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Nanostore Vs Modern Channel: Process Optimization Proposal

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Abstract

In Peru, "bodegas," nanostores, are essential for families' daily supplies. With around 535,000 establishments throughout the country, 150,000 are in Lima. They represent 75% of mass consumption. Despite their roots in society, the modern channel incursion has raised questions about the continuity of these small stores. This phenomenon is not new because, in developed countries, similar businesses were displaced by supermarket chains. This research immerses traditional and modern channel relationship dynamics, evaluating whether the nanostores' generic cost leadership strategy is efficient compared to large retailers' differentiation strategy. Likewise, we will explore nanostores' challenges and opportunities regarding technology, financing, and social and economic instability that impact their livelihood. From this, we will provide short- and long-term process optimization strategies. Hence, this study examines small businesses, nanostores, and supermarket interaction processes, providing key perspectives to guarantee their continuity and success in the market.

Keywords: *modern channel, optimize, nanostore, processes, supermarkets*

1. Introduction

Nanostores in Peru, commonly referred to as bodegas, play a pivotal role in food distribution owing to their strategic locations and commitment to providing families with retail quantities at affordable prices. With approximately 535,000 establishments nationwide, of which 150,000 are situated in Lima, they constitute 75% of mass consumption (Gestión, 2023). Nevertheless, the increasing presence of the modern channel has sparked speculation about the potential disappearance of these stores, aligning with trends observed in developed countries (Herbozo, 2023). Currently, household expenses are allocated at 27% for nanostores and 21% for the modern channel, signifying a declining trend from 2019's 13% to the present 6% (Saenz, 2022). Despite nanostores continuing to serve as a significant economic pillar, generating over US$ 2 billion annually, the modern channel's robustness has propelled its spending growth to 39%, while nanostores lag at 12% (EYNG, 2021).

The challenges arising from the interaction between modern and traditional channels have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, posing threats to consumer loyalty (Cheng, 2023). Despite nanostores maintaining a 75% market share through loyalty, expansive coverage, and substantial social impact, they confront critical obstacles, including the absence of Fintech technology and services, inadequate financing and banking support, and interference from intermediaries (Salas, 2020). Social and political instability further compounds their situation, with 98% operating in a subsistence context (Gestión, 2023). Despite showcasing resilience, with 73% connected to the internet and 37% conducting banking transactions through applications, merely adopting technology and hybrid models is insufficient to stave off extinction; a necessity exists to refine processes and adapt to market changes (Lozano, 2021).

In this context, there is a profound interest in scrutinizing the dynamics between nanostores and supermarkets in Peru. This study's primary objective is to assess the competitive advantage of nanostores, employing the generic cost leadership strategy, in comparison to the pricing and quantity offerings of the modern channel. Given the emergence of threats due to market changes, it is imperative for nanostores to adapt, notwithstanding the limited attention they often receive. Consequently, we have evaluated their processes and efficiency, focusing on proposing short and long-term strategies that enable them to confront the modern channel's advancement and navigate the ever-evolving market dynamics.

To achieve this objective, we have selected the "Esperanza" nanostore in Jesús María, boasting over a decade of operation, as our study subject. Our approach involves immersing ourselves in reality through

close observations and detailed interviews, complemented by consumer data collection and price comparisons. Additionally, analytical tools such as Porter's value chain, SWOT analysis, and BPMN have been employed to deepen the analysis. These tools not only furnished essential data but also significantly contributed to realizing the research objective by offering a comprehensive view of the dynamics between nanostores and supermarkets, highlighting potential adaptation and improvement strategies for small businesses in an ever-changing market environment.

2. Literature review

The uncertainty surrounding the future of nanostores stems from the recent growth and financial stability of the modern channel, coupled with market challenges related to technology, adaptability, consumer trends, and process optimization. Several studies, including those by Mora et al. (2021), Cheng (2023), and Disruptivo (2018), have addressed these issues, laying the groundwork for the present research.

Firstly, the significant strengthening of the modern channel is evident, reaching 21% of consumer spending and representing 39% of the growth in household spending, surpassing the traditional channel by 24% (Saenz, 2022). Concerns about the survival of nanostores intensify when considering the impact of modern channel growth. Disruptivo (2018) suggests the possibility of up to 7 nanostores disappearing for each Tambo, highlighting the urgent need for improved business management and closer connectivity with consumers to avoid absorption by these large retail chains. Andrés Choy, president of the Peruvian Winery Association, expressed his apprehension, stating that nanostores cannot compete with supermarkets (Lozano, 2021). Political and social uncertainty, economic recession, intermediaries, and citizen insecurity pose additional challenges, placing close to 98% of nanostores in a subsistence situation (Gestión, 2023).

