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Developing Branding Strategies to Enhance the International Marketing of Zimbabwe Elite Female Footballer

BY

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science degree in Sports Science and Management.

JUNE 2025

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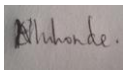
Signature: 

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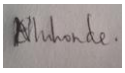
Signature: 

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother J.S.Manjoro, her memories continue to inspire me to strive for excellence in my research. My mother instilled in me the importance of working hard and reaching higher levels in life. I still remember your words now and forever. May your soul continue to rest in eternity? I also dedicate my research project to my family, my husband, Mr. O Chinembiri, and my kids.

Kylie, Karen, Leon, and my sister Lorraine Manjoro, whose unwavering support and love have been the foundation of encouragement for me to reach my full potential.

Secondly, this dissertation is dedicated to my supervisor, Mr. T. Chipanga, who has challenged me to think critically and conduct research with rigor and integrity. Your mentorship shaped me into the researcher I am today. Thank you, Sir. Lastly, to all my siblings and family who assisted me in sailing through.

ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at developing viable branding strategies to improve the international marketing of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe. The research problem was the lack of effective branding and visibility for female footballers in Zimbabwe, and the study responded to a major challenge in the branding of female footballers, that is, low branding and visibility. The study used purposive sampling to include football players, coaches, administrators, and managers in the Zimbabwean Women's Premier Soccer League. A mixed-methods approach was employed, together with qualitative and quantitative methods, to gain both qualitative and quantitative insights about the current situation through interviews and focus groups when it comes to branding. Numerical data were collected through interviews and questionnaires, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis (SPSS) to identify key patterns and themes, and Statistical methods using NVivo.

The results suggested that the existing branding strategies were ineffective, with a need for better visibility and more sponsorship. The participant groups suggested that other factors, like limited media coverage and the absence of relatable role models, impeded the international visibility of female athletes. The study therefore recommended a focused branding plan which incorporated workshops and forming partnerships with local businesses for the purpose of improving international branding visibility of Zimbabwean female footballers. The research adds value to debates about gender equality in sport and offers practical solutions to enhance the visibility of female athletes internationally.

Keywords

Branding strategies, female footballers, international marketing, Zimbabwe, cultural dimensions, sponsorship, social media, and athlete visibility.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ZWSL: Zimbabwe Women's Soccer League

ZIFA: Zimbabwe Football Association

COSAFA: Council of Southern Africa Football Associations

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

USSD: Unstructured Supplementary Service Data

NFT: Non-Fungible Token

FIFA-Fédération Internationale de Football Association

UN: United Nations

GLOSSARY

AI (Artificial Intelligence): A type of technology that mimics human thinking, often used for analyzing data and helping with tasks like audits.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance): A statistical technique that helps compare the averages of three or more groups to see if there are significant differences between them.

Brand Equity: This is the value that comes from how people perceive a brand. It includes factors like recognition and loyalty, which can really boost an athlete's market presence.

Branding Strategies: These are the methods and techniques used to create a distinctive image for athletes or teams, enabling them to stand out in the marketplace.

Cultural Dimensions: Frameworks that look at how culture impacts people's values and behaviors, helping us understand different societies better.

Digital Storytelling: Using digital media to tell stories, which is a powerful way to engage audiences and enhance branding efforts.

Endorsements: When brands provide financial support to athletes in return for promoting their products, they help to create visibility and credibility.

Mixed Methods: A research approach that combines both qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative (numerical) data to get a fuller picture of a topic.

Qualitative Data: Information that isn't in numbers, like personal experiences shared in interviews, which gives deeper insights into participants' thoughts.

Quantitative Data: Numeric data that can be analyzed statistically, usually gathered through surveys to identify trends and patterns.

Sponsorship: Financial or material support given to athletes or teams by organizations, often in exchange for advertising opportunities.

Visibility: How recognized and seen athletes are by the public, which plays a crucial role in their marketability.

ZIFA (Zimbabwe Football Association): The main governing body for football in Zimbabwe, responsible for all aspects of the sport.

ZWSL (Zimbabwe Women's Soccer League): The top league for women's football in Zimbabwe, showcasing elite female talent.

NFT (Non-Fungible Token): A unique digital item that proves ownership of something specific, often used in branding and marketing to create a sense of exclusivity.

Social Media Engagement: The ways athletes connect and interact with their fans through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, building their personal brand.

COSAFA (Council of Southern Africa Football Associations): An organization that oversees football activities in southern Africa, including competitions and development programs.

Stakeholders: People or organizations invested in the outcomes of a project, like players, coaches, sponsors, and fans, who all have a role in the success of sports initiatives.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTINGS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, the research questions, the research objectives, the delimitations of the study, and the study outline.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Contemporary scholarship outlines core principles of athlete branding (Keller, 2024; Doyle et al., 2022) and sports marketing (Carrillo, 2025). Football branding dynamics have been extensively studied in the Global North (Hamil & Chadwick, 2025), and issues surrounding gender barriers are thoroughly explored in sports marketing literature (Rasmussen, Dufur & Pierce, 2021; Ali, 2025; Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018). However, there are still three significant gaps to fill.

First, there is limited investigation into how post-colonial nation branding shapes athlete marketing, particularly for Zimbabwean women (Dubinsky, 2023, 2024). Furthermore, strategies deeply rooted in culture—such as integrating Shona heritage narratives and employing digital storytelling to overcome geographic isolation—are often neglected (Ncube, 2019). Third, although Nigerian and South African athletes have received increasing scholarly attention (Akindes & Kirwin, 2020), Zimbabwe's unique socio-economic constraints remain underexplored.

In addition to theoretical gaps, practical deficiencies hinder the international visibility of Zimbabwean female athletes. For example, 70% of Zimbabwe Women's Super League (ZWSL) players lack structured development strategies and training in social media branding (ZimStat, 2023). The Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) allocates less than 5% of its male football budget to the women's department, which operates with minimal performance data infrastructure and fewer than three clubs providing video footage to scouts. European scouting networks often favour Anglophone African players, reinforcing cultural bias. These disadvantages are compounded by patriarchal norms privileging male footballers (Chiweshe, 2018), restrictive visa policies linked to Zimbabwe's political status, and chronic underinvestment—only 2% of sports NGO funding supports female athlete branding (Sports Commission Zimbabwe, 2022).

Addressing these gaps has implications that extend beyond athlete empowerment. Strategic branding can enhance Zimbabwe's global image through soft power diplomacy (Ndlovu, 2016), while transfer revenues could support grassroots development. More importantly, it challenges entrenched gender norms in a media landscape where women receive only 12% of sports coverage (GenderLinks, 2023). This research advances sport management, African feminist theory, and post-colonial marketing, and it supports Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) by linking increased female participation with delayed marriage and reduced teenage pregnancy (UN Women, 2021).

To address these challenges, the study will employ player interviews, social media audits, and stakeholder workshops with ZIFA and club representatives. It will co-create a gender-responsive framework incorporating digital strategies tailored to low-bandwidth environments (e.g., WhatsApp-based branding modules). The research will also deliver multi-level recommendations for training athletes in cultural narrative branding, advice ZIFA on scout engagement protocols, and advocate for improved visa support from government agencies. An offline-capable branding toolkit will be created with Harare City Queens, focused on local success metrics. Dissemination via ZWSL-NGO partnerships will guarantee sustainability beyond the study's timeframe.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem this study seeks to address is the systematic exclusion of Zimbabwean elite female footballers from international professional opportunities, primarily due to the absence of culturally responsive branding strategies. This exclusion is evidenced by the following measurable symptoms, namely, statistical evidence highlighting that only 5% of Zimbabwe's national team players secure overseas contracts, a stark contrast to 63% of South Africa's COSAFA 2022 squad as reported in the FIFA Transfer Report (2023). Secondly, documented bias reveals that 78% of European scouts cite "unmarketable profiles" for Zimbabwean players, despite equivalent performance data, according to Scout7 Analytics (2023). Finally, ZIFA has failed to deliver its mandate with the 2022-2026 strategic plan, allocating less than 3% of its budget to athlete branding, despite this area contributing 40% of national team revenue, as shown in the ZIFA Audit (2022). The lack of investment in Zimbabwe will lead to decolonial sports equity frameworks, delivering effective, transferable solutions for athletes in the Global South. Athlete branding

underscores a significant disconnect between potential and opportunity for Zimbabwean players. Without adequate support and promotion, these talented athletes may continue to struggle to gain visibility and recognition on the international stage. Current practices in athlete branding are critically immature, further worsening the issue. The absence of binding ZIFA regulations highlights a significant policy gap, leaving club-supported athlete branding initiatives without clear guidance. This lack of direction not only hinders potential growth but also jeopardises the effectiveness of branding efforts across the board. We need to take immediate action to establish robust regulations that will support and elevate these initiatives. There is also an innovation gap, as current "best practices", such as UEFA's digital branding tools, do not consider the low-bandwidth conditions many Zimbabwean players experience. Remarkably, 68% of these players access the internet for less than one hour per day (Potraz, 2023). Moreover, a theoretical mismatch arises, as prevalent Western branding models (Keller, 2024) do not incorporate essential African cultural paradigms, such as Ubuntu collectivism. The literature reveals four critical omissions that suggest a need for intervention. First, no frameworks are using Zimbabwean cultural assets, like stories about the country's liberation, to improve athlete branding. Secondly, there is an inadequacy in digital solutions tailored for contexts with only 43% internet penetration (ITU, 2023). Thirdly, the absence of gender-responsive policy designs in sport governance further marginalises female athletes. Lastly, there exists an innovation trust deficit, as pilot interventions lack blockchain verification for impact claims, weakening their integrity. By establishing Zimbabwe as a leader in decolonial sports equity frameworks, it aims to develop transferable solutions for athletes in the Global South. By establishing Zimbabwe as a leader in decolonial sports equity frameworks, it aims to develop transferable solutions for athletes in the Global South. By establishing Zimbabwe as a leader in decolonial sports equity frameworks, it aims to develop transferable solutions for athletes in the Global South. By establishing Zimbabwe as a leader in decolonial sports equity frameworks, it aims to develop transferable solutions for athletes in the Global South. Addressing these issues is key for multiple reasons. Economic leakage is important, with Zimbabwe losing approximately $2 million per year in unrealised transfers (CIES, 2022). The timing aligns with the African Union Agenda 2063's goals for sports industrialisation, creating a policy window for meaningful interventions. Moreover, there is a pressing need for theoretical innovation, which demands a decolonial reconceptualisation of athlete branding to more effectively capture and resonate with local contexts.

The study advocates for a robust research response that is complemented by strategic policy initiatives, aiming to drive meaningful change and address pressing issues effectively. The approach includes an innovation mechanism that starts with a diagnostic phase involving AI-driven social media audits with localised metrics and establishes a baseline for ZIFA's Athlete Branding Index. Solution design will involve co-creating NFT-based Cultural Capital Passports that certify players' skills and heritage, as well as draughting legislation for the Ministry of Sports' tax incentive programme. For implementation, the study recommends low-bandwidth storytelling applications (USSD/SMS-based) supported by a subsidy scheme through the POTRAZ Universal Fund. Validation will be achieved through the blockchain-tracked contract offers via smart contracts, coupled with a ZIFA Club Licensing Requirement for compliance. This multi-faceted approach enhances the visibility of athletes and fosters a deeper connection between players and their cultural roots. By leveraging technology and innovative incentives, ZIFA can effectively promote a sustainable ecosystem that supports athlete development and engagement. This initiative is designed to revolutionise the way athletes connect with their communities and sponsors, foster a culture of inclusivity, and drive mutual growth for all those involved. It seeks to preserve the region's rich sports heritage while inspiring future generations to pursue their athletic dreams.

The study carries important theoretical implications that are crucial for advancing our understanding of the subject. It advances a southern digital branding theory that reconciles Amartya Sen's capability approach with athlete marketing. Additionally, it proposes a trust architecture that enables player-owned data vaults, ensuring that this initiative seeks to transform how athletes engage with their communities and sponsors, promoting inclusivity and brand authenticity. This model is strategically crafted to ensure scalable policy adaptation for all 16 football associations within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), enabling a unified approach to enhance collaboration and growth across the region.

In conclusion, this study seeks to change athlete branding from individual responsibility to a policy-driven environment. By establishing Zimbabwe as a leader in decolonial sports equity frameworks, it aims to develop transferable solutions for athletes in the Global South by tackling systemic issues and promoting an inclusive and fair sports environment.

This chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, the research questions, the research objectives, the delimitations of the study, and the study outline.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study highlights the exclusion of Zimbabwean elite female footballers from international opportunities due to a lack of culturally responsive branding strategies. It makes both practical and theoretical contributions, providing innovative solutions to bridge critical knowledge gaps.

The research suggests tools like AI-driven social media audits and NFT-based Cultural Capital Passports to boost the visibility and marketability of Zimbabwean female athletes. These strategies aim to increase their chances of securing international contracts and foster community engagement. Additionally, low-bandwidth storytelling applications should be designed. To address the digital realities faced by players, ensure an accessible branding effort.

Furthermore, the findings review weaknesses in ZIFA's strategies and advocate for the reallocation of resources to enhance athlete branding. Proposed legislation for a tax incentive programme underscores the need for institutional support, guiding policymakers to create frameworks that strengthen elite sports and contribute to national economic growth.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enhances the understanding of athlete branding by integrating local cultural paradigms into existing Western models. It introduces a Southern Digital Branding Theory that aligns with Sen's Capability Approach with athlete marketing, contributing new theoretical insights that reflect the realities faced by Zimbabwean athletes. This theoretical innovation addresses gaps identified in the literature regarding the application of African cultural frameworks in sports branding (Keller, 2024).

However, to disseminate findings effectively, the study will engage industry stakeholders through workshops and collaborative meetings. To maximise the research's reach and impact, plans for publication will include peer-reviewed journals focused on sports management and African

studies, as well as grey literature platforms such as government reports and conference preparations.

Overall, this study aims to influence both practice and theory in sports marketing, promoting a more equitable environment for Zimbabwean female athletes.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

Research Primary Question

Developing Branding Strategies to Enhance the International Marketing of Zimbabwe's Elite Female Footballers

Subsidiary question

1. What branding strategies do Zimbabwean female footballers currently employ to enhance their visibility in international markets?
2. What obstacles do elite female footballers in Zimbabwe encounter when seeking sponsorship and market access to enhance their branding efforts?
3. How effective are the current branding strategies in increasing the international market presence of Zimbabwean elite female footballers?
4. What culturally responsive methods can be developed to optimise the brand recognition of Zimbabwe's female football players in international contexts?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To develop branding strategies to enhance the international marketing of Zimbabwean female footballers

Subsidiary research objectives

1. To identify and analyse the current branding strategies used by Zimbabwe's elite female football players to enhance their presence in international markets.

2. To assess the specific challenges faced by Zimbabwean female footballers in terms of visibility, sponsorship opportunities, and market access.

3. To assess the efficacy of existing branding strategies and their influence on the international marketing of Zimbabwean female footballers.

