to identify patterns of trust, reciprocity, and network interaction in the clove marketing system. The findings revealed two major marketing channels: (1) farmers sell wet cloves to intermediary traders, who then distribute the product to wholesalers and industries, and (2) farmers sell dried cloves directly to wholesalers for higher pricing and greater market control. Trust, reciprocal relationships, and adherence to social standards facilitate unsecured capital loans, promote information exchange, and assure compliance with informal agreements. Strong community values, particularly *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and solidarity, enhance the robustness and adaptation of clove marketing systems. The combination of social capital and digital networking enhances access to market knowledge and promotes sustainable marketing practices. The findings highlight the necessity of increasing social capital to improve farmer welfare, increase market efficiency, and create a sustainable marketing framework.

Keywords: clove, marketing channels, rural agribusiness, social capital, trust

INTRODUCTION

The role of social capital in clove marketing is becoming more prominent in contemporary agricultural discourse. In rural economies where traditional agricultural practices are tightly linked to community values, connectivity helps to reduce information disparities and improve knowledge exchanges among clove producers (Thirtawati *et al.* 2025; Pretty & Ward 2001; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Recent research has proven that dimensions of social capital like trust, shared norms, and community networks have a substantial impact on farmer decisions, particularly the adoption of sustainable technologies. For example, Ren *et al.* (2022) discovered that social norms and networks have a substantial influence on farmers' adoption of ecologically friendly pest management technology, while having a somewhat small effect.

Trust, shared norms, and community networks serve as the foundation for informal bargaining and coordination, encouraging collaborative marketing tactics that minimize transaction costs and increase competitiveness (Yu *et al.* 2022; Uphoff & Wijayaratra 2000; Narayan & Pritchett 1997). Emphasizes the multidimensional importance of trust in cooperation

partnerships, noting that trust improves performance and decreases risks in inter-organizational connections (Nielsen 2004). Furthermore, emphasize the role of social capital, including trust, cooperation, and local identity, in shaping rural development and agricultural innovation processes (Rivera *et al.* 2019). Rural communities often rely not only on land and labor, but also on strong social bonds. Farmers gain considerably from family networks and community engagement, which facilitate access to financial resources, share market information, and negotiate favorable prices (Addai *et al.* 2025; Krishna 2002). In such circumstances, bonding, bridging, and linking characteristics of social capital are critical for individual and collective flexibility to market conditions (Yu *et al.* 2022; Thirtawati *et al.* 2025; Pretty & Ward 2001).

Recent research stresses the multifaceted effects of social capital on rural marketing, such as the spread of digital innovations, supply chain strengthening, and cultural branding tactics (Khazami & Lakner 2022; Krishna 2002; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Nonetheless, there is a significant research gap in the practical application of these mechanisms within niche agricultural commodity systems such as cloves, which are both culturally and economically important but frequently overlooked in national agricultural agendas and scholarly research (Pretty & Ward 2001). This study combines theoretical ideas on social capital with empirical evidence from rural clove-producing groups. It demonstrates how traditional community structures can effectively manage marketing difficulties by

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leveraging digital platforms, institutional connections, and multi-stakeholder partnerships (Khazami & Lakner 2022; Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Furthermore, this study presents an intersectional framework of social identity and market orientation, emphasizing how cultural narratives and trust-based connections promote product distinctiveness and consumer loyalty (Narayan & Pritchett 1997; Yu *et al.* 2022). The findings give a detailed knowledge of the socioeconomic determinants that influence rural marketing systems, notably among clove farmers. The findings would be useful for policymakers, farmer cooperatives, and rural development practitioners seeking to use social capital to create resilient, inclusive, and competitive agricultural business models in Indonesia and other similar contexts (Uphoff & Wijayaratna 2000). Finally, the study seeks to examine and clarify the substantial impact of social capital on the construction and operation of locally and culturally entrenched marketing channels in rural clove-producing communities (Thirtawati *et al.* 2025; Pretty & Ward 2001).

The concept of social capital has received a lot of attention in agricultural development literature, particularly in rural areas where formal institutions are generally weak or nonexistent. Social capital refers to the networks, norms, and attitudes that enable coordination and collaboration for mutual benefit (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2023; Rivera *et al.* 2019). In an agrarian community, these social dynamics help minimize transaction costs, increase information flow, and make it simpler for smallholder farmers to obtain informal financing, which is critical for them (Zhou & Ning 2025; Addai *et al.* 2025).

