



The 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference in the clothing sector in Tarapoto

Las 4C's del marketing y la preferencia del consumidor del sector de prendas de vestir en Tarapoto

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ABSTRACT

The clothing sector in Tarapoto faces a decline in sales due to deficiencies in understanding customer needs and limitations in communication channels, which justified examining the link between consumer-centered marketing strategies and their purchasing preferences. The objective was to determine the relationship between the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference in the clothing sector in Tarapoto in 2024. A quantitative methodology with a non-experimental correlational design was employed, applying structured questionnaires to a non-probabilistic purposive sample of 243 consumers. Statistical analysis was performed using Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient. The results showed that 64% of consumers perceive the 4Cs of marketing at a regular level and 63% express preferences at the same level; furthermore, significant positive correlations were confirmed between all dimensions (customer, cost, convenience, and communication) with consumer preference. It was concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference ($Rho=0.753$, $p<0.001$), validating the importance of the model as an effective approach for generating sustainable preferences in the local market.

Keywords: commercial convenience; customer value; marketing strategies; perceived cost; purchasing behavior

RESUMEN

El sector de prendas de vestir en Tarapoto enfrenta una disminución en las ventas debido a deficiencias en la comprensión de las necesidades del cliente y limitaciones en los canales de comunicación, lo cual justificó examinar la vinculación entre las estrategias de marketing centradas en el consumidor y sus preferencias de compra. El objetivo fue determinar la relación entre las 4C's del marketing y la preferencia del consumidor del sector de prendas de vestir en Tarapoto en el año 2024. Se empleó una metodología cuantitativa con diseño no experimental de nivel correlacional, aplicando cuestionarios estructurados a una muestra no probabilística intencional de 243 consumidores. El análisis estadístico se realizó mediante el coeficiente de correlación Rho de Spearman. Los resultados evidenciaron que el 64% de los consumidores perciben las 4C's del marketing en nivel regular y el 63% manifiesta preferencias en el mismo nivel; además, se confirmaron correlaciones positivas significativas entre todas las dimensiones (cliente, costo, conveniencia y comunicación) con la preferencia del consumidor. Se concluyó que existe una relación directa y significativa entre las 4C's del marketing y la preferencia del consumidor ($Rho=0,753$, $p<0,001$), validando la importancia del modelo como enfoque efectivo para generar preferencias sostenibles en el mercado local.

Palabras clave: comportamiento de compra; conveniencia comercial; costo percibido; estrategias mercadológicas; valor para el cliente



1. INTRODUCTION

The management of the 4Cs of marketing has become a critical strategy in the digital era, where companies strive to remain competitive and influence purchasing decisions. The evolution of marketing toward a value-based approach has transformed the role of consumers, positioning them at the center of business activities (Zulfikar et al., 2023). This model, which comprises Customer, Cost, Convenience, and Communication, represents an adaptation of the traditional 4Ps approach, responding to an environment in which consumers have greater power and access to information (Le, 2022; Sane, 2022).

The main characteristic of this approach is its orientation toward a deeper understanding of and response to customer demands, recognizing that success depends on the ability to create and maintain long-term relationships with consumers (Ramos Oyola & Neri Ayala, 2022). Wang (2020) states that the 4Cs allow organizations to adapt their business strategies to a market that is increasingly focused on consumers and their specific needs, while Laheebi (2020) emphasizes their relevance in competitive and dynamic business environments where differentiation based solely on products is no longer sufficient.

At the international level, the implementation of the 4Cs has shown significant results across different markets. In China, UNIQLO implemented delivery strategies that generated a 500% increase in sales during the “Double 11” event, while also producing an additional 10% to 15% in consumption through in-store pickup (He & He, 2019). In the Saudi market, changes in advertising budgets demonstrate the importance of digital communication, with investment in digital media accounting for 50% of total advertising expenditure (Hawas et al., 2023).

In the Peruvian context, several studies have demonstrated the relevance of marketing strategies to consumer behavior. Cavero Ballona et al. (2024) reported that, in Chiclayo, 54% of respondents rated service quality in retail stores as high, while 51% reported a high level of satisfaction. Huamán Pérez and Castelo Loayza (2023) found that, in Cusco, 55% of customers expressed satisfaction with purchases ranging from 50 to 100 soles. Puican and Malca (2021) found that digital marketing reached 34% at a moderate level, suggesting opportunities for improving strategies based on the 4Cs.

