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Customer experience management: A study of humanic versus mechanic clues and business sustainability of selected Nigeria local fashion brands

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of humanistic and mechanical indicators on the concept of sustainability. Embarking designers create brands to fulfill creative needs, but fashion entrepreneurs must evaluate challenges with discernment and expertise, understanding customer-centric product design. This study examined how local fashion brands in Nigeria manage customer experience in accordance with this fundamental principle of sustainability. In order to accomplish the stated aims, two hypotheses were derived based on the study questions posed. The study employed a mixed method, where a survey and an interview were used to get responses from the employees and customers. The survey was generated via a structured questionnaire and distributed online. The investigation employed a descriptive research approach, distributing and retrieving 103 copies of the questionnaire from the employees of the two selected local fashion brands. Using the structural equation model (SEM-Smart-PLS), the study found that humanic and mechanic clues both have a significant influence on sustainability. Based on the findings, it was recommended that fashion companies ought to provide training to their personnel to surpass client expectations, cultivate a welcoming work environment, and strategically position fittings to generate a favourable psychological influence on prospective buyers.

Contribution/Originality: The study analyzes customer experience management in Nigerian local fashion enterprises, focusing on mechanic and humanic clues. This research is the first of its kind in this context. It highlights the potential of mechanical clues for sustainable product design and emphasizes employee behavior's role in brand authenticity and longevity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global population of individuals identifying as "fashion enthusiasts" and their clientele is on the rise, with a notable increase observed among young individuals and women residing in the sub-Saharan African region. In

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response to the growing demands of this swiftly developing consumer segment within the area, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have emerged, offering private fashion labels. Customer experience has steadily taken the lead in driving merchants' lasting competitive advantage through distinction as conventional in-store buying and online shopping combine to create new purchasing scenarios (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Effiom & Edet, 2018).

Customer experience is currently a crucial distinction in today's commoditized economy and plays a major role in determining the success of any industry (Kell, 2018). The consumer experience focuses on the impressions of interactions between the business and the consumer that elicit an emotional response (Bhatt & Patel, 2020). It enables the business to identify and subsequently reduce differences between customers' expectations and actual customer encounters at the first point of interaction (Pandey & Chawla, 2018). Humanic, mechanical functional clues are major components that make up the customer experience. This study only examines human and mechanical clues. This research will evaluate how these cues affect organizational sustainability.

The Nigerian fashion industry, a significant player in today's developing countries, confronts numerous challenges. These issues include poor service delivery, public mistrust of fashion products, increased debt, and inferior products. Due to this, customers now favor investing in international fashion brands and overpaying fashion creators with their money. In addition to these issues, the apparel business has undergone significant changes due to intense competition and the constant need to improve fashion products to ensure operational efficiency while adhering to environmental dynamics.

Consumers expect businesses to be aware of environmental trends and changes, and to offer necessities that follow these trends. Consumers frequently have an experience buying a product or service from a company, whether positive, negative, or apathetic (Bascur & Rusu, 2020). What matters most is how the company manages the situation. When choosing and using services, consumers seek out and further process more information than managers and service providers frequently know. When it comes to handling and managing "clues" ingrained in the service experience and a variety of emotions, customers frequently behave like detectives (Borishade, Worlu, Ogunnaike, Aka, & Dirisu, 2021). Consumers examine these signs and their emotions while buying, using, and assessing a product or service (Borishade et al., 2021).

However, empirical studies have revealed that the implementation of customer relationship management has not yielded the expected results for marketers. They argue that customer experience management, given the remarkable realities of rapid changes in business environments and consumer demands, should be used to achieve sustainable competitive benefits. To improve customer focus and ultimate viability in the business setting, "customer experience management strategy" is thus a relatively novel technique. However, just as goods and services are separate, so are encounters with services? Customers undoubtedly desire experiences, and as more businesses actively create and promote them, marketers are likely concerned about the quality of the experience itself. Despite the high demand in the fashion industry, mechanical cues can set the stage by influencing customers' expectations, but humanic cues typically take the lead in fulfilling the promise through the service provider's performance. Essentially, customers seek out concrete cues to help guide their expectations of a service. As a result, this study investigates the impact of customer experience management on the sustainability of Nigeria's fashion design industry.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The research objectives were aimed at filling the intellectual gap:

i. Examine the effect of humanic clues on sustainability of the fashion industry (i.e., economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability);
ii. investigate the influence of mechanic clues on sustainability of the fashion industry (i.e., economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability);

The objectives were hypothesized in null form as follows:

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Hypothesis 1 (H_1). Humanic clues do not significantly influence the sustainability of the fashion industry.