Secondly, market challenges pose significant threats to nanostores that have adopted a generic strategy focused on cost leadership. According to Weinberger (2009), businesses applying this method attract customers with competitive prices and maintain an efficient combination of quality and price, a common feature in nanostores. However, they are limited by inflation and economic instability, experiencing increases of 40% to 50% in some products, despite representing 35% of retail trade (Ferrándiz, 2023). The lack of technological adaptation, exacerbated after the pandemic, has created a precarious situation in nanostore processes. Gan@Más (2022) reports that 83% are at a beginner level in their digital transformation, with only 1% reaching the maximum level of development, putting around 30 thousand businesses at risk (Espinoza, 2023). Despite these challenges, the preference of 96% of consumers for daily shopping in nanostores suggests that they maintain their attractiveness, despite price increases and financial challenges, especially among certain segments of the population (Rojas, 2023).

In this way, the uncertainty about the future of nanostores has driven research into their relationship with the modern channel, their permanence in the market, and opportunities for improvement. The study by Mora et al. (2021) in Mexico City highlights the value proposition of nanostores, adapted to customer needs over short distances and retail quantities, concluding that they are not destined to disappear. The work of Moyano et al. (2022) in Ica, Peru, focuses on the characteristics, challenges, and innovative strategies adopted by nanostores in response to the COVID-19 crisis. On the other hand, Boulaksil & Belkora's (2017) analysis of nanostores in Valencia highlights the operational challenges in various distribution processes. These studies offer a comprehensive perspective on the nanostore-supermarket relationship, providing strategic recommendations to optimize processes amid contemporary market challenges.

3. Methods and procedures

Section 1: Nanostore-Supermarket Relationship

The "Esperanza" nanostore in Jesús María, Lima, was selected as a case study, acknowledging its limited representativeness. A sample consumer who documented their purchases at the nanostore for a month provided insights into product consumption. For comparison, Plazavea, the country's largest supermarket, was chosen (Peruvian Chamber of Electronic Commerce, 2021). The study employed a first-order approach to empirically determine which channel (traditional or modern) offers the lowest accounting price for specific quantities of products. Variables such as the modern channel were controlled, and products were chosen based on their nature, disregarding the brand. Those with the lowest price in the supermarket catalog were selected, and quantities were equalized using a simple rule of three, approximating prices for minimum quantities available in nanostores but not in supermarkets. Data was recorded in a table and a comparative graph, including the standard deviation

of prices to assess differences and determine which channel is more cost-effective in terms of lower prices.

Section 2: Nanostore Processes

Process 1: Reception of the Product from Suppliers

Overcoming the challenge of obtaining qualitative data from nanostore managers, a bond of trust was established using observation and interviews with the nanostore owner, "Esperanza." Porter's value chain model identified key processes, focusing on inbound logistics and operations to generate value for customers.

Process 2: Nanostore-Customer Relationship (Loyalty)

The SWOT analysis, a qualitative tool, was employed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The analysis concentrated on the nanostore's marketing and customer loyalty strategy, aiming to leverage its distinctive characteristics and reinforce them.