Studies have shown that social capital is essential for enabling market entry. Bonding social capital, defined by strong intra-community links, promotes trust and collective action among community members, increasing their ability to collaborate in crop production and marketing (Field 2004). Furthermore, bridging and linking social capital, which refers to linkages that go beyond the local community, allows farmers to build links with cooperatives, value chains, and institutional customers (Woolcock 1998). These broader networks are essential for identifying new market opportunities, enhancing price negotiations, and assuring equal access to market information (Markelova *et al.* 2009; Alene *et al.* 2008).

In the marketing system, social capital serves two functions. It provides an informal assurance mechanism in the absence of enforceable contracts, while also imposing social responsibility, which can be restrictive without institutional support (Fafchamps & Minten 2002; Granovetter 1985). Empirical study undertaken by Reardon *et al.* (2009) and Swinnen & Kuijpers (2020) showed that farmers with strong networks are more likely to participate in high-value commodity chains and adopt market-oriented techniques. The digital revolution has increased social capital by enabling farmers to expand their relational

networks across geographical boundaries. Recent research has investigated how social media platforms and digital marketplaces, when joined with established trust-based networks, can boost marketing results and information transmission in rural communities. These findings illustrate social capital's dynamic nature and its ongoing importance in both traditional and contemporary agricultural economies.

Although attention to social capital in rural development is growing, less study has focused on its implementation within specific commodity systems such as cloves. Given cloves' cultural and economic importance in particular Indonesian regions, understanding how social ties and informal norms promote clove marketing might provide significant insights into broader agricultural marketing theory and practice. This study fills that gap by conducting an empirical investigation of the role of social capital in Mamampang Village's clove marketing system. This study believed that social capital considerably influences the performance and structure of the clove marketing channel. Finally, this study aimed to investigate and explain the major impact of social capital on the structure and function of locally and culturally integrated marketing channels in the Mamampang Village community, Tombolopao District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi.

METHODS

This research was carried out in Mamampang Village, Tombolopao District, Gowa Regency, from August to December 2024. This village was chosen as the research site because it is a major hub for clove production in South Sulawesi. The village community is known for its strong social connections, which are characterized by increased trust among residents, a willingness to collaborate, and informal trading behaviors that impact local marketing dynamics.

This study employed a qualitative methodology to investigate the impact of social capital on the clove marketing process in this community. The informants were chosen using two sampling strategies, purposive sampling and snowball sampling, as described by Sugiyono (2018, 2019). Purposive sampling was used to actively select informants based on specified criteria relevant to the research goals. In this case, ten clove farmers were selected based on certain criteria, including having at least 10 years of clove farming experience and overseeing at least 0.2 hectares of clove cultivation. This criterion ensures that informants have sufficient knowledge and experience in crop management, clove marketing, and social relationships with other farmers and merchants. Simultaneously, the snowball sampling method was used to recruit additional informants through referrals from the first informant, allowing researchers to gain a more complete insight of the clove marketing network. The

combination of the two techniques produced thorough and credible data that accurately portrayed the realities and interactions of the clove marketing system participants in Mamampang Village.

This work included both primary and secondary data sources (Sapto *et al.* 2020). Primary data was gathered directly from farmers and dealers via semi-structured, in-depth interviews, supplemented by field observations and documentation. Secondary data, including demographic, sociological, and geographic information, were gathered from the Mamampang Village Office, as well as pertinent periodicals and books on social capital and agricultural marketing. The data gathering procedure followed the framework given by Sugiyono (2012), which includes three key techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation involved directly monitoring interactions between farmers and traders during marketing activities to comprehend the practical operation of social relationships. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to freely share their opinions and experiences, while also allowing the researcher to explore further into developing subjects. Photographs, field notes, and audio recordings were used to enhance and validate the data.

