



*Breaking away from inferiority: the strive for legitimacy in postcolonial service encounters*

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**Breaking Away from Inferiority: The Strive for  
Legitimacy in Postcolonial Service Encounters**

**Evelyn Azikiwe**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of**

**Sheffield Hallam University  
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**December, 2020**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University or other academic or professional organization whilst taking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines how service worker identity is mediated through global cultural flows and the consumption practices of elite clients within beauty stores in Nigeria.

With a social constructionist approach and Foucault's theoretical perspectives on power, subject and technologies of the self, I used qualitative methods involving fieldwork such as participant observation and interviews for the data collection.

The findings of the study expose how inequalities that go deeper than differences in wealth and economic status shape the experiences and subject positions taken by the service workers in this context; symbolic meanings and values attached to global brands are embedded within socio-historical discourses and class differentiations; lastly, stigma is found to be a significant driver of behaviour as the workers collectively and consistently express a deep sense of inferiority in relation to their client's status, as well as relaying stories of struggle and striving for their acceptance. Thus, in seeking to manage these social asymmetries, western brands are used to mask the perceived subjugated identities experienced by the workers.

The findings extend Fanon's and Spivak's postcolonial theoretical perspectives by examining how workers' identities are transformed through the internalization of inferiority within the context of beauty salons in Nigeria. Also, it enhances the overall theoretical perspectives of brands in the marketplace, especially in postcolonial settings like Nigeria.

The implication of this study provides more insights into the socio-cultural context of global brands, which offers new business opportunities for emerging markets such as Nigeria. This is relevant because the success of most big firms from developed economies within the emerging markets is crucial, particularly as they are already operating in a saturated business environment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty. Without Him, this would have been impossible. Through this journey, He gave me strength unimaginable. To Him be all the Glory.

Deepest gratitude to my husband, Emmanuel Chukwuma Azikiwe and beautiful children, Ruth, Bethel, Ifeoma and Samuel. Your unwavering support kept me pushing on. Chuma, during those years, you were always there to say, “do not worry, everything will be fine”. My three beautiful daughters, now my closest friends and sisters. My little son, who always saw me on my desk, would say, “Mummy, when will you finish this your PhD?” To my mum, your words kept me pushing on.

My supervisors, Dr Craig Hirst, Dr Pallavi Singh and Dr Debbie Hill, words are not enough to express myself here.

To my Director of Studies, Dr Craig Hirst, I offer my heartfelt gratitude for your immense support and encouragement through this journey. May the Lord bless you, and may the lines fall in the most pleasant places for you. Amen.

Special thanks to Dr Pallavi Hirst and Dr Deborah Hill for your support, words of encouragement, advice and help in my academic career. May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen.

To my sister, Sarah Ofor, my friends and colleagues from Sheffield Hallam University, Dr Francis Awolowo, Dr Jerneja Lesnik, Dr Herine Otieno, Lyle Odendaal, and many others, thank you so much for those words of encouragement. They meant so much!

Lastly, many thanks to this study’s participants for their precious time and efforts, especially during fieldwork.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CAQDAS – Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

CC - Cultural Capital

CCT – Consumer Culture Theory

EC – Economic Capital

FCT – Federal Capital Territory

FCTA – Federal Capital Territory Administration

HCC – High Cultural Capital

ICR – Interpretive Consumer Research

LCC – Low Cultural Capital

LIC – Less Industrialized Countries

SME – Small-Medium Enterprises

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## **ACADEMIC CONFERENCE PAPERS**

October 2019: Azikiwe, E. & Hirst, C. Breaking away from inferiority; The strive for legitimacy in service encounters. Working Paper presented at the Association of Consumer Conference, Atlanta, US.

June 2018: Azikiwe, E. & Hirst, C. How do marketplace interactions shape identity outcomes between differentiated class groups in Nigeria? Poster presentation at Consumer Culture Theory Conference, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

June 2017: Azikiwe, E. Acculturation in Nigeria; a critical examination of marketplace Performances. Paper presented at Sheffield Business School Doctoral Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield.

April 2017: Azikiwe E. The role of marketplace performances in the diffusion of acculturation in Nigeria. Paper presented at the Academy of Marketing Conference, Doctoral colloquium, University of Hull.

# **CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

## **Personal Motivation for this Study**

Many years back, before I decided to register on a PhD program, I owned and managed a beauty store in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. As a mother who had acquired an MBA degree, my decision to start a business enabled me to earn additional income for my children were young but not yet of school age. In terms of the business structure, the majority of my employees were internal migrants from other urban and rural parts of the country. Also, a small number of others originated from the rural communities around the city. In contrast, most of the store customers were high-class citizens in Abuja, employed as government officials, politicians and professionals in various fields, and businessmen and women.

Although my primary goal was to provide outstanding and satisfactory services for these customers, I realised my business was failing to achieve this after a few months. From my observations, I found that most of my employees had difficulties interacting with these higher status clients. The elite customers were very inconsistent in their behaviours and attitudes toward them while attending to their needs. Also, I noticed that these behaviours were primarily displayed by the new migrant workers who had not worked in the city for a long time. Most times, the customers reported that my staff's behaviour was unacceptable. They perceived that the girls were being rude or ignoring them. Over time this began to affect the business, and sales started to decline. My worries for the business's future made me look inwards, reflect on daily interactions between workers and customers in the store, and manage this.

With the desire to succeed in business, I became further interested in understanding what was underlying and shaping the relationships between the workers and the elite clients in the store and how this may be affecting

performance and productivity. In my reflections, I noticed that the elite consumers who regularly visited the store presented themselves in very similar ways regarding their dress codes and accessorising. Specifically, they would come for their appointments adorned in expensive luxury brands with clearly conspicuous western designs and symbols. I realised that the consumption of these globally recognised luxury brands was possibly being used to mark out their ordinate position in the Nigerian society and position them in relation to others of this 'elite' group. In many respects, because of the mainly Western brands that were being displayed, I also started to consider whether these customers were seeking to emulate wealthy consumers from more developed countries in an attempt to align themselves as global elites. Also interesting was that over time, the service workers also started to engage in the consumption of famous global brands with conspicuous symbols. For me, this behaviour was interpreted as an emulation of their customer's style of fashion. I observed that the more experienced salon workers usually dressed 'well' by wearing fashionable branded clothes and other beautiful items. At the same time, I observed that some newly employed workers were beginning to put more effort into their dress standards. As they began earning an income from their work in the store, it became apparent that these employees were using a significant part of their pay in an effort to 'level up' with their clients and more experienced colleagues in the store.

Thus, the questions left in my mind back then were as follows:

- (1) What were the reasons for the worker's consumption of global brands, as they are usually expensive?
- (2) To what extent are the workers being influenced by their wealthy client's codes of dress, behaviour and tastes, and are they merely seeking to emulate their consumption of global brands?



(3) How and in what ways does the consumption of global brands shape the service encounters in the store, and how is this experienced by the parties involved?

(4) How do these experiences impact on the worker's self-esteem, lived experiences, and social identities?

### **1.1 Initial Theoretical Insights that shaped the Study**

Upon my PhD programme commencement, I began to explore the literature related to identity transformation and acculturation. I discerned that what I had been observing in my store could potentially be related to these research traditions. Namely, many salon workers were becoming *acculturated* in some way into the codes of style and tastes of the higher-class group in this context, which in themselves seemed to be adopting the fashions of the developed world. However, in my initial readings, I soon realised that most of these studies were centred on international migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Also, findings indicated that the respondents in this body of research had started to accommodate the host culture somehow, even if it was in the form of resistance (Sam & Berry 2010). However, fewer studies showed that acculturation manifests in cultural globalisation and pervades local contexts through mass-mediated messages and ideologies (Arnett 2002; Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013; Jenzen et al., 2011; Laroche & Cleveland, 2007).

In contrast to the work that looks at immigration between countries, these studies mainly focus on poor migrants who relocate from rural areas to big cities within their own country. In so doing, these migrants experience a change in their consumption practices and identities as a form of 'in-country acculturation when they encounter narratives and practices emanating from across the globe (Oswald 1999; Penaloza 1989; Sandicki et al., 2006; Tari et al., 2008; Ustunier & Holt, 2007). As I continued to read, I, therefore, understood that migration-based

acculturation involves the process of cultural change amongst immigrants who have migrated to other countries (Chen et al., 2008). In contrast, globalisation-based immigration involves complex forms of connectedness that transcends nation-states and cultural barriers (Chen et al., 2008; Tomlinson, 2007), which initiates cultural change in people who are not international migrants (Ozer & Schwartz, 2006). As such, acculturation can be conceptualised as a process instituted by both immigration and globalisation. As essential concepts and ideas for framing this study, the ‘in-country acculturation is apparently relatable to my observations in the store.

This review of previous literature also led to an understanding of Post-assimilationist models of consumer acculturation, which focus on the multiple and often conflicting outcomes of immigration when migrants pursue or are subjected to various identity positions in relation to different socio-cultural conditions and contexts (Askegaard et al.; Oswald 1999 2005; Penaloza, 1994). In the course of my reading, I was significantly influenced by the work and ideas of Penaloza (1994), Oswald (1999), Askegaard et al. (2005), Luedicke (2011) and Ustunier & Holt (2007), which I will review in some detail below.

To begin with, Penaloza (1994) produced fundamental insights into the process and outcomes of acculturation in her study of Mexican immigrants into America. Her ethnography produced a model that outlines her focus informants' varying outcomes and lived experiences resulting from their “border crossing” and relocation, shaped by various individual, interpersonal, contextual and processual factors. For instance, it is argued that amongst other things, individual demographics (age, gender, income etc.), language proficiency, recency of arrival, professional skills and competencies, as well as facilitating agents (friends, family, schools and churches) all play a role in mediating the outcome of immigration for an individual. So does the extent and frequency of contact with people from the host country through socialising and interactions in the

workplace. That is to say, an individual's experience will vary in relation to these factors/forces, and that outcomes range from *assimilation* and/or *resistance* of the host culture to *maintaining* aspects of indigenous identities, rituals and practices, as well as experiences of *segregation* through either self-directed choices or host culture social acceptance and the nature of related infrastructure (segregated housing and communities etc.). The resultant theory developed in this study offers a more nuanced and socio-culturally situated understanding of acculturation which demonstrates that experiences and outcomes may vary considerably depending upon a subject's socio-historical context and personal biography. This is clearly interesting for my study, given the stark socio-cultural differences and experiences that exist between the two parties who come together in the beauty stores of Abuja.

Second, and in a similar manner, in a study of middle-class Haitian immigrants to America, Oswald (1999) developed a 'Performative Model' of acculturation which demonstrates the ways in which immigrants are able to construct hybrid identities and seamlessly switch between the cultural codes and practices of both host and home culture. Drawing on Horowitz' (1975) notion of "ascriptive identity", this model brought to light the fact that some migrant consumers are able to negotiate social structures, including those related to class and national culture, and adjust their tastes, preferences and behaviours depending on situations in which they find themselves. In the words of Oswald (1999:307) [*italics added*]), "*class identification and boundary formation are not fixed but fluid: informants... [can shift... in the respect that they can] ... position up and down the social ladder depending on their frame of reference*".

Third, in extending postassimilationist theory beyond the North American cultural realm, Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard's (2005) study of Greenland's Inuit population in Denmark demonstrates that patterns of ethnic identity construction are not only reflected in multiple conflicting ideological

positions and identities rooted in both host and home nations. As found in the studies reported above, they also manifest from transnational contexts. It implies that a third acculturation agent should focus on migration and acculturation studies, reflecting the globalised landscape in which we are arguably situated today.

Indeed, because of the observed prevalence of western brands being adopted by both clients and workers in the Nigerian beauty store context, I am investigating these findings that apparently resonate with this particular study's focus. In addition to this, Askegaard et al.'s (ibid) research also identifies an additional outcome or identity position of acculturation, referred to as Oscillating Pendualism. Oscillating Pendualism, they argue, transcends the dichotomy between Assimilation and Maintenance whereby consumers are able to flit between both positions as they seek to manage the attractions and alienations of both cultures. In their research, for example, the investigators demonstrate how

*“Many informants express a need to retreat from the perceived mechanistic strictures of the market-mediated Danish world through the repeated physical border crossing. They desire periodic unadulterated doses of idealised Greenlandic food, sociality, seasonality, and nature to ‘recharge their batteries’”* (ibid: 166).

In this way, the theoretical upshot of this argument is that consumers seem able to reflexively negotiate the cultural boundaries and categories located in the home or host culture to alleviate any tensions in their lived experiences and identity projects - albeit temporarily, which leaves an important question as to whether the service workers in the Nigerian context of Abuja, are able to reflexively negotiate any tensions or conflicts in their identities from their experiences with wealthy clients in the beauty stores.

Fourth, following a systematic review of 14 ‘2<sup>nd</sup> wave’ consumer acculturation papers, including those presented above, Luedicke (2011) developed the Recursive Cultural Adaption Model. This framework conceptualises consumer acculturation as a multi-directional process of cultural negotiation that unfolds between all stakeholders involved and focuses on the discourses, consumption practices, and resources that migrants and locals draw upon when negotiating their intercultural relations and identities. As such, this model reveals that the outcomes of acculturation are not necessarily determined by any particular individual’s actions, motivations, or resources per se (either from the host or home culture). Instead, they are continually shaped through a complex web of interactions, attitudes and cultural negotiations that cut across individual and intra-individual relationships and discursive practices. This clearly begins to cast some light on the negotiations that were possibly unfolding in my store as the workers were coming into close contact with their clients who in themselves were bringing narratives of luxury, wealth, status and global brands along with them during their scheduled appointments—leaving me questioning how these interactions were being experienced by the parties involved.

However, while these studies offer an agentic view of consumer acculturation – in the respect that consumers can make tactical choices (Luedicke, 2011), the final study in this review by Ustunier & Holt (2007) casts doubt on consumers ability to pursue hybrid identity projects or engage in Oscillating Pendulism; especially if they are relocating from the less developed world or have limited socio-cultural and economic resources. By introducing the ‘dominant consumer acculturation’ model, these researchers contended that differences in socio-cultural structures and resources produce differentiated acculturation patterns, offering consumers a limited number of identity positions and outcomes. The authors of this study claim that the typical social class positions of migrants from less developed countries affect their identity outcomes because they arguably lack

the symbolic, social and cultural capital to participate in the same consumption practices and experiences of host consumers (ibid). Hence, in accordance with these findings, the researchers developed a further outcome of acculturation which they refer to as ‘shattered identity projects’, which is an intriguing insight given the socio-cultural backgrounds of the foci informants in my study.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

By reflecting on my prior assumptions before embarking on this study and reviewing the literature on acculturation, it has become clear that a range of forces, including those of cultural globalisation, penetrates the African continent through mass-mediated ideologies. Also, the interactions between people potentially shape workers' experiences and outcomes within beauty stores in Abuja. As a widespread phenomenon in Nigeria, globalisation exposes the population to global consumer culture, which can inflect the consciousness of consumers and shape their tastes, lifestyles, and consumption practices (Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013). Especially in shops and salons, which bring service workers into close contact with the higher classes in society, who seem to be increasingly adopting the brands and styles of the developed world. Hence, this study examines how this context and the interactions herein shape the service workers' experiences and identities in beauty salons in Nigeria. As these workers come into proximity with the elites, who are arguably fully-fledged consumers of global consumer culture and western brands, this study seeks to critically examine how the worker's identity is mediated and transformed through interactions with their clients. In so doing, this study seeks to develop and contribute to knowledge by offering an account of the role that marketplace interactions play in identity negotiation and transformation in Nigeria. This is important because studies of African consumers are under-represented in consumer behaviour, which has resulted in a limited understanding of Nigerian consumers more broadly (Lysonski & Duvarsula 2013). That is to say, the overwhelming dominance of

consumer research studies concern western markets- which has consigned non-western subject positions to an imaginary waiting room of history (Varman & Vikas, 2007; Varman, 2018). Therefore, this study is needed to explain how the socio-historical discourses and global cultural flows that manifest in this setting potentially play a role in the interplay of meanings that structure and shape service interactions between the elite class and service providers in Abuja. In addition, by analysing the role that brands perform in this context, this study also responds to the need for more contextualised socio-cultural branding research to enhance the overall theoretical understanding of consumer-brand relationships in the global marketplace; especially in relation to Africa in particular (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2006; Cayla & Arnould, 2008; Wright et al., 2005).

Therefore, taking into account the discussion above, alongside my personal reflections and experiences, the purpose of this study is to examine how service worker identity is mediated through global cultural flows and the consumption practices of elite clients within beauty salons in Nigeria. Notably, it maps and explains the process and factors through which service workers' identity is transformed through these interactions. Thus, this led me to formulate the following objectives for this study.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

- To examine the socio-historical context of Nigeria and the formation of its class system to understand the power relationships that exist between the actors involved in service interactions in the beauty stores of Abuja
- To assess the role that global brands and their consumption perform in this context and the outcome for service workers.
- To explore the nature of service encounters between service workers and wealthy elite clients within the context of beauty stores in Abuja.

- To examine how service interactions with elite Nigerian customers shape and influence service workers' subject positions and identity projects.

#### **1.4 Summary and Outline of the Thesis**

This chapter has reviewed my personal experience in the beauty store, which initially stimulated my interest in this research. In so doing, I explained the study's theoretical background, which centred on consumer acculturation and post-assimilation research. This highlighted the range of factors and processes that may come to play in shaping the outcomes of migrants when 'crossing borders' to new and unfamiliar places. The review also pointed out that acculturation potentially occurs amongst people who relocate to new countries. Also, it happens within home nations if citizens migrate to new areas or are exposed to global flows emanating from the world's developed countries. In relation to this, I postulate that this may be occurring in my chosen research setting whereby service workers are increasingly exposed to globalisation and narratives from the 'West' through their interactions with their wealthy clients who increasingly adopt unfamiliar luxury and global brands. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the critical contextual factors of the study by describing the key characteristics of Abuja, including the focal informants of this research, who are the wealthy individuals who reside within the city and the service workers who belong to the lower classes who make up the majority living in the squatter settlements around the boundaries of the city.

In achieving this study's aim, I have organised the following parts of the thesis into eleven chapters.

Chapter Two reviews the literature related to Consumer Culture Theoretical (CCT) perspectives of globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and global brands, which are foundational constructs for this study. In particular, the perspectives of globalisation, including homogenisation, glocalisation and deterritorialisation,



are reported, alongside a discussion of global cultural flows, global brands and luxury consumption.

After this, in Chapter Three, I review the literature related to symbolic consumption and identity and evaluate studies related to services marketing, social class stratification, and the service encounter.

Chapter Four explains and justifies the philosophical positioning and methodological approach taken in this research. Thus, it presents the rationale for adopting a social constructionist epistemological perspective as the underpinning position of the study.

In Chapter Five, I outline the research design and sampling strategy. This includes a discussion of the data collection methods and analytical procedure. Because of this research's aim, there was a need to focus on the naturalistic setting within the context of beauty salons to observe the daily activities and interactions of the participants. As such, a range of ethnographic methods was chosen, which includes participant observations and semi-structured interviews.

After this, Chapter Six follows a review of the process taken to interpret and make sense of the data.

Chapters Seven to Eleven focus on the findings of the research.