The clothing sector in Tarapoto is experiencing a significant decline in sales, as evidenced by lower customer traffic, accumulated inventories, and temporary store closures. Consumers express dissatisfaction with the price-quality relationship, while stores lack an effective digital presence. Retailers continue to offer traditional designs that are not aligned with current trends demanded by customers, who increasingly choose to purchase products in other cities or through online platforms.

Previous studies support the relationship between the variables examined in this research. Šostar and Ristanović (2023) found in Pakistan that personal and psychological factors exert a marked influence on consumption patterns, with a reported significance level below 0.000. Fachmi et al. (2021) demonstrated in Indonesia that promotional elements and pricing strategies exert a determining influence on purchasing behavior, with an R^2 of 0.944. At the national level, Torres-Sinarahua and Napán-Yactayo (2021) identified significant associations between purchase intention and merchandising components, with $\rho = 0.572$. At the local level, Tarrillo Mundaca and Vásquez Pinedo (2021) demonstrated that marketing mix components significantly influence purchasing decisions, while Yalico Mendieta and Llanos Gaona (2019) confirmed a significant correlation with $\rho = 0.545$.

The study is grounded in Zeithaml's perceived value theory, which establishes that consumer value represents an overall assessment of a product's utility based on perceptions of what is received relative to what is given (Zhang et al., 2023). Woodruff extends this theory by arguing that perceived value is dynamic and evolves throughout the consumption experience (Scridon et al., 2019). Complementarily, consumer behavior theory establishes that purchasing choices are based on psychological processes involving both cognitive and affective elements (Khan, 2020; Sharma & Sudan, 2020).

Regarding consumer preference, Guo et al. (2020) state that it represents a set of inclinations and priorities that individuals develop toward certain products, shaped through complex processes involving cognitive and affective elements. These preferences act as significant predictors of purchasing behavior and are expressed through consistent patterns of product selection and evaluation (Magqupu et al., 2024; Candra Susanto et al., 2024).

Based on the above, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference in the clothing sector in Tarapoto in 2024. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the current status of the 4Cs of marketing, determine the level of consumer preference, and establish the correlations between each of the four dimensions and consumer preferences.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted in the district of Tarapoto, San Martín Province, San Martín Region, Peru. The commercial area under study is located in the urban center, specifically in the high jungle of northeastern Peru, at an altitude of 350 meters above sea level, with coordinates 6°29'16" south latitude and 76°22'18" west longitude. The study was carried out during 2024 in shopping centers and stores located in central areas of the district.

The study was applied in nature and aimed at solving problems through theoretical knowledge (Arias Gonzales & Covinos Gallardo, 2021). A quantitative approach was employed, characterized by the systematic collection of numerical data that were statistically analyzed to test hypotheses (Ñaupas Paitán et al., 2018). The study had a correlational scope, examining relationships between variables within a specific context (Hernandez & Mendoza, 2018). The non-experimental design made it possible to study the phenomena without intentional manipulation of the variables (Arias Gonzales & Covinos Gallardo, 2021).

The population consisted of 47,533 inhabitants of Tarapoto, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI, 2018), and 1,187 formal clothing establishments with an active Taxpayer Registration Number (RUC) were identified. The sample consisted of 243 consumers selected through non-probability purposive sampling (Quezada Lucio, 2021), considering formal establishments with higher customer traffic and willingness to participate, located in the central area of the district according to the criteria of Arias Gonzales and Covinos Gallardo (2021).

The inclusion criteria comprised individuals over 18 years of age residing in Tarapoto, consumers who had purchased clothing at least once during the previous three months, customers of formal establishments, and individuals who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria included consumers who purchased exclusively from informal markets, temporary visitors or tourists in the city, and participants who did not fully complete the assessment instrument.

The independent variable was the 4Cs of marketing, operationalized into four dimensions: Customer, Cost, Convenience, and Communication, with indicators related to the perception of needs, perceived value, ease of purchase, and clarity of information, respectively. The dependent variable was consumer preference, comprising two dimensions: the Cognitive Component, referring to knowledge and the relevance of the price-quality relationship, and the Affective Component, related to distinctive characteristics and satisfaction with the product purchased.

The survey technique was applied using two structured questionnaires. The first measured the 4Cs of marketing through 20 items distributed across the Customer, Cost, Convenience, and Communication dimensions. The second assessed consumer preference through 12 items covering the Cognitive and Affective Components. Both instruments used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, following methodological recommendations (Ñaupas Paitán et al., 2018).

