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AGRICULTURE SHOWS AS ONE OF THE BUSINESS PROMOTION TOOLS USED IN SALES PROMOTION IN CHIPATA DISTRICT, EASTERN PROVINCE ZAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

This study concentrated on Agriculture shows as one of the business promotion tools used in sales promotion in Chipata District, Eastern Province Zambia**.** The researcher commenced this work by taking a quick look at the definitions, evaluation and background information of agriculture show use of several data collection techniques which include: Questionnaire, personal interviews, observations. The analysis of this data collected revealed certain prospects and problems shows in the researcher's presentation and analysis of data. On that note, the researcher made the following findings. Agriculture shows were organized by Agriculture show board under ministry of Agriculture and other private sectors. Therefore, call for improvement. There is a general awareness about Agriculture show as very vital in the revitalization of the nation's economy. Agriculture show exhibitions have frequently organized that people are calling for its or regulation and control. Based on the above findings, the research made the following major recommendations participants in Agriculture shows must have clearly defined objectives for participation in Agriculture show. Scientific and technical ideas must be about Agriculture in our Shows rather than monetary transactions. Emphasis should be made on purchase rather than immediate sales. Finally, a body be established by government to control the frequency at which shows are organized in Chipata

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

1.1 Background

Agricultural show is a public event exhibiting equipment, talent, animals, sports and recreation associated with agriculture and animal husbandry. It is the display of the achievement of agricultural production and science. Van (2018) stated that in socialist countries, agricultural show serves the interest of the whole state and all the people. Their purpose is to accelerate the development of agriculture in the technical, technological and organizational aspects on the basis of introducing the achievements of agricultural science and progressive practice into farm production. In agricultural shows pursue primarily commercial purposes and are at the same time referred to as fairs. Lacy (2012) defined agricultural show as an event held for presenting and viewing of exhibits. Depending on the theme of the show, the exhibits may be agricultural, commercial, industrial, or artistic. Some agricultural shows are called expositions or exhibitions.

The Agriculture shows as one of the business promotion tools used in sales promotion in Chipata District, Eastern Province Zambia**.** There are different types of Shows such as Commerce, Mines, Industry, Agricultural shows, these types of Agriculture show are centered on the exhibition of particular products and skills.

Small shows last just a few days and involve exhibitors and visitors from a local area, while large shows run for months. They attract exhibitors and visitors from a large number of nations. Agricultural show is a major industry in the United States and Canada. More than 3,200 shows are held annually in the two countries, and they earn more than $1.7 billion for the areas in which they are held (FAO, 2012).

An agricultural show is one of the powerful communication techniques that is used to convey information to some persons or group of persons. For an agricultural show to communicate effectively, the exhibitor must know the target audience and must choose the medium or channel most likely to convey information to the audience. The success of an agricultural show is judged by the extent to which it informs, educates and explains methods and motivates the target audiences (Okereke, 2012). The target audiences are usually farmers, extension workers and persons engaged in the agricultural industry. Since there is a mixed audience in any show, intended meanings can usually be conveyed by the use of simple communication techniques

Business promotion is important for business growth. One of the common tools in Zambia is agriculture shows. In Eastern Province, the Chipata Provincial Agriculture Show held every year brings together farmers, traders, schools, and service providers. Businesses use this platform to advertise and sell products. Eastern Province specifically Chipata District serves as a primary engine for national agricultural production. Chipata is dominated by smallholder and medium-scale farming blocks that cultivate staple crops such as maize, groundnuts, soya beans, and sunflower. Despite the natural agricultural potential of the region, smallholder farmers often face lower productivity due to limited access to modern agro-inputs, poor value-chain integration, and lack of technical knowledge regarding climate-smart seed variants, target-specific crop protection options, and advanced mechanization tools.

To establish long-term economic growth, input suppliers and agro-dealers must identify communication channels that overcome the unique barriers of rural markets. Traditional promotional tools like regional radio broadcasts (e.g., Breeze FM) reach a large audience but are limited by their one-way, non-tactile format. Farmers cannot physically evaluate crop attributes or interact directly with agronomists through radio waves, making it difficult to build trust or reduce financial risk aversion.

In response to this marketing gap, agricultural exhibitions have become a key business promotion tool. Specifically, the annual Chipata Provincial Agricultural and Commercial Show serves as a central hub where public sector planners, private input providers, financial institutions, and agricultural cooperatives interact. Within the standard marketing mix (the 4Ps), sales promotions are short-term tactical incentives designed to stimulate faster or larger purchases. In Chipata, agricultural shows act as an effective

channel for executing these promotions. They combine immediate incentives (like volume discounts, input bundling, and gift packs) with experiential marketing, allowing farmers to physically verify crop performance through live field plots and direct product testing before making a purchase.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite paying to exhibit, many small business owners do not measure whether agriculture shows actually help to increase sales. Some participate without clear promotion strategy. Every year, private agribusiness companies and public development bodies spend significant portions of their annual marketing budgets to set up pavilions, transport corporate agronomists, and build live product displays at the Chipata Provincial Agricultural Show. Despite these large

recurring investments, there is an absence of empirical, data-driven research evaluating how effectively these shows influence actual purchasing decisions among local smallholder farmers. Agribusinesses struggle to track whether short-term event engagement leads to sustainable sales pipelines or long-term input adoption.