Chapter Seven responds to the first objective of this study by presenting the genealogical analysis and findings on how the research setting's socio-historical context influences marketplace performances, thus providing new insights for advancing theoretical arguments in consumer research studies. Therefore, I explain Nigeria's socio-historical development and its colonial past, the emergence of the new elites and a vastly unequal society with a prevalence of inequality and poverty. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the key contextual factors of the study by describing Abuja's key characteristics, including the focal

informants of this research, who are the wealthy individuals who reside within the city. Also, it describes the service workers who belong to the lower classes who make up the majority living in the squatter settlements around the city's boundaries.

In response to the second research objective, Chapter Eight discusses the findings by assessing the role of global brands and consumer behaviour in this context and the outcome for service workers. The findings provide insights into the symbolic meanings and values attached to global brands, consumption practices of these brands and the outcome on the workers.

In Chapter Nine, I discuss the findings that respond to the second objective by providing the findings on the nature of service interactions between the study participants. Here, I demonstrate how commercial friendships between the workers and their wealthy clients are constrained by class consciousness.

Chapters Ten then responds to the fourth objective by revealing how the workers experience prejudice and stigmatisation in the form of othering and stereotyping. In relation to this, I discuss the worker's experiences of inferiority and the tensions that manifest through verbal abuse and customer misbehaviour in the store.

Chapter Eleven discusses the service workers' response to stigma by explaining how they engage in self-reformation tactics and identity performances. I conclude by discussing the fact that service workers adopt new practices of etiquette and fashion in the quest for respectability and social acceptance, which matches the aesthetics, taste, and expressions of their wealthy clients. Thus, leading to the transformation and negotiation of the worker's identity.

Finally, Chapter Twelve brings the study to a conclusion by presenting the theoretical model that was developed out of the research findings and offers a

summary of the contribution to knowledge. This thesis is then drawn to a close with a discussion of the study's limitations and recommendations for future

## **CHAPTER TWO: GLOBALIZATION, COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE CONSUMPTION OF GLOBAL BRANDS**

### **Introduction**

As globalization pervades our everyday lives, it becomes more fundamental to understand its impact, especially on the behaviour of consumers and the outcomes of marketplace interactions. Hence, in the last three decades, there has been a growing interest in international marketing and Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) for studying the globalization of businesses, global brands and consumer behaviour. With the spread of globalization across continents, through advancements in technology, increasing travel, the expansion of international corporations and global brands, most individuals are being exposed to other cultures more than ever before (Chen et al., 2016). By conceptualizing globalization as the universalization of modernity, Robertson (1992) helps us understand its influence better. He referred to globalization as the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole concrete global interdependence. According to Tomlinson (2012), globalization is a generalised process of increasing connectedness between cultures. For Giddens & Pierson (1998, p. 166), it is a consequence of modernism because it involves the accelerating spread of western institutions and new forms of interdependence in the world. Globalization, it is argued, pervades the intimate parts of human personality, in the respect that many people feel that they are uncontrollably grabbed by powers that affect their existing ways of life (Giddens, 2003). Numerous studies within consumer culture theory (CCT) have broadly explored different theoretical and critical angles in understanding the broader socio-cultural implications of globalization for brands, individual consumers, and groups (Firat, 1997; Ger & Belk, 1996; Holt et al., 2004). These are highly important to this thesis because they collectively reveal how consumers experience globalization and global brands in the developing world. As such, they

provide a practical conceptual framework for interpreting the data collected in this study. Consequently, they will be reviewed below.

## **2.1 Perspectives on Globalization**

The CCT scholars identify three important perspectives of globalization relevant to this study: homogenisation, glocalization, and deterritorialization (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019). Accordingly, these perspectives comprise different conceptualizations of globalization and assumptions regarding the concept of culture, power relations between countries and the role ascribed to individuals in globalization processes (ibid). Basically, within the perspective of homogenisation, the world is divided into power hierarchies, often referred to as the centre and periphery. The centre comprises Western Europe, North America, and Japan. The periphery regions are subordinated through colonialism and the expanding capitalist system (Robertson, 2016; Wallerstein, 2000). Theorists of this perspective argue that globalization is a cultural and economic alignment process whereby globally available goods, media, ideas, and institutions overrun and displace local cultures (Ritzer, 1996).

## **2.2 Homogenisation**

According to Sharifonnsabi et al. (2019), the theoretical perspectives on homogenization assume that cultural boundaries primarily map onto nation-state borders, as distinct national and ethnic values define culture, languages, and politics (Craig & Douglas, 2006; Robertson & White, 2016: 60). Therefore, this viewpoint of globalization is synonymous with capitalism (Friedman, 2000; Wallerstein, 2000) which “has established the market and production networks that eventually brought all people around the world into its logic as a single worldwide structure” (Robertson, 2016: 128 – 129). The spread of free-market policies, privatization, deregulation, and limited social welfare are the fundamental forces of homogenisation (Antonio, 2016; Friedman, 2000, 2005).

Also, it is promoted by the globalising practices and infrastructure of global brands.

From this perspective, it is assumed that consumers, particularly in developing countries, lack agency as they are portrayed as being receptive to, and seduced by, consumer goods and culture from the developed world (Sharifonnsabi et al., 2019). In addition, there is an assumption that the power hierarchy between the countries that structure globalization mainly follows an East-West binary. For instance, many lower-class consumers in the periphery are worse off than their counterparts in the centre because they lack the economic and cultural resources to engage in global consumer culture (Bo`hm and Brei, 2008; Varman and Belk, 2008). The wealth and status inequalities between the rich and poor become more pronounced as globalization places many lower-class consumers into a condition of economic and social struggle (Bo`hm and Brei, 2008; Ghosh and Chandrasekhar, 2000). These studies also contend that though most developing countries in the African continent have gained independence from colonial rule, colonial forms continue to exist with the dominant spread of homogenising devices such as mass-mediated messages and fashion (Bonsu, 2009). Through mass-mediated messages, Africa and African consumers are often portrayed as primitive and relegated to a discourse of racial inequality (ibid).

On the other hand, consumer research scholars have also argued that consumers in the periphery are empowered by the increased availability of consumer products, a liberalization of local economies and the possibility of joining global consumer markets (Antonio, 2016). Most of these scholars have utilized the homogenisation perspective as a point of departure to challenge the assumptions of a unified and homogenised globalized world. Though prior studies acknowledge the influence of internationalization of Western business practices in periphery countries (Ritzer, 2011), the findings related to consumer resistance contradict the standpoint of global homogenization. These studies offer varying

viewpoints of consumer experiences of homogenisation. They portray multiple outcomes from globalization, whereby consumers' adoptions of global brands are not universal but determined by their level of social, economic and cultural capital (Ustunier & Holt, 2007). They are equipped with an abundance of these resources; for example, an albeit limited range of consumers in the periphery are seemingly able to scratch beneath the veneer of brands and appropriate their meanings and value to suit their own particular goals and lifestyles.

Additionally, despite the pervasive flow of culture brought about by globalization, a range of studies have also found that consumers still share a national identity in the form of an awareness of shared ethnicity and history (Kaplan & Herb, 2011). Also, there are locally anchored feelings of community, loyalty and devotion (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Mehta and Belk, 1991). Consumer research scholars who adopt this perspective argue that the consumption of local brands become a way for these consumers to preserve their ethnic values and culture. Hence, by adopting a form of political consumerism by avoiding global brands in support of their national economy and national identity (Varman and Belk, 2008), consumers in the less developed world seemingly adopt a resistive stance against the global marketplace (Dong and Tian, 2009). For instance, Brecic et al. (2013) found that despite Serbs and Croatians' shared national history, both groups prefer their products over those from neighbouring countries, especially when engaging in rituals such as birthdays or other festivities. At the same time, a series of other studies offer insight into consumer's experiences of homogenisation and cultural displacement by demonstrating how citizens in countries like India, Turkey and Tunisia, engage in boycotts of Western products in attempts to preserve local traditions and customs (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Varman and Belk, 2008, 2009).

## **2.3 Glocalization**

The viewpoints emerging from the literature into glocalization challenge the assumption of ‘pure and core culture’ and cultural hegemony and homogenization. These studies reveal how a country or region's culture blends with others during processes of globalization (Sharifonnsabi et al., 2019). According to glocalization scholars, rather than local and global cultures conflicting with tensions, they should be seen as opposites of the same coin (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019). A range of studies in this tradition explains the processes through which “local cultures and forces of globalization are thoroughly interpenetrated and co-shaping” (Ger & Belk, 1996; Robertson, 1995; Wilk, 1995). They argued that the in-flow of globalization and localization within a context increase socio-cultural diversities, which results in glocalization (Wilk, 1995). This, they contend, leads to the emergence of new consumer subjectivities, lifestyles and habitus’ which manifest in forming new markets in the periphery. For instance, Kravets & Sandikci (2014) examined the rise of middle-class consumers in emerging markets such as Turkey and India that were undergoing social and economic reforms towards more globally connected market-based economies (Vikas et al., (2015). This study found that though middle-class consumers have access to global brands and products, they are also actively involved in shaping and transforming the meanings, usages and materiality of these brands to suit their life projects (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019).

More so, consumer research studies on glocalization tend to show that the process empowers consumers in the periphery (Eckhardt & Mahi, 2004; Grunhagen et al., 2010; Sandicki et al., 2016). These studies find that the processes of glocalization empower consumers by enabling them to have control over adopting, rejecting, or transforming foreign markets offerings (Vikas et al., 2015). For instance, Eckhardt & Mahi (2004) found that lower-class Indian women use imported polyester fabrics rather than expensive silk to sew traditional saris, enabling them



to wear traditional clothing without the expense. Hence, they can still uphold their local traditions and engage in their customs (Grunhagen et al., 2010). Also, studies find that glocalization increases consumers' consumption choices due to the rise of ethnically adjusted foreign products from local producers that enter the market (DeBerry-Spence et al., 2012; Vikas et al., 2015). It is because when global brands are introduced into new markets, they create new category opportunities that open doors for local brands (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019). As such, the hybrid nature of emerging markets positions global brands as enabling agents that empower the local economy rather than diminishing it (Ho, 2001).

Additionally, most glocalization scholars argue against the idea that consumer identities are anchored in their nationalities and ethnicities. Instead, consumers adopt a more performative notion of the self through which they strategically negotiate and shape their identities through consumption (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Nielson, 2010). Thus, consumer identity is portrayed as a hybrid in form and rooted in both national/local and global citizenship ideals (Robertson, 1992). This is because though consumers may choose global brands and products, they are able to actively transform and shape their meanings (Kravets & Sandicki, 2014). For example, Sobh et al. (2014) found that the youth in the Arab Gulf States, who can afford to travel and familiarize themselves with western ways of living, acquire new interpretive and practical strategies for combining local and religious values at home with those from abroad. Also, when equipped with such 'global' cultural capital, Cherrier & Belk (2015) found that religious women in Arab Gulf countries are able to transform the meanings associated with a traditional black gown from a sign of religious modesty into a cloak of invisibility for western luxury brands that they wear underneath.

## 2.4 Deterritorialization

Perhaps more relevance to this study is the assertion by deterritorialization scholars who maintain that consumers are empowered by embracing ideologies of globalization that are significantly associated with their identity positions (Demangeot & Sankaran, 2012). According to Appadurai (1990) and Bauman (2000), deterritorialization is centred on those post-industrial and post-modern dynamics which gradually replace the world of nation-states, national sovereignty and single-centred globalization with a world in which people, information and objects are part of a global system of movements. This implies that the interpenetration of global flows on culture is no longer confined to a defined geographic locality. Rather these distinct cultures are replaced by geographically dispersed cultures linked together through mass-mediated ideologies (Pieterse, 2019; Hermens & Kempen, 1998). These global cultural flows create opportunities for commonalities between individuals from different nationalities, languages, ethnicity and country of residence, as they come to share similar lifestyles, values and consumption interests (de Burgh-Woodman, 2014; Emontspool and Georgi, 2017; Figueiredo and Uncles, 2015; Hannerz, 1990).

Within this perspective, studies have shown how global flows of cultural meaning and values empower consumers (Craig & Douglas, 2006). These theorists argue that these global flows of meanings attached to products, in many instances, contribute to the legitimization of stigma and the normalization of market mediated practices that previously marginalised consumers (Kamarulzaman et al., 2016). For instance, Sandicki & Ger (2010) found that the global legitimization of veiling as a fashionable practice is facilitated by the growing transnational community of consumers who follow the same faith. They argue that these consumers can reframe the practice of veiling as a liberator of agency rather than a stigmatised symbol of subordination (Ger, 2013). Consequently, with such global flows spreading through nation-states and beyond (Appadurai,

1996), it is argued that religious women in Turkey and elsewhere, who may never leave their country, may overtime come to feel part of an imagined global community (Takhar et al., 2012)

Further, these flows are regarded as representations of a deterritorialized global ideology that is targeted at global consumer segments. By bringing together contradicting cultures and weakening the ties of particular locations (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2008), these deterritorialized global brands provide new ways of building cross-cultural connections and forming transnational communities and identities (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019). Therefore, this perspective illuminates how consumers achieve global citizenship by creating imagined global identities with like-minded individuals across the world (Strizhakova et al., 2008). In essence, deterritorialization produces new global subjectivities and creates new cultural differences as consumers become more reflexive about their own culture (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard, 2007; Seo et al., 2015). That is to say, a consumer's exposure to different cultures results in learned dispositions such as cosmopolitanism rather than inherited nationality and race (Demangeot & Sankaran, 2012; Emontspool & Georgi, 2017).

## **2.5 Deterritorialization and the Pervasion of Global Cultural Flows**

Appadurai (1990) maintains that deterritorialization captures a decentralised process whereby countries are integrated. Despite being independent of hierarchical relations, they are connected through a combination of five global flows manifest as mediascapes, financescapes, ideoscapes, ethnoscapes, technoscapes and consumptionscapes. These are defined as follows:

- 'Ethnoscapes' are produced by the flow of people.
- 'Technoscapes' are produced by the flows in technology and machinery.
- 'Financescapes' result from the rapid flows of capital and money in currency markets and stock exchanges.

- ‘Mediascapes’ manifest in the flows of information distributed by newspapers, magazines, television and film.
- ‘Ideoscapes,’ which involves distributing political ideas and values linked to the flows of state and counter-state movements, ideologies of freedom, welfare and rights, etc.

As a well-acknowledged study in the globalization literature on ‘global cultural economy’ Appadurai (1990, p. 296) illuminates the

*“Central problem of today’s global interactions, as the tension between cultural homogenization and glocalization by identifying these ‘global cultural flows moving in isomorphic paths.’*

These flows generate distinct images such as sets of symbols, meanings, and values, which are a disjunctive order between economy, culture and politics in the globalization age. Hence, Appadurai argues that we witness a decentralised global marketplace where production is widely dispersed across the globe and consumer products are influenced by a wide range of cultural values beyond those that symbolize modernity and the western ways of life (Faist, 2000).

From the views on deterritorialization, the spread of global consumer culture penetrates through new information and communication technologies, improved transportation, the emergence of global media and powerful multi-national companies (Hamelink, 1983). For instance, the rapid spread of globalization in Nigeria is due to the media, which is considered one of the most vibrant in Africa (Lyonski & Durvasula, 2013). It can be attributed to the fact that most countries are exposed to significant global TV media content daily (Kintz, 2007). According to Okunna,

*“Whether through their importation of western media culture or through the barrage of western television culture which flows into their countries through*

*Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) over which they have no control, developing countries are at the receiving end as alien cultures which are alienation their peoples from their own countries (1999: pg.,145).*

The uncountable numbers of satellites TV and foreign station flood the screen (Umeogu & Ifeoma, 2013) with far brighter and fuzzy free pictures than the local stations, ensuring an unrivalled relevance in the cultural markets. These international programs, which are mainly from the United States and Europe (Noviademu 2014), offer role models and mindsets that are more attuned to modern western lifestyles and consumerism (Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013). This spread of global consumer culture is sometimes referred to as Americanization, McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1996) and Westernization (Latouche, 1996). Obviously, the world is becoming smaller with the local cultures and traditions struggling to survive amidst the pervasion of global cultural flows. In contrast, cultural differences are eroded (Hamelink, 1983).

As global consumer culture spreads and announces itself in the banners of Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Sony, IBM, Mercedes, Marlboro and other transnational corporations, many consumers of the less affluent world try to adapt to the increasingly changing environment (Ger & Belk, 1996). Steger (2002) cites Nike sneakers on Amazonian Indians, Texaco baseball caps on Sub-Sahara youths and Chicago Bulls sweatshirts on Palestinians. This form of cultural convergence was captured perfectly by Beck (2000, p. 42) in the following statement:

*"In the villages of Lower Bavaria, just as in Calcutta, Singapore or the 'favelas' of Rio de Janeiro, people watch Dallas on TV, wear blue jeans and smoke Marlboro..."*

As a result, scholars on globalization argue for global consumerism as a form of homogenization (Ger and Belk, 1996; Goodman, 2007; Hopper, 2007), particularly when consumerism is generally considered a widespread

unquenchable desire for material possessions (McCracken, 1988). In order to keep up with the growing materialistic, ambitious and conspicuous consumption expectations emanating from the core (Varman & Belk, 2008), affluent consumers in the emerging markets become empowered by engaging in global consumer culture (Antonio, 2016). What then for the less wealthy, such as the Nigerian service workers examined in this study.

Additionally, Jafari & Goulding (2013) assert that these global cultural flows provide consumers with more resources to organise their lives in their local contexts. For consumers in the emerging markets, consuming global brands is a welcome endorsement of western values and creates an avenue for emancipation from their own local cultures (Ger & Belk, 1996; Nelson & Paek, 2007). It is quite apparent in most homes within the developing world as the cultural products used by families originate from western countries (Jafari 2007). Past studies acknowledge the fact that these cultural flows provide individuals with the cultural capital which is manifest in signs, images, symbols, experiences and consumption practices which are used to organize lives, construct ideal selves (Friedman, 1994; Featherstone, 2004) and mediate “socio-cultural transformations” (Olsen & Gould, 2008). As such, Jafari & Goulding (2013) maintain that these global cultural flows stimulate reflexivity as an ongoing process of virtual intercultural learning through which people reconstitute their lives and change their consumption practices and lifestyle choices. Often, this manifests in the preference for and consumption of global brands and a desire for cosmopolitan experiences.

## **2.6 Cosmopolitan Consumption**

As an increasing number of wealthy consumers from the periphery begin to engage with global consumer culture, they arguably fulfil a desire “*to become full and equal citizens of modern urban society*” (Ferguson, 2002 p. 555). According to Ferguson (2002), the adoption of western dress, lifestyles and

manners are akin to a desire for global citizenship. Scholars refer to this sociological perspective as a need for cosmopolitanism, which is an orientation of openness to foreign others and cultures (Beck, 2006; Saito, 2011; Skey, 2012). Indeed, many of these scholars have argued that cosmopolitanism refers to the cultural realm of citizenship, for it is bound up in questions of identity, community and belonging in a globalised world (Molz, 2016).

For Hannerz (1990, p.236), cosmopolitanism is:

*“a state of mind, a cultural skill, conveying an orientation, and willingness to engage with the Other... [it is] a state of readiness, [and] a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting.”*

Thus, cosmopolitanism is an intellectual skill, an aesthetic and practical pleasure in experiencing and navigating cultural differences (Molz, 2016).