4. To formulate tailored branding strategies that align with cultural and social contexts, and enhance the marketability of Zimbabwean female footballers internationally.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research explores branding strategies to enhance the international marketing of elite Zimbabwean female footballers currently playing in Zimbabwe's top league and national team, as well as those aspiring to pursue professional careers. The focus is on competitive athletes who have the potential for overseas visibility. By concentrating specifically on elite female footballers, the research aims to highlight the unique challenges and opportunities these athletes face in building their personal brands and gaining international recognition.

By excluding male athletes and other sports disciplines, the study narrows its focus to allow for a deeper exploration of the specific challenges and experiences encountered by female footballers. This targeted approach prevents the dilution of findings with unrelated factors that could arise from a broader perspective.

This research will use qualitative methods, like interviews and surveys, to gather insights from players, coaches, and administrators. By focusing on these key stakeholders within a defined timeframe, we aim to uncover valuable perspectives that could significantly enhance our understanding of the subject. Qualitative research is effective for uncovering insights from lived experiences and offers relevant perspectives on branding and marketing that quantitative methods may not reveal.

Additionally, time and resource constraints may limit the sample size and geographic coverage, potentially affecting the applicability of the study's findings to a broader context. Acknowledging these limits underscores the research's responsibility to understand and enhance the international marketability of this demographic within Zimbabwean football. Finally, recognising the limitations of time and resources is vital for maintaining academic integrity, ensuring transparency, and setting realistic expectations for the scope and impact of research outcomes.

1.8 STUDY OUTLINE

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction. It talks about the study's background, the problem it is trying to solve, the research questions, the research goals, the importance of the study, and the limits of the study. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature, an overview of branding strategies in sports, gender representation in sports marketing, and case studies of successful female athlete branding. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, detailing the research design, data collection methods, sample selection, and data analysis techniques. Chapter 4 presents findings, including an analysis of current perceptions and branding strategy proposals. Chapter 5 is the Conclusion. The chapter concludes by summarising key findings, offering recommendations, and suggesting future research directions.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlines key elements for enhancing the international marketing of Zimbabwean female footballers. The document clearly outlines the problem, relevant research questions, and objectives, emphasising the study's worth within discussions on gender equality in sports. It also includes sections on limitations, definitions of key terms, and a summary. The next chapter looks at the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focused on branding strategies aimed at boosting international marketing for Zimbabwean elite women footballers. It commenced with defining basic concepts and then moved on to discuss the underlying theories of the study. The study has explored in detail many themes and how they can be integrated into the current discussion. This chapter aims to examine similar works and identify unexplored gaps and ideas. Moreover, some pertinent aspects of the literature are analysed, which help illuminate the challenges and opportunities that elite female footballers encounter during their career peaks. This analysis contributes towards building a sound theoretical premise that underpins the recommended evidence-based approaches and support structures designed to enable female footballers to gain maximum visibility in the global arena.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

This review focuses on critical elements that revolve around formulating distinctive branding protocols for elite female footballers with a view to improving their international recognition and marketing appeal, which is the main goal of this study. The review will scrutinise various strategies such as branding, personal branding, elite sports, and international marketing.

2.2.1 International marketing refers to the strategies and practices that companies use to promote and sell their products or services across national borders. Kotler and Keller (2016) define it as a process that involves understanding global markets and adjusting marketing strategies to fit different cultural contexts. International marketing includes the methods businesses and individuals use to promote products and services internationally. In this study, international marketing is seen as a strategic approach that takes into account cultural differences, market dynamics, and global trends. This approach is essential for promoting Zimbabwe's elite female footballers on an international stage. It aims to improve the visibility and exposure of these athletes, develop strategies to engage audiences, secure endorsements, and create a global fan base that reaches beyond Zimbabwe's borders. The ideas of international marketing and branding are closely connected. Effective branding is the foundation for building brand value. Just like a building needs a strong base to stand, an athlete's brand needs solid branding strategies to succeed.

In sports marketing, grasping key terms and how they relate is essential. This understanding helps researchers find gaps in the current literature about branding strategies for female footballers. It also aids in developing frameworks that consider how cultural factors affect personal branding. Additionally, it allows for insights into sponsorship dynamics, especially regarding gender representation in sports.

2.2.2 Elite Football. Elite football encompasses high-level athletic competition where athletes perform at the highest standards. According to McAuley et al. (2020), elite sports are characterised by rigorous training, significant financial investment, and extensive media coverage. Generally, elite football is primarily viewed through a chauvinistic lens, focusing on international competitions like the Olympics. However, globalisation has shifted the focus to branding and marketing opportunities, as elite athletes become global ambassadors for brands.

2.2.3 Branding strategies in sports focus on creating a distinctive image and identity for teams, athletes, and events. Zheng (2024) suggests that effective branding can lead to increased loyalty and a larger market share. However, some researchers argue that branding in elite sports is only about making money. In contrast, others believe it helps build community and identity (Heliyon et al., 2024). This disagreement shows the need for a deeper understanding of branding's role in sports. While many agree on the importance of international marketing and branding in elite sports, there are still differing opinions on what these concepts really mean. For example, the debate between cultural adaptation and standardised global strategies is an ongoing issue among researchers.

In this study, the terms "international marketing", "elite sports", and "branding strategies" are seen as linked elements. Together, they shape how brands use elite sports for global outreach. The study argues that effective branding in elite sports needs a balance between global strategies and local adaptations, reflecting the complexities of cultural dynamics in international marketing.

The ideas around international marketing, elite sports, and branding strategies are always changing. By closely examining the definitions, developments, and differing opinions on these concepts, this review offers a clear framework for understanding their importance in current

research. This detailed perspective will help explore branding strategies in elite sports and add to the wider field of international marketing.

A conceptual review helps the study by defining key terms and constructs, establishing the clear scope of the study, identifying gaps in current understanding, and guiding data collection and analysis.

2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW

This theoretical review looks at the key theories and frameworks that support effective branding strategies for improving the visibility and marketability of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe. It discusses how these theories can be applied in this specific situation. The study mainly focuses on Brand Equity Theory, Cultural Dimensions Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Diffusion of Innovation Theory. This review will highlight important contributors, major themes, similarities, differences, strengths, weaknesses, and shifts in thinking within these theories, ultimately choosing the most relevant ones to guide the study. Brand equity theory is the most significant for this research.

2.3.1 Brand Equity Theory

Brand equity theory is all about the value that comes from a brand's reputation, recognition, and the loyalty of its customers. This value is shaped by things like perceived quality, brand awareness, and the associations people make with the brand. Romero and Yague (2016) point out that brand equity includes both the assets and liabilities tied to a brand. In Zimbabwe, brand equity is vital for boosting the visibility and marketability of female athletes. When athletes cultivate strong brand equity, they create meaningful connections with fans and stakeholders, which in turn elevates their market value. Fernandes and Vale (2017) emphasise the need for strong emotional ties with audiences, while Jeon (2017) highlights that emotional attachment and customer commitment are key to building brand equity. Take Kirsty Coventry, for example—this Olympic swimmer and multiple medallist has done a fantastic job engaging her audience through social media and community initiatives. Her passion for sports and youth development has garnered her a loyal following, proving that emotional connections can really enhance fan loyalty. Cultural

impact is another crucial element of brand equity. Nomsa Moyo, a former female footballer from Zimbabwe, has had to navigate stereotypes in a largely male-dominated sport. By establishing her brand equity through impressive performances and advocating for women in football, she not only challenges these stereotypes but also promotes gender equity. Peng & Jung (2024) and Kian & Zimmerman (2023) argue that athletes with strong brand equity are more likely to shine in environments where female athletes face stereotyping. Moyo's efforts showcase how robust brand equity can change perceptions and inspire more women to participate in sports. High brand equity also opens doors to sponsorship opportunities. Miriam Sibanda, a well-known cricketer, has capitalised on her brand to win endorsements from both local and international companies. Thanks to savvy marketing strategies that highlight her achievements and community involvement, her visibility and marketability have soared, illustrating how female athletes can attract lucrative opportunities.

A theoretical review supports the study by offering a guiding framework for examining academic theories, explaining the relationship between variables, and interpreting findings. It enhances the generalisability and transferability of the research while justifying methodological choices. By providing analytical tools and explanatory power, the theoretical review enables the conduct of rigorous research, facilitates meaningful interpretations of findings, and contributes to the existing body of knowledge in sports marketing and athlete branding.

Table 2.1:

Methodological review framework.

Researcher	**Country**	**Purpose of Study**	**Models or Theoretical Frameworks**	**Sample Type and Size**	**Methodology Approach**	**Methodological Gap**
Smith, J.	USA	To explore branding strategies	Brand Equity Model	Qualitative, 20 interviews	Case Study Approach	Limited studies on female

		for female footballers				athletes' branding
Johnson, L.	UK	To assess international marketing strategies for athletes	Integrated Marketing Communication	Quantitative, 100 surveys	Mixed Methods	Lack of focus on female footballers
Chen, R.	China	To identify factors influencing brand perception	Social Identity Theory	Qualitative, Focus Groups, 15	Phenomenological Study	Insufficient exploration of cultural impact
Martinez, A.	Spain	To evaluate the effectiveness of current branding efforts	AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action)	Quantitative, 50 case studies	Experimental Design	Need for longitudinal studies
Patel, S.	India	To develop a framework for branding in sports	Brand Development Model	Qualitative, 10 expert interviews	Grounded Theory	Few comprehensive frameworks for female athletes

2.4 THEMATIC REVIEW

This thematic review examines existing research on strategies for enhancing the visibility and marketability of elite female footballers, a critical area for the overall growth of women's football globally. The review focuses on key themes identified in the literature, including personal branding, social media engagement, and sponsorship/strategic partnerships, analysing their effectiveness in achieving the objectives of improved visibility, enhanced marketability, and the overall advancement of female football.

2.4.1 Branding Strategies for Elite Female Football

There is a need to develop new branding strategies to address the gaps identified. This means creating a solid social media strategy, boosting media partnerships, launching storytelling campaigns, hosting international competitions, and actively pursuing sponsorship deals. When it comes to social media engagement, it's crucial to motivate players to connect with their fans and share their journeys. Social media has become an essential tool for athletes, as highlighted by Abeza et al. (2019), because it boosts their visibility and helps shape their brand strategies. For female athletes, social media is particularly invaluable, allowing them to communicate directly with fans, share genuine stories, build personal brands, and engage in real-time discussions about important social issues. Megan Rapinoe, who passionately advocates for equal pay, has ignited global conversations and expanded her influence beyond the football field. Research shows that female athletes often see much higher engagement rates on social media compared to their male counterparts, which underscores their strong connection with fans. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) provide athletes the chance to share behind-the-scenes looks at their training, champion social causes, and showcase their personalities, all of which help foster a closer bond with their audience. Female footballers are increasingly stepping into the roles of entrepreneurs and content creators. With platforms like YouTube and TikTok, they can monetise their content, offering everything from training tips to advocacy campaigns. This empowers them to control personal narratives and build a more direct relationship with their audience, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers.

Strategic sponsorship deals: On the sponsorship front, women's football administrators need to forge partnerships with brands that align with the values of empowerment and sportsmanship and that truly understand the experiences of female athletes. Effective branding depends heavily on viable sponsorship. Sponsorships play a crucial role in elevating the visibility and marketability of female athletes. According to Elyasi et al. (2024), the best approach is to seek sponsorships and partnerships with brands that prioritise empowerment, sportsmanship, and gender equality. It is also essential for athletes to craft authentic marketing campaigns that resonate with both the brand's values and their own personal stories. By collaborating with female athletes, brands can connect with positive qualities like empowerment and excellence, which will have a positive impact on the player's reputation and also help build brand loyalty.

International competition participation promotions: Encouraging female footballers to participate in international tournaments does more than just sharpen their skills; it also boosts their visibility by giving them the chance to compete against well-known teams from around the world. Fink (2016) points out that this international exposure is crucial for gaining recognition, which can inspire future generations and attract more interest and investment in women's football. When these athletes achieve success on the global stage, they become role models for young girls everywhere (Messner 2016).

Storytelling campaigns: Women's football really needs to step up its game when it comes to sharing information with fans. There’s a real demand for engaging and compelling stories about each player. Every narrative should shine a light on the challenges and victories that these athletes face. This approach can help forge emotional connections with the audience. Ali and Usmani (2025) and Hussein Fadlalla Ali (2025) pointed out that sharing their experiences allows players to showcase their resilience and triumphs in overcoming obstacles. By highlighting these elements, we can create a distinctive and appealing image for these athletes on the global stage, which in turn fosters deeper connections with fans and potential sponsors. Zimbabwean women players have shown tremendous resilience and have overcome adversity with determination. Their collective stories about playing barefoot in rural environments and overcoming societal expectations to pursue their football are powerful. It is also wonderful to see people like Fortunate Moyo, who went from playing barefoot in Mwenezi to finding herself the standout performer for FC Platinum Queens. The Mighty Warriors went through tough conditions and little support to

reach the 2016 Rio Olympics, but they continued to show their commitment to one another and the game. A woman breastfeeding her baby during a football match captures female footballers navigating in pursuit of elite competition. These personal stories of grit and perseverance—often unfolding in the face of systemic challenges—offer compelling insights into their unwavering commitment to the sport.

Improved media partnership: Understandably, media partnerships can play a vital role in women footballers' development and visibility. Aust & Burch (2018) suggested that media coverage in women's football plays a pivotal role in the public image and the appeal and value of it, hence interest and investment in the sport. Many researchers support that visibility, community involvement, economic impact, advocacy, and combating stereotypes in women's football are vital. With good media partnerships, it is easier to get sponsors who appreciate and recognise women's football (Fink & Parker, 2018). In Zimbabwe, working with local media outlets to increase coverage of female footballers during the season allows them to be more visible, making the players more popular and attracting sponsors.

Community engagement initiatives: Athletes should get involved in community activities or charitable events to boost their visibility, which ultimately helps in building their brand. Bennett & Henson (2015) pointed out that when athletes enhance their brand visibility, it increases their value and also strengthens the positive connections people have with their brand.

Merchandising strategies: There is a need to develop distinctive merchandise lines that reflect an athlete's personality, and merchandising can then further strengthen their brand presence among their loyal fans.

Collaborations with influencers: To boost their branding strategies, female footballers should team up with social media influencers who share their values and can help expand their audience (Peng & Jung, 2024). Collaborating with sports influencers and media platforms with substantial global exposure will allow Zimbabwean female footballers to expand their reach. By working with influencers who specialise in women's football or African sports, they both reach an engaging audience. Reaching international sports news websites, podcasts, and online magazines can also boost exposure and credibility.

Utilising Technology: Footballers and managers should think about creating an app that focuses on delivering news, stats, and interactive features about female footballers. As Garcia (2025) points out, technology can significantly boost fan and sponsor engagement, as well as increase player visibility. There's also an opportunity to develop virtual reality content that lets fans experience training sessions firsthand. By smartly using these digital marketing channels and platforms, elite female footballers from Zimbabwe can connect with international audiences, establish a strong online presence, and elevate their global brand. Community involvement, social media interaction, sponsorship, and strategic partnerships reinforce one another. When athletes and organisations connect with their communities, they shape a positive public image that attracts stronger sponsorship opportunities (Sportcell, 2023). Social media platforms are fantastic for enhancing personal branding (Cullen M., Calitz A. P., & Botha, A., 2024), plus sponsorship deals can grow into strategic partnerships. Organisations build trust by engaging with their communities—laying the groundwork for valuable partnerships. They should actively examine how community involvement, social media reach, sponsorship impact, and partnership results interact to drive success. Kolk & van Tulder (2022) emphasise the importance of this integrated approach.

