Innovations

Impact of Digitalisation and Innovation on the Competitive Edge of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in the Fashion Industry in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examines the impact of digitalisation and innovation on the competitive edge of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in the fashion industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigates the effects of social media, digital payment, and online shopping on customer satisfaction, which is considered a key determinant of competitive advantage. The research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing primary data collected through a questionnaire administered to 84 SMEs in the fashion industry. The data is analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The results indicate that social media and online shopping have a statistically significant positive impact on customer satisfaction, suggesting their importance for enhancing competitiveness. However, digital payment did not have a significant effect in this study. The regression model exhibits a moderate correlation and explains approximately 22% of the variation in customer satisfaction. Based on the results, policy recommendations are proposed, including developing robust digital infrastructure, implementing capacity-building programs, facilitating widespread adoption of digital payment systems, enacting data privacy and security policies, and promoting a culture of innovation and digitalisation through industry associations and support organisations.*

Keywords: *Digitalisation, Innovation, Competitive Edge, Customer satisfaction, SMEs*

1 Introduction

Modernisation and technical advancements have caused a shift in the definition of competitive advantage throughout time (Amesho et al., 2022). According to Leonidou et al. (2020) and Amesho et al. (2022), a business's innovative capabilities are currently regarded as one of the most important instruments for advancement and continuous competitive advantage. Additionally, digitalisation is believed to be the foundation of the so-called fourth industrial revolution, a period of technological advancement that is changing practically every element of life, including business practices (Falentina et al., 2021). In the opinion of Li et al. (2020), organisations can enhance their competitive advantage and react to changing market conditions by leveraging technology and developing a strategic approach. Furthermore, it will help the companies boost their reputation, especially since it will be easier to provide high-quality goods or services, expand company ventures, and increase efficiency while maximising benefits (Knudsen et al., 2021). In a comparable vein, innovation is essential to modern organisations because it helps them identify, share, and use information to give them a competitive advantage over their rivals (Hoosain et al., 2020). In light of this, to facilitate the sharing of information management among employees inside the company, firms have made significant expenditures in actualising an information management capability (Rodrigues &Fanco, 2021; Amesho et al., 2022).

Notably, technology is vital for generating new sources of growth, raising productivity, and assisting workers and companies in transferring to and adapting to the new world. As a result, it is critical to utilise technology and acquire new skills and knowledge, without which future work will not be possible (Bulkina et al., 2022). Furthermore, Ohinokand Hunka (2023) claimed that digitalisation has turned into a crucial element influencing the competitiveness and organisational effectiveness of enterprises in the quickly evolving business climate of today. They further stated that businesses must adapt and take advantage of new digital opportunities as a result of the advancement of information technologies, the application of digital innovations, and modifications in customer behaviour. Besides, a lot of businesses are starting to view digitalisation as a strategic concern in the face of a turbulent and fiercely competitive business climate. Factually, adopting digital technology can greatly boost customer happiness, expedite procedures, raise productivity, and open up new development options, making the issue pertinent.

As organisations worldwide commence digital transformation, a piece of knowledge and insight into its capacities is vital to achieving a competitive edge as the future of continuous growth and competitive advantage in a business rests with using

digitalisation (Ohinok&Hunka, 2023; Kavitha, 2023), because it is enveloping a widespread of organisational functions, including manufacturing, customer services, human resources management, distribution, corporate governance and performance and sales. Additionally, business intelligence, corporate asset management, electronic commerce, and various other business operations methods are included in the digitalisation process (Kavitha, 2023). Consequently, companies of all sizes and across borders are investing heavily in digital initiatives to stay competitive and give maximum value to their clients because it provides data analytics and intelligence, which aids in developing stronger customer relationships (Druhova, 2021). Likewise, research indicates that automating and streamlining internal business processes inside an enterprise can boost productivity and profitability, cut expenses, expedite production, and dramatically lower errors (Ebrahim et al., 2021). These findings provide evidence for a positive view of the effects of digitalisation.

On top of that, globally and across industries, digital advancement is transforming value chains, markets, business models, and companies.Innovative concepts, newly launched start-ups, or established organisations engaged in different industries appear as new challengers to conventional business methods and models (Hangl, 2024). For instance, Amazon and eBay have put pressure on stationary trade. Airbnb has developed a digital business model to connect people with unused and available accommodation and those who need temporary accommodation via digital marketplaces. Also, the German Fidor Bank has jumped into the payment services industry with new business models, joining PayPal and Google Pay. It does this by fusing its expertise in digital processes and data monitoring with banking services. Factually, the emergence of novel technologies has led to the growth of fresh markets and companies have had to modify their operations to the new circumstances if they wanted to avoid being driven out of the market (Hangl, 2024).

Incidentally, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are not left out of the business environment equation. It should be noted that small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are included in the discussion of the business environment. In many instances, they serve as an essential informal social safety net by giving those impacted by external shocks a source of work because they constitute a substantial source of income and employment in many developing nations (Falentina, 2021). Nonetheless, their output is still lower than that of big businesses. Since the second half of the 1990s, there has been a global thrust of businesses, including SMEs, towards digitalisation - that is to use digital technologies such as smartphones and the internet. The primary force behind this upswing has been this digital innovation's rapid development and dissemination. According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU)(2020), about 40% of people worldwide have an

internet connection, and this percentage is still growing. It is anticipated that there will be over 50 billion internet-connected devices by 2022, up from approximately 42 billion in 2019 (Juniper Research 2021).Moreover, it is anticipated that the application of digital technology across all business domains will help not just larger companies but also smaller companies from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. Comparably, it has been contended that the Internet has evolved into a catalyst for innovation in small enterprises throughout various countries (Falentina, 2021).

