

Analysis of the production processes of the Pamplona confectionery sector as a platform for industrial and business development

Análisis de los procesos productivos del sector dulcero de Pamplona como plataforma para el desarrollo industrial y empresarial

Análise dos processos produtivos do setor de confeitaria de Pamplona como plataforma de desenvolvimento industrial e empresarial

Vianeth Socorro Jaimes Villamizar¹
Zoraima Victalia Peñaranda Ayala²
Sandra Milena Castro Escobar³

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- ¹ Master of Administration, Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences, University of Pamplona
CVLAC: https://scienti.minciencias.gov.co/cvlac/visualizador/generarCurriculoCv.do?cod_rh=0001434961
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0708-3528>
Email: vianeth.jaimes@unipamplona.edu.co
- ² Industrial Engineering, Faculty of Engineerings and Architecture, University of Pamplona
CVLAC: https://scienti.minciencias.gov.co/cvlac/visualizador/generarCurriculoCv.do?cod_rh=0001692389
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5450-7224>
Email: zorapayala@unipamplona.edu.co
- ³ Industrial Engineering, Faculty of Engineerings and Architecture, University of Pamplona
CVLAC: https://scienti.minciencias.gov.co/cvlac/visualizador/generarCurriculoCv.do?cod_rh=0000790397
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1745-0019>
Email: sandra.castro@unipamplona.edu.co



Abstract

The article is derived from the research titled "Analysis of the Production Processes of the Pamplona Candy Market as a Platform for Industrial and Business Development," conducted at the University of Pamplona in 2004.

Introduction: The creation of a strategic plan was essential for fostering business development in the competitive Pamplona candy market. This process involved a thorough analysis of the market, competition, and consumer trends.

The goal was to evaluate the production processes within the Pamplona candy market to identify areas for improvement and propose strategies that would optimize efficiency, promote business growth, and enhance competitiveness.

Problem: The candy market is a crucial economic activity in Pamplona, contributing significantly to the local economy and providing employment. However, it faces challenges related to modernization, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Methodology: The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach was vital for designing a comprehensive strategic plan. The qualitative analysis provided insights into the dynamics of the sector, while Porter's Five Forces analysis helped assess the competitive landscape. By integrating both methods, we were able to formulate strategies to enhance the sector's competitiveness.

Results: The survey revealed that the sector is primarily dominated by micro-businesses, emphasizing their critical role in the local economy. The findings allowed us to design a strategic plan aimed at strengthening their competitive growth and establishing the candy market as a platform for sustainable business development in Pamplona.

Conclusion: Companies in the candy sector must focus on innovation by creating healthier products, improving digital marketing strategies, and leveraging e-commerce to adapt to market trends. This will enable them to expand into new markets and channels, enhancing their competitiveness in the evolving business landscape.

Keywords: Candy market processes, business development, strategic plan, Porter.

Resumen

El artículo se deriva de la investigación "Análisis de los Procesos Productivos del Sector Dulcero de Pamplona como Plataforma para el Desarrollo Industrial y Empresarial", desarrollado en la Universidad de Pamplona en 2004.

Introducción: En el sector dulcero de Pamplona, la creación de un plan estratégico fue esencial para fomentar el desarrollo empresarial en un entorno competitivo. Esto incluyó un análisis detallado del mercado, la competencia y las tendencias de consumo.

Evaluar los procesos productivos del sector dulcero de Pamplona para identificar mejoras y proponer estrategias que optimicen la eficiencia, promuevan el desarrollo empresarial y aumenten la competitividad.

Problema: El sector dulcero es una actividad económica clave en Pamplona, contribuyendo a la economía local y generando empleo. Sin embargo, enfrenta desafíos de modernización, competitividad y sostenibilidad a largo plazo.

Metodología: La investigación empleó un enfoque mixto, combinando métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos, lo que fue crucial para diseñar un plan estratégico. El análisis cualitativo permitió comprender las dinámicas del sector, mientras que el análisis de las 5 fuerzas de Porter evaluó la competencia en el mercado. La combinación de ambos enfoques permitió formular estrategias que mejoren la competitividad del sector.

Resultados: La encuesta reveló que el sector está dominado por microempresas, destacando su importancia en la economía local. El diagnóstico permitió diseñar un plan estratégico para fortalecer su crecimiento competitivo y establecerlo como plataforma de desarrollo empresarial y sostenible en Pamplona.