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, obtaining values of 0.981 for the 4Cs of marketing and 0.977 for consumer preference, indicating excellent internal consistency. The questionnaires were administered directly to consumers at the main shopping centers. Assistance was provided when questions arose without influencing participants' responses, and the questionnaires were checked to ensure proper completion and the absence of missing information during the data collection process.

The analysis was conducted in two phases. First, a descriptive analysis was performed using frequency tables to identify the status of the variables. Second, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was applied, and the results ($p < 0.05$) indicated a non-normal distribution. Consequently, Spearman's Rho coefficient was used as a non-parametric test for hypothesis testing. Data processing was performed using IBM SPSS software, while Microsoft Excel was used for the initial digitization of the data.

The research was grounded in international ethical principles. Respect for autonomy was ensured through informed consent, whereby each participant received information regarding the objectives of the study and the voluntary nature of participation. A coding system was established to protect participants' confidentiality and identity. The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence guided the study toward the generation of beneficial knowledge while avoiding practices that could negatively affect consumers and business owners in the sector.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the study conducted with 243 consumers in the clothing sector in Tarapoto, who evaluated the 4Cs of marketing and their purchasing preferences. The results are organized according to the specific objectives and incorporate descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, supported by previous studies addressing similar issues in commercial contexts.

3.1 Current status of the 4Cs of marketing

The results showed that 64% of consumers perceived the 4Cs of marketing at a regular level, while 26% considered them inadequate and only 10% rated them as adequate (Table 1). These findings indicate that strategies focused on Customer, Cost, Convenience, and Communication are only partially implemented in the sector, revealing significant opportunities to improve the understanding of consumer needs.

Table 1. Current status of the 4Cs of marketing

Levels	Range (From)	Range (To)	Frequency	%
Inadequate	20	46	63	26%
Regular	47	73	155	64%
Adequate	74	100	25	10%
Total			243	100%

These results are consistent with Puican and Malca (2021), who found that digital marketing reached 34% at a regular level, suggesting widespread deficiencies in the implementation of marketing strategies. However, they differ from the findings of Caverio et al. (2024) in Chiclayo, where 54% of respondents rated service quality as high. Wang (2020) argues that companies should develop more personalized value propositions to improve these indicators.

3.2 Level of consumer preference

It was identified that 63% of consumers expressed preferences at a regular level, 26% at an inadequate level, and only 10% at an adequate level (Table 2). These findings reveal an intermediate level of

satisfaction in both cognitive components related to knowledge of product characteristics and affective components associated with distinctive features and satisfaction with the clothing purchased.

Table 2. Level of consumer preference

Levels	Range (From)	Range (To)	Frequency	%
Inadequate	12	28	64	26%
Regular	29	44	154	63%
Adequate	45	60	25	10%
Total			243	100%

These results are consistent with Huamán Pérez and Castelo Loayza (2023) in Cusco, where 55% of respondents expressed satisfaction with purchases ranging from 50 to 100 soles. Guo et al. (2020) explain that preferences are not static but continuously evolve in response to internal factors and external stimuli. Papanicolau Denegri et al. (2023), in Metropolitan Lima, identified similar patterns in which cognitive and affective components influence purchasing decisions.

3.3. Normality test

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to determine the distribution of the data. The results showed that the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference variables, as well as their dimensions, had significance values of $p < 0.05$, indicating a non-normal distribution (Table 3). Consequently, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient was selected as the non-parametric test for hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Normality test

Variable/Dimension	Statistic	df	Sig.
4Cs of marketing	0.081	243	0.001
Customer	0.110	243	0.000
Cost	0.098	243	0.000
Convenience	0.092	243	0.000
Communication	0.080	243	0.001
Consumer preference	0.105	243	0.000

3.4. Relationship between Customer and consumer preference

The results of Spearman's Rho test yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.734 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, confirming a considerable positive correlation between the Customer dimension and consumer preference (Table 4). This finding indicates that when companies understand consumers' needs, desires, and behaviors, their inclination toward specific products in the sector increases.

Table 4. Relationship between Customer and consumer preference

		Customer	Consumer preference
Spearman's Rho	Customer	1.000	.734**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	243	243
	Consumer preference	.734**	1.000
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	243	243

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

These findings are consistent with Šostar and Ristanović (2023) in Pakistan, who demonstrated a marked influence of personal and psychological factors on consumption patterns. Nagina et al. (2024) further state that understanding preferences enables organizations to identify consumption patterns and anticipate market trends. Won and Kim (2020) add that consumer motivations directly influence purchase intention.

