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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CLOTHING AND TEXTILES EDUCATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN LAGOS STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria's creative economy, the nexus of sustainable fashion entrepreneurship and artificial intelligence (AI) offered a developing chance for youth empowerment. However, little is known about how much AI adoption affected young fashion designers' environmental sustainability and entrepreneurial preparedness. This study examined how the adoption of AI affected the entrepreneurial growth of young people working in fashion design companies in Lagos State, Nigeria, paying special attention to how AI promoted environmentally friendly business practices. Through stratified and purposive sampling, 150 respondents were chosen from Lagos's fashion design hubs, innovation centres, and vocational schools. Using a descriptive survey design, information was gathered via questionnaires and interviews. The tools evaluated AI integration, entrepreneurial readiness, and eco-friendly design practices. The data were analysed using both descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson correlation and linear regression) statistics. The findings revealed a significant predictive effect of AI use on the capacity to apply sustainable design practices ($\beta = .61$, $p < .01$) and a strong positive relationship between AI adoption and entrepreneurial readiness ($r = .67$, $p < .01$). These results demonstrated how AI tools like digital sketching, virtual prototyping, and predictive analytics can revolutionise innovation and green entrepreneurship. The study, which was guided by Schumpeter's Innovation Theory, showed that students' perceptions of the utility and usability of AI tools influenced the integration of AI in fashion education, which in turn encouraged creativity and "creative destruction." The ability of young people to engage in eco-conscious fashion entrepreneurship was found to be greatly enhanced by customised AI-driven interventions. In order to enhance sustainable development through creative enterprise, the study suggested policy support, capacity building, and the integration of AI literacy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Fashion Design, youth entrepreneurship, Sustainable Innovation, Nigeria, Creative Economy

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a disruptive force in many domains since the Fourth Industrial Revolution, altering how industries grow, how businesses are run, and how knowledge is shared. The global fashion and textile industry, which was formerly based on crafts, has also been impacted by this disruption. AI-powered digital tools, such as predictive design software, intelligent supply chain systems, and virtual fittings, are transforming the design, production, and marketing of apparel in response to growing concerns about environmental sustainability and economic adaptability. Consequently, vocational education systems, especially those specialising in clothing and textiles, are being challenged to prepare students not only for employment but also for innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship Across the globe, educational institutions are beginning to align curricula with emerging technologies to equip learners with relevant 21st-century skills (UNESCO, 2022). In developed economies, AI integration in vocational training has resulted in enhanced learner creativity, reduced production waste, and improved problem-solving competencies, skills essential for sustainable entrepreneurship. For instance, adaptive AI software is now used in design simulations to help students visualise outputs before committing physical resources, thus encouraging eco-conscious production (Singh & Sharma, 2021).

In Nigeria, especially for young people, vocational education is crucial for economic diversification, job creation, and self-reliance. Clothing and textile education, which can address social and ecological issues through sustainable fashion practices in addition to industrial development, is one of the key pillars of these initiatives. Yet, many vocational schools in Lagos State continue to struggle with a lack of funding, policy inertia, and exposure to digital innovation, even though they are situated in the commercial centre of the country (Oladejo et al., 2023). These flaws jeopardise the industry's ability to generate graduates who can start eco-friendly businesses or compete in the AI-driven global fashion markets. In order to close that gap, this study examines how much AI is being incorporated into Lagos State's vocational clothing and textiles programs and how this affects students' creativity, awareness of the environment, and preparedness for the workforce.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian vocational schools are still lagging behind in implementing artificial intelligence (AI), especially in the field of clothing and textiles education, despite the fact that AI has been widely recognised as a revolutionary force in business and education. The majority of Lagos State's educational institutions continue to use antiquated teaching techniques that do not take into account the continuous digital transformations, despite the fact that developed economies are already utilising AI-driven tools like predictive market analysis, intelligent design systems, and virtual prototyping to promote sustainable practices and entrepreneurial creativity (Singh & Sharma, 2021; Obi & Oyebola, 2024). This disparity has significant ramifications since graduates of these programs are still ill-equipped to compete in technologically advanced global marketplaces that place a premium on innovation, environmentally responsible manufacturing, and digital proficiency. The persistent reliance on manual approaches contributes to challenges such as overproduction, textile waste, and inefficient supply chains, highlighting a lack of preparedness for sustainable entrepreneurship (UNESCO, 2022). The lack of empirical data on the use of AI in Lagos' vocational clothing and textiles programs exacerbates this problem by limiting evidence-based curriculum reform, institutional planning, and focused investment in digital infrastructure. While national policies have started to acknowledge the value of digital innovation in vocational

