STRATEGIC SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON CUSTOMER PERCEPTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPPLY CHAIN EFFICIENCY PRACTICES ENHANCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES- TAKING PANGDONGLAI, YONGHUI, AND WALMART AS EXAMPLES

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how strategic supply chain management efficiency influences customer satisfaction and competitive advantage in China's supermarket industry, focusing on Walmart China, Yonghui Supermarket, and Pangdonglai. Using quantitative surveys and statistical analyses (descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression), the study finds that customer satisfaction is strongly linked to market share, perceived value, brand loyalty, and supply chain efficiency. It also reveals that innovations such as AI, real-time traceability, and sustainable sourcing enhance consumer perceptions and contribute to long-term competitiveness. The findings offer practical guidance for supermarket managers to improve efficiency and build sustainable advantage through customer-centric strategies, while contributing to academic understanding of customer satisfaction's mediating role.

Keywords: strategic supply chain management efficiency, customer satisfaction, China's supermarket industry, competitive advantage

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาประสิทธิภาพการจัดการห่วงโซ่อุปทานเชิงกลยุทธ์ว่ามีอิทธิพลต่อความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าและความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขันในอุตสาหกรรมซูเปอร์มาร์เก็ตของจีนอย่างไร โดยมุ่งเน้นไปที่ Walmart China, Yonghui Supermarket และ Pangdonglai การศึกษานี้ใช้การสำรวจเชิงปริมาณและการวิเคราะห์ทางสถิติ (สถิติเชิงพรรณนา สหสัมพันธ์ และการถดถอยพหุคูณ) และพบว่าความพึงพอใจของลูกค้ามีความสัมพันธ์อย่างมากกับส่วนแบ่งทางการตลาด มูลค่าที่รับรู้โดยลูกค้า ความภักดีต่อแบรนด์ และประสิทธิภาพของห่วงโซ่อุปทาน นอกจากนี้ยังเผยให้เห็นว่านวัตกรรมต่างๆ เช่น AI การตรวจสอบย้อนกลับแบบเรียลไทม์ และการจัดหาอย่างยั่งยืน ช่วยยกระดับการรับรู้ของผู้บริโภคและส่งเสริมความสามารถในการแข่งขันในระยะยาว ผลการวิจัยนี้นำเสนอแนวทางปฏิบัติสำหรับผู้จัดการซูเปอร์มาร์เก็ตในการปรับปรุงประสิทธิภาพและสร้างความได้เปรียบอย่างยั่งยืนผ่านกลยุทธ์ที่เน้นลูกค้าเป็นศูนย์กลาง ขณะเดียวกันก็ส่งเสริมความเข้าใจเชิงวิชาการเกี่ยวกับบทบาทของความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า

คำสำคัญ: ประสิทธิภาพการจัดการห่วงโซ่อุปทานเชิงกลยุทธ์, ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า, อุตสาหกรรมซูเปอร์มาร์เก็ตของจีน, ความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขัน

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INTRODUCTION

This study explores the role of Supply Chain Management (SCM) in enhancing customer satisfaction and competitive advantage in China's highly competitive supermarket industry, focusing on Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart. Prior research indicates that strategic SCM elements—such as inventory optimization, logistics agility, and supplier collaboration—directly influence retail performance (Chopra & Sodhi, 2014; Mentzer et al., 2001; Gunasekaran & Kobu, 2007). In China's fragmented distribution networks and diverse consumer markets, localized supply chain strategies are essential (Greeven et al., 2021; Wave Grocery, 2023). For example, Pangdonglai's community-focused model aligns with Smith & Sparks' (2004) findings that localized sourcing enhances loyalty; Walmart China leverages Data Lake and mobile applications to improve customer experience (Walmart Inc., 2019); and Hu (2023) emphasizes that regional retailers must have clear positioning to compete with domestic and international chains.

