

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOTWEAR MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN ABIA STATE

By

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ABSTRACT

The study examined disruptive innovation and economic sustainability of footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State. The objectives of the study were to: Determine the impact of technological innovation on economic sustainability of footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State; examine the effect of market innovation on economic sustainability of footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State. The study utilized a survey research design. A structured five (5) points likert scale questionnaire was used to obtain primary information from the respondents while the secondary sources of data include journals, magazines, textbooks and internet. The population of the study comprised of the 1756 footwear manufacturers, while the sample sizes of 398 were derived from Taro Yamane formula. 386 copies of questionnaires were duly completed and returned showing 96% response rate. Research hypotheses were tested using multiple regressions. Findings from the study show that technological innovation has significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State. Market innovation has no significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State. The study concludes that disruptive innovation has significant positive effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State in Nigeria. The study recommends that Collaboration between footwear manufacturers and government, can lead to breakthrough innovations and help commercialize new technologies. Public-private partnerships can be particularly effective in this regard. Policymakers should balance regulation with the need for innovation, providing a clear and predictable regulatory environment that supports the development of new technologies and business models.

Keywords: disruptive innovation, economic sustainability, technological innovation, market innovation and footwear firms

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, the concepts of disruptive innovation and economic sustainability have emerged as critical drivers of long-term business success and

societal advancement (Ohanyere, Okoye, & Nnebe, 2025). Disruptive innovation refers to transformative technologies or processes that fundamentally alter existing market structures, often displacing established products or services with more efficient, accessible, or affordable alternatives. From digital platforms to renewable energy and artificial intelligence, such innovations are reshaping how businesses operate and compete (Ifechukwu-Jacobs, Arinze, Nwangwu, & Atueyi, 2025).

Economic sustainability, on the other hand, involves the ability of businesses and economies to generate enduring value without depleting the resources human, environmental, or financial—necessary for future growth. It focuses on resilience, responsible resource use, and inclusive development, ensuring that economic progress can be maintained over the long term (Ntadom Atueyi. & Jacobs. (2021).

This paper explores the intersection between these two powerful forces: how disruptive innovation can be harnessed to promote economic sustainability in both emerging and established business environments. The study seeks to understand how businesses—especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)—can adopt innovative technologies and models to improve productivity, reduce environmental impact, and strengthen financial viability (Onya, Arinze, & Atueyi, 2025). Special attention is given to challenges such as access to technology, financing, infrastructure, and human capital, which often determine the success of sustainable innovation strategies (Nwangwu, Ohanyere Nwangwu, & Atueyi, (2025). By analyzing real-world examples, reviewing relevant literature, and gathering local insights, this project aims to provide practical recommendations for policy makers, entrepreneurs, and investors on how to foster an ecosystem that supports both innovation and sustainability. Ultimately, the goal is to demonstrate that disruptive innovation, when strategically integrated, can serve not just as a source of competitive advantage, but also as a foundation for lasting economic growth and social progress.

The disruptive innovation concept first originated from Christensen (1997) and focused primarily on technological innovation but over the years, this has changed, to also include products and business models. Disruptive innovation has emerged as a crucial concept in the business world, and its association with economic sustainability has spurred academic investigation. To handle these transformative transformations, disruptive innovations often break traditional market norms and create new paradigms, needing exceptional leadership and strategic decision-making on the side of the management.

Christensen (1997) established the disruptive innovation hypothesis, emphasizing the importance of leadership in identifying and implementing disruptive ideas. Managers have a vital role in creating an environment favorable to the evolution of disruptive ideas inside their organizations. Furthermore, even when the potential consequences are uncertain, they must make courageous decisions to invest resources and support creative ventures.

The current business environment exists of tough and unpredictable competition. According to Poorangi, Khin, Nikoonejad and Kardevani (2013) all organizations, regardless of their size and scope of operation are faced with tough competition challenges and for them to cope with this state of affairs, SMEs are turning to innovation to stay afloat. Innovation is regarded as an essential aspect when considering the competitive environments of SMEs and innovation strategy and planning focused attention inter alia on competitive environment, resources and competencies. Failure to engage with new technologies in the near future could result in an SME becoming obsolete and less competitive while possible new entrants to the market may become the new winners (Ngugi, 2017).