Conclusión: Las empresas del sector deben innovar, creando productos más saludables, mejorar su marketing digital y aprovechar el comercio electrónico para adaptarse a las tendencias del mercado y expandirse a nuevos canales y mercados.

Palabras clave: Procesos Sector dulcero, desarrollo empresarial, plan estratégico, Porter.

Resumo

Este artigo baseia-se na pesquisa "Análise dos Processos Produtivos do Setor de Confeitaria de Pamplona como Plataforma para o Desenvolvimento Industrial e Empresarial", realizada na Universidade de Pamplona em 2004.

Introdução: No setor de confeitaria de Pamplona, a criação de um plano estratégico foi essencial para impulsionar o desenvolvimento dos negócios em um ambiente competitivo. Isso incluiu uma análise detalhada do mercado, da concorrência e das tendências de consumo.

Avaliar os processos produtivos do setor de confeitaria de Pamplona para identificar melhorias e propor estratégias que otimizem a eficiência, promovam o desenvolvimento dos negócios e aumentem a competitividade.

Problema: O setor de confeitaria é uma atividade econômica fundamental em Pamplona, contribuindo para a economia local e gerando empregos. No entanto, enfrenta desafios em termos de modernização, competitividade e sustentabilidade a longo prazo.

Metodologia: A pesquisa utilizou uma abordagem de métodos mistos, combinando métodos qualitativos e quantitativos, o que foi crucial para a elaboração de um plano estratégico. A análise qualitativa forneceu insights sobre a dinâmica do setor, enquanto a análise das Cinco Forças de Porter avaliou a concorrência no mercado. A combinação de ambas as abordagens permitiu o desenvolvimento de estratégias para melhorar a competitividade do setor.

Resultados: A pesquisa revelou que o setor é dominado por microempresas, destacando sua importância na economia local. A avaliação levou à elaboração de um plano estratégico para fortalecer seu crescimento competitivo e se estabelecer como uma plataforma de negócios e desenvolvimento sustentável em Pamplona.

Conclusão: As empresas do setor devem inovar criando produtos mais saudáveis, aprimorar seu marketing digital e alavancar o e-commerce para se adaptar às tendências de mercado e expandir para novos canais e mercados.

Palavras-chave: processos do setor de confeitaria, desenvolvimento de negócios, plano estratégico, Porter.

1. INTRODUCTION

The candy market in Pamplona is crucial for the local economy, not only for its contribution to employment and economic development but also for its cultural and traditional significance. However, it faces significant challenges, such as the lack of innovation, competition from substitute products, and limited presence in markets

outside the city. This study focuses on designing a strategic plan to address these challenges and encourage a more competitive and sustainable business environment.

Currently, global gastronomy has gained great relevance, especially due to the appreciation of foods that occupy a prominent place in specific markets. In Colombia, for instance, confectionery products are highly valued, with traditional candies being an indispensable element both gastronomically and sentimentally for Colombians. These candies are generally recognized by people over 25 years old, as they have experienced distinctive flavors that have left a mark on their memories.

Therefore, the confectionery industry not only offers characteristic flavors but also generates a sense of belonging related to childhood memories, family, or specific lived moments. The consumption of traditional Colombian candies reflects a profound social sensitivity, where cultural traditions of each region of the country are appreciated and exalted. This, at the same time, drives economic and regional development in Colombia [1].

The production of traditional candies often begins with sugarcane processing, followed by the creation of intermediate products derived from it, and concludes with local distribution [2].

According to Procolombia (2022), the confectionery market in Colombia is segmented into bonbons, caramels, candies, non-cocoa products, and chewing gum, with the first two occupying approximately 80% of the market. With around 700 companies in the sector, these exported 59,053 tons of candies, with bonbons, caramels, and candies leading with 82%, reflecting constant growth in exports [3].

Despite the national and international popularity of chocolates and candies, the industry has faced recent challenges, such as an 8.3% decrease in the GDP of the sector in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the advanced aging of 45% of crops and increased production costs due to rising raw material prices have negatively impacted the industry [4].

In a world that prioritizes health and wellness, national health authorities are implementing measures to address obesity and food-related diseases. One such measure is increasing taxes on high-sugar products, such as sweets and confectionery. Although the primary objective of this measure is to promote healthier eating habits, its impact on the confectionery industry is significant and requires analysis [5].

