

# Digital strategy for the growth of micro and small enterprises: the case of Gusto Amazónico in Tarapoto

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## *Estrategia digital para el crecimiento de MYPES: el caso de Gusto Amazónico en Tarapoto*

Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa<sup>1</sup>  , Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz<sup>1</sup>  , Ángel Cárdenas-García<sup>1</sup>  

<sup>1</sup>Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Facultad de Ingeniería de Sistemas e Informática. Tarapoto, Perú.

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**Corresponding Author:** Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa 

### ABSTRACT

The research analyzed the influence of a marketplace on the commercial performance of the company Gusto Amazónico, located in Tarapoto, during 2020. The study was based on the observation that digital transformation and e-commerce had significantly changed the way companies interacted with their customers and managed their operations. International, national, and local background information was reviewed, demonstrating that the adoption of digital trading platforms expanded market reach, optimized internal processes, reduced costs, and strengthened customer relationships. Marketplaces were identified as a particularly advantageous strategy for micro and small businesses with physical infrastructure limitations, as they allowed them to access more consumers without high investments in premises or personnel. In the specific case of Gusto Amazónico, it was determined that the implementation of a marketplace could facilitate expansion into new markets, diversification of sales channels, and improvement in order and inventory management. Likewise, the incorporation of methodologies such as Lean Startup and Lean Canvas provided an agile framework for designing, validating, and adjusting the business model, reducing risks and promoting continuous learning. In conclusion, it was established that the adoption of a marketplace, together with digital marketing and customer relationship management strategies, had the potential to become a catalyst for the company's sustainable growth and competitiveness, provided that it could effectively adapt to technological changes and the demands of digital consumers.

**Keywords:** E-Commerce; Marketplace; Micro And Small Businesses; Lean Startup; Amazonian Taste.

### RESUMEN

La investigación analizó la influencia de un marketplace en el desempeño comercial de la empresa Gusto Amazónico, ubicada en Tarapoto, durante el año 2020. El estudio partió de la constatación de que la transformación digital y el comercio electrónico habían modificado de forma significativa la manera en que las empresas interactuaban con sus clientes y gestionaban sus operaciones. Se revisaron antecedentes internacionales, nacionales y locales que demostraron que la adopción de plataformas digitales de compraventa ampliaba el alcance de mercado, optimizaba procesos internos, reducía costos y fortalecía las relaciones con los clientes. Se identificó que los marketplaces representaban una estrategia especialmente ventajosa para las micro y pequeñas empresas con limitaciones de infraestructura física, al permitirles acceder a más consumidores sin inversiones elevadas en locales o personal. En el caso específico de Gusto Amazónico, se determinó que la implementación de un marketplace podía facilitar la expansión hacia nuevos mercados, la diversificación de canales de venta y la mejora en la gestión de pedidos e inventarios. Asimismo, la incorporación de metodologías como Lean Startup y Lean Canvas ofreció un marco ágil para diseñar, validar y ajustar el modelo de negocio, reduciendo riesgos y potenciando el aprendizaje continuo. En conclusión, se estableció que la adopción de un marketplace, junto con estrategias de marketing digital y gestión de relaciones con clientes, tenía el potencial de convertirse en un catalizador para el crecimiento sostenible y la competitividad de la empresa, siempre que se lograra una adaptación efectiva a los cambios tecnológicos y a las exigencias del consumidor digital.

**Palabras clave:** Comercio Electrónico; Marketplace; Micro y Pequeñas Empresas; Lean Startup; Gusto Amazónico.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, digital transformation has revolutionized the way companies interact with their customers and conduct business transactions. E-commerce has evolved from an emerging innovation to an essential element for business competitiveness in a globalized and highly dynamic market. This modality has enabled businesses of all sizes to access new markets, optimize their processes, and provide personalized experiences, thereby adapting to the demands of increasingly informed and demanding consumers.

Within e-commerce, marketplaces have emerged as key platforms for connecting sellers and buyers. These virtual spaces bring together a wide variety of suppliers, making it easier for consumers to compare prices, evaluate options, and purchase products efficiently. In addition, their technological structure allows sellers to reduce costs, improve inventory management, and expand their reach without the need for significant investments in physical infrastructure. International studies, such as those by Costella et al.<sup>(1)</sup>, Tamayo<sup>(2)</sup>, and Reydet, have shown that the implementation of marketplaces promotes sustained growth, strengthens customer relationships, and contributes to the financial stability of organizations.