Hypothesis 2 (H_2). Mechanic clues do not significantly influence the sustainability of the fashion industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Customer Experience

Becker and Jaakkola (2020) examined the customer experience concept as a comprehensive form of consumption that encompasses five distinct dimensions. The elements encompassed in this framework consist of social and cognitive aspects, along with sensorial-perceptual, affective, and physical behavioral components. The customer experience definition by Grønholdt (2021), Keiningham et al. (2020), and Mbama and Ezepue (2018) established the foundation for their study by acknowledging the extant body of literature on customer experience.

The dimensions of customer experience discussed in this study exhibit a discrepancy when compared to Schmitt (1999) model. A distinction is made between the physical aspect and the value component. In contrast, they incorporate the physical element alongside the sensory dimension. Borishade, Worlu, Kehinde, and Ogunnaike (2017) propose that an experience can be understood as either a subjective perception or sensation, or as a specialized expertise within a professional domain. The notion of feeling or sensation encompasses the cognitive process of experiencing and encountering stimuli. For example, the act of allowing a prospective consumer to engage in a test drive of an automobile serves to strengthen the logical inclination to make a purchase since it elicits an emotional experience through the act of driving (Borishade et al., 2017). Borishade et al. (2017) suggested that customer experience is defined as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, comprising diverse components. Customer experience is now a crucial managerial tool, according to Worlu, Kehinde, and Borishade (2016) because it influences consumer behavior. Therefore, fashion firms need to develop a referral system where clients can recommend one another.

2.1.1. Customer Experience Management Clues

The customer experience clues can be classified into two categories: mechanic cues, and humanic cues. In their seminal article, Carbone and Haeckel (1994) introduced the concepts of "mechanic clues" and "humanic clues" during a seminar and subsequently expanded upon these concepts by incorporating functional clues in later publications (Borishade et al., 2019). Johye and Soobin (2016) argued that Clients who work with organizations actively and subtly evaluate and incorporate the many cues they come across during the engagement, producing a series of impressions. Any observed or felt stimuli can trigger these sensations, which can range from neutral to highly charge. The existence or absence of specific stimuli may provide important information or hints that help enhance the overall experience.

2.1.2. Humanic Clues

Humanic clues encompass the actions and conduct of individuals within an organizational context, such as their non-verbal gestures, vocal intonations, affability, and degree of enthusiasm. An illustration of Humanic indicators within the fashion industry includes the presence of customer care representatives and employees who exhibit friendliness and helpfulness. Human engagement can extend customer respect and regard, surpass their expectations, build their trust, and foster loyalty.

A service provider's effectiveness increases when they demonstrate extraordinary traits such as kindness, compassion, and resourcefulness. The fashion business is a constantly changing phenomenon with several major influences. Numerous factors affect the fashion business, ranging from the most recent trends to social developments. The importance of humanic cues in fashion is one significant topic that has attracted growing attention in recent years (Bain, 2018).

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2.1.3. Mechanic Clues

Mechanical cues are the outward manifestations of the service interaction. Customers who visit a physical store to make a purchase first come into contact with mechanical cues, which later affect their decision-making process. According to Berry, Wall, and Carbone (2006), researchers in the subject of environmental psychology have studied how the physical environment affects people's thought processes, emotional states, and behavioral inclinations in a particular scenario. A wide range of environmental elements, such as facility design, equipment, furniture, displays, signs, colors, textures, noises, and lighting, are included in the definition of mechanical clues. Customers and service providers can effectively communicate visually thanks to sensory cues, eliminating the need for spoken expression. The environment is one element that may alter how customers view a brand or product.

2.2. Business Sustainability

Business sustainability refers to a firm's ability to conduct its operations without endangering the welfare of present or future generations. Due to the damaging effects that the fashion business may have on the environment and society, sustainability has recently taken on more significance. Using sustainable materials, encouraging fair labor practices, and minimizing waste and emissions are just a few of the activities that make up the sustainability of the fashion business. This may be accomplished in a number of ways, including the adoption of circular business models, which minimize waste by reusing and recycling resources, the sourcing of eco-friendly products, and the maintenance of ethical labor practices.

Transparency, accountability, and innovation are key components of industry practices and consumer behavior that must change for fashion to be sustainable. It involves developing a system that prioritizes and appreciates sustainability at every level of the fashion industry, in addition to producing goods that are socially and environmentally responsible (Berg et al., 2019).

2.2.1. Concept of Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability refers to the ability of an economic system to maintain its productivity and growth over time without depleting natural resources or damaging the environment (Akindele & Akindele, 2021). It entails developing economic systems that can continue to be productive and successful, while also taking into account how economic activity will affect society and the environment in the long run. The fashion business frequently adapts to swift shifts and fleeting trends. However, there is more emphasis on economic sustainability in the fashion sector as worries about the environment and social responsibility increase. Creating economic value in a way that doesn't deplete natural resources or have a detrimental effect on society is known as "economic sustainability" (Ajisafe & Akinlo, 2013).

Resource efficiency is a key component of economic sustainability. This entails making the most of available resources while reducing waste. For instance, companies could employ recycled materials in their manufacturing processes or develop techniques to cut energy use. Companies may reduce their environmental impact and save money by doing so, which will increase their long-term economic viability.