Another aspect to consider is the relationship with the competitiveness of confectionery companies in the global market. If a country decides to implement a sugar tax increase while others do not, local companies may face unequal competition. This can lead to a loss of competitiveness in the international market and a decrease in exports, negatively affecting the overall economy [6].

Pamplona's candy market consists mainly of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) dedicated to the traditional production of "bocadillo veleño," "panelitas," and milk-based sweets. These enterprises are a source of employment in the region and significantly contribute to the local gross domestic product (GDP).

The competition in the candy market is intense due to the presence of imported products, often sold at lower prices. This unfair competition negatively affects local producers, who face difficulties competing in price and quality [6]. Furthermore, limited access to international markets restricts the growth and expansion opportunities of the sector.

The production costs in the candy market are high, mainly due to fluctuations in the prices of raw materials such as sugar and cocoa. This situation is exacerbated by poor infrastructure, which increases logistical costs and affects the efficiency of transporting inputs and finished products [7].

The candy market holds not only economic importance but also profound cultural and social value. Pamplona's traditional sweets are part of the region's cultural heritage, and their production is a practice passed down from generation to generation.

This sector provides employment to a considerable number of local inhabitants, including women and youth. Nevertheless, gender inequality persists, and women face barriers in accessing resources and training opportunities. Promoting gender equality and improving working conditions are fundamental challenges for the inclusive development of the sector.

2. METEERIALS AND METHODS

The research employed a mixed-methods design, combining both qualitative and quantitative elements in a single study to leverage the strengths of both approaches for a more precise understanding of the investigated phenomenon. This approach allowed the exploration of the quality and subjectivity of human experiences, as well as the collection of objective and quantifiable data, offering a richer and more holistic perspective of the problem at hand.

The exploratory-descriptive approach focuses on describing and understanding a specific phenomenon or problem in detail without attempting to establish causal relationships. This approach is particularly useful when investigating underexplored topics or when an initial understanding of a problem is needed before formulating specific hypotheses [8]. Techniques such as surveys, structured interviews, or document analysis were employed, enabling the collection of detailed data on the characteristics and dynamics of the phenomenon under study.

As part of this research, a survey was designed as the main data collection instrument. This survey consisted of formulating questions for producers, marketers, and customers in the candy market of Pamplona, with the objective of gathering relevant information about the study's subject matter. Specifically, the survey aimed to achieve several objectives, such as:

Sector characterization: The survey provided specific data as inputs for characterizing Pamplona's candy market. Questions focused on the types of products, distribution channels, company size, and production practices to create a detailed profile of the sector, identifying its strengths and weaknesses.

Current situation diagnosis: By applying the surveys, relevant information was collected to analyze Porter's Five Forces, a conceptual framework used in industry to assess sector competitiveness. The questions addressed issues such as rivalry among companies, bargaining power of suppliers and customers, threats of substitute products, and new competitors entering the market. The responses were key to understanding the sector's dynamics and its current challenges.

Strategy establishment: By obtaining direct information from entrepreneurs and key stakeholders in the sector through the survey, opportunities and challenges were identified. The responses guided the development of specific strategies to enhance competitive growth, such as product diversification, exploration of new distribution channels, and implementation of sustainable practices.

The systematization, tabulation, and presentation of survey data were carried out using statistical software SPSS, which involved several key steps to extract meaningful information and present it effectively. First, the collected data were organized into an Excel spreadsheet, with columns assigned to each variable of interest, such as age, gender, specific survey responses, etc. Once organized, the data were exported to SPSS, where statistical analyses were conducted, and graphical visualizations were generated to present the percentage results of each survey question.

The population of Pamplona was considered the starting point for applying the instrument to customers. According to Pamplona's official municipal portal (<https://www.pamplona-nortedesantander.gov.co/>, 2024), the city has an approximate population of 76,983 inhabitants. Based on the calculations performed, a representative sample of 20 participants was selected, including proprietors, administrators, and employees of microbusinesses dedicated to the production and commercialization of confectionery, all of them registered at the city's Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, 7 informal vendors in Pamplona's candy market were included to make up a representative sample.

3. RESULTS

The research focused on the candy market in Pamplona, providing detailed insights through a comprehensive characterization of the sector. Key aspects, such as the variety of products offered, the geographical distribution of companies, and consumer perceptions, were analyzed [9]. Additionally, a precise diagnosis of the sector's current state was conducted using Porter's Five Forces analysis to identify the competitive dynamics influencing its development. This analysis highlighted several factors affecting the sector's competitiveness, ranging from the bargaining power of suppliers to the threat of new competitors entering the market.