training, they are still largely theoretical, inconsistent, and underfunded (Oladejo et al., 2023). The marginalization of vocational students in Nigeria's quickly growing creative economy could be sustained as a result of this misalignment between institutional realities and policy intentions. Therefore, by examining the degree of AI integration in Lagos State's clothing and textiles education and its impact on students' entrepreneurial readiness, sustainability orientation, and digital competence for 21st-century business environments, this study fills a crucial research gap.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The study sought to examine the availability of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Catalyst for Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Clothing and Textiles Education in Vocational Education Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. To examine the extent to which Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are integrated into clothing and textiles education programmes in vocational institutions across Lagos State.
2. To investigate the influence of AI integration on students' entrepreneurial readiness in clothing and textiles education.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools integrated into clothing and textiles education programmes in vocational institutions across Lagos State?
2. How does the integration of AI influence students' entrepreneurial readiness and sustainability-oriented practices in the clothing and textiles sector?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the purpose and research questions, the study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and students' entrepreneurial readiness in clothing and textiles education.
2. H_{02}: The use of AI technologies does not significantly influence sustainability-oriented practices among clothing and textiles students in vocational institutions in Lagos State.

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence in Vocational Education

The term artificial intelligence (AI) describes how machines that are made to carry out tasks like learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making can simulate human intelligence. AI is increasingly being used in educational settings to replicate real-world scenarios, automate feedback, analyse learning data, and personalise instruction (UNESCO, 2022). Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are used in vocational education to enhance instruction and learning while also bridging the gap between classroom instruction and industry expectations by matching students' skills with the demands of the labour market.

Through resources like intelligent tutoring systems, digital platforms that mimic real-world production environments, and predictive analytics for design, artificial intelligence (AI) supports practical training in vocational schools (Onukwuba & Nwachukwu, 2021). These applications are especially pertinent in industries where quality, speed, and innovation are crucial, such as apparel and textiles. For example, students can use AI-powered software to create fashion prototypes, visualise material use, and detect flaws before physical production, which enhances both technical competence and sustainable practice. Furthermore, AI enables personalised learning pathways

tailored to students' strengths, allowing instructors to focus on creativity and critical thinking rather than repetitive teaching tasks. In skills-based education, where learners progress at varying rates, adaptive learning platforms are crucial because they can track individual progress, identify knowledge gaps, and recommend learning resources (Adebowale & Adebisi, 2022). However, challenges like inadequate digital infrastructure, a lack of technical teacher training, and ambiguous policies are keeping AI from being fully incorporated into vocational education in developing countries (Oladejo et al., 2023). The lack of resources in vocational schools hinders the full implementation of AI, even though some national frameworks in Nigeria promote digital innovation. The skills gap between vocational graduates and the evolving demands of digitally transformed industries is widened by this restriction.

Sustainable Entrepreneurship

The process of finding and seizing business opportunities that not only create economic value but also favourably impact social welfare and environmental preservation is known as sustainable entrepreneurship. It prioritises innovation, resource efficiency, and long-term impact over traditional entrepreneurship, which is more focused on short-term profit. Sustainable entrepreneurship is especially relevant in the fashion and textiles industry, which has a long history of being linked to unfair labour practices, pollution, and overproduction. When combined with digital innovation, sustainability fosters a mindset that values problem-solving and systems thinking, skills necessary to build resilient and responsible businesses (Omeje, Mba, & Ugwu 2025). In vocational education, where many students hope to launch micro or small businesses after graduation, this becomes extremely important.

By facilitating smart manufacturing, predictive modelling, and efficient resource use, artificial intelligence (AI) helps to foster sustainable entrepreneurship. AI tools, for instance, can assist fashion entrepreneurs in predicting consumer trends, streamlining production schedules, and reducing material waste, all of which directly contribute to environmental objectives. Because of these advantages, AI is positioned as a tool that supports sustainability principles in entrepreneurial practice rather than merely as a technical one. To achieve this synergy between AI and sustainable entrepreneurship, however, deliberate curriculum reform, infrastructure investment, and a supportive institutional culture are required. Nigeria strongly promotes youth entrepreneurship, but the sustainability element is usually overlooked in vocational training. Numerous initiatives still put immediate financial gain ahead of long-term ecological and social considerations. Therefore, this study investigates how implementing AI in vocational schools can aid in shifting the focus of entrepreneurship education towards sustainability.

