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### Abstract

*This study examines the promotion of Nigerian fabric brands through fashion exhibition events and social media engagement. Utilizing a mixed-methods research design, the study incorporates descriptive research and content analysis. Data were collected from social media networks, review sites, newspaper websites, and published journals, thematically arranged to identify key trends. The findings highlight seven indices from Lagos Fashion Week, Port Harcourt International Fashion Week, and Hayati Fashion Week, emphasizing event strategies and social media engagement levels categorized as high, moderate, or low. Analysis of fabric types used by designers revealed preferences across different regions. The study underscores the effectiveness of integrating fashion events with social media to enhance brand visibility and consumer engagement. Evaluations indicate a strong impact on brand awareness and purchase intentions, though further research is needed to explore long-term effects and strategies for sustaining engagement. This approach provides comprehensive insights into the strategic promotion of Nigerian fabric brands.*

**Keywords:** Event strategy, fashion exhibition weeks, social media, brand visibility, Nigeria fabrics, consumer engagement

### Introduction

Fashion exhibition events play a crucial role in showcasing Nigerian fabrics and brands, contributing to the promotion and recognition of the local fashion industry. Studies emphasize the importance of understanding consumer expectations and drivers of satisfaction for Nigerian garment designs, highlighting aspects such as style variety, dimensions, finishing, fabric quality, durability, and aesthetics (Gurova, et al., 2020; Opaleye et al, 2020; Omeihe et al., 2023; Bizuneh & Kifle, 2024). The sense making processes within entrepreneurial co-opetition networks in Nigeria's fashion industry shed light on the institutional and socio-historical influences that shape co-opetitive behaviors and mindsets, emphasizing the significance of contextual complexities in co-opetition studies (Kom,2022; Ziyae et all., 2022; Kostis et al., 2024). Additionally, incorporating Ankara textiles in western-style collections for Nigerian women attending formal events showcases the fusion of cultural influences with design elements, emphasizing fit, comfort, modesty, and cultural

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relevance in the final designs (Hughes,2022; Almalki & Tawfiq, 2023; Elfeky & Elbyaly,2023; Ibiwoye, 2023).). These insights underscore the multifaceted nature of fashion events marketing, customer engagement, and the generation of electronic word-of-mouth in the context of Nigerian fabrics and brands.

Fashion exhibition events play a crucial role in promoting Nigerian fabrics brands by providing a platform for designers to showcase their creations and attract consumer interest(Samuel, 2022; Fakunle, 2023). Events like the Lagos Fashion Week (LFW) in Nigeria offer designers the opportunity to self-represent their work, challenge colonial ideologies, and legitimize alternative identities, ultimately promoting Nigerian fabrics brands on a global scale (Nwafor, 2021; Hughes,2022). Additionally, innovative exhibition racks equipped with LED displays and audio players enhance the presentation of textile fabrics, making them more appealing to visitors and potential buyers(Sun et al., 2020). Moreover, the design process applied in fashion shows, as seen in the work by the Light e Scene Laboratory (LALUCE), focuses on overcoming limitations through creative practices, ensuring the quality presentation of Nigerian fabrics brands to the audienceSan Miguel, 2023; Huggard & Särämäkari, 2023).

Fashion exhibition events enhance brand engagement through social media platforms, as highlighted in some studies (Grassi, 2020; Majeed et al., 2021; Verma, 2021; Goyal & Verma, 2024).. These events serve as fundamental tools for fashion brands to connect with audiences and spread their messages effectively<sup>[1]</sup>. Additionally, social brand engagement on social media platforms positively impacts brand equity and indirectly influences purchase intention in the fashion industry<sup>[2]</sup>. Furthermore, the impact of social media brand communities on Millennials in the fashion industry is explored, emphasizing the formation of brand-customer relationships and fostering a sense of community around a brand<sup>[3]</sup>. Ultimately, the combination of fashion exhibition events and social media engagement contributes significantly to customer engagement, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions in the fashion and apparel sector<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **Types of Fashion Exhibition Events**