The study greatly benefited from the data provided by the Pamplona Chamber of Commerce, which facilitated a clear diagnosis and characterization of the sector. Notably, it was found that the sector is predominantly composed of microbusinesses, including individual entrepreneurs and commercial establishments. These businesses engage in various activities related to the production, commercialization, and sale of sweets and related products. Key findings include:

To understand the dynamics of the sector more thoroughly, the collected data can be related to the conceptual framework. Below is the systematization of the candy sector in Pamplona based on information gathered by the Pamplona Chamber of Commerce for the year 2023.

Table 1. Characterization matrix of the candy market in Pamplona

Organization	Name	Activity	Business Size	Number of employees
Sole Proprietorship	Matagira Quintana Nohemí	Production and sale of artisanal sweets	Microbusiness	1
Sole Proprietorship	Rivera Castellanos Danilo	Retail trade of sweets	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Super Dulces - Pamplona	Retail trade of sweets		1
Sole Proprietorship	Diana Rocío Ordoñez Duarte	-Commercialization of traditional and artisanal sweets of Norte de Santander -Commercialization of ice cream in various presentations. -Production of desserts, chocolates and artisanal ice cream.	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Dulcería Y Heladería Boquita 'S	-Commercialization of traditional and artisanal sweets of Norte de Santander -Commercialization of ice cream in various presentations. -Production of desserts, chocolates and artisanal ice cream.		1

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Organization	Name	Activity	Business Size	Number of employees
Sole Proprietorship	Helida Velandia Gutierrez	Production and sale of yogurt, sweets and desserts	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Dulces La Nona	Production and sale of yogurt, sweets and desserts		1
Sole Proprietorship	Pabón López Yuly Rocío	Sale of sweets, desserts, fruit, and coffee shop	Microbusiness	2
Commercial Establishment	Fresas Con Crema Yulan	Sale of sweets, desserts, fruit, and coffee shop		2
Sole Proprietorship	Duarte Duarte Myriam	Production and sale of sweets. Retail trade of food products	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Dulces Chato`S	Production and sale of sweets. Retail trade of food products		1
Sole Proprietorship	Hernández Sarmiento Marina	Production and commercialization of artisanal sweets	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Fábrica De Dulces La Pamplonesita	Production and commercialization of artisanal sweets		1
Sole Proprietorship	Castro Díaz María Elena	Retail trade of food products - Producer of artisanal sweets	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Venta De Dulces El Rey	Production and commercialization of artisanal sweets		1
Sole Proprietorship	Pérez Rojas Luis David	Production and commercialization of milk-based sweets	Microbusiness	1
Sole Proprietorship	Rojas Granados Carlos Eduardo	Production and commercialization of dairy products, including milk-based sweets	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Productos Artesanales Nevada	Production and commercialization of dairy products, including milk-based sweets		1
Sole Proprietorship	María Julia Mendoza Suarez	Tourist lodging, artisanal sweets, desserts, and specials meals	Microbusiness	1
Commercial Establishment	Delicias Toledanas Villa Julia	Tourist lodging, artisanal sweets, desserts, and specials meals		1

Source: own work(2024)

The table above presents the characterization of the candy market in Pamplona, as registered with the Chamber of Commerce of Pamplona.

According to the data provided by the Chamber of Commerce, the candy market in Pamplona is primarily composed of microbusinesses, including sole proprietorships and commercial establishments. These companies are engaged in various activities related to the production, commercialization, and sale of sweets and related products. Several key aspects of the sector were identified:

Diversification of Activities: The market shows significant variety in business activities, ranging from the production and sale of artisanal sweets to the

commercialization of ice cream, desserts, dairy products, and fruits. This indicates diverse local preferences and demands.

Business Size: The analysis revealed that the majority of businesses in Pamplona's candy market are microbusinesses, which suggests that small businesses dominate the sector. This has important implications for competition and the ability of these businesses to invest in technology and marketing.

Local Competition: Given the high concentration of microbusinesses, there is significant competition within the local market. This results in variability in pricing, product quality, and the additional services offered to differentiate from competitors. The market is highly competitive, requiring businesses to constantly develop strategies to maintain their position [10].