Nevertheless, there is a deficiency in the literature regarding the connection between competitive advantage and digitalisation. It has been predicted that SMEs will use the Internet to boost their exports and become more competitive. Given that entrepreneurship emphasises effective production, this is an intriguing topic (Joensuu-Salo&Matalamaki, 2023). Therefore, this study will use Lagos, Nigeria as a case study to demonstrate how digitization and innovation impact SMEs' competitive advantage in emerging nations. Considering that Lagos is home to the greatest concentration of SMEs in Nigeria—7.3% of all SMEs in the nation—it is an ideal location for research on SMEs in the nation (Agusto& Co, 2023). Lagos, Nigeria's economic hub with an amazing 18.9 million internet users, tops the list of cities in Nigeria where the majority of the country's internet users reside (Akintaro, 2024). The State's high internet usage is largely due to its sophisticated infrastructure and standing as a commercial and tech hub. Lagos is a hub for digital activity since it is not only the most populated metropolis in Nigeria but also a mingling pot of cultures and industries (Akintaro, 2024). Therefore, this research will examine the impact of digitalisationand innovation on the performance of SMEs in the fashion industry using SMEs in Lagos State as a case study. In conclusion, social media, digital payments, online shopping, and customer satisfactionwill all be used as factors in this study to explore the aforementioned subject.The broad objective of this study is to investigate the impact of digitalisation and innovation on the competitive edge of SMEs in Lagos, Nigeria. The study specifically tries to determine the type of relationship that exists between social media, digital payments, online shopping, and customersatisfaction in SMEs in the fashion industry in Lagos, Nigeria.

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between social media and customer satisfactionin SMEs in the fashion industry in Lagos, Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between digital payments and customer satisfaction in SMEs in the fashion industry in Lagos, Nigeria.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between online shoppingand customer satisfaction in SMEs in the fashion industry in Lagos, Nigeria.

Literature Review

This section investigated prior scholarly viewpoints, models and opinions on digitalisation and innovation, and the degree to which it is related to competitive edge in small and medium-sized businesses.

Conceptual Review

To understand the perspective of literary works and the historical definitions of these terms, the concepts that made up the dependent and independent variables were examined.

Digitalisation

In the business world, digitalisation is viewed as a revolutionary process that helps companies embrace new business models. Businesses use this approach to replace outdated technologies with new ones that support model development, innovation, and service delivery (Joshi et al., 2021). Another way to describe it would be the use of digital technology by companies in their daily operations, which promotes connection between people and organisations (Lee et al., 2020; Gruia et al., 2020). According to Rivza et al. (2020), digitalisation is the process of transforming analogue information into digital information. This enables organisations to grow their operations, generate and take advantage of new opportunities, and become more competitive. Rapid adaptation to changes in the market and consumer preferences is one of the concepts' defining characteristics (Szopa&Cyplik, 2020). The digitalisation of SMEs presents opportunities for cost reduction, new product and service introduction, improved collaboration with other organisations, and expanded market reach (Bokša et al., 2020; Sijabat, 2022).

Businesses can utilisedigitalisation to handle data and preserve social relationships with clients (Sijabat, 2022). The term "digitalisation" also describes how businesses are continuing to use digital technology to automate corporate processes, optimise operations, and boost efficiency—all of which help businesses become more competitive (Garzoni et al., 2020). In the contemporary economy, Lukonga (2020) highlights the significance of technology, especially digital platforms.Through the use of digital platforms, business owners can increase profitability and overcome obstacles related to scale, opening up new markets, sourcing avenues, and networks (OECD, 2021). Simultaneously, digitalisation gives companies a more productive setting in which to grow their networks, which boosts their productivity and competitiveness (Lukonga, 2020).

Social Media

Given the constantly changing characteristics of these digital environments, the term "social media" has taken on many meanings and is still subject to interpretation; however, in general, it refers to online platforms that enable user interaction, including the production and dissemination of ideas, content, and information (Creevey et al., 2021). Due in large part to the speed at which information can be shared among people, these platforms have highlighted a disruption in the power dynamics between companies and customers, posing a serious threat to conventional branding theory and practice (Pantano, 2021). Social media interactions between customers and brands encourage innovation by giving them a greater say in the creation of new products and services (Sijabat, 2022).Likewise, according to Kucharczuk et al. (2022), social media (SM) is a type of electronic communication that enables users to form online communities in which they exchange ideas, information, messages, and other content including images and videos. Because social media is based on collaborative platforms, it facilitates and promotes online sharing, co-creation, discussion, and participation from individuals, groups, and organisations. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are a few of the well-known SM platforms. Based on a survey, McDonald's, Starbucks, Red Bull, KFC, and Coca-Cola are the top five businesses with the greatest number of social media followers (Bragg et al., 2020).

SM is frequently used to stay in touch with friends, build new ones, engage in conversation, and look for information and enjoyment (Kucharczuk et al., 2022). Food and beverage firms also manage thousands of social media profiles on the internet; in 2017, it was reported that the global cost of social media advertising was $35.98 billion, a 26% rise from the previous year (Bragg et al., 2020). These businesses can benefit from the expanding trend of SM platforms by using the popularity of SM to create new marketing strategies targeted at their desired demographic (Bragg et al., 2020). On Twitch, a more recent social media platform for live gaming broadcasts, brands advertise by supporting influencers, sponsoring tournaments, and placing merchandise on streams(Pollack et al., 2021; Kucharczuk et al., 2022).

Digital payment

Mobile phone-based digital payments include those made with NFC, QR codes, and OTP (one-time password, secret verification code) (Prihatinintias & Wipraganang, 2021). Formerly, mobile wallets, mobile commerce, and mobile acceptance were the three categories into which academics separated mobile payments. When mobile devices are used to provide electronic commerce directly to customers' hands through wireless technology, the term "mobile commerce" refers to this. Similarly, mobile payment acceptance is the process of incorporating cellular

devices (such as PDAs, smartphones, and tablets) into the system by converting them into either temporary or permanent hardware that enables retailers to take payments with credit or debit cards. For example, accepting payments with a credit or debit card. Also, customers can use a mobile wallet—a smartphone application—in place of credit or debit cards to make payments. Certain wallet services take advantage of proximity technology, including near communication, and are cloud-based, integrated into a device, or both (Prihatinintias & Wipraganang, 2021).