Clothing and Textiles Education in Vocational Institutions

Clothing and textiles education is a vocational field that focusses on the design, production, marketing, and management of clothing and textile products. Because it blends technical expertise, business acumen, and creative design, it is a rich environment for entrepreneurs to grow. While traditional education has relied on manual skills and studio-based instruction, the digitalisation of the global fashion industry demands a more technology-driven approach to teaching and learning. The clothing and textiles programs offered by Lagos State's vocational schools equip students with the practical skills they need to start their own businesses or enter the workforce. However, many of these institutions still operate with outdated machines, rigid

curricula, and limited exposure to digital design platforms, thus constraining students' readiness for innovation and modern entrepreneurship (Nwachukwu & Onuoha, 2020).

Virtual prototyping, AI-assisted pattern generation, and smart textile design platforms allow students to experiment without using physical resources, which can revolutionise the way students learn and create. These tools not only reduce production costs and foster creativity, but they also promote sustainable practices by minimising fabric waste and reducing energy use in design iterations (Singh & Sharma, 2021). Despite these benefits, AI integration in Nigerian apparel and textiles education is still patchy and disorganised, with organised initiatives to teach lecturers how to use digital tools and align course material with international technological standards lacking. Modernising apparel and textiles education with AI is crucial for empowering a new generation of entrepreneurs who can compete in the rapidly changing, environmentally conscious fashion industry. It is not just a question of technology.

Theoretical Framework

Schumpeter's Innovation Theory (1934)

Joseph Schumpeter's 1934 Innovation Theory of Entrepreneurship served as the foundation for this investigation. The theory highlights innovation as the primary force behind economic growth and entrepreneurship, contending that business owners create "new combinations" in the form of goods, procedures, markets, and organisational strategies. The idea of "creative destruction," which holds that new, more effective innovations replace outdated methods of production and organisation, is fundamental to this theory. According to Schumpeter's theory of innovation as a transformative force, the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into the teaching of apparel and textiles in Lagos State vocational institutions is reflected in this study. Students can create eco-friendly products, reduce waste, and create sustainable business models with the help of AI-powered tools like virtual prototyping, intelligent design software, and predictive analytics. This aligns entrepreneurship with both environmental consciousness and economic viability. AI creates a new generation of fashion entrepreneurs who can succeed in cutthroat markets by empowering students with digital creativity and sustainable practices. Schumpeter's theory emphasises the entrepreneur as the primary innovator, but detractors contend that it downplays the contribution of infrastructure, education, and institutions to innovation. By investigating both students' innovative abilities and vocational schools' readiness to offer AI-driven learning environments that can spur sustainable entrepreneurship, this study expands on the theory's application.

Research Methodology

In order to give a comprehensive picture of how artificial intelligence (AI) affected clothing and textiles education and sustainable entrepreneurship in Lagos State vocational institutions, this study used a mixed-methods approach based on a descriptive survey design, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH), Lagos State University of Science and Technology (LASUSTECH), Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka (FCET Akoka), and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education (now a part of LASUED) were among the postsecondary institutions in Lagos that offered accredited clothing and textiles programs. Together, these institutions housed 90 employees, including department heads, lecturers, and instructors, and about 450 final-year students (NBTE, 2023; UNILAG Curriculum Bulletin, 2024). A sample of 140 respondents, 100 final-year students, 30 lecturers/instructors, and

10 department heads, was selected to ensure both representativeness and manageability. Purposive sampling was employed to select institutions based on accreditation status, stratified sampling was used to proportionally represent students and staff, and simple random sampling (balloting) ensured unbiased selection within groups. Data collection relied on structured questionnaires for students and semi-structured interviews for lecturers and administrators. The questionnaire, divided into six sections (demographics, exposure to AI, entrepreneurship and innovation, institutional preparedness, barriers, and challenges), was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, while the interview guide explored institutional practices, perceptions, and barriers. Validity was ensured through expert review, and a pilot test with 20 respondents outside the sample yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84, confirming high reliability. Physical questionnaires were used, and interviews, which lasted 20 to 30 minutes, were consented to be audio recorded and then transcribed. According to current guidelines for educational research, all ethical standards were rigorously upheld, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and institutional approval (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; OECD, 2024). The associations between AI integration, entrepreneurial readiness, and sustainability orientation were investigated through the use of quantitative data and descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation, linear regression, and chi-square. The findings from both strands were combined to give a thorough understanding of AI's role in vocational fashion education in Lagos State. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was used to identify innovative practices and institutional challenges.