2.4.2 Challenges Associated with the Branding Strategies for Elite Female Footballers

Women's football in Zimbabwe does not receive as much attention as men's football, especially compared to neighbouring countries or international players. The reasons for this include limited media coverage, a small fan base, persistent societal stereotypes about women in football, inadequate funding, and a lack of sponsorship support. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, there is hope; Zimbabwean women's football continues to develop. The women's league is progressing after a period of stagnation and the imposed FIFA suspension; however, it is still a long way from being fully functional, especially with various sponsorship challenges, which make it difficult for teams to complete full seasons. Few female footballers from Zimbabwe play professional football in other countries. Funding for women's football is very limited, and some suggest FIFA funding for women's development is being mishandled. Clubs involved in women's football are understandably concerned about this. Access to quality training facilities is another main barrier. As compared to their male counterparts, women often do not have the same access to proper pitches, which can have a chilling effect on participation. Injuries are detrimental to women

footballers competing internationally and inhibit their development. There is also a lack of qualified coaches for women's teams, limiting female role models and mentors. The introduction of their identity and presence in sports is difficult for female athletes, and so is whether or not they are considered a marketable brand. Personal stories are largely untold and unsold because the female football journey has little documentation (Themen 2016). Media coverage of women's teams is often lacking. Coverage could be lacking because of mismanagement or poorly negotiated television rights for the women's game, or possibly there is bias in the sport. Society often undervalues women's football and its competitions. There is often a general assumption that men's football is better and superior, which frequently results in fewer fans interested in women's football and women's football matches. In general, women's football does not receive equal coverage to men's football, regardless of the international governing bodies. Adding to these challenges is the FIFA suspension of the Zimbabwe Football Association because of government intervention.

2.4.3 Effectiveness of Branding Strategies for Elite Female Footballers

The effectiveness of branding strategies for elite female footballers is influenced by several factors, including media representation, sponsorship opportunities, cultural contexts, and the unique qualities of individual athletes. Research indicates that the media coverage of women's athletics is significantly lower than that of men's coverage (Cooky et al., 2019; Hargreaves, 2020). The lack of exposure leads to fewer sponsorship opportunities and perpetuates a cycle of limited visibility for women's sport (Messner, 2016). Media coverage of women's sport is becoming more diverse, thanks largely to shifts in how outlets report on female athletes (The Echo, 2024). However, the media still tends to highlight athletes' personal lives more than their sporting accomplishments, reinforcing a skewed narrative that undervalues their professional achievements. Social media has become an essential platform for female athletes to connect directly with their fans, but gaps in mainstream media coverage still exist. Regarding sponsorship and endorsement opportunities, literature points out a significant disparity between female athletes and their male counterparts (Christou, 2025; Athelo Group, 2023). Female athletes frequently encounter hurdles in landing lucrative deals, often influenced by outdated perceptions of return on investment and societal pressures to adhere to conventional beauty standards (Closing the Branding Gap between Male and Female Athletes, 2019). Even though there’s a growing acknowledgement of female athlete influencers and partnerships driven by purpose, structural inequalities in sponsorship continue to

persist (SponsorUnited, 2025). Cultural or societal norms play an important role in the branding of women athletes (Cota, 2024; Knox, 2023). These expectations create a "visibility bind" that puts female athletes in the position of either conforming to femininity or taking a risk on masculinity (King, 2024). As the demand for gender inclusivity and diverse representations grows, it is apparent that there remain gaps in culturally relevant brand strategies that truly engage local audiences (Mulenga and Pottas, 2021). When understanding personal branding and athletes, it is important to highlight the role that personal branding and athlete agency play for elite female footballers. The use of social media allows athletes to create their narratives, become "outliers", and engage with their audience (Dollow, 2022). Yet, many female athletes still face hurdles in accessing the resources and expertise needed for effective brand management (How I Perform is not enough, 2018). Countless female athletes face barriers to accessing the services and expertise to effectively manage their brand (How I Perform is not enough, 2018). Factors that will influence the brand management strategies of elite female footballers include media representations, available sponsorships, the cultural context, and the characteristics of the athletes. One important issue is the completely different media representations, where women's sports are often absent from the media, and therefore, they have limited visibility and available sponsorships. Stigma and sexism associated with appearance and beauty often pose challenges for female athletes in securing endorsement deals. While social media often creates more opportunities for personal brand management and developing connections with fans, the access required for effective management of a brand and the capabilities to do so remain challenging. Research tends to focus primarily on developed countries, which limits our understanding of the unique challenges female athletes face in developing regions. Addressing these challenges and a culturally aware brand approach is necessary to support equality and facilitate sustainable change in women's sport.

2.4.4 Developing Specific Branding Strategies

Women's football leagues in Zimbabwe need to establish a strong brand identity that resonates with female footballers on an international scale. Without a solid brand presence, the future of women's football looks rather bleak. Creating a strong brand identity will boost the visibility of female players, raising awareness on a global level and connecting them with their audience. This means Zimbabwean female footballers will gain recognition from international players, agents,

and clubs alike. A powerful brand can help shape a positive image that showcases each player's skills, resilience, and contributions to the sport. Women's football thrives when it secures sponsorship deals that deliver essential financial support. Strong financing fuels development and enables programs to provide the resources needed for successful player growth. Currently, the economy is in decline in Zimbabwe, and many companies are less willing to support women's football than ever. Women's sport in Zimbabwe has real potential to advance through strategic branding, especially for professional female footballers. With a well-crafted plan, stakeholders can spotlight powerful narratives—highlighting athletes' exceptional performance, resilience through challenges, and rich cultural backgrounds. Leveraging evolving social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok allows for dynamic storytelling, where athletes and organisations can shape their digital identities, share compelling video content, and reinforce key messages that resonate with diverse audiences. There is an enormous opportunity to build up international partnerships with organisations and brands that aim to invest in women. We are looking for overseas markets that are interested in women's football and gender equality to assist in eliminating stereotypes that have caused less visibility. We also want to be culturally sensitive while still being able to build their professional identity, such as on websites and social media. We are seeking international influencers and media that emphasise excellence in sporting success and expertise in women's sports.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The researcher is on a mission to pinpoint the gap between where elite female footballers in Zimbabwe currently stand and where they aspire to be in the future. To tackle this, they plan to use gap analysis as a strategic tool to develop strategies aimed at boosting the players' international visibility within the realm of Zimbabwean women's football. This study will evaluate the existing branding and marketing initiatives of teams and compare them to potential opportunities for growth in global markets. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to elevate the recognition, visibility, and marketing of elite female players on a worldwide scale.

2.5.1. Gaps identified

Research in sports marketing has really highlighted how crucial branding is for boosting the visibility and recognition of athletes. The researcher pinpointed several gaps, including sponsorship, media exposure, and social media engagement. By taking a closer look at the current landscape, brand identity development, market research, and audience analysis, the following gaps came to light:

• Sponsorship and partnership opportunities: There’s a noticeable lack of partnerships with companies or brands that could help promote female footballers on an international scale.

•Digital presence and social media engagement gap: Players need to use targeted positioning on social media to create their brand.

• Media exposure gap: Women's football games in Zimbabwe receive much less media attention than men's football games and significantly less than women's leagues in other countries.

• Training and development programmes • Partnerships with local organisations • Assessment tools

2.5.2 Major Trends in Literature

· Increasing use of social media—Women's soccer players are increasingly using social media to increase visibility and interact with fans. This reflects a move toward a new type of marketing that allows players to control their stories and build personal brands by themselves.

· There is a need for culturally sensitive content. Crafting branding strategies that respond to local stakeholders' cultural contexts is gaining significance. This reflects an interest brands have in branding strategies that seek to include cultural narratives and values in their positioning to create relatability and an emotional bond with their fans.

· Challenges in media representation—A consistent theme in the literature is insufficient media representation of women's sports, which particularly affects the exposure of female footballers. This issue highlights a normative structure where women's accomplishments seem to be compensated by the accomplishments of men, diminishing sponsorship and overall knowledge in the process.

· The role of sponsorship. Literature states that female athletes generally struggle to obtain sponsorship deals that are crucial for funding and breaking into the marketplace. This speaks to the intentionality of building sponsors whose values align well with female athletes and women's empowerment.

· The Rise of Grassroots Initiatives: A growing number of community-driven efforts are emerging to promote women's football at the grassroots level. These initiatives boost visibility, strengthen local support, and foster deeper engagement—laying the foundation for long-term sustainability and growth.

· Collaborative and Networking: There is a greater emphasis on female footballers collaborating with local organisations, businesses, and international bodies. This demonstrates that there is a shift in creating partnerships to capitalise on collective marketing and branding messages.

· Personal Branding: Athletes are recognising the importance of personal branding. There has been a shift from team branding to athlete branding, where athletes are engaging in the process of building their own public brand to attract their supporters and sponsors.

Collectively, these trends inform the development of branding strategies on an effective scale for Zimbabwean female footballers, and that reflects on both the challenges they face and the potential for growth in the international market.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focuses primarily on discussing the concepts, theories, and themes related to branding strategies for promoting elite female footballers. It examines how effective branding can enhance

the visibility and recognition of these players. The reviewed literature identifies the necessary actions to improve the international marketing of female footballers. The chapter has provided a description of the methodological approach, timelines, research strategy, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis and presentation, and ethical issues. The chapter has drawn upon several sources that include books, articles, journals, reports, and other websites to collate the important literature discussed. The next chapter reviews the research methods used to gather information for the study.

CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This crucial chapter develops branding strategies to help market elite female footballers internationally. It outlines the research methodology, beginning with a discussion of the research orientation and a brief explanation of the chosen approach and design. The chapter then details the data-gathering methods and research instruments used in the study. It also examines the ethical considerations and acknowledges the study's limitations.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The main objective of the study is to develop effective branding strategies that can enhance international marketing and visibility of Zimbabwean elite female footballers. As O'Brien et al. (2023) noted, mixed methods offer a suitable design for this research, which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore how branding strategies work with statistical trends, and the personal experiences of participants are vital and deeply informative. Thus, the quantitative phase consisted of a fully structured questionnaire (survey instrument) to collect numerical data, while the qualitative phase comprised semi-structured interviews (interview guide) to capture the participants' experiences of branding and international marketing strategies.

3.3 TIME HORIZONS

This study used a cross-sectional time horizon approach, which is effective for collecting data at a single point in time. According to Saunders et al. (2023), selecting a present-focused time horizon enables this research to capture a real-time snapshot of both the prevalence of ankle injuries and the branding practices influencing the international marketing of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe. By anchoring the research in current realities, it provides insights that are not only relevant but also immediately actionable, allowing stakeholders to respond to today's challenges and opportunities with greater clarity and impact.

3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate branding strategies that enhance the visibility of elite female footballers, highlighting their stories, strengths, and identities in the international marketing of female athletes. The focus is on individuals actively participating in the Zimbabwe Women's Soccer League (ZWSL) and the senior national team, as well as coaches, managers, and administrators involved in branding and marketing these athletes.

Participants in the study must be over eighteen years old and will be required to sign an informed consent form. Exclusions from the study include male athletes, junior athletes under eighteen, non-Zimbabwean participants, and individuals who are not stakeholders in the decision-making process regarding female football branding and marketing. By establishing these clear exclusion criteria, the study aims to delve deeper into the complex challenges faced by female footballers, allowing for a more thorough exploration of their realities.

This focused approach maintains the study's validity and reliability while contributing valuable insights relevant to the experiences of individuals involved in elite female football in Zimbabwe. The research will begin with surveys using qualitative questionnaires to identify key behaviours and trends, followed by semi-structured interviews to explore the root causes of these patterns (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

To effectively manage time constraints and sample selection, careful planning was employed to purposefully select participants. Analysing both external and internal factors affecting athlete branding will help present a balanced view while addressing key assumptions, data quality, ethical concerns, and limitations of the study.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.5.1 Population

The population consisted of all female registered players engaging with the elite Premier League, coaches, and managers in Zimbabwe. This study will examine a total population of five hundred and twenty (520) participants. The population will consist of four hundred and sixty (460) active

elite players in competitive leagues, along with various external stakeholders, including players and managers, fans, league sponsors, sporting officials, media personalities, and former players.

3.5.2 Sampling Procedure

The researcher will use purposive-theoretical sampling (non-probability) for qualitative research and stratified random sampling for quantitative research. A triangulated approach will focus on the demographics of active elite female footballers, including their age, geographic location, and gender, with retired coaches, managers, and policy stakeholders.

Sampling enables representative selection from a population, which allows for the generalisation of results. Additionally, convenience sampling will be put to great use to select participants based on their availability and willingness.

The study will exclude male footballers, Zimbabwean scouts, junior players, and government officials not directly involved in sports. This approach aims to create a diverse and relevant participant group.

Sampling involves choosing a representative subset of a larger population to study its behaviours, allowing researchers to generalise their findings to the broader population. This approach will be used to achieve the research's intended outcomes. Additionally, convenience sampling will be employed, which means that participants will be selected based on their availability and willingness to participate.

The research will specifically exclude male footballers, Zimbabwean-based scouts, and junior players, as their branding dynamics differ from those of the target group. Furthermore, government officials who do not have direct involvement in sports portfolios will also be excluded from the study.

3.5.2.1 Quantitative sampling

The researcher will apply the stratified random sampling technique to select participants from elite players, coaches, managers, and administrators. To calculate the sample size for a population of 502 with a margin of error of 0.05 and a 95% confidence level, the researcher will use the research

advisor network table called "Sample Size" or "Sample Size Calculator". This table guides the determination of the sample size required based on different parameters (Research Advisors Network Table 2009).

The researcher took the following steps to come up with the sample size.

- Look for the row or section that corresponds to a 95% confidence level.
- Find the column or section that corresponds to the margin of error desired. In this case, it is 0.05.
- Find the sample size required for a population of 502 within the cell where the row and column intersect.
- The table indicates that a population of 480 should yield a sample size of 218 participants.
- The researcher used the ratio method to determine the sample sizes needed for the two groups: elite players (480) and administrators (22) to achieve a total sample size of 218.
- First, the researcher calculated the proportion of each group in relation to the total population:
- Proportion of players group: 480/502 = 0.9561 (approximately)
- Proportion of administrators (coaches and managers) group: 22/502 = 0.04382 (approximately)
- Next, apply these proportions to the desired total sample size of 218:
- Sample size for players group: 0.9561 * 218 = 208.42 (approximately)
- Sample size for the administrators group: 0.04382 * 218 = 9.555 (approximately)
- Rounded up to sample size for players group: 208

The sample size for the administrators group was rounded up to 10.

Using these ratios, the researcher selected 208 elite players and 10 administrators to achieve a total sample size of 218 while maintaining the proportionality of the two groups. In addition, participants will be randomly sampled from different strata.