Artisanal Focus: Many businesses focus on the production and commercialization of traditional sweets from the region, highlighting an appreciation for authenticity, quality, and trust in local products. This artisanal approach can serve as a key differentiator, building customer loyalty and attracting those seeking unique, authentic experiences [9].

Additional Services: Some companies that produce and distribute sweets in Pamplona also offer complementary services, such as tourist lodging or coffee shops. This indicates a diversification strategy aimed at increasing revenue and attracting a broader range of customer segments.

In conclusion, the candy market in Pamplona is diverse and predominantly composed of microbusinesses offering a wide range of products and services related to sweets and complementary foods. The intense competition within this market could drive innovation and differentiation, particularly due to the flexible organizational structure of these businesses [11].

Analysis of Porter's Five Forces

The analysis of competition involves assessing the number and size of competitors, as well as the aggressiveness of their commercial strategies. In a highly competitive market, confectionery businesses must differentiate themselves through quality, trustworthiness, product innovation, and exceptional customer service to maintain their market position.

Considering the aforementioned points, the candy market in Pamplona is diverse and primarily composed of microbusinesses offering a broad range of products and services related to sweets and complementary foods. The high level of competition

within this market fosters innovation and differentiation, particularly given the flexible organizational structure that characterizes the sector.

Table 2. List of product’s prices at the candy market of Pamplona

Product	Establishment A	Establishment B	Establishment C
Candies (100g)	\$2,000	\$2,200	\$1,800
Chocolates (100g)	\$3,500	\$3,800	\$3,200
Cookies (paquete 200g)	\$4,000	\$4,200	\$3,800
Gummies (100g)	\$2,500	\$2,700	\$2,300
Marzipan (unidad)	\$1,200	\$1,300	\$1,100
Chocolate bar (50g)	\$2,000	\$2,200	\$1,900

Source: own work(2024)

As shown in the table, the prices of the five products analyzed among companies in the candy market exhibit a variation of approximately plus or minus 200 pesos. This price range allows businesses to stay competitive and adapt to market conditions.

Furthermore, the data collected provided valuable insights for analyzing Porter’s Five Forces, revealing significant patterns and trends that enhance understanding of the sector’s current state. These findings are essential in developing effective business strategies aimed at fostering growth and competitiveness in the candy market. By addressing identified opportunities and leveraging the industry’s strengths, businesses can position themselves for success [12]. The following results are presented below:

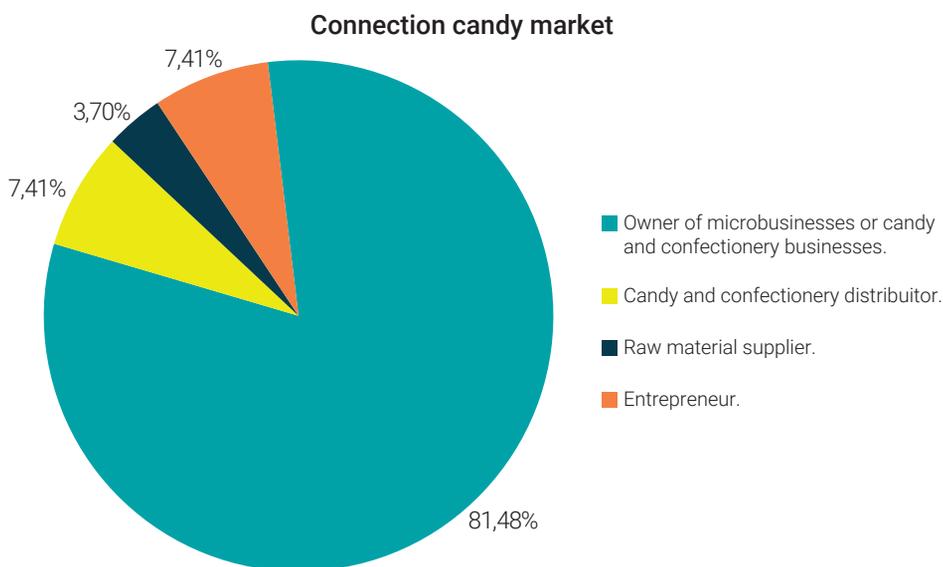
Table 3. Connection with the candy subsector in the city of Pamplona

Connection with the candy subsector in the city of Pamplona	N	%
OWNER OF MICROBUSINESSES OR CANDY AND CONFECTIONERY BUSINESSES	22	81,5%
CANDY AND CONFECTIONERY DISTRIBUTOR	2	7,4%
RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIER	1	3,7%
ENTREPRENEUR	2	7,4%

Source: own work(2024)

The previous table presents the percentage distribution of stakeholders involved in the candy market. This segmentation was essential for understanding the dynamics of the market and the relationships among its various participants. As shown, the

largest representation in the sector consists of microbusiness owners or confectionery businesses, with a total of 22 establishments, accounting for 81.5% of the market.