Fashion exhibition events can be categorized into different types based on their focus and purpose(Brambilla et al., 2017; Gott et al 2017; Aziz et al., 2019; Becattini et al., 2023).. Contemporary fashion exhibitions can be divided into two main categories: fashion brand exhibitions and museum fashion exhibitions (Petrov, 2019). Fashion brand exhibitions aim to create a competitive advantage by showcasing the latest collections in a visually appealing and immersive manner to enhance brand loyalty and engagement (Singh, 2023; (MSME Africa, 2024; 10Times, n.d.; Vogue Business, 2023) On the other hand, museum fashion exhibitions focus on the social, cultural, and artistic aspects of fashion, emphasizing public education and careful collection conservation to celebrate the historical and artistic value of fashion rather than solely focusing on commercial aspects. Additionally, fashion shows have evolved to incorporate new communication strategies, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, expanding beyond traditional formats to include pre, during, and post-event stages, utilizing digital platforms for storytelling and interaction (Bide, 2017; Murzyn-Kupisz & Hołuj, 2021; Merino, 2022; Entwistle, 2023).

**Event stakeholders**

Fashion exhibitions provide opportunities for brands to showcase their products and engage with consumers in a tangible, experiential setting. studies by Sergio, (2020) and Andò et al., (2023) highlight the role of fashion exhibitions as immersive platforms that allow brands to communicate their unique narratives and craftsmanship directly to attendees. Key Players and Stakeholders of fashion exhibition events encompasses various essential entities for its successful execution. According to Allen et al., (2022), these entities typically include event organizers, fashion designers, exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees (Gursoy et al., 2017; Kawamura, 2018; Williams, 2018; Abou-Shouk 2018; Ciprazo & Barat, 2021).

**Nigeria Events Exhibition organiser**

Lagos Fashion Week (Lagos FW) is a premier annual multi-day clothing trade show that occurs in Lagos, Nigeria (Orukpe & Faruq, 2023) Established in 2011 by Omoyemi Akerele, it has grown to become Africa's largest fashion event, garnering significant national and international media attention. Lagos FW showcases over 60 Nigerian and African fashion designers to a global audience of more than 40,000 retailers, media, and consumers (Orukpe & Faruq 2023); (Fibre2Fashion, 2024; Eventbrite, n.d.; (Vanguard News, 2022)). This platform has significantly contributed to the international recognition of African designers and fashion brands, such as Orange Culture, Lisa Folawiyo, and Christie Brown (British Council, 2022).

Port Harcourt International Fashion Week, alternatively known as Native & Vogue, is an annual clothing and fashion event held in the oil capital of Nigeria, Port Harcourt. Initiated in 2013, it is jointly organized by Neo Mantra Ltd and Bruno Creazioni Company and is primarily sponsored by the Rivers State government. This three-day event serves as a platform for local and international fashion models and designers to display their talents, providing emerging designers an opportunity to develop their creative expressions. Since its inception, the event has showcased several of Africa's top designers and has featured prominent figures such as former Miss World, Agbani Darego, as a host.

Hayati Fashion Week (HFW) is an annual event that showcases modest fashion collections from Nigeria and other African countries to the press and the general public. Established in 2017 by Fatima Togbe, HFW aims to address the underrepresentation of modest fashion on major Nigerian fashion platforms. This study explores the significance of HFW in promoting modest fashion and providing a platform for designers, models, and businesses within the industry.