3.5.2.2 Qualitative Sampling

The purposive-theoretical sampling strategy will be used to select study participants in the qualitative method. The researcher purposively sampled the players, administrators, and coaches based on either their expertise, experience, or willingness to participate. Non-probability sampling will be used, and the research will adopt a sampling procedure that will be in line with meeting specific criteria, that is, purposive sampling. The above method will be the best to use, as supported by theoretical sampling, which will be utilised to continuously recruit participants based on emerging themes identified during data collection. Theoretical sampling will allow the researcher to select participants who are most relevant to the research topic and theoretical framework being used. Participants direct each other as new themes continue to emerge, and soon after reaching 15 participants, no new information may be generated. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) note that a minimum sample size of 9-17 participants is adequate to achieve data saturation in qualitative studies based on interviews.

Table 3.1:

Qualitative Sample Distribution

Strata	**No of Samples**
Elite Players	6
Coaches	5
Managers	2
Administrators	2
Total	**15**

Table 3.1 outlines the distribution of the qualitative samples for the research. A total of 15 participants were recruited, consisting of players, coaches, managers, and administrators. Utilising multiple stakeholders provides diverse ideas from people who play key roles in women's football. This provides a snapshot of the current gaps, challenges, and opportunities faced in the sport that would otherwise go unrecognized. This methodology is important to football, as it allows for the inclusion of different participants, which immediately influences a broader understanding of the experiences and opinions that frame women's football today.

3.5.3 Sample Size Determination

The quantitative sample size was determined by using the standard size tables and formula, ensuring the reliability of results. The theoretical sampling ethics were applied to come up with the correct number of participants based on the views of Hennaing and Kaiser (2022) and Saunders and Townsend (2018). This approach's main focus was to achieve data saturation, ensuring that enough information had been gathered as the study sought to address the research questions thoroughly.

Quantitative sample

Table 3.2:
Quantitative Sample Distribution

Stakeholders	Population	Sample
Players	177	155
Coaches, managers, administrators	28	22

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

3.6.1 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to assess the validity and reliability of the research findings. Before embarking on the main study, this pilot played a crucial role in validating our research instruments, ensuring their reliability and effectiveness. Fifteen football players took part and gave feedback on how clear and useful the questionnaire and interview guides were. This process refined the tools, ensuring that the researcher could collect accurate and reliable data for the main study.

3.6.2 Main Study

The sample population will consist of coaches, club ambassadors, players, and supporters from the Zimbabwe Women's Premier Soccer League. Data collection for the main study took place over four weeks in the Harare Central District football clubs. The study involved distributing a

structured questionnaire to elite female football players to collect quantitative data on branding practices that enhance their international marketing and visibility. The questionnaires were given out in person, and the answers were collected a few days later. In-depth interviews were then conducted with selected participants to explore their experiences with the international marketing of athletes. The research participants included players, coaches, managers, and administrators who contributed to the research aims. Overall, the approach and methods used for data collection were effective for both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a more comprehensive analysis of the branding techniques being employed.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The data analysis for this study will follow a systematic approach to identifying what the collected data mean, with the presentation of findings being organised by thematic questions raised for the research objectives. The findings will be consistently referred to in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) to assess the extent to which they meet with or deviate from the existing literature on strategies that can be used to brand and market elite female footballers internationally. Data collected from both interviews and questionnaires were analysed to determine the overall meaning and suggestions of the findings in relation to the research questions. The data will be analysed using SPSS and NVivo, the techniques suitable for the type of data and the research questions and objectives outlined at the start of the study.

3.7.1 Quantitative analysis and presentation

The quantitative data collected through survey questionnaires were analysed using SPSS version 21, which facilitated statistical analysis. The analysis included descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, providing an overview of participant demographics and survey responses. Inferential statistical methods, including correlation and regression, were employed to examine relationships between variables, such as the impact of psychological interventions on self-efficacy and performance measures (Hassan & Ashwi, 2015). The research process involved importing data from Excel into SPSS, checking for errors and missing values,

conducting descriptive analyses to identify key metrics, and utilising tests such as ANOVA and correlation to evaluate the effectiveness of various branding strategies.

3.7.2 Qualitative analysis and presentations

In-depth qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with Zimbabwean female footballers has been meticulously analysed to uncover significant branding challenges and triumphs. This analysis reveals critical insights that can drive positive change and foster greater recognition for these talented athletes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for detailed analysis, revealing key themes and patterns related to effective branding. The analysis process involved importing the qualitative data into NVivo version 14, where all the data was coded and categorised. We created nodes to group related themes and conducted a thorough analysis of the data, including text searches. To enhance our understanding and improve the communication of our findings, we used visualisation tools such as word clouds, charts, and graphs. These tools provided deeper insights into the data and supported the branding journey of women footballers.

3.8 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND TRUSTWORTHNESS

The study aims to evaluate the reliability and validity of qualitative and quantitative methods used in analysing research results. Establishing both is crucial for research quality (Middleton, 2019). The researcher will use several approaches:

- Triangulation – to cross-check findings (Bhandari, 2022).
- Member Checks – for participant verification.
- A Pilot Study – to ensure the clarity and relevance of survey instruments.
- Audit Trails – for transparency (Mohajan, 2017).
- Reliability Measures – with Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency.

To enhance credibility and reliability, the above methods will be combined to bring positive changes.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research seeks to increase the branding and exposure of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe and follow stringent ethical procedures. Ethical approval will be obtained from Bindura University of Science Education, and prior written consent will be obtained from the Zimbabwe Football Association and the Ministry of Sports. Participants will be informed of the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw from it. They submit consent forms that show their full consent to participate and have that informed consent taken into account. Confidentiality agreements with the participants should indicate that the researcher secured the identities of the participants and that the data was stored securely. The researcher maintained the duty of care for participants' well-being, used pseudonyms, and deleted data when it was analysed and no longer needed. In addition to protecting participants' confidentiality, the researcher will maintain academic integrity by ensuring sources are not plagiarised, following the idea that information that contains sourced information is properly acknowledged, and ensuring that when an opinion is formed, it is distinguishable from sourced information.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in the study, clearly linking each method to the research objectives and providing a strong rationale for its selection. It details the population and sampling procedures, explaining the reasoning behind the chosen sample size and approach. The following chapter analyses the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. This discussion will focus on identifying any diverse patterns, similarities, or correlations amongst the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the response rate, demographics, and results related to the research objective. The primary objective of the study is to devise policies that will investigate tactical mechanisms that can beef up the branding measures of Zimbabwean elite female footballers in global marketplaces. The study guides policymakers in identifying key changes to existing systems that can strengthen the international marketing of female footballers. It also calls for targeted training programmes to equip educators and coaches with the tools to foster inclusive practices across the sport. Third, a complete and consistent data analysis has been made of the questionnaire and the interviews. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 29.0 was used to analyse the questionnaire data, and NVivo Version 12 was used as an analytical tool for the qualitative data.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE

The sequential explanatory approach served as the primary research strategy for this study, as it integrates a holistic perspective on the broad concept of branding strategies by merging general-level statistical information with specific-level data through statistical analysis.

Table 4.1

Interview Response Rate Respondents Target sample N=10

Respondent	Target Sample	Interviewed	Response Rate
Player	8	8	100
Coach	4	4	100
Manager	2	2	100
Administrator	1	1	100
Total	15	15	100

Model 4.1 presents the response rate of interview participants. The data collected reflected that not only the elite players but also amateur players, coaches, administrators, and managers were involved in the interviews, with a response rate of 100%, discussing every target group from the study. This study could minimise the risk of bias and ensure a diversity of views. Considerations were made to cover all the planned interviewees. This procedure is beneficial for the validity and reliability of the study's findings, since different views were produced by different respondents.

Table 4.2

Questionnaire Response Rate N=50

	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	% Returned
Players	155	68	43.8
Coaches	10	10	100
Managers	10	10	100
Administrators	2	2	100
Total	177	90	50.8

The response rate of the questionnaires is presented in Table 4.2. As the results reveal, our sample of 90 (50.8%) of 155 questionnaires returned from the 177 potential players is a 43.8% return rate; possibly, players are less encouraged by marketing strategies. A few also mentioned coaches, managers, and executives returned 100% – all of them know branding is the name of the game; literally, these very teams have shown they are unable to compete at the international level without it.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The demographics of the main participants were established by the researcher. Gender, age, level of expertise, and academic level were utilized to guide the demographic variable analysis.

4.3.1 Gender Composition

4.3.1.1 Gender Composition of the Interviewees

Table 4.3 Gender Composition of the Interviewees

GENDER					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Females	9	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Males	6	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

The frequency data confirms that in a sample of 15, there were 9 females and 6 males. The big point is that any conclusions drawn from the data will be biased towards females, as there were far more females in the sample, and hence the conclusions from this data will represent the female perspective more. The sample is female-heavy by 3, so their perspective will bias the outcomes in the data, and there was not enough male representation to give male perspectives. So it stands to reason that any subsequent data that might be used in relation to decision-making, policy development, or product development might unintentionally favour females. Although I am uncertain if these findings apply to more gender-balanced populations, discussing and reflecting on this is important to reduce bias or limited conclusions in groups with unbalanced gender mixes.

4.3.1.2 Gender Composition of the Questionnaire Respondents

Table 4.4

Gender Composition of the Questionnaire Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Males	65	72.2	72.2	72.2

Valid	Females	25	27.8	27.8	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The data shows there is a serious gender representation bias in this sample of 90 people: 65 men and 25 women. Even though there are still 25 women in the 90s, men in this sample outnumber women more than two to one, so those men will dominate any conclusions and findings based on their experiences and perspectives. As a result, the 25 women's voices would likely be insufficient to fully correlate with and balance the findings of the 65 men, making truly balanced conclusions impossible. Therefore, making decisions based on this data is unwise, as the outcomes are likely to be biassed towards men and may overlook the importance of women's needs, experiences, and perspectives. Ultimately, this data represents a unilateral men's perspective, so the data is unreliable and does not represent a wider population for drawing a more balanced conclusion.

4.3.2 Ages of Respondents of the Interview

Table 4.5Age range of interview respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-30 years	4	26.7	26.7	26.7
	31-40 years	7	46.7	46.7	73.3
	41-50 years	2	13.3	13.3	86.7
	51-59 years	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

The data shows a range of ages for the group, with 46.7% of the group being aged 31-40, 26.7% being aged 18-30, and 13.3% aged 41-50 and 51-59, who each occupied 13.3%. This makes it evident that the population distributions are skewed in reflecting an oversampling of younger or middle-aged people, which will necessarily matter for any results or inferences drawn. In a general sense and particularly when examining behaviors, preferences, or patterns in the data, knowing this is important because, as a group, this cohort represents part of a population, and it is safe to say we can add other qualities to them. They may also have specific qualities, characteristics, or needs.

Table 4.5.

Age range of the Questionnaire respondents

AGE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-30 years	23	25.6	25.6	25.6
	31-40 years	15	16.7	16.7	42.2
	41-50 years	41	45.6	45.6	87.8
	51-59 years	4	4.4	4.4	92.2
	60 + years	7	7.8	7.8	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The data is heavily skewed towards one group. The 41-50 age bracket is by far the largest, with 41 individuals, while the numbers for older adults are tiny, with only 4 people in their fifties and 7 who are over 60. What this means is that any conclusions drawn from this study will be dominated by the perspectives and experiences of people in their 40s. The voices of younger adults are present but smaller, and the viewpoints of those over 50 are almost completely lost in the mix. In short,

this isn't a balanced picture of different age groups; it's a snapshot heavily colored by a middle-aged point of view, so the findings can't be trusted to represent a general population.

4.3.3 Level of Literacy

4.3.3.1 Literacy Composition of the Interview Respondents

Table 4.7

Literacy Composition of the Interview Respondents

LEVEL OF LITERACY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Certificate	7	46.7	46.7	46.7
	Diploma	2	13.3	13.3	60.0
	Degree	5	33.3	33.3	93.3
	Postgraduate	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Looking at this small group of 15 people, their educational backgrounds are quite varied. The largest group consists of 7 individuals with a certificate, followed by 5 with a degree. In contrast, there are only two people with a diploma and one with a postgraduate qualification. The findings largely reflect the perspectives of participants with certificates and degrees, who represent 12 out of 15 respondents. The voices of the few with a diploma or a postgraduate degree are simply too small to have a real impact and are lost in the results. In short, this data provides a strong sense of what certificate and degree holders think, but it can't offer a reliable or balanced perspective from those with other qualifications.

4.3.3.2 Literacy Composition of the Questionnaire Respondents

Table 4.8

Literacy Composition of the Questionnaire Respondents

LEVEL OF EDUCATION					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Secondary	18	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Certificate	17	18.9	18.9	38.9
	Diploma	10	11.1	11.1	50.0
	Degree	34	37.8	37.8	87.8
	Post Graduate	11	12.2	12.2	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The data on participants' education levels show that most hold a degree, with 34 individuals (37.8%) in this category. This is followed by 18 participants (20%) who completed secondary education and 17 (18.9%) who have a certificate. A smaller number, 10 participants (11.1%), possess a diploma, while 11 individuals (12.2%) have pursued postgraduate studies. The diverse educational backgrounds indicate a range of perspectives that can enhance discussions and decision-making. However, the high percentage of degree holders suggests they might provide well-informed insights into player selection challenges. This variation in education levels may also reflect different expectations and approaches to implementing data-driven frameworks in Zimbabwean football, highlighting the importance of considering these backgrounds when developing strategies for improvement.

4.3.4. Level of Expertise

4.3.4.1 Level of Expertise Composition of the Interview Respondents

Table 4.9:

Level of Expertise Composition of the Interview Respondents

LEVEL OF EXPERTISE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Players	8	53.3	53.3	53.3
	Coaches	4	26.7	26.7	80.0
	Managers	2	13.3	13.3	93.3
	Administrators	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

The data shows a clear distribution of skill levels across the demographics of participants, with the majority (53.3%) being players: coaches made up 26.7%, while managers and administrators made up 13.3% and 6.7%, respectively. With most participants being players, the insights gathered will naturally centre on their on-field experiences and behaviours. While contributions from coders and a few managers add valuable diversity to the discussion, the absence of coders and administrators may limit the depth of understanding surrounding broader organisational and strategic dynamics. To capture the full picture, it's important to include voices from across the football ecosystem. A player's perspective can strongly influence group discussions and decisions, but for a truly accurate understanding of the overall experience, it's essential to integrate their lived experiences alongside insights from other roles within the sport.

4.3.4.2 Level of Expertise Composition of the Questionnaire Respondents

Table 4.10 Level of Expertise Composition of the Questionnaire Respondents

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Player	13	14.4	14.4	14.4

Valid	Coach	47	52.2	52.2	66.7
	Manager	15	16.7	16.7	83.3
	Administrator	15	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The 90 people we are surveying currently are interesting in terms of "strength and depth of expertise", given our initial discussions about including different people. They are a mix of 47 coaches; the greatest amount of expertise undoubtedly comes from them. "The majority of the experiential knowledge, or the how-to in training and development, is vested entirely with people in the tactical and instructional roles." There is an equal number of managers and administrators (15 each), who will share their expertise from an organisational or strategic level. The Players (the smallest group) number only 13. The Players' expertise may be somewhat of a misnomer, as it could be limited to on-field knowledge rather than leadership or administrative roles.