In the Peruvian context, the adoption of digital solutions has grown significantly, especially in sectors such as textiles, agro-industry, and handicrafts. National and local research, including studies by Barrera, Egovail et al., and Maldonado<sup>(3)</sup> highlight that e-commerce represents a strategic opportunity for micro and small enterprises (MSMEs), enabling them to overcome geographical barriers, reduce operating costs, and diversify their sales channels. However, challenges remain related to technological adaptation, staff training, and building trust in digital environments.

The specific case of the company Gusto Amazónico, located in Tarapoto, reflects this reality. Despite its potential to offer products with differentiated cultural and gastronomic value, it faces limitations in entering broader markets. The implementation of a marketplace is presented as a strategy that could not only improve its commercial performance but also strengthen its competitiveness against companies that already operate with consolidated digital models.

Therefore, it is relevant to analyze the influence that a marketplace can have on the commercial performance of Gusto Amazónico. This research is based on a theoretical framework that includes concepts such as e-commerce, digitization, customer relationship management (CRM), social media, and agile methodologies such as Lean Startup and Lean Canvas, thus integrating a holistic approach to understanding how technology can drive sustainable business growth.

## DEVELOPMENT

### Research background

#### International

Costella et al.<sup>(1)</sup> in their undergraduate thesis “GOT IT! Marketplace de arrendamiento” (GOT IT! Rental Marketplace) from the University of Chile, Faculty of Economics and Business, School of Economics and Administration, Santiago, Chile. The marketing plan has been defined as a key success factor, as well as the development of long-term strategic alliances. The marketing plan is essential to accelerate penetration and increase platform usability, aiming to reach 56 600 active users in the shortest time possible. Strategic alliances are related to

raising barriers to entry into the industry and, on the other hand, allowing us as developers to provide our users with the best user experience, from uploading a product to the application to the moment of collection or payment of balances. Taking all of the above into account, we have achieved a company capable of generating revenues of over CLP 1,85 billion with an EBITDA margin of 47 % in its fifth year of operation, which demonstrates the capacity and stability of cash flows once a critical mass of customers and frequency of use is achieved.

Tamayo<sup>(2)</sup> in his undergraduate thesis “Proposal for a B2B-based marketplace model for the auto parts sector in Colombia” from the Nueva Granada Military University in Bogotá, D.C. The B2B e-marketplace business model may be the solution that will provide evidence of technological initiative for the auto parts sector in Colombia, because it will generate value for organizations, allowing them to reinvent themselves based on the needs of customers, who demonstrate day after day their awareness of the costs of a product or service, demand quality, and are selective.

Reydet in his undergraduate thesis “Technical, economic, and strategic feasibility assessment of implementing a marketplace for Chilean artisanal products” from the University of Chile, Faculty of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Department of Industrial Engineering, Santiago, Chile. According to the market study, a large number of people are familiar with online shopping, with a significant proportion of consumers surveyed (87,2 %) having made purchases in the last 12 months via this channel. Considering only the target segment (ABC1), over 96 % of those surveyed indicated that they had made purchases online in the last 12 months.

#### National

In a thesis “Development of an e-marketplace platform to improve the participation of SMEs in digital commerce” from the National University of San Marcos, Faculty of Systems Engineering and Informatics, E.A.P. Systems Engineering, Lima. The social contribution of this project is to identify ways for SMEs to participate in the digital market, thus avoiding the need for extensive knowledge of technology and barriers to entry.

Egovail et al., in their undergraduate thesis “Business plan for an online fresh fruit marketplace for wholesale markets in Metropolitan Lima” from the ESAN University Master’s Program in Agribusiness Management in Lima. The online marketplace as a new channel for marketing fresh fruit in Metropolitan Lima suggests that the proposed business plan is viable, given the level of investment and positive returns.

Aliaga et al., in their undergraduate thesis “Influence of e-Commerce on the performance of micro and small enterprises in the Peruvian textile sector in the Gamarra Commercial Emporium” from the San Ignacio de Loyola University in Lima. The general hypothesis of this research has been proven; therefore, e-commerce does influence the performance of micro and small enterprises in the textile sector of the Gamarra Commercial Emporium. In addition, e-commerce activity does not influence the reputation and image of the brand or the participation of micro and small enterprise customers. However, it does influence customer attitudes toward the brand. Likewise, e-commerce management factors do not influence customer attitudes toward the brand, but they do influence customer participation in MSMEs and their brand reputation and image.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the competitiveness factor of e-commerce does not influence any of the dimensions of the performance construct.