According to Weenink (2007), cosmopolitanism is a new source of power in the age of globalization. He argued that it is a form of capital that helps its owners progress in ‘globalizing social arenas...in which the struggle is for privileged positions’ that require competencies to effectively interact with people of multiple nationalities (2007, p. 1092). In this regard, cosmopolitanism is regarded as a set of ideas of universality and inclusion, including the consumption of international or western goods and adopting lifestyles that constitute a claim to membership of the modern world and global society. Therefore, it is expected that cosmopolitan openness to foreign cultures is more likely to be found amongst wealthier individuals and those from higher socio-economic groups exposed to other cultures (Cheyne and Binder, 2010) through travel and educational opportunities and other global aesthetic experiences. This enables the postcolonial subaltern classes to participate in global modernity and legitimize their global community membership (Molz, 2016).

Scholars who adopt Bourdieu's key concept of cultural capital in relation to cosmopolitanism shed light on how it perpetuates class stratification and unequal distribution of power within a society (Igarashi & Saito, 2014). For example, a study by Kim (2011) found that the cosmopolitan attitude and lifestyle acts as a form of global cultural capital used to both exclusive access resources and designate one's class and status (p. 113). As such, some studies argue that cosmopolitanism is central to class stratification in a global world. That is to say; the cosmopolitan identity serves as an exclusive class position reserved for mobile bourgeois elites with expensive taste and jet-set lifestyles (Featherstone, 2002; Calhoun, 2002), just like the Nigerian elites who are tended to by the service workers in this study. In this sense, the tastes, preferences and cultural competencies involved in cosmopolitan consumption operate as markers of distinction rather than inclusion (Bourdieu, 1984). Furthermore, arguably, one of the ways in which such individuals and groups may exercise their cosmopolitan tastes and reinforce their status is through the purchase and consumption of global brands and luxury. The final section of this chapter will review the body of literature related to these concepts.

## **2.7 Global Brands**

Global brands can be defined as products that are available in most countries and which have a uniform positioning and image worldwide (Douglas & Craig, 2011, Ozsomer, 2012; Sharifonnabi et al., 2019). By being perceived by consumers as 'global' (Ibid), it is argued that the consumption of global brands signals a consumer's diversity and tolerance of foreign cultures. That is to say; they act as symbols associated with a deterritorialized global consumer culture (Ozsomer, 2012). Compared to local products in the competitive set (Arnould, 2010, Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004), such brands are usually perceived as higher quality, holding greater social esteem and conveying an aura of being connected with the global community (Steenkamp et al., 2003). It is argued that for consumers in



developing countries, global brands are seen as a welcome endorsement of western values and a way to emancipate oneself from the indigenous culture (Ger and Belk, 1996).

On the flip side, many studies in the CCT discipline also demonstrate the ideological struggles consumers experience when confronted by global brands. These are of particular interest to this study because of the varying reports offered by the research informants about their experiences with such brands. According to these studies, some consumers prefer and seek local brands because they preserve ethnic values and tradition (Sharifonnsabi, Bardhi & Luedicke, 2019). These local brands also help to cement individual and communal identities based on locally anchored feelings of history, loyalty, and devotion (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012). Thus, the preference for local brands, as opposed to global ones, becomes a form of political consumerism that is perceived to support national economies and identity (Varman & Belk, 2008). Such behaviour, it is argued, can be construed as a form of resistance against the global marketplace (Dong & Tian, 2009).

Thus, many consumers in the periphery see western global brands as a threat to their way of life and community-based modes of production (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012) to the extent that sometimes these brands are boycotted (Varman & Belk, 2009). In the extreme, studies have also found evidence of consumers being stigmatised in their home communities because they adopt global brands, which are regarded as anti-nationalist and disloyal to indigenous culture and traditions (Gao, 2012). In their study of infidel “Trojan horses,” for example, Izberk-Bilgin (2012) found that the purchase and consumption of global brands is perceived as an unwelcome and profane act that grants access to meanings and symbols that colonise local markets and threaten citizens’ religious ideologies.

In relation to this, Askegaard (2006) argues that brands should be conceptualised as historical and institutional forces that profoundly impact the perception of the marketplace and consumer social categories and subjectivity more generally.

## **2.8 Global Brands, Luxury and Symbolic Consumption**

Reports emanating from previous studies (Askegaard, 2006; Ekinci et al., 2013) acknowledge that global brands are the primary sources of symbolic consumption worldwide. These studies find that consumers engage with brands because of the meanings and values they perceive to be associated with them (Ekinci et al., 2013). Consumers widely use them to convey and communicate collective and individual social identities (Askegaard, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). According to Strizhakova et al. (2008), global brands convey meanings and initiate new values that promote diversity as well as inclusion. This may particularly be the case in the developing world, where the consumption of global brands is argued to create transnational communities bonded by common symbolic reference points (Beck, 2000; Wilk, 1995).

As global brands spread to developing countries such as Nigeria, it is expected that consumers from the higher socio-economic strata would have access to a broad and growing range of luxury brands for their consumption. These brands are known for their high prices, perceived quality and craftsmanship, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness and other high-level non-functional associations (Heine & Phan, 2011; Kapferer & Bastien, 2012, p. 313) like self-enhancement (Shukla, 2011; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Examples of these luxury brands in a fashion sense include but are not limited to Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Christian Dior, Gucci, Versace, Ralph Lauren, Ferragamo, Mont-Blanc, and Bottega Venetta, amongst others.

A number of studies have found that within developing markets, wealthy consumers prefer luxury brands to local ones because they are perceived to convey social status and enable the expression of wealth whilst connecting their

users to the global elite (Ger & Belk, 1996; Rucker et al. 2012; Wang & Yang, 2008). That is, these branded products become part of a nuanced interplay of ideologies that structure marketplace performances and social life (Askegaard 2006). Consumers engaging in this form of consumption derive satisfaction from the real or imagined reaction of others to their conspicuous display of wealth (Berger & Ward, 2010; Mason, 1980; O’Cass & Siahtiri, 2013). Several studies within consumer research, for example, reveal that this form of conspicuous consumption involves a field-specific game whereby brands effectively signal status in particular consumption fields (Holt, 1998; Ustunier & Holt, 2010) or when consumed by members of an ‘in-group (Berger & Heath, 2007). For example, Ustunier & Holt’s (2010) study aimed to understand how status consumption works in less industrialised countries when “new consumer” classes emerge (Myers & Kent, 2004) which have discretionary purchasing power approaching western levels and are able to pursue a consumption-focused lifestyle (Ustunier & Holt, 2010). This study illuminates how the lifestyle of the west is a compact but orthodox set of tastes and practices that symbolize middle-class western values and aspirations. In this study of Turkish consumers, high levels of economic capital are displayed by expressing the lifestyle of the west in an orthodox script-like fashion across a range of consumption domains. This phenomenon is anticipated to be similar in this study because elite individuals are likely to engage with luxury brands to exercise their status amongst the populace (Erdem et al., 2006). Hence, we can postulate that the influx of global brands, alongside the heightened competition among consumers for status in society, will result in a growing desire for luxury products and their perceived associated symbolism.

In spite of this, it is important to recognise the nuance in behaviours adopted by elite consumers when consuming luxury and global brands. For some, brands' signalling effectiveness (Gao et al., 2016) is argued to be based on the logo's

visibility on the product or its prominence relative to other features (Berger & Heath, 2010). However, this is not the case for all. In a detailed study by Han et al. (2010), it was found that the level of conspicuousness of a brand used by some consumers depends on their preference for loud or quiet signals. The study also explores the role of conspicuous brands and how they enable these consumers to associate or disassociate from other groups of consumers (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005).

In this study, four groups of consumers were labelled in relation to what the researchers classified as the four (P)s of luxury. Namely, '*Patricians*,' '*Parvenus*,' '*Poseurs*,' and '*Proletarians*'. Accordingly, in the case of *Patricians*, these elite consumers seek to avoid loud signals of luxury. In contrast, they opt for brands with subtle signals because they have no concern for recognition other than from other patricians like themselves, who have acquired the repertoire and field-specific cultural capital to recognise the products being consumed. As such, they engage in horizontal rather than vertical signalling. The *Parvenus*, on the other hand, engage with very loud and distinctive brands that have wide recognition as they like to make their position in the social order very clear and conspicuous. They also have a greater need for status across a wide range of social groups. For instance, they acknowledge that the "LV monogram of a Louis Vuitton handbag is widely recognised as synonymous with luxury and would be prone to celebrate this brand as a result.

Similarly, *Parvenus* may not have accrued the cultural capital to engage with and find value in luxury products that signal quietly. The third category is the *Poseurs*, who do not possess the abundant financial means to consume luxury but greatly need status and be associated with the affluent. Hence, they become prone to purchasing counterfeit luxury goods or opt for discounted products with loud signals (Wee et al., 1995). Lastly, in this study, the *proletarians* are argued to be consumers from lower socio-economic groups who do not have the financial

means to engage with luxury and have no desire to consume for the sake of expressing status (Han et al., 2010).

## **2.9 Consumption of Global Brands and Emulation**

As explained above, the relationship between “*Parvenus and Poseurs*” reflects Veblen’s (1899) thesis that consumers from the higher classes use conspicuous brands to dissociate themselves from the lower-class, while lower-class consumers consume conspicuously to associate themselves with those above them in the social strata. Veblen (1899) identified two motives for such consumption, which include ‘pecuniary emulation’ and ‘invidious comparison’, whereby pecuniary emulation refers to consumers attempt to associate themselves with the higher classes through conspicuous consumption.

As explained in the introduction chapter of this thesis, a fundamental assumption of this study is that service workers who tend to elite consumers will be subject to conspicuous displays of wealth regularly and resultantly may seek to emulate the choices of their clients. For instance, in Nigeria, emulation is on the increase, as the western control of social media and advertising stimulates indigenous consumers to emulate the consumption practices of consumers in the developed world (Tomlinson, 1999; Wilk, 1998). So, while on the one hand, Holt et al. (2004) argue that the cosmopolitan class's preferences and consumption practices are based on the global social class structure, which leads to an emulation of middle-class consumers from the western countries (Ustunier & Holt, 2010). On the other hand, extant historical and socio-historical studies on consumption demonstrate that consumers tend to emulate local elites in the developing world rather than following a single global generic "western" consumer model (Ozsomer & Altaras, 2008). So, as elite consumers tend to engage with branded luxury products from the West (Spratt et al., 2009; Ustunier & Holt, 2010), it is conceivable that this will rub off on those from the lower tiers of society, including the service workers who are the focus of this study. Thus, leaving the

significant question, *“how and in what ways do the consumption practices, preferences and attitudes of the elite in Nigerian society rub off and are experienced by those less privileged?”* Will, the service workers in this study simply seek to emulate these choices in the manner of Han et al.’s (2010) ‘*Poseurs*’ for example, or will they develop other forms of critical responses and perceive western global brands as a threat to their way of life and local identities similar to the informants investigated in Izberk-Bilgin’s (2012) study.

## **2.10 Global Cultural Flows, Consumer Empowerment and Disempowerment**

Most homogenisation scholars believe that the increased availability of consumer products, a liberalization of local economies, and a possibility of joining global consumer markets will empower the consumers in the periphery. This discussion on consumer empowerment has been a focal topic in relation to global cultural flows and transformations of social structures such as class, gender, religion and nationality etc., in developing countries (Bonsu, 2009; Costa, 2005; Vikas et al., 2015). For instance, Varman & Belk (2012) study shows that the rise of consumer culture in emerging markets in India empowers affluent consumers who manage to keep up with rising materialistic ambitions and conspicuous consumption expectations (Varman and Belk, 2008). For these wealthy consumers, shopping in western-inspired malls can evoke feelings of being modern and feed a situated fantasy of being westernized (ibid). While such situations can empower elite young consumers, Sharifonnasabi et al. (2019) opine that it increases economic inequalities and social conflicts.

However, Antonio (2016) says studies within consumer culture theory research counters the perception by the homogenisation scholars concerning consumer empowerment as discussed above. This is because some CCT studies have shown that global homogenisation results in experiences of disempowerment in the developing world (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019). According to Bonsu (2009),

though the countries have gained independence from colonial rule, dominance and control continue to exist and spread through new homogenising devices such as advertising and fashion. For instance, Africa and Africans are portrayed in adverts and fashion magazines as exotic and primitive (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019), placing Africans in vulnerable positions and perpetuate discourses of racial inequality. Thus, Bonsu (2009) says that while contemporary advertising discourses may cover colonialism and narratives of modernisation and liberation, conversely, the discourses preserve the power dominance of more developed nations over less developed ones.

Also, the lower-class consumers in the developing countries are worse off because they lack the economic or cultural resources required to participate in western consumer culture (Bo`hm and Brei, 2008; Varman and Belk, 2008). The majority of these lower-class consumers face economic and social struggles, further deepening their existing wealth and status inequalities (Bo`hm and Brei, 2008; Ghosh and Chandrasekhar, 2000). Hence, (Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019) says that by collecting such emic perspectives on consumers' struggles against homogenization, CCT scholars challenge the neoliberal welfare assumptions of the homogenization perspective.

## **2.11 Global Cultural Flows and Lower-Class Consumer Subjectivities**

According to Bhavsar & Bhugra (2008), global cultural flows cause wealth inequalities instead of diminishing them. This is essentially the case within postcolonial countries such as Nigeria, which harbours an uneven distribution of economic gains. According to Sharma & Sharma (2010), most of this wealth is in possession of a few wealthy individuals. The wealth inequalities and segregation cause the lower-class individuals to be socially discontented; hence, they begin to perceive themselves and the world differently (ibid). As a result, most lower-class individuals and groups experience increased levels of stress, alienation and feelings of injustice (Sharma & Sharma, 2010) and a collection of

relative deprivation in a large section of people (Umeogu, 2013). Also, locally made products are not appreciated, for they are perceived as inferior brands (Ugwueye, 2007, p. 104).

Besides that, people become socially disconnected (Sharma & Sharma, 2010), causing a growing sense of confusion and uncertainty (Arnett, 2002). Kinnvall (2004) says these emotional implications have intensified 'ontological insecurity and existential uncertainty.' According to Ugwueye (2007), Africans risk losing their cultural heritage in the face of globalization, not only because they feel that their heritage is obsolete or inferior but because people have been so taken in by what is western. This cultural imperialism, which seeks to enslave the African mind, has left cultureless or culturally disoriented people (p. 107). Malgaj says,

*"Today, in an age when discrete cultures themselves are under threat, the question of cultural identity becomes newly problematic and takes on new urgency. The reason for this importance lies in the preservation of the traditional cultures and values that are carefully being sewn into the entanglements of globalization (2007, p.109).*

The consequence of this is the cultural synchronization of both the global and the local cultures, resulting in identity loss (Umeogu, 2012). Due to these global cultural flows' repressive nature through mass-mediated ideologies, many people, especially the youths, are not proud of their culture. The majority of them have feelings of inferiority complex, greed, and materialism, threatening to drown their culture (Umeogu, 2012). According to Umeogu & Ifeoma (2012), these individuals experience identity loss saying,

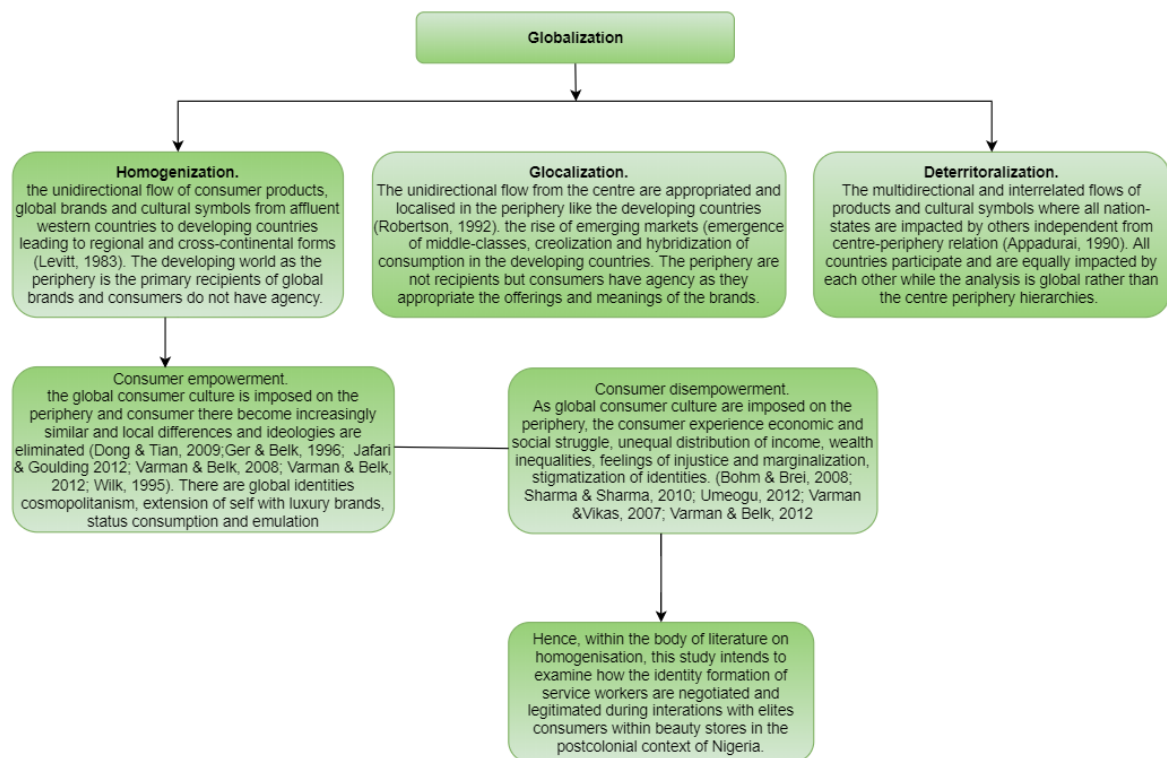
*"Who am I? Who are we? This is the type of question that subsequent generations will ask of the rate of cultural dependency if the foreign material is checkmated. This situation will be the aftermath of the elimination of culture. When a country consciously or unconsciously loses its identifying traits, what will they become?*



*If “A” ceases to be “A” or blends into “B”, what happens to “A” when it comes to sovereignty and location?” (pg. 125).*

That said, it would be interesting in this study to see and examine how these postcolonial subjects, such as the service workers, react to the influences of these global cultural flows. That is, what happens when these global cultural flows meet the postcolonial subjects such as the service workers as they interact with their elite clients who are assumed to be the carriers of the global culture and symbols of civilization?