Digitalization is reshaping SCM efficiency: data-driven inventory optimization reduces costs and improves satisfaction (Immadisetty, 2019), while efficient fresh-produce supply chain systems lower costs and losses (Tong, 2023)—a core focus for Yonghui. However, Chinese FMCG retailers still face challenges in balancing cost efficiency with sustainability (Staff Reporter, 2023) and integrating fragmented suppliers (Cao & Zhang, 2011).

Competitive advantage depends on aligning supply chain design with market demands (Porter, 2008). Agile networks, such as those implemented by Pangdonglai, enable both cost leadership and differentiation (Qi et al., 2017). Customer satisfaction plays a mediating role, as efficient SCM reduces delivery times and improves product availability, thereby boosting loyalty and market share (Anderson, Fornell, & Mazvancheryl, 2004; Homburg et al., 2015). In the Chinese context, Yonghui's fresh-food supply chain innovations integrate global technologies with local consumer insights to create unique value propositions (Grewal et al., 2021).

Building on these theoretical and empirical insights, this study compares three distinct SCM models from Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart, analyzing how their configurations translate into improved customer satisfaction and sustained market competitiveness.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

1. What are the significant differences in Strategic Supply Chain Efficiency practices among Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart?
2. How do the differences in strategic supply chain efficiency practices relate to customer satisfaction across the three supermarkets?
3. How does customer satisfaction co-relate to competitive advantage in the supermarkets in China?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and analyze the relationship of strategic Supply Chain Efficiency practices on customer satisfaction at Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart.
2. To evaluate differences in strategic supply chain efficiency practices (namely: inventory management, logistics efficiency, supplier collaboration, degree of digitalization) among the three supermarkets: Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart, and their impact on customer satisfaction.
3. To explore how customer satisfaction from strategic supply chain efficiency practices at the three supermarkets': Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart, is correlated to their positions to establish and enhance their competitive advantages.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The first set of hypotheses: The impact of supply chain management efficiency on customer satisfaction

This study divides supply chain management efficiency into four key dimensions: digital level, supplier collaboration, inventory efficiency, and logistics efficiency. These factors are widely considered to be key practical means to improve customer experience, optimize service processes, and enhance responsiveness. Hence, the following hypotheses are put forward.:
$H0_1$: Customer satisfaction is not significantly impacted by digitization.
$H1_1$: Customer satisfaction is considerably improved by digitization.
$H0_2$: Customer satisfaction is not considerably impacted by supplier collaboration.
$H1_2$: Customer satisfaction is considerably improved by supplier collaboration.
$H0_3$: Customer happiness is not significantly impacted by inventory efficiency.
$H1_3$: Customer satisfaction is greatly enhanced by inventory efficiency.
$H0_4$: Customer happiness is not greatly impacted by logistics efficiency.
$H1_4$: Customer satisfaction is greatly enhanced by efficient logistics.

The second set of hypotheses: The influence of customer satisfaction on competitive advantage
According to market orientation theory and customer relationship management theory, customer satisfaction is regarded as a key prerequisite for enterprises to gain long-term competitive advantage. Thus, the following theory is put forth.:
$H0_5$: Customer satisfaction does not have a significant impact on competitive advantage.
$H1_5$: Customer satisfaction has a significant impact on competitive advantage.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Foundations of Supply Chain Management

This study explores how strategic supply chain management (SCM) enhances competitive advantage in Chinese supermarkets by improving supply chain efficiency and customer satisfaction. According to Mentzer et al. (2001), strategic SCM emphasizes process integration, strategic alignment, and demand-driven responsiveness to align supply chain activities with overall business goals. Chopra and Sodhi (2014) highlight the importance of risk management, agility, and resilience for sustainable operations.

Strategic Supply Chain Efficiency

Strategic supply chain efficiency involves optimal resource allocation to minimize waste and costs while maximizing customer value (Li et al., 2016). Key approaches include inventory management (Ozturk, 2020), logistics efficiency (Christopher, 2016), supplier collaboration (Barratt & Oliveira, 2018), and digitalization (Immadisetty, 2019; McKinsey, 2022). For example, Chinese supermarkets apply ABC classification and just-in-time replenishment to synchronize inventory and reduce stockouts (Baldi et al., 2023; Hu, 2024). Technologies such as GPS and GIS optimize distribution routes, improving accuracy and timeliness, while supplier collaboration enables real-time data sharing and faster response to demand fluctuations (Bakalo & Bogale, 2024).