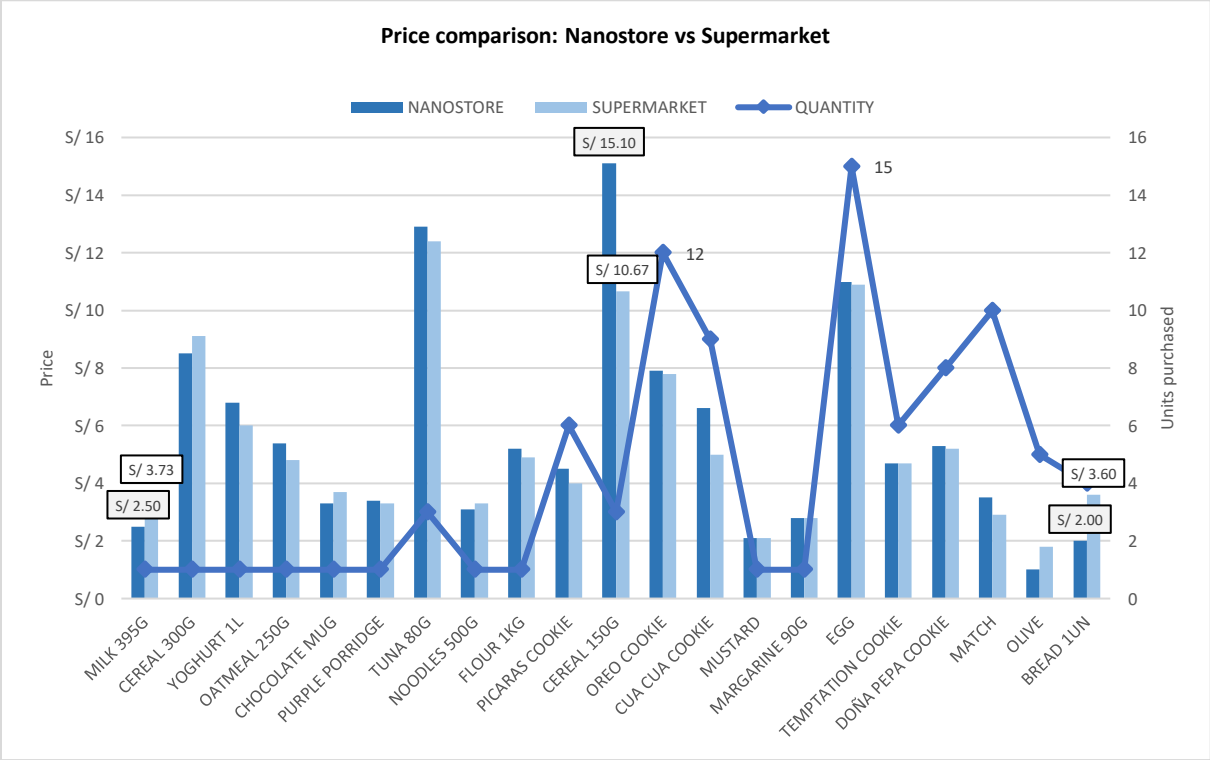
Process 3: Delivery of the Product to the Customer

Similar to process 1, an outbound logistics approach was adopted using a BPMN diagram to visualize the processes and means the nanostore utilizes to deliver products to customers. This approach, encompassing income management, inventory, and distribution channels, enabled the proposal of short and long-term improvement strategies, tailored to the nanostore's economic investment capacity.

4. Experimental/numerical setting it

Section 1: Nanostore-Supermarket Relationship

Figure 1 Comparison of Prices in Different Sales Channels



Source: Developed by the author

Figure 1 compares products purchased at the "Esperanza" nanostore with the lowest prices at Plazavea, emphasizing common items like eggs (15 units) and Oreo cookies (12 units). Despite an overall minimal price difference, indicated by a low standard deviation of 0.346, notable disparities exist in specific products. For instance, a package of 3 units of 150-gram cereal exhibits a percentage difference of 29.34%, priced at S/15.10 in the nanostore versus S/10.67 in the supermarket. Although the brand variable was excluded for methodological reasons, other significant divergences include 395-gram milk, with a 49.2% variation, and olives with an 80% difference. While most prices remain consistent, these instances underscore the importance of evaluating each product individually when deciding between the nanostore and the supermarket in terms of low prices.