## Conceptual framework

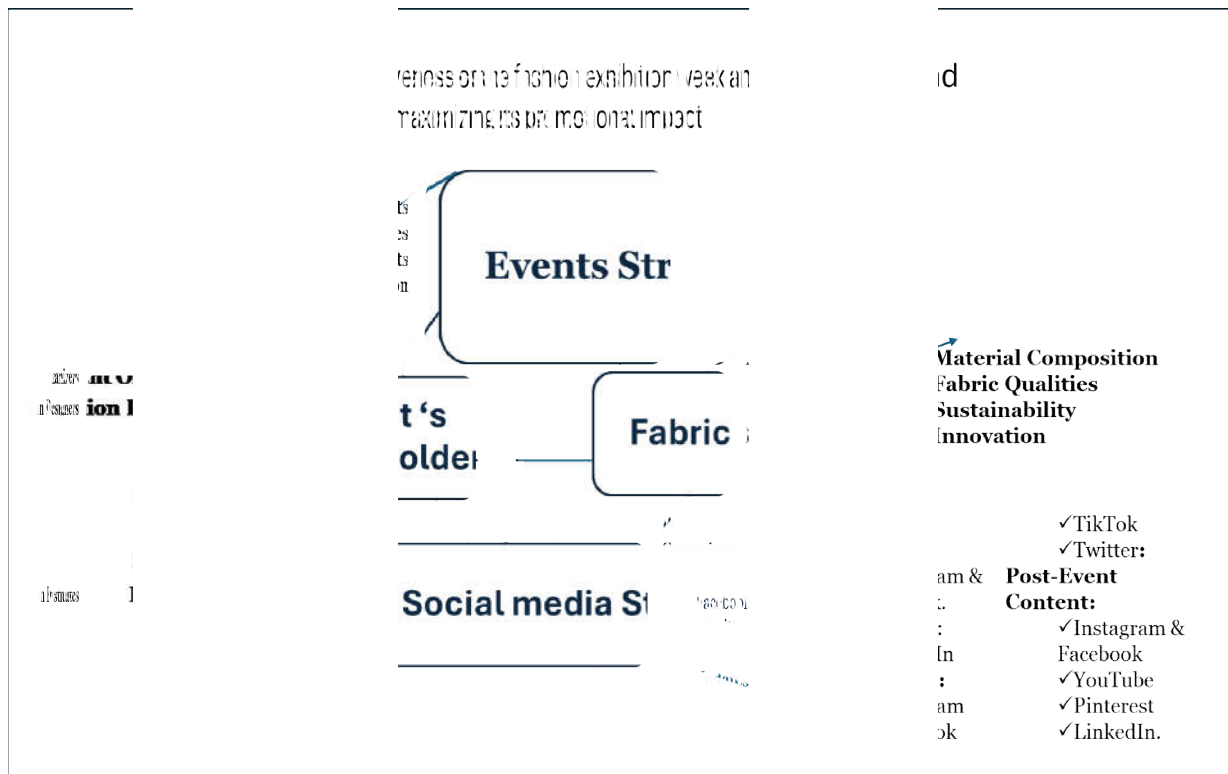


Chart 1: Conceptual framework

## Theoretical framework

Event Marketing Theory, as developed by Bernd H. Schmitt, focuses on the strategic planning, execution, and management of events to promote products, brands, or services (Urdea et al., 2021). It emphasizes creating engaging experiences that foster direct connections between brands and audiences. For promoting Nigerian fabric brands, this involves designing interactive fashion exhibition events and integrating them with social media to amplify reach and impact. The theory highlights the importance of audience engagement, memorable brand experiences, and feedback evaluation. By applying Schmitt's Event Marketing Theory, the research explores how strategically executed events and social media engagement can enhance brand visibility, consumer interaction, and overall marketing effectiveness for Nigerian fabric brands.

## Leveraging Fashion Exhibition Events and Social Media Engagement for the Promotion of Nigerian fabric Brands

## Event Features for Fashion Exhibition Weeks

Activity	Objectives	Duration	Location	Takeholders
1. Opening Ceremony	to inaugurate the event, showcase the participating designers, and create buzz.	1 hour	Grand Hall, Lagos	Designers, event organizers, and media.
2. Fashion Show	to showcase the latest collections from participating designers.	2 hours	Runway, Lagos	Designers, models, and audience.
3. Live Q&A Session	to provide insights into the design process and challenges.	1 hour	Stage, Lagos	Designers and audience.
4. Networking Session	to facilitate connections between designers, buyers, and industry professionals.	1 hour	Reception Area, Lagos	Designers, buyers, and industry professionals.
5. Photo Shoot	to capture professional photographs of the collections.	1 hour	Runway, Lagos	Designers, photographers, and models.
6. Social Media Engagement	to promote the event and collections on social media platforms.	1 hour	Event Space, Lagos	Designers, event organizers, and audience.
7. Closing Ceremony	to conclude the event, thank participants, and announce the winners.	1 hour	Grand Hall, Lagos	Designers, event organizers, and media.

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7. Closing Ceremony	to conclude the event, thank participants, and announce the winners.	1 hour	Grand Hall, Lagos	Designers, event organizers, and media.

Chart 2: Key for Event promotional strategy for fashion Exhibition week

### **Methodology**

The study made use of a mixed-methods research design, specifically incorporating elements of both descriptive research and content analysis (Kansteiner & König, 2020). Detailed information about the Nigerian Fashion Exhibition weeks was collected from various sources such as social media networks, review sites, newspaper websites, and published journals. This approach is characteristic of descriptive research, which aims to describe the characteristics or functions of a particular phenomenon. Content analysis was employed to systematically analyze the qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. Thematic arrangement and manual extraction of data were indicative of this approach. Social media engagement levels were categorized into high, moderate, and low, which also involved content analysis to quantify the engagement data.