2.2.2. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability refers to the ability of natural systems to maintain their ecological balance and function over time without depleting or worsening. It entails managing natural resources sustainably and taking into account how human activities may affect the environment in the long run. The preservation of natural resources is one of the fundamental tenets of environmental sustainability (Mademlis & Werneborg, 2019). In addition, environmental sustainability requires reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions (Effiom & Edet, 2018).

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In the fashion sector, environmental sustainability has grown to be a top priority. The fashion business is the second-largest polluter in the world after the oil sector, and because of the explosive expansion of fast fashion, its environmental effects are anticipated to rise dramatically in the future (Bain, 2018). The fashion sector is responsible for 20% of the world's wastewater output and 10% of its carbon emissions, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In order to reduce its negative effects on the environment, the fashion industry must embrace sustainable practices. By lowering its carbon footprint, the fashion business may contribute to environmental sustainability. Energy, which is mostly sourced from fossil fuels, is required in huge amounts for the manufacture of textiles and garments. The Carbon Trust estimates that the textile sector emits 1.2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases each year, which is more than all international flights and marine transport combined (Berg et al., 2019). By utilizing energy-efficient practices across the supply chain and investing in renewable energy sources like wind and solar energy, the fashion industry can lessen its carbon impact.

2.2.3. Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is defined as society's ability to meet its present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Barber & Rushing, 2016). The idea entails looking at and dealing with societal issues such as poverty, injustice, and social exclusion, while also ensuring that everyone has fair access to basic resources and opportunities for success. The encouragement of ethical labor practices is one of the most important components of social sustainability in fashion. This entails ensuring equitable treatment and respect for employees, equitable compensation, and a safe and healthy work environment. In recent years, there have been several instances of worker exploitation and hazardous working conditions in the fashion business, especially in developing nations where labor regulations may be lax or poorly implemented. Therefore, fashion companies must take responsibility for the production conditions of their goods and strive to ensure fair and respectful treatment of their employees. Community involvement is a crucial component of social sustainability in fashion. This entails working with local communities to understand their needs and concerns, as well as ensuring that production processes do not negatively impact their environment or way of life.

The fashion industry requires a diversified strategy to tackle the complex issue of social sustainability. Fair labour practices, community involvement, transparency and accountability, climate change, and social justice are all concerns that fashion businesses need to address. Brands may guarantee that their activities have a positive influence on society and contribute to a more sustainable future by adopting a holistic approach to social sustainability (Frasquet, Miquel, & Mollá, 2017).

2.3. Theoretical Justification

The buyer behavior theory put forth by Howard and Sheth (1969) is employed to comprehend how customers make judgements while making purchases. It implies that a variety of variables, including personal traits, societal and cultural influences, and marketing stimuli, have an impact on consumer behavior. The idea emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend these elements in order to create efficient marketing plans that target consumer demands and preferences and, eventually, increase sales and client loyalty. The theory of dynamic capabilities provides a framework for understanding how businesses may maintain a competitive edge by developing new skills to respond to environmental changes. The market theory cannot be fully explained by the idea of dynamic capacities; so, the experience learning theory was developed. Kolb (1984) experiential learning theory places a strong emphasis on the value of active experimentation and first-hand experience in learning. When applied to market orientation, the theory suggests that businesses should engage in experiential learning to better understand and respond to customer needs and preferences. By actively engaging with customers and reflecting on their experiences, businesses can develop more customer-focused strategies and improve their market orientation. Therefore, this research recommends the theories of buyer behavior and the experiential learning theory.

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3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a concurrent mixed-methods research design data collection strategy, administering quantitative data through a questionnaire and complementing it with qualitative data through an interview guide. We adopted a conclusive quantitative research design that was explanatory in nature, and an exploratory qualitative research design to identify new issues that customers could express themselves on. The total number of employees from both Nack Apparel and Fish Clothing is one hundred and three (103) in the quantitative population. For the qualitative population, the number of customers was infinite.

For the quantitative study, all employees of NACK apparel and Fish clothing were covered using Census/complete enumeration method. For the qualitative study, five key customers were interviewed from each company and branch.

Hence, 30 customers were interviewed in all branches of NACK apparel and Fish clothing. Based on this study, the quantitative study is the list of all employees from both Nack apparel and Fish Clothing. For the qualitative study, the list of all customers that shop at Nack apparel and Fish clothing in Nigeria. We adopted convenience sampling and purposive sampling for both quantitative and qualitative data in this study. To obtain high-quality quantitative data; questionnaires were handed out to employees in the organization. We divided the questionnaire into four sections (Sections A, B, C, and D).

Section A revealed the demographic profile of the respondents, including gender, age, educational qualification, previous employment, and patronage experience. Section B featured the independent variable (Customer Experience Management). Section C featured the moderating variable (Market Orientation), while Section D featured the dependent variable (sustainability).