### Local

Maldonado<sup>(3)</sup> in his undergraduate thesis “Taking advantage of market opportunities through e-commerce for traditional products from the city of Lamas,” from the National University of San Martín de Tarapoto. Business opportunities abroad and through the internet are immense, with the United States being the largest market, whose internet sales growth is greater than 16 % compared to the previous year (2011). In Latin American countries, the rate exceeds 30 %. In addition, transportation costs are not an obstacle if we are targeting the continental market.

### Theoretical basis

#### E-commerce

The digital revolution is a period of economic, social, and technological transformation on a scale not seen since the industrial revolution. The term “digital economy” was coined by author Don Tapscott, who describes how the Internet can change the way companies operate. According to Tapscott, as information changes from analog to digital, physical elements will become virtual, changing the metabolism of the economy, the types of institutions and relationships possible, and the nature of economic activity itself. The world is becoming increasingly digital, trade is becoming more global, and transformations are on the rise. Some companies are already exploring new methods to boost productivity, streamline processes, and leverage digital tools to solve problems more efficiently.

#### Digitization

In our society, innovation is still limited when it comes to addressing the global challenges of the internet. Although the digitization process has been developing for several years, there is still a long way to go. This process has become a real trend that poses new challenges for economic agents involved in this digital system. The key is to adapt to change and react quickly to new challenges. Companies and individuals that are unable to adapt to change will become virtually extinct, losing many opportunities for innovation. According to Tapscott many content companies and entertainment companies, broadcast networks, and publishers are lagging due to resistance to old paradigms. Many of the most successful companies are those with experience in software, services, computer-based content, and digital telecommunications.

### CRM

CRM is a strategy that seeks to manage customer relationships in such a way that the most relevant and significant information for the company can be obtained, as this is the only way to influence customer purchases. In this strategy, the keyword is the relationship between the company and the customer. While it is true that many companies consider commercial operations to be limited to the purchase and sale of a product or service, this is no longer enough. Commercial operations have now expanded, seeking support in technology for advanced data processing techniques that enable better management decisions to be made. Paul Greenberg<sup>(4)</sup> the goal of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) is to optimize customer satisfaction,

company sales, and efficiency by building the strongest possible relationships at the organizational level. According to Swift, “the objective of CRM is to increase opportunities by improving communication with the right customer, proposing the right offer (product and price), through the right channel, and at the right time.”

According to the authors mentioned above, the purpose of CRM is to increase company profits through customer relationships, by having as much knowledge as possible to segment and detect more purchasing opportunities easily. With the advent of the Internet, the rules of the game changed completely. Companies changed the way they offer their products and services. In this context, information has become a lethal weapon that is used to build customer loyalty—the benefits of the Internet for a company.

- The Internet provides 24/7 access.
- Customers do not need to travel.
- Improves communication with customers. Threats of the Internet
- Lack of adaptation of computer systems.
- High variety of competitors.
- It is an overly volatile market.

### Social

These are valuable tools for communication between the company and the customer. We must remember that the key to success for any company is the social communication it maintains with its customers. The internet could provide practical solutions to different problems faced by the company. It can help us to have more two-way communication, allowing us to listen to customers in order to offer them products that are better suited to their needs and to solve their problems. Swift utilizes high-tech communication media and agile systems to make the exchange process efficient. This refers to all the resources necessary for customers to access the centers where products and services are provided. The internet has enabled e-commerce to evolve from being a simple catalog of products or services, built from a static page with little maintenance, to becoming one of the most indispensable means of making sales and generating profits.

### Dimensions of e-commerce

According to Laudon, “E-commerce is the use of the internet, the web, and software applications to do business. More formally, it comprises digital commercial transactions that occur between organizations and between individuals.” According to De la Garza<sup>(5)</sup> e-commerce “is an enveloping set of information technology tools, as well as business strategies designed to promote commercial practices in electronic form” (figure 1).