To improve validity and triangulation, semi-structured interviews were supplemented with field observations and document inspections. The acquired data were analyzed thematically using the Miles & Huberman (1994) approach, consisting of three major stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (verification). During data reduction, interview transcripts and field notes were examined and organized into basic themes such as trust, reciprocity, and collaboration between farmers and traders. The

data display step entailed presenting findings in descriptive and narrative formats to demonstrate the linkages between social capital and marketing techniques. To ensure reliability, data from interviews, observations, and documentation were triangulated and verified. Finally, conclusions were drawn after detecting reoccurring patterns of interaction and verifying them with informants to ensure consistency and validity. The study found that social capital, as reflected by trust, social norms, and networking, is critical in promoting collaboration, sustaining market stability, and improving the effectiveness of Mamampang Village's clove marketing system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Identity

The respondents' identities provide important context for understanding the conclusions about the role of social capital in the clove marketing system in Mamampang Village. Purposive and snowball sampling approaches were employed to select thirteen respondents, including local traders and clove growers. The key criteria assessed include age, educational achievement, farming experience, and the number of family dependent.

Figure 1 depicts how the respondents' socioeconomic position influences their participation in the clove market. The number of interviewed informants among clove producers and dealers in the village was 13. There were six people aged 43–45, five aged 51–56, three aged 32–38, and one aged 78. The age range of responders or informants is 15 to 64

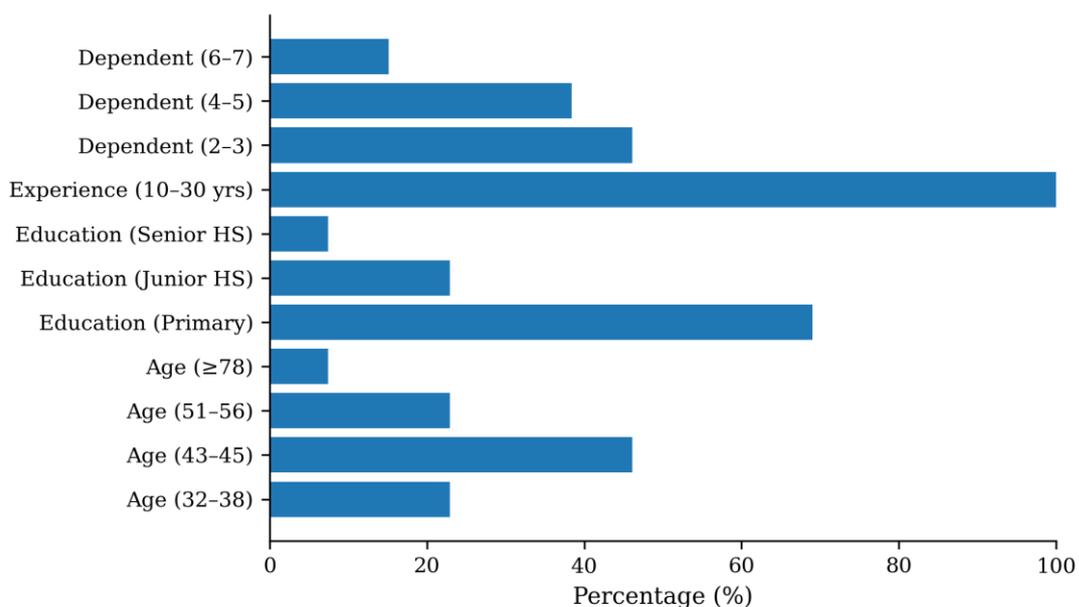


Figure 1 Respondent identity.

years, showing that they are still productive. This is consistent with Ngadi *et al.* (2023) findings about an aging trend and decreased young participation in Indonesia's agricultural workforce. The fact that 69.2% of respondents only completed primary education and only one completed upper secondary education suggests that respondents' educational backgrounds are often limited. Higher education promotes innovation and managerial effectiveness, enabling farmers to better adapt to agricultural technologies and market systems (Arnott *et al.* 2021). All respondents had been involved in clove cultivation for 10 to 30 years, suggesting extensive experience and resilience in risk management and productivity. In terms of household structure, nearly half (46.2%) of respondents had two or more dependent, while 15.3% supported large households of up to seven people. Extended families require more income diversification to sustain their livelihoods and provide children's access to education. This reliance ratio also strains household budgets and may limit access to welfare and education. Overall, clove growers are middle-aged, have limited education, and have extensive experience. This profile influences how social capital is generated and utilized, thereby improving cooperation, trust, and exchange, all of which are required to sustain South Sulawesi's rural clove market.

Clove Marketing Channels

The distribution channel is critical for getting goods from the manufacturer to the final consumer. It consists of numerous intermediaries who assist with this procedure. Each worker in the distribution chain is responsible for ensuring that products are delivered swiftly on time and remain on the market (Sumarwan 2015).