Qualitative methods involved gathering data from social media networks, review sites, newspaper websites, and journals (Chu et al., 2020; Rodriguez & Storer, 2020; Sundararaj & Rejeesh, 2021). Thematic analysis was used to organize the content thematically for each organizer to identify key themes (Morgan, & Nica, 2020). Additionally, content analysis was used to manually extract and analyze the types of fabrics used by designers (Van et al., 2021).

### **Quantitative Methods**

Quantitative methods were employed by selecting seven indices from the exhibition weeks to evaluate specific aspects (Rahman, 2020). Social media engagement was analyzed and categorized into high, moderate, and low levels (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021; Khan, 2022).

This combination of methods allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the strategies and impacts of the Nigerian Fashion Exhibition weeks, providing both detailed descriptions and quantifiable metrics.

**Presentation of result**

Table 1: Showing analysis of event strategy for fashion exhibition week

Indices	Lagos Fashion Week	Port Harcourt International Fashion Week	Hayati Fashion Week
Target Audience Analysis	Detailed demographic and psychographic analysis of international and local attendees.	Focus on local talent and international exposure with a diverse audience profile.	Analysis of press and general public interest in modest fashion.
Brand Positioning	Strong brand story and consistent visual identity across all marketing materials.	Emphasis on inclusivity and emerging talent with a distinct brand narrative.	Unique brand positioning to address underrepresentation of modest fashion.
Product Showcase	Diverse range of high-quality fashion fabrics from renowned and emerging designers.	Showcase of works from top African designers and emerging talents.	Exhibitions featuring innovative modest fashion designs and emerging brands.
Networking Opportunities	Exclusive networking events with designers, manufacturers, and industry leaders.	Collaborative events and partnerships to foster community and industry growth.	Networking soirees to connect designers, models, and industry stakeholders.
Marketing and Promotion	Robust pre-event campaigns and on-site marketing activities.	Targeted marketing efforts to attract global attention and enhance event visibility.	Strategic marketing to highlight modest fashion and attract diverse audiences.
Customer Experience	Personalized interactions with attendees and comprehensive follow-up strategies.	Interactive and inclusive customer experience with opportunities for direct engagement.	Focus on personalized attendee experiences and showcasing creative expressions.
Sales Metrics and Feedback	Extensive data collection on visitor interactions and customer feedback mechanisms.	Systematic feedback collection and sales metrics to evaluate event success.	Feedback and sales data collection to measure impact and inform future events.

Table 1 provides an analytical overview of the impacts of three major fashion weeks in Nigeria: Lagos Fashion Week, Port Harcourt International Fashion Week, and Hayati Fashion Week.

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- **Lagos Fashion Week** excels in **Target Audience Analysis**, with detailed demographic and psychographic profiles of both international and local attendees. It emphasizes a strong brand story and visual identity, showcasing a diverse range of high-quality fashion fabrics. Exclusive networking events and robust marketing efforts are key features, coupled with personalized customer experiences and extensive feedback mechanisms (Lagos Fashion Week, n.d.; (Lagos Fashion Week, 2023; Legendary Gold Limited, n.d.
- **Port Harcourt International Fashion Week** focuses on highlighting local talent and international exposure, with a diverse audience profile. The event emphasizes inclusivity and emerging talent, showcasing top African designers. It fosters community growth through collaborative events and partnerships, and employs targeted marketing strategies to enhance visibility. The customer experience is interactive and inclusive, with systematic feedback collection (Tella, 2023).
- **Hayati Fashion Week** addresses the underrepresentation of modest fashion, providing a unique brand positioning. The event features innovative modest fashion designs, facilitating networking among designers, models, and stakeholders. Strategic marketing highlights modest fashion, attracting diverse audiences. Personalized attendee experiences and comprehensive feedback mechanisms ensure the event's impact is effectively measured and utilized for future improvements.