**Fig 2.1 The Perspectives of Globalization and Gap of the Study**



The diagram illustrates past studies on globalization within consumer research and the gap in knowledge for this study. As discussed in the sections above, the decentralised global consumer culture is imposed through mass-mediated ideologies. However, the consumers' adoption of this culture is determined by

their economic, social and cultural capital (Ustinier & Holt, 2007). As such, it is expected that wealthy consumers, especially those in postcolonial settings such as Nigeria, can engage in the global consumer culture through their consumption of global luxury brands that suit their aesthetic behaviours and lifestyles. Also, these consumers extend themselves with luxury brands and status consumption. Though, there are arguments that the intersection of global culture with the local results in tensions, Sharifonnasabi et al. (2019) says these cultures are blended, thereby creating socio-cultural diversities, the emergence of new consumer subjectivities and lifestyles.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

As discussed in the sections above, decentralised global consumer culture is being spread globally through mass-mediated ideologies and global brands. However, it seems that a consumers' adoption and willingness to engage in this culture is determined by their levels of economic, social, and cultural capital (Ustinier & Holt, 2007) as well as their attitudes towards cosmopolitanism and globalization (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Varman and Belk, 2008, 2009). As such, it is wholly expected that the wealthy consumers in this study will enthusiastically participate in this culture by consuming brands to express their status and identities and align with a global elite. However, what is unknown is how this form of consumption and display will impact and influence the interactions and experiences of the service workers in the beauty stores of Abuja. Mainly when the perspectives of globalization discussed in this chapter have shown that this cultural process leads to disempowerment of lower-class individuals through creating socio-economic inequalities that lead to greater marginalization of the poor. So will the service workers in this study simply seek to emulate the choices and consumption practices of their elite customers in the manner of Han et al.'s (2010) *'Poseurs'* for example, or will they develop other forms of critical responses and perceive western global brands as a threat to their way of life and local identities similar

to the informants investigated in Izberk-Bilgin's (2012) study. In addressing this, it is first necessary to evaluate the literature related to service interactions and social stratification, where I turn my attention in Chapter Three.

## **CHAPTER THREE: SERVICE INTERACTIONS, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION, AND IDENTITY**

### **Introduction**

Researchers within the interpretive consumer research (ICR) tradition widely reported how consumers utilise products and other marketplace resources to construct and transform their identities. Most of these broadly agree that products embody systems of meaning (Levy, 1959) through which individuals express themselves and communicate to others (Dittmar, 1992; McCracken, 1988) in both ‘private’ and ‘communal’ contexts (Holt, 1995; Ekinci et al., 2013; Sorensen & Thomsen, 2005). As Douglas & Isherwood (2002) explain, people exploit the symbolic meanings of products to create cultural notions of the self and acquire and sustain desired lifestyles that afford consumers various experiences. These experiences are related to comfort, esteem, status, excitement, emotional nourishment and pleasure (Holt, 1997; Holbrook, 1999; Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982). For others, consumer goods create and define social connections for affiliation (Cova, 1997), marking the boundaries of subcultures of consumption (Canniford, 2011; Martin, Schouten & McAlexander, 2006). The goods help promote and accommodate changes in the self (Hollenbeck & Patrick, 2016) and society (Holt & Thompson, 2004).

Researchers also show how the meanings associated with consumption may also connect us to a sense of the past (Belk, 1991; Brown et al. 2003; Goulding, 2001), facilitate identity transition (Hogg et al., 2004) and challenge societal norms and conventions (Goulding & Saren, 2009). Also, the meanings associated with consumption offer the scope to signal multiple and often conflicting aspects of our identities (Larsen & Patterson, 2018; Thompson & Ustnier, 2015). Indeed, as Gergen (1999) explains, to feel ‘alive’ in this saturated world, and acquire a sense of meaningfulness, we are compelled to engage in an ongoing series of self-creation projects. Moreover, as Scott, Husemann and Hill (2019) remind us, some

of these projects are sometimes shaped around pain and unpleasant experiences. Perhaps this is why Thompson (2014) argues that the pursuit and consumption of identity is possibly the most purposeful yet complex goal for consumers, and Levy (1959, p.118) exclaimed that “*people buy things not only for what they can do but also for what they mean*”. This implies that if an individual desires happiness, identity, beauty, love, masculinity, youth, material bliss and other things, a commodity is usually somewhere to serve the purpose (Gabriel & Lang, 1995). Alternatively, as McCracken (1988) argues, in the culturally constituted world in which we find ourselves living today, certain acts of self and collective definition would be impossible without consumer goods. Hence, following this, the symbolic meanings of consumer goods and consumption practices have gained lots of attention in the last three decades (Ekinci et al., 2013; Holt, 1995; Arnould & Thompson, 2005), including the interest of this study.

### **3.1 The Conceptualization of Identity for this Study**

While it is now widely accepted by the ICR community that identity is manifest through consumption - which is the position taken in this study-, researchers have previously disagreed over the ways in which identity is formed and constituted. In particular, the study of identity can be rooted in two divergent ontological positions; the *ascribed* and the *achieved or acquired* perspectives (Gabriel & Lang, 2006). For example, Kellner (1992, p.141) conceptualised ascribed identity as an unproblematic subject for

*“one’s identity was fixed and stable...One was a hunter, a member of a tribe, and that was that.”* In this respect, identity is believed to be “*a function of predefined social roles...which provide... [an] orientation and religious sanction to one’s place in the world.*”

Thus, this form of identity is considered an outcome of family lineage and a function of social roles defined by birth contingencies (Jenkins, 2014). Therefore, the ascribed identity takes an essentialist position as it defines and provides a

*fixed* orientation for social life in relation to gender, social class, status or religion (Larsen & Patterson, 2018).

According to Gabriel & Lang (2006, p. 80):

*“No matter what transformations are taken by the individual, his or her identity cannot change. Nor is identity a matter of choice, will or desire; identity is the outcome of family lineage. In this case, confusion over identity amounts to confusion over parenthood- i.e., this is confusion over facts and on meanings.”*

In contrast, the *achieved or acquired* perspective considers that identity is shaped in the social sphere and temporarily located within past, present and future relations. As Jenkins (2014) explains, identity is fluid and produced with others' aid throughout the course of life. Hence, identity is not a fixed position one takes within the social world; rather, the individual and the social are inextricably linked (Jenkin, 2014). In this regard, identity is perceived as subjective and results from psychological and social work (Gabriel & Lang, 2006). Arguably, this, therefore, is the position adopted by most scholars in the ICR tradition.

However, while conceptually drawing from prior analytical studies of identity, which foreground the psychological and socio-cultural approaches of consumer identity construction (Penaloza 1994; Oswald, 1999; Ustunier & Holt, 2007; Askegaard, Arnould & Kjedaard, 2005), this literature was found to have only partial relevance to the theoretical goal of this study. These studies primarily use ahistorical and universalistic models that focus on issues surrounding the interpretation and coordination of relationships between people and the marketplace, rather than the underlying socio-historical factors that shape these interpretations and the related outcomes for identity (Ger et al., 2018).

So, following earlier calls for more understanding of the global consumer and marketplace subject (Kane, 2007) and contextualised consumer research that

moves beyond the phenomenological (Ger et al., 2018; Askegaard & Linnet 2011), this study draws more heavily on the social constructionist thought, the ideas of Michel Foucault and more recent theorising in CCT/ICR, to establish how discourses associated with global consumer culture come to play in identity negotiations within service encounters in post-colonial Nigeria. As such, the remaining discussion in this section will review the key conceptual ideas associated with this perspective, along with some recent ICR work that adopts this position.

In contrast to the ascribed perspective of identity, for Foucault (1980), individual subjects do not come into the world as formed beings. Nor do they simply make agentic psychological choices about who they are or whom they want to be, as per the majority of thought from the achieved and acquired perspective. Rather, individuals and their identities are constituted in and through a set of relations and discourses imbued with power.

As Callero (2003, p.127) explains:

*“The self that is socially constructed is never a bounded quality of the individual or a simple expression of psychological characteristics; it is a fundamentally social phenomenon, where concepts, images and understandings are deeply determined by relations of power.”*

In this respect, an individual’s subjectivity is always determined by their location within the specific ‘*institutional topography*’ (Foucault, 1980). For instance, in our increasingly connected world, the topography includes the discourses and power relationships associated with the marketplace and globalization. That is to say; individuals are subjected to complex relations of power in their social fields and take up various positions with regard to global consumer culture and the market. As argued by Thompson (2004, p.170) for example,

*“as advertisements mythologize their promoted products and brands, they are also constructing an ideal consumer lifestyle... [and] promulgating a discourse of power... that seeks to channel consumers’ identities and lifestyles in a particular ideological direction”.*

Thus, this perspective of identity formation requires a shift of lens from the individual as a unit of analysis to the interactions between the individual, the collective, and the socio-cultural context (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; 2007). Sacraboto and Fischer (2013), for instance, demonstrate how the experiences and identities of plus-sized fashionistas are grounded in the socio-historical context and institutional logic that serve to limit their access to resources and goods in the clothing industry. They argue:

*“Fatness is widely considered a discrediting attribute, a physical and character stigma (Goffman 1986)... Historical analysis indicates that the various forms of discrimination experienced by such people effectively reduce their opportunities in the job market, in school, at doctors’ offices, and in the marketplace: “Fat people are often treated as not quite human entities to whom the normal standards of polite and respectful behaviour do not seem to apply” (Farrell 2011, 6–7) ...[What is more] ... the field of fashion does not merely reflect these societal prejudices against fat; it intensifies them”.* (Sacraboto and Fischer, 2013, p.1239 references in original).

Similarly, in their study of status consumption in less industrialised counties (LICs), Ustunier & Holt (2009) reveal how global cultural power and discourses from the West restructure the ways in which identity is performed and shaped within semi-periphery LICs (note; semi-periphery LICs are countries that have progressed to industrial production but yet to achieve the heights in GDP and socio-cultural development of the more economically advanced countries in the centre).



Intriguingly, following ‘*identity interviews*’ of different factions of upper-middle-class female consumers who vary in cultural capital concerning “*Bourdieu’s high versus low thesis*” (p. 44), the findings reveal that while all informants engage in status consumption, they do so in vastly different ways. LCCs (low cultural capital consumers) argued that *indigenous* people limit the scope of the field in which they compete for status within their country. Also, the populace looks to local members of high society and celebrities to define what is considered tasteful prestigious. “*In other words, they pursue a trickle-down strategy... [that is] ... local, not global*” (p. 42) and locate status in pecuniary emulation of locally endorsed expensive goods and luxury services. HCCs, on the other hand, “*vigorously adopt the global consumption field imposed by the West...[and]... deploy a very different status strategy...that emphasizes intensive knowledge and orthodox performance of the Western Lifestyle myth*” (p. 47).

In this respect, status for HCCs in LICs is manifest and accrued through cultural sophistication and expression.

In accordance with this, HCCs pursue what the researchers call ‘*de-territorialised cultural capital*’, and work “*industrially*” to transform their tastes to align with the cultural flow of signs and symbols of refinement brought into focus by globalization. However, in their final analysis, the researchers argue that despite their

“*best efforts, because the Western lifestyle is not part of the HCC habitus, it stubbornly remains as borrowed culture, an add-on aspect of their identity projects... [And] as a result... HCCs tend to be reflexively insecure about their ability to successfully deploy... [this] lifestyle in a manner that yields... [the sought] cultural capital*” (p.53).

Thus, as people of the less developed world become ever more exposed to the global flows of western culture and the discourses that are grounded in the socio-

economic disruptions brought about by globalization, it seems clear that they are increasingly pressed to adopt or resist certain lifestyles and identities, albeit with varying degrees of success. Therefore, as Askegaard and Linnet (2011, p. 396) argued, in conducting studies, researchers “*should acknowledge the cultural, historical and societal conditions that makeup identity*” and the means through which identities are made legitimate and desirable in the first place.

In summary, this section of the chapter introduces four significant points relevant to the study of identity for this thesis. First, it is clear that identity is a contested concept in academic research. Some theorists contend it is an essentialist construct aligned to birth and social position (the ascribed perspective). In contrast, others believe it is contingent upon psychological and social processes that lead to identity choice and change over life (the achieved or acquired perspective). Therefore, identities are either pre-ordained or individually and socially constructed.

Second, in line with most theorising in the ICR/CCT traditions, identity is shaped by consumption and reflected in the goods and activities that consumers engage in their daily lives. Alternatively, in other words, consumption is a means for expressing the self and desired lifestyles across various social contexts. Third, in relation to the notion that identity is manifest through consumption, it is therefore self-evident that consumer goods and consumption practices carry and convey cultural and symbolic meanings that hold significant social value for members of society.

Fourth, in relation to the social constructionist thought, individual and social identities are considered to be much more than psychological and social constructs in the sense that they are shaped by cultural and historical forces in the form of power relationships that define and limit the range of identity templates in a given social setting. That is, identities are socio-historically and culturally contingent and should be studied as such. However, in spite of recent calls to

action for more socio-historically grounded studies of identity formation, albeit for a small number of notable ICR scholars, relatively few researchers have explored or assessed how identity is formed or negotiated in this manner, especially in the context of service interactions. As the purpose of this study is to examine how service workers in the developing world negotiate and experience identity through their interactions, that are in themselves, shaped by imbricated layers of culture (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) from both global and local contexts, the following section offers a review of associated studies. It begins with an overview of the service literature more broadly.

### **3.2 Overview of Core Ideas in Services Research**

Most service marketing research focuses on the importance of person-to-person encounters or the relationship between the client and service provider and their respective roles in the marketing effort's overall success (Solomon et al., 1985). For instance, an article in “Advertising Age” argues that:

*“In the service business, you’re dealing with something that is primarily delivered by people-to-people. Your people are much of a product in the consumer’s mind as to any other attribute of that service. People’s performance day in day out fluctuates up and down. Therefore, the level of consistency that you can count on and try to communicate to the consumer is not a certain thing. The real tangible is the human element which, with the best will in the world, most of us cannot control to anywhere near the same degree that a product manager controls the formulation of beauty soap, for example” (Knisley, 1979, pp.47-51).*

Similarly, early studies in consumer research commonly analysed marketplace performances between service providers and their clients by illuminating their dyadic interactions (Solomon et al., 1985). These interactions are usually reported

to be structured by role-playing, norms of reciprocity, and co-creative collaboration processes (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012).

Much of this research focuses on particular industry contexts and job roles such as flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983), McDonald's counter workers (Leidner, 1993), convenience store workers (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1989), bank clerks (Schneider & Bowen, 1985), whole life insurance salespersons (Crosby, Evans & Cowles, 1990), social workers in hospitals (Heimer & Stevens, 1997), potato chip salespersons (Lopez, 1996) and nannies and au pairs (Macdonald, 1996). On the other hand, others have focused on the antecedent states and outcomes from service delivery, such as clients' attitudes and reactions (Bitner, Booms & Tetrault, 1990; Crosby et al.; 1990; Liljander & Strandvik, 1995), and service worker mindsets and behaviours (Donavan, Brown & Mowen, 2004). Other studies have focused on developing scales for measuring attributes like customer experiences (Klaus & Maklan, 2012; 2013) and service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994).

### **3.3 Marketplace Performances, Class Stratification and the Service Encounter**

However, various studies in the CCT/ICR tradition have recently drawn attention to marketplace interaction and performance as a key constituent of the service encounter. These primarily conceptualise marketplace interactions and performances as cooperative affairs through which consumers and service workers pursue shared objectives to achieve mutually meaningful and value-added experiences by working together (Arnould 2005; Deighton, 1992; Lusch et al., 2007). These studies analyse how socio-cultural differences between service providers and consumers in things like gender, social class and status, shape or impede interpersonal rapport, emotional commitment and the shared understanding needed to achieve satisfactory marketplace outcomes and commercial friendships (Price and Arnould, 1999). Often these studies reveal the

contextually bound pattern of rituals, role-playing and normative rules that come into play in these interactions (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012). They also bring into light how organised practices generate shared experiences and meanings (Arnould & Price, 1993; Penaloza & Gilly, 1999) and value co-creation (Goulding et al., 2009; Maclaren & Brown, 2005; Thompson & Arsel, 2004).

However, studies that explore the class inequalities that manifest in service encounters are of more relevance to this research. This is because developing countries such as Nigeria are highly stratified (Dion & Borraz, 2017), and the consumption of services in such contexts resultantly brings individuals together into a physical space who occupy vastly distant class positions (Dion & Borraz, 2017). However, it is clear from extant research that variances in social, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) often exist in these settings in the developed world. The insight generated from these studies helps to cast some light on the outcomes of these interactions. Sherman (2007), for example, explores how workers in luxury hotels in the US are able to assert a powerful sense of self while forming meaningful and reciprocal relationships with their customers. While class inequality is an everyday reality in this setting due to growing disparities in wealth in North America, the workers in this context can position themselves on a range of personally meaningful hierarchical dimensions such as competence, employment status, morality, intelligence, etc., cultural capital. Significantly, the workers can mitigate the significant disparities in economic capital between their guests and themselves and assuage any contradictions in their identities through these dimensions.

In contrast, a study of luxury retail stores in China reveals how such relationships can be stripped of most forms of reciprocity and mutuality and how status and privilege crucial components that surface in the service encounter are relatively blunt and deleterious ways (Hanser, 2006). By utilising Bourdieu's perspectives on social distinction as a conceptual lens, the researcher illustrates how the

wealthy customers of these stores command respect and reverence from the store clerks involved in delivering the service. On the other hand, the perspective was adopted to examine how the clerk's, in turn, express deference as a key means for recognizing and marking their customers status. In trying to cope with these asymmetries and manage their self-esteem, the research details how the service workers - who are actively encouraged by their managers - attempt to embody the value of the brands they sell to achieve the aesthetic and interactional styles demanded by their customers (Otis, 2008). In other words, brands play a crucial role in shaping subjectivities and behaviour by making the players involved in these games perform as class subjects. This finding from Dion & Borraz's (2017) study reflects the belief that brands are a means to express identity and a vehicle through which status games are structured in service-based settings. However, despite the workers' efforts in this context, tensions still surface due to the significant disparities in status between the two groups involved in these relationships. Besides, there is also the fact that the brands utilised in these performances act as a constant reminder of the subordinate position they hold in the social hierarchy.

More recently, attention has focused on the interpersonal and structural aspects of status-seeking practices that unfold in relatively intimate service settings in LICs. For instance, a study by Ustunier & Thompson (2012) illustrates the sociological complexities and outcomes that manifest in status games when two elements of a populace who occupy significantly different positions on the socio-economic hierarchy come together in hairdressing salons. Set in Turkey, the researchers explain this context's institutional shaping, which brings mass elite female customers into contact with male hairdressers who render services for them. The hairdressers, it is argued, originate from poor squatter communities and find the occupation a means to advance their social position and elevate their status. For some, the profession is seen as a means to level up with their clients.

As such, the process through which the hairdressers are selected, recruited and trained is richly described to illustrate the transformational journey through the occupation and which resultantly shapes and structures their identities.

To beginning with, it is apparent that recruits are selected based on their looks and potential for social etiquette at a very young age. Then, they work for years performing relatively essential duties, up to and including hair washing and drying, to learn the service skills associated with the craft and develop the required field-specific cultural capital demanded by their clients. As they come into close contact with the customers during this apprenticeship, the hairdressers also learn how to negotiate the nuanced and complex power relationship in this context.

So, while more experienced hairdressers portray themselves as possessing superior aesthetic skills and fashion knowledge through which they can exert subtle forms of influence and control over their clients, the customers, on the other hand, perceive the hairdressers as recipients of their benevolent tutelage and a valuable channel through which to experience and learn more about refined taste and mass elite sensibilities. That is to say, the elite mass customers in this context regard their hairdressers and salon owners... “as social inferiors” (p.811), who are privileged to interact with them. In this respect, it is argued that the...