Disruptive innovation, while potentially revolutionary, faces several challenges. These include resistance from established companies, the difficulty of adapting to changing market conditions, resource limitation, regulatory barriers and the risk of failure for those investing in new technologies or business models. Additionally, disruptive innovations often start with lower performance than established products and may face market skepticism and regulatory hurdles.

The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of disruptive innovation on economic sustainability of footwear manufacturing firms in *Abia State* while the specific objectives of the study were as follows:

1. Determine the impact of technological innovation on economic sustainability of footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.
2. Examine the effect of market innovation on economic sustainability of footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.

To achieve these objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Ho₁: Technological innovation has no significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.

Ho₂: Market innovation has no significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.

Conceptual Review

Disruptive innovation is the introduction of a product or service into an established industry that performs better and normally at a low cost than current offerings, thus putting out of place the market leaders in that specific marketplace and changing the business (Clayton, 2015). Disruptive innovation does not necessarily involve cutting-edge new technology, as radical innovation does. Sometimes, it involves the application of a relatively new, but not cutting-edge, technology to a new product category (Govindarajan, Kopalle, & Danneels, 2011). The term "disruptive innovation" was first used in 1997 by Professor Clayton Christensen of Harvard Business School, who explained in his book "The Innovator's Dilemma" that it refers to a product or service that is somewhat behind and continues to lead an industry. The market, the market created a market revolution. For example, the disruptive innovation of social networks is Facebook, which in a short time has become the most used platform and the one that offers users the most benefits (Ascencio, 2019). Disruptive innovation is characterized by the fact that when a product or service enters the market or quickly becomes a leader in a segment, it causes a shift in competition in such a way that others must develop pricing strategies to offset the demand for that product or service innovation (De la Vega, 2018).

Economic sustainability refers to practices designed to create the long-term economic development of a company or nation while also managing the environmental, social, and cultural aspect of its activities. It is about balancing economic growth and generating profit with the impact on the environment and people. There are three key areas of economic sustainability, namely: economic viability, environmental protection and social equity (Okpala 2024). While it may seem like this pillar is focused on an organization's ability to remain profitable throughout its lifetime, economic sustainability isn't just about money. An economically sustainable organization is one that drives revenue and maintains long-term business growth without negatively impacting the community, environment, or health and wellbeing of its employees (Adejola, Joseph & Ojuola, 2024). Economic sustainability allows businesses to decipher where they can improve their sustainability measures and reduce their carbon footprint in order to adhere to new environmental regulations as well as attract new customers and investors (Douye & Chukwu, 2024). The traditional measure of the economic

performance is the gross domestic product or GDP, which represents the total value of all goods and services produced by a nation during a given year. Other economic indicators include: Investment in public, Business and private assets, Social investment, Rate of inflation and Government borrowing and debts, Competitiveness/productivity and trade/export/imports etc. According to Eshra and Beshir (2021), economic sustainability disclosure is simply the organization's effort to utilize available resources efficiently and add value. The study notes that ESR relates more to the production of goods and services needed for exchange and transaction purposes at fair prices for the satisfaction of corporate profit objectives as an obligation to investors, through the satisfaction of identified target market. However, firm achieved economic responsibility through society and community relation, employee relation, and environmental performance. The motivation for the economic dimension is perceived as a purely endogenous function of a company's evaluation of the cost-benefits of such responsibility and other associated firm-specific factors. Atanda, Oseneme and Ogundana (2021) notes that economic sustainability is the use of existing resources in an optimal way using various strategies so that a responsible and beneficial balance can be achieved in the long-run. It may not only address the financial performance of the reporting company but also the company's effects on the economic circumstances of its stakeholders and on the local, national and global economic systems in which it operates.

Theoretical Review

Disruptive technology and disruptive innovation are terms used in business and technology literature to describe innovations that improve a product or service in ways that the market does not expect, typically by being lower priced or designed for a different set of consumers.

Disruptive innovations can be broadly classified into low-end and new-market disruptive innovations. A new-market disruptive innovation is often aimed at non-consumption (i.e., consumers who would not have used the products already on the market), whereas a lower-end disruptive innovation is aimed at mainstream customers for whom price is more important than quality.

