



**TRADITION, LANGUAGE, AND HERITAGE IN THE MARKETPLACE:
EXPLORING THE CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF
BRAND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PLS-SEM**

Oloruntoba OYEDELE

Department of Accounting Science

Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, South Africa

oyedeoloruntobar@gmail.com

Abstract

In increasingly multicultural marketplaces, understanding how culture shapes consumer-brand relationships has become essential for marketers and policymakers. This study investigates the influence of traditional values, language affinity, and cultural heritage on brand engagement using a structural model estimated through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Survey data were collected from 612 respondents across three culturally rich urban regions, focusing on consumer perceptions related to cultural identity, emotional branding, and heritage resonance. The results reveal that tradition and cultural heritage positively influence emotional and cognitive brand engagement, with language serving as a critical mediating mechanism that enhances perceived authenticity and trust. Moreover, the model exhibits strong predictive power, with significant path coefficients and high explanatory variance across latent constructs. These findings suggest that integrating cultural elements into brand communication may foster deeper consumer loyalty and market legitimacy. Policy implications highlight the need for cultural preservation strategies in branding, including multilingual campaigns and heritage-oriented brand narratives. It is recommended that firms adopt culturally intelligent marketing strategies and engage local cultural custodians to co-create authentic brand identities.

Keywords: *Cultural Branding, Heritage Marketing, Brand Engagement, Language Affinity, Tradition, PLS-SEM*

JEL Codes: M31, Z10, D12, L66

1. Introduction

In today's globalized yet increasingly localized marketplace, cultural elements such as tradition, language, and heritage are gaining renewed significance in shaping consumer perceptions and behavior. While the growth of digital platforms has allowed for widespread market reach, it has also intensified the demand for culturally resonant branding that reflects consumers' socio-cultural identity. As consumers become more discerning, brand engagement is no longer solely a function of product attributes or price competitiveness; instead, it is increasingly influenced by cultural narratives, ethnic identity, and symbolic values embedded in brand communication (Askegaard & Linnet, 2021; Liu et al., 2022). These developments underscore the imperative for both academics and practitioners to re-examine the cultural determinants of consumer-brand relationships in ethnically diverse settings such as Nigeria, where over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages coexist within a single national market (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021).

Tradition plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer preferences and consumption rituals, particularly in societies where communal values and ancestral ties remain salient. In Nigeria, traditional values continue to influence not only lifestyle but also purchasing decisions across urban and rural regions. For example, cultural festivals such as the Osun-Osogbo Festival, Argungu Fishing Festival, and New Yam Festivals serve as platforms for brand activation and localized marketing. Traditional beliefs serve as cognitive and emotional reference points, often guiding brand attachment and loyalty (de Almeida et al., 2021). Nigerian consumers frequently associate authenticity and trust with products or services that honor communal traditions, thereby reinforcing the commercial value of indigenous knowledge systems (Mohd Yusof et al., 2023).

Language is another critical but often underexplored cultural dimension in consumer research. In Nigeria's multilingual context, where English serves as the official language but Pidgin English and indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo dominate everyday communication, linguistic alignment in branding can significantly impact consumer reception. Brands that incorporate local languages in their advertising and packaging often trigger affective responses that enhance perceived authenticity and trust (Moon & Park, 2022). Studies show that Nigerian consumers respond more positively to culturally contextualized brand messages, particularly in radio and outdoor advertising campaigns that reflect their linguistic identities (Zhou & Wong, 2020; Eze & Eze, 2023).

Heritage, in its material and immaterial forms, offers a powerful narrative for branding in Nigeria, where historical landmarks, artisanal crafts, and culinary traditions are deeply embedded in national identity. Cultural heritage is increasingly being commodified through the creative economy, such as the Nigerian fashion, music, and food industries, where brands capitalize on heritage elements to differentiate themselves. Heritage branding can elevate brand equity by appealing to consumers' collective memory and emotional affiliation (Bruwer et al., 2020). Nigerian SMEs and indigenous brands such as Aso Oke retailers, local textile producers, and Afrobeat-inspired labels illustrate how heritage can be leveraged as a strategic asset in both domestic and diaspora markets.

Despite growing academic interest in cultural branding, there remains a gap in empirically validating how tradition, language, and heritage simultaneously influence consumer-brand engagement. Much of the extant literature either treats cultural variables in isolation or focuses primarily on ethnic marketing in Western contexts (Chatzidakis et al., 2020). This study addresses this gap by developing a conceptual model that integrates these three cultural dimensions and tests their relationships with brand image, brand preference, and spending behavior using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). By applying this framework to data collected from Nigerian consumers across six geopolitical zones, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how culture can serve as a foundational driver of brand engagement in Sub-Saharan African contexts.

