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**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**FACULTY OF COMMERCE**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

**Exploring the Antecedents, Dimensions, and Consequences of Perceived Brand Equity in Professional Sports Teams on the Zimbabwean Football Market.**

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## ABSTRACT

The study explored the antecedents, dimensions, and market consequences of perceived brand equity in professional sports teams on the Zimbabwean football market and developed a strategic brand management framework that can bridge existing practical and theoretical knowledge gaps in the management of football brands in the country. The exploratory sequential mixed methods research design was adopted as the guiding model for the data collection, analysis and interpretation process in this study. The first phase of this study utilised such qualitative data collection procedures as, free-thought listing, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings from the qualitative phase of the study were used to generate data collection instruments for questionnaire survey and assess the overall prevalence of the variables that were identified in the qualitative strand from a large number of users of football brands. The NVivo 10 and Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 software packages were used to analyse qualitative and quantitative data, respectively. The study identified and classified the antecedents of brand perceptions held by Zimbabwean consumers for professional football teams into "Consumption Experience-Triggered Antecedents", "Significant Others-Triggered Antecedents", and "Management-Triggered Antecedents". The research findings support the conceptualization of perceived brand equity in as an aggregate of brand awareness and brand associations. Zimbabwean consumers of football brands perceived European professional football teams as the market leaders in their brand category. South African professional football teams were ranked second, and Zimbabwean professional football teams were positioned at the bottom of the brand leadership rankings in the minds of Zimbabwean consumers of football brands. The study illustrated how the brand the perceptions held by Zimbabwean corporate and individual consumers for professional football teams have generated negative and positive market consequences. The existing sports brand equity conceptual models do not completely capture the brand perceptions held by Zimbabwean consumers for professional football teams owing to the subjective nature of customers' experiences with the teams. The study proposed the Sports Team Brand Hierarchy Conceptual Framework, Conceptual Framework for Understanding Sponsor-Based Brand Equity in Professional Sports Teams, Conceptual Framework for Assessing Media-Based Brand Equity in professional sports teams, and Integrative Conceptual Framework for Understanding perceived brand equity in professional sports teams as a way to bridge existing practical and theoretical knowledge gaps in sport brand management.