This study adopted a five-point Likert scale item ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Strongly Agree-5, Agree-4, Neutral-3, Disagree-2, Strongly Disagree-1). .The qualitative data was interview guide of customers that shop from Nack apparel and fish clothing. To ensure content validity and construct validity of the research instruments, the research instrument was presented to supervisors who are experts in the field of the research.

The quantitative data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 and Structural Equation Model (SEM) - SMART-PLS 4 to ascertain regression, correlation. The qualitative data collected were analyzed using Thematic analysis. Descriptive statistics were used in presenting the data.

In order to protect participants' rights and welfare and to conduct research in a responsible and transparent manner, ethical considerations are essential.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Humanic clues do not significantly influence the sustainability of the fashion industry.

The hypothesis consists of a single exogenous variable, namely Humanic clues, and a single endogenous variable, namely Sustainability.

The assessment of the research variables was conducted through the utilization of a structured questionnaire that employed a five-point Likert scale.

The latent variable of humanic clues was assessed using three (3) items, while sustainability, encompassing economic, social, and environmental aspects, was assessed using seven (7) items, as presented in Table 1.

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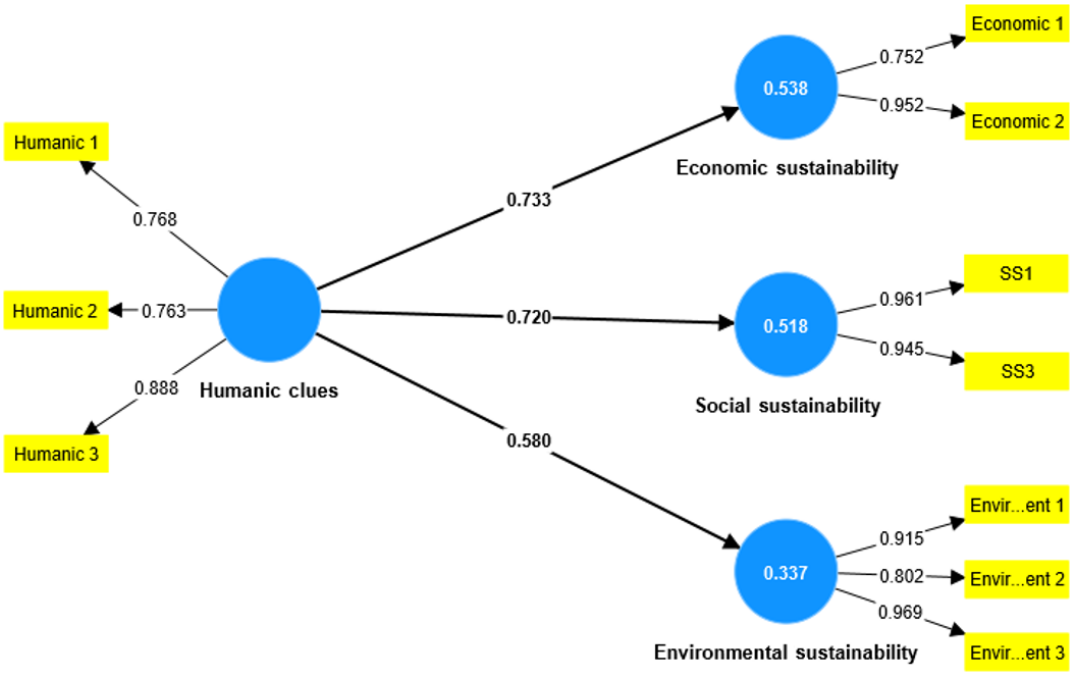

Figure 1. Path algorithm of humanic clues on sustainability.

Table 1. Factor loading for humanic clues and sustainability (Economic, social and environmental sustainability) in Nigeria local fashion brand.

Indicators	Factor loading	Error variance	Variance inflation factor (VIF)	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's alpha	No. of indicators
Indicator	> 0.7	< 0.5	< 3.5	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.5	≥ 0.7	
Humanic clues				0.770	0.654	0.748	3
HC1	0.768	0.232	1.289				
HC2	0.763	0.237	3.815				
HC3	0.888	0.112	4.361				
Economic sustainability				0.967	0.736	0.779	2
ES1	0.752	0.248	1.359				
ES2	0.952	0.048	1.359				
Social sustainability				0.917	0.908	0.900	2
SS1	0.961	0.039	3.020				
SS3	0.945	0.055	3.020				
Environmental sustainability				0.902	0.806	0.877	3
ES1	0.915	0.085	7.435				
ES2	0.802	0.198	1.954				
ES3	0.969	0.031	9.587				

Composite reliability should surpass 0.70. However, the construct's AVE must exceed 0.50. If the Cronbach Alpha coefficient is 0.70 or greater, the instruments are dependable. From the above Table, all mechanic clues and sustainability constructs in selected Nigerian fashion brands have composite internal consistency and Cronbach Alpha reliability.