Table 1 Comparison of Expenses between Nanostore and Supermarket

Nanostore	Supermercado
S/ 117.58	S/ 112.67

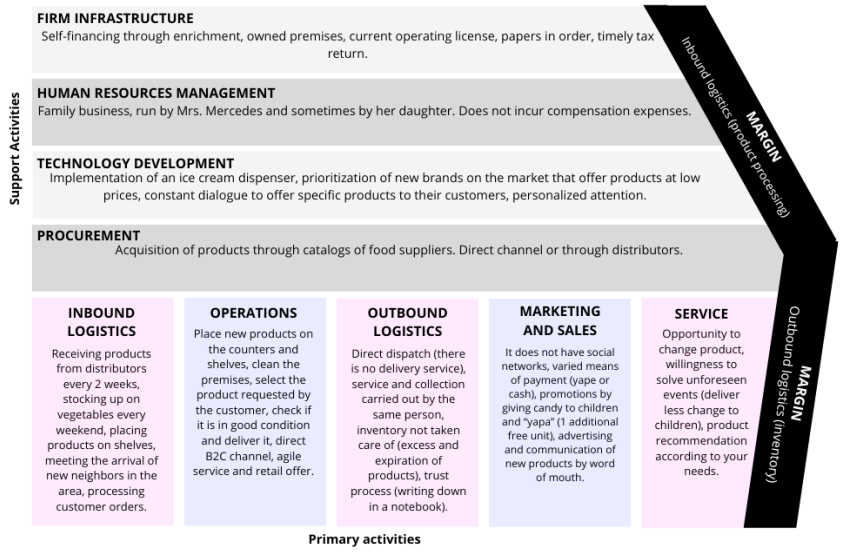
Source: Developed by the author

Table 1 presents a comparison of expenses between the “Esperanza” nanostore and the Plazavea supermarket. The total expenditure in the nanostore amounts to S/117.58, whereas in the supermarket, it is S/112.67. The difference of S/4.91, equivalent to 4.36% of the total spending in the nanostore, indicates that purchasing the same products in a supermarket would be slightly more economical for the consumer. It’s crucial to note that, despite the minimal percentage difference, the choice between the nanostore and the supermarket may hinge on additional factors, such as convenience, geographic proximity, and personal preference. This analysis underscores the importance of considering not only individual product prices but also the overall spending when making purchasing decisions between these two channels.

Section 2: Nanostore Processes

Process 1: Reception of the Product to Suppliers

Figure 2 Porter's Value Chain of Nanostore “Esperanza”



Source: Developed by the author

Figure 2 illustrates Porter’s Value Chain analysis applied to the “Esperanza” nanostore. According to Torres (2018), a company’s success hinges on competent management, process control, and providing satisfactory customer service. The “Esperanza” nanostore, reflecting a common family business model crucial for vulnerable households (Lozano, 2021), operates under owner-led management without a formal human resources structure, focusing its technology development on service efficiency and customer support.

However, challenges arise in inbound logistics, where key processes like Reception (quality and quantity verification), Storage (hygiene, organization, and relocation), and Rotation are not consistently met (PQS Editorial Team, 2016). Despite regular visits from distributors every two weeks, the nanostore faces issues such as product surpluses and expiration date concerns due to poor turnover and inaccurate order quantities. This affects operations and product presentation, as organizational difficulties on counters and shelves emerge from low turnover. The absence of an inventory system and less precise management leads to neglected products, impacting customer service. Outbound logistics operate on a direct-to-consumer (B2C) model, supported by marketing strategies aligned with the generic cost leadership strategy. Additionally, customer advisory services are provided to differentiate the nanostore from competitors.

In summary, the value chain analysis underscores the need to address deficiencies in inbound logistics and operations to enhance efficiency and customer satisfaction. Attending to these critical aspects can fortify the competitive position of the “Esperanza” nanostore in the market.

Process 2: Nanostore-Customer Relationship (Loyalty)

Table 2 Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Nanostore "Esperanza"

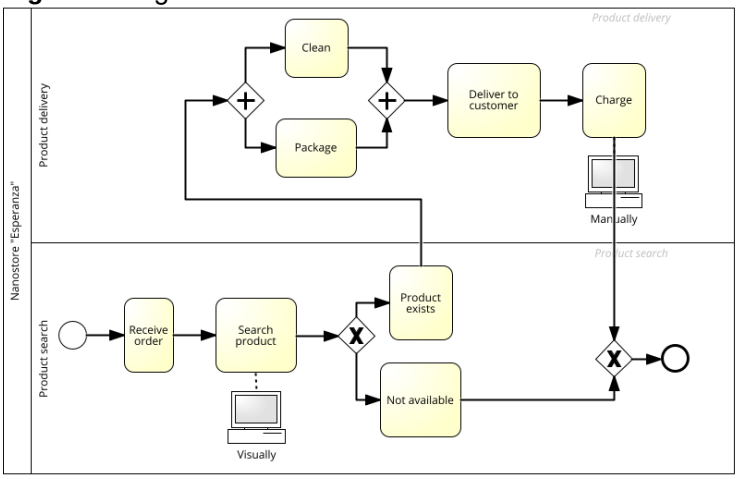
Strengths	Opportunities
F1 Variety of products (school supplies, perfumery, desserts) **F2** Kind, cordial and patient treatment **F3** Sales of cents and "yapa" **F4** Recommendation of low price products **F5** Varied payment method (yape) **F6** Know your neighbors (10 years old)	**O1** Construction of a building next door **O2** Municipal facilities **O3** Trainings such as "My open nanostore", "Digital Nanostore", "Improving my nanostore"
Weaknesses	**Threats**
D1 Does not offer sale of condiments **D2** Lacks a variety of meat or vegetables **D3** Lack of cleanliness in the premises **D4** Poor management of the expiration date of products	**A1** New warehouses nearby **A2** Preference for wholesale purchasing **A3** Convenience stores (Tambo, Oxxo) **A4** Economic and political instability