Clove producers in the village use a variety of marketing strategies based on their social resources, relationships, and institutional and market assistance. The marketing framework includes both short and long channels. Short channels, such as direct sales to customers or local markets, are mostly driven by strong social relationships and familial networks. These relationships promote high levels of trust, reciprocity, and collaboration, lowering transaction costs and bargaining risks (Fischer & Qaim 2012). Such bonded

social capital promotes farmers' desire for direct transactions, especially when trust is created to assure consistent pricing and support systems.

Farmers in the village also use longer channels, such as intermediary traders, wholesalers, or cooperatives, particularly those with larger networks and institutional links. Farmers in these agreements use bridging and linking capital to expand their reach outside the village and gain access to more organized supply chains (Markelova *et al.* 2009). These expanded networks allow for greater price transparency, logistics support, and access to larger buyers, albeit with additional complexity and sometimes higher prices. Nonetheless, for many farmers, particularly those organized into groups or cooperatives, these lengthier channels provide opportunity to diversify market exposure and stabilize seasonal income streams (Trebbin & Hassler 2012).

There are two basic clove marketing channels discovered in the field: Marketing Channel I (Figure 2): Farmers sell freshly gathered (wet) cloves to local collecting traders, who subsequently supply major traders in the subdistricts. These large traders then distribute to industrial processors and warehouses. Collectors routinely visit farmers' houses, lessening the logistical burden. Social capital is critical in this channel, as interpersonal ties based on trust frequently influence pricing and repayment arrangements. Farmers who require immediate liquidity or have limited access to market information frequently choose this route. According to in-depth interviews with the ten informants, five (50%) marketed their cloves through this channel.

Marketing Channel II allows producers to sell dried cloves directly to major traders or market customers. This route has higher profit margins because dried cloves trade at more consistent prices, and growers can time their sales to take advantage of favorable market pricing. However, participation in this channel necessitates adequate resources for storing and drying the cloves, as well as a thorough awareness of the market. As a result, it is typically used by farmers with broader networks, appropriate market intelligence, and greater financial resources. In this channel, social capital manifests as extended relational networks and reputation-based trust, allowing farmers to form long-



Source: Canva, 2025 (translated version)

Figure 2 Marketing channel 1 for cloves in Gowa Regency.

term connections with large traders outside their area and adapt their marketing techniques in response to price fluctuations. Figure 3 depicts the flow of Marketing Channel II in Gowa Regency, demonstrating the direct interaction between farmers and large traders in the absence of local collection traders. The chart demonstrates that the farmers themselves carry out the drying process, therefore they bear the risks and potential profits.

Digital and hybrid technologies have a significant impact on the dynamics of various marketing channels. Emerging trends in social network marketing indicate that Mamampang farmers can expand their reach through online platforms that allow for product awareness, direct buyer connection, and real-time price negotiation (Hobbs 2020; Tsan *et al.* 2019). Integrating digital communication into existing trust-based systems has the potential to improve market resilience, particularly during periods of economic turbulence. Empirical observations indicate that farmers' channel decisions are not exclusively economic. Geographic closeness, cultural familiarity, and a history of successful previous transactions are all strong motivators. Farmers with strong social networks tend toward markets that are consistent with their social environment, where trust minimizes risk and increases predictability (Fischer & Qaim 2012).

The clove marketing system in Mamampang Village is a complex interplay between economic rationality and social capital. The existence of both direct and indirect routes demonstrates how local actors handle relationships and institutional dynamics. Rural clove producers can increase their marketing efficiency, resilience, and equitable participation by strategically using these ties, whether through traditional means or digital technologies.

The Role of Social Capital in Clove Marketing

Social capital plays a multidimensional role in clove marketing in the village, impacting both informal and official marketing channels while also improving the resilience and efficiency of clove marketing systems. Social capital, which includes networks, trust, norms, and collaborative linkages, allows clove producers to gain access to crucial resources, share market knowledge, and coordinate collective actions for improved bargaining and price setting. According to Nahapiet's (1998) framework for the relationship between social capital and value creation, farmers who harness strong social capital are better positioned to secure critical resources such as financial support and technical guidance, as well as improved market access through established trust-based networks. Such embedded communication channels save transaction costs, promote faster decision-making, and reduce risk in volatile markets.