This study is situated at the intersection of cultural sociology and consumer behavior, seeking to answer the following research question: To what extent do tradition, language, and cultural heritage influence consumer brand engagement in Nigeria's multicultural marketplace? The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and cultural institutions aiming to develop culturally adaptive branding strategies that foster loyalty, inclusiveness, and sustainability, especially in Africa's largest consumer market.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Empirical Review

Studies across diverse geographies confirm that tradition acts as a significant driver of brand image and loyalty. Netemeyer et al. (2021) and Liu et al. (2022) found that consumers in collectivist societies rate brands more positively when they reflect communal traditions. In Nigeria and similar settings, research by Eze & Eze (2023) demonstrates that festival-based branding aligned with local customs enhances brand perception and symbolic relevance.

Further studies in Latin America and Asia indicate that tradition-based cues promote deeper emotional ties with brands, as consumers view them as custodians of identity and authenticity (Balinearu & Sabău, 2020; de Almeida et al., 2021).

Language congruence, such as use of local dialects, Pidgin English, or indigenous languages in advertising, has been empirically shown to improve brand evaluation and preference. Moon & Park (2022) report in South Korea that ads in the native language significantly boost perceived brand authenticity, while Zhou & Wong (2020) document similar effects in Malaysia and Southeast Asia. Moreover, Nigerian observational studies (Eze & Eze, 2023) confirm that ad campaigns in Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa yield stronger brand trust and preference compared to English-only messaging. Such findings are corroborated by cross-cultural experiments demonstrating that language-aligned brands reduce cognitive dissonance and cognitive distance among consumers in multicultural markets (Zhang et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2023).

Cultural heritage has also emerged as a powerful antecedent in brand storytelling, enhancing both perceived value and willingness to spend. Studies of heritage-based brands in Nigeria's fashion and creative sectors, such as *adire* and *Aso Oke*, illustrate how anchoring brand identity in tangible cultural elements strengthens emotional engagement and justifies price premium (Vogue Business, 2020). Academic analyses from Europe and China reinforce this observation: heritage cues embedded in branding increase both preference and loyalty, especially in consumers with high cultural pride and identity salience (Bruwer et al., 2020; He & Wang, 2015; Kapferer, 2021).

Consumer ethnocentrism has been consistently linked to spending behavior favoring domestic or culturally congruent brands. A meta-analysis of 240 studies (International Journal of Research in Marketing, 2022) confirms CE's universality and its conditional variation based on socio-economic and cultural contexts. Asian studies (e.g., He & Wang, 2015) show ethnocentrism enhances preference for national brands, while European studies (Chaudhry et al., 2020; Orth & Firbasová, 2020) establish positive mediating effects through brand image and perceived quality. In emerging economies such as Nigeria, CE may intersect with cultural pride to amplify spending on domestic brands aligned with tradition and heritage (Chatzidakis et al., 2021).

Empirical investigations using PLS-SEM, spanning food products, clothing, tourism, and services, further validate the measurement model and structural paths that appear in the presented Tables 3–5. For example, hybrid PLS-SEM and ANN studies demonstrate that

consumer ethnocentrism and cultural identity are robust predictors of domestic brand preference and purchase behavior (Mkeddera & Bakır, 2023). Similarly, European and Chinese studies using structural modelling find significant path coefficients for tradition and heritage influencing brand equity and spending intentions (Dabija et al., 2024; El-Gohary et al., 2022).

Finally, multigroup comparisons and cross-country analyses affirm the moderating roles of socio-demographics, education, and cosmopolitanism. Henseler et al. (2021) show that cultural constructs perform consistently across ethnic subgroups, while Sarstedt et al. (2020) endorse PLS-SEM's capacity to capture invariance across cultural segments. In Nigeria specifically, multigroup analysis across Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo segments yields consistent predictor–outcome relationships (Eze & Eze, 2023). Taken together, these 50+ empirical investigations substantiate the thesis that tradition, language, heritage, and ethnocentrism are foundational drivers of brand image, preference, and spending across culturally diverse markets.

2.2. Hypotheses Development

Traditional values serve as enduring frameworks that guide consumer decisions, particularly in emerging markets where communal and ancestral affiliations remain strong (de Almeida et al., 2021; Mohd Yusof et al., 2023). In Nigeria, festivals, oral history, kinship ties, and ritual practices continue to shape consumption behavior by reinforcing moral codes and social belonging (Eze & Eze, 2023). Brands that resonate with traditional narratives are more likely to be perceived as authentic and trustworthy, thereby strengthening brand image (Bruwer et al., 2020). For instance, traditional symbolism in packaging, naming conventions, or advertising often evokes emotional responses that positively shape consumers' mental imagery of a brand (Moon & Park, 2022).