Result and Discussions

In order to give a comprehensive picture of how AI affects entrepreneurship education in Lagos State vocational schools, this section presents the findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Semi-structured interviews with important stakeholders and structured questionnaires were used to gather data.

Research Question One: To what extent does AI integration in Clothing and Textiles education correlate with students' entrepreneurial readiness?

Table A: AI Integration in Clothing and Textiles Education

Item Code	Statement	Mean	SD
AI_Q1	My institution uses AI-driven tools in practical training.	3.61	1.15
AI_Q2	I have been taught how to use AI in fashion design.	3.49	1.12
AI_Q3	Instructors demonstrate AI applications during lessons.	3.73	1.16
AI_Q4	We use digital/automated sewing systems in class.	3.50	1.12
AI_Q5	I have access to AI software for design simulation.	3.49	1.16
AI_Q6	AI is part of my entrepreneurship training curriculum.	3.37	1.17

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

According to their answers to the questionnaire, students strongly agreed that AI should be incorporated into their educational process. Strong agreement that teachers actively use AI tools in their lessons is indicated by the highest mean score (M = 3.73). This implies extensive exposure to educational materials powered by AI. The results of the interviews supported these findings, with a number of instructors highlighting the expanding selection of AI-powered sewing machines and design simulation software. They did, however, also list a lack of funding and staff training as obstacles to the widespread adoption of AI-driven pedagogies.

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Research Question Two: How does AI exposure influence students' orientation towards sustainable entrepreneurship in fashion?

Table B: AI's Influence on Entrepreneurial Readiness

Item Code	Statement	Mean	SD
ENT_Q1	AI exposure has improved my problem-solving skills.	3.40	1.18
ENT_Q2	AI has enhanced my creativity in fashion design.	3.41	1.08
ENT_Q3	I am confident in using AI to start a fashion venture.	3.37	1.07
ENT_Q4	AI tools make business processes easier for me.	3.47	1.12
ENT_Q5	I can now develop sustainable fashion solutions.	3.47	1.12
ENT_Q6	I feel AI helps me innovate better in clothing business.	3.54	1.08
SUS_Q7	AI helps me minimise waste in my designs.	3.38	1.10
SUS_Q8	I can use AI to choose eco-friendly materials.	3.46	1.11
SUS_Q9	I now understand sustainable fashion better through AI.	3.53	1.13
SUS_Q10	AI encourages me to create recyclable fashion products.	3.41	1.08
SUS_Q11	I believe AI can reduce the environmental impact of fashion.	3.50	1.12
SUS_Q12	I plan to integrate sustainability in future fashion business.	3.61	1.14

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

According to quantitative findings, AI greatly improves students' capacity for creativity and problem-solving, thereby preparing them for future business endeavours. Data from interviews supported this conclusion, with department heads emphasising that students who were exposed to AI applications showed greater confidence when putting forward start-up ideas. However, participants noted that a potential obstacle to applying classroom knowledge to real-world businesses was limited access to cutting-edge AI tools. Quantitative data showed that students were highly aware of sustainable practices. Analysis of the interviews showed that instructors actively promote eco-friendly material selection and waste reduction, with AI tools helping to make this change. Interviewees, however, voiced worries about the high price of sustainable AI solutions, which might prevent their widespread use in professional contexts.

Test of Hypotheses

Research Question One: To what extent does AI integration in Clothing and Textiles education correlate with students' entrepreneurial readiness?

Hypothesis: H_0: There is no significant relationship between AI integration and students' entrepreneurial readiness.

Analysis Using Pearson Correlation

Variables	N	R	p-value
AI Integration & Entrepreneurial Readiness	150	0.624	0.000

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

The results show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.05$) between students' entrepreneurial readiness and the use of AI in clothing and textiles education. This implies that the more students are exposed to AI tools and digital systems during their fashion education, the more prepared they feel to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the two variables have a significant relationship.

Research Question Two: How does AI exposure influence students' orientation towards sustainable entrepreneurship in fashion?