Construct-specific factor loadings ranged from 0.708 to 0.912. Because the instrument met the fitness criteria, it is dependable and valid. The measurement model had no collinearity because all VIF values were below the strict threshold value of 3 (Sarstedt, Hair, Cheah, Becker, & Ringle, 2019).

Bootstrapping evaluation follows (Osibanjo et al., 2020) employ boot strapping to detect significant values. Partial Least Squares (PLS) bootstrapping generates 5000 subsamples to achieve statistical significance. Bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples was used to determine path coefficient values and determine the effects of customer experience management, market orientation, and sustainability.

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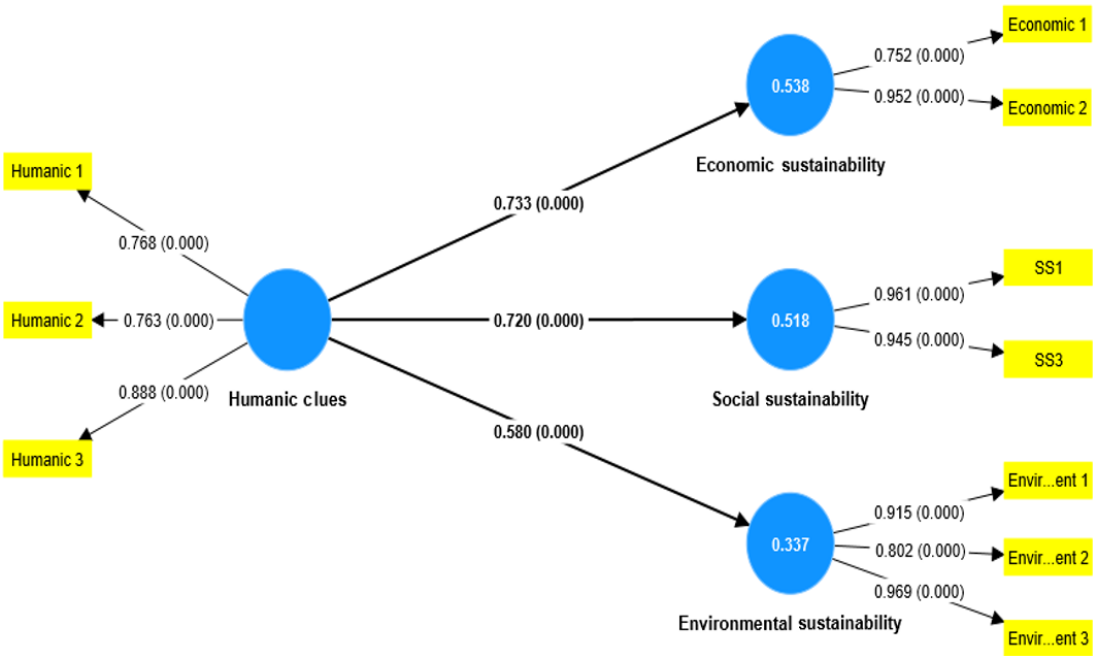

Figure 2. P-coefficient of the value of humanic clues and sustainability (Economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability).

Figure 1 describes the PLS Bootstrapping Model with β and P-coefficient of the value of Humanic clues and sustainability (Economic sustainability, social sustainability, and Environmental sustainability). Figure 2 displays the p-value, which establishes the degree of likelihood. The probability must be less than 0.05 before it can be considered significant. At a p-value of 0.05, all the values of Humanic clues, sustainability culture, adaptive performance, contextual performance, task performance, and work value measurements obtained in the research instrument are significant

Table 2. Coefficient value of hypothesis one.

Variables	Path co-efficient	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P values	Hypothesis decision	r-square (r^2)	R-square adjusted	Effect size (F^2)	Effect size description	Q^2
HC → Eco Sus	0.733	0.019	38.420	0.000	Significant	0.538	0.536	1.163	Large	0.532
HC → Env Sus	0.580	0.040	14.623	0.000	Significant	0.337	0.334	0.507	Large	0.331
HC → Soc Sus	0.720	0.031	22.946	0.000	Significant	0.518	0.516	1.075	Large	0.518

Table 2 exhibits hypothesis one's intelligent partial least squared statistical results on humanic hints and sustainability. Human signals impact sustainability.

Humanistic cues affect economic sustainability (β=0.733, R2=0.538, t-statistics=38.420>1.96, P-value=0.000 <0.05). The Path coefficient of 0.733 implies a strong relationship between humanic cues and economic sustainability. Humanic signals explain 53.8% of economic sustainability variance. Humanic clue influences environmental sustainability (β=0.580, R2=0.337, t-statistics=14.623>1.96, P-value =0.000 <0.05). Humanistic cues have a moderate association with environmental sustainability. According to R2, 0.337, human signals explain 33.7% of environmental sustainability variance. Humanic signals affect social sustainability (β= 0.720, R2=0.516, t-statistics=22.946>1.96, P-value=0.000 <0.05). Social sustainability and humanic cues are significantly connected

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with a Path coefficient of 0.720. 51.8% of social sustainability is humanistic. Economic sustainability is most predictive, followed by social and environmental sustainability (Table 2).