Customer Satisfaction in Retail

Customer satisfaction—encompassing service quality, product freshness, price competitiveness, and shopping experience—is a critical retail performance indicator (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Tsiros & Heilman, 2005). Supply chain efficiency directly impacts product availability and service reliability, thereby enhancing customer loyalty and brand trust (Szymanski & Henard, 2001). Leading Chinese supermarkets demonstrate distinct SCM capabilities: Pangdonglai leverages localized supply chains to ensure freshness (Pandayoo, 2025), Yonghui integrates cold chain logistics and AI forecasting for fresh produce management (Tong, 2023), and Walmart China combines global sourcing with localized store operations.

Competitive Advantage

Strategic SCM supports both cost leadership and differentiation by enabling fresh product availability and omnichannel convenience (Chopra & Sodhi, 2014; Christopher, 2016). Customer satisfaction acts as a key driver of competitive advantage by fostering loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Dick & Basu, 1994; Walsh et al., 2009). Despite challenges such as fragmented suppliers and regulatory variability, Chinese supermarkets achieve supply chain resilience and compliance through digital and localized strategies (Cao & Zhang, 2011). Overall, integrating lean, agile, and digital SCM practices with customer-centric innovation fosters sustainable competitive advantage in China's dynamic retail sector (Greeven et al., 2021).

Supermarket Industry Dynamics in China

China's supermarket sector is characterized by rapid growth driven by urbanization, rising incomes, and shifting consumer preferences toward convenience and quality. The competitive landscape features both domestic chains, such as Yonghui and Sun Art, leveraging deep supply chain

integration, and international players like Walmart China, which focus on local adaptation and digital transformation. New retail pioneers such as JD.com's 7 FRESH and Alibaba's Hema Fresh integrate online and offline experiences to elevate service standards and personalization (Greeven et al., 2021).

Profile of Case-Study Supermarkets

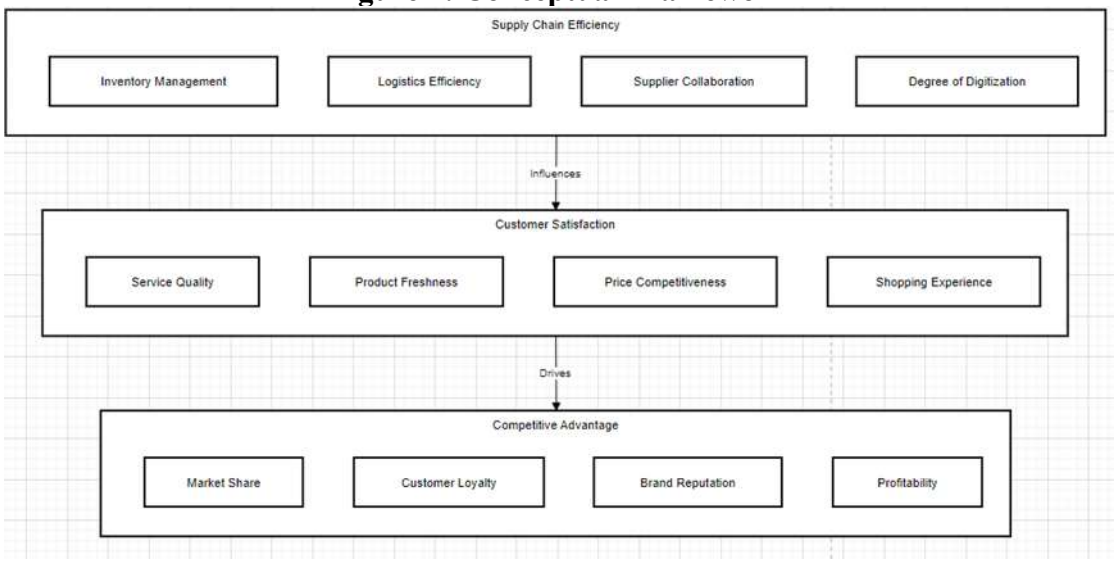
The study examines three representative supermarket chains:

- **Pangdonglai**, which emphasizes customer-focused operations and local supply chain localization to ensure freshness and community integration (Li, 2025; Pandayoo, 2025).
- **Yonghui**, known for national expansion and innovations in cold chain logistics combined with AI-driven forecasting to maintain fresh produce quality (Tong, 2023).
- **Walmart China**, which applies global sourcing advantages and localized store formats, including bonded warehouses to manage cross-border logistics efficiently (Walmart China, n.d.).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research conceptual framework posits that strategic supply chain efficiency practices—encompassing inventory management, logistics efficiency, supplier collaboration, and digitization—are critical drivers that directly enhance customer satisfaction by improving service quality, product freshness, price competitiveness, and the overall shopping experience. In turn, elevated customer satisfaction acts as a key mediator that strengthens supermarkets' competitive advantages, including market share, customer loyalty, brand reputation, and profitability. Thus, effective supply chain efficiency practices indirectly but substantially contribute to sustainable competitive advantage in the supermarket industry.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology and analytical techniques employed to explore the relationships among strategic supply chain efficiency practices, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage in the supermarket sector, focusing on Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart in China. A quantitative research design was adopted, with data collected through structured questionnaires distributed both online and offline. Out of 646 returned questionnaires, 606 were valid, yielding a high response rate of 93.8%.

To ensure measurement reliability and validity, Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.969$), while content validity was established by adapting items from prior studies. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed structural validity with satisfactory KMO values, strong factor loadings, and significant Bartlett's test results. Descriptive and frequency analyses summarized respondent demographics and shopping behaviors, revealing a predominantly middle-income, working adult sample with frequent supermarket visits and notable adoption of digital shopping channels.

Composite variables were constructed by averaging Likert-scale items for each latent construct, including inventory efficiency, logistics efficiency, supplier collaboration, digitization level, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied to test hypothesized relationships, with all regression assumptions met and no multicollinearity detected. Additional analyses included descriptive statistics and frequency analysis of customer perceptions regarding emerging supply chain technologies and competitive advantage dimensions. Together, these methods provided a comprehensive, multi-dimensional framework ensuring the reliability and accuracy of results, supporting rigorous examination of how supply chain efficiency impacts customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. This methodological foundation prepares for detailed empirical findings in the next chapter.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The data analysis method adopted data visualization and used some statistical tools to perform statistical analysis on the data, such as hypothesis testing, descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Table 1: Regression Results – Customer Satisfaction as Dependent Variable.

Predictor	Beta	t-value	p-value	VIF
Digitalization Level	0.279	6.522	0.000**	3.208
Supplier Collaboration	0.189	4.150	0.000**	3.652

Logistics Efficiency	0.023	0.533	0.595	3.295
Inventory Efficiency	0.143	3.656	0.000**	2.701
Perceived Competitive Advantage	0.288	8.155	0.000**	2.193

The regression analysis examined the impact of four supply chain efficiency variables—digitization, supplier collaboration, logistics efficiency, and inventory efficiency—on customer satisfaction. Results indicated that digitization was the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = 0.279$, $p < 0.001$), followed by supplier collaboration ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.001$) and inventory efficiency ($\beta = 0.143$, $p < 0.001$), all significantly enhancing customer satisfaction. However, logistics efficiency showed no significant effect ($\beta = 0.023$, $p = 0.595$). The overall model was highly significant ($F = 231.762$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 62.1% of the variance in customer satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.656$), with tests confirming model robustness and no autocorrelation issues.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Between Customer Satisfaction and Dimensions of Competitive Advantage