According to Purwanto (2021), digital payments can manage responsible financial management and real added value to help SME actors compete successfully worldwide. Since digital payments are a tool for making trustworthy and well-informed decisions, they are an indispensable part of modern living (Djakasaputra et al., 2021). The use of digital payments, suggested by Prahiawan et al. (2021), will assist businesspeople in managing their finances to meet a goal or target, specifically in generating large profits so that the company's performance improves. Additionally, these individuals will be able to recognise and react to changes in the economy, business climate, and finance, as well as make decisions that will result in creative and well-directed solutions for SMEs' financial performance and sustainability. Therefore, the use of digital payments has an effect on performance that can enhance or improve SMEs' financial performance (Rombe et al., 2021; Daud et al., 2021).

Online Shopping

Online shopping, also referred to as business-to-customer (B2C) sales and e-commerce, is the act of a customer making a purchase from a business over an online channel. Before making a purchase, customers may or may not look for information online (Le et al., 2022). One of the 21st century's rising technologies that planners need to pay close attention to is online purchasing. Customers now find online buying more convenient (Adibfar et al., 2022), and vendors are always working to make the online shopping experience even better for their patrons (Walmart, 2021). The emergence of new distribution channels has generated a structural upheaval that has influenced the whole retail industry, ushering in a new age for the sector (Gouveia&Mamede, 2022). The traditional counter has given way to extensive internet-based platforms in the classic sales industry. There are four categories of distribution channels, each with a distinct set of clients and behaviours. Shopping through physical storefronts is known as traditional channel shopping. Online shopping is known as e-commerce. Using various channels (PC, tablet, mobile) to shop is known as multichannel shopping. Engaging customers anywhere is known as omnichannel shopping (Bollwegg, 2020).

Customers can communicate with enterprises via digital channels such as social networks, at any time and from any location, according to the notion of the Omnichannel Sales Channel. Keeping in mind that consumer behaviour has changed dramatically (Bollweg, 2020) and that consumers now expect an integrated, seamless experience when making purchases, similar to what Omnichannel offers, as a result of the accessibility of digital technologies. In contrast to conventional sales and distribution channels, Omnichannel works in concert with other channels, obfuscating the distinctions between them and creating a world without walls or borders. Traditional retail establishments are also experiencing digitization (Gouveia&Mamede, 2022).

Competitive Edge

Competitive advantage, sometimes referred to as competitive edge, is the ability of a business to outperform rival businesses in the same industry or market under its unique qualities and assets (Nguyen &Khoa, 2020). According to Hindasah and Nuryakin (2020), every asset and capability is unique, rare, non-replaceable, and challenging for rivals to imitate, so, using its resources gives a company a sustained competitive advantage. A firm's competitive advantage is essential to its success in a cutthroat market. According to Andrés-Sánchez et al. (2022), a company's ability to effectively adopt a generic strategy is what gives it a competitive advantage. The phrase comes from a company's capacity to give its customers value that outweighs the costs of providing it, which is essentially where the term originated. Fred David once said, "Whatever a company does better than rival firms" is its competitive edge (Siregar, 2024), which is at the centre of a company's strategic policies - a fundamental component of strategic management despite being challenging to measure (Nayak et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the ability of SMEs to predict globalisation is the main factor contributing to their competitive advantage. Measures of innovation, global orientation, and dynamic capacities are used to quantify their competitive advantage (Kano et al., 2022). Moreover, as innovation and a global mindset have a significant impact on SMEs' ability to compete in the global market, they should be given top priority (Kano et al., 2022). Additionally, in the case of SMEs, chance and entrepreneurship are essential for businesses to get a competitive edge, as these two factors are known to be the main drivers of the business's prosperity (Siregar, 2024).

Also, an enterprise’s emotional competencies include marketing, human resource growth and development, and firm management. Notably, implementing strategies that make use of a variety of the enterprise's resources results in a competitive advantage because a company's ability to compete is based on its ability to give

customers benefits over rivals by supplying things with greater value (Suganda&Rohman, 2023). Comparably, some of the indicators used to evaluate a competitive advantage include the service/product's distinctiveness, excellence, and competitive pricing (Hossain, 2022). A service/product is considered distinct when it combines client preferences with creative value (Azeem, 2021). A company's service/product quality is determined by the quality of its designs (Clauss, 2021), and the enterprise's ability to modify the price of its services/products to the average price in the market is price competitiveness (Zameer, 2021). These indicators combined provide a platform for a competitive advantage (Suganda&Rohman, 2023).

Customer Satisfaction

A person's happiness or dissatisfaction with a product's performance or perceived outcomes to their expectations is known as customer satisfaction (Irawana et al., 2023). According to Irawana et al. (2023), customers are either satisfied or extremely satisfied if the performance or experience meets or is above their expectations. If it does not meet expectations, they are unhappy. Ginting et al. (2023) state that meeting the requirements, wants, and expectations of customers for a product is a prerequisite for achieving customer satisfaction. They went on to say that what keeps customers using a product over time, keeping them loyal, and encouraging them to recommend it to others is customer satisfaction. According to Irawana et al. (2023), customer satisfaction may also be defined as an assessment conducted after a purchase in which the performance of the substitute product or service selected is thought to have met or surpassed pre-buy expectations. According to their claims, a company's ability to improve its marketing success depends in large part on its ability to satisfy its customers, who are therefore more likely to make more frequent purchases. Furthermore, an "emotional (feeling) state that arises from their assessment of the difference between their expectations and service provider's performance" is how Bakti et al. (2020) characterised customer satisfaction. According to this definition, customer contentment is the state that a client attains after assessing how well a product or service meets their expectations.