### Browsing

With e-commerce, customer searches are increasing exponentially, giving companies a way to showcase their products and services more efficiently. However, to do so, it is important to develop advertising campaigns and have a greater presence on social media. Only then can we get closer to the customer.

### Visit

Once we have the customer’s attention, we can pique their interest in the products or services offered by the company. At this point, we need to focus on enhancing the customer’s

experience by facilitating navigation, improving search results, and refining the layout.



Figure 1. Dimensions of e-Commerce

### Buy

To say that e-commerce is fulfilling its function, it is necessary to go through the last step, which is purchasing or placing orders through an electronic medium. Once the customer has chosen or selected the product, the purchase will be made. This process must be kept simple, easy, and secure for the customer, thus creating an environment of trust.

### Marketplace

According to Laudon et al., the marketplace is an electronic market on the internet where hundreds of major buyers can contact thousands of scattered suppliers. All of this is based on tools and services that have been tested and designed to reduce costs and increase efficiency in the marketing chain, where the third-party intermediary that forms the electronic market would obtain considerable profits. The characteristic of the marketplace within e-commerce is that it is a market that incorporates sellers and their respective inventories, where consumers have the option of choosing between different suppliers, thus selecting and negotiating the purchase as necessary. Due to the wide range of suppliers in the market, the buyer benefits from a better choice of products. Likewise, competition between merchants selling similar goods leads to lower prices and quality customer service. The supplier focuses on sourcing, inventory, order management, and fulfillment, in addition to customer service. On the other hand, the platform provides the technological infrastructure, fraud and risk management, payment processing, big data analysis, etc.

### Lean Startup

The Lean Startup methodology consists of a three-phase cyclical process: create, measure, and learn. This feedback loop enables decisions to be made throughout the process, allowing for adaptation and change while maintaining the vision or ultimate goal through experimentation. It is like using the scientific method in an experiment to learn as you go and measure the progress of the product or service.

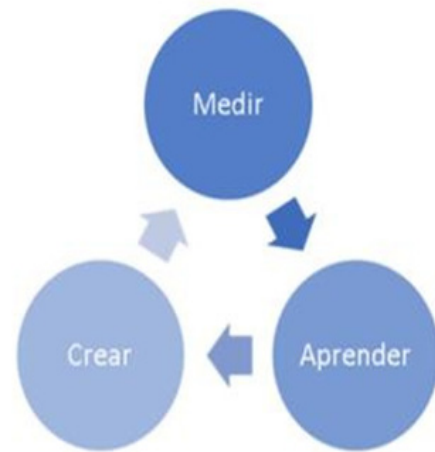


Figure 2. Lean Startup methodology

### Create

In this phase, the growth and value hypothesis of the business is proposed, outlining the goal and vision of the business. This is followed by designing a Minimum Viable Product or MVP (a product or service that meets the most basic and minimum functionalities for the customer and is feasible and profitable). This MVP is continuously developed and always focused on the business vision. It is used to test the hypothesis as quickly as possible. In addition, this prototype helps to verify the hypothesis without investing in real physical and technological infrastructure. Being a prototype, it dramatically reduces implementation costs and time. It is an agile methodology that helps to avoid paralysis by analysis. All types of expenditure must be focused on testing and verifying the product or service and its hypothesis; otherwise, it will be considered a liability.

During this phase, we began by posing the problem-solution dichotomy. To achieve a fit between the two, we used the empathy map technique, which allows us to know what potential customers think, feel, hear, and how they behave, finding the following:

- What do they see? Traffic, congestion, and safety problems are worsening, resulting in lost time, and yet the authorities are not taking the necessary steps to address these issues.
- What do they hear? They hear signs of corruption among the authorities, which influences their hope for a solution to the problems.
- What do they think? New forms of marketing, such as e-commerce, could help solve some of their problems and recover the time lost in purchasing and acquiring their products.
- What do they do? They carry out the same tasks and processes routinely because they have no other options.
- What effort do they make? They make the effort to get up early in the morning to do their shopping and arrive at their businesses on time with their products. Based on the problems outlined above, this reinforces the hypothesis of creating an online marketplace platform.