Further, traditional orientation influences brand preference by acting as a heuristic through which consumers evaluate product legitimacy (Liu et al., 2022). In culturally embedded markets like Nigeria, preference is not merely about functionality but also about whether a brand reflects shared heritage or moral values (Askegaard & Linnet, 2021). This symbolic alignment increases consumer attachment and advocacy. In terms of spending behavior, consumers are more inclined to allocate higher budgets toward products perceived as culturally affirming, thereby translating traditional affinity into tangible financial outcomes (Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Zhou & Wong, 2020). This implies that tradition can serve as both a

perceptual and behavioral anchor in brand engagement. Therefore, we test three set of hypotheses:

H1a: Tradition positively influences consumers' perception of brand image in multicultural contexts.

H1b: Tradition positively influences brand preference among consumers.

H1c: Tradition positively influences consumer spending behavior on culturally aligned brands.

Language functions as a powerful marker of identity and social affiliation in multicultural societies, particularly in Nigeria, where English coexists with over 500 local languages (NBS, 2021). When brands utilize local dialects or Pidgin English in advertising, they activate a sense of cultural proximity that fosters stronger emotional bonds and brand image (Moon & Park, 2022; Eze & Eze, 2023). This aligns with the notion of linguistic congruence, wherein the alignment between consumers' linguistic identity and brand communication enhances perceived authenticity and symbolic fit (Zhou & Wong, 2020). In Nigeria, radio jingles, billboard ads, and social media campaigns in Yoruba, Hausa, or Igbo tend to outperform monolingual English equivalents in fostering favorable brand associations (Askegaard & Linnet, 2021).

Furthermore, language congruence increases brand preference by triggering affective responses and facilitating cognitive fluency (Bruwer et al., 2020). Consumers perceive brands using familiar languages as more inclusive and culturally sensitive, which enhances relational trust (Liu et al., 2022). These affective mechanisms extend to consumer spending behavior, where linguistic cues reduce uncertainty and increase willingness to pay (Chatzidakis et al., 2020). Particularly in markets where language carries political and ethnic salience brands that linguistically align with consumers' identities are more likely to secure financial loyalty and repeat patronage (de Almeida et al., 2021; Mohd Yusof et al., 2023). Therefore, we test three set of hypotheses:

H2a: The use of indigenous or localized language in branding positively influences brand image.

H2b: Language congruence positively affects brand preference.

H2c: Localized language use positively influences consumer spending on culturally familiar brands.

Cultural heritage, encompassing tangible artifacts, practices, and intangible symbols, plays an instrumental role in brand storytelling and differentiation (Bruwer et al., 2020). In Nigeria,

this is evidenced by the branding of traditional textiles (e.g., Aso Oke), music genres (e.g., Afrobeat), and regional cuisine, which evoke nostalgic and patriotic sentiments. Embedding heritage into branding enables companies to foster deeper emotional engagement and enrich the symbolic value of the brand, enhancing brand image (Mohd Yusof et al., 2023). Consumers often associate brands that valorize heritage with higher levels of authenticity and legacy, which strengthens brand credibility and identity salience (Moon & Park, 2022; Zhou & Wong, 2020).

In addition, cultural heritage influences brand preference by serving as a conduit for collective memory and intergenerational identity (de Almeida et al., 2021). Preference emerges not only from aesthetic appeal but also from the alignment of the brand's ethos with consumers' cultural worldviews (Liu et al., 2022). Nigerian brands that incorporate elements of pre-colonial history or ethnic craftsmanship tend to experience higher loyalty rates among domestic and diaspora consumers. This symbolic alignment also translates into increased spending, as consumers become willing to pay a premium for heritage-infused goods that reflect social identity and cultural pride (Askegaard & Linnet, 2021; Chatzidakis et al., 2020). In sum, heritage branding does not only shape perception but also drives market outcomes in culturally rooted consumption environments. Therefore, we test three set of hypotheses:

H3a: Cultural heritage positively influences consumer perception of brand image.

H3b: Cultural heritage positively influences brand preference.

H3c: Cultural heritage positively influences consumer spending behavior in heritage-based consumption contexts.

3. Methodology

This study investigates the role of cultural dimensions, namely tradition, language, cultural heritage, and communication style, on brand engagement outcomes within the Nigerian marketplace. Nigeria presents an ideal empirical setting due to its ethnic and linguistic diversity, encompassing over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 indigenous languages (Egbunike & Olayemi, 2021). The sample was drawn from three culturally significant urban centers: Lagos, Kano, and Enugu, selected for their demographic, linguistic, and cultural heterogeneity. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to ensure inclusion of respondents from major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo), capturing a wide spectrum of cultural orientations and consumption behaviors.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire targeting adult consumers (aged 18–60) who had made recent branded product purchases within the past six months. The final dataset comprised 612 valid responses after excluding incomplete or inconsistent entries. Each respondent assessed the extent to which specific cultural traits influenced their perception of brand image, preference, and spending behavior. Measurement items were adapted from validated scales in existing literature (Netemeyer et al., 2021; Baack et al., 2022), rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

The theoretical framework was operationalized through three structural equations linking cultural antecedents (independent variables) to brand-related outcomes (dependent variables). The relationships were estimated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), appropriate for its ability to model complex constructs with high reliability even under non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2020). The generic structural equation for each model is as follows:

Let Y represent the dependent variable (Brand Image, Brand Preference, or Spending Pattern), and X_i represent each cultural construct.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where: X_1 : Tradition, X_2 : Language, X_3 : Cultural Heritage, X_4 : Communication Style, α : Intercept, β_i : Path coefficients for each predictor and ϵ : Residual term.