Table 2 : Showing social media engagement for the Fashion show

Social Media Platforms	Lagos Fashion Week	Port Harcourt International Fashion Week	Hayati Fashion Week
Website	3	2	2
Facebook	2	3	2
Twitter	2	1	1
Instagram	3	2	3
TikTok	3	2	2
LinkedIn	2	1	1
Customer Review Sites	2	2	3

Key = High 3, Moderate 2, Low 1

Table 2 presents social media engagement rates for three Nigerian fashion events. **Lagos Fashion Week** has high engagement on its website, Instagram, and TikTok (all rated 3), indicating strong online interaction. Engagement on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Customer Review Sites is moderate (rated 2). **Port Harcourt International Fashion Week** shows the highest engagement on Facebook (rated 3) and moderate engagement on the website, Instagram, TikTok, and Customer Review Sites (rated 2). Twitter and LinkedIn have low engagement (rated 1). **Hayati Fashion Week** has high engagement on Instagram and



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Customer Review Sites (both rated 3), moderate on the website, Facebook, and TikTok (rated 2), and low on Twitter and LinkedIn (rated 1). These insights help tailor marketing strategies for each event.

Table 3: showing the types of fabric used by designers during the fashion exhibition weeks.

Fabric Types	Lagos Fashion Week	Port Harcourt International Fashion Week	Hayati Fashion Week
Ankara	3	2	3
Aso Oke	2	3	2
Adire	3	2	3
Lace	3	3	2
Kente	2	2	1
Chiffon	3	2	3
Brocade	2	3	2
Silk	3	2	3
Velvet	2	2	1
Tulle	2	1	2

Key: High = 3, Moderate = 2, Low = 1

Table 3 shows fabric usage levels by designers at three Nigerian fashion exhibition weeks: Lagos Fashion Week, Port Harcourt International Fashion Week, and Hayati Fashion Week. Lagos Fashion Week frequently uses **Ankara**, **Adire**, **Lace**, **Chiffon**, and **Silk** (rated 3). Port Harcourt International Fashion Week highlights **Aso Oke**, **Lace**, and **Brocade** (rated 3). Hayati Fashion Week prominently features **Ankara**, **Adire**, **Chiffon**, and **Silk** (rated 3). **Kente** and **Velvet** are less used across all events (rated 1-2), showing selective integration. This table highlights fabric preferences, showcasing cultural and aesthetic trends in Nigerian fashion.

Table 4: Nigeria Fashion week

Stakeholders	Activities
Designers	Showcase new collections, participate in runway shows, network with industry professionals.
Models	Walk the runway, participate in photo shoots, engage with designers and media.
Media	Cover the event, conduct interviews, publish reviews and fashion insights.
Retailers	Explore new collections, place orders, network with designers and brands.
Consumers	Attend shows, interact with designers, purchase new fashion items.
Sponsors	Provide financial support, gain brand visibility, engage with the audience.
Fashion Institutes	Participate in workshops, present student collections, network with professionals.

**Lagos Fashion Week**

Stakeholders	Activities
Designers	Present collections, participate in runway shows, collaborate with local talents.
Models	Model collections on the runway, participate in photo shoots, network with industry stakeholders.
Media	Report on the event, interview designers and models, highlight key trends.
Retailers	Review collections, establish business relationships, place orders for new collections.
Consumers	Watch runway shows, engage with designers, purchase showcased items.
Sponsors	Support the event financially, enhance brand recognition, interact with attendees.
Fashion Institutes	Host educational sessions, display student works, connect with industry experts.

**Port Harcourt International Fashion Week**

Stakeholders	Activities
Designers	Display modest fashion designs, engage in runway shows, connect with modest fashion advocates.
Models	Model modest fashion collections, participate in photo sessions, interact with media and designers.
Media	Cover the event, feature modest fashion trends, interview designers and models.
Retailers	Evaluate modest fashion lines, form business partnerships, place bulk orders.
Consumers	Attend shows, explore modest fashion options, make purchases.
Sponsors	Sponsor the event, increase brand awareness, engage with the modest fashion community.
Fashion Institutes	Conduct fashion seminars, showcase student designs, network with industry professionals.