Competitive Advantage Dimension	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)	Sample Size (n)
The supermarket performs better than others in terms of product price-performance ratio.	0.392**	0.000	606
The supermarket provides unique products and services.	0.474**	0.000	606
More and more consumers are choosing this supermarket.	0.447**	0.000	606
I remain loyal to this supermarket.	0.444**	0.000	606

I prioritize shopping at this supermarket.	0.438**	0.000	606
The supermarket has a good brand image and reputation.	0.463**	0.000	606
The supermarket is operating well and has long-term development potential.	0.440**	0.000	606

Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between customer satisfaction and all measured dimensions of competitive advantage ($p < 0.01$) among 606 respondents. Customer satisfaction showed moderate to strong correlations with price-performance ratio ($r = 0.392$), unique products and services ($r = 0.474$), consumer preference ($r = 0.447$), customer loyalty ($r = 0.444$), shopping prioritization ($r = 0.438$), brand image and reputation ($r = 0.463$), and operational performance ($r = 0.440$). These results underscore that higher customer satisfaction is strongly associated with enhanced perceptions of competitive advantage, especially regarding product uniqueness and brand reputation, highlighting its vital role in supermarket competitiveness.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

Name	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median
AI-enabled prediction will improve shopping experience and product freshness.	606	1.000	5.000	3.691	1.418	3.000

I hope to see visualized product traceability and inventory information, which strengthens my trust in the brand.	606	1.000	5.000	3.612	1.454	3.000
If supermarkets can provide more frequent product category updates and inventory, my satisfaction and purchase intention will increase.	606	1.000	5.000	3.604	1.454	3.000
The integration of online and offline shopping experiences will improve my loyalty and satisfaction with the supermarket.	606	1.000	5.000	3.587	1.480	3.000
If supermarkets promote green procurement and sustainable packaging, I am more willing to support the brand.	606	1.000	5.000	3.705	1.449	4.500

Figure 2: Average Comparison

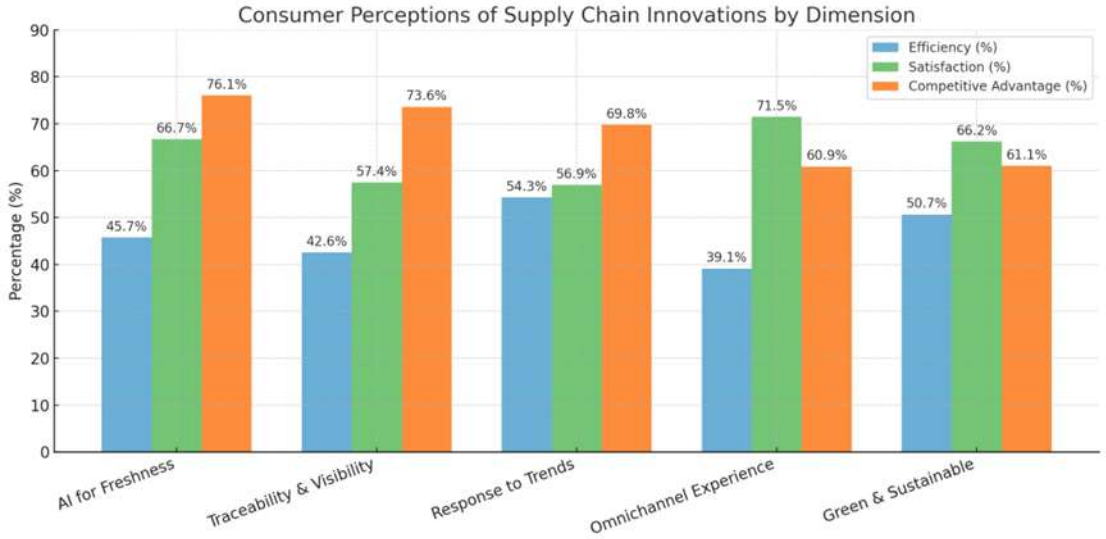
Respondents moderately supported five future-oriented supply chain initiatives, with average scores between 3.60 and 3.71. Sustainability efforts, such as green procurement and sustainable packaging, received the highest approval (M = 3.705), indicating stronger customer willingness to support brands with eco-friendly practices. Conversely, frequent product category updates and inventory replenishment scored lowest (M = 3.604). Considerable variation in responses (SD ~1.42–1.48) and median values around neutrality reflect mixed customer attitudes, with sustainability showing notably greater endorsement. These insights provide a foundation for further research and highlight customer expectations for innovative supply chain strategies.