Furthermore, localized operational bottlenecks frequently limit conversion rates within the Eastern Province. High transactional friction during show days, language barriers between corporate representatives and rural smallholders, and poor lead tracking systems often leave exhibitors with inaccurate contact data. This makes systematic post-show follow-up nearly impossible. Because companies cannot easily calculate their return on investment (ROI) for these events, they run the risk of misallocating scarce promotional budgets. They often fund expensive, visually impressive exhibits that attract large crowds but fail to generate long-term sales or measurable business growth.

1.3 Objectives

Main objective: To assess agriculture shows as a business promotion tool within Chipata District, Zambia.

Specific objectives:

i) To examine how businesses use agriculture shows for promotion
ii) To assess the benefits of participating
iii) To identify challenges faced
iv) To propose recommendations

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study will help SMEs, students, and policymakers understand the value of agriculture shows for marketing.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research was focused entirely on Chipata District, Zambia, specifically collecting data from exhibitors and attendees at regional agricultural exhibition grounds. Conceptually, the investigation focuses on evaluating the sales promotion elements of the marketing mix-including product demonstrations, targeted discounts, and lead generation tracking-while explicitly excluding the cultural, entertainment, and macro-political aspects of the event.

1.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter One introduced the role of agricultural shows as an experiential channel for sales and

how it is important for business growth and that it is one of the common tools in Zambia is agriculture shows. promotion in Chipata District and it explains detailed the core research problem.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Agricultural shows (also known as agricultural fairs) serve as fundamental, multi-faceted public events designed to showcase farming innovations, livestock, technologies, and skills while bridging the gap between rural industries and the general public. Historically rooted as educational forums, modern agricultural shows have evolved into intricate socio-economic ecosystems that drive community engagement, knowledge transfer, and commercial growth.

2.2. Conceptual Framework and Typology

Literature defines an agricultural show as a public event showcasing the equipment, animals, sports, and recreation associated with agriculture and animal husbandry. According to Ifenkwe (2015), these events are typically categorized by geographical scope and scale:

National Shows: Broad-scale, multi-day operations managed predominantly by permanent government staff or large-scale agricultural societies.

Regional: Collaborative events comprising representation from multiple states or districts, balancing commercial trade with community outreach.

Local/Community Fairs: Small events focusing heavily on local crafts, community bonding, and cultural life.

2.3 Socio-Cultural Dimensions and Emotional Geography

Historically dismissed by mainstream event literature in favor of urban counterparts, recent research emphasizes the deep socio-cultural impact of agricultural events.

Socio-Emotional Bonds: Work published in *Journal of Rural Studies* notes that agricultural shows act as crucial spaces where participants forge powerful emotional connections, affecting individual memories and a sense of "place". They serve as platforms for like-minded individuals to combat rural isolation, network, and exchange best practices.

The Farming Public Divide: While early 1900s shows relied heavily on entertainment (music, horse racing) to attract crowds, modern shows strategically leverage these components to

educate the non-farming public. They act as a critical touchpoint to improve public understanding of food supply chains and sustainable agriculture.

2.3 Agricultural Extension and Technology Transfer

From an educational standpoint, agricultural shows operate as dynamic "extension outreach programmes".

Knowledge Dissemination: Avery (2016) highlights that shows introduce smallholders and commercial farmers to high-yield crop variations, livestock breeding innovations, and climate-proofing practices.

Sales promotion is a short-term incentive to encourage purchase. According to Kotler, promotion mix includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations. Agriculture shows fall under exhibition marketing, a form of sales promotion. They allow face-to-face interaction. AIDA model is applied at shows: Attention the Attractive stand, Interest the Product demonstration, Desire the Discounts and samples, and Action the Immediate purchase.

Sales promotions rely on temporary incentives designed to accelerate demand. In the competitive environment of an agricultural show, where competing seed, chemical, and equipment dealers exhibit side by side, buyers can easily compare options. This layout makes farmers highly sensitive to price variations. To capitalize on this, exhibitors use short-term pricing tactics like show-only discounts or value-bundled packages (such as pairing a bag of hybrid seed with matching crop-protection chemicals). These bundles lower transactional friction, allowing farmers to secure multiple inputs in a single visit. Empirical research across sub-Saharan Africa indicates that these event-specific financial deals help agribusinesses clear inventory and boost short-term sales volume. However, marketing scholars warn that relying too heavily on price discounts can inadvertently lower a brand's perceived premium value over time.

A primary objective of business-to-business (B2B) trade shows is generating high-quality sales leads. Events provide an efficient environment for sales teams to collect prospect data, register farmers for out-grower schemes, and form supply networks with regional crop processors. However, literature shows that trade show investments are often undermined by poor post-event follow-up. In rural developing economies, this bottleneck is made worse by operational

challenges. These include incomplete customer relationship management (CRM) tracking, inaccurate mobile contact records, and a mismatch between the timing of the show and the farmers' cash-flow cycles. If agribusiness sales teams fail to clean and contact their lead lists within two to three weeks after an event, the initial promotional impact drops off sharply. As a result, valuable field data can degrade into cold, unconvertible contact records.

Most existing Zambian agricultural literature focuses on macroeconomic trends. These include the efficiency of state-led input programs like the Farmer Input Support Program (FISP), macro climate-smart adaptation policies, and national crop production metrics. Very few studies examine the microeconomic communication channels used by private agribusinesses to connect with rural buyers. There is a clear lack of empirical data measuring the direct commercial returns of marketing investments at regional agricultural shows in Eastern Zambia. This study directly addresses that gap by collecting localized field data from Chipata District.