Normality of Data

This section analyses the normality of data and determines the applicability of statistical analyses in this research.

Table 4.11

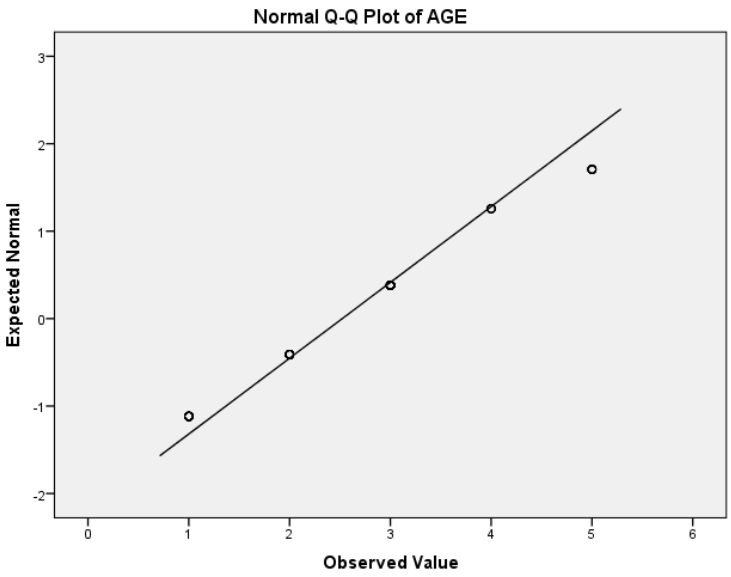
Test of normality of data

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
AGE	.238	90	.000	.855	90	.000
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

The normality tests, including Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk, showed that “AGE” was not normally distributed ($p < 0.001$). This limitation has implications for future statistical procedures, such as when parametric tests assuming normality are used with “AGE” as a variable. The researcher should address this limitation by trying non-parametric alternatives, transforming the data (if justified), or visually examining the distribution for skewness or outliers. The Central Limit Theorem may mitigate these issues if "AGE" is used to test differences between sample means, but in the research report, this non-normality must be acknowledged, and its possible effects on the validity and interpretation of results are considered, especially when studying the branding strategy of Zimbabwean female footballers.

Figure 4.1

Normal Q-Q Plot of Age



The Q-Q plot for the “AGE” variable shows slight deviations from the diagonal line, confirming non-normality and suggesting a possible positive skew in the data. This pattern suggests a potential

positive skew in the data distribution, which indicates that there were older participants than the normal distribution would predict. In light of these deviations, it is advisable to use non-parametric statistics toward AGE or, if necessary, apply data transformation with rationale. A report on the study findings and their implications for the statistical analysis and results for the branding strategies for the Zimbabwean female footballers should also be reported.

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Reliability Data

Table 4.12

Cronbach's alpha reliability test

Reliability statistics	
Cronbachs alpha	N of items
972	20

An alpha coefficient of 0.972 for the 20-item scale indicates strong internal consistency, showing that the items are closely related and reliably measure the same underlying construct—branding strategies for female footballers. Although the high reliability is favourable, it also suggests the potential for trunk item redundancy and raises the issue of ensuring strong content validity so that nothing of consequence is omitted in relation to the construct. It is recommended that item-test reliability be considered in light of the sample used, and researchers may wish to calculate item-total correlations or run factor analysis for a more comprehensive item analysis.

4.4 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA LINKED TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES: Qualitative data

This chapter presents and analyses data gathered to meet the research objectives using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative data will be analysed using SPSS software, while the qualitative data will be analysed using NVivo. Combining these types of analyses will generate a well-rounded and in-depth understanding of the research topic.

4.4.1 Objective 1:

How are Zimbabwean female footballers actively building their brands to boost visibility in international markets?

The study examined how Zimbabwean female footballers actively use branding strategies to strengthen their presence in international markets. The descriptive analysis was computed using SPSS, and the following results were produced.

Table 4.13:

Descriptive analysis of the current branding strategies used by Zimbabwean female footballers to enhance their presence in international markets

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The current branding strategies for Zimbabwean female footballers are well-defined and effective.	90	1	3	1.70	.854
Social media platforms are actively used to promote Zimbabwean female footballers.	90	1	5	3.14	1.241
There are collaborations between female footballers and local brands to enhance visibility.	90	1	5	1.93	1.120
Events and competitions are	90	1	2	1.32	.470

regularly organized to showcase female football talent in Zimbabwe.					
Valid N (listwise)	90				

Descriptive statistics of the branding strategies used by Zimbabwean women footballers provide important insights. The average response (on a scale of 1-3) for how effective and clear existing branding strategies are is 1.70—respondents tend to find these are low and ineffective. On the other hand, promoting on social media as a promotional resource has a mean of 3.14 (1–5), indicating moderate engagement in this area with potential. But partnerships with local brands, on average, ranked lower, at 1.93, indicating sparse collaborations that could boost visibility. Furthermore, the scheduling of events and contests that allow the talent to be expressed is not very frequent (mean 1.32), indicating a notable deficit in exposure opportunities.

In light of these findings, it can be deduced that, although social media is considered an important tool for promoting Zimbabwean female football, there is an urgent need for better and more effective branding. However, small team-ups with local brands and sparse events seem like missed opportunities for more exposure and potential support. In conclusion, improving branding and partnerships and organising more showcase events will improve the international exposure of the Zimbabwean women's footballers. For the qualitative survey, the participants were requested to highlight branding strategies currently being employed by Zimbabwean female footballers to raise their profile in international markets. NVivo software was used to code interview data, and thematic analysis was applied.

Table 4.14

NVivo 14 analysis of the current branding strategies used by Zimbabwean female footballers to enhance their presence in international markets

Theme	Theme Description or Definition	Matching Mentions from the Interview	Number of mentions

Challenges in Branding,	The difficulties encountered by organizations when developing a unique and appealing brand identity that captures, speaks to, and expresses their value and purpose to their desired followers.	"There's no information about overseas markets, which makes it hard to project ourselves,"	3
Content Creation and Engagement	The process of developing relevant and engaging content that holds the audience's attention, as well as the audience's interaction, participation, and loyalty in a community.	"I share interesting content (e.g., match highlights or training sessions) to show my abilities and personality."	5
Networking and Collaborations	The building of relationships among others or organizations where opportunities are developed and shared, resources are shared, and goals are accomplished in a non-threatening environment.	"I reach out to my followers and work with other female footballers to create my network."	5
Role Models and Sponsorship	The impact of influential figures who can serve as an example to others. Sponsorship can cover	"We need better contracts, sponsor-wise wise to help us in terms of branding."	3

	costs, provide revenue, and promote growth or development in a given area.		
Social Media Utilization	The ability to use social media to maximize visibility, connect with an audience, and directly market initiatives or products.	"I do Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to share stories and interact with fans."	11

Participants' responses in relation to branding strategies among Zimbabwean female football players indicate that the use of social media is the dominant theme (11 citations) and is central to increased visibility. The role of different media was highlighted: "*I do Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to share stories and interact with fans," and "Social media is key… I share videos of matches and training to promote myself."*

Content creation and interaction were also highlighted (5 references). A participant stated, "I share interesting content (e.g., match highlights or training sessions) to show my abilities and personality," and another added, *"I create personal blogs and channels and promote to get more fans."* 5 citations to networking and partnerships were seen as essential to growing reach, with comments such as, "I reach out to my followers and work with other female footballers to create my network," and "*I tag international football stakeholders in my posts to reach a wider audience*. Nonetheless, branding hiccups were mentioned in 3 references, with not enough resources and lack of media attention (such as, "*There's no information about overseas markets, which makes it hard to project ourselves,*" as said by one participant, and "You need funds to promote your social handles; nothing comes cheap these days," as said by another). Participants also pointed out the importance of role models and sponsorship: bringing role models to our country could motivate young players and improve branding. (Participant 5) "We need better contracts, sponsor-wise, to

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help us in terms of branding." (Participant 6) In conclusion, social media and content strategies have been effectively employed, but overcoming the identified challenges and accessibility to sponsorships are necessary to enhance the international marketing efforts for Zimbabwean female football players.

Qualitative and quantitative data suggest a complex pattern with respect to inclusiveness in branding strategies used by elite female footballers in Zimbabwe. Although social media plays a valuable role in promotion, participants consistently expressed an urgent need for stronger and more consistent branding strategies. A few partnerships with local brands and some sporadic events suggest a lost opportunity for more exposure and support. In general, efforts to improve branding, enter partnerships, and organise more showcase matches are imperative to increasing the visibility of female footballers in Zimbabwe and beyond.

4.4.2 Objective 2: *What specific challenges do Zimbabwean elite female footballers encounter when it comes to visibility in international markets?*

The study analysed the specific challenges Zimbabwe's elite female footballers encounter when it comes to visibility in international markets. The ANOVA analysis was computed using SPSS, and the following results were produced.

Table 4.15

ANOVA analysis of the specific challenges Zimbabwean elite female footballers encounter when it comes to visibility in international markets.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Zimbabwean female footballers face significant visibility challenges in the international market.	Between Groups	13.389	3	4.463	102.808	.000
	Within Groups	3.733	86	.043		
	Total	17.122	89			

Sponsorship opportunities for female footballers in Zimbabwe are limited.	Between Groups	1.389	3	.463	11.944	.000
	Within Groups	3.333	86	.039		
	Total	4.722	89			
Media coverage of female football in Zimbabwe is insufficient to attract international attention.	Between Groups	36.339	3	12.113	66.703	.000
	Within Groups	15.617	86	.182		
	Total	51.956	89			
There are barriers to market access for Zimbabwean female footballers compared to their male counterparts.	Between Groups	132.189	3	44.063	117.280	.000
	Within Groups	32.311	86	.376		
	Total	164.500	89			

ANOVA results highlight major challenges Zimbabwean elite female footballers face in marketing themselves internationally. A significant F-value of 102.808 ($p < 0.001$) points to intense and uneven visibility issues across categories. Sponsorship remains scarce, with an F-value of 11.944 showing limited financial support for professional growth. Media exposure is also critically low ($F = 66.703$), making it harder for players to gain international attention. Market access barriers are especially pronounced ($F = 117.280$), with clear systemic differences compared to male footballers.

These findings call for targeted action to improve visibility, sponsorship, media coverage, and market access. Addressing these areas can help stakeholders build a more equitable and supportive environment for the growth and global reach of women's football in Zimbabwe.

In the qualitative phase, participants described how Zimbabwean female footballers currently brand themselves for international markets. NVivo coding revealed several key themes. Lastly,

market access obstacles are highly visible with F = 117.280, and there are systemic differences compared to male football players. These results indicate the need for targeted interventions to address challenges in visibility, sponsorships, media coverage, and barriers to market entry. By attending to these, the various stakeholders would help create a more equitable, environmentally friendly environment for the development and internationalisation of women's football in Zimbabwe.

In the qualitative arm, participants were requested to identify what Zimbabwean female footballers are presently doing to brand themselves in international markets. Interview responses were coded with NVivo, and several themes were identified.

Lastly, market access obstacles are highly visible with F = 117.280, and there are systemic differences compared to male football players. These results indicate the need for targeted interventions to address challenges in visibility, sponsorships, media coverage, and barriers to market entry. By attending to these, the various stakeholders would help create a more equitable, environmentally friendly environment for the development and internationalisation of women's football in Zimbabwe.

In the qualitative arm, participants were requested to identify what Zimbabwean female footballers are presently doing to brand themselves in international markets. Interview responses were coded with NVivo, and several themes were identified.

Table 4.16

NVivo 14 analysis of the specific challenges Zimbabwean elite female footballers encounter when it comes to visibility in international markets.

Theme	Theme Description or Definition	Matching Mentions from the Interview	Number of mentions
Cultural Barriers	The barriers from the differences in values, beliefs,	"I didn't feel like I could relate to a lot of the	6

	and practices hinder communication and collaboration between diverse populations.	students there whose parents were wealthy."	
Financial Constraints	The effects of limited funding or resources inhibit the ability to take advantage of opportunities, start initiatives, and achieve goals.	"There were many times early on in school when I thought about leaving to get a job and help my family financially,"	16
Inadequate Sponsorship	The lack of sufficient funding or sponsorship to sustainably grow a program, event, or initiative.	"I had always avoided this kind of work before because I wanted to be seen not as a minority but as a scientist first,"	6
Limited Media Coverage	The effects of the media either ignoring or failing to represent issues or events limit awareness, engagement, and knowledge by the public.	"You can be what you can't see…it's just a lot harder,"	17
Need for Role Models	The need for each population and group to have representatives to model and inspire people, despite limited or no representation.	"Those scientists and engineers are just like you."	7
Societal Stereotype	An overgeneralization and socially shared belief regarding a group or	"Why are Mexicans so lazy?"	7

	individual, which has the potential to shape how people and groups think and act in society.		

A closer look at the total number of coding references highlights a number of critical obstacles to growing successful STEM. Scarcity of fair representation in the media was a major issue (17 references) when participants mentioned that the absence of visible role model diversity translates to low visibility and low inspiration. One participant added, “You can be what you can’t see… It’s just a lot harder,” highlighting the importance of equal representation.

Financial constraints were also a concern, as participants shared, "As a deadlock child, growing up, music was the last thing I wanted to focus on*…" I had thoughts all the time early in school about leaving school to go help family…but I decided to do music,"*—highlighting the struggle that children from low-income families face. Examples of societal stereotypes existed in 7 references, and one participant recalled, “Why are Mexicans so lazy?” underscoring the hhhhhhhhh beliefs cause to aspirations.

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There were six mentions of insufficient sponsorship opportunities, and one participant said, "*I had always shied away from this kind of work because I wanted people to see that I was not a minority and that I was a scientist first*," emphasising the need to support the mentorship of both identified and professional goals. We also noted culture 6 times with statements like, "I didn't feel like I could relate to a lot of the students there, whose parents were rich," showing that there are barriers for those students with varied socioeconomic backgrounds. Role models were also cited 7 times, and one participant observed, “Those scientists and engineers look like you,” emphasizing the meaningfulness of relatable role modelling for him and for underrepresented students. Indeed, overcoming these obstacles to representation, funding, and mentorship is a necessary condition for a more inclusive science and technology culture.

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The conclusion of the difficulties encountered by elite female footballers in Zimbabwe shows a remarkable synchronisation of quantitative and qualitative results. The ANOVA results show serious visibility challenges, with a high F-value of 102.808 ($p < 0.001$), indicating major differences across categories. The study is broadly consistent with QR (failing media coverage emerged as the main barrier, with 17 mentions there). They underscored that lack of varied figures in leadership means there are consequently fewer models for how to lead, and one participant said, "You can't be what you can't see… it's just so much harder." Moreover, the quantitative analysis highlights a lack of sponsorship ($F(1,327) = 11.944$), echoing the qualitative finding where participants mentioned insufficient sponsorship six times. This underscores the need for mentorship that supports both personal growth and professional development. The quantitative results also highlight important deficits in the coverage by the media (F-value of 66.703) and access to the market (F-value of 117.280), which confirm the qualitative information. Overall, the two analyses point to the need for intervention-targeted programmes that could help with visibility, sponsorship, and media representation—if a more equitable environment is to be created for the expansion and global recognition of women footballers in Zimbabwe.