Social capital in the agricultural system is defined as an integrated entity with four interconnected dimensions: trust, norms, networks, and common

values. Trust encourages honest transactions and lowers perceived risk between farmers and market intermediaries, whereas norms provide informal standards that regulate behavior and prevent opportunistic behaviors. Networks serve as means for exchanging information, resources, and market opportunities, improving supply chain coordination. Shared values support these elements by providing a common ethical and cultural foundation that fosters long-term cooperation and commitment among players. Together, these aspects build a cohesive bundle of social capital that reduces transaction costs, increases coordination efficiency, and promotes the long-term viability of agricultural relationships (Figure 4).

In Mamampang Village, clove marketing channels often include both locally direct sales and broader, mediated channels that bridge and link social capital. Bravo *et al.* (2019) demonstrated in a similar rural context that farmers who invest in strong social networks and trust have greater collective negotiating power and can reach markets outside their immediate village bounds. Direct marketing channels rely on social capital formation, long-established personal ties and shared cultural norms foster quick trust and repeat transactions between local suppliers and consumers. Bridging capital, on the other hand, enables farmers to connect with external stakeholders such as wholesalers, cooperatives, or digital platforms, which not only disseminate quality assurance messages but also provide current market information required for strategic pricing and product differentiation (Arnott *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, the integration of digital tools into traditional marketing channels is becoming more significant. When clove producers use digital platforms



Figure 3 Marketing channel 2 for cloves in Gowa Regency.

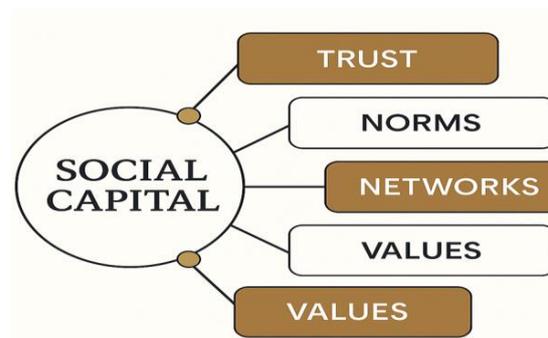


Figure 4 Social capital in clove marketing.

based on their pre-existing social capital, they can increase customer involvement and improve the overall competitiveness of their products. This digital-social synergy is critical for building resilience and real-time responsiveness. Thus, by creating social capital inside and outside local communities, clove growers in the village ensure that their selling channels stay strong, efficient, and adaptable in the face of changing market conditions.

- **Trust**

Trust is an important factor of social capital that has a considerable impact on the transaction behavior of clove farmers in Gowa Regency. According to 13 informants, trust between actors, which is deeply established in familial norms and long-term social connections, serves as the major foundation for informal financial exchanges between farmers and traders. Merchants are prepared to lend finance without formal collateral thanks to this trust, and farmers can swiftly access financial assistance during important production periods.

Informants in Gowa Regency have three dimensions of trust: (1) confidence in farmers borrowing capital, (2) confidence that the capital is used for genuine land-related needs, and (3) confidence that the farmers will repay the capital by the agreed-upon deadline. These indicators indicate that financing relationships between farmers and capital providers are more than just transactional, with expectations of responsible use of funds and timely repayment. Such trust patterns can lower perceived risk, encourage repeat loans, and improve long-term collaboration across local agricultural networks. Farmers having strong, trust-based connections with large traders prefer direct sales to earn better pricing. Farmers who rely on relationships with collecting traders, on the other hand, prefer indirect channels because they believe they are more secure and safer (Cahyono 2014).

- **Network**

Social networks are the most important source of social capital for clove marketing in Gowa Regency. Field studies found that direct engagement between farmers and dealers fosters a support structure for all parties. Farmers profit from this network by getting quick market knowledge, more marketing possibilities, and informal safety nets during price fluctuations. Figure 5 depicts how various individuals interact and organize the clove marketing system.

The farmer, collecting trader, and large trader are interrelated like gears in a single system, implying that changes in one actor's conduct have a direct impact on the performance and bargaining position of the others. Farmers play a vital role in the marketing process, with collection traders and large traders serving as support gears that transfer information, prices, and product flows across the supply chain. Close social links make

it easier to share pricing and demand information quickly, increasing the efficiency of clove marketing. This result is consistent with Malik *et al.* (2015), that farmer-trader interactions in Ketanda Village resulted in structured and efficient trading networks.