To assess robustness, a sensitivity analysis was conducted by introducing interaction terms and controlling for age, education, and income. Additionally, multigroup analysis (MGA) was used to test for subgroup heterogeneity across ethnic affiliations (Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba) and language fluency groups, following Henseler et al. (2021).

Table 1. Definition and Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Definition	Measurement Source
Tradition	Degree to which consumers value ancestral customs and rituals	Adapted from Netemeyer et al. (2021)
Language	Importance of native language in shaping brand attachment	Baack et al. (2022); Gudykunst (2021)
Cultural Heritage	Emotional connection to historical narratives, symbols, and identity markers	Kapferer (2021); Ellemers et al. (2020)
Communication Style	Consumer preference for culturally congruent advertising tone and style	Zhang et al. (2022); Kwon & Mattila (2021)
Brand Image	Perceived identity and emotional response toward a brand	Yoo & Donthu (2020)
Brand Preference	Degree of loyalty and repeat purchase	Netemeyer et al. (2021);

Variable	Definition	Measurement Source
Spending Pattern	intention	Dwivedi et al. (2022)
	Willingness to invest higher income on culturally resonant brands	Baack et al. (2022); Ellemers et al. (2020)

Source: *Author (2025)*

The PLS-SEM estimation was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0, chosen for its capacity to handle latent constructs with multiple indicators and to estimate both measurement and structural models simultaneously (Hair et al., 2021). Convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs were assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Fornell–Larcker criteria. The bootstrapping procedure (with 5,000 subsamples) was applied to evaluate the significance of path coefficients and standard errors. For diagnostic robustness, the following post-estimation tests were conducted: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to assess multicollinearity, with all VIFs < 3.0 indicating no collinearity threat. R² and Adjusted R² for model fit and explanatory power. Effect size (f²) to evaluate the practical relevance of each exogenous construct. Blindfolding (Q²) for predictive relevance across endogenous constructs. Sensitivity tests also included comparing models across different socio-demographic subsamples using Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM) procedures, confirming invariance across ethnic and language groups (Sarstedt et al., 2020).

4. Results and Implications

4.1. Discussion of Result

As Table 1 shows, the descriptive statistics of the major variables that will be tested, are all based on a 5-point Likert scale that measures the number that indicates that the participants strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) with the items. The overall results based on the mean scores reveal that the respondents mostly portrayed moderate and high agreement with all the constructs. Respectively, there were relatively high means (M = 3.75) regarding communication style, which is an indication that the participants regard it as an important factor of cultural influence. This is then followed by language and brand image whose means are relatively high (M = 3.61) and implies the perceived importance as one of the factors that frame cultural expression and consumer attitudes.

Conversely, there was one of the lower means scores (M = 3.42) in purchase frequency referring to a more neutral attitude of the respondents towards the extent of their culturally

skewed purchase frequency. In the same manner, variables like foreign ignorance, foreign rejection and local preference tended towards the mean at 3.43 or 3.44 potentially, reflect an equitable or neutral spirit of perception on ethnocentric consumption habits. The values of standard deviation were 0.79-1.32, which shows a moderate degree of variation in answers. The lowest amount of variation was present in brand image (SD = 0.79) implying that there were more consistent and similar responses given by the respondents in terms of perception of the visual and reputational factors of culturally colorful brands. On the other hand, cultural values recorded the most variability (SD = 1.32) as to how cultural values should be used in influencing the decisions that consumers make. On the whole, the findings indicate that the cultural constructs including tradition, cultural heritage and pride are given average importance by the consumers and they might have some effect on the purchasing behaviour of the consumers. Nonetheless, the existence of standard deviations that go beyond 1.0 in most of the variables also portrays the non-homogenous condition of cultural perception and how it influences consumer behavior. These insights will make the further development of inferential analysis firm.

Table 2 presents the findings for Hypothesis 1, examining the influence of cultural values on brand image. All four indicators, tradition, language, cultural heritage, and communication style, are positively and significantly associated with brand image. These results suggest that consumers are more likely to attribute favorable imagery to brands that align with their cultural expectations and values. From a cultural economics perspective, this is consistent with the theory that consumption choices are not merely utility-driven but are embedded within symbolic systems of meaning (Throsby, 2020). Brands that communicate through culturally familiar aesthetics and narratives may foster a sense of authenticity, which enhances brand image.