### Measure

In this phase, actionable and accessible matrices are available, as well as small batches that allow for optimization. This serves



to evaluate and determine whether validated knowledge is being obtained. Instead of traditional accounting, innovation accounting is used here, since financial projections are high risk, and it is not possible to control or obtain reliable information about the future behavior of the economy, let alone the results. Here, a starting point is established from which data and subscription rates, conversion rates, and customer value are acquired. Based on these metrics, consumer behavior is evaluated, and the areas of the proposed growth model are improved, backed by data and the presentation of validated knowledge. Another tool in this phase is actionable indicators, which are realistic, such as the percentage of customers who make a purchase. In contrast, vanity indicators show general and superficial statistics, such as the number of visitors to the business.

### Learning

The main concepts here are the options to persevere or modify the product or service, objective truth, personal experimentation, and courage. Here, the results from the previous phase are analyzed and acted upon. If the hypothesis proposed in the first phase is not the most effective, the focus should be on changing the strategy. It is not advisable to insist on an incorrect hypothesis; it is best to pivot. The results obtained from the data measured are 100 % real; they do not respond to intuition or common sense, but rather to reality. Pivoting helps you take the right path toward your vision. The proposed product or service may make consumers recognize that they have an unmet need, and that is

when you must persevere. However, there may be cases where the product does not meet the need. In that case, you must change the strategy and adapt the product to revalidate it. This is why it is critical to have a clear initial business hypothesis so that you can face failure. In this methodology, failure is essential: when there is failure, there is learning; when there is learning, there is growth; and without failure, you would not know whether to pivot or persevere.

### Lean Canvas

This strategy tool for business model development combines the Canvas Business Model and the Lean strategy, developed by the Japanese, enabling the analysis and improvement of business models in terms of efficiency. It is based on nine key aspects, including unique value proposition, customer segment, cost structure, revenue streams, problem, solution, metrics, competitive advantage, and channels. The Lean Canvas is developed in the following sequence:

- Problem.
- Customer segmentation.
- Unique value proposition.
- Solution, channels.
- Revenue stream.
- Cost structure.
- Key metrics.
- Special advantage.

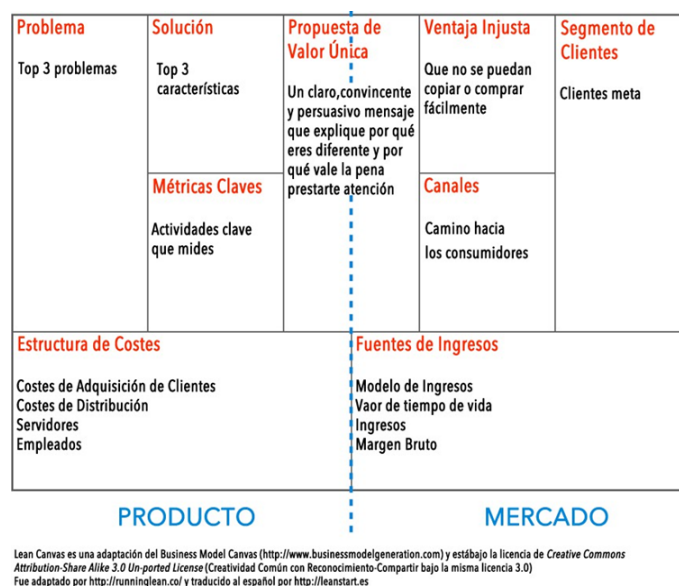


Figure 3. Lean Canvas Model

### Definition of basic terms E-Commerce

E-commerce has revolutionized the business models that were known until the 19th century, which is why this trend has become increasingly established over the years.

Kalakota et al.<sup>(6)</sup> stated that e-commerce has become a determining factor for the future of organizations, as well as changing the way companies compete, react, and the nature of leadership. E-commerce was defined as the act of using technology to enable buying and selling transactions;<sup>(7)</sup> Kalakota et al., offer a similar definition.

### Marketplace

This is a buying/selling platform where several sellers come

together, facilitating exposure and the sales process.

### Performance

Musa et al.<sup>(8)</sup> stated that the performance of MSMEs was measured by sales growth or profitability, where purchasing power plays a role.

Aliyu et al. considered that organizational performance can be measured through financial evaluation, which would include sales growth, return on equity, and return on assets.<sup>(9,10,11,12)</sup>

### CMS

This consists of a content management system, which includes the code necessary to manage

the text, pages, multimedia, and design of a website. Specific platforms such as WordPress, Prestashop, Joomla, and Drupal are known as CMS.