- **Social Norms**

Unwritten social norms serve as informal regulations that maintain order and reinforce social cohesion within the agricultural community. Examples include the need to return borrowed products and the implicit promise to sell harvests to lenders. These norms represent collective awareness and high levels of trust, allowing for peaceful interactions in the absence of explicit restrictions. They influence farmers' behavior in conformity with community ideals, as stated in Emanuel's (2020) research on the sustainability of social norms in the *kumpo kumpo* tradition.

- **Reciprocal Relationships**

Farmers in the village continue to engage in reciprocal connections as a form of social capital, such as sharing market information and providing labor during harvest season. Traders also help one another by exchanging clove price information, demonstrating a spirit of solidarity that promotes price stability and discourages unhealthy competition. Furthermore, farmers highly support the *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) system, particularly during times of labor shortages. These patterns of interaction contribute to the sustainability of clove farming. According to Nurul *et al.* (2022), comparable collaboration occurs in seaweed cultivation, where farmers and traders share labor and capital.

- **Values**

Values are another important component of social capital that influences how farmers and dealers behave in the clove-selling business. The interviews revealed that the farmers and traders in the village value collaboration, responsibility sharing, and peaceful market interactions. These ideas function as unwritten regulations, encouraging farmers and middlemen to

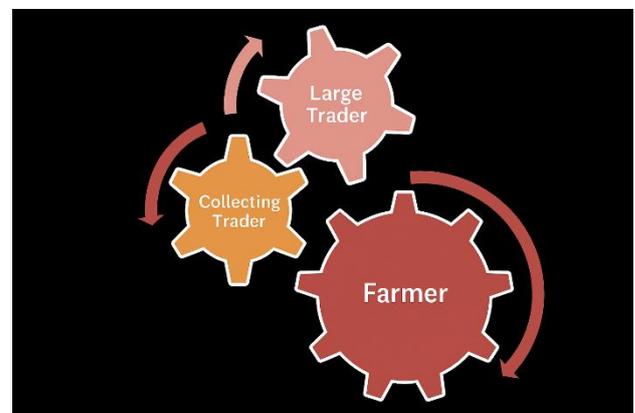


Figure 5 A network of clove farmers in Gowa District.

collaborate to maintain market prices consistent. By adhering to these shared principles, both parties may ensure that middleman traders make fair profits, so contributing to a more equitable and sustainable marketing ecosystem. Collaboration based on shared principles fosters long-term relationships, reduces conflict, and strengthens the clove marketing network. According to the interviews, the dominating values of clove farmers and trading community are togetherness, *gotong royong* (mutual collaboration), and trade fairness. These principles are expressed in activities such as assisting one another during harvest and sharing price information to ensure market stability and mutual benefit. This approach fosters equitable economic outcomes while also preventing exploitative practices in trading system.

Informants in Gowa Regency place a high importance on (1) *gotong royong* and (2) desire to help one another. These values demonstrate that economic actions in society are rooted in a culture of solidarity rather than sole personal motivations. *Gotong royong* promotes labor sharing, information exchange, and collaborative problem solving, while the norm of aiding one another increases informal safety nets when farmers encounter production or financial shocks. As a result, these social values can boost resilience, lower transaction costs, and foster the growth of local agribusiness. Such solidarity and collaboration allow the community to confront economic obstacles and market fluctuations together, thereby boosting shared wealth. This is consistent with the findings of Arnott *et al.* (2023), that shared experiences in the agricultural sector foster a sense of communal togetherness and solidarity.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Mamampang Village's clove marketing system functions through two basic channels: sales to collecting traders and direct transactions with large dealers. Trust, social networks, norms, reciprocity, and common values are all examples of social capital that influence the selection and efficacy of these channels. These social structures affect not only economic decision-making, but also the sustainability and durability of marketing practices.

Trust promotes unsecured transactions, social networks speed up the flow of market information, and informal standards ensure transaction stability. Reciprocal relationships and shared principles, such as *gotong royong*, strengthen solidarity and increase marketing efficiency. Furthermore, the combination of digital tools and conventional social networks broadens market access while increasing adaptation to price fluctuations and market unpredictability. The synergistic combination of traditional and digital systems, together with social trust, promotes long-term market viability. Overall, the results of this study are

consistent with a broader research approach that highlights the importance of trust and reciprocity in strengthening farmers' marketing systems. Strengthening social capital and boosting digital adaptation have emerged as critical methods for creating inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agricultural marketing networks.

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