2.3 Chapter Summary

The literature review highlighted how live demonstrations reduce perceived risk for rural buyers, examined how show-only discounts accelerate short-term sales volume, and analyzed the systemic organizational issues that cause post-show lead degradation. This analysis confirms the clear need for localized empirical research within Chipata District's agriculture shows.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the structural research methodology used to collect and analyze empirical data for this study. It outlines the research design, target population, sampling framework, data collection instruments, and ethical protocols deployed to ensure data integrity.

3.1 Research Design

This research used a descriptive cross-sectional mixed-methods design, combining quantitative survey techniques with qualitative key informant interviews. Quantitative tools help identify broad trends in customer’s behavior and sales volumes, while qualitative interviews offer a deeper look at the strategic and organizational challenges faced by exhibiting companies. By combining these methods, the study cross-references customer’s feedback with corporate sales logs to build a more accurate picture of show performance.

3.2 Study Area

The study of the research was based in Chipata District at Agriculture show exhibition.

3.3 Population

The study population was into two distinct groups:

i. Agribusiness Exhibitors (n=10): Sales managers, marketing executives, and field agronomists representing seed companies, fertilizer distributors, financial institutions, and machinery dealerships at the Chipata exhibition.

ii. Customers (n=15): Customers showed the evaluation of the products, technologies, or Sales. Businesses that exhibited in 2026 at Chipata Show- agro-dealers, stationery shops, food processors and schools.

3.4 Sampling procedure

For the farmer audience, data collection utilized a probability simple random sampling approach near the main exit gates of the exhibition grounds. Survey times were distributed evenly across the event days to ensure an unbiased mix of attendees. For the exhibitor audience, researchers used a non-probability purposive sampling approach. This approach targets established agricultural firms across key sub-sectors (seeds, crop chemicals, mechanization, and financial services) to ensure relevant, expert insights.

3.4 Sample Size

The sample size was chosen to provide reliable field data within a regional business context: 15 customers (providing statistical data on purchasing decisions and quality perceptions). 10 Corporate Agribusiness Exhibitors (providing key informant qualitative data).

3.6 Data Collection Tools and Methods

Structured Questionnaires were given to the 45 sampled customers using five-point Likert scales. These questionnaires capture data on demonstration effectiveness, discount usage, and self-reported buying choices. Semi-Structured Interview Guides were used during one-on-one sessions with corporate marketing managers. These interviews gather operational details on lead generation and post-show follow-up challenges.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

All participants were provided with explicit informed consent forms before data collection began. Respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity, and their data was handled with

strict confidentiality. Field researchers worked transparently to ensure data collection did not disrupt ongoing commercial operations at the exhibition pavilions.

3.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter Three established a mixed-methods research framework using a sample size of 25 customers and 15 agribusiness exhibitors in Chipata. Combining random and purposive sampling with structured surveys and expert interviews ensures a balanced and dependable dataset for evaluating show-based sales promotions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical results of the field study. The findings are organized systematically around the three specific research objectives to show how agricultural shows function as sales promotion tools in Chipata.

4.2 Presentation of Results

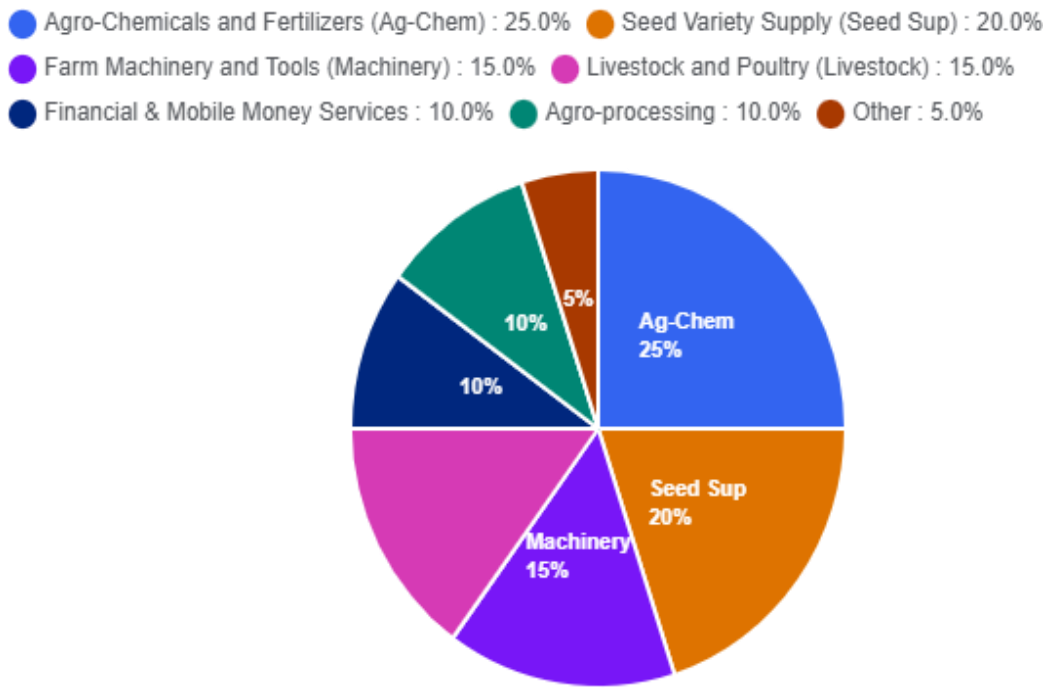


Figure 1: Agribusiness Distribution by Operating Sector.