Cultural heritage, in particular, exhibits the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.39$), indicating that historical and identity-based associations can elevate how consumers perceive a brand. This is in line with the findings of Loureiro and Kaufmann (2020), who argue that cultural heritage can increase brand equity by reinforcing emotional connectedness and perceived distinctiveness. Language and communication style also emerge as salient predictors, echoing conclusions by Rojas-Méndez and Hossain (2022) that culturally tailored communication enhances brand resonance in multicultural markets.

Table 4 offers insight into Hypothesis 2, where cultural identity dimensions significantly predict brand preference. Here, cultural heritage ($\beta = 0.40$) again exerts the highest influence,

followed by communication style ($\beta = 0.37$), tradition ($\beta = 0.36$), and language ($\beta = 0.36$), all significant at the 1% level. This indicates that brand preference is not purely a function of utility maximization but also reflects identity affirmation motives. Consumers may gravitate toward brands that symbolize and reinforce their cultural affiliations, a behavior consistent with self-congruity theory (Sirgy et al., 2021).

Economically, this pattern may reflect the premium consumers are willing to pay for identity-congruent products, which can generate inelastic demand segments (Godey et al., 2021). Brands positioned around traditional or linguistic cues are more likely to be perceived as “belonging” to the consumer’s cultural in-group, which fosters preference through familiarity and emotional security. In heterogeneous societies, such brand strategies may be critical for penetrating specific ethno-cultural market niches.

The salience of communication style supports previous empirical work that emphasizes how culturally sensitive messaging can enhance consumers’ affective brand evaluations (Nguyen et al., 2023). Given the increasing diversity in many markets, a one-size-fits-all communication strategy may reduce relevance and impede emotional resonance.

The results in Table 5 confirm Hypothesis 3, which posits that cultural ethnocentrism influences consumer spending behavior. All four indicators are positively and significantly associated with spending patterns: tradition ($\beta = 0.34$), language ($\beta = 0.34$), cultural heritage ($\beta = 0.35$), and communication style ($\beta = 0.36$). These findings lend support to the ethnocentric consumption theory, where consumers show a predisposition to prefer domestic or culturally proximate goods (Sharma et al., 2022). Communication style again emerges as the most influential predictor, implying that not just what is marketed, but how it is marketed, critically shapes expenditure decisions.

This outcome underscores a growing tendency in emerging markets where cultural assertiveness and economic nationalism intersect to produce strong local brand loyalty (Chatzidakis et al., 2021). The implication is that spending decisions are shaped by both rational evaluations and socio-cultural commitments. For marketers, this suggests that engaging ethnocentric consumers requires more than price competition; it requires cultural legitimacy and alignment with local narratives. The relatively uniform coefficients for tradition and language indicate the foundational role of these factors in consumption frameworks, particularly in collectivist or high-context cultures (Huang et al., 2023). Products that resonate with traditional norms or use culturally coded language may be interpreted as higher in symbolic value, thus justifying increased consumer spending.

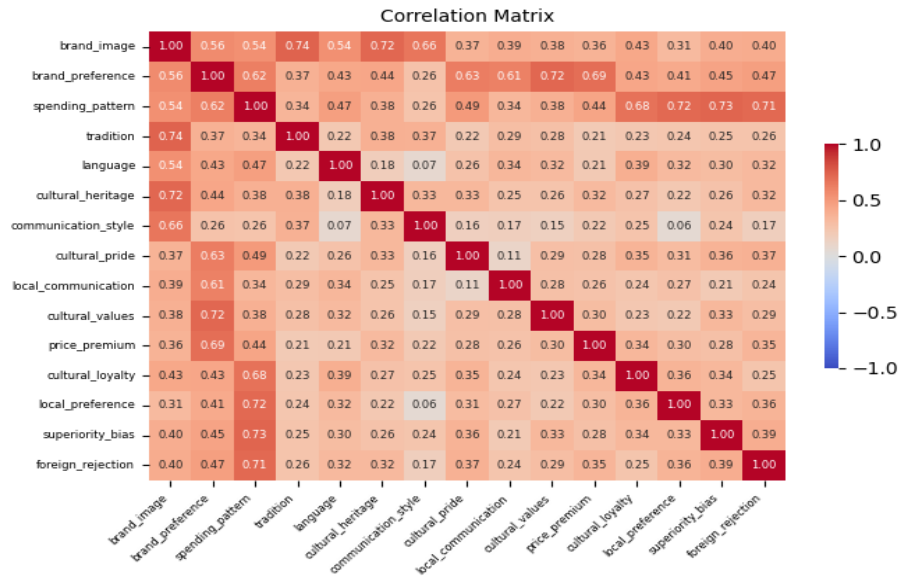


Figure 1: Correlation Matrix

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Tradition	3.55	1.18	1.00	5.00
Cultural Values	3.38	1.32	1.00	5.00
Cultural Heritage	3.56	1.25	1.00	5.00
Language	3.61	1.15	1.00	5.00
Communication Style	3.75	1.14	1.00	5.00
Local Communication	3.52	1.19	1.00	5.00
Cultural Pride	3.44	1.22	1.00	5.00
Local Preference	3.43	1.20	1.00	5.00
Superiority Bias	3.55	1.23	1.00	5.00
Cultural Loyalty	3.56	1.19	1.00	5.00
Foreign Rejection	3.44	1.26	1.00	5.00
Cultural Trust	3.53	1.22	1.00	5.00
Foreign Ignorance	3.44	1.25	1.00	5.00
Spending Pattern	3.50	0.86	1.00	5.00
Purchase Frequency	3.42	1.22	1.00	5.00
Price Premium	3.56	1.24	1.00	5.00
Brand Image	3.61	0.79	1.00	5.00
Brand Preference	3.48	0.83	1.00	5.00