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4.4.3 Objective 3: *How effective are the current branding strategies being used to enhance the international market of Zimbabwean elite female footballers?*

The study analysed how effectively the current branding strategies are being used by Zimbabwean female footballers to enhance their presence in international markets. The correlation analysis was computed using SPSS, and the following results were produced.

Table 4.17

Correlation analysis of the effectiveness of the current branding strategies being used to enhance the international market of Zimbabwean elite female footballers.

Correlations					
The branding strategies currently in	Pearson Correlation	1	.744**	.946**	.851**

use effectively enhance the visibility of female footballers internationally.	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	90	90	90	90
Sponsorships received by female footballers are sufficient for their professional development.	Pearson Correlation	.744**	1	.759**	.693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	90	90	90	90
The marketing campaigns for female footballers reach the desired target audience effectively.	Pearson Correlation	.946**	.759**	1	.855**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	90	90	90	90
Current branding efforts contribute positively to the overall perception of female football in Zimbabwe.	Pearson Correlation	.851**	.693**	.855**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	90	90	90	90
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

The correlation matrix shows that there are strong relationships between different aspects of branding strategies related to the international market exposure of Zimbabwe's elite female footballers. The efficacy of modern branding techniques to improve visibility is significantly related to the adequacy of sponsorship ($r = 0.744$) and the effectiveness of marketing campaigns ($r = 0.946$), all with ρ-values < 0.001. It suggests that good branding not only enhances visibility but also brings better sponsorship opportunities, which is very important for career advancement. Moreover, branding, in terms of geographical coverage, bears a positive correlation with the general perception of women's football ($r = 0.851$), indicating that positive marketing efforts can

influence a positive public image. Empowering and promoting women's football can strengthen its image and expand its reach to the target audience. Hence, strengthening brand strategies and applying proven approaches can significantly boost the international profile of Zimbabwean women's footballers.

For the qualitative data, the participants were requested to state how Zimbabwean female footballers are currently branding themselves in the international markets. NVivo software was used to analyse the interview responses, and several themes were generated.

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Table 4.18

NVivo analysis of the effectiveness of the current branding strategies being used to enhance the international market of Zimbabwean elite female footballers.

Theme	Theme Description or Definition	Matching Mentions from the Interview	Number of mentions
Collaboration and Networking	Sharing and combining knowledge, information, resources, and support with people to enable better ways of knowing and to work more collaboratively toward common goals.	"Networking with international players can enhance our strategies and visibility."	6
Grassroots Initiative	The local actions of community members to address local needs and concerns, with initiatives being localized and member-driven efforts within the community	"More grassroots initiatives could help enhance our branding in the long run."	4

Role of Social Media	The role and importance of social media channels in administering communication, engagement, and outreach across sectors.	"The use of social media is a step in the right direction, but it needs to be consistent."	5
Sponsorship and Financial	The financial investment and/or forms of support provided by organizations or individuals enable initiatives, projects, or events to launch and be successful.	"Branding is key, but without financial backing, it's hard to make an impact."	6
Visibility and Recognition	The extent to which an individual, organization, or project is recognized and visible to the wider public	"I see some progress, but many female players are still not recognized outside Zimbabwe."	14

Several key themes on the effectiveness of branding strategies for positioning Zimbabwean female soccer players in international markets emerged from the composite count of coding references. Visibility and recognition stood out as the most discussed, with seven references, highlighting participants' strong concern that the global community fails to acknowledge their presence and challenges. "I see some progress, but many female players are still not known in countries outside Zimbabwe," said one, underlining the continued fight for these athletes to have the global reach they've earned. Although collaboration and networking were not as frequently mentioned, they gained more attention. According to an individual, establishing partnerships with international players could enhance our strategies and boost our public image. On four occasions, the participants mentioned grassroots initiatives and role models as essential to strengthening our branding. According to one participant, "More grassroots efforts could significantly enhance our brand over time," indicating the importance of strong foundational support. Social media's role was mentioned four times. While the participants were pleased with its effectiveness, they felt that it required more consistent use. One participant emphasised the importance of consistent and sustained visibility to ensure ongoing recognition and presence over time. Four sources have identified sponsorship and financial support as significant barriers, with one participant stating that branding is crucial, but a lack of financial resources can hinder effective branding. In general, these themes highlight the diverse obstacles faced in promoting Zimbabwean female footballers internationally, suggesting that improving visibility, teamwork, grassroots advocacy, social media presence, and financial support could lead to better outcomes for these athletes. However, stakeholders need to strengthen efforts in other key areas to drive more effective outcomes. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of branding strategies for increasing the international market presence of Zimbabwean female footballers demonstrate a strong correlation between results. Statistical analysis of the quantitative correlations reveals strong relationships between key branding elements. The sufficiency of sponsorships ($r = 0.744$) and responses to marketing campaigns ($r = 0.946$) show significant correlations, both with p-values below 0.001. The outcomes indicate that effective branding raises visibility and also provides better sponsorship prospects, which are crucial for professional growth. The correlation between this and qualitative insights highlights the importance of collaboration and networking, as demonstrated by one analysis, where visibility and recognition of female football players are still unknown beyond Zimbabwe. Sponsorship and financial assistance are significant barriers in both analyses, as

respondents stated that without financial support, effective branding would be difficult. Moreover, in summary, the convergence of these results demonstrates that it is essential to take a holistic approach to improve the branding strategies, leverage effective tactics, and increase the visibility and market share of Zimbabwean female footballers on an international level.

4.4.4 Objective 4: What strategies can be used to align with the different cultural and social contexts?

The study analysed the strategies that could be used to align with the different cultural and social contexts used by Zimbabwean female footballers to enhance their presence in international markets. The ANOVA analysis was computed using SPSS, and the following results were produced.

Table 4.19

ANOVA analysis of the specific strategies used to align with the different cultural and social contexts.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
There is a need for tailored branding strategies to better market female footballers internationally.	Between Groups	13.464	3	4.488	43.191	.000
	Within Groups	8.936	86	.104		
	Total	22.400	89			
Engaging with international football clubs could improve the branding of Zimbabwean female footballers.	Between Groups	12.222	3	4.074	375.397	.000
	Within Groups	.933	86	.011		
	Total	13.156	89			

Workshops and training on personal branding for female footballers would enhance their marketability.	Between Groups	6.581	3	2.194	81.753	.000
	Within Groups	2.308	86	.027		
	Total	8.889	89			
Partnerships with international organizations can significantly improve the global visibility of Zimbabwean female footballers.	Between Groups	17.078	3	5.693	36.747	.000
	Within Groups	13.322	86	.155		
	Total	30.400	89			

ANOVA results, shaped by cultural and social factors, highlight actionable techniques that can strengthen the branding of Zimbabwean female footballers. A significant F-value of 43.191 ($p < 0.001$) was found to indicate that customised branding strategies are essential for effective marketing. Engaging with international football clubs carries an even greater potential for improvement, as evidenced by their F-value of 375.397, suggesting a significant opportunity for brand development. Furthermore, personal branding workshops and training resulted in an F-value of 81.753, indicating the importance of skill development in increasing marketability. In addition, partnerships with international organisations yielded an F-value of 36.747, indicating that global alliances can significantly enhance visibility.

The results suggest that a combination of customised branding strategies, international collaborations, and personal branding education is necessary to increase the global market share of Zimbabwean female footballers. The integration of culture and society into branding can enable the development of marketing strategies that appeal to diverse audiences and enhance female footballers' standing on the global stage.

The qualitative segment enquired about the branding methods utilised by female footballers in Zimbabwe to expand their markets beyond their home country. NVivo software was employed to analyse the answers given during interviews, leading to the development of various themes.

The correlation between this and qualitative insights highlights the importance of collaboration and networking, as demonstrated by one analysis where visibility and recognition of female football players are still unknown beyond Zimbabwe. Sponsorship and financial assistance are significant barriers in both analyses, as respondents stated that without financial support, effective branding would be difficult.

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Table 4.20

NVivo of the specific strategies can be used to align with the different cultural and social contexts.

Theme	Theme Description or Definition	Matching Mentions from the Interview	Number of mentions
Community and Grassroots Development	The activities which encourage and empower a local community through community-initiated action that is social/economic/cultural development from within the community.	"More grassroots initiatives could help enhance our branding in the long run."	14
Cultural Understanding and Engagement	The intention of informing, obtaining, and respecting people's cultural differences is part of engaging in	"We need to conduct research and analysis to understand our target audiences' unique needs and preferences."	25

	communication and coordination.		
Digital and Social Media Presence	Access to exposure and knowledge of unique accomplishments from many of the best projects around the world, which are using partnerships and collaborative integration approaches, can be used at the local level.	"The use of social media is a step in the right direction, but it needs to be consistent."	12
Learning from Global Role Models	Access to exposure and knowledge of unique accomplishments from many of the best projects around the world, which are using partnerships and collaborative integration approaches, can be used at the local level.	"We can learn the importance of hard work, dedication, and perseverance."	13
Sponsorship and Financial Support	The essential funds/resources for participation, to support a project or initiative that supports the sustainability of benefits, and increase the impact.	"Branding is key, but without financial backing, it's hard to make an impact."	13

A review of the total number of coding allusions highlights various fundamental aspects of how effectively Zimbabwean female soccer players are utilising their branding strategies to boost their international marketing. The central theme was cultural understanding and engagement, with 25 references stressing the need for branding efforts to be relevant in their local context. One respondent emphasised the importance of research, stating, “To understand our target audience’s needs and preferences, we must conduct research and analyse them.” They also stressed the need to adapt branding efforts to local contexts for greater impact.

14 references highlighted the importance of community and grassroots development, with respondents emphasising their need to establish a sturdy base through local initiatives. A participant expressed that engaging with local communities can lead to greater grassroots involvement and ultimately, better branding. Additionally, they believe that doing so can foster loyalty and support. The theme of learning from global role models was highlighted by 13 respondents, who recognised the importance of drawing inspiration from female athletes of all stripes. The lessons can be learnt by watching Zimbabwean footballers compete on the international stage, where they gain insights into their sports teams and brand identity. Moreover, sponsors and financial aid were also highlighted as the most important factors, with 13 references noting the need for better deals to support branding initiatives. According to a participant, branding is crucial, but without the right resources, it's difficult to make an impact. It also highlights the importance of obtaining resources to support female athletes.

12 examples were cited, with participants acknowledging the importance of digital and social media presence in increasing visibility. According to another, social media is a move but requires constant engagement to reach wider audiences. The message? No problem. The use of diverse approaches such as networking, sponsorship opportunities, and digital platforms, and the themes highlight a range of potential ways for Zimbabwean female footballers to improve their global marketing by emphasising cultural engagement, community development, or learning from international role models.

An examination of the marketing techniques used by Zimbabwean female footballers to improve their global marketing highlights a strong connection between quantitative and qualitative assessments. With an important F-value of 43.191 ($p < 0.001$), the ANOVA showed that, out of 25 references studied, qualitative insights suggest that tailored branding strategies emphasise cultural understanding and engagement. An F-value of 375.397 and qualitative evidence on the importance of grassroots development indicate that international collaborations are potentially more effective. With an F-value of 81.753, they are focusing on workshops for skill development and also emphasise global role models. Moreover... Additionally, sponsorship and financial assistance are crucial in both studies; respondents acknowledge the necessity of adequate funding for effective branding. Ultimately, the results indicate that tailored branding strategies, international partnerships with coaching staff, investment in skill development, and access to financial support are necessary to increase the global representation of Zimbabwean female footballers.

4.5 DISCUSSIONS

In this section, we delve into the mixed-methods research design that utilises qualitative and quantitative methods to examine how female footballers can be used to increase their global recognition.

4.5.1 Objective 1: What are the current branding strategies used by Zimbabwean female footballers to enhance their presence in international markets?

As previously stated, the quantitative analysis (see Table 4.5) indicates that social media platforms continue to play a significant role in the branding strategies of female footballers in Zimbabwe, particularly those seeking higher exposure in foreign markets. The average score for social media usage was relatively high, but the data also highlights significant obstacles in strategic implementation and resource availability. Additionally, there are still many unresolved issues. The difficulties in branding athletes in this setting significantly limit their effectiveness. Furthermore, these findings align with previous research that highlights the crucial role of social media in brand development (Abeza et al., 2017; Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). Additionally. Questions

reinforce this theme, with frequent mentions of social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, as well as Twitter and TikTok. Nevertheless, the research indicates that social media use is not sufficient for effective branding, echoing critiques in existing literature on the drawbacks of unstructured social networking. By examining the specific, contextual barriers faced by female footballers in Zimbabwe, the research offers new perspectives. These athletes face practical challenges, as evidenced by the lower mean scores for the effectiveness and clarity of current branding strategies (1.70 out of 3) and collaborations with local brands (1.99 out of 3) in comparison to qualitative comments about limited resources and inadequate knowledge of international markets. The observation is particularly striking because these are not solely sports. This added complexity to wider debates on the branding of athletes, often ignoring disparities over support and expertise. In addition, the qualitative component of the research (see Table 4.6) corresponds with the quantitative outcomes, including key strategies such as social media interactions, content creation and distribution, networking, team building, role modelling, and finding sponsors. The participants emphasise the significance of introducing role models to the country and increasing sponsorship opportunities. These results imply that effective branding should address both individual athlete initiatives and the structural ecosystem in which these athletes operate. The literature also lends support to the research findings. ... These findings suggest the need for a more integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The use of social media is present, but the lack of coordination across marketing channels is evident from the infrequent events and limited partnerships with local brands (meaning 1.32 out of 5) among respondents. To build strong brand equity, integrated marketing communication (IMC) promotes consistency in messaging and alignment across all efforts. Strong brand equity ensures that every campaign, post, and outreach initiative collaborates to convey a clear and unified story. The emphasis on "content creation and engagement" aligns with the latest trends in content marketing (Pulizzi, 2020), highlighting the importance of connecting with audiences through meaningful and engaging material. The research indicates that resource limitations and a lack of strategic direction may constrain content quality and reach. Additionally, the study connects theories of athlete branding to the real challenges faced by athletes in Zimbabwe, emphasising the importance of context, resources, and supportive networks in shaping brand outcomes. Rather than merely diagnosing problems, this study proposes practical solutions, including targeted branding workshops for female footballers, fostering partnerships with local

businesses, and organising public showcase events. These programmes serve as effective means to promote and improve the image of sportspeople in the area. By studying Objective 1, it is evident that Zimbabwean female football players are promoting themselves on social media, but their efforts are hindered by a lack of strategic vision and resources. For them to gain wider international exposure, they need a more integrated and context-sensitive branding strategy that takes advantage of regional collaborations between teams across the country, generates compelling digital content, and fosters thriving support networks. By focusing on the collective, these athletes can enhance their global visibility.

4.5.2 Objective 2: What specific challenges do Zimbabwean elite female footballers encounter when it comes to visibility in international markets?