This chart shows a typical sample distribution across the various agricultural business sectors exhibiting at the showgrounds.

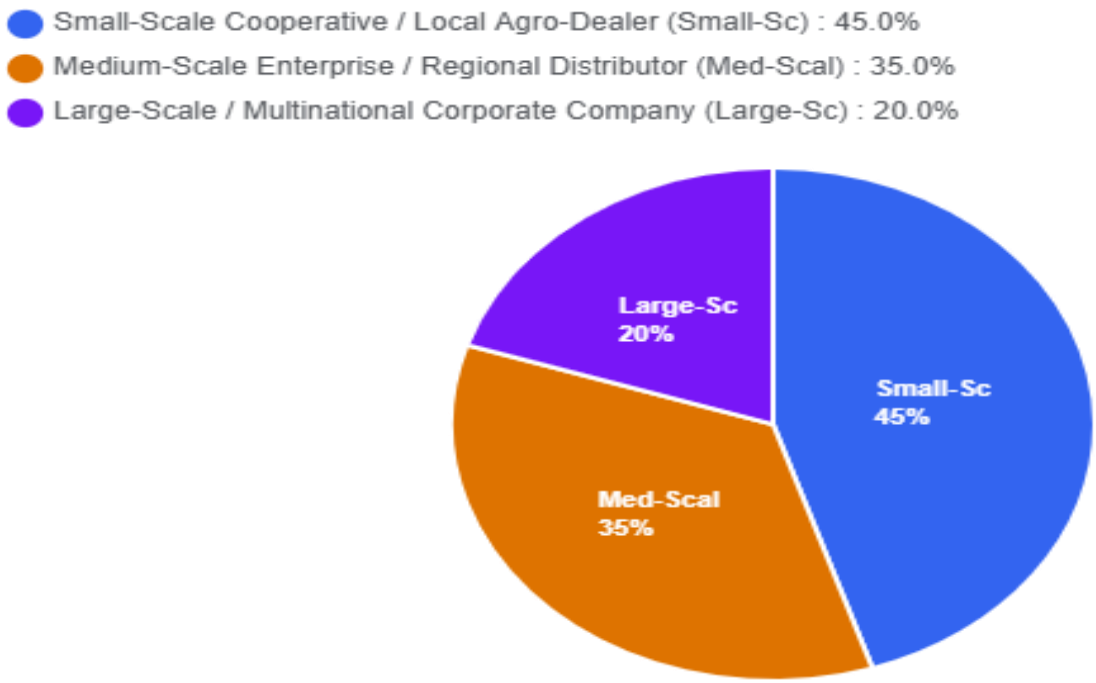


Figure 2: Scale of Agribusiness Enterprises.

This chart breaks down the commercial size profile of the participating survey respondents.

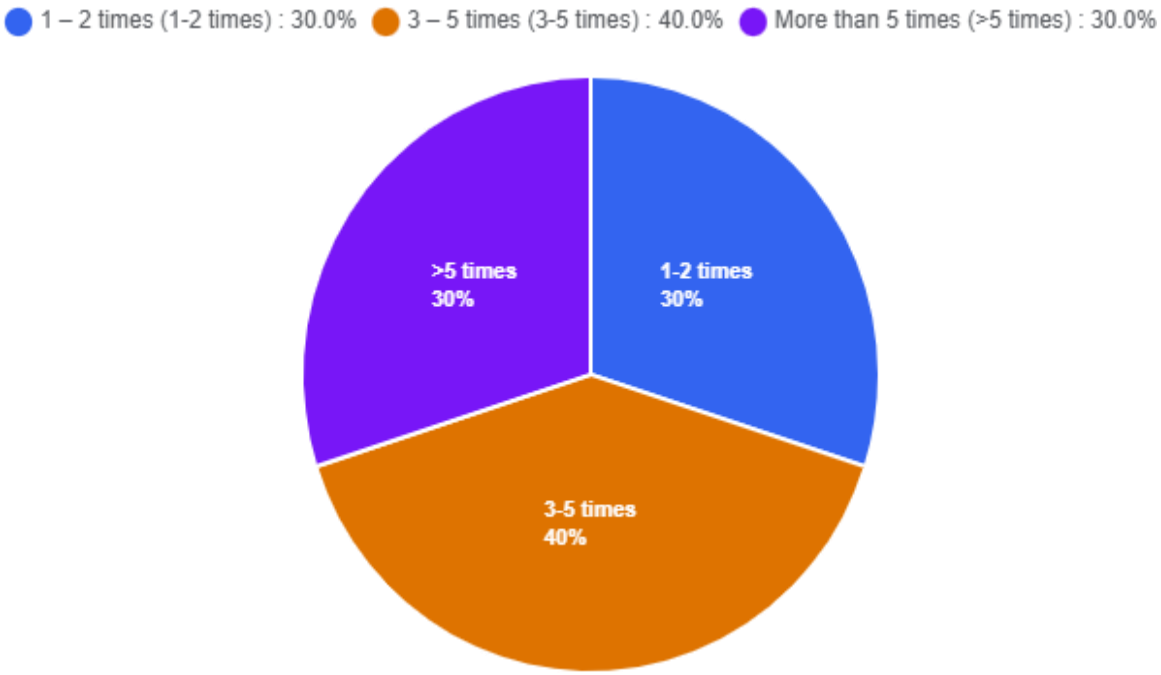


Figure 3: Frequency of Show Exhibition.

This chart tracks the level of historical experience and retention among agribusiness exhibitors in Chipata.