*... “Hairdressers’ ostensibly empowering identity practices are undertaken within socioeconomic games whose rules have been set by the cultural norms of the dominant class” (p.812).*

Intriguingly, this form of class dominance has a further implication for the identities of the hairdressers investigated in this study. In Turkey, it is argued that females are traditionally subordinate to men and that this is indeed the case for both parties brought together in these salons. This is because the female clients

in this setting are still located within patriarchal relationships in their immediate mass elite social milieu, and the male hairdressers hold an ordinate position over their female contemporaries in the squatter communities through what the researchers describe as a '*gender-based... [occupational] monopoly*' (p.812). However, in the salon, the customers command an ordinate position over their hairdressers, which in effect reverses the power relations manifest through traditional gender configurations and the socio-economic norms of the country. In this respect, the male hairdressers lose some sense of their gendered identity in pursuing employment and middle-class status. Alternatively, in other words, according to the researchers, "*These men are... [found to be] ... "trading a subcultural species of gender capital... for forms of capital (e.g., economic, social, and cultural) that provide... utility in...[the]...metropolitan and middle-class status systems"* (p.812), which they aspire to belong.

Alongside their re-configured gendered authority, it is argued that the customers similarly value the associated symbolic capital that accrues from carrying the styles and images created by their hairdressers, as this positions them as refined and tasteful amongst their peers. More importantly, they also covet "*the... [celebrity like] ... adulation of...[the] hairdressers and owners*" as this holds significant currency in their social worlds as the perceived value of positional goods and services diminishes in relation to the expansion and growth of the mass elite class in their country. Through these examples, the researchers show how this consumption field is marked by *interdependent* status games that provide opportunities for both consumers and service providers to enact different beliefs about their relative positions of influence and power. Also, the study illuminates the salon as a venue through which class-based entitlements and social hierarchies are created, expressed, reproduced, and reconfigured.

Finally, while set in the UK, a paper by Yeadon-Lee (2012) offers an alternative sociological account of 'hairdresser' status in relation to the perceptions of their



clients. Drawing on interviews and observations, this study explored the relationship between “*service discourses, work practices and the construction of hair stylists’ status in salons within the high-profile segment of the industry*” (p.2). Notably, the researcher begins by mapping the contradictions that manifest in this professional context between the image of the occupation and the skills required to be successful in the job. Here, she compares the key technical skills and ‘know-how’ required for cutting, styling and colouring hair, as well as the interpersonal attributes that make stylists skilled emotional labourers and confidants for their clients, with the public image of this work as “*a simple, unskilled...occupation that can be done by anybody*” (p.1). The underlying tension between the high cost of the services offered and this perception is also highlighted.

Furthermore, the researcher also refers to previous work by Gimlin (1996) that points out that the

“*imperative to make money and provide good customer service... [means] that stylists... [are] placed in a subordinate and servile position in relation to clients whereby their emotional labour... [becomes] ‘self-sacrificing’ in nature*” (p.1).

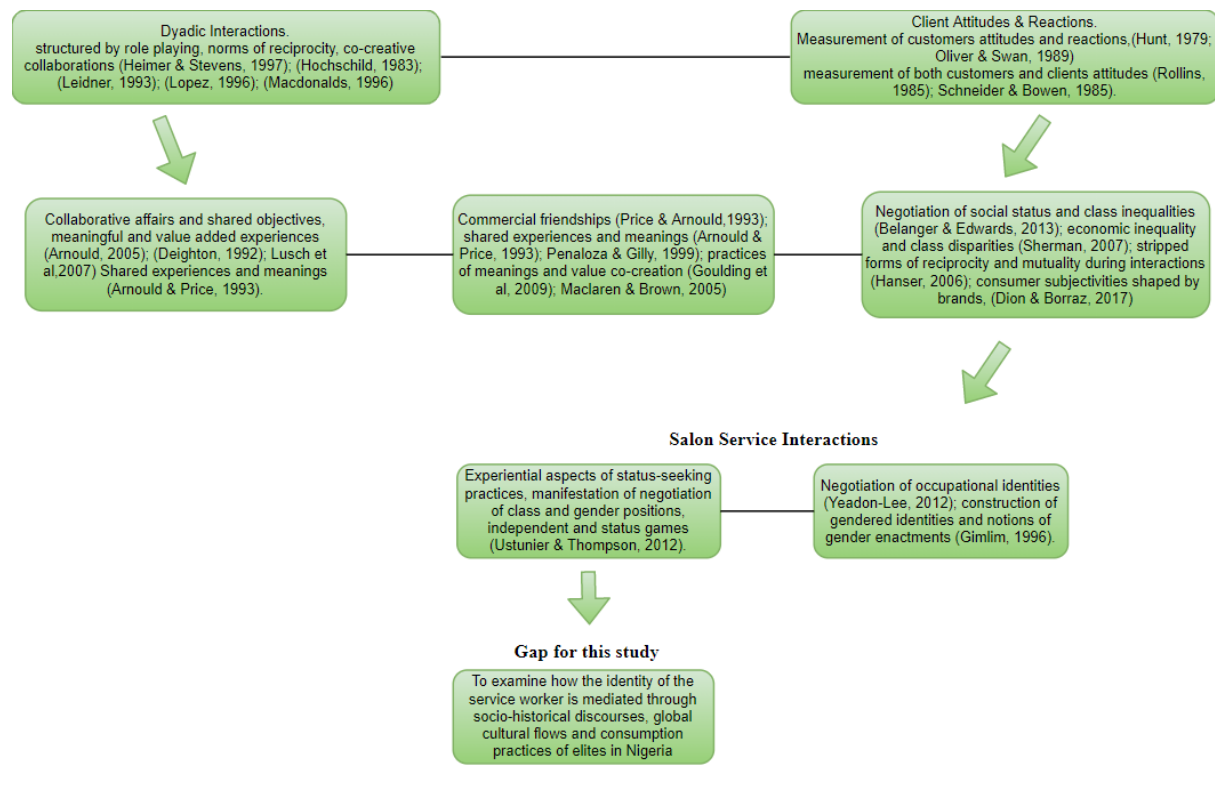
However, in contrast to these observations, and indeed those from Ustiuner and Thompson’s study, the findings from this research illustrate how these tensions and images could be managed by adopting a series of aesthetic and material practices and behaviours that facilitate the construction of expert status.

First of all, the workers in these beauty salons could position themselves as stylish and fashion-forward through their clothing choices and hairstyles. So, while the salons in which they work required uniformity in clothing colour choices, the stylists could exercise discretion in their outfits and own particular style. Thereby, the stylists are able to promote individuality and competence through aesthetic labour. Importantly, throughout this observational study, it was noted that the

hairdressers constantly changed and updated their outfits and hairstyles, leading to the perception that these workers are tuned in to popular culture and trends. Secondly, the hairdressers were able to command respect and deference from their clients through demonstrating professional skills and knowledge. In particular, the clients of the salons investigated in the study were offered in-depth consultations before their hair cut that explored the best options and styles for them and how the best results could be achieved. The stylists then embellished this during the hair cut itself through a careful and in-depth explanation of what was undertaken and how to achieve the best results from products and home styling the hair. Significantly, the stylists could also demonstrate and exercise authority by refusing some of their client's requests. For instance, if it was believed that a particular hairstyle or cut would not suit the customer, or if it may cause some damage in the case of bleaching or aggressive colouring. In this case, knowledge and authority were brought to bear as a marker of professional competence and expertise.

In addition, the salon owners actively sought to demonstrate their stylists' professional credentials by showcasing awards or training that they had won or received on visual screens and posters that adorned the walls of their shops. Thereby objectifying the field-specific cultural capital of their employees (Holt, 1998). Through this combination of professional and aesthetic knowledge and skill, the hairdressers in this study were, therefore, able to position themselves as specialists with significant expertise vis-à-vis their clients. As such, it both serves to nullify the general social perception that frames the image of their occupation and elevate their *achieved* occupational identity more broadly.

**Fig 3.1 Service Interactions and Gap of the Study**



To close, studies have begun to address class disparities between customers and workers and how this manifests in service interactions and identity formation. However, as shown in the diagram above (Fig. 3.1), their findings collectively do not fully account for the socio-historical context that structures and shapes these encounters. This is mainly within post-colonial contexts such as Nigeria. Actually, what remains elusive is an empirical account of the relational dynamics and intersubjective processes that unfold between the parties involved in service delivery and how this resultantly shapes the identity positions of service workers. This is a gap in knowledge that this research seeks to address. To provide a theoretical examination and analysis of identity within the postcolonial service encounter, I draw from the postcolonial theoretical perspectives of third world subjectivities and interpretation of identity transformation in the following section.

### **3.4 Postcolonial theory**

The term “postcolonial” may be misleading as it refers to the period when the colonies of ex-European empires became independent sovereign states. However, in broader terms, the theory relates to a body of studies that explore complex relationships between the colonised and the coloniser (Bhabha, 1994; Chakrabarty, 2007; Gupta, 1998; Prakash, 1992). The complexity of these relationships is revealed through a more nuanced understanding of colonialism and its consequences, which is quite problematic (Varman & Belk, 2012). This is because the postcolonial theorist argues that the national spaces created by anti-colonial movements continue to reflect colonial experiences (ibid).

Notable amongst these theorists are Edward Said (1978, 2000), Gyattari Spivak (1988), Homi Bhabha (1994) and Frantz Fanon (1968, 1984). These scholars contribute to various postcolonial discourses such as Orientalism, The Subaltern, Othering, Differentiation, and Inferiority. Although there are some competing interpretations and debates amongst the discourses, I draw upon Spivak’s (1994) and Fanon (1952;1967) perspectives for the conceptualisation of postcolonial identity. These works are most relevant to this thesis because they offer insights into consumer identity construction in developing postcolonial settings. Hence, they are helpful as a lens to understand how the identities of the service workers in this study are shaped in relation to the socio-historical discourses of postcolonial Nigeria alongside the discourses emanating from global consumer culture. Thus, the following section outlines key elements of the different perspectives of postcolonial theory and the justification for specifically focusing on Spivak’s and Fanon’s writings as a theoretical lens for this study.

### 3.5 Postcolonialism and Orientalism

Edward Said's pioneering study on 'Orientalism' is regarded by many as one of the original inspirations for developing postcolonial studies as an academic discipline (Kennedy, 2000). Drawing inspiration from Foucault's philosophy and methods (Nichols, 2010), Said (1978) maintains that orientalism is based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between the '*Orient*' (*the East*) and the '*Occident*' (*the West*). In relation to this, Orientalism reflects a Western-style form of domination and authority over the orient, thus portraying the orient and its people as necessarily inferior (Nichols, 2010; Rizvi et al., 2006). According to Said (1978), this power relationship is produced and maintained by specific forms of knowledge, which simultaneously remove representational authority from non-western people. Also, it distorts the images and knowledge about them. Also, it contributes to the production of a new object of study that explores how western culture has become dominant by gaining strength and identity through defining itself against the orient (ibid). Said says,

*"My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment era"* (1978, pg. 3).

Although Said's (1978) Orientalism positions postcolonial people as inferior to western culture, this perspective was not adopted as a lens to understand the emulation practices and identities of the workers in the study. As earlier stated in the introduction chapter, the purpose of the study was to explore how the power relationships manifest in global cultural flows and the consumption practices of the elites stimulate the change of service workers' identity in the salons. Hence, the following section discusses the concept of subalternity within postcolonial

settings and how this may be a better concept to understand the social processes unfolding in this context.

### **3.6 Postcolonialism and Subalternity**

The notion of the ‘subaltern’, which means ‘inferior’, was first adopted by Antonio Gramsci in 1934. As a pioneering study, it refers to the historiography of people subjected to the hegemony of the ruling classes (Ashcroft et al., 2013). The term ‘subaltern’ describes lower-class postcolonial subjects’ peasants, workers and other such groups in society (Guha. 1982).

Further to this, Spivak’s (1994) exploration of politically oppressed and marginalised women in India is another study that provides insight into the experiences of domination of lower-class postcolonial subjects, as it sheds light on their inability to speak to voice their resistance (Ashcroft et al., 2013). As such, Spivak’s work helps me to understand the class positions and differences between the service workers and elites in this study, particularly in the face of cultural globalisation

Also, I draw from the concept of Othering as an underpinning lens to understand the processes involved in the identity transformations of the service workers. With the influx of global cultural flows that merge with the socio-historical discourses already present in this setting, Spivak (1994) and Fanon’s (1952; 1967) works help to explain how the subjectivities manifest in the salons of Abuja are both dependent upon and a reaction to Western culture, modernity, and civilisation. More so, Spivak’s (1995) perspectives on Othering highlight’s how the imperial powers created their “others” through dominant colonialist discourses and racial and discursive practices

In this way, Fanon (1952; 1967) postulates that the ‘other’, as a colonial subject, is subject to intense alienation and reduced to a non-human; they are displaced to the margins of society and social action (Fanon, 1967). According to Spanakos

(1998), the colonised subject merely responds to events generated, contextualised, and defined by the coloniser (ibid). In many ways, powerless to this process, they become objectified and dependent upon the coloniser for their characterisation. According to Goldberg (1997: 81),

*“Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognised by him.”*

### **3.7 Postcolonialism and Internalisation of Inferiority**

Fanon’s (1952; 1967) perspective on Othering reflects the interconnections between the convergence of western culture and the socio-historical discourses that intersect each other in generating third-world subjectivities. As a research project situated within a postcolonial setting, the relevance of Fanon’s work to this study is that it offers insights into the psychological effects and spillover of colonial administration and racist policies conducted under colonial rule that is residual in Nigeria today (Rizvi et al., 2006). Importantly, Fanon believes that colonial subjects are internally and psychologically colonised even after independence. He challenges the fixed idea of settled identity that is anchored within western rationality. His expression on the “pitfalls of national consciousness” suggests that even though one may be liberated from colonialism, it does not mean that one will be free. Indeed, for Fanon, the colonised bourgeoisie who replaced colonial rule simply substituted it with their forms of dominance, surveillance and coercion using the same vocabulary of power as the colonial powers (Rizvi et al., 2006).

According to Young (2003), in reference to Fanon, these bourgeoisie

*“Have a black skin, with a white mask.”* (p.144).

Thus, the lower-classes are further dehumanised by the national bourgeois who adopt the coloniser’s world as their own and look upon their fellow colonised

with disgust, anger and pity through a profound internalisation of the prejudices of the coloniser (Spanakos, 1998). Alternatively, as Fanon (1952; 1967) puts it, the lower-class people maintain an inferior identity determined by the master-slave narrative. Accordingly, these individuals still suffer from the deep psychological trauma of otherness rooted in socio-cultural violation and objectification (Varman & Belk, 2012). Unable to achieve the position of a subject, they continue to feel stigmatised and marginalised (ibid, 2012).

### **3.8 Postcolonial Subjectivities, Marginalisation and Stigma**

According to Goffman (1963), stigma is,

*“An attribute that is deeply discrediting’, where on the basis of perceived ‘difference’ or ‘deviance’, the bearer is reduced ‘from a whole, and usual person to a tainted discounted one”* (1963, p.3).

Advances in theory and research regarding the conceptualisation of stigma show that it occurs at societal, interpersonal and individual levels (Arjan et al., 2013). Building on previous theories (Corrigan, 2004; Herek, 2007), Pryor & Reeder (2011) articulate a conceptual model that depicts four dynamically interrelated manifestations of stigma. These are public stigma, self-stigma, stigma by association and structural stigma. First, public stigma represents people’s social and psychological reactions to someone perceived with a stigmatised condition. Second, self-stigma reflects the social and psychological impact of possessing stigma. Third, similar to Goffman’s (1963) perspectives, stigma by association refers to societal social and psychological reactions to individuals associated with a stigmatised condition. Lastly, structural stigma legitimises and perpetuates a stigmatised status by society’s institutions and ideological systems.

Amongst these, public stigma is considered to be at the core of the other three manifestations. For instance, self-stigma often results from an awareness of public stigma, as people with stigmatising conditions are keenly aware of the



social devaluation connected with their situation. Thus, stigma may manifest as an aversion to interactions, avoidance, social rejection, discounting, discrediting, dehumanisation, and depersonalisation of others into stereotypical caricatures. (Dovidio et al., 2000; Herek, 1999).

Amongst the different perspectives related to the social-psychological stigma of relevance to this study, the structural stigma seems to be the most fitting as it shows how existing social inequalities are perpetuated by hegemonic processes and the exercise of social, economic and political power (Campbell & Deacon, 2006; Link & Phelan, 2001; Parker & Aggleton, 2003; Scambler & Paoli, 2008). This form of stigma is not embodied within an individual per se. Instead, it occurs within social interactions and contexts (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998; Hebl & Dovidio, 2005; Pryor & Reeder, 2012). In relation to this, Goffman (1963) says stigma is context-dependent and relational because something could be regarded as stigmatising in one situation or audience, but not another. Therefore, the analysis of structural stigma requires examining the social context in which stigma occurs and the local knowledge systems that contribute to its creation (Foucault, 1977).

Relating structural stigma as an underpinning lens to understand postcolonial subaltern subjectivities illuminates the fact that some social structures empower and privilege specific individuals at the expense of others. For instance, the power differences between the national bourgeoisie and their subalterns who live in poverty (Jones et al., 2004) and lack cultural capital (Sivaram et al., 2009) results in feelings of marginalisation, exploitation, domination, and stigmatisation (Parker & Aggleton, 2003). As explained in the literature review chapter of this thesis, this situation is amplified by exposure to the west through globalisation.

Or as Fanon says,

*When Blacks make contact with the white world, certain sensitising actions take place. If the psychic structure is fragile, we observe a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. His actions are destined for 'the other' (in the guise of a white man) since only the Other can enhance his status and give him self-esteem (pg. 132).*

This perspective of postcolonial subjectivity thus sheds light on the complexities that manifest between the national bourgeoisie who directly engage in modernity and the vast majority of individuals in Nigeria who do not. These interactions and experiences, or lack thereof, potentially lead to a process of identity struggle that privileges the west. What is more, these struggles may be compounded for the lower-class individuals and brought into sharp relief by their exposure to global cultural flow as they come into contact with the Bourgeoisie in the salons of Abuja. Thus, potentially leading to the creation of new anxieties and desires (Varman & Belk, 2012). As shown in previous studies (e.g. *ibid*, 2012), as a result, the service workers may attempt to mitigate the negative psychological and social impacts of any resulting stigmatisation or desire that materialises through their interactions with their elite clients by employing various coping strategies (Arjan et al., 2013).

### **3.9 Stigmatisation and Coping Strategies**

Previous studies on stigma management have explored the tactics employed by consumers to avoid and escape from stigmatisation through various coping or stigma management processes (Crosby, 2012; Crockett, 2017). These studies show that consumers mobilise against stigma by engaging in self-reform tactics which align their identities with non-stigmatised norms and practices. According to Arjan et al. (2013), these can be classified into two principal forms; problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The former of these is geared towards altering the relationship between the stigmatised individual and their environment. Broadly construed, this involves individuals' selectively

compensating for stigma during social interactions by either being outgoing, avoiding stigmatising situations, seeking social support or by activism (ibid). The latter, on the other hand, aims to regulate negative emotions through:

- (1) Downward social comparison.
- (2) Externally attributing the stigmatising behaviour of others to ignorance.
- (3) Denial.
- (4) Positively reappraising stigmatising experiences or
- (5) Detaching oneself from the source of stigma (Crocker et al., 1998; Major & O' Brien, 2005; Miller & Kaiser, 2001).