Moreover, one of the metrics used to gauge customer satisfaction is (1) product/service quality -the degree to which online retailers can satisfy customers with their purchases of goods or services. (2) Price - the degree of satisfaction with the costs and savings offered by Internet retailers. (3) Convenience refers to how satisfied customers are with the ease with which they may shop online (Ginting, 2023). Furthermore, Phi &Huong (2023) supported the idea that a company's marketing initiatives lead to customer satisfaction, which measures consumers' perceptions of after-sale services after making a purchase.Companies need to know

what their clients expect from them because offering them extraordinary values will make them happier (Al-Ahaddi et al., 2022). According to Alanazi and Alenazi (2023), peers' perceptions of customer satisfaction might be influenced by their interactions with consumers. The expectations of the customer's emotional state that arose in light of the discrepancy between his/her expectations and actual performance are referred to in this context as perceived customer satisfaction (Alanazi&Alenazi, 2023)

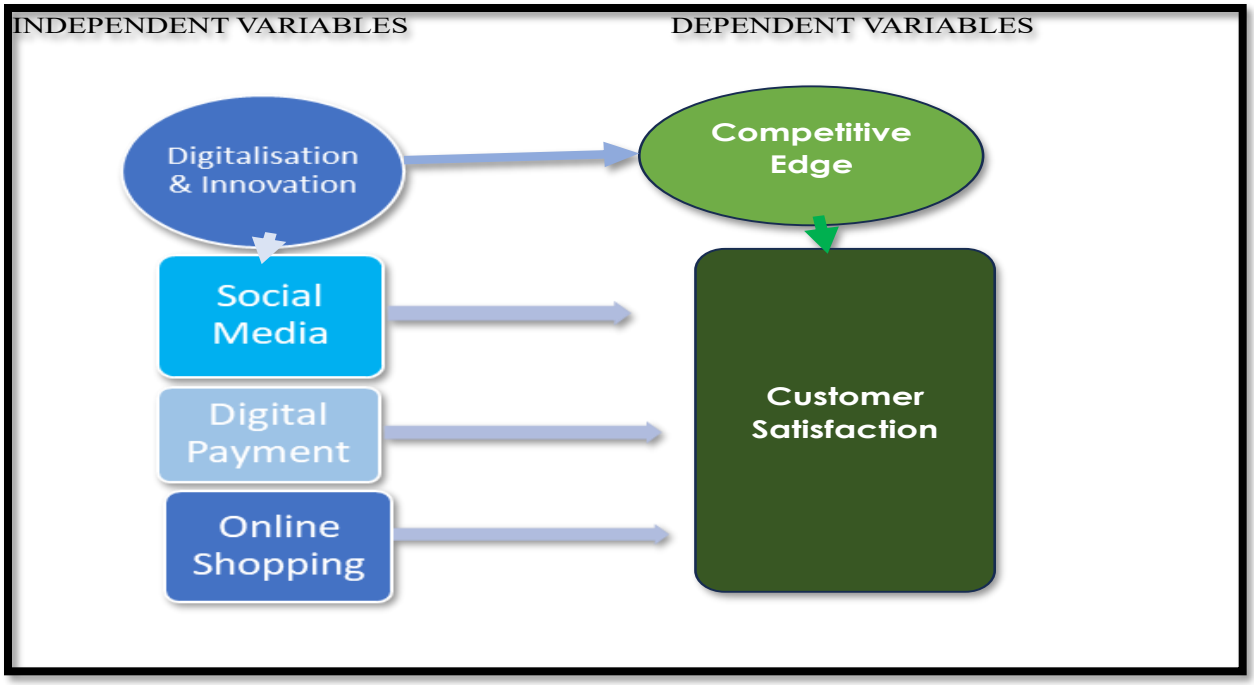

Figure 1. Conceptual Model (Researcher, 2024)

Theoretical Framework of Digitalisation and Innovation

The Resources-Based View (RBV)

Due to a fast-paced environment, firms are currently dealing with higher degrees of uncertainty and complexity, making it harder to gain and hold onto a sustainable competitive edge, even for short periods (Abu Hasan, 2022). Embracing the ongoing industrial revolution—primarily digital—and adjusting to technological improvements is one of the biggest difficulties facing organisations today (Azmi et al. 2020). This is particularly true for companies that are eager to expand internationally to gain a larger piece of the global market but were not born digital or global (Abu Hasan, 2022). According to Mahani and Suraiya (2019), digital transformation is an essential and economical strategy for these companies to obtain a competitive advantage in the global market.Expanding into new overseas markets through e-commerce or digital export is one of the most efficient ways to accomplish this goal

(Pergelova et al., 2019). Research on strategic management has shown that companies can use both intangible and tangible resources to their advantage and obtain a competitive edge (Abu Hasan, 2022). On the other hand, the extent to which enterprises' resources and capabilities foster competitive advantages through the adoption of digital technology has not yet been made clear by the literature on strategic management (Mahani&Suraiya, 2019). Remarkably, scholars claim that embedded technology and innovation capabilities are rapidly influencing small- and medium-sized enterprises' ability to remain sustainable (Zalina et al., 2016).

According to Barney (1991) and Warnier et al. (2013), the Resource-Based View Theory (RBV) acknowledges the significance of individual strategies, firm resources, and particular internal characteristics as firm resources in improving a business's performance and sustainability. Tomaximise their economic value, the company's strategic objectives are to build and deploy a wide portfolio of valuable, unique, inimitable, and irreplaceable resources (VRIN) (Warnier et al., 2013). The framework is ideal for putting into practice integrated strategies that concurrently address the external and internal viewpoints on important business choices. Particularly, scholars claim that the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to innovate, raise finance, network, and use technology is a prerequisite for their survival (Zalina et al., 2016; Mahani&Suraiya, 2019). According to RBV, companies that have and make use of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and competencies can improve their competitive advantages in areas like cost, quality, or similar differentiating qualities. The goal of the RBV is to comprehend the connections between various resources and the way those connections might be leveraged to obtain a competitive edge (Abu Hasan, 2022).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

According to Davis (1989), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) posits that customers' behavioural intention to use a technology is influenced by their judgements of its ease of use and utility. TAM is the acronym for the model designed to evaluate users' adoption of information technologies while conducting business. It investigates how users' perceptions of the usefulness and simplicity of these technologies affect their intention to use them (Askoy&Semiz, 2020). Perceived utility and perceived ease of use are thus the two dimensions covered by the model.The definition of perceived ease of use is "the extent to which a person believes that using the system will be free of effort," while perceived usefulness is "the extent to which a person perceives that using the network will enhance his or her performance" (Venkatesh& Davis, 2000). Several studies have applied TAM for various purposes, including the adoption of ICT systems (Venkatesh& Davis, 2000), users' acceptance of IoT technologies (Gao & Bai, 2014; Singh &Ramakrishnan, 2017), social media usage (Rauniar et al, 2014), acceptance of mobile library applications

(Rafique et al., 2020), e-learning social media (Peng & Hwang, 2021), and acceptance of smart mirrors (Aksoy&Semiz, 2020; Park & Kim, 2021; Volz et al., 2022; Alanazi&Alenazi, 2023).