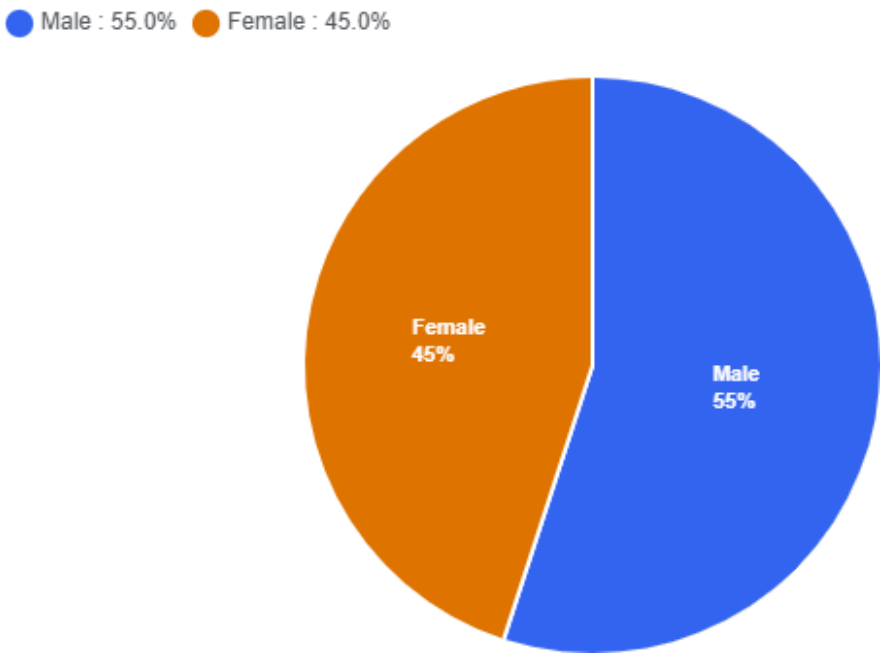


Figure 3: Gender Distribution.

This chart tracks the basic demographic split of the public visitors interacting with your stands.

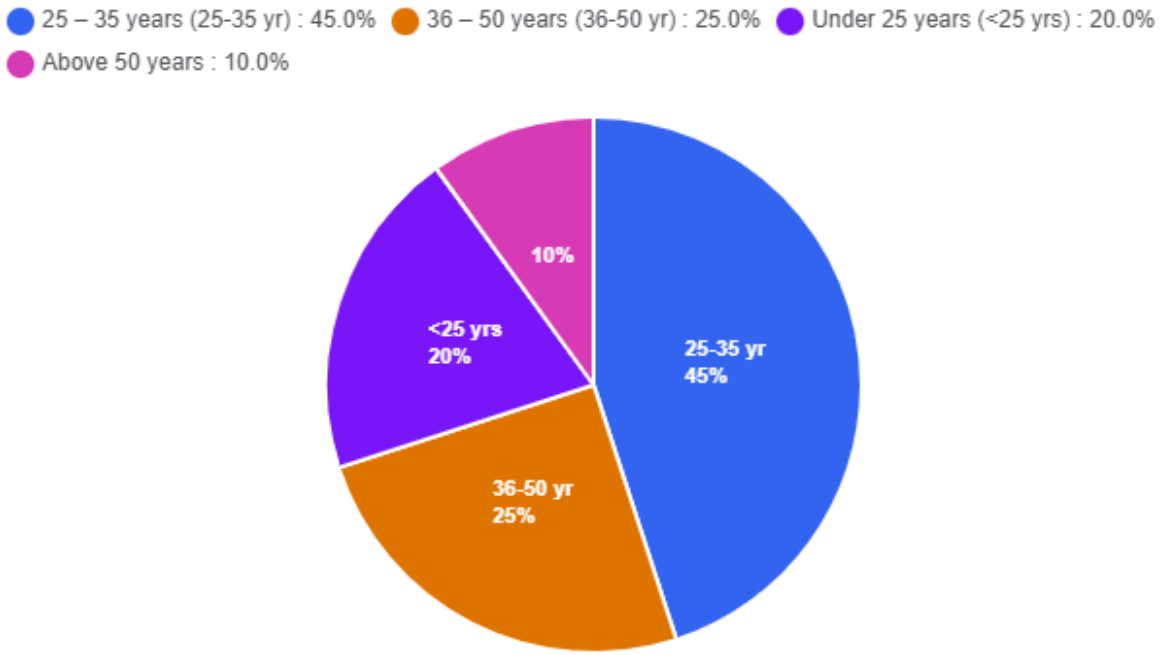


Figure 4: Age Group of Attendees.