In addition to these two broad approaches to coping with stigma, Castle (1986) postulates that practices associated with '*masking*' also allows socially excluded and marginalised groups such as women and the lower-classes to overcome prejudice and bridge patriarchal and class-based divides. That is to say, '*the mask*', which is essentially an emulation practice, helps people to feel safe and free from social sanctions (Goffman, 1968; Varman & Belk, 2012).

In an earlier interpretation of this phenomenon, Fanon (1952) suggests that the stigma associated with colonialism influences individuals' identities through the associations linked to enslavement and imperialist control by foreign powers. He argues that postcolonial subjects seek to overturn these associations engage in masking to conceal their subservient identities, which they broadly interpret as inferior. Thus, postcolonial subjects seek to emulate the West, which is paradoxically the source of their subaltern subjectivities (Bhabha, 1994).

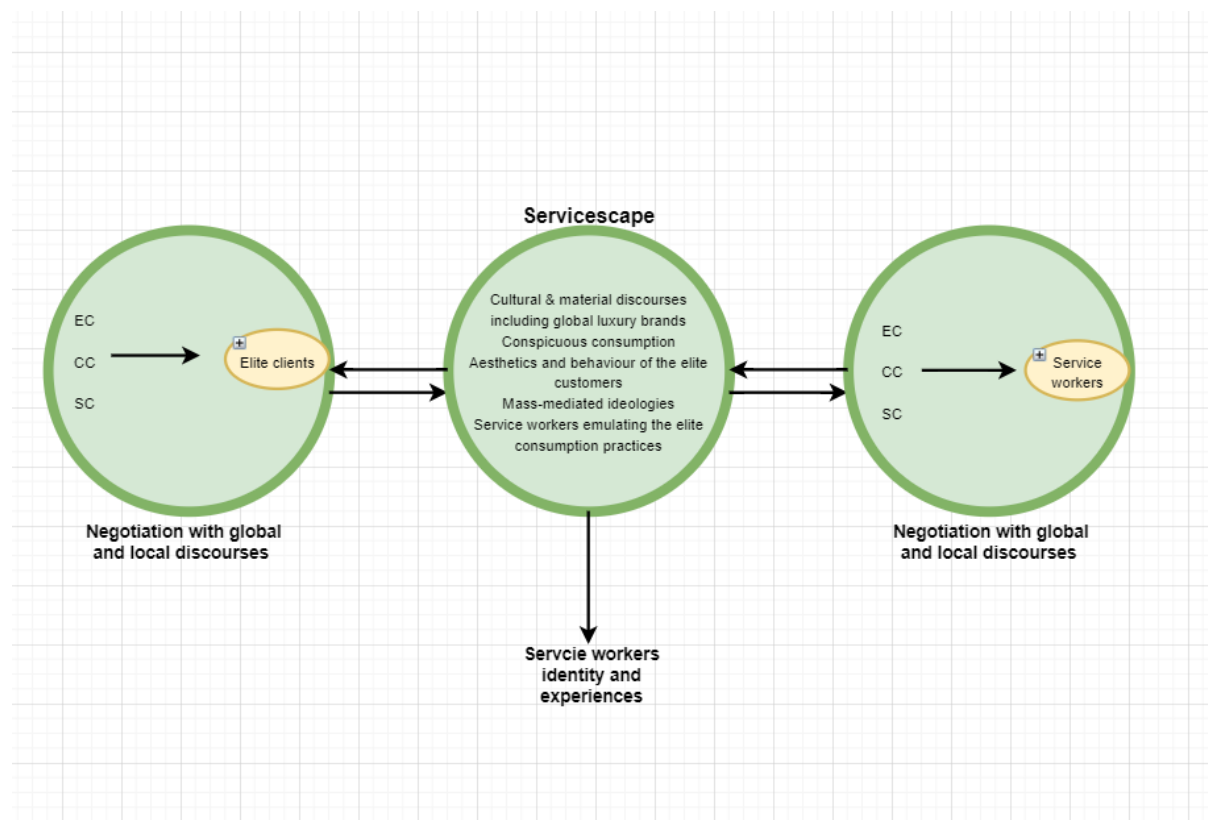
Several studies in the CCT tradition report how subaltern consumers attempt to mask their third world subjectivities by emulating western culture. For instance, Varman & Belk (2012) examined how lower-class consumers in India attempt to disguise their identities through emulating Western consumption practices and fashion choices. Hence, this study reports how stigmatised individuals consume

clothing as a form of veiling to disguise themselves and pass the tests of social acceptability (Varman & Belk, 2012). According to Castle (1986, p.56),

*“Clothing has always been the primary trope of deceitfulness of the material world – a mutable, shimmering tissue that everywhere veils the truth from human eyes”.*

In conclusion, from the review of the literature associated with post-colonialism, stigma and coping, it is clear that the concepts and theories associated with this body of work hold relevance for understanding identity transformation within postcolonial contexts such as the salons of Abuja. As such, these ideas offer a robust framework for understanding the everyday experiences and outcomes of the service workers and, therefore, a useful conceptual lens for this study.

**Fig 3.2 The Conceptual Model for this Study**



### **3.10 The Conceptual Model**

The conceptual model presented in Figure 3.2 illuminates how the service worker identity may be shaped through power relationships between the global cultural flows, elites' consumption practices, and socio-historical discourses.

Arguably, due to the range of cultural and material resources that workers confront when tending services to their clients, they are, by implication interacting with global and local contexts, brought into sharp relief through mass-mediated ideologies and the meanings and images associated with global brands. That is to say, the workers come into contact with the brands and aesthetics of their customers that they are involved with, and these, by implication, may 'rub off' through their interactions. Importantly, as the data for the study was being collected, it became clear that discourses of globalization amidst those from the local context of Nigeria were shaping the experiences and identities of the workers through their interactions with their clients. This prompted an interest in the literature reviewed in the previous chapters, which help explain the formation of service worker identity within this context and have led to the development of the model. In other words, the review and resulting conceptual model has enabled an understanding of the complex relationship between the western world and developing countries by bringing to light how globalization and its flow, including through the medium of service delivery and interaction, continue to inform current discourses and performances of identity, race, modernity and socio-cultural development (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1952; Nandy 1983).

The circle on the left-hand side contains the elites having access to cultural capital (CC), economic capital (EC), and social capital (SC). The other circle by the right is for the service workers. The arrows pointing towards the elite clique and service workers circles are the dominant structures of mass-mediated ideologies, the

influx of global brands, social discourses and class differentiation, interactions with the global and local context. At the heart of the diagram in Figure (3.2) is the servicescape of beauty salons which has the cultural and material discourses including global brands, the conspicuous consumption of the elite clients while in the stores, the aesthetic behaviour of the elites, mass-mediated ideologies and service workers emulating the consumption practices of their elite clients.

With the elite consumption of global brands as the first-hand contact of global consumer culture to the service workers and the interactions in the store, the service workers emulate them and, as a result, become acculturated. Hence, these dominant structures pervaded the beauty stores' context in the identity negotiation and construction of the service workers.

Therefore, in achieving the purpose and objectives of this study, as stated in the introduction chapter of this thesis, the conceptual framework developed will enable a general sense of the reference in approaching the phenomenon of this study. Also, it will help me select the appropriate methodology and data collection and analysis in the following chapters of this study.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the review on symbolic consumption and the extension of the self has shown how consumers use products and other marketplace resources to construct and transform their identities. In exploring the interpretive consumer research perspectives on the conceptualization of identity, I reviewed studies on service interaction, social stratification, and identity conceptualisation. Drawing on Foucault's thoughts and ideas, I explored the role of discourses associated with global consumer culture in identity negotiations. Thus, the study takes on the Foucauldian perspective, which perceives identity as subjective and socially constructed. Further, as the purpose of this study examines how service worker identity is mediated through socio-historical discourses, global cultural flows, and the consumption practices of elites in Nigeria, I reviewed the studies on

services interactions within consumer research. Hence, further discussions focused on studies exploring the interpersonal and structural aspects of status-seeking practices that unfold in relatively intimate service settings in developed countries. Lastly, to provide a theoretical examination and analysis of identity within the postcolonial service encounter, I explored the postcolonial theoretical perspectives of third world subjectivities and interpretation of identity transformation. Following this, I will discuss the research methodology, data collection, analysis, and findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

Research findings provide contributions to academic knowledge, organisational practices and systems improvement (Nyame-Asiamah, 2009). However, the reliability, relevance and quality of any research depend largely on the methodological approach used to carry it out (Myers et al., 2009).

According to Morgan (p.19, 1998),

*“The empirical research study is not simply a choice of methods, but rather it is a mode of engagement which is a wider process that constitutes and renders a subject amenable to study in a distinctive way. The selection of... methods implies some view of the situation being studied, for any decision on how to study a phenomenon carries with it certain assumptions or explicit answers to the questions of what is being studied.”*

Hence, this chapter discusses the rationale for the methodological design and theoretical framework adopted for this study. In this respect, it outlines and considers: (1) the philosophical underpinnings this approach is based upon; (2) the methodological commitments it subscribes to and (3) the methodological perspective used to ground the study in a socio-historical context.

### **4.1 The Methodological Approach**

While reviewing the marketing literature, it became apparent that little attention was paid to the value of qualitative research in the discipline. An explanation for this by Milliken (2001) suggests that the reason may have been due to the propensity to apply quantitative approaches due to the positivist tradition being perceived as more scientific (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Drawing heavily from applied economics at the time, within this paradigm, the consumer subject was assumed to be a rational decision-maker whose perception was deemed to reflect



an objective or shared reality which was then quantified through the processes of reduction and scaling for measurement (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Thus, such studies hold a realist conception of social reality, which is a distinctive epistemological position that stresses the importance of carefully measuring and quantifying phenomena to identify relationships between social units and isolated variables (Bryman & Bell, 2011; (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988), such as the influence of price changes on purchase behaviour for example.

However, as I began to review studies related to globalization, symbolic consumption, and identity, I soon realised that many of these sit within the CCT (Consumer Culture Theory) tradition and adopt an interpretive cultural approach. This approach, which is allied with postmodern marketing thought, draws extensively on philosophies that reject positivist views of knowledge and realist ontology. Instead, the interpretive tradition assumes that social and cultural researchers cannot produce accurate representations of some imagined external reality and create fundamental truths that correspond to that reality (Moisander et al., 2009). Rather, researchers in this tradition focus on “*the imbricated layers of cultural meanings that structure consumer actions in a given social context*” (Thompson & Troester, 2002; 550) and hold the view that reality is an individual or social construction that manifests across a range of contexts.

As such, this paradigm shifts the focus away from customer information processing and cause and effect relationships to the lived experience of consumers in a range of socio-cultural settings (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In doing this, these researchers recognise that consumers and other market actors must be studied in context rather than separated from their ‘natural settings’ in how positivist researchers would attempt to do through questionnaires and lab experiments (Lutz, 1989). This is because they conceive individuals and groups as producers and products of their manifold and shifting socio-cultural

environments (Joy & Venkatesh, 1994; Firat & Venkatesh, 1993; Venkatesh et al., 1993).

## **4.2 Research Philosophy**

When carrying out research, it is paramount to have considered the philosophical positioning of the study. This is important because undertaking a project appropriately requires a commitment to a methodological approach that determines the range of research methods appropriate for investigating and reporting data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). As such, research involves aligning with a paradigm that includes ontological, epistemological, and methodological commitments (Cresswell et al., 2003).

With the above in mind, I settled for a social constructionist approach for this study. It would enable me to examine service workers' experiences and identity outcomes within beauty salons as they interact with elite clients amidst the socio-historical discourses and global cultural flows that shape these contexts. Committing to this approach of social reality requires a specific commitment to a relativist epistemology. This is in line with Berger & Luckman's (1967, p.3) notion that researchers in this tradition hold a shared view that "reality is socially constructed in the sense that all human knowledge is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations" by the actors involved in these situations. As such, this perspective subscribes to the idea that no single '*objective*' reality exists '*out there*' that is independent of social actors that researchers can access through the scientific method (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Instead, researchers hold the belief that social realities are multiple and plural and that actors negotiate and create these in their everyday lives and through their social interactions (ibid, 1988). In this way, researchers often focus on the meanings people attach to these realities and how they shape their experiences, practices and subjectivities more broadly (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

In relation to this, the relativist epistemological perspective of the social constructionist approach maintains that to understand and represent an actor's social world and the cultural categories and concepts associated with it, then the socio-historical and cultural structures that are implicated in shaping and sustaining it has to be considered as well (Burr, 2006; Hibberd, 2005). This philosophical viewpoint is relevant to this study because it enables the critical examination of the experiences and outcomes of the research informants in relation to the social-historical and cultural discourses involved in constituting them.

According to Burr (2006), this critical approach implies that the socio-historical and cultural discourses that manifest in power relations should be highlighted. Doing so allows a researcher to understand how a consumer or market actors' experiences, practices, and outcomes are structured (Moisander et al., 2009). Essentially, concerning this study, this requires a shift from a pure focus on the lived experiences of Nigerian beauty salon service workers to the analysis of the systemic and “complex intertwining of the individual and the social in the contexts” that manifest their life conditions (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011, p.397).

This philosophical lens has enabled me to explore the mediation and transformation of the workers' identities as they interact with their elite clients in Abuja's stores while taking account of the socio-historical discourses and forces of cultural globalization within this postcolonial context. Hence, it illuminates how the service workers make sense of their daily interactions with their customers amidst the dominant global and local social discourses that interpenetrate Nigeria's social world.

### **4.3 The Social Constructionist Approach**

My decision to settle on this social constructionist philosophical approach was not a straightforward one. As explained earlier in the introduction chapter, the research study's vision unfolded during the literature review related to acculturation and globalization. It also fell into place over time as I commenced fieldwork and began to observe the daily interactions in the store and during my familiarization with the data that was being produced.

First, I had originally thought that my interest should be focused on the workers' lived experiences during their daily interactions with their elite clients. As such, I was initially drawn to the interpretative method of Phenomenology, which broadly pays attention to the meanings and experiences implied in the narratives captured from informants from long unstructured interviews (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). In particular, my attention at this time was drawn to the fact that in exploring the human actions of informants, Phenomenology emphasizes situated freedom by upholding the role of context in individual subjective experiences (Lopez and Willis, 2004). However, in the end, I found it unsuitable because it only focuses on individuals as units of analysis and runs the risk of placing too much emphasis on their personal experiences in social life at the expense of unearthing the cultural complexity of social action and the historically constituted marketplace (Moisander et al., 2009). As such, the tradition hides the power relations within consumer subjectivities and consumption practices (ibid), which are of real interest to this study because of the clear and present imbalances in status and social standing between the workers and customers of Abuja's beauty stores. Therefore, following much thought, phenomenology proved unsuitable as a lens to examine how the workers' experiences and identities are mediated and transformed by social discourses, global cultural flows and consumption practices.

As I reflected on previous studies that report class differences within service encounters (Hanser, 2012), it became apparent that class inequalities play a vital role in structuring service interactions and outcomes on identity. Furthermore, through my continued reading, which was spurred by my growing interest in social constructionist thought, I soon realised that the class system in Nigeria is highly stratified and significant in shaping social experiences and has evolved over time due to a break from the country's post-colonial past.

Therefore, as a socially embedded approach, social constructionism is more relevant than other research traditions for this study because it is attuned to the

*“View that all knowledge, and ... meaningful reality ... is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context”* (Crotty, 1998:42).

In this respect, the approach argues that all social concepts and cultural categories are socially constructed. According to Burr & Dick (2017), these categories are historically and culturally specific, making our knowledge of the world relative rather than absolute. Thus, it renders the idea of ‘truth’ problematic.

The philosophical stance of social constructionism emphasizes the cultural and institutional origins of meaning and provides a lens through which to view social phenomena. It implies that understanding any phenomenon during social interaction involves language as a critical constituent (Burr & Dickson, 2017). That is to say; language is of great importance to this approach because apart from transmitting thoughts and feelings, it makes thought possible by constructing concepts and structuring the experience of individuals. Correspondingly, social constructionism acknowledges the interplay between society, culture, and language (Crotty, 1998). It implies a reciprocal and interdependent relationship between things in the world and our consciousness. Thus, Crotty (1998) says,

*“No object can be adequately described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it, nor can any experience be adequately described in isolation from its object (pg. 45).*

In other words, meanings found within objects or the world are dependent on our consciousness, whilst the context of a phenomenon gives different meanings to the same object with its particularities. Adopting the social constructionist philosophical approach thus aligns with the relativist epistemology explained and allows me to examine how the service worker’s experiences and identities are mediated through global cultural flows and the consumption practices of elite clients within beauty salons in Nigeria.

#### **4.4 Theoretical Framework**

Having made a commitment to a research tradition, my initial intention was to use Ustunier & Holt’s (2007) Dominant consumer acculturation’ model and Luedicke’s (2011) Recursive Cultural Adaption model as the theoretical framework to guide my understanding of how the identities of service workers are negotiated and transformed during service delivery. My thoughts at this time were based on the fact that these models provide a broad yet nuanced perspective through which to explore the ways in which socio-cultural factors shape the outcomes of identity work. As such, I was inclined towards adopting these because they conceptualise consumer acculturation as a multi-directional, sustaining the process of cultural adaptation (Luedicke’s, 2011, whereby migrants and locals negotiate their intercultural relations through combinations of their resources, consumption practices and cultural discourses (see chapter one for a more detailed review).

However, during the fieldwork, I began to reflect on my prior assumptions using these models. While they are still essential and have influenced my focus during data collection and analysis, I soon realized that my interest in examining the acculturation of service workers compelled me to a more specific exploration.

Although it was apparent that some of the workers were emulating the consumption practices of the elites in the store and that a range of identity outcomes were coming into play due to their experiences, my focus shifted to how socio-historic discourses and global cultural flows play a role in the interplay of meanings that structure and shape service interactions between the participants in these stores. Thus, my interest narrowed to a focus on how global cultural flows and the consumption practices of elites in this context influence the worker's identities as they perform services for them. Hence, the developing interest that unfolded during the fieldwork and interviews pointed me that an appropriate and suitable theoretical framework for the study should consider the socio-historical and cultural discourses inherent within this setting. Also, such framework would enable the exploration of how the forces of cultural globalization that flow through the meanings associated with global brands (Cayla & Arnould, 2008) and mass-mediated messages (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) come into play in the interactions between the various parties in the beauty salons of Abuja, and how this informs and shapes the identity of the service workers. With these in mind, I embarked on a broader exploration of social theories.

At that time, I thought of primarily adopting Bourdieu's (1984) theories of Habitus, Capital and Distinction to explore the socio-cultural and economic differences entrenched within Nigeria, which were brought into sharp relief in the salons investigated in this study. Indeed, these theories, and the related works of Douglas Holt (1998), Coskuner-Bali & Thompson (2012), (Arsel & Thompson, 2011), and (Ustuner & Holt, 2010) had earlier informed my thinking and analysis of the data collected in this study. Moreover, with the gulf in economic resources and sheer wealth of the clients compared with the relative and abject poverty of the workers, these concepts are undoubtedly relevant to understanding how status manifests and operates in relation to each party.