3.5. Relationship between Cost and consumer preference

A Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.728 was obtained with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, demonstrating a considerable positive correlation between the Cost dimension and consumer preference (Table 5). This result confirms that consumers' comparative assessment of the benefits received and the economic sacrifices involved significantly influences their purchasing preferences in the clothing sector.

Table 5. Relationship between Cost and consumer preference

		Cost	Consumer preference
Spearman's Rho	Cost	1.000	.728**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	243	243
	Consumer preference	.728**	1.000
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	243	243

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

These results are consistent with Fachmi et al. (2021) in Indonesia, who demonstrated that pricing strategies exert a determining influence on purchasing behavior, with an R^2 of 0.944. Liu et al. (2024) emphasize that preference analysis is essential for developing sustainable competitive advantages through pricing strategies that reflect the value perceived by the market.

3.6. Relationship between Convenience and consumer preference

The results showed a Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.741 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, confirming a considerable positive correlation between the Convenience dimension and consumer preference (Table 6). This finding demonstrates that ease of purchase and access to clothing substantially influence the purchasing inclinations of local consumers.

Table 6. Relationship between Convenience and consumer preference

		Convenience	Consumer preference
Spearman's Rho	Convenience	1.000	.741**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	243	243
	Consumer preference	.741**	1.000
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	243	243

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

These findings are consistent with Hawas et al. (2023) in the UNIQLO case in China, where integrated delivery strategies generated a 500% increase in sales. Prianggono and Sitio (2020) confirm that service quality and ease of purchase have a direct effect on consumer decisions, improving satisfaction and loyalty toward commercial establishments.

3.7. Relationship between Communication and consumer preference

A Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.744 was obtained with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, demonstrating a considerable positive correlation between the Communication dimension and consumer preference (Table 7). This result confirms that information clarity and the effectiveness of interaction channels exert a significant influence on consumers' purchasing decisions in the sector.

Table 7. Relationship between Communication and consumer preference

	Communication	Consumer preference
Spearman's Rho	Communication	1.000
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.744**
	N	243
	Consumer preference	1.000
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000
	N	243

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

These results are consistent with Hawas et al. (2023) in the Saudi market, where investment in digital media reached 50%, demonstrating the growing importance of digital communication. Nguyen et al. (2022) further indicate that effective brand communication significantly influences purchasing decisions by generating lasting emotional connections with consumers.

3.8. Relationship between the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference

The results showed a direct and significant correlation between the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference, with a Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.753 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$ (Table 8). This finding confirms that the comprehensive implementation of the 4Cs model is significantly associated with purchasing preferences, thereby supporting the general hypothesis of the study.

Table 8. Relationship between the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference

	4Cs of marketing	Consumer preference
Spearman's Rho	4Cs of marketing	1.000
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.753**
	N	243
	Consumer preference	1.000
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000
	N	243

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

These findings are consistent with Tarrillo Mundaca and Vásquez Pinedo (2021) in Tarapoto, who demonstrated that marketing mix components significantly influence purchasing decisions. The perceived value theory, as discussed by Zhang et al. (2021), supports these findings by establishing that consumers make an overall assessment of utility by considering monetary aspects, time invested, and psychological benefits. Candra Susanto et al. (2024) further indicate that preferences result from an evaluation process involving culture, social groups, personal characteristics, and psychological factors, all of which are comprehensively addressed by the 4Cs model.

CONCLUSIONS

A direct and significant relationship was identified between the 4Cs of marketing and consumer preference in the clothing sector in Tarapoto in 2024, with a Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.753 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$, validating the model as an effective approach for generating sustainable consumer preferences in the local market. Regarding the current status of the 4Cs of marketing, 64% of consumers perceived them at a regular level, indicating partial implementation of customer-centered strategies. Similarly, 63% reported consumer preference at a regular level, reflecting an intermediate level of satisfaction in both cognitive and affective components. Regarding the correlations by dimension, Customer obtained $Rho = 0.734$, Cost reached $Rho = 0.728$, Convenience recorded $Rho = 0.741$, and Communication showed $Rho = 0.744$, all with $p < 0.001$. These results confirm that understanding consumer needs, optimizing the value-price relationship, facilitating purchasing processes, and ensuring effective communication are significantly associated with consumer preferences. These findings provide

empirical evidence for the development of more effective marketing strategies in the local clothing sector. Future research is recommended to expand the study to other commercial sectors in the Amazon region and incorporate mediating variables such as brand loyalty.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the subject matter of this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, funding acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing – original draft, and writing – review and editing: Alvarado-Lozano, J. M. and Tuanama-Amacifuen, L. I.

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