Graph 1. Connection with the candy subsector in the city of Pamplona

Source: Self-elaborated

Graphically, it is evident that the majority of survey respondents are owners of microbusinesses or confectionery businesses, representing 81.5%. This indicates that this group is the most dominant in Pamplona’s candy market. Distributors and employees each account for 7.4% of the survey respondents, while raw material suppliers constitute 3.7%. The predominance of business owners suggests that Pamplona’s candy market is primarily composed of small businesses and microbusinesses, which significantly influences local economic dynamics. The low representation of distributors, suppliers, and employees indicates that most operations in the market are directly managed by the owners.

In terms of market analysis, the significant predominance of microbusiness owners and confectionery operators reveals a business structure centered on small enterprises, with limited involvement from other stakeholders. These insights are crucial for developing strategies to support and strengthen the candy market, with a particular focus on the needs of microbusiness owners.

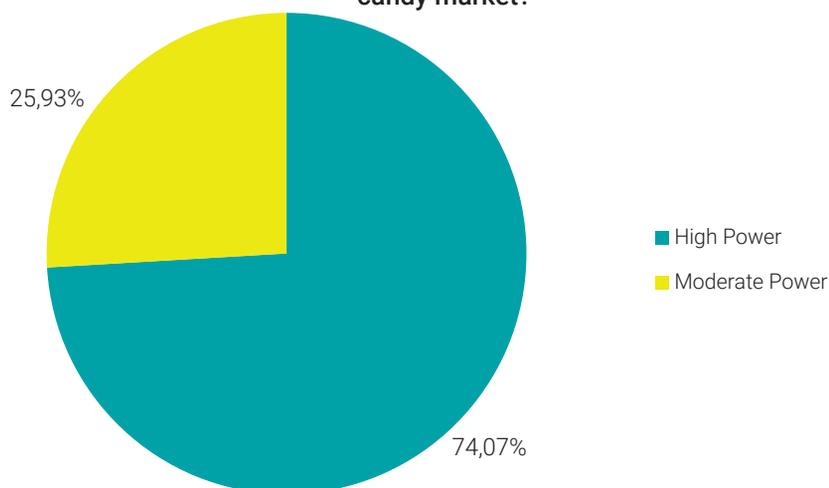
Table 4. How would you describe the bargaining power of your clients in the Pamplona candy sector market?

RESPONSE	N	%
HIGH POWER	20	74,1%
MODERATE POWER	7	25,9%
LOW POWER	0	0,00%

Source: own work(2024)

The table also illustrates the bargaining power of companies in the Pamplona candy market over their customers. As shown, this power is rated as high, indicating that customers have a significant influence on sales conditions, prices, promotions, distribution channels, and the overall characteristics of the products.

How do you describe the bargaining power of your clients in the Pamplona candy market?



Graph 2. Bargaining power

Source: Self-elaborated

The analysis of the survey responses reveals that 20 respondents, representing approximately 74% of the total, perceive a high level of bargaining power among customers in the Pamplona candy market. Conversely, 7 respondents, or about 26%, consider customer bargaining power to be moderate. These findings indicate that businesses in Pamplona’s candy market face considerable pressure from customers to offer high-quality products, competitive prices, and excellent service. The perception of moderate bargaining power by a minority suggests some variability in opinions. However, the majority view high customer bargaining power, underscoring the

need for businesses to remain agile in responding to customer needs and demands. Maintaining a strong focus on customer satisfaction is essential for sustaining competitiveness and ensuring long-term success in the market.