Disruptive technologies are particularly threatening to the leaders of an existing market, because they are competition coming from an unexpected direction. A disruptive technology can come to dominate an existing market by either filling a role in a new market

that the older technology could not fill (as cheaper, lower capacity but smaller-sized flash memory is doing for personal data storage in the 2000s) or by successively moving up-market through performance improvements until finally displacing the market incumbents (as digital photography).

In contrast to “disruptive innovation”, a “sustaining” innovation does not have an effect on existing markets. Sustaining innovations may be either “discontinuous” (i.e. “revolutionary”) or “continuous” (i.e. “evolutionary”). Revolutionary innovations are not always disruptive. Although the automobile was a revolutionary innovation, it is not a disruptive innovation, because early automobiles were expensive luxury items that did not disrupt the market for horse-drawn vehicles.

The term disruptive technology was coined and introduced in the article “Disruptive Technology: *Catching the wave* (1995). The concept of disruptive technology continues a long tradition of the identification of radical technical change in the study of innovation by economists, and the development of tools for its management at a firm or policy level. In the theory, Christensen distinguish between “low-end disruption” which targets customers who do not need the full performance valued by customers at the high end of the market and “new-market disruption” which targets customers who have needs that were previously unserved by existing incumbents. “Low-end disruption” occurs when the rate at which products improve exceeds the rate at which customers can adopt the new performance. Therefore, at some point the performance of the product overshoots the needs of certain customers segments. At this point, a disruptive technology may enter the market and provide a product which has lower performance than the incumbent but which exceeds the requirements of certain segments, thereby gaining a foothold in the market. In low-end disruption, the disruptor is focused initially on serving the least profitable customer, who is happy with a good enough product. This type of customer is not willing to pay premium for enhancements in product functionality. Once the disruptor has gained foot hold in this customer segment, it seeks to improve its profit margin. To get higher profit margins, the disruptor needs to enter the segment where the customer is willing to pay a little more for higher quality. To ensure this quality in its product, the disruptor needs to innovate. The incumbent will not do much to retain its share in a not so profitable segment, and will move up-market and focus on its more attractive customers. After a number of such encounters, the incumbent is squeezed into smaller markets than it was previously serving. And then finally

the disruptive technology meets the demands of the most profitable segment and drives the established company out of the market.

“New market disruption” occurs when a product fits a new or emerging market segment that is not being served by existing incumbents in the country. Disruptive innovation is an innovation that simplifies and makes more affordable products and services to undesirable or ignored markets. Established companies typically strive to improve their products and services for their profitable customer base, largely ignoring the needs and desires of untapped segments.

Empirical Studies

Agbaje, Obisanya, Olubodun, (2024) explored the impact of disruptive innovations—technological advancements in transforming business practices—on employees' careers, with a focus on Nigeria. While disruptive innovations enhance industrialization, globalization and efficiency, their influence on employee roles, skills, and job security have been under examined, especially in developing countries, thereby changing narrative of the future of work. Using a survey methodology and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, the study finds that respondents are generally aware of disruptive innovations, though adoption varies among organizations. The results indicate positive effects on employees' roles and skills but highlight the need for ongoing reskilling and upskilling. Thus, the conclusion is that stakeholders, such as job seekers, business owners, employees, and policymakers, will be aided in making informed decision regarding disruptive innovations. The study suggests that future studies should model employee development in response to these technological changes in the Nigerian context.

Dzedulionis, (2023) explored the impact of 21st-century disruptive innovations on the credit card sectors of the United States and China, with a particular focus responded through change management strategies. While both countries represent major economies with mature financial infrastructures, the pace and nature of disruption—driven by technologies such as mobile payments, artificial intelligence, and digital ecosystems—have triggered contrasting responses on how key industry players have shaped by cultural, regulatory, and structural differences. The study analyzes the evolution of legacy institutions and emerging fintech challengers, evaluating their ability to adapt to shifting consumer behavior, regulatory reforms, and digital transformation. Drawing from case studies of companies such as Visa,

Mastercard, UnionPay, and Ant Group, this research applies established change management frameworks (e.g., Kotter's 8-Step Model and Lewin's Change Theory) to assess how these organizations navigated strategic transformation. Findings suggest that firms embracing proactive, innovation-driven change cultures were more resilient in the face of disruption, while those reliant on traditional banking models experienced diminished competitiveness. The dissertation contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between innovation and organizational adaptability in a rapidly evolving global payments landscape.