While reading through the works of Bourdieu on distinction, I became interested in how he describes the relationship between status and associated lifestyles and how these manifests in social class differences. For Bourdieu, class is shaped by and through the “habitus” (discussed later) and the various expressions of meaning situated in different consumption practices, which manifest symbolically as a “style of life” (Weininger, 2002). Bourdieu explains that these lifestyles and associated consumption practices constitute social collectivities (status groups) by establishing symbolic boundaries between individuals occupying different locations in the class structure (ibid).

Importantly this interest in Bourdieusian theory stems from his demonstration of the “*hierarchy of lifestyles as the misrecognised retranslation of the hierarchy of classes*” (Wacquant, 2006, p.10). What this means concerning this research is that understanding the class relationship between the participants in the salons of Abuja entails exploring the differences in lifestyles and consumption practices. Also, it implies considering the forms of capital (cultural, social and economic) between the dominant class and petty bourgeois, who make up the clients and service workers. This is based on the variations in asset structures associated with each of their corresponding social positions. With respect to the bourgeois or elites in this study, from the Bourdieuan perspective, this relates their class habitus to their freedom from material constraints and their judgement of taste.

According to Bourdieu, the ‘sense of distinction’ of the bourgeois demonstrates their distance from material necessity and long-standing monopoly over scarce cultural goods. That is to say, the bourgeoisie shows their interest more in forms of appreciation and pleasure of an object than in its functionality. Furthermore, when endowed with economic capital, the dominant class express their ‘*sense of distinction*’ by consuming expensive luxury with a carefully crafted opulence (Weininger, 2002). Hence, bourgeoisie taste’ defines itself by negating the ‘taste of necessity’, which may hold for the elites in this study.



In contrast, working-class individuals', such as the service workers in this study, subordinate forms of pleasure to function by emphasising their judgement on practical concerns. As such, Bourdieu's study on distinction provides a vital underpinning lens to examine the consumption practices and lifestyles of the elites and service workers in this context. The differences between both groups can also be framed in relation to the Bourdieusian concept of the 'Habitus' (1990). This concept highlights the system of durable and transposable dispositions through which individuals perceive, judge, and act in the world (ibid, 1990).

Playing a central role in Bourdieu's theories, Wacquant (2006) explains that the habitus is an unconscious disposition, set of attitudes, and behaviours shared by people of similar experiences and lifestyles acquired through the internalisation of external constraints and possibilities. According to Bourdieu (1990), the experiences of a particular class condition distinguishes a given location in social space as it marks out a specific set of dispositions upon the individuals within the space. Regarding these dispositions as a "*generative formula*," Bourdieu defines them as

*"an acquired system of generative schemes...[that] makes possible the production of ...thoughts, perceptions and actions"* (1990, p.55).

For him, different individuals have variants of the field that impose their specific determinations and expectations for those within it. Furthermore, Reay (2004) suggests that Bourdieu conceives the habitus as a multi-layered concept with two notions. The first is at the level of society and the second at a more complex level of the individual. Thus, for him, an individual's history is constitutive of the habitus and the whole collective of family and class membership.

Reflecting on the two key groups being investigated in this study, it is clear that the disposition and attitudes of the elites are quite different from the service workers. This is mainly observable in their different ways of speaking and acting

(Bourdieu, 1990, pg. 70). Also, it is reflected in their use of vocabulary, walking, feelings, thinking attitudes, and values

As such, Bourdieu's study on distinction, and the associated concepts discussed herein, provide a vital underpinning lens to examine the consumption practices and lifestyles of both the elites and service workers in this context. Indeed, these theories, and the related works of Douglas Holt (1998), Coskuner-Bali & Thompson (2012), Arsel & Thompson (2011), and Ustuner & Holt (2010) have informed my thinking and analysis of the data collected in this study. With the gulf in economic resources and apparent differences in lifestyles, the clients' habitus and collective lived experiences compared with the workers. These concepts are undoubtedly relevant to understanding how status manifests and operates in relation to each party.

However, as the research unfolded, I was increasingly drawn to the socio-cultural context of this setting and how it is implicated in (re)producing the experiences and outcomes of the workers. This resulted in the consideration and blending of Foucault's perspectives of power and subjectivity into the theoretical framework for making sense of the data collected in this research. In the following section, I, therefore, provide an exploration of these perspectives to justify their suitability as a lens to understand the phenomenon investigated in this study.

#### **4.5 Foucault's Concept of Power**

Foucault's perspective on power and the subject was considered for theorising the service worker's identity struggles in this research. Unlike Marx's juridical model, which views power as sovereign and repressive, Foucault negates this focus which upholds that power is held or possessed by individuals or groups and is embodied, institutionalised and structured (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Townley, 1993). Instead, according to his disciplinary perspective, Foucault offers a more nuanced view, saying,

*“that the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power. One identifies power with a law which says no; power is taken above all as carrying the force of prohibition. Now I believe it is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread. If power were anything but repressive if it did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us a force that says no, but it transverses and produces things; it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault, 1980, p.119).*

Although it is clear from the argument above that Foucault accepts the repressiveness of power, he maintains that sovereign power has been replaced by disciplinary power. This conception of power relates to multiple forms of subjugation having a place and function within the social organism (Allen, 2002). Foucault says power is not associated with a particular institution but relational to practices, techniques, and procedures (Townley, 1993). According to him,

*“in the thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980, p. 39).*

As such, Foucault’s disciplinary model conceptually transforms power from being perceived as a local exercise of force within the confines of institutions into far-reaching relationships of power (Rouse, 2005). According to Wartenberg (p.

150,1990), Foucault's power relations are usually mediated by social alignments, which can be likened to the field of social arrangements constituted in a coordinated and specific manner. Regarding these power relationships as social arrangement provides an understanding of the fact that situated power relationships form the "field." Hence, I found the conceptualisation of power relations as social alignments relevant as a lens to view the relationship between the dominant structures of cultural globalisation and class inequalities that play out in this postcolonial setting as mass-mediated ideologies and local structures of similarities and difference.

According to Foucault (1980), power relations are so complex that they cannot be attributed to any particular institution or group. Instead, all individuals are equally trapped within a system of power relations beyond their complete control (ibid, 1980).

*"Power is like a machine in which everyone gets caught within it, for it is omnipresent, everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere or as being "produced from one moment to the next"* (Foucault, 1980, p.93).

Relatively speaking, and in relation to the context of this research, this perspective thus offers a novel framework through which to reflect on and understand the power relationships that shape the service encounter between the elites and workers of this study.

However, though all individuals get trapped within the mechanisms of power, Heller (1996) argues that no individual or group can entirely control a social formation's entire power program, but some of more influence than others. This is because certain structural class positions in society, like the elites within Nigeria, enable certain individuals or groups to control more power mechanisms. Hence, Foucault maintains that

*“Certainly, everyone doesn’t occupy the same position. Certain positions preponderate and permit an effect of its strategic positions” (1978, p. 156) or, as in the case of the “dominant class” whose dominance is not a “privilege, acquired or preserved...but the overall effect of its strategic positions.” (Foucault, 1980, p.26).*

Therefore, given the status of the Elites within Nigeria, which is constituted by economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), arguably gives them more control of the mechanisms of power than the service workers. As discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis, the upper-class consumption practices of global luxury brands imply that the elite participants are more able to engage in cosmopolitanism and global luxury brands than other groups in the country.

Consequently, while exploring the power relations within the context of beauty salons in Nigeria, instead of asking questions such as *“who has power?”* or *“what or where does power reside?”*, the Foucauldian perspectives allows me to ask questions termed as the *“how” of power*” (Townley, 1993). Therefore, adopting Foucault’s concepts of power stands as an underpinning lens to answer the overarching research question of this study,

*“How do the dominant power structures of cultural globalisation shape the service interactions and identity formation of the service workers in this context?”*

#### **4.6 Power and Resistance**

Even though Foucault (1982) acknowledges the centrality of power, he argues that resistance is also central to power relations. He insists on a close connection between power and resistance, arguing that they cannot be external to each other. That is to say; power is not a system of domination with an inside or an outside (Rouse, 2005). Thus, Foucault asserts that in trying to understand what power

relations are, perhaps we should investigate the many forms of resistance and the various attempts made to disassociate these relations (1982, p.211).

Alternatively, as Wartenburg (1990) puts it, power is mediated by dynamic social alignments exercised through an agent's action only to the extent that other agents remain aligned with them. Therefore, though dominant agents are concerned by the need to sustain the alignment of power relations, subordinate agents may simultaneously seek ways of challenging or evading them. He says, the...

*"Subordinate agent is never absolutely disempowered, but only relatively so...just as the dominant agent's actions are subject to the problematic power by maintaining the allegiance of the aligned agents, the subordinate agent is always in the position of being able to challenge the aligned agent's complicity in her disempowerment."* (Wartenburg, 1990 pg. 173).

Hence, Rouse (2005) maintains that the Foucauldian view on power relations points to the fact that resistance to specific alignments of power is always possible owing to the outcome of ongoing struggles to sustain or undermine networks of domination. Accordingly, the relational character of power relationships

*"are strictly dependent on the multiplicity of points of resistance which play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle within power relations as they are present everywhere in the power network"* (Foucault (1980, p.95).

Thus, Rouse (2005) agrees with Foucault's conception that power is not something possessed or wielded by powerful agents as sovereign because it is co-constituted by those who support and resist it.

In relating this perspective to this study, as explained in section 3.2, though some consumers engage in global consumer culture, there is always some resistance by local cultures, groups and individuals. With this resistance, socio-cultural diversities are formed (Wilk, 1995; Ger & Belk; 1996), implying that global

cultural flows and local cultures are co-shaping (Ger & Belk, 1996) and that as a result, most cultures in the world today are blended.

However, as I have described in the previous chapters, I am not seeking to explore the workers' resistance to global cultural flows and how this shapes and transforms their identities per se. Actually, the main focus of this study aims to examine and understand how the service workers identity is mediated and transformed amidst the power relationships inherent in the postcolonial context of Nigeria in general and the beauty Salons of Abuja in particular. Therefore, having presented Foucault's perspective of power and how it relates to this study, the following section explores his conceptualisation of subjectivity and how this can explain the identity construction of workers as a mediation between the dominant discourses manifest in this particular context.

#### **4.7 Foucault's Subjectivity and Service Workers Identity**

Foucault's (1980) conceptualisation of power and the subject argues against the possibility of a 'liberated' subject. According to him, individual subjects do not come into this world as formed beings; they are constituted in and through these relations of power. That is to say, individuals are subjected to complex and multiple shifting relationships of power in their social fields, which determine and structure the range of identities available to them. This implies that power is the condition for the possibility of individual subjectivity, which is always determined by the subject's location within a specific institutional topography (Allen, 2002), such as a citizen of, and worker in the beauty stores, of Abuja. As Foucault (1980, p. 97-98) explains:

*"We should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of... forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc.... I believe that we must attempt to study the*

*myriad of bodies which are constituted as peripheral subjects as a result of the effects of power.”*

Therefore, in accordance with Heller (1996), any attempt to condense social formations into multiple and mutually exclusive subject positions is in contrast to Foucault’s understanding of subjectification. This is because identity or subjectivity is believed to unfold through a complex co-production process shaped through a range of socio-historical discourses and interpersonal relationships that produce the range of subject positions available to individuals at any one time.

Therefore, relating this conceptualization of power and subjectivity to this study implies that the service workers and elites are caught within a range of power relationships that manifest from dominant structures relevant to this particular context. These, therefore, must include the global cultural flows and mass-mediated ideologies associated with global brands and luxury, as well as other social discourses inherent within the postcolonial context of Nigeria and its class system. What is more, these, in turn, must be considered as significant mediators of subject positions and identities.

Another relevant perspective of Foucault’s is his notion of the ‘*technology of the self*’ (1988). This is because it emphasises the socially constructed mechanisms through which people come to understand and experience themselves as subjects as they construct, modify and transform their identities (Shankar, Cherrier & Canniford, 2006; Motion & Leitch, 2007). According to Foucault, the technology of the self

*“permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom perfection of immobility”* (1988.pg. 18).



In relation to this, Foucault's technology of the sign system is also a useful framework to explore the participants' emulation practices and identity change. According to him, "*the technology of the sign systems permits us to use signs, meanings, symbols or significations*" (Foucault, 1988 pg., 18) in order to construct and play with our identities. Therefore, this perspective may provide insight into how the individuals in this study conceive of and co-produce their identities. Thus, it will help show how the service workers use the resulting knowledge through their interactions with the elites in the salons to control and modify their behaviour and, ultimately, form a sense of self as an aesthetic pursuit (ibid).

Foucault refers to this as,

*"a self which has to be created as work of art."* (1984, p.362).

In this respect, the consumption practices of the elites and the emulation practices of the service workers can be regarded as one of the many technologies of the self, a site of self-creation, or self-care (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Rose, 1998). As Du Gay (1996, p. 76-7) argues,

*"As consumers, people are encouraged to shape their lives by the use of their purchasing power to make sense of their existence by exercising their freedom to choose in a market...within the discourse of enterprise/excellence consumers are constituted as an autonomous, self-regulating and self-actualising individual actors seeking to maximise their "quality of life."*

Hence, the 'technologies of the self and 'sign systems' concepts used for this study helps to configure an understanding of how the actors in the salons of Abuja mediate their identities through their numerous interactions and consumption practices.

## 4.8 Genealogical Approach

While this study's original goal was to gain an in-depth insight into how the workers' identities are transformed, my interest was initially centred on how micro-practices are implicated in this process through power relationships. However, I realised that the subject positions of the service workers are not wholly determined through individual choices or the behaviour and consumption practices of their clients per se. Rather, according to this theoretical framework, identities are mediated and shaped amidst the historical contingencies and social discourses that animate their social experiences and interactions in the beauty stores more broadly. As such, to account for these historical contingencies, a method is required that is particularly attuned to this phenomenon. Therefore, after deliberating several methodological approaches, I finally settled on Foucault's genealogical approach, which is a range of investigative practices that hold a "critical purpose.... [of]... exposing the contingent... origins of cherished ideas and entrenched practices" (Bevir, 2008, p.1). Alternatively, as Foucault (1995, p.31) proclaims, a "*history of the present*", whereby the researcher is tasked with producing a "historical narrative that explains an aspect of human life by showing how it came into being" (Bevir, 2008, p.1).

The phrase "*history of the present*" suggests "*presentism*", a historical method that approaches the past using the concepts and concerns of the present. However, Foucault was not engaged in "*presentism*", neither reading present phenomenon or cultural meanings back into history nor claiming to discover the phenomenon of earlier times with the same significance. Neither was he was using a new interest as the spur to question the past in new ways.

Rather, in accordance with Dreyfus and Rainbow's interpretation (1982, p.118), genealogy is an "*approach explicitly and self-consciously begins with a diagnosis of the current situation... it is an unequivocal and unabashed contemporary orientation.*" In other words, it involves diagnosing phenomena in the present

and then working out the genealogy by beginning an analysis from a posed question in the present (Kritzman 1988, p. 262). Essentially, genealogy and the critical discourses it engenders is concerned with what Foucault (1978) describes as “*an insurrection of subjugated knowledge*” (p.11). The aim is to locate the forms of power and the channels through which they are mediated and how they permeate the social body more broadly. According to him, genealogy is a way of writing critical history, using historical materials to evaluate values in the present day.

Notably, genealogy is not a search for “origins”, but rather it is a search for processes of descent and emergence (Foucault, 1984, p.80-86). This implies that it is not connected to the tracing of the present-day phenomenon to their origins. Actually, it concerns outlining the erratic and discontinuous process whereby the past becomes manifested in the present. In that regard, Dean (1994) explains that genealogy is like an “*effective history*” because it problematises the present by revealing the power relations upon which it depends and the possible process that has brought it into being. Hence, Foucault says,

*“The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously thought mobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself”* (Foucault, 1991, p.82).

In other words, the genealogical method unearths the minor practices involved in rendering behaviour, knowledge and social relations to thought, description and intervention (Anais, 2013). According to Foucault (1991, p.83),

*“Genealogy ...seeks to re-establish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning but the hazardous play of dominations.”*

In simpler terms, genealogy aims to trace the forces that gave birth to our present-day practices and identifies the historical conditions upon which they still depend.

Thus, it uses historical materials to rethink the present by tracing the struggles, displacements and repurposing processes through which contemporary practices emerged, thereby showing how present-day practices depend on historical conditions of existence. Roth (1981, p.43) emphasised,

*“writing a history of the present means writing history in the present; self-consciously writing in a field of power relations and political struggle”.*

Therefore, the genealogical method shows how complex power relations and struggles shape present-day phenomenon.

As a result, unlike traditional historical methods which uncover the logical and progressive histories of phenomena by exposing the ‘truth’ behind social arrangements to answer questions of “*who we really are*”, genealogy, on the other hand, tells us “*How we have come to conceive of ourselves as subjects.... [and]... how we... [make and remake] ... ourselves as... beings*” (Foucault, 1980).

The methodology allows me to understand how service workers come to know themselves in relation to their clients and how their identity is shaped and transformed within the beauty salons in Nigeria. As such, the relevance of studying the “history of the present” gives a precise understanding of the present as a site of temporal and historical processes through which individuals constitute themselves as subjects (Koopman, 2008). Further, studying “the present” in relation to how it is historically and temporally located amidst ongoing processes of change provides an account of the continually changing rather than a static state of social life (Foucault 2002, p.9).

Consequently, genealogy as an approach does not seek to impose coherence in structures. Rather, it highlights differences and ruptures the dominant structures thought unified (Foucault (1977, p.147). As such, it does not seek to answer the question of “why”, nor does it trace a practice from the beginning to the end.

Instead, it asks the question of “*how*” and “*through what relays of power?*” (Anais, 2013). The genealogist can start with asking the question of “*when*”, “*how*”, and through “*what*”, relays of power that a given practice, behaviour or phenomenon became problematic (ibid). Secondly, it problematizes a given practice by generating questions to explore a mundane or widely accepted institutional practice (ibid).

It involves enquiries into “*how dominant discourses within postcolonial Nigeria and cultural globalization shape the interactions within service encounter*”, “*how these interactions shape the experiences*”, “*the transformation of the service workers' consumption practices*”, and “*the identity construction of the service workers.*”

According to Rabinow and Rose (2003 pg. 9),

*“Diagnosis of the present does not proceed by attempting a comprehensive study of these practices as they exist today, rather it does that by seeking to understand the conditions that have made these practices possible.”*

In this way, genealogy promotes an analysis of local and micro-level practices and the outcomes related to the social-historical context that regulates these factors (Foucault, 1980). As such, adopting a genealogical approach for the study will allow me to:

- (1) trace and understand how the contemporary practices and experiences of service workers emerged out of specific social struggles, conflicts, and exercises of power in Nigeria (Garland, 2014), and:
- (2) ascertain that the interactions that unfold in Abuja's beauty stores are the outcomes of “historical constructs” (Saukko, 2011).