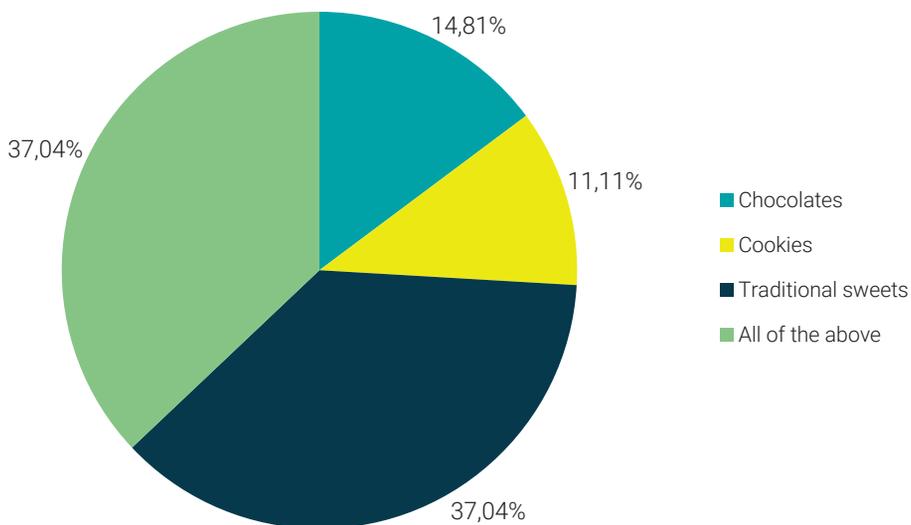
Table 5. What kind of confectionery products does your business offer?

RESPONSES	N	%
CHOCOLATES	4	14,8%
COOKIES	3	11,1%
TRADITIONAL SWEETS	10	37,0%
ALL OF THE ABOVE	10	37,0%
OTHER	0	0,00%

Source: own work(2024)

The previous table displays the types of confectionery products offered by the surveyed businesses in Pamplona’s candy market, with traditional sweets being the most commonly produced. These products are a staple of the city’s market and have a long-standing presence in the local confectionery landscape.

What kind of confectionery products offers your business?



Graph 3. Confectionery products that offers your business

Source: Self-elaborated

The collected data reveal a clear distribution of preferences for sweet products, as reflected in the number of responses for each category. Chocolates received 4 responses, accounting for approximately 15% of the total. Cookies garnered 3 responses, representing about 11%. Traditional sweets emerged as the most popular choice, with 10 responses, making up around 37% of the total. Interestingly, the same percentage (37%) was allocated to the option "All of the above." Notably, there were no responses in the "Others (specify)" category.

These results indicate a strong preference for traditional sweets, which are a hallmark of the candy market in Pamplona, followed closely by the option to offer a variety of products. Chocolates and cookies, while still popular, have a smaller presence in comparison. The absence of responses in the "Others" category suggests that the provided options adequately encompass the types of confectionery products offered by the surveyed businesses.

Given the prominence of traditional sweets as the sector's primary product, further research is needed on production systems to enhance and modernize their manufacturing processes. This could help these sweets compete in national and international markets, especially since they are highly typical, artisanal, and culturally significant to the city.

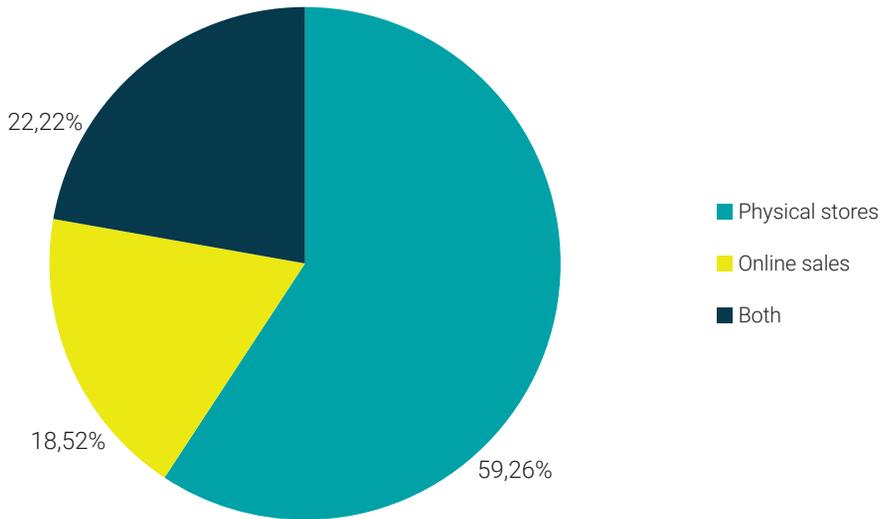
Table 6 . What is the main distribution channel for confectionery products?