Hypothesis 2: Mechanic clues do not significantly influence the sustainability of the fashion industry.

The hypothesis involves two variables: sustainability and mechanic clues. A five-Likert scale questionnaire measured the research variables. Table 3 demonstrates that three items measured the latent variable, mechanic hints, and seven items measured sustainability (economic, social, and environmental).

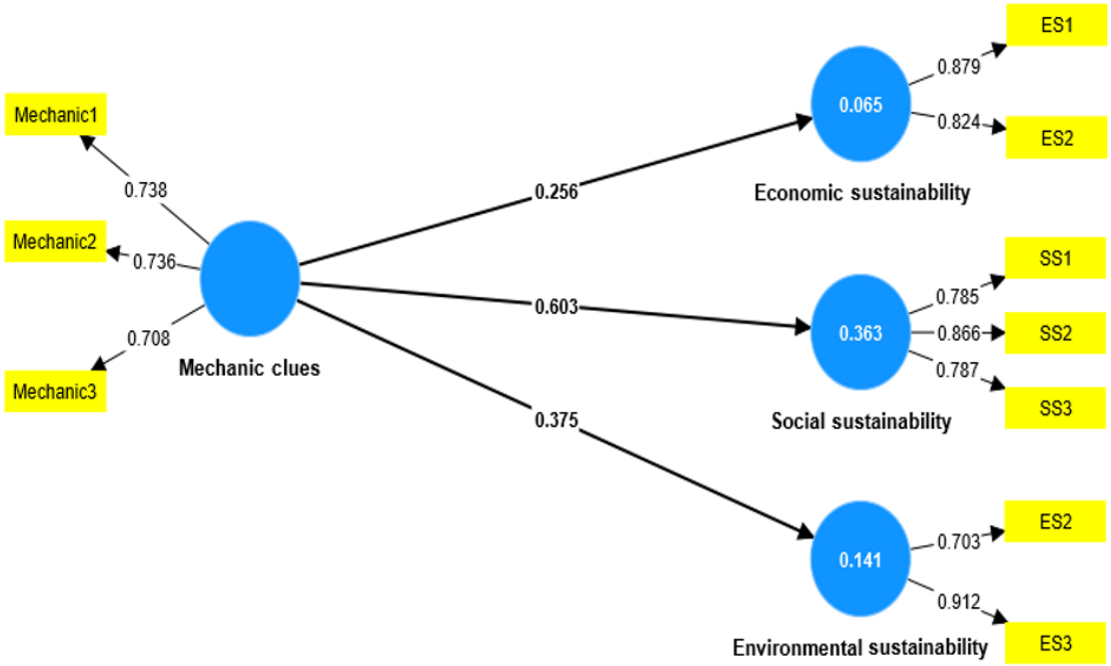

Figure 3. P-coefficient of the value of mechanic clues and sustainability (Economic, social and environmental sustainability).

Table 3. Factor loading for mechanic clues and sustainability (Economic, social and environmental sustainability) in Nigeria local fashion brand.

Indicators	Factor loading	Error variance	Variance inflation factor (VIF)	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's alpha	No. of indicators
Indicators	> 0.7	< 0.5	<3.5	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.5	≥ 0.7	
Mechanic clues				0.771	0.529	0.755	3
MC1	0.738	0.262	1.207				
MC2	0.736	0.264	1.183				
MC3	0.708	0.292	1.109				
Economic sustainability				0.841	0.726	0.725	2
ES1	0.879	0.121	1.260				
ES2	0.824	0.176	1.140				
Social sustainability				0.854	0.662	0.776	3
SS1	0.785	0.215	2.425				
SS2	0.866	0.134	1.269				
SS3	0.787	0.213	2.346				
Environmental sustainability				0.795	0.663	0.719	2
ES2	0.703	0.297	1.260				
ES3	0.912	0.088	1.140				

Construct composite reliability must exceed 0.70. AVE must exceed 0.50. Finally, reliable instruments have a Cronbach Alpha of 0.70 or higher.

From the preceding Table, Table 3 presents all constructs from mechanic clues and sustainability (economic, social, and environmental sustainability) selected in Nigerian fashion, indicating composite internal consistency and

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Cronbach Alpha reliability. Construct-specific factor loadings ranged from 0.708 to 0.912. Because the instrument met the fitness criteria, it is dependable and valid. The measurement model had no collinearity because all VIF values were under the strict threshold value of 3 (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Bootstrapping evaluation follows. Osibanjo et al. (2020) employ boot strapping to detect significant values. They calculated mechanical clues and sustainability in selected Nigerian fashion firms using bootstrapping and 5000 subsamples. A sample of fashion labels had similar opinions.