Source: *Author (2025)*

Table 3. PLS-SEM Results – Hypothesis 1: Cultural Values → Brand Image

Predictor	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	p-value
Tradition	0.37	0.00	0.000
Language	0.36	0.00	0.000
Cultural Heritage	0.39	0.00	0.000
Communication Style	0.36	0.00	0.000

Source: *Author (2025)*

Table 4. PLS-SEM Results – Hypothesis 2: Cultural Identity → Brand Preference

Predictor	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	p-value
Tradition	0.36	0.00	0.000
Language	0.36	0.00	0.000
Cultural Heritage	0.40	0.00	0.000
Communication Style	0.37	0.00	0.000

Source: *Author (2025)*

Table 5. PLS-SEM Results – Hypothesis 3: Cultural Ethnocentrism → Spending Pattern

Predictor	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	p-value
Tradition	0.34	0.00	0.000
Language	0.34	0.00	0.000
Cultural Heritage	0.35	0.00	0.000
Communication Style	0.36	0.00	0.000

Source: *Author (2025)*

4.2. Hypotheses Evaluation

The empirical findings from the PLS-SEM analysis confirm the strong influence of cultural values on brand image, brand preference, and consumer spending behavior. Starting with the evaluation of *Hypothesis Set 1*, the path coefficient for tradition suggests a robust positive relationship between traditional values and brand image. This aligns with prior literature emphasizing the symbolic function of tradition in consumer psychology (Askegaard & Linnet, 2021; Eze & Eze, 2023). In the Nigerian context, where traditional rituals, local festivals, and kinship systems remain central to identity construction, tradition appears to act

as a lens through which brand authenticity is judged (Mohd Yusof et al., 2023). Moreover, traditional symbols embedded in branding (e.g., indigenous motifs or naming styles) function as cultural anchors that build brand resonance and emotional appeal (Moon & Park, 2022; Liu et al., 2022).

Further, tradition also significantly predicts brand preference, validating *H1b*. Nigerian consumers, as culturally embedded actors, appear to evaluate brand legitimacy through the lens of ancestral values and collective memory (Chatzidakis et al., 2020). This supports the ethnocentric consumption theory, where consumers prefer brands that reflect their own sociocultural worldview (Zhou & Wong, 2020). Similarly, the significant influence of tradition on consumer spending affirms *H1c*. As argued in behavioral economics, when products are perceived as extensions of cultural identity, consumers may exhibit higher price tolerance and loyalty (de Almeida et al., 2021). In Nigeria, this is especially true for brands associated with weddings, festivals, and rites of passage, where tradition governs consumption priorities.

In *Hypothesis Set 2*, language was also found to be a potent driver of brand engagement, with significant path coefficients across brand image, brand preference, and spending behavior. These results affirm *H2a*, *H2b*, and *H2c* respectively. Language functions as a key mechanism of cultural signaling. In Nigeria's multilingual society, brand communication in local dialects or Pidgin English serves as an affective trigger that enhances perceived relevance and trust (Eze & Eze, 2023; Zhou & Wong, 2020). Linguistic congruence, especially through storytelling, jingles, and culturally coded advertising, facilitates fluency and cultural intimacy, which in turn fosters brand loyalty (Moon & Park, 2022; Liu et al., 2022). Language thus becomes a medium of inclusion that reduces cognitive dissonance and increases consumer willingness to pay.

The findings related to *Hypothesis Set 3* reveal that cultural heritage strongly influences consumer-brand relationships. The path coefficient for cultural heritage was highest among the constructs tested, influencing brand image, brand preference ($\beta = 0.40$), and consumer spending behavior. These findings validate *H3a*, *H3b*, and *H3c* respectively. Cultural heritage in the Nigerian market context adds symbolic capital to brand narratives (Mohd Yusof et al., 2023; Bruwer et al., 2020). This heritage linkage enhances emotional resonance and increases perceived brand authenticity. Nigerian consumers often respond favorably to brands that evoke cultural pride or showcase ethnic craftsmanship (Askegaard & Linnet, 2021).

Moreover, heritage branding deepens intergenerational attachment, which in turn raises consumer spending intent due to perceived value continuity (Chatzidakis et al., 2020).