Resource Orchestration Theory

The fundamental tenet of resource orchestration theory, a prominent theory in strategic management research, is to stress resource allocation, integration, and utilisation as well as how an enterprise's capabilities and resources are crucial to creating a sustainable competitive advantage (Sirmon et al., 2011; Sirmon et al., 2007). The digital platform, first and foremost, is the enterprise's external resource pool. Digital Platform Capability (DPC) stands for the enterprise's capacity to integrate platform resources, which helps integrate important shared knowledge (Mikalef&Pateli, 2017; Gonzalez &Melo, 2018). Organisations can enhance their ability to adapt to dynamic market conditions and increase the success rate of their innovation endeavours by streamlining, organising, and employing their internal information resource flow (Nambisan, 2017; Warner &Wäger, 2019). Similarly, the technical features and architecture of digital platforms facilitate resource reorganisation for businesses. Enterprises with strong DPC may configure, arrange, and coordinate platform resources more easily thanks to the platform's modularization, standardisation, and openness (Cenamor et al., 2019). This allows for the creation of novel resource combinations and fosters company innovation. Lastly, according to Ordaniniand Pol (2001), the digital platform fosters an organisational climate that allows for flexible subject cooperation and is advantageous for enterprise value co-creation (Lavie, 2007). Value co-creation simultaneously links the relationship between DPC and Innovation performance (IP) by enabling firms to integrate and utilise platform resources. In summary, we think that value co-creation plays a significant role in this connection and that DPC is a major element affecting IP based on resource orchestration theory (Hong et al., 2022).

Empirical Review

This section summarised prior research on the topic of "digitalisation and innovation and competitive edge," discussing significant, comprehensive, and recent studies related to it. It also supported the current investigation by summarising prior research on the issues that seem to be resolved and remain open.

Lukonga (2020) conducted a study on the digitalisation of business practices in 21 Middle Eastern and North African countries, as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAP). The study concluded that digital technology can increase productivity and accelerate the integration of businesses into the digital economy. According to

Lukonga (2020), MSMEs need to reevaluate their development strategies and give business digitalisation top priority if they are to become effective engines for equitable growth. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, big data, and the Internet of Things can all lower expenses and operating costs while boosting productivity and easing cross-border transactions.Likewise, Shettima& Sharma (2020) used primary and secondary data to investigate the effects of digitalisation on SMEs, and they employed chi-square testing to verify their hypotheses. According to their research, digitalisation significantly affects SMEs in Nigeria by automating processes and products, which raises output and quality.

Also, Additionally, Prihatiningtias&Wipraganang (2021) investigated how long-term use of mobile payment apps affected SME performance during the COVID-19 outbreak in terms of non-financial performance. Identification of a sample of SMEs in Malang, Indonesia was done using a quantitative technique. The SME sample's questionnaire distributions provided the data. The results of their analysis using SPSS 21 indicated a connection between SMEs' non-financial performance during the COVID-19 pandemic and their continuous use of cellular payments. In the same vein, Sasidharan& Reddy (2021) looked into how digital infrastructure affected how Indian manufacturing companies participated in the global value chain (GVC). A comprehensive, firm-level, disproportionate panel of 4,875 manufacturing firms from the previous 20 years was used to investigate the relationship between digitalisation and GVCs. First, the growing significance of digital infrastructure in the Indian context was explained, and the relationship between digitalisation and GVCs was then empirically examined. Using a logit model, it is discovered that digitalisation has a favourable and significant impact on businesses' participation in GVC. Similarly, Mokokeng& Tan (2021) investigated the moderating impacts of the e-commerce experience by examining the influence of factors related to online purchasing on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Structural equation modelling analysis was performed on 287 completed replies. The findings show that factors such as product delivery, perceived security, information quality, and product variety all affect how satisfied customers are with their online shopping experiences.

In parallel, in the UK hotel industry, Tajvidi&Karami (2021) looked into how social media affects business performance and how marketing capabilities play a mediating role. A structural equation modelling approach has been used in this study to analyse the data. A mail survey was used to gather survey data from a sample of 384 UK hotels. The data analysis's findings show a strong and favourable correlation between social media use and business success. The results demonstrated that the relationship between social media use and business performance is favourably and considerably mediated by marketing competencies,

specifically branding and innovation. Comparably, Awindja&Fatoki (2021) looked into how the expansion of SMEs in Nairobi CBD was impacted by economic digitisation. A random sample of 300 SMEs was chosen from among the 1000 SMEs who had officially registered in the study area. The data collection tool utilised was the questionnaire. Using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24, a regression analysis was performed to ascertain the significance of the association between the dependent and independent variables. According to the survey, digital financial services had a big role in fostering the expansion of SMEs in Kenya. Conversely, Druhova and colleagues (2021) investigated how digitalisation has affected the financial sector. The study's conclusions demonstrated that digitalisation had a detrimental effect on the indicators of studied banking activities. Higher Internet usage for payments has been linked to worse returns on financial assets and a higher proportion of problem assets in portfolios of nations. Similarly, Dolega et al. (2021) used unique data collected over 12 months from a major online shop to investigate the effects of social media marketing on retail website traffic, orders, and sales. Important discoveries showed that while social media increases web traffic, it has no discernible effect on product orders or sale revenue.

In contrast, Hasan et al. (2022) looked at how crucial it is for SMEs to use digital technology in their business operations. The results demonstrated that the use of technology will assist bridge the productivity gap between SMEs and large firms by expanding capacity and capability for increased competitiveness and innovation, which will increase long-term productivity and sustainability. Also, Hajar et al. (2022) looked at the mediation effect of customer loyalty and happiness to assess the influence of value innovation on firm performance and long-term growth. The results of the study provided empirical validation for the theoretical research model, demonstrating the significance of the value innovation method in attaining long-term growth and company success through the enhancement of customer happiness and loyalty. While Daud et al. (2022) used quantitative approaches and data analysis techniques based on SEM using Smart PLS 3.0 software to examine the impact of digital finance, digital marketing, and digital payment variables on finance performance. In the Indonesian province of Banten, questionnaires were sent to SME respondents using the snowball sampling technique. The data analysis's findings demonstrated that digital finance significantly and favourably impacted financial performance.