RESPONSES	N	%
PHYSICAL STORES	16	59,3%
ONLINE SALES	5	18,5%
BOTH	6	22,2%

Source: own work(2024)

According to the table, the main distribution channels used by companies in Pamplona's candy market are physical stores, which serve as the primary channel for selling products. However, online sales and a combination of both physical and online channels are also utilized, albeit to a lesser extent.

What is your main distribution channel for confectionery products?



Graph 4. What is your main distribution channel for confectionery products?

Source: Self-elaborated

The data reveal that physical stores dominate the distribution of confectionery products, accounting for approximately 59% of the responses. This highlights the need for businesses to strengthen their presence in physical retail spaces. Strategies such as expanding to new locations, improving product visibility in existing stores, and building strong relationships with distributors and retailers could help achieve this goal.

While online sales make up a smaller portion of the distribution channel, representing around 19% of the responses, they remain highly relevant. This suggests that businesses could benefit from enhancing their online presence by improving the shopping experience on their websites, investing in digital marketing, and expanding availability through popular e-commerce platforms.

Additionally, about 22% of survey respondents indicated they use both physical stores and online channels to purchase confectionery products. This underscores the importance of adopting an omnichannel strategy that integrates both online and offline sales efforts. By doing so, businesses can offer a seamless and convenient shopping experience, extending their reach and meeting customer demands more effectively.

In conclusion, while physical stores remain the primary distribution channel, adopting a balanced strategy that leverages both online and offline sales could be key to enhancing the company's visibility and success in the candy market.

Regarding distribution, companies may choose to sell directly to consumers through their own stores or coffee shops, or collaborate with local distributors and

retailers to broaden their reach. The choice of distribution channel depends on factors such as cultural and religious practices, marketing strategies, geographical reach, and market segmentation.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The design of a strategic plan for the candy market in Pamplona is rooted in a thorough analysis of the sector's current environment, which emphasizes the need to characterize and diagnose its core components. The findings reveal that the candy market is largely composed of microbusinesses, which indicates a business structure limited by resources and specialized staff[13]. This limitation may hinder these businesses' ability to compete effectively in broader markets, highlighting the importance of providing support in critical areas like innovation and digital marketing[14].

Competition within the sector is intense, as identified through the analysis of Porter's Five Forces [15]. The strong rivalry among competitors, coupled with the threat of substitute products, positions the candy market in a vulnerable state. Despite its significant local economic role, microbusinesses face challenges in maintaining competitiveness without adequate access to technological resources and training programs that would allow them to innovate and adapt to evolving market dynamics [13].

Customer bargaining power is another crucial factor in this study. The majority of survey respondents believe that customers possess significant bargaining power, forcing companies to be highly responsive to changing market demands and preferences [13]. This highlights the importance of diversifying product offerings, particularly in a market dominated by traditional products. Companies must also adapt to emerging trends, such as the demand for healthier options, to remain relevant.

Additionally, the study reveals that businesses in the sector predominantly rely on traditional distribution channels, such as physical stores, although online sales are becoming increasingly important [13]. This presents a significant opportunity for companies to strengthen their e-commerce strategies. By adopting an omnichannel approach that integrates physical and digital sales channels, businesses can expand their reach and enhance customer satisfaction.

Innovation—or the lack thereof—emerges as a central issue. The absence of investment in research and development is a major weakness that needs to be prioritized. Developing new products that align with current market trends, such as healthier and higher-quality offerings, is essential for standing out in an increasingly competitive market [15].

Lastly, strategic collaboration between confectionery businesses and other stakeholders, such as suppliers and distributors, is key to improving operational efficiency and competitiveness [15]. These partnerships could open access to new markets, optimize supply chains, and foster sustainable, long-term growth for the sector in Pamplona [13].

5. CONCLUSIONS

The lack of innovation is one of the main weaknesses of the sector. Companies need to invest in research and development to improve the production processes of traditional sweets, which are a hallmark of the city's candy market. Additionally, they must create new products that cater to market trends and the changing preferences of consumers, such as healthier options with reduced sugar content [16].

Companies must also enhance their digital marketing strategies and explore new distribution channels to increase visibility and presence in regional and national markets. Digitalization and the use of e-commerce platforms can serve as key tools to achieve this objective.

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