Source: Developed by the author

According to Saenz (2022), 31.4% of purchases occur in nanostores due to the convenience of buying products in minimum quantities, capitalizing on their focus on a friendly seller-customer relationship, and offering everyday-use products (Management, 2023). Utilizing the SWOT analysis in Table 2 to assess the performance of the "Esperanza" nanostore, it stands out for its variety in school supplies and perfumery (F1), fostering close relationships with customers (F2), and attracting neighbors to the new building (O1). The nanostore provides discounts and additional perks ("yapa") (F3), distinguishing itself from new nearby wineries (A1). It leverages training opportunities (O3) and municipal facilities (O2) for digital transformation and offers a diversity of payment methods (F5). Despite economic and political instability (A4), it maintains customer loyalty in its 10 years of operation (F6). The store aims to enhance its product management (D4) and addresses challenges such as wholesale preference (A2) and competition from convenience stores (A3) by providing purchasing advice and recommending cost-effective products (F4). The SWOT analysis reveals several strengths of the "Esperanza" nanostore in the market while identifying areas for improvement, particularly in product management. By proactively addressing threats and capitalizing on strengths, the business can fortify its competitive position and adapt to market dynamics.

Process 3: Delivery of the Product to the Customer

Figure 3 Diagram of Customer Service Processes in Nanostore "Esperanza"



Source: Developed by the author

The BPMN diagram in Figure 3, focusing on the customer service process, underscores three crucial points. Firstly, the "search product" stage is executed precariously, with the owner relying on her knowledge or visual search, which can lead to interruptions if attention is diverted to her daughter. Secondly, the simultaneous "clean and package" process reveals deficiencies in inventory management, with low turnover and poor logistics management causing delays. Thirdly, during the "charge" stage, although the nanostore accepts payments in cash and Yape, it lacks credit card

acceptance and a revenue control system, relying on the owner to conduct transactions without a detailed record in a notebook or accounting software. In summary, customer service at the “Esperanza” nanostore encounters challenges in the efficiency of product search, inventory management, and sales registration. Addressing these weaknesses could significantly enhance customer experience and optimize business operational processes.

5. Results and Discussion

Section 1: Nanostore-Supermarket Relationship

Despite the increasing involvement of the modern channel in consumption, representatives of nanostores in Peru, such as Choy and Campos, assert that they are not on the brink of disappearance. They remain pertinent, especially in low or middle-income areas (Gestión, 2023). According to Mora et al. (2021), these stores are poised for continued expansion, particularly as they are closely linked to low-income consumers in developing countries. The price variation, as evident in Figure 1, results from supermarket alliances with specific products, lower distribution costs, and specialized administration. Although Lima residents prioritize lower prices, assigning a score of 3.58 on a 4-point scale to supermarkets, surpassing the traditional channel by 0.06 (Suito, 2020), the latter continues to represent 75% of mass consumption in Peru, compared to the modern channel’s 25% (Gestión, 2023). The spending difference between both channels (Table 1) is approximately 5%, a consequence of the more efficient management of supermarkets. However, nanostores, being small enterprises, are more susceptible to environmental factors such as inflation and increasing citizen insecurity, placing the survival of many at risk (Espinoza, 2023). Despite these challenges, nanostores cater to a specific target audience, leveraging advantages like proximity and retail (See Table 3). Contrary to the misconception that only low-income families patronize these businesses, nanostores also attract high- and upper-middle-income consumers. Additionally, nanostores enjoy customer loyalty, geographical reach, more relational interaction, and a greater social and cultural impact compared to the modern channel (Salas, 2020). In conclusion, the traditional channel will persist, as it targets a specific customer type and capitalizes on its value proposition centered around proximity, quantity, and the relationship with customers.