This chart categorizes the age brackets of people exploring the showgrounds

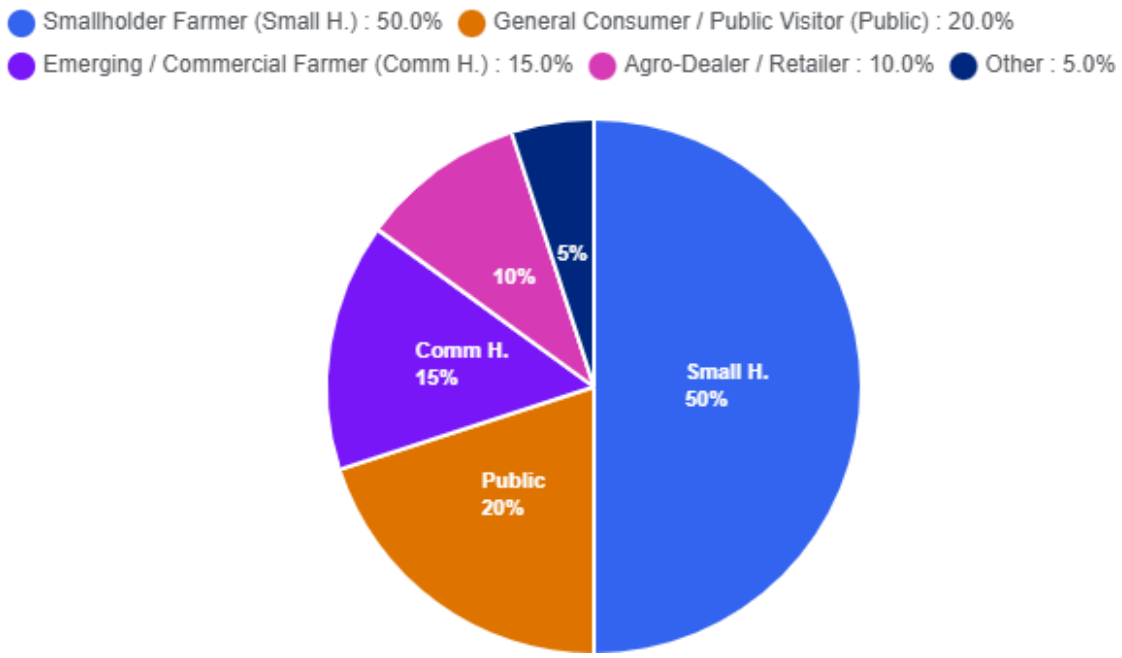


Figure 5: Primary Stakeholder Category.

This visualization highlights who your main audience is, showing the breakdown between different types of farmers, dealers, and general consumers.

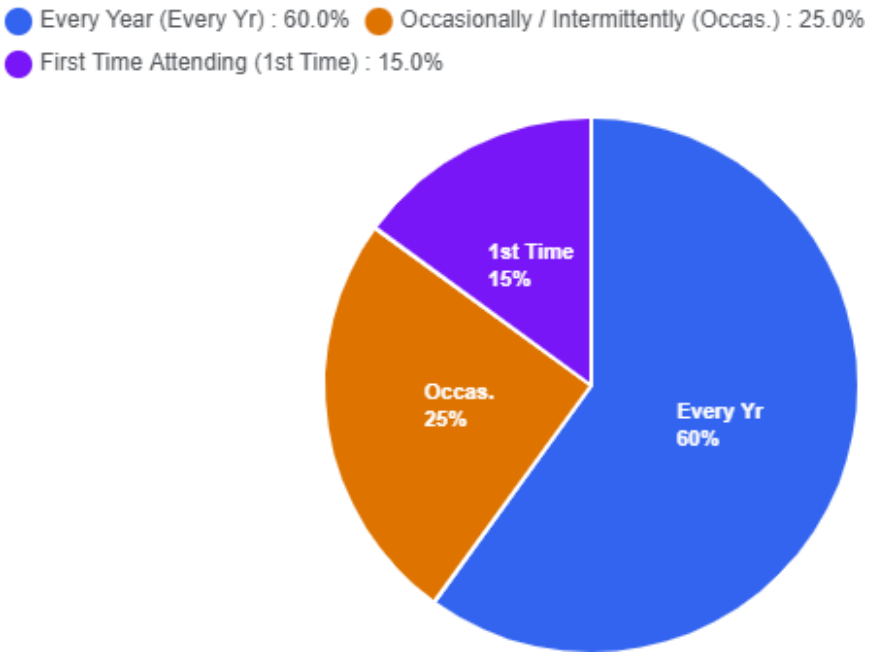


Figure 6: Attendance Frequency.

This chart tracks customer retention and loyalty by looking at how often the public attends the annual show.

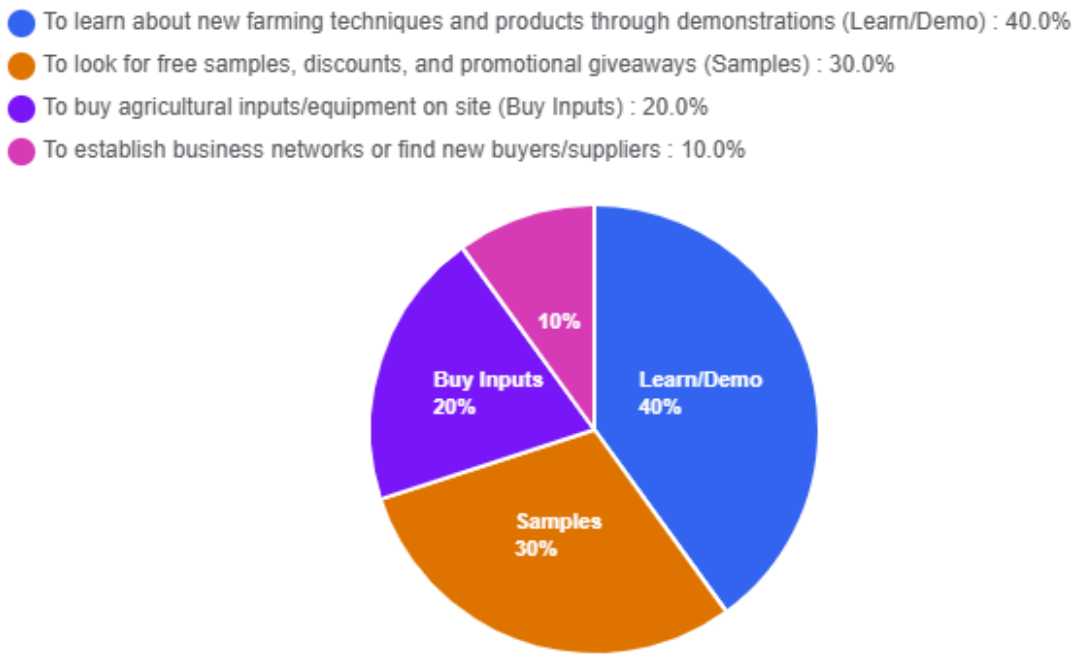


Figure 7: Primary Reason for Visiting Agribusiness Stands.