Furthermore, Sijabat (2022) also looked into how knowledge management techniques and company digitalisation affected MSMEs' performance. Four hypotheses were tested using a structural equation model based on primary data collected from 95 entrepreneurs who were involved in MSMEs. According to this

study, digitalisation significantly and favourably affects MSMEs' company performance and knowledge management procedures. These results suggested that Indonesian MSMEs should do more research into the possible advantages of digitization. In the same way, Alwan & Alshurideh (2022) looked at how digital marketing affected consumer happiness as well as value creation. This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the proposed model that was hypothesised, using a survey questionnaire to gather data from a sample of Jordanian telecom companies' customers. Using 315 genuine and fully returned questionnaires, the research analysed the data to evaluate the hypothesised statements and ran the necessary analysis processes using the PLS-SEM technique. The findings demonstrated that digital marketing has a major and advantageous impact on customer satisfaction and value development.

Likewise, Shabani et al. (2022) used customer loyalty and the SERVQUAL model (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) to quantify the impact of digitalisation on service quality. The goals were attained using a quantitative approach and a structured questionnaire; 400 customers of Kosovo banks made up the research sample. Based on the OLS model, the results indicated that digitalisation had a beneficial impact on customer loyalty and service quality. While Awadhi and Obeidat (2022) investigated the relationships among customer satisfaction, customer experience, and customer expectations in the context of the United Arab Emirates' digital telecom solution. The study employed a quantitative data analysis approach and a positivist philosophical viewpoint to sample 130 customers who use the digital solution provided by the UAE telecom industry. Regardless of generational differences, the study found a strong correlation between customer expectations and experiences and the level of satisfaction that people in the United Arab Emirates have from using or engaging with digital solutions in the telecommunications sector. In a similar vein, Khalayleh & Al-Hawary (2022) investigated how Jordan's five-star hotels' marketing effectiveness was affected by their digital content marketing mix. Customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and recruiting new consumers were the aspects of marketing performance, while digital marketing database, social media platforms, digital pricing, and digital advertising were the elements of the marketing mix for digital content. The study population consisted of patrons of Jordanian five-star hotels, from which a suitable sample of (294) patrons was drawn. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was utilised to analyse the study's data. According to the study's findings, Jordan's five-star hotels' marketing performance was positively impacted by every component of the marketing mix for digital content.

Meanwhile, Alanazi&Alenazi (2023) investigated how smart fashion mirror use affected customers' perceptions of satisfaction in retail fashion establishments. They collected information from a sample of retailers' fashion stores using a questionnaire. The results, which were explained using IBM SPSS AMOS software, show that the retailers' intention to use smart fashion mirrors was significantly impacted by their perception of the mirrors' usefulness and ease of use. This, in turn, had a significant impact on their perception of customer satisfaction. Similarly, Alsedrah (2023) looked into how American SMEs' performance has been impacted by the digitalisation of business. The information was gathered via a survey of SME owners in the United States. The success of the SME was assessed using critical performance indicators such as market share, profitability, and revenue growth. After the data were examined, it was evident that digitalisation components and the success of SMEs were highly correlated. Additionally, Kádárová et al. (2023) used the statistics programme EViews 12 to study how digitization affected the performance of SMEs. 135 observations from 27 European nations were gathered over a five-year period to make up the dataset. The hypothesis are tested using a linear regression model, which shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results of this study showed that digitalisation in European SMEs is greatly accelerated by the integration of digital technologies and digital intensity, which has a favourable effect on performance.

Furthermore, Joensuu-Salo & Matalamaki (2023) looked at how digital capability affected the expansion and success of the company. 242 Finnish SME owner-managers provided the data, which were then evaluated using structural equation modelling. The findings indicate that smaller businesses struggle with performance metrics and have less digital capacity than larger SMEs. Digital competence can accelerate the process of creating opportunities and help a business survive in the face of competition. It is positively correlated with both firm performance and firm growth. In addition, Ohinok & Hunka (2023) investigated how digitization affects an organization's competitiveness and efficacy in the contemporary corporate environment. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in the technique. The results showed that there is room for innovation in digital technology, as well as improvements in operational processes and enhanced agility. Also, Weragoda et al. (2023) looked at how customer awareness was affected by personalised marketing, interactive marketing, and comment reviews. One hundred workers of A & G Enterprises, a SMEs in the mobile phone industry, participated in a survey. The results show that, in comparison to customisation, interactive marketing and comment reviews have a bigger impact on customer awareness.

Moreover, Pathak et al. (2023) looked into how online promotion affected the growth of the retail banking sector. The findings demonstrate that retail banks with an online presence can outperform their competitors by providing innovative digital banking services and accommodating shifting consumer preferences.In the same line, Shafiq et al. (2023) investigated how media marketing affects the growth of customer trust and happiness in Pakistan by using the mediating role of consumer engagement. The solution to this issue was a quantitative investigation. A questionnaire was used to collect the primary data for the study from a sample of approximately 310 people, including students, business executives, employees of the government, and workers in the private sector. Demographics, reliability, descriptive statistics, and correlation are among the empirical statistics that are extracted using SPSS by the suggested framework under investigation. Confirmatory Factor Analysis evaluated the model's precision and efficacy, as well as the SEM-Structured Equation Model approach used with SmartPLS 4 to evaluate the proposed model. The results showed that social media marketing, incentives, brand perception, electronic word-of-mouth, customer engagement, customer trust, and customer happiness were all significantly positively correlated. However, when Ilham et al. (2023) looked at how PT. Alunicorn's customers made decisions about what to buy, they found contradictory information. SEM AMOS 23 was the analytical method employed in this study, which involved interviewing 249 individuals. The results demonstrated that while digital marketing and product quality positively influence customer satisfaction and purchase decisions, service quality did not affect these outcomes.