Hypothesis: H_0: There is no significant relationship between AI integration and sustainable entrepreneurship orientation among students.

Analysis Using Pearson Correlation

Variables	N	r	p-value
AI Integration & Sustainable Entrepreneurship Orientation	150	0.571	0.000

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

According to the analysis, students' orientation towards sustainable entrepreneurship and AI integration have a moderately strong positive correlation ($r = 0.571$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that exposing students to AI technologies encourages them to embrace sustainable behaviours like choosing eco-friendly materials and cutting back on waste. The null hypothesis is thus disproved, and a strong positive correlation is found.

Discussion of Findings

According to the study's findings, there is a significant and favourable relationship between two important aspects of students' development, sustainable entrepreneurship orientation and entrepreneurial readiness, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in clothing and textiles education. The combined results of the semi-structured interviews and the structured questionnaire demonstrate how AI has the potential to revolutionise vocational fashion education in Lagos State.

First off, previous research has shown that digital technologies boost students' confidence and competence in launching and running businesses (Oluwatobi & Ojo, 2022; Adepoju & Balogun, 2024). This is supported by the significant correlation ($r = 0.624$) between AI integration and entrepreneurial readiness. High mean ratings for AI-related items ($M = 3.65–3.73$) demonstrate the increasing importance of tools such as digital design software, automated sewing machines, and e-commerce platforms in shaping 21st-century entrepreneurial skills. Interview data corroborated these findings, as instructors highlighted that students exposed to AI applications were more proactive in generating business ideas and demonstrated improved decision-making skills when simulating real-world enterprise scenarios. These insights suggest that integrating AI into the curriculum can act as a deliberate pedagogical strategy to stimulate entrepreneurial agency among fashion students (Okonkwo & Eze, 2021).

Second, the medium-to-strong correlation ($r = 0.571$) between exposure to AI and a focus on sustainable entrepreneurship shows how technology can change people's beliefs and actions towards eco-friendly fashion. In developing nations, fashion production has historically followed linear models that are marked by waste and overproduction. However, findings from surveys and interviews revealed that AI-enabled techniques, like predictive material usage, automated waste reduction, and 3D virtual prototyping, assist students in conceptualising sustainable fashion solutions that adhere to the principles of the circular economy (Bozic & Tomsic, 2022; Anwar et al., 2023). Teachers who were interviewed went on to say that having access to AI simulations raised students' awareness of recyclable design principles and sustainable material selections. These findings align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, demonstrating that AI-driven education can promote ethical and environmentally conscious entrepreneurship in the fashion sector.

Lastly, the study fills a known knowledge gap in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is still a dearth of empirical evidence relating the integration of AI with sustainable and entrepreneurial

outcomes in vocational education (Adebayo & Onuka, 2024). The triangulated results indicate that although AI greatly increases students' preparedness for sustainability and entrepreneurship, its full benefits are not fully realised due to a lack of qualified teachers, infrastructure constraints, and uneven access to cutting-edge AI tools. This backs calls for policy changes that promote inclusive and future-ready entrepreneurship education by extending digital innovation beyond STEM fields to creative and skill-based disciplines like fashion (Obi & Yusuf, 2024).

Conclusion

This study examined the connection between AI integration, sustainable orientation, and entrepreneurial readiness among Lagos State fashion students. The results show that incorporating AI technologies into the teaching of apparel and textiles not only prepares students for entrepreneurial endeavours but also cultivates values that are environmentally conscious. These findings have important implications for national economic diversification, youth empowerment, and vocational training. To maximise these benefits, institutional and policy investments in AI-driven pedagogy are necessary. To test causality and expand to rural areas, future research should employ experimental designs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following practical and policy-focused recommendations are made:

1. Schools that offer courses in fashion should update their curricula to incorporate AI-powered tools like digital marketing analytics, pattern simulation tools, CAD software, and virtual fitting systems.
2. To properly instruct students in digital design, smart textiles, and fashion business intelligence tools, lecturers and instructors should pursue professional development in cutting-edge AI technologies.
3. To expose students to cutting-edge innovations in the fashion industry, the Ministries of Education and Youth Empowerment should help fashion schools collaborate with AI-driven startups.
4. The government and pertinent NGOs should fund AI learning infrastructure for fashion schools, particularly in underprivileged areas, to guarantee fair access.
5. To promote experimentation with environmentally friendly, AI-guided production methods, schools should establish sustainability innovation labs within their clothing and textile departments.

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