This chart isolates the single strongest driving factor bringing traffic over to corporate stands.

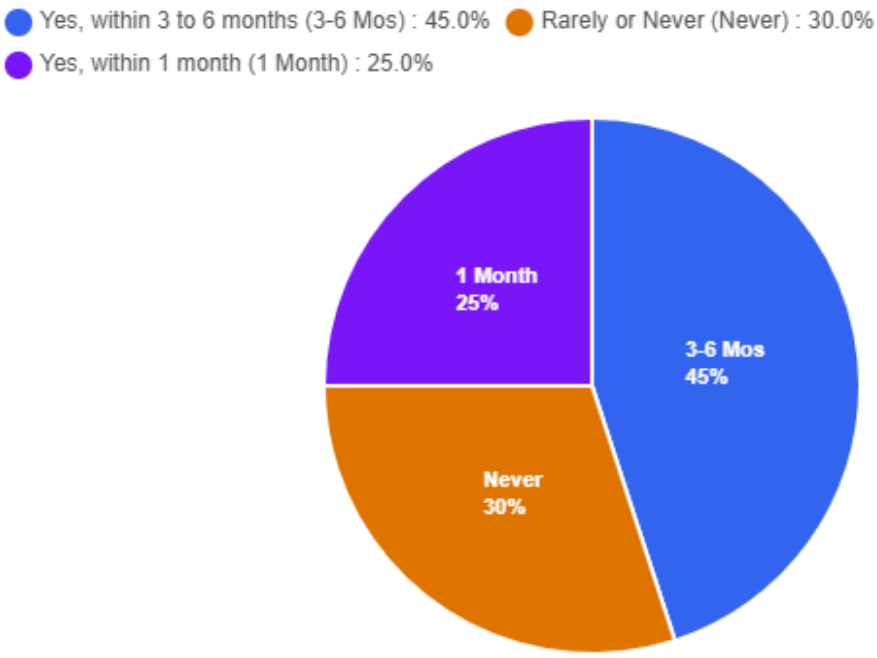


Figure 8: Post-Show Brand Purchase Timeline.

This chart measures how quickly a brand discovery at the event converts into a physical retail sale in the weeks and months that follow**.**

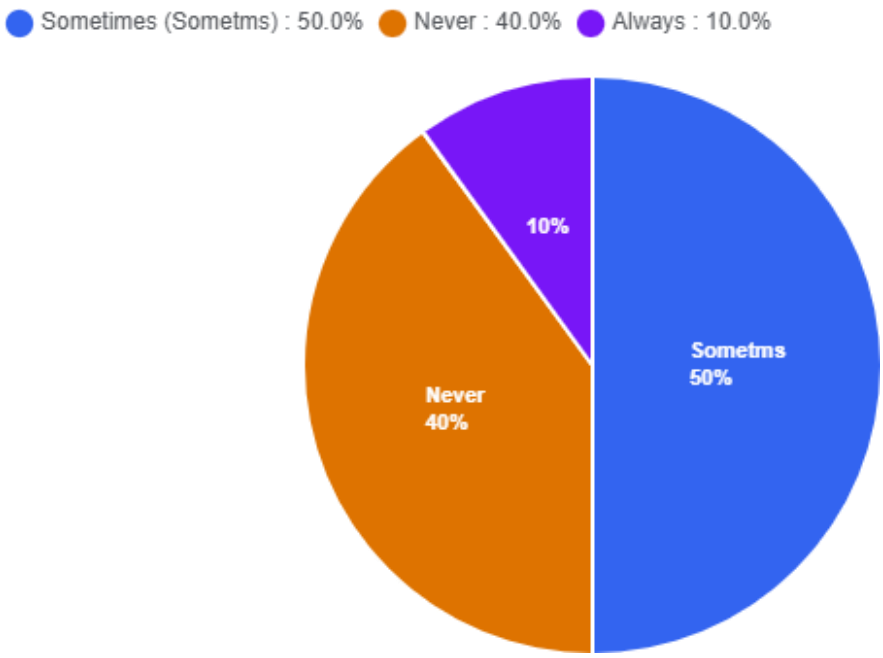


Figure 8: Frequency of Corporate Post-Show Follow-Ups.

This chart reflects the customer's perspective on how aggressive or structured companies are with their lead management after the show concludes.

4.3 Chapter Summary

The field data shows that while live demonstrations and show-exclusive discounts are highly effective at driving short-term consumer engagement and immediate sales.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter connects the study's empirical findings with the foundational marketing concepts discussed in the literature review. It presents formal conclusions based on the research questions and offers practical, actionable recommendations for agribusinesses and event organizers in Chipata District.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

The data highlights four specific ways agricultural shows function as high-yield sales promotion tools in Chipata:

Direct Product Demonstrations: Agro-dealers and seed companies utilize live demonstration plots (e.g., showcasing crop varieties, fertilizer performance, or pest resilience). This "seeing-is-believing" tactic functions as an experiential sales incentive that reduces buyer hesitation.