Table 3 Consumer Preference Characteristics

Variables	Nanostore	Supermarket
Time	1-2 minutes	25 minutes
Mobilization to the purchasing center	Walking	Walking
Shopping transfer	Walking	Car
Products	Specific brands	Variety of brands
Prices	Offers lower priced product	Price comparison opportunity
Delivery	No	Yes
Vegetables	Fresh	Preserved in the refrigerator
Quantity	Retailer (specified by the client)	Choose what is offered (no possibility of customization)

Source: Developed by the author

Section 2: Nanostore Processes

Process 1: Reception of the Product to Suppliers

In Peruvian nanostores, the digital transformation is still in its early stages, with 83% at a beginner level and only 1% reaching maximum development (Gan@Más, 2022). In the case of the “Esperanza” nanostore, specific areas of improvement have been identified along with concrete proposals. Firstly, the sourcing process relies on the supplier’s catalog, with quantities being subjective. To optimize this, the implementation of inventory software that allows precise control is suggested. Secondly, the visual organization of products could be enhanced by arranging shelves with attractively colored sections for easy searching. Thirdly, to address product rotation and prevent losses due to expiration, a system utilizing machine learning is proposed. This system would analyze consumption trends and synchronize with the inventory. As a short-term strategy, it is recommended to label products by color and utilize an acrylic board for best-selling products. These proposals address deficiencies promptly and at lower costs, serving as an intermediate step before the long-term implementation of inventory software.

Process 2: Nanostore-Customer Relationship (Loyalty)

According to Mora et al. (2021), nanostores are preferred, representing 31.4% of purchase preferences due to proximity and customizable product quantities (Saenz, 2022). In the “Esperanza” nanostore, three characteristics are identified that can be enhanced to maximize its benefits. Firstly, the exceptional friendly relationship can be reinforced by utilizing an acrylic board to announce daily discounts and maintaining an active presence on social networks. Secondly, promotions such as “fiado” (credit) and “yapas” (additional items) can be sustained and strengthened through a loyalty-based consumption structure. Thirdly, differentiation through the purchasing experience can be expanded by offering coffee in the short term and considering transformation into a cafeteria in the long term, especially given the owner’s expertise in making pastries. These strategies contribute to customer loyalty, strengthening the connection with the “Esperanza” nanostore and enhancing the shopping experience. This, in turn, encourages customers to choose the store over other alternatives.

Process 3: Delivery of the Product to the Customer

According to Salas (2020), nanostores and wholesale points represent 75% of the market with significant purchasing power, but they lack technological solutions. In the “Esperanza” nanostore, orders are currently received physically, without leveraging digital channels like WhatsApp and social networks. To enhance competitiveness, it is suggested to use WhatsApp Business for orders and consider implementing a long-term delivery service. Additionally, the nanostore’s internal processes can be optimized to streamline customer service. Concerning the “charge” process, there is a proposal to implement a logbook for short-term profitability analysis. In the long term, considering accounting software synchronized with inventory can help study purchasing behavior. Diversifying payment methods beyond Yape is also recommended, exploring options such as electronic wallets to improve online presence and automate processes. These suggestions aim to modernize the nanostore’s operations and enhance its competitiveness in the market.

6. Conclusions and future research

The research covered two essential aspects: the relationship between nanostores and supermarkets and the specific operational processes of a particular nanostore, namely “Hope.” Firstly, it highlighted the coexistence of the traditional and modern channels in Peru. Despite the advancement of the latter, nanostores remain relevant due to their proximity, retail quantities, generic cost leadership strategy, and close customer relationships. While supermarkets boast more efficient management, the traditional channel still commands 75% of mass consumption. Therefore, both nanostores and supermarkets have distinct places in the Peruvian market, offering unique value propositions with nearly comparable prices.

Secondly, the internal processes of nanostores can be refined to leverage their strengths and confront market threats. Areas for improvement in technology adoption and operational efficiency were identified, presenting opportunities for enhancing processes and competitiveness. Recommendations include the implementation of inventory software, visual enhancements to product layout, and rotation strategies. In terms of the nanostore-customer relationship, the business excels in personalized attention and friendly promotions. Suggestions aim to integrate digital marketing strategies, structured promotions, and an expanded product offering. In the product delivery process, the need to digitize orders, enhance efficiency in searching and packaging, and establish a sales record for evaluating business profitability stands out. Diversifying payment methods is also deemed essential for modernizing nanostore operations.

Finally, for future research, it is recommended to explore the long-term impact of digital transformation on nanostores and their ability to adapt to changes in the economic and social environment. Additionally, investigating how the inclusion of Fintech services and digital payment options can influence the competitiveness of these small businesses could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between traditional and modern channels in the Peruvian market, offering insights for the future development of these businesses.

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