Maena, (2022) assessing the effect of disruptive innovation on competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nairobi city central business district. The study objectives were to determine the effect of Technological innovation on Competitiveness, to establish the effect of New Market innovation on Competitiveness and to explore the effect of Social Digital Trends on the Competitiveness of SMEs in Nairobi City Central Business District. The study adopted a descriptive research design the target population was SMEs that are located within the Central Business District (CBD) in Nairobi city. The researcher targeted the managers of 22,000 of these SMEs within the CBD that are listed in the NCC in the year 2020. The study applied the probability (purposive) sampling technique. A total of 88 SMEs within Nairobi City CBD with verifiable trading licenses were studied. The study used questionnaires as the main data collection instrument to collect the primary data. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS Version 24. The data collected was analyzed using multiple regression and frequency tables. The study findings for technological innovation revealed that it has influenced change in SMEs' operations. The findings indicate a significant relationship between Technological innovation and Competitiveness ($r=0.467$, $p=0.000$) where profitability is enhanced by 47% in a Pearson correlation model. The findings of linear regression analysis showed that while increasing Technological innovation by one unit, Competitiveness increases by 0.358 units. Study findings for new market innovation revealed that it had significant impact on SMEs' competitiveness. A Pearson correlation test showed that there is a positive relationship between new market innovation and competitiveness ($r=0.429$, $p=0.000$). The study findings on social digital trends revealed that it has significant influence on SMEs' competitiveness. A Pearson correlation test showed that there is a strong positive relationship between competitiveness and social digital trends ($r=0.365$, $p=0.000$). Findings of linear regression analysis between social digital trends and competitiveness explained 13.3% of the variation in the competitiveness confirming that the SMEs are unable to adopt and utilize effectively social digital trends, which prevents them from becoming

competitive. The study makes the following conclusion; new technology leads to improved cash flow product innovation, which is part of the vision and mission of the organization. In addition, technological changes have led to improved organizational performance and improved product quality. Thus, innovation in products is considered to help achieve competitive advantages for enterprises. Moreover, the study concluded that SMEs venture into new markets to gain competitive advantage. Also, majority of the SMEs introduced new products and they used innovation to power their marketing campaigns. SMEs that adapt to consumer behavior and new technologies while maintaining a strong customer focus is also essential to great marketing. The study revealed that SMEs utilize new market innovation to create a niche of new customers. Furthermore, the study concludes that social digital trends as well as social identity elements influence the use of social media in SMEs. In addition, the direct effect of social identity on SME engagement in social media usage appears to be limited. The majority of SMEs have a strong social media presence; therefore, social media trends demonstrate to have a greater influence on SMEs' performance. The study recommends that SMEs should put more investment since technological innovation is dynamic and it keeps on changing every so often. SMEs must therefore be able to adjust quickly to ensure relevance in the market. Moreover, the study recommends that since SMEs venture into new markets to gain competitive advantage and that majority of the SMEs introduce new products from time to time, they should use innovation to power their marketing campaigns. Furthermore, the study recommends that because social media influences the use of social media in SMEs, there is need to utilize social identity elements that influence the use of social media in SMEs.

Methodology

This study however adopted the survey research design. The survey research design method was used in this study, by collecting data through questionnaire from population of interest. It involved using a self-designed questionnaire in collecting data from the respondents. Area of study is Abia state. Abia State is a Nigerian state, located in the southeastern region of the country. The researcher made use of primary and secondary sources of data. However, the footwear manufacturing firms constituted of 1756 footwear manufacturers. The sample sizes of 398 were derived from Taro Yamane formula, while the secondary sources of data include the journals, magazines, textbooks and internet. The study employed structured questionnaire as a method of data collection. Meanwhile percentage

table and analysis of variance were used to analyses the collected data from the sample respondents. Inferential statistics was used to reach conclusions and make generalizations about the characteristics of populations based on data collected from the sample. Percentage table was used to analyze the demographical data. Hypotheses were analyzed using ANOVA method at 0.05% level of significance.