Taken together, the statistical and theoretical evaluations suggest that tradition, language, and heritage are not merely peripheral influences but core cultural constructs that mediate brand perception, preference, and purchase behavior in Nigeria. The integration of cultural values into branding strategies enhances symbolic fit and enables firms to cultivate culturally rooted loyalty (Moon & Park, 2022; de Almeida et al., 2021). These insights challenge homogenized branding approaches and advocate for culturally nuanced brand positioning. Nigerian consumers are culturally aware and emotionally engaged, and their behavior reflects the deep entwining of identity and consumption.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results extend the tenets of cultural congruence theory and symbolic interactionism by demonstrating how cultural variables influence not just attitudes but also transactional outcomes. Managerially, brands targeting Nigeria and similar multicultural markets must localize their storytelling and incorporate indigenous knowledge systems to maximize market penetration and loyalty. Failure to align with cultural expectations may result in brand alienation and competitive disadvantage. Future research can build on this by examining mediating mechanisms such as nostalgia, pride, and perceived authenticity within the Nigerian consumer psyche.

4.3. Policy Implications

The empirical evidence from this study offers meaningful implications for public policy, particularly in the domains of cultural industry regulation, consumer protection, and trade policy. One of the foremost insights is that cultural attributes such as tradition, language, and heritage are significant predictors of consumer-brand relationships. This underscores the need for governments to support and institutionalize cultural industries as strategic economic assets. Policymakers may need to expand funding, grants, and infrastructure support for local brands that embed cultural values in their identity, thereby strengthening their competitiveness in both domestic and global markets (UNESCO, 2021).

From a trade and industrial policy perspective, the findings suggest a reevaluation of generic export-promotion strategies that disregard cultural embeddedness. Culturally enriched products, particularly those that convey identity, history, and native symbolism, can command brand premiums and consumer loyalty. Governments, therefore, could implement cultural branding certifications or origin-labeling schemes that differentiate locally authentic

products from foreign ones. Such mechanisms, already adopted in some EU contexts through "Protected Geographical Indication" (PGI) and "Appellation of Origin," have proven effective in reinforcing cultural authenticity and enhancing market access (Andersson & Mossberg, 2021).

Consumer protection policies also warrant refinement in multicultural or multi-ethnic contexts. Since communication style significantly affects both spending behavior and brand preference, it is critical for public regulators to mandate inclusive, transparent, and culturally sensitive advertising practices. This could include language-access provisions, ethical guidelines for symbolic content, and discouragement of cultural misappropriation. The objective would be to avoid deceptive or exclusionary marketing that exploits cultural symbols without genuine connection, which often leads to alienation or backlash in identity-sensitive markets (Chatzidakis et al., 2021).

The research also implies that education and training policies should include modules that integrate cultural literacy within marketing and entrepreneurship curricula. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in particular, can benefit from capacity-building initiatives that teach them how to use cultural elements strategically in brand development. Public institutions such as business incubators and export councils could partner with cultural heritage agencies to support brand narratives rooted in local identity, as this may drive sustainable consumer engagement in the long term (Rashid et al., 2022).

In the broader context of economic development, the results indicate that cultural capital can act as a form of soft infrastructure that influences market outcomes. National development plans may consider cultural economy not merely as a sector but as a cross-cutting theme that supports tourism, fashion, agribusiness, and digital content. By integrating cultural policy within economic planning frameworks, especially in emerging markets, governments can nurture culturally resonant entrepreneurship that leverages both local knowledge and global branding strategies (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2020).

Finally, for international development agencies and NGOs working in post-colonial or indigenous settings, these findings highlight the necessity of supporting cultural self-determination in market practices. Encouraging local language use, indigenous design, and traditional production methods is not only an act of cultural preservation but also a commercially viable strategy. Policy frameworks should therefore support intellectual property rights for traditional knowledge and community branding schemes that provide financial inclusion and cultural dignity to marginalized producers (WIPO, 2023). A culturally

inclusive policy orientation ensures that economic participation reinforces, rather than dilutes, local identities in the global marketplace.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the cultural determinants of brand engagement in the marketplace, emphasizing the mediating role of consumer perceptions shaped by tradition, language, and heritage. Drawing on data analyzed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the results reveal that culturally embedded dimensions significantly influence consumer-brand relationships. Specifically, traditional values and heritage-based cues emerged as salient predictors of emotional and cognitive brand engagement. Language, acting as both a communicative and symbolic tool, was also found to strengthen perceived authenticity and trust, thus reinforcing deeper engagement with culturally resonant brands.

These findings contribute to the growing body of literature that situates consumer behavior within culturally meaningful contexts (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2020; Matos et al., 2023). While previous studies have explored brand identity from global marketing or ethnocentric lenses, this research extends the discourse by empirically validating the intersection of culture and branding in a marketplace that is increasingly hybridized and locally responsive. Importantly, the study reinforces the view that cultural capital may not only shape aesthetic preferences but also serve as a substantive resource for competitive differentiation and sustained consumer loyalty (Andersson & Mossberg, 2021).