Table 4 Multiple-response frequency analysis

Measure	**Efficiency (%)**	**Satisfaction (%)**	**Competitive Advantage (%)**
Use AI to improve freshness	45.71%	66.67%	76.07%
Real-time traceability and inventory visibility	42.57%	57.43%	73.60%
Rapid response to consumer trends	54.29%	56.93%	69.80%
Integrated online and offline shopping experience	39.11%	71.45%	60.89%

Green procurement and sustainable packaging	50.66%	66.17%	61.06%

Figure 3: Descriptive data on consumer perceptions of supply chain innovations by dimension



The multiple-response frequency analysis reveals that AI-enabled prediction is viewed as the most impactful practice for enhancing competitive advantage (76.07%) and customer satisfaction (66.67%), with moderate perceived efficiency benefits (45.71%). Real-time product traceability is highly valued for competitive advantage (73.60%) and satisfaction (57.43%) but less so for efficiency (42.57%). Rapid response to consumer trends ranks highest in efficiency (54.29%) while also supporting satisfaction and competitive advantage. Integrated online-offline shopping strongly enhances customer satisfaction (71.45%) but has lower efficiency perception (39.11%). Green procurement and sustainable packaging receive balanced high ratings across competitive advantage, satisfaction, and efficiency, highlighting sustainability's dual role in customer value and operational performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study investigates the relationships among supply chain efficiency practices, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage in Chinese supermarkets, focusing on Pangdonglai, Yonghui, and Walmart. The results from regression and correlation analyses indicate that digitalization, supplier collaboration, and inventory efficiency significantly enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn positively influences competitive advantage factors such as customer loyalty, product value perception, and brand image. While logistics efficiency did not have a significant effect on satisfaction, it remains operationally important.

The study validates the proposed conceptual framework that supply chain efficiency practices impact customer satisfaction, which mediates competitive advantage. Of the five hypotheses tested, four were accepted except the effect of logistics efficiency on satisfaction, which was marginally insignificant.

Differences in supply chain practices among the three supermarkets were significant, especially regarding digitalization and supplier collaboration, and these differences are closely linked to customer satisfaction and competitive advantage outcomes. Customer satisfaction strongly correlates with loyalty, market share, and brand uniqueness.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the study advances supply chain and strategic management research by experimentally confirming customer satisfaction as a mediator and integrating consumer attitudes toward innovative practices such as AI, real-time traceability, and green procurement. This enriches the current theoretical framework by including dynamic capabilities and customer-centric innovation in supply chain efficiency discussions, particularly in the Chinese retail context.

Managerial Implications

Managerially, the findings suggest supermarkets should prioritize efficiency practices visible to customers, such as digital technologies, strong supplier collaboration, and effective inventory management to reduce stockouts and improve satisfaction. Additionally, sustainability initiatives and innovations like AI-driven freshness management and product traceability are critical for meeting evolving consumer expectations and enhancing brand loyalty. The integration of omnichannel shopping experiences is also emphasized to maintain competitive positioning in China's dynamic retail market.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The study's limitations include a predominantly urban and digitally active sample, and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Future research should broaden demographic and geographic scope, include more retail formats, and incorporate operational performance metrics alongside customer perceptions.

Recommendations for future studies include exploring specific digital tools (e.g., mobile apps, AI recommendations) on customer satisfaction and investigating community buying models that leverage peer trust and localized inventory sharing to enhance supply chain responsiveness and customer loyalty.

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