Results & Discussions

Multiple regression result was employed to test the effect of independent or explanatory variables on the dependent variables. The result of the multiple regression analysis is presented in the tables below.

Summary of the Regression Result

The result of the multiple regressions formulated in chapter three is presented in the tables below.

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.148 ^a	.055	.017	.87456	.022	4.311	2	384	.014	1.731

a. Predictors: (Constant), MIN, TCHI

b. Dependent Variable: ECS

Table 4.1.1 shows that R^2 co-efficient of determination which measures the strength of the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable has the value of 0.55. This implies that 55% of the variation in disruptive innovation and economic sustainability is explained by variations in technological innovation and market innovation. This was supported by adjusted R^2 of 0.55%. Test for autocorrelation: This is used to test whether errors corresponding to different observations are uncorrelated. If the value of the Durbin Watson from the regression result is close to 2 no autocorrelation in that regression result, but if it deviates significantly then there is autocorrelation. The Durbin-Watson statistic (D.W) of 2 reveals no autocorrelation in the model. Hence, the result is good for business analysis because the Durbin Watson result is 1.7 which indicates that the study is free from the problems of autocorrelation.

Table 4.2 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.595	2	3.298	4.311	.014 ^b
	Residual	293.705	384	.765		
	Total	300.300	386			

a. Dependent Variable: ECS

b. Predictors: (Constant), MIN, TCHI

The f-statistics value of table 4.2 with f-statistics probability of 0.000 shows that the independent variables have significant effect on dependent variable such as technological innovation and market innovation can collectively explain the variations in economic sustainability.

Table 4.3 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	2.969	.115		25.825	.000	2.743	3.195
	TCHI	.099	.034	.152	2.936	.004	.166	.033
	MIN	.020	.032	.033	.642	.522	.042	.083

a. Dependent Variable: ECS

A'priori Criteria: This is determined by the existing business theories; it also indicates the signs and magnitude of the business parameter under review. In table 4 3 above, we found out that technological innovation has a positive sign given its value as 0.9; this implies that a unit increase in technological innovation increases the economic sustainability by 9%. This conforms to the a' priori expectation. Market innovation has a positive sign given its value as .02 this implies that a unit increase in Market innovation increases the economic sustainability by 20%. This conforms to the a' priori expectation.

T- Statistics: The t-test is used to measure the individual statistical significance of the explanatory parameters in the model. From table Coefficients above technological innovation is 2.936, this is statistically significant, this suggest that it contribute significantly to economic sustainability. Market Innovation is .642 this is statistically insignificant; this suggest that it does not contribute significantly to economic sustainability at 5% level of significant.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: Technological innovation has no significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.

Technological innovation has a t-statistics of 2.936 and a probability value of 0.004 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypotheses which state that Technological innovation has significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.

Ho₂: Market innovation has no significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.

In testing this hypothesis, the t-statistics and probability value in table above is used. Market innovation has a t-statistics of .642 and a probability value of .522 which is statistically insignificant. Therefore, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypotheses which state that Market innovation has no significant effect on economic sustainability in footwear manufacturing firms in Abia State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Technological innovation is essential for economic sustainability, as it has the potential to address pressing global challenges and drive economic growth and development. Technological innovation can increase efficiency and productivity across various sectors, reducing costs and improving competitiveness. For example, automation and artificial intelligence can reduce labor costs and increase efficiency in manufacturing and service industries. Innovations in clean energy, water management, and waste reduction can help conserve natural resources and mitigate the environmental impact of economic activity.

Market innovation can foster competition, leading to lower prices and higher quality goods and services. Innovative markets attract investment and foster entrepreneurship, leading to job creation and economic development. For example, the emergence of new industries, such as renewable energy or blockchain technology, can stimulate investment and job creation in local communities. Market innovations can also support economic sustainability by encouraging more sustainable production.

The study recommends that:

1. Collaboration between footwear manufacturers and government, can lead to breakthrough innovations and help commercialize new technologies.
2. Public-private partnerships can be particularly effective in this regard. Policymakers should balance regulation with the need for innovation, providing a clear and predictable regulatory environment that supports the development of new technologies and business models.

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