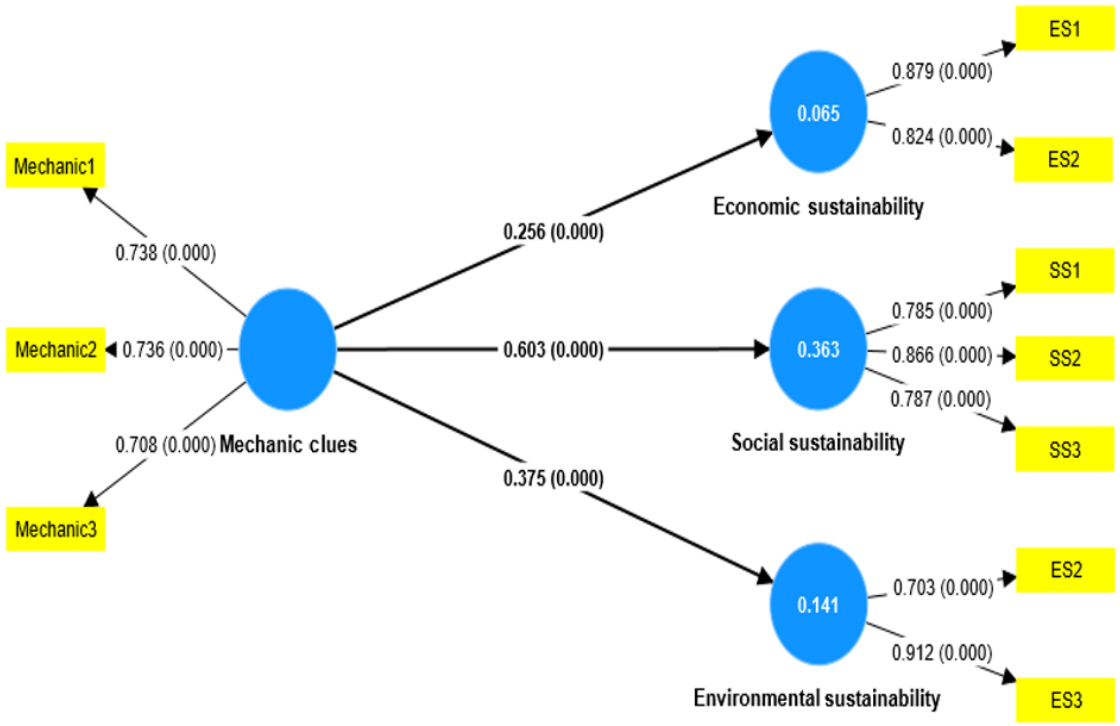

Figure 4. P-coefficient of the value of mechanic clues on sustainability (Economic, social and environmental).

Figure 3 describes the PLS Bootstrapping Model with β and P-coefficient of the value of mechanic clues on sustainability (economic, social and environmental). The p-value, which determines the amount of likelihood, is shown in Figure 4 displays the p-value, which establishes the degree of likelihood. Before it may be regarded as significant, the probability must be less than 0.05. At a p-value of 0.05, all the values of mechanic clues and economic, social, and environmental sustainability measurements obtained in the research instrument are significant at a p-value of 0.05.

Table 4. Coefficient value of hypothesis two.

Variables	Path co-efficient	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P values	Hypothesis decision	R-square (R^2)	R-square adjusted	Effect size (F^2)	Effect size description	Q^2
MC → Eco Sus	0.256	0.073	3.527	0.000	Significant	0.065	0.062	0.070	Large	0.050
MC → Env Sus	0.375	0.062	6.009	0.000	Significant	0.141	0.137	0.164	Small	0.128
MC → Soc Sus	0.603	0.041	14.632	0.000	Significant	0.363	0.360	0.570	Medium	0.351

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Table 4 shows hypothesis two's clever partial least squared statistical outcomes on mechanic clues and sustainability. Mechanical cues strongly impact sustainability. Mechanic signals greatly affect economic sustainability (β= 0.256, R2=0.065, t-statistics=3.527>1.96, P-value=0.000 <0.05). Mechanic signals and economic sustainability have a weak 0.256 Path coefficient. Mechanic cues explain 6.5% of economic sustainability variance. Mechanical cues affect environmental sustainability (β= 0.375, R2=0.141, t-statistics=6.009>1.96, P-value=0.000 <0.05). According to the 0.375 Path coefficient, mechanical cues have a weak impact on environmental sustainability. Mechanistic suggestions explain 14.1% of the environmental sustainability variance. Mechanic signals affect societal sustainability (β=0.603, R2=0.363, t-statistics=14.632>1.96, P-value=0.000 <0.05). The Path coefficient of 0.603 suggests that mechanic clues and social sustainability are moderately related. Mechanical concepts explain 36.3% of the social sustainability variance. According to Table 4 social sustainability is most predictive, followed by environmental and economic sustainability.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research are discussed based on an empirical and theoretical review of literature.