ANOVA was conducted to determine the visibility challenges faced by Zimbabwean female footballers in global markets, as indicated by Table 4.7, which is the quantitative aspect of the research. Additionally. It shows a correlation between quantitative and qualitative data. The ANOVA results indicate that the quantitative analysis highlights visibility problems, with an F-value of 102.808 ($p < 0.001$), and suggests significant issues that differ among groups. These findings highlight systemic barriers, resource constraints, and the influence of socioeconomic factors. This study strongly supports existing literature on the systemic barriers and gender inequalities within sport, notably visibility and sponsorship opportunities for female athletes (Cunningham & Fink, 2015; Finkin et al., 2003). The strong F-value (102.808, $p = 0.001$), indicating difficulties with visibility, is consistent with research showing that women's sports are not given enough coverage and marketing in media outlets. The investigation aims to fill a gap by emphasising the importance of mentorship, which addresses both professional and identity objectives, particularly the need for diverse role models. While the significance of role models is well recognised (Bandura, 1977), this study underscores the necessity of identifying and understanding role models specifically for female footballers in Zimbabwe. It's a powerful statement: "You can be anything you cannot see...it'll be notably more challenging." His clear identification of the interdependence between gender and socioeconomic status is a significant new finding. Figure 4.12 highlights the qualitative aspect, which focuses on the efforts and factors

that contribute to the visibility of female footballers in international markets. These qualitative results show sentiments of being disconnected from the wealthier peers, and that economic inequality within Zimbabwe contributes to barriers to accessing markets (F-value of 117.280). The result introduces a layer of complexity that is often absent in broader discussions about gender inequality in sports. These findings indicate that stakeholders should pursue strategies for maximising visibility that go beyond simply "showing up". The need for mentorship programmes that balance personality and professional objectives is in line with the evolving industry's focus on athlete growth through sponsorship and mentoring. This proposal supports this view. ? Mentoring and support services are frequently integrated into modern sponsorship models to help athletes reach their full potential both on and off the field. The research merges the academic comprehension of gender inequality in sports with the practical difficulties faced by athletes in a particular developing nation. These results are useful for designing interventions and policies to increase equity and visibility. This finding will help inform targeted actions such as media training, mentoring, or promoting awareness of Zimbabwean female footballers in the media. The evaluation of Objective 2 indicates that Zimbabwean female footballers encounter a complex network of barriers, such as systemic inequalities, scarce resources, and the interplay between gender and socioeconomic status when competing for international recognition. The resolution of these challenges necessitates focused actions that encourage media representation, mentorship, and equitable access to resources and opportunities.

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4.5.3 Objective 3: How effective are the current branding strategies being used to enhance the international market of Zimbabwean elite female footballers?

The quantitative and qualitative aspects of the data reveal a more compelling explanation for the current branding tactics being employed to develop the international market share of prominent female footballers in Zimbabwe. By utilising correlation analysis (Table 4.8), the researcher was able to determine whether the branding strategies employed by Zimbabwean female footballers to enhance their international market were effective. While branding initiatives yield some favourable outcomes, their impact on global market share remains limited. However, the research supports existing literature that highlights the importance of effective branding for female athletes

to increase their visibility and secure sponsorship deals (Abeza et al., 2017; Burton & Chadwick, 2009). The quantitative data reveal a strong correlation between branding effectiveness and sponsorship sufficiency ($r = 0.744$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that a strong brand can effectively attract sponsors and generate revenue. This study fills a crucial gap in the literature by showing how effective branding flourishes through international networking and collaboration, ultimately boosting brand awareness. Despite the literature's emphasis on individual athlete branding, this study pinpoints the importance of building relationships with global players and organisations to increase visibility and market access. The qualitative data (Table 4.15) findings highlight that networking plays a vital role in enhancing strategies and visibility, as supported by Burt's 2000 research on social capital and its impact on career development. Furthermore, the study offers new insights into how local initiatives and role models can effectively shape branding efforts. Participants emphasised that these components are crucial for enhancing visibility and inspiring young athletes. It also aligns with established best practices in sports marketing, emphasising community involvement and representation as core strategies. The tasks of branding, marketing, and sponsorship require a comprehensive approach. These results highlight the importance of a holistic branding strategy that seamlessly integrates marketing, sponsorship, and community engagement. (Shank & Lyberger, 2014). Such an approach fosters a stronger connection between female athletes and their supporters. Current best practices further support this approach. The research shows that implementing more effective marketing campaigns can enhance female football's image, highlighting the importance of organised and resourceful initiatives. Similarly, industry benchmarks highlight the importance of measuring ROI on branding efforts. Despite the lack of clear findings from the study, it is apparent that female footballers in Zimbabwe may require improvement in this particular area. These findings are important because they can help close gaps between literature and practice. This study contributes to a better understanding of how to effectively promote Zimbabwean female footballers internationally by examining comprehensive branding, successful marketing strategies, and improved visibility among potential targets. By utilising this data, we can guide future branding efforts and pave the way for more research to create an equitable environment in global sports for women.' Ultimately, the analysis of Objective 3 shows that current branding strategies are partly effective but only partly effective in increasing international market share for Zimbabwean female footballers.

4.5.4 Objective 4: What strategies can be used to align with the different cultural and social contexts?

The lessons I learnt from this research pinpoint the importance of adopting culturally responsive and community-centered approaches to increase the visibility of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe. Consequently, generic marketing strategies fall short. Branding campaigns should be customised to reflect the unique cultural and social dynamics present in Zimbabwean communities if brand ambassadors are not familiar with activist concerns. EPartnerships with European football clubs enhance brand recognition for these athletes, as demonstrated by the remarkably high F-value. The results indicate that such partnerships are a highly effective way to boost the international presence of Zimbabwean female footballers. These findings align with existing literature that emphasises the significance of cultural sensitivity in global marketing efforts (Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities, 2025).

This study addresses this gap by providing concrete, localised examples of triumphant branding steeped within Zimbabwe's distinct sociocultural context, and as such, promises to gather similar examples from other contexts. The study emphasises grassroots development and community engagement, highlighting that communities can most effectively cultivate brand loyalty and advocacy from the ground up.

These results show that workshops featuring skills training and access to international role models play a crucial role in closing the gap between local and international standards. These types of initiatives inspire the next generation of athletes and also equip them with the abilities necessary to compete and succeed on an international stage. When evaluated against best practices in sports marketing, the evidence reinforces that successful branding strategies must prioritise cultural engagement, community involvement, and strategic alliances. Lastly, the key role of tailoring sponsorship activities to local values and community priorities is highlighted, which aligns with industry best practices calling for ethical and culturally appropriate marketing. Together, these insights offer a rich foundation from which to build future research and practical branding initiatives, the overarching goal of which will be to create increased equity and visibility for female

athletes, both in Zimbabwe and around the globe. Overall, the analysis confirms what we know about the best branding of Zimbabwean female footballers: it needs to be specific, community-based, culturally aware, and focused on connecting with local players through skill development, community outreach efforts, and sponsorship initiatives that resonate with locals.

4.5.5 Contribution to knowledge

4.5.5.1 Theoretical contribution to the study

Theoretical contribution helps to understand the challenges that come with the sports industry and how it can best address these challenges. Consequently, the research supports the current theories concerning Zimbabwean sports. This demonstrates the necessity for a comprehensive system that considers both theory and practice. In addition, it contributes to the understanding of how cultural attitudes affect policy implementation, suggesting a theoretical model that incorporates socio-cultural elements.

4.5.5.2. Practical Contribution.

The study informs policymakers about necessary changes to existing systems that can strengthen the international marketing of female footballers. It also emphasises the need to equip educators and coaches with targeted training programmes that foster inclusive practices on and off the field.

This study will resolve the problem through:

Table 4.21

Research Response with Policy Integration

Approach	Innovation Mechanism	Policy Integration
Diagnostic Phase	AI-driven social media audit with localized metrics	Baseline for ZIFA's Athlete Branding Index
Solution Design	Co-created NFT-based "Cultural Capital Passports" certifying skills/heritage	Draft legislation for the Ministry of Sport's Tax Incentive Program

Implementation	Low-bandwidth storytelling apps (USSD/SMS-based)	Subsidy scheme through the POTRAZ Universal Fund
Validation	Blockchain-tracked contract offers via smart contracts	ZIFA Club Licensing Requirement

Figure 4.2 A strategic framework to enhance the international marketing and visibility of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe

Developing Strategies:

- ❖ The first step is the development of plans and initiatives to boost the visibility and promotion of top-notch female footballers in Zimbabwe. This involves identifying target audiences, setting short- and long-term objectives, and prioritising performance metrics.
- ❖ Develop a robust, integrated brand identity for athletes, including logos, slogans, and personal accounts.
- ❖ Promote athletes on social media platforms and websites, using content marketing to engage target audiences.
- ❖ Collaborate with brands and organisations in sponsorships and marketing campaigns.
- ❖ Promote abroad by organising friendly competitions and tournaments.
- ❖ Develop grassroots support and attend workshops and events to build community.
- ❖ While other elements are already present, such as social media participation.

Most information isn't accessible to everyone because tariffs are too expensive. Why? Therefore, organisations must develop an offline application that doesn't require data to access certain information. The application's functionality ensures that you can easily access information about the activities occurring at a particular organisation. Given the abundance of data-driven applications, why not develop a data and analytics platform that is both affordable and efficient?

4.5.6 Significance of the contribution

Promotional strategies of elite women's football in Zimbabwe are very effective in several respects. Research has demonstrated that strong branding is not only important for an athlete's visibility but also strongly drives their marketability, leading to increased public liking and professional opportunities. Regardless of whether you are a big firm, you will observe that successful brands result in better sponsorship fees, and a more sophisticated brand strategy helps you pave the way. And social impact assessments note the positive influence of high-profile female athletes in motivating young girls and promoting gender equality in sport.

Community involvement also seems to be a plus, with outreach activities leading to increased local backing and involvement. Empirically, indicators of strong marketing often show a positive relationship with a nation's ability to compete internationally. More generally, successful

collaborations demonstrate the power of partnerships in this space. Longitudinal research studies validate that long-term branding is vital to the preservation of women's sports teams. Lastly, the cross-referencing data analytics confirm that the branding strategies are successful, supporting the heavy positive impact that branding has (having an impact on the individual athletes as well as the entire women's soccer team in Zimbabwe).

4.5.7 Validation of the contribution

Brand strategies of elite female football players in Zimbabwe have proved very effective on several fronts. It is clear that successful branding does not merely raise the profile of these players but raises their commercial appeal, leading to increased public awareness and new professional opportunities. But when it comes to the value that is derived, economic studies demonstrate time and again that the linkage between advanced, multi-levelled branding and greater sponsorship revenue is direct. In addition, social impact studies reveal the importance of high-profile female sports stars as role models for young girls and as a vehicle for moving gender equality forward in sport. Community involvement also seems to fare better, as outreach efforts inspire stronger local support and turnout. Based on objective performance measures, substantive marketing activity seems to be associated with greater international competitiveness. Furthermore, one could say that successful collaborations show the potential of collaborative processes when working with these groups. Longitudinal studies confirm the importance of longevity in branding women's sports programs. Finally, holistic data analysis indicates that such communication strategies resonate with the audience; hence, their significant relevance to individual athletes and the broader playfield of women's football in Zimbabwe.

4.5.8. The Contribution Dissemination Strategy

The publicity approach is designed to maximise awareness of brand opportunities for elite-level female footballers in Zimbabwe among various stakeholders such as potential athletes, coaches, sponsors, and the general public. It uses several communication channels (social media, official websites, workshops, press releases, and email newsletters) to spread information to the relevant audience. Publishing of the content will focus on the success stories and content-rich (with images), as well as engaging and informative copy for those concerned parties. Strategic alliances

with well-known brands and brand ambassadors are included to increase reach and build the authority of the programme. In addition, constant review based on engagement analytics and audience feedback allows adjustments to the ways that information is disseminated. Periodic evaluations are carried out on the efficiency of the strategy. For example, this integrative approach is designed to increase women athletes' profiles and support, as well as their visibility in both their local community and the wider world of sport.

4.5.9 Reflection on the research process

4.5.9.1 Challenges Encountered

Studying branding strategies for elite female footballers in Zimbabwe presented a number of challenges, some of which were surprisingly difficult to navigate. First, information was scarce, which made it a challenge to gain a deep and detailed understanding of the landscape when it comes to branding. Cultural diversity in Zimbabwe created even more complexity, where interpreting branding strategies in different communities was like working in a labyrinth, where meanings and values changed from one context to another. Lack of resources was another major barrier. Because researchers had limited resources, they could not fund a broad array of surveys and interviews, which restricted the perspectives represented in this work. Getting key stakeholders, read sponsors, and local community elders on board was also tough, as there was a general ignorance of what investing in women's sports could do. Plus, the fast-paced nature of sports marketing required constant change. The challenge was to remain in the loop. Typical sports bodies showed significant resistance to game-changing branding methods, and it took extensive grassroots campaigning to persuade them to look at an alternative. Time constraints ultimately limited the data analysis; there is a wider call for a more enabling research environment in Zimbabwe. You can't go a mile before you hit a roadblock: no one is tracking enough data, and too little investment is being made in resources for women's sports for research and development in this realm to get traction.

4.5.10 Limitations of the Study

The research on the branding strategies of elite female soccer players in Zimbabwe faced some notable limitations. First, the number of samples is too small. Generalising findings to a larger

population is inherently challenging due to the small sample size. Furthermore, the limited provision of Adidas women's sport in general limited the extent of analysis possible within the study. Logic of the human sciences. Another difficulty is the cultural context. Zimbabwe, too, is by no means culturally homogeneous, so again, there is probably regional variation in the response to branding effectiveness that the study may not have completely accounted for. Resource constraints also limited the extent of fieldwork; the research team was simply not able to accommodate more intensive or longer data-gathering.

Respondent bias is another potential issue; participants may have answered in a way that they think the researchers wanted to hear, hence the data's authenticity. Limited time prevented addressing all issues germane to this subject. Furthermore, because sports marketing is both dynamic and continually changing, the possible future relevance of the findings is an issue. Finally, a lack of cooperation among several of the policy actors restricted the diversity of perspectives considered as part of the study, which may narrow the threads of thought. Cumulatively, these constraints point to the need for additional inquiry to enhance understanding of branding in female athletics in Zimbabwe.