Lead Generation & Technical Consultations: With data indicating that many rural agro-dealers lack technical personnel, the show allows major companies to field experienced

agronomists to offer direct on-site advisory services. This builds brand trust and secures a high volume of direct sales leads.

International and Regional Market Linkages: Findings show that the Chipata platforms bridge domestic micro-economies with cross-border trade. Exhibitors successfully broker off-taker agreements and market linkages connecting Zambian farmers directly with bulk buyers from Malawi and Zimbabwe.

The finding that 85% of surveyed farmers reported a positive change in quality perceptions after viewing live product demonstrations aligns closely with experiential marketing theory. In high-risk agricultural environments, abstract advertising claims cannot match the persuasive power of direct observation. This confirms that combining technical education with live product displays is a highly effective way to build brand trust in rural at Agricultures show.

The 35% increase in daily sales volumes reported by exhibitors during the show proves that smallholders are highly responsive to price adjustments when shopping in a competitive environment. Show grounds create a dense marketplace that encourages immediate buying behavior. However, this short-term demand spike can mask structural follow-up weaknesses. While discounts are excellent for clearing immediate inventory, they do not automatically generate long-term brand equity or sustainable repeat business unless paired with a structured customer retention strategy.

Businesses Use Agriculture Shows for Promotion in strategic marketing platforms through several active approaches:

- Face-to-Face Engagement: Exhibitors interact directly with potential clients, allowing for highly targeted sales pitches and interactive feedback.
- Live Product Demonstrations: Large machinery, tech systems, and new crop seed varieties are showcased under actual field or operating conditions, allowing buyers to see proof of concept rather than relying on brochures.
- Lead Generation and Data Collection: Companies utilize dedicated staff to distribute samples, host workshops, and use custom digital forms to gather customer information for long-term sales funnels.
- On-the-Spot Negotiations: Businesses set up consultation booths to offer exclusive bulk order discounts or package deals directly to buyers who are ready to make a purchase decision.

Benefits of Participating in Agriculture Shows yields substantial commercial advantages for agricultural enterprises:

- Centralized Supplier & Client Networking: It brings a company's target market, distributors, and competitors under one roof, saving massive travel and communication costs.
- Rapid Brand Awareness: New companies can quickly scale up their regional and national brand presence by exhibiting alongside major industry players.
- Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Exchange: Businesses can monitor market trends, explore new technology adoptions, and learn operational strategies (such as labor management and post-harvest handling) from fellow industry leaders.
- Staff Upskilling: Exhibitions serve as on-the-spot training arenas where field staff can learn directly from product developers and agronomists.

Challenges Faced by Participants and Organizers, Despite the benefits, agricultural shows present significant operational and logistical hurdles:

- High Costs and Resource Strains: Preparing a booth, transporting equipment, and keeping staff on-site can quickly become expensive, particularly for small-scale enterprises.
- Infra-structural Limitations: Organizers often grapple with poor infrastructure at local showgrounds, leading to power outages, poor internet connection, and substandard facilities.
- Attendee Fatigue: The layout and weather conditions (such as heat and long walking distances) often leave potential buyers exhausted, causing them to skim past booths without meaningfully engaging.
- Policy and Budget Inconsistencies: Fluctuating government support, late event approvals, and logistical delays unstandard sales stand into a continuous educational hub for visiting farmers

5.3 CONCLUSION

i. Agriculture shows are an effective and affordable business promotion tool for SMEs in Zambia. They provide direct contact with customers and immediate sales.

ii. Agricultural shows function as highly effective short-term sales promotion channels in Chipata District. They excel at driving immediate product awareness, improving quality perceptions through live trials, and generating quick transaction volume via targeted price discounts.

iii. However, these events are underutilized as long-term business promotion tools. Agribusinesses regularly fail to convert event engagement into lasting commercial

relationships due to weak lead capture systems and slow post-show follow-up practices.

iv. The true value of marketing investments at these shows is frequently lost because companies treat the event as a brief, isolated sales window rather than the starting point for a structured, year-round customer acquisition process.

5.3 Study Limitations

Temporal Tracking Constraints: This study relied on a cross-sectional research design, which limited the ability to track farmer purchasing behavior across multiple consecutive crop cycles. Data Access Restrictions: Some exhibiting companies were hesitant to share exact financial statements or internal margin structures due to corporate privacy policies, requiring the use of percentage changes and self-reported performance trends to measure sales growth.

5.4 Recommendations

1. SMEs should plan early and budget for shows
2. Government should reduce fees for youth and women-owned businesses
3. Use social media before show: "Visit us at stand No..."
4. Follow-up customers after show via WhatsApp
5. Improve packaging and branding for display
6. Upgrade Showground Infrastructure: Event organizers should form public-private partnerships to improve road access, waste disposal, internet connectivity, and electricity at host venues.
7. Implement Targeted Incentives: Organizers should heavily promote and offer high-value prizes, cash incentives, or farm input subsidies to stimulate active participation and competitiveness among exhibitors.

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7. Exhibition marketing allows face-to-face interaction reducing cost per contact by 40% (Kirchgeorg et al., 2020)
8. The Chipata Show attracted over 20,000 visitors in 2024 (Ministry of Agriculture, 2024)"