Hypothesis 1: Humanic clues do not significantly influence the sustainability of the fashion industry.

The review of these findings shows that there is a significant influence of humanic clues among the three variables. However, environmental sustainability was found to have the least predictive value. This could mean that the tone of voice, communication style, and employees' behavior may have nothing to do with a sustainable environment. The findings of this research support the studies of different authors, which revealed that the behaviors of employees or the communication style this employee possesses in relation to customers will influence their buying habits (Borishade et al., 2021; Suvarchala & Rao, 2018). The results of this study align with the existing theoretical framework on consumer behavior, specifically the theory that posits three key determinants of consumers' responses to fashion products: the stimuli (comprising product attributes and features), the consumer's internal state (including mood, personality, and values), and their subsequent behavioral response towards the product. The literature covered in chapter two of this study provides evidence that humanic cues can be observed in the behaviors and expressions exhibited by employees within organizations. These factors encompass the individual's selection of vocabulary, degree of passion, vocal intonation, nonverbal cues, level of organization, appropriate attire, and additional elements. Berry et al. (2006) characterized humanic and mechanic cues as the factors that contribute to the customer service experience, specifically pertaining to how organizations demonstrate their dedication to understanding and fulfilling the requirements and desires of their customers.

Hypothesis 2: Mechanic clues do not significantly influence the sustainability of the fashion industry.

The second hypothesis's findings indicate that mechanic clues have a significant influence among the three variables. The findings of this study indicate that social sustainability exhibits the highest level of predictive significance, followed by environmental sustainability and economic sustainability. It is suggested that brands use eco-friendly materials when setting up their environments. The results of this study align with the existing scholarly literature, which has consistently demonstrated through multiple empirical investigations that mechanical cues exert a significant impact on the sustainability domain (Dang, Nguyen, Bu, & Wang, 2019). However, Donnelly, Lynch, and Holden (2008) revealed no direct association between mechanic clues and consumer loyalty. The two researchers' contexts, surroundings, and variable conceptualizations may explain this. Mechanic signals have an impact on clients' first impressions and shape their overall experience. The existing body of literature indicates that mechanic cues originate from inanimate entities or environments and serve to exhibit functionality or utility. The various elements, such as furniture, building design, displays, equipment, colours, smells, noises, lighting, and other physical cues, effectively communicate the service to clients in a non-verbal manner.

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5.1. Presentation of Interview Findings

Thirty customers participated in the interview section. Questions from the interview were asked to seek their opinions on their buying behaviors across all brands they could relate to, including NACK apparel and Fish clothing. The analysis of this interview was presented in themes and codes, as seen in Table 5

Table 5. Interview analysis.

Themes	Code number	Code name	Frequency	Percent (%)	Ranking
Humanic clues on sustainability	1	Respect for customers	9	20	1
	2	Quick and timely response from customers	30	6	6
	3	Effective communication	21	8.57	4
	4	Good customer service	28	6.43	5
	5	Employee tone of voice	28	6.43	5
Mechanic clues on sustainability	6	Clean and hygienic environment	18	10	3
	7	Conducive ambience	9	20	1
	8	Brand location	9	20	1
	9	Brand facilities	10	18	2

The table above revealed that the majority of customers prioritized brand location, conducive ambience, and respect for customers, with each category accounting for 20% of the total. The frequency of prompt and timely responses from staff was the lowest, at only 30 (6%). This could be due to customers being aware of what they want and understanding that a delay in response is a result of their traffic, with the ultimate goal being to make a purchase and be satisfied. Above all, every participant in the interview demonstrated excellent knowledge and responsiveness.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of current research yield the following conclusions;

The first conclusion suggests that humanic signals improve local fashion brand sustainability. Humanic cues affect consumer experience and sustainability. As a result, fashion firms must prioritize humanistic considerations, particularly in customer acquisition. Mechanical cues enhance sustainability. The study found that mechanic cues improve consumer experience and environmental sustainability. Therefore, brands must pay special attention to mechanic clues because they form customers' first and lasting impressions and help exceed their expectations, which affects the customer experience.

6.1. Contribution to Knowledge

i. Mechanic clues can be used to inform product design decisions. For instance, designing a product to be strong and durable can extend its lifespan and minimize the need for new product creation.

ii. The study contributes to the multifaceted conceptualization of humanic clues and sustainability, and addresses the ever-present need for employees to adequately behave in an acceptable manner.

6.2. Suggestions for Further Studies

i. The researcher suggests replicating this study in other Nigerian sectors to gain a better understanding of customer experience management determinants and sustainability.

ii. Investigate other moderators that might influence the relationship between customer experience management and sustainability, and understanding these processes can help to ascertain the impact of customer experience management on sustainability in more subtle ways.

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