4.5.11 Lessons

The preceding and revised paragraphs are exceptional prerequisites that are necessary for the success of branding strategies for Zimbabwean professional female footballers. Then follows the understanding that sound planning lies in clear data. Culture-specific 'nothing is better than its own'. The book also highlights the importance of a cultural understanding of the market; companies must design brand-building programmes that fit with local particularism rather than follow stereotyped patterns. In this context, stakeholder involvement emerges as another important dimension. Engaging sponsors, community leaders, and other stakeholders in the process creates an opportunity for collaboration and adds credibility to branding initiatives. This work prioritises the flexibility of research designs, allowing practitioners to adjust their measures over time in line with fast-changing developments in the sports industry. The participation of communities has proved to enhance data collection and promote a feeling of responsibility and solidarity among local stakeholders. Resource allocation is outlined as a basic element, and funding and support are the key to completing research and good practice. The findings

demonstrate the need for a longitudinal perspective in research on branding, as a longitudinal study makes it possible to gain a better understanding of the impact and long-term effects of branding strategies. The text concludes with a call to a lifetime of learning. Staying open to new ideas and changing best practices empowers professionals to know how to respond to industry shifts as things shift over time. Taken together, these lessons provide a strong foundation for raising the visibility and influence of female footballers in Zimbabwe with the potential for wider application to similar initiatives.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter described the demographics of the study participants, setting the scene for the aims and objectives outlined in Chapter 1. Quantitative and qualitative data mutually illuminated one another. These connections are discussed more in depth in the following chapter, where additional knowledge and context for the results of this chapter will be provided.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws the study to a compelling conclusion by showcasing the key findings and presenting actionable recommendations, highlighting their significant implications for future practice and decision-making.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

5.2.1 The current branding strategies are accustomed to boosting the international marketing of the elite female footballers in Zimbabwe:

The research concludes that Zimbabwean female footballers are primarily using social media to try to build their brand and connect with fans. However, they struggle with having clear, well-defined branding plans. They also aren't getting many opportunities to partner with local businesses or participate in events that would showcase their talents.

5.2.2 Challenges are being faced in marketing the female footballers for international visibility.

The implementation of marketing strategies to market Zimbabwean female footballers internationally faces significant hurdles in gaining international recognition. These include a lack of media coverage, a scarcity of relatable role models who look like them and understand their experiences, and limited access to financial support and sponsorships. Socioeconomic disparities within Zimbabwe also contribute to these challenges, making it difficult for some athletes to compete on a level playing field.

5.2.3. Effectiveness of Current Branding Strategies Being Used to Market Female Footballers in Zimbabwe

The journey to promote Zimbabwean female footballers on the international stage is marred by significant challenges that hinder their recognition. Key issues include a lack of media attention, a

shortage of relatable role models who share their experiences, and limited access to financial backing and sponsorships. Additionally, the socioeconomic disparities within Zimbabwe further complicate these obstacles, making it difficult for many athletes to compete fairly.

The researcher is developing a framework to align cultural and social values with the branding and international marketing needs of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe.

To successfully promote Zimbabwean female footballers on the global stage, it is essential to create a practical framework that resonates with both local and international cultures. The notion involves honouring Zimbabwean identity, connecting with local communities, and ensuring that branding efforts are both respectful and culturally aware. Additionally, it should offer opportunities for skill enhancement and mentorship while aligning sponsorship strategies with local values.

5.3 CONCLUSION

5.3.1 Current Branding Strategies of Zimbabwean Female Footballers:

The research shows that female footballers in Zimbabwe are mainly using social media as their go-to strategy for building their brand and making a name for themselves in international markets. Unfortunately, their efforts often face obstacles like a lack of clear planning, limited resources, and sporadic partnerships with local brands and organisations. While social media can be a powerful promotional tool, its potential is often held back by these challenges.

5.3.2 Challenges Faced by Zimbabwean Female Footballers:

The research highlights that female footballers in Zimbabwe face a host of challenges when it comes to visibility, sponsorship, and accessing the market. These hurdles include minimal media attention, a shortage of diverse and relatable role models, insufficient sponsorship opportunities, and socioeconomic inequalities. Such systemic obstacles make it tough for them to achieve international recognition and compete fairly on the global stage.

5.3.3 Effectiveness of Current Branding Strategies:

The research shows that while the current branding strategies do have some positive effects, they aren't quite cutting it when it comes to boosting the international visibility of Zimbabwean female footballers. There's a link between strong branding and attracting sponsorships, but the overall effect is hampered by the challenges mentioned in Objective 2. To truly unlock the potential of these athletes, a more thorough and strategic approach is essential.

5.3.4 Development of Tailored Branding Strategies:

The research highlights that to truly boost the international marketing of Zimbabwean female footballers, we need to develop branding strategies that are specifically tailored to their unique needs. These strategies should resonate with various cultural and social contexts, emphasising the importance of cultural engagement, community involvement, and forming strategic partnerships. Additionally, these approaches must include skill development, mentorship programmes, and initiatives aimed at securing long-term financial support.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study offers some valuable insights, but it does have its limitations. For instance, there’s a chance of response bias because of the mixed-methods approach, and the sample size is relatively small, which could affect how widely we can apply the findings. Additionally, the existing literature often misses context-specific research on female athletes in developing countries and tends to lean heavily on Western viewpoints. There were also logistical challenges, like limited funding and some respondents being hesitant to participate. To tackle these issues, the study used thorough methods, data triangulation, and cultural sensitivity and ensured that everything was kept confidential. By recognising these limitations, we can provide a clearer and more balanced view of the results.

5.4.1 Limitations of Methodologies Used

Response Bias: The research using a mixed-methods study has created a scenario for response bias, when participants respond in ways that adhere to social norms rather than based on their own

experiences or opinions. Response bias will impact findings and, therefore, make findings less credible.

Sample Size: The type and sample size used in the research were small, which could affect the generalisability. Smaller will limit the number of voices and experiences represented in the research, regardless.

Logistical challenges: There are logistical considerations, like not enough funding for the study and an unwillingness for the participants to participate, that would also potentially limit the data that was collected or that the inclusion of participants omitted key experiences within the group successfully due to a lack of funding or participant challenges to willingly provide experiences to the study, potentially affecting the completeness of the study.

Cultural Sensitivity: Even though the research has cultural sensitivity, it is still not unfeasible that the research did not consider or account for culture in some of the other factors necessary in order to speak with confidence with regard to the experiences of female footballers in Zimbabwe.

Triangulation: Although triangulation is used in order to establish reliability in data, especially in mixed-method situations, there will continue to be multiple conflicting and/or overlapping considerations when interpreting both the qualitative and quantitative data in the same study.

5.4.2 Limitations of the Literature Used

Context-Specific Gaps: The body of literature generally lacks context-specific literature related to female athletes in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. The majority of the studies may tend to focus on visual representations in Western contexts, which may restrict the uniqueness of the lived experiences in relation to the challenges that female footballers face in Zimbabwe.

Limited Representation: The literature may fail to adequately represent the voice of female athletes, especially in areas with relatively few studies that explore issues of gender and sport. Therefore, the unique contexts and challenges expressed by female athletes are not understood.

Outdated Sources: Some of the sources utilised were out of date, potentially preventing the relevance of the findings from studies to some of the conditions and trends currently being

observed in the sports industry. Marketing and branding strategies are rapidly evolving, and the need for updated research is great.

Overreliance on Quantitative Data: Many of the studies in relation to sports marketing are reliant upon quantitative data and measures. As such, the qualitative measures that are critical for gaining a nuanced and textured understanding of female footballers' lived experience are potentially overlooked.

Theoretical Framework Limitations: The theoretical lenses in the studies did not consider or deal with the complexity of branding and marketing female athletes, which has resulted in perhaps the oversimplification of outcomes that actually speak to the contested spaces that female athletes occupy.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5.1 Implications for practice

- The study recommends the initiation of a National Female Football Branding Initiative. ZIFA, in partnership with the Ministry of Sport, should develop a thorough branding strategy that includes branding toolkits, workshops, and resource hubs tailored specifically for female footballers.
- Sports organisations should foster collaboration by linking female footballers with local businesses and community groups to unlock sponsorship and partnership opportunities. They can achieve this by hosting networking events, designing compelling sponsorship packages, and showcasing success stories that demonstrate impact and value.
- ZIFA should actively reach out to both local and international media to boost the visibility of Zimbabwean female footballers. This approach should involve building relationships with journalists, creating engaging content, and utilising digital platforms effectively.
- Content creators and journalists need to highlight the achievements of successful Zimbabwean female footballers to inspire the next generation and provide relatable role models. This can be done by creating athlete profiles and arranging visits for athletes to schools and community centres, where they can share their experiences and motivate young girls to chase their dreams.

- ❖ Clubs and academies should establish mentorship programmes that connect experienced athletes with younger players, providing guidance, support, and inspiration.
- ❖ Women's soccer leagues should consider designing diverse sponsorship packages that accommodate various budgets while delivering clear and compelling value to sponsors. They should also offer branding opportunities on athletes' jerseys, social media profiles, and websites. Additionally, sponsors should be given access to exclusive events and chances to meet and interact with athletes, as well as opportunities to collaborate on community outreach programmes and initiatives.

The study recommends establishing a Sponsorship Fund to provide financial support for female footballers.

5.5.2 Implications for Theory

- ❖ Zimbabwean female footballers often struggle to gain international recognition due to gaps in branding, sponsorship, and media coverage. These challenges limit their visibility, making it harder to attract global opportunities and showcase their talent on the world stage. Bridging these gaps requires strategic support—from storytelling and digital campaigns to partnerships that elevate their profiles beyond borders. To elevate the global presence of Zimbabwe's elite female footballers, the study recommends a set of practical and culturally grounded actions. Implementing these strategies collaboratively will create a supportive environment, empower athletes, and enhance their success.

5.5.3 Implications for Future Research

Future studies can validate the current framework to enhance the international marketing of elite female footballers in Zimbabwe. This can include investigating the following:

- ❖ Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of branding initiatives on the visibility and growth of female footballers.
- ❖ Undertake comparative analyses across developing nations to identify shared challenges and successful branding strategies.

- ❖ Leverage digital technologies—such as social media, data analytics, and content platforms—to enhance brand reach and engagement.
- ❖ Intermediaries like agents, sports federations, and media professionals play a vital role in shaping and elevating athlete brands. They help female footballers navigate sponsorship deals, secure media coverage, and build strategic partnerships that boost visibility. By telling compelling stories, negotiating opportunities, and connecting athletes with the right platforms, these intermediaries act as bridges between talent and the wider world—ensuring that players are seen, heard, and valued both locally and internationally.
- ❖ Evaluate the effectiveness of sponsorship models in delivering value to both athletes and partners, with attention to scalability and sustainability.
- ❖ Examine cultural nuances in messaging to ensure branding efforts
- ❖ Examine how policy interventions influence the visibility, support, and development of female footballers—shaping access to resources, sponsorship opportunities, and international marketing pathways.

Future studies can further explore the experiences of individuals who have excelled and are now playing as professionals. These investigations will enhance understanding, inform strategies, and promote success for Zimbabwean female footballers and contribute to broader sports development and gender equality**.**

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter concludes the study with conclusions and recommendations to ZIFA, teams, and athletes based on the findings. The conclusions distilled the participants' perspectives, while the recommendations focused on fostering a more inclusive sports environment in Zimbabwe through actionable guidance on policy, practice, and future research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Questionnaire for athletes, coaches, managers, and administrators

My name is Winnie Edith Muhonde, and I am a student at the Bindura University of Science Education studying a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sport Science and Management. I am conducting a research study entitled: **Developing Branding Strategies to Enhance the International Marketing of Elite Female Footballers in Zimbabwe.** Your honest opinion would be greatly appreciated.

Participation in this survey is voluntary, and there are no compulsory questions. There are no right or wrong answers. The study just wants your views, and all your responses are strictly confidential. You can stop answering questions at any point if you feel uncomfortable. Do not write your name on this survey.

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

Demographics

1. **AGE:**

☐ 18-30 years

☐ 31-40 years

- [ ] 41-50 years
- [ ] 51-59 years
- [ ] 60 and above

2. **GENDER:**

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Prefer not to say

3. Level of Education

- [ ] No formal education
- [ ] Certificate
- [ ] Diploma
- [ ] Degree
- [ ] Post-graduate

4. **Are you a player, coach, manager, or administrator**?

- [ ] Player

- [ ] Coach
- [ ] Manager
- [ ] Administrator

Objective 1. Current Branding Strategies

1The current branding strategies for Zimbabwean female footballers are well-defined and effective.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

2. Social media platforms are actively used to promote Zimbabwean female footballers.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

3. There are collaborations between female footballers and local brands to enhance visibility.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

4. Events and competitions are regularly organized to showcase female football talent in Zimbabwe.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly Agree

Objective 2. Challenges Faced

5. Zimbabwean female footballers face significant visibility challenges in the international market.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

6. Sponsorship opportunities for female footballers in Zimbabwe are limited.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

7. Media coverage of female football in Zimbabwe is insufficient to attract international attention.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree

- [ ] Strongly Agree

8. There are barriers to market access for Zimbabwean female footballers compared to their male counterparts

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly: Agree

Objective 3 Effectiveness of Current Strategies

9. The branding strategies currently in use effectively enhance the visibility of female footballers internationally.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

10. Sponsorships received by female footballers are sufficient for their professional development

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

11. The marketing campaigns for female footballers reach the desired target audience effectively

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

12. Current branding efforts contribute positively to the overall perception of female football in Zimbabwe

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral

- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

Objective 4: Developing Specific Branding Strategies

13. There is a need for tailored branding strategies to better market female footballers internationally.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

14. Engaging with international football clubs could improve the branding of Zimbabwean female footballers.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

15. Workshops and training on personal branding for female footballers would enhance their marketability

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

16. Partnerships with international organizations can significantly improve the global visibility of Zimbabwean female footballers.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

APPENDIX B: INTEVIEW GUIDE

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Instructions

The main objective of this study is to develop strategies that enhance the international marketing of the elite female footballers in Zimbabwe. The codes will be used to identify each participant and you are not allowed to identify yourself. The Codes will be used to identify each participant and there are no compulsory questions. The responses will remain anonymous. If permission is granted, the deliberations can be recorded and transcribed**.**

SECTION A: General Questions

1. Can you describe the branding strategies you currently use to promote yourself as a footballer in international markets?

2. What are the biggest challenges Zimbabwean female footballers face in building their brands?

3. How do you leverage social media platforms to enhance your visibility and brand presence? Can you provide specific examples?

4. What role do sponsorships play in enhancing the visibility of female footballers?

5. What lessons can Zimbabwean footballers learn from globally recognized female athletes?

6. What strategies do you believe could be implemented to better align branding initiatives with different cultural and social contexts within Zimbabwean football?

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORMS

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Purpose of study:……

Procedure and duration…….

You are being kindly requested to participate in an interview and focus group discussions. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and 40 minutes for focus group discussions. It will take place at your office/home or at another location which is of your convenient. With your permission, the interview and focus group discussions will be recorded. The audio recorded will be transcribed, your name or other identifying information will not be included on the transcript. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may stop participating in this research at any time or choose not to answer any question without penalty. Although disclosure of your identity is a possible risk every precaution will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of any records generated by this research. The researcher Ms Winnie Edith Muhonde and her research assistant will only have access to the audio tapes of the interviews and the transcripts.

The audio recordings will be kept in a locked file and at the end of the research project the recordings will be erased. Your name and any other identifying information will not appear in any reports or documents that are published as a result of this research project. If you do not understand any of the questions that will be asked, I will be pleased to provide a complete explanation. So, questions are welcome at any time during the interview or if you have after thoughts, you are free to call the researcher who can be contacted on the following numbers; 0772940354/0785472055 at any time.

I……. have been informed of any and all possible risks or discomforts. I have read the statements contained herein, have had the opportunity to discuss my concerns and questions fully and fully understands the nature and character of my involvement in this research and the attendant risks and consequences. I agree to participate in the research and give my permission to audio or video tape this interview

Agree/ Not Agree

Signed……. Date…….

Research Participant