In a comparable direction, Hangl (2024) investigated how digitalisation affected Austrian traded prime market companies' ability to succeed in business. The necessary data for this study was acquired by a thorough investigation of all the organisations' annual reports that were part of the analysis. There was no relationship found between software investment and financial success across all businesses' regression analyses. Nevertheless, the relationship between software investments and financial success in both industries was clear when the regression models were later computed separately for financial and non-financial businesses.In addition Wang and Prajogo (2024) investigated the impact of supply chain digitalisation on firms' performance by facilitating the development of supply chain agility and innovative capability. Design, procedure, and strategy - To validate the models, they employed structural equation modelling, using a dataset of 271 UAE-based businesses. To evaluate the study hypotheses, analyses of mediation and moderation were carried out. The findings indicate that supply chain digitalisation and a company's performance are positively correlated, with supply chain agility and innovation capability acting as full mediators.

Literature Gap

This study has added to the body of knowledge in the terrace of scope and methodological ground. Even though Nigeria's fashion industry has become a viable enterprise (Statista, 2023; Research & Markets, 2023), which has birthed many small and medium-scale enterprises, there is insufficient information and research on it. The majority of recent literature concentrated on other industries, like the banking, food, agricultural, service and manufacturing sectors (Ikon&Igwedinmah, 2022; Izuogu et al., 2023; Adeyinka, 2023). Also, little literature is available on digitalisation and developing a competitive edge in the fashion industry in developing countries such as Nigeria. Research in this area has been focused on large-scale enterprises such as the banking and energy sectors and the effect of digitalisation (Nwaiwu, 2021; Samuel-Ogbu, 2022; Agboola et al., 2019; Adefolu&Murtadho, 2020;). When it comes to the conceptual problems identified by empirical evaluations, several research has concentrated on the connection between cloud computing, social media, customer loyalty and productivity (Ikon & Igwedinmah, 2022; Onyijen et al., 2019; Fajobi, 2023; Solo-Anaeto et al., 2017; Idonedo et al., 2023; Khairuddin & Olowosuyi, 2020). Moreover, the combination of the concepts of online shopping, digital payment, social media and customer satisfaction has not been studied, this study concentrates on the relationship between the variables and customer satisfaction contains innovation as a mediating variable in a single study. Furthermore, the theories utilized in previous studies in Nigeria did not capture the Research Orchestration Theory and Technological Adaption Model, which are connected to this study. These theories will directly explain the relationships between digitalisation and its effect on competitive edge in SMEs.

Methodology

"Small and medium business owners or managers" in Lagos State, Nigeria's Victoria Island commercial district make up the study's participant pool. This region was chosen due to its unparalleled economic significance throughout the nation; it serves as Nigeria's social and economic centre, and—above all—the simplicity of survey distribution and collection was taken into account. The research challenge and related questions served as the foundation for the survey's design. The decision was made to utilise a purposive sampling technique due to its high population representation. There are 8,689 SMEs in Lagos overall (NBS, 2017) and about 107 in Victoria Island, Lagos' fashion industry. Nonetheless, 84 is the intended sample size for this investigation. The sample size calculation by Taro Yamane (1967) was necessary for these computations. The SPSS statistical software will be utilised for the analysis of primary data obtained via a questionnaire tailored to the study's goal. To make sure the study instrument measured the things it was supposed to measure, its

validity was examined. Additionally, the research instrument's dependability test was run; this test measures internal consistency. The internal consistency test revealed that the total Cronbach coefficient for the entire questionnaire was (α) = 0.850, with the lowest being 0.775 and the highest being 0.851. Gefen, Straub, and Boudreau (2000) concluded with confidence that the instrument is highly reliable because Cronbach's alpha is greater than the acceptable level of 0.70, which is why the scales were deemed reliable based on the results of the researcher's pre-test. Cronbach's alpha was also greater than the 0.84 recommended by Nunnally (1970).

Model specification

This approach, inspired by Zhao et al (2024), allows us to explore how digitalisation and innovation affect SMEs' competitive edge in Lagos, Nigeria. Accordingly, the study defined and estimated the following regression model to elucidate these dynamics.

$CS = f(SM, DPP, OS)$ .....(1)

Hence, the regression model is;

$CS_{jt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SM_{j,t} + \beta_2 DPP_{j,t} + \beta_3 CS_{j,t} + \mu_0$.....(2)

Where:

SM = Social Media

DPP = Digital Payment

OS = Online Shopping

CS = Customer satisfaction

β_1-β_3= Beta coefficient that measures the sensitivity of variable X to change in variable Y(CS)

β_0 = constant

μ_0 = error term

Scope of the study

The study examined the impact of digitalisation and innovation on the competitive edge of Nigerian SMEs in the Fashion Industry. The study's target population consisted of 107 SMEs in Victoria Island, Lagos State. The sample size for the study was 84 listed fashion houses at the Lagos Fashion Show.

Findings and Discussions

The result in Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for four variables: customer satisfaction, social media, digital payment, and online shopping. The data was collected from 84 observations. Customer satisfaction had a mean of 4.56 on a scale from 3 to 5, with a standard deviation of 0.556, indicating that most responses were fairly high and clustered around the mean. Online shopping had a similar mean of 4.53 with a standard deviation of 0.620. Social media and digital payment had slightly lower means of 4.28 and 4.23, respectively. However, their standard deviations of 0.895 and 0.854 were higher, suggesting more variability in the responses for these variables compared to customer satisfaction and online shopping. The minimum value across all variables was 1, while the maximum value was 5. These statistics are based on the author's computations from data collected in 2023.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer satisfaction	84	3	5	4.56	.556
Social media	84	1	5	4.28	.895
Digital Payment	84	1	5	4.23	.854
Online Shopping	84	3	5	4.53	.620

Source: Author's computation, 2024

The regression analysis in Table 2 examined the impact of social media, digital payment, and online shopping on Customer satisfaction. The constant term of 2.131 with a p-value of 0.001 indicates a significant baseline value for the dependent variable when all the independent variables are zero. The result showed that social media and online shopping both had positive and statistically significant coefficients of 0.180 (p=0.005) and 0.263 (p=0.005), respectively. This suggests that increases in social media usage and online shopping activities are associated with higher values of customer satisfaction. However, the coefficient of digital payment (0.101) was not statistically significant at the 5% level (p=0.302), implying that digital payment did not have a significant impact on the dependent variable in this model.