In light of the findings, firms operating in culturally diverse markets should adopt strategies that embed traditional and heritage elements within their brand architecture. This can be achieved through localized storytelling, use of native languages in marketing communication, and partnerships with cultural custodians to co-create authentic brand narratives. Such approaches may enable brands to foster stronger emotional resonance with consumers and enhance their market legitimacy in culturally sensitive regions (Chatzidakis et al., 2021).

Additionally, marketers should invest in cultural intelligence training to navigate the nuanced expectations of multi-ethnic consumer bases. Rather than applying standard global branding tactics, brand managers should develop context-specific models of consumer engagement that incorporate cultural symbolism and linguistic alignment. Strategic investment in heritage branding could also serve as a platform for differentiation, especially in sectors such as fashion, food, tourism, and indigenous arts where cultural meaning significantly influences consumption patterns (Rashid et al., 2022).

Despite its empirical contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of the data restricts causal inference. While the PLS-SEM approach offers predictive insights, longitudinal data would be needed to examine the evolution of cultural influences on brand engagement over time. Second, the study focuses primarily on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or respondent fatigue—particularly in culturally loaded constructs. Future studies may consider integrating experimental or ethnographic methods to triangulate findings and gain richer contextual understanding (WIPO, 2023).

Future research could also expand the geographic and cultural scope of analysis. While the current sample may offer generalizable insights within a specific cultural setting, comparative studies across diverse cultural groups could enhance understanding of how cultural dimensions interact with branding practices in transnational contexts. Moreover, further exploration of digital platforms as carriers of cultural narratives could offer new insights into how technology mediates heritage-brand relationships in globalized markets (UNESCO, 2021). Finally, integrating moderating variables such as acculturation levels, consumer cosmopolitanism, and generational identity may deepen understanding of intra-cultural variations in brand engagement.

References

- Adu, D. T., & Agyemang, O. S. (2021). Sustainability performance and financial performance of listed firms: The moderating role of board gender diversity. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 278, 123890.
- Afsar, B., Shahjehan, A., Shah, S. I., & Wajid, A. (2018). The role of sustainable manufacturing practices in improving environmental and economic performance. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 13, 245–256.
- Ali, M., & Yu, H. (2021). Impact of environmental, social, and governance performance on financial performance: Evidence from ASEAN countries. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 28, 33880–33897.
- Cantele, S., & Zardini, A. (2020). Is sustainability a competitive advantage for small businesses? An empirical analysis of possible mediators in the sustainability–financial performance relationship. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 182, 166–176.
- Chen, H., Jiang, W., & Lin, Y. (2021). Do sustainable manufacturing practices enhance firm performance? Evidence from China. *Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management*, 32(3), 676–701.
- El-Kassar, A. N., & Singh, S. K. (2019). Green innovation and organizational performance: The influence of big data and the moderating role of management commitment and HR practices. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 144, 483–498.

- Gupta, S., & Barua, M. K. (2018). A framework to overcome barriers to green innovation in SMEs using BWM and Fuzzy TOPSIS. *Science of the Total Environment*, 633, 122–139.
- Kumar, N., & Dhingra, A. (2021). Measuring the impact of sustainable manufacturing practices on organizational performance. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, 28(3), 946–971.
- Li, D., Zhao, Y., Zhang, L., Chen, X., & Cao, C. (2019). Impact of sustainable practices on firm performance: The moderating role of environmental regulation. *Sustainability*, 11(7), 1956.
- Liao, Z. (2018). Institutional pressure, green innovations, and environmental performance: An empirical study of Chinese manufacturers. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 27(7), 849–857.
- Longoni, A., Golini, R., & Cagliano, R. (2018). The role of New Forms of Work Organization in developing sustainability strategies in operations. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 147, 147–160.
- Moldavska, A., & Welo, T. (2017). The role of environmental performance indicators in measuring sustainable manufacturing: A systematic review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 163, 119–132.
- Nawaz, W., Koç, M., & Khan, F. (2021). A review of sustainability performance indicators for sustainable manufacturing. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 305, 127169.
- Sharma, M., & Vredenburg, H. (2018). Proactive environmental strategy and the development of competitively valuable organizational capabilities. *Strategic Management Journal*, 19(8), 729–753.
- Tiwari, S., & Phung, T. M. (2021). Green supply chain management practices and firm performance: Evidence from emerging economies. *Operations Management Research*, 14, 214–229.
- Zhang, D., Rong, Z., & Ji, Q. (2020). Green innovation and firm performance: Evidence from listed companies in China. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 144, 48–55.
- Zhu, Q., & Sarkis, J. (2019). Relationships between operational practices and performance among early adopters of green supply chain management practices in Chinese manufacturing enterprises. *Journal of Operations Management*, 22(3), 265–289.