**Hayati Fashion Week****Discussion**

Event fashion exhibitions in Nigeria present key players and stakeholders which include designers, attendees, international journalists, photographers, and artisans (Onyeator, 2019). These events, such as Lagos Fashion Week (LFW), serve as platforms for self-representation, legitimizing alternative identities, and challenging colonial ideologies (Jones & Adeleke, 2019). Additionally, high-end fashion exhibitions play a crucial role in showcasing fashion as art, bridging the gap between fashion and museum settings, and encouraging viewers to see the interrelationship between fashion and art (Brown & Okafor, 2018). Contemporary fashion exhibitions in Nigeria focus on building competitive business advantages through differentiated content, brand loyalty, and immersive experiences for viewers (Adams, 2021). Moreover, the trend of virtual fashion exhibitions is gaining traction, offering a digital alternative to physical showcases, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for institutions to invest in new fashion technologies (Rao et al., 2021; Chrimes & Boardman, 2023; Di Maria et al., 2023).

In the context of Nigerian fabric brands, understanding the attendance demographics and visitor numbers at fashion exhibitions becomes instrumental in gauging the reach and

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impact of these events. By analyzing attendance data, researchers can discern trends in consumer interest, geographic distribution, and demographic representation, thereby informing strategic decisions regarding event planning, location selection, and audience targeting.

Moreover, investigating the feedback and perceptions of attendees provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of fashion exhibitions in raising awareness and generating engagement with Nigerian fabric brands. Studies by Chen et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of post-exhibition evaluation in assessing consumer sentiment, brand perception, and purchase intent. By conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups with attendees, researchers can elucidate factors influencing consumer perceptions before and after engaging with Nigerian fabric brands at exhibitions. Understanding the impact of these events on brand awareness, perceived value, and purchase consideration enables brands to refine their marketing strategies, product offerings, and experiential activations, ultimately fostering stronger connections with their target audience.

### **Social media engagement**

Social media engagement has emerged as a pivotal metric for understanding consumer behavior and brand interaction in the digital age. With platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok offering diverse avenues for communication and content sharing, brands, including those in the fashion industry, are leveraging these platforms to enhance their visibility and engage with their audience. Research by Smith et al. (2019) underscores the significance of engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments as indicators of audience interest and brand resonance. In the context of Nigerian fabric brands, a burgeoning segment of the global fashion market, understanding the level of engagement on social media platforms becomes particularly pertinent. By analyzing these metrics, researchers can discern patterns of user interaction, the virality of content, and the efficacy of brand messaging strategies in captivating audiences.

Moreover, the demographic composition of the audience engaging with Nigerian fabric brands on social media serves as a crucial dimension for understanding consumer preferences and tailoring marketing efforts. Studies by Jones et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of demographic segmentation in social media marketing, highlighting how factors such as age, gender, location, and interests influence consumer engagement and purchasing decisions. For Nigerian fabric brands seeking to optimize their social media presence, insights into the demographic characteristics of their audience can inform content creation, platform selection, and targeting strategies. By delineating the profile of their social media followers, brands can cultivate more personalized and resonant communication strategies, thereby fostering deeper connections and enhancing brand loyalty among diverse segments of their audience.

Brand visibility and perception are crucial for Nigerian fabric brands' success. Conducting surveys and interviews provides insights into consumer awareness, perception, and preferences (Wang et al., 2019). This helps identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in brand positioning. Fashion exhibitions elevate brand visibility and shape perceptions by generating buzz and social media traction (Kim & Lee, 2020). Analyzing social media metrics before and after exhibitions assesses their effectiveness in amplifying

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brand visibility and engagement. Exploring shifts in consumer sentiment post-exhibition provides insights into brand communication strategies (Yang et al., 2021). This interplay enhances brand storytelling and long-term consumer relationships.

### Policy Implication

The research highlights the need for policies that support the integration of fashion exhibition events with digital marketing strategies. Government and industry stakeholders should encourage the use of social media for promoting local fabric brands, providing training and resources to designers. Additionally, fostering collaborations between event organizers and tech companies can enhance digital engagement, driving growth and global recognition for Nigerian fabric brands.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The study demonstrates that leveraging fashion exhibition events and social media engagement significantly enhances the promotion of Nigerian fabric brands. Through a mixed-methods approach, including descriptive research and content analysis, it was found that integrating event strategies with social media activities effectively boosts brand visibility and consumer engagement. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, played a crucial role in reaching broader audiences. However, further research is needed to explore long-term effects and strategies for sustaining engagement. It is recommended that organizers continue to innovate in event planning and social media integration to maintain and enhance brand promotion, ensuring ongoing consumer interest and loyalty.

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