The regression diagnostics show a moderate correlation (R=0.471) between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R-squared value of 0.221 indicates that approximately 22.1% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables included in the model. The adjusted R-squared of 0.192 accounts for the number of predictors in the model. The F-statistic of 7.587 with a p-value of 0.000 suggests that the overall model is statistically significant.

Table 2: Regression Result

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
(Constant)	2.131	.614	3.468	.001
Social media	.180	.063	2.869	.005
Digital Payment	.101	.097	1.040	.302
Online Shopping	.263	.090	2.916	.005
Regression Diagnostics				
Correlation (R)	.471			
R-squared	.221			
Adjusted R-squared	.192			
Std. Error of the Estimate	.499			
F-statistic	7.587			
Prob(F-statistic)	.000			

Source: SPSS Output from Author's Computation using the original Data

The regression results indicate that social media and online shopping have a significant positive impact on the dependent variable, which based on the context, is likely related to customer satisfaction, firm performance, or competitive advantage. This aligns with several studies in the empirical review that highlight the positive effects of social media and online shopping on business outcomes. For instance, Tajvidi&Karami (2021) found that social media usage positively impacts business performance in the UK hotel industry, mediated by marketing capabilities. Mokokeng& Tan (2021) also showed that factors like product delivery, security, information quality, and product variety in online shopping influence customer satisfaction.

However, the insignificant coefficient for digital payment is somewhat contradictory to findings from other studies. Prihatiningtias & Wipraganang (2021) found that long-term use of mobile payment apps positively affected SME non-financial performance during COVID-19. Daud et al. (2022) also reported that digital payment had a significant positive effect on financial performance of SMEs in Indonesia. This discrepancy could be due to contextual differences, such as the specific industry studied or the level of adoption and integration of digital payment systems in the sample.

The moderate correlationsuggests that while the independent variables explain a reasonable portion of the variation in the dependent variable, there are likely other important factors not included in the model. This is consistent with the literature gap identified, which notes that previous studies have often focused on a subset of the variables considered here, such as cloud computing, social media, or customer loyalty (Ikon&Igwedinmah, 2022; Onyijen et al., 2019; Fajobi, 2023).

The significant F-statistic indicates that the overall model is valid and the independent variables collectively have a significant impact on the dependent variable. This reinforces the importance of digitalisation and innovation for SMEs, as emphasized by studies like Lukonga (2020), which argued that SMEs need to prioritize business digitalisation to become effective engines for equitable growth.Several studies in the review, such as Hasan et al. (2022), Hajar et al. (2022), and Sijabat (2022), have also highlighted the positive impact of digitalisation on SME performance, productivity, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. The regression results align with this broader narrative, underscoring the need for SMEs, particularly in the fashion industry, to embrace digitalisation and leverage tools like social media and online shopping to gain a competitive edge.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This study has investigated the impact of digitalisation and innovation factors, specifically social media, digital payment, and online shopping, on the competitive edge of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in the fashion industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. The regression analysis revealed that social media and online shopping have a significant positive effect, while digital payment did not have a statistically significant impact. These findings corroborate and extend previous research on the role of digitalisation in fostering business performance, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage.

The positive influence of social media and online shopping underscores the importance of these digital tools for SMEs in the fashion industry. Social media platforms enable effective marketing, branding, and customer engagement, while online shopping provides a convenient and accessible sales channel. SMEs that leverage these technologies can enhance their visibility, reach, and customer experience, thereby gaining a competitive edge over their peers. However, the insignificant effect of digital payment systems highlights the need for further adoption and integration of such technologies within the industry. Based on these findings, several policy recommendations can be proposed. Firstly, the government should prioritize the development of a robust digital infrastructure, including reliable internet connectivity and affordable access to digital technologies. This will create an enabling environment for SMEs to embrace digitalisation effectively.

Secondly, capacity-building programs should be implemented to equip SME owners and employees with the necessary digital skills and knowledge to leverage social media, online shopping, and digital payment systems.

Furthermore, the government should collaborate with financial institutions and fintech companies to facilitate the widespread adoption of digital payment systems among SMEs and consumers. This could involve incentives, educational campaigns, and the development of secure and user-friendly digital payment platforms tailored to the needs of the fashion industry. Additionally, policies should be enacted to protect consumer data privacy and ensure the security of online transactions, fostering trust and confidence in digital systems. Also, industry associations and entrepreneurship support organizations should play a proactive role in promoting digitalisation and innovation among SMEs in the fashion industry. This could involve organizing workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs, as well as facilitating knowledge-sharing and best practices among industry players. By fostering a culture of innovation and digitalisation, SMEs in the fashion industry can better adapt to the evolving business landscape and maintain a competitive edge in the long run.

Contributions to knowledge and Suggestions for Further Studies

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. In the first instance, it provides empirical evidence on the impact of digitalisation and innovation factors on the competitive edge of SMEs in the fashion industry, a sector that has been under-researched in this context. By examining the effects of social media, digital payment, and online shopping, the study offers insights into the specific digital tools and platforms that can drive competitiveness for fashion SMEs. Furthermore, the inclusion of customer satisfaction as the dependent variable adds a valuable dimension to understanding the mechanisms through which digitalisation influences business outcomes. Equally, the study contributes methodologically by integrating various constructs – social media, digital payment, online shopping, and customer satisfaction – into a single model. Previous research has often focused on subsets of these variables, limiting a holistic understanding of their interplay. By employing regression analysis, the study provides a quantitative assessment of the relative importance of each factor, informing strategic decision-making for SMEs in the fashion industry.

Therefore, future research could explore the mediating or moderating effects of variables such as entrepreneurial orientation, organizational culture, or market conditions on the relationship between digitalisation and competitive edge. Additionally, a qualitative approach, such as case studies or in-depth interviews, could provide deeper insights into the challenges, opportunities, and best practices associated with the adoption and effective utilization of digital technologies in the

fashion industry. Furthermore, future studies could expand the scope beyond Lagos State to gain a broader understanding of the impact of digitalisation on fashion SMEs across different regions or countries. Cross-cultural comparisons could also be valuable in identifying variations in the adoption and effectiveness of digital tools across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

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