### Cookie

A trail of information left by a user on the server when they access the store. This small piece of code is handy for determining whether a visitor accesses the website regularly, performs specific actions, is interested in one type of advertising or another, etc.

### E-business

A business that bases its activities on the Internet.

### E-marketing (or Web marketing)

This refers to all actions taken to increase the visibility of a website or web pages on the Internet, with the ultimate goal (in the case of e-commerce) of getting Internet users to purchase the product. This includes e-mailing, natural and paid search engine optimization, web campaign design, and other related services.

### Front office

The front office of a store consists of the interface, images, texts, and prices that a customer sees when browsing the store.

### Inbound & Outbound links

An inbound link is an internal link within a website that connects to another section or page of that website. An outbound link, on the other hand, refers to links that point to other external websites.

### KPI

This stands for “Key Performance Indicators” and helps to assess our objectives and conversions by monitoring statistics that report on their performance.

### M-commerce

This term refers to mobile commerce, with the possibility of making transactions and purchases from a mobile device. Its use is increasingly widespread among internet users and involves a series of changes in web design, such as responsive themes, adapted payment gateways, etc.

### Multichannel

This refers to the possibility of selling through a combination of the different channels available (smartphones, platforms, branches, etc.).

### Payment gateway

This utility is responsible for processing sales payments, ensuring maximum security for the customer clearly and straightforwardly.

### Conversion rate

This is an indicator that helps us assess the efficiency of our online store. In e-commerce, it is calculated by dividing the total number of buyers by the total number of visits.

### Problem

This refers to problems encountered that affect a large group of people.

### Customer segmentation

Definition of the group of people or entities to whom the value proposition is directed value.

### Unique value proposition

Evaluate the product/service that generates value for the market segment defined in the previous module.

### Solutions

Proposals were made to solve the detected problems.

### Channels

This is the form of communication between the company and its customers, as well as how the value proposition is delivered.

### Revenue

This is how the company will make a profit, which may be through sales, sales commissions, subscriptions, etc.

### Cost structure

This includes the specific expenses incurred to develop and deliver the value proposition.

### Key metrics

These variables will provide insight into the state of the business.

### Special advantage

This refers to the competitive advantage over the competition, which is not easy to copy.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of Gusto Amazónico’s commercial performance in the marketplace reveals that digital transformation and e-commerce are key factors in enhancing the competitiveness of micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) in a globalized economy. Evidence gathered from international, national, and local research shows that the implementation of digital trading platforms not only expands market reach but also optimizes internal processes, reduces costs, and strengthens customer relationships.

Marketplaces are establishing themselves as a strategic solution for companies with physical infrastructure limitations, as they allow access to a large number of consumers without incurring significant expenses in premises or personnel. The diversity of suppliers on these platforms encourages competition, benefiting customers with better prices and higher-quality service. For companies, exposure in a well-managed digital environment means opportunities for differentiation and loyalty, supported by technological tools such as CRM, data analytics, and social media.

The study shows that, in the Peruvian context, there are still significant challenges related to training in the use of technologies, adapting processes to the digital environment, and building trust in online transactions. However, successful experiences in implementing marketplaces in similar sectors—such as those observed in Gamarra or the marketing of agro-industrial products—show that it is possible to achieve substantial improvements in commercial performance when well-designed strategies are applied.

In the case of Gusto Amazónico, adopting a marketplace represents a growth opportunity that would allow it to expand its

target market beyond the local area, diversify sales channels, and optimize order and inventory management. The incorporation of methodologies such as Lean Startup and Lean Canvas facilitates an agile approach to designing, validating, and adjusting the business model, minimizing risks and maximizing learning from real customer experience.

In summary, the evidence suggests that the implementation of a marketplace, complemented by digital marketing and customer relationship management strategies, can become a key catalyst for the sustainable growth of companies such as Gusto Amazónico. However, its success will depend on the ability to adapt to technological changes, respond to the needs of digital consumers, and sustain a differentiated value proposition in an increasingly competitive environment.

## FINANCING

None.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

*Conceptualization:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Data curation:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Formal analysis:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Research:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Methodology:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Project management:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Resources:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Software:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Supervision:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Validation:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Visualization:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Writing – original draft:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

*Writing – review and editing:* Franko Raúl Salazar-Novoa; Marco Armando Gálvez-Díaz; Ángel Cárdenas-García.

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