Therefore, the genealogical approach allows me to reflect on and reconstruct the socio-historical setting of this study and how it structures the class disparities

between the participants, thereby creating an opportunity to explore how the service workers' identity is negotiated and transformed through these asymmetrical power relationships.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

As experiences and identity are mediated and transformed within contextual factors inherent to socio-historical discourses, I adopted a social constructionist perspective that centres on social reality being contingent and socio-historically structured. This alongside are Foucault's theoretical perspectives of power, subjectivity and technologies of the self, and more recent models of acculturation (Ustunier & Holt's, 2007; Luedicke, 2011) and consumer resources (Holt, 1998; Coskuner-Bali & Thompson, 2012; Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Ustuner & Holt, 2010) which are clearly suited to this study as the theoretical framework.

Accordingly, in relation to this framework, individuals are subjected to complex and multiple shifting relationships of power within their social fields, implying that service workers' identities and experiences are formed within power struggles and negotiations with global cultural flows and socio-historic discourses inherent to this particular postcolonial context. This is a vital viewpoint for this study, enabling a critical examination of how the nature of interactions between the participants and the outcomes unfold in relation to this setting's socio-historical context. By extension, the positioning of this study led to the adoption of genealogy as the broad methodological approach for this research, which will allow me to construct a "*history of the present*" and provide answers to the research objectives. That is, what historical events have produced the marketplace context through which identities are mediated and formed through interactions between clients and service workers in Abuja's beauty salons.

In the following chapter, I will discuss how this study's social constructionist philosophical positioning influenced this study's data collection methods and process.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

### **Introduction**

Given that qualitative researchers view social phenomenon holistically (Cresswell, 2003), and genealogy requires a series of investigative interventions, a mixed-data approach was adopted for this study. Termed pluralism in qualitative research, this approach involves the mixing of methods and data to create holistic insight and rich accounts of social phenomena (Frost, 2013). According to Silverman & Patterson (2014), the selection of research methods is broadly determined by the research objectives and need to be selected in relation to the philosophical positioning of the study. Thus, the decisions concerning the methods used for data collection broadly flowed from the aim and positioning of this research, which is to produce a socio-historically grounded account of the ways in which marketplace interactions between class differentiated groups shape the experiences and identity outcomes of service workers in the capital city of Nigeria.

Broadly construed, the data collection method used for this study was a critical ethnographic approach, which involves describing and interpreting culture and social groups in their natural setting (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011), using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis. Hence, this approach was used to develop a contextualised understanding of the social reality produced in the research setting by focussing on the ordinary, everyday behaviour and interactions of the participants (ibid, 2011), in relation to the socio-historic background that is implicated in the production of the subject positions that manifest in this context. Therefore, this chapter details these methods and how they were employed in this particular project, beginning with an overview of participant observation.



## 5.1 Participant Observation

According to Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte (1999:91):

*“Participant observation is the starting point for ethnographic research as it helps the researcher to identify and guide the relationships with the informants... [ and] ... get the feel of how things are organised and prioritized...[as well as].. how people interrelate... [This]... enables the researcher to... [become]... familiar with the people... studied, thereby easing the facilitation process... And... [this]... provides the researcher with the source of questions to ask the participants to achieve the objectives of the study”.*

The main goal of using this method in this study was to achieve an in-depth understanding and familiarity of the interrelationships and behaviour of the informants as they unfolded in their natural settings by observing the common and uncommon everyday activities of participants (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Accordingly, by observing the social interactions between the customers and the service workers, this approach enabled me to explore how a range of cultural discourses structure interactions within the beauty stores and the meanings that the study participants give to their cultural environment (Holloway & Todres (2003). However, alongside providing rich data in and of itself, this intervention also provided me with numerous observational and interviewing opportunities to build a wealth of data that could be triangulated later in the study (Holloway et al., 2010). Additionally, it afforded a context for sampling informants for interviews, asking open-ended questions in situ, and identifying key issues and themes for constructing interview guides and questioning (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). It enabled me to familiarise myself with the participants and make it possible to refer to particular scenes and critical incidents that I could return to in interviews.

At the initial stage of data collection, I started by observing the social world of the participants before the systematic enquiry and examination of the setting

began (Wolcott, 2009). When I started the observations, I did not begin collecting field notes with a theory in mind but rather with curiosity about the study phenomenon. Doing the observations before the interviews gave me valuable insights into the formulations of the interview questions. This was quite relevant for this study as it allowed me to observe the service workers and elites during their interactions and was able to engage in informal interviews with the participants as the need arose. This was quite helpful as I asked informal questions for more clarifications on the phenomenon, which aligns with Dewalt & Dewalt (2011) recommendation that using these different methods -with their strengths and limitations- allows for cross-validation of the data for comparison.

## **5.2 Sampling process for the observations**

Sampling during participant observation is necessary because though a community may share the same perspectives and worldviews, individuals will have their own particular experiences and places in the social system. This is crucially important in this specific context where the life worlds of the customers and workers are fundamentally different. That is, the clients of the beauty stores of Abuja that I wanted to investigate are some of the wealthiest individuals in Nigerian society, while the workers sit amongst the lowest socio-economic strata of the country. Thus, there was a need to understand and account for the range of socio-cultural and economic variations in the whole sample based on these class differences, as well as the fact that in relation to these differences, their experiences and perspectives will vary to suit (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). Accordingly, Mead (1953) stresses:

*“Anthropological sampling is not a poor and adequate version of sociological or socio-psychological sampling... It is simply a different kind of sampling, in which the validity of the sample depends not so much on the number of cases as upon the proper specification of the informant so that he or she can be accurately placed, in terms of a very large number of variables- age, sex, order of birth,*

*family background, life experience, temperamental tendencies (such as optimism, habit of exaggeration, etc.), political and religious position, exact situational relationships to the investigator, configurational relationship to every other informant, and so forth. (654-55).*

Thus, the sampling of the settings for participant observation ensured access to the key individuals and groups that would help to address the research questions being asked (Honigmann, 1970) and the nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011).

On entering the field, I initially thought of conveniently sampling three beauty stores within the same area as the site for the observations. However, having lived in the city for a long time, I realised on reflection that the salons of Abuja target different customers and I particular wanted to investigate those that serve the higher echelons of Nigerian society. Therefore, I had to review and change my initial choice of beauty stores. In relation to this, I utilised a purposive sampling approach to identify and approach the stores situated in the Western part of the city that attracts families of very wealthy citizens. This includes families of top government officials, including Ministers, Senators, House of Representatives Members, and the Permanent Secretaries of Government parastatals and top politicians and contractors to the government. Equally, this part of the city attracts higher professional groups like senior bank and government officers, senior business executives and owners, and other senior figures in various fields.

This choice ensured the sample was developed explicitly around the wealthy of the capital and that these customers have the resources and need to visit the salons regularly. Similarly, while I realised that these stores might attract some middle-class citizens who live in other parts of the city, the prices for their services are usually too high for this stratum to visit on a frequent basis.

### **5.3 Entry into the Field**

My initial entry into the field was relatively easy as I had managed the first salon as the owner for some years, as explained in the introduction chapter of this study. However, it was not so easy to gain access to other beauty salons in the region. This was because I had not visited them before as a customer, and my past identity raised suspicions amongst the owners due to my professional background. In relation to this, I had to contact a worker who had previously worked in my store to help connect me with the second salon manager in the sample. In retrospect, this was the only way I could get access to this particular store as the managers and owner of the store were initially profoundly suspicious of my activities and intentions. As such, I had to explain my intentions to the managers, and that I meant no harm, that my reasons were purely for research purposes and that they may in turn benefit from the study's findings. The third salon also presented difficulties in terms of access. With this, again, I relied on my social network and had to speak to a friend who knew the owner of the salon. She gave me his contact details and I had to visit the salon to explain the purpose of the research study.

Clearly, it was not an easy process for me as I have owned a salon before, and I am well-known by some of the customers of these stores. Therefore, I had to convince the owners and managers of the salons that my investigation was being conducted ethically in strict accordance with the University's research protocols and that my research would have no adverse effects on the stores. Equally, I would cease observations and leave a store if any customers I knew were booked in for an appointment or entered for a 'walk-in' service or purchasing products. I also assured the owners that their stores would be strictly anonymised in reporting data and writing up the thesis and any subsequent related works.

After obtaining initial consent to carry out the fieldwork in the salons, the first thing that I had to consider was my involvement as an observer in the salons. Would I be a participant or non-participant observer and investigate overtly or

covertly? This was fundamental for this study because, according to Gold (1958), the degree to which the researcher involves herself in the culture and community being studied during the observations makes a significant difference in the quality of the produced data. In this respect, Gold provides four theoretical and practical stances for researchers conducting field observations. First is complete participant involvement, whereby the researcher becomes a group member and conceals their identity to avoid disrupting normal activities. The second stance involves the researcher similarly engaging and participating as a group member who makes their role as a researcher known to the participants. Unlike the first approach, this may lead to community members adopting behaviours that are not consistent with those under normal circumstances when they are not aware of being observed. The third is the observer, who is mainly detached but becomes involved in group activities and processes that may interest the study. In this respect, the primary role of the researcher in this stance is to collect data, and the community under investigation is fully aware of the researcher role and activities. Finally, it is an approach whereby the researcher is completely hidden from view while observing or is in plain sight in a public setting yet not engaging in community activity but as a covert non-participant. While this may have clear advantages, in the sense that it allows the researcher to freely observe and record observations anonymously without disrupting the natural flow of community activities and behaviour, this, along with the first approach, is now broadly considered ethically dubious, especially in relation to Sheffield Hallam Universities Ethical framework that clearly states that all observational studies should be guided by disclosure. Although some researchers, such as Lugosi (2006), argue that covert observational research is a reasonable stance for investigators to adopt in a programme of study, others disagree. For instance, Dewalt & Dewalt (2011) maintain that participant observation raises the highest number of ethical questions concerning informed consent and the right of participants to decide whether to participate in a study or not. According to them,

the researcher must make every effort to make themselves known to participants before observations take place and that ideally, they should be aware of the aim and objectives of the research and how it is intended to be used.

Hence, before commencing fieldwork, I made my intentions and objectives known to the participants and explained the relevance of the observations in the stores. I acquired signed informed consent from the managers of the stores, who then informed the workers about my research. After that, I explained and sought consent from any worker or customer with whom I came into contact during fieldwork throughout the investigation.

Following these various approaches to observation in relation to my research aims and ethical stance, I decided to adopt the third position as an observer and occasional participant during the observations. This enabled me to benefit from being close to the participants to observe their daily interactions and engage in dialogue with them. It afforded me a degree of detachment to reflect on key episodes of behaviour as they unfolded in situ in the stores.

In relation to this particular approach, I used a combination of descriptive, focussed, and selective observations (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987; Angrosino & dePerez, 2000), which allowed me to generate a range of data. With descriptive observation, the aim was to observe anything and familiarise myself with the context and identify key behaviour patterns. In relation to this, I was picking up on the nature of interpersonal relationships, body language, subtleties in speech and language, emotions, role performances, as well as codes and styles of dress, and other relevant behaviour and practices. I returned to the site following interviews with focused observation to concentrate on behaviours identified in testimonies in situ. As such, with this technique, the insights generated from interviews guide what to observe. Finally, selective observation was used to help delineate the differences and nuances in different types of activities and

behaviours, which affords a more penetrating and rigorous analysis (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987; Angrosino & dePerez, 2000).

#### **5.4 Establishing Rapport with the Participants**

Initially, when I started the observations, it was clear that some of the service workers were very cautious and guarded with their behaviours. However, after a few days, as they became more familiar with my presence, they relaxed and became willing to divulge more information about their activities and interactions with their clients. Simultaneously, the clients seemed unperturbed by the presence and activities in the store as they seemed to be carrying on with their behaviour and conversations as normal. As I reflected, I concluded that this was probably because the customers are familiar with higher education and the centrality of research in universities, as most of them were well-educated individuals.

This being the case, establishing rapport between the researcher and participants is a fundamental factor in the successful outcome of participant observation and a research study of this type. As Villa Rojas (1979) explained in relation to his field research in the Mayan region of Mexico, it is *“our close contact with the local people... [that]... has always led to excellent rapport... [which is] ... the only basis on which reliable information is obtained”*. In relation to this, Jorgenson (1989) suggests that the degree to which trust and cooperation are established in observational studies influences to a large extent the degree to which the information gathered is accurate and dependable. Therefore, I developed a range of strategies to build rapport and trust with the service worker informants in my particular context, including speaking the local English referred to as ‘Pidgin English’ with them. Pidgin English is a mixed dialect of the English language and some languages local to the country and is the most widely used means of communication in Nigeria, especially amongst people from lower socio-economic classes. Communicating in this way enabled me to get closer to the

service workers and gain sensitive information, which would have been difficult to achieve if I had spoken to them in English.

On the other hand, when talking to the clients of the stores, I mainly used English as most of them are highly educated people and professionals in various fields. Hence, talking to this class of participants in the local Pidgin English would have been inappropriate.

### **5.5 Familiarising through Participation in Daily Activities in the Stores**

During the fieldwork, I alternated between stores on different days to observe and familiarise myself with the whole context. At the initial start of the observations, I visited the stores on different days and interacted with the service workers as much as possible. During this process, I did not take notes or ask directed questions even when I thought that I should. I was particularly interested in the core aspects of the participants' culture (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002) and mainly was attuned to this in my observations. Hence, I observed the daily activities and interactions in the stores to become familiar with the workers. Also, during this stage, I wanted to understand the daily pattern of activities in the different stores concerning, amongst other things, the similarities and differences, the nature of the interactions between staff and customers, and the relationships developed and formed between the workers and their elite clients. This also helped me to understand the language used by the workers, including colloquial and non-verbal cues (Gary & Holmes, 2020) and how they addressed their clients and each other.

In order to mitigate the power differences between myself and the workers, I decided to get involved in the stores' main activities by helping them while they were attending to their customers. This also helped me to become acquainted with some of the elite customers as well. For instance, when the workers were very busy, I helped out in “giving pieces of hair extensions” to the braiders” while braiding the customers’ hair. I soon learned that giving hair extensions is a very



simple activity that involves taking out small pieces of hair from the bunch to give to the workers who attach it to the customer's hair. This process made it easier for the braider and helped them achieve well-made, beautiful hairstyles in much quicker timescales.

Whilst I helped out, I chatted with both the workers and customers at the same time. Sometimes the conversation would be on fashion or general news and events happening within the country, while on other occasions, it could be about family and lifestyle etc. These close interactions with the workers and customers helped me develop a friendly relationship with them (especially in relation to salons in the other parts of the city that I was not as familiar with). As a result, I began to understand the interrelationships and dependencies between the elite customers and workers. These initial interactions also facilitated my deeper immersion into the daily cultural activities of the salons.

As time passed, I began to achieve and record much more authentic 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) of service worker behaviour, the lifestyles and dispositions of the elites, and some contextual factors inherent within the context of this study. Apparently, my positionality as an insider at this field stage helped significantly increase the depth and richness of the data collected for this research. According to Savin-Baden & Major (2013, p.71), the positionality of the researcher "*reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a research study*", as it influences how the research is conducted, its outcomes and results (Rowe, 2014).

However, I had to be mindful of my insider position during the fieldwork to reduce biases because of my familiarity with the salons and the Nigerian culture. Also, I recognised that some participants might be less willing to reveal sensitive information than they would want to with an outsider they will have no contact

with in the future (Gary & Holmes, 2020). This being the case, I tried to build a trusting relationship with the service workers across the sample to feel more secure in sharing information with me about their experiences with their clients.

In reflection, my experience in the field, especially in the first three months, made me realise that my daily participation while helping out and interacting with the participants helped me gain openness and trust, especially the workers. This resulted in the richness of the data collected during the informal conversations and interviews throughout my fieldwork. As explained above, this is clearly relevant because the information gathered should be dependable and trustworthy (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). For instance, during the initial period of observation, the service workers were not always open and forthcoming to my questions. Such as,

*“The way you dress to work every day, could you tell me more about the clothes and brands you wear?”*

During these initial casual conversations, they were not always willing to reveal why they engage in such consumption practices. Still, after a while, some of them began to respond and explain their reasons. This was clearly important as their responses often led to more focused observations.

During the informal conversations with the participants, I followed their lead but asked occasional questions to focus on the topic or clarify some issues discussed. Additionally, I remained conscious of maintaining mental notes of key issues to record later in the day. In relation to this, Bernard (1995, p.209) explains that informal interviews should have

*“a total lack of structure or control. The researcher just tries to remember conversations heard during the course of a day “in the field”. This requires*

*constant jotting and daily sessions in which you sit at a typewriter, unburden your memory and develop your field notes.”*

At the end of each day, I tried to reconstruct my observations and the conversations in the salons and record them in field notes. According to Dewalt & Dewalt (2011), writing field notes is the primary method of capturing data from participants during observations and informal interviewing. While researchers can audio or videotape more formal interviews, the writing of field notes is the primary way to record the observations of daily events and behaviour, overheard conversations and informal interviews (ibid). Thus, I started taking field notes sometimes in the stores and most times after leaving for the day. During the fieldwork, the bulk of notes I made were often at the end of the day when I returned to my house and Sundays when they were closed for the weekend.

As I made those notes, I reflected on the daily activities and observations in the stores, the participants' verbal interactions, and the informal conversations I had with them. In relation to this, I also reflected on my review of literature on acculturation, cultural globalization, elite consumption practices of luxury brands, practices of conspicuous consumption and emulation, service encounters in salons and identity construction, especially on lower-class consumers such as the service workers. Also, I prepared guides on my activities for the following day. For instance, I may revisit a particular store for more observations or clarifications or visit a different store with the same objectives to confirm similar occurrences. Sometimes, if there were differences, I tried to pry more into these and then later reflect on them while writing my notes concerning my understanding and reflections on such phenomena observed in the stores.

This is in line with Dewalt & Dewalt's (2011) suggestion that during observation, the researcher has to sort out regular from irregular activities and look for variation to view events in their entirety from various viewpoints. This includes

identifying negative cases or exceptions. Moreover, when behaviours exemplify the theoretical purposes of the study, the researcher should seek similar opportunities to more systematically observe those events and behaviours in more detail. In addition to this, Wolcott (2001) suggests that the fieldworker should also ask themselves if they are making good use of the opportunity to learn what they want, and from what they are observing, and if what they want to learn makes the best use of the opportunity presented. For instance, I observed or heard about scenes of tension and conflict, which were indicators of the power relationships and asymmetries manifesting in this context. Consider the following episode I observed early on in the fieldwork:

*“Why are you treating me like this? I am also important in this town...why are you insulting me? Are you the one feeding me... are you paying my bills? You cannot treat me like I am also important in this town.”*

Additionally, given that there were lots of unexpected responses and surprises from participants from these informal interactions, they were often crucial to shaping the protocol and questions for the more formal interviews later in the study.

This is from an informal conversation with a worker following a similar event:

*“That is how they talk to us when they come here, for they think that nothing good will ever come out from us because of who we are and where we come from.”*

*“What do these mean? Are the workers disrespectful because they feel empowered by their skills as a form of cultural capital?”*,

*“Are they resisting being looked down on because they have achieved a new form of identity as they interact with the elite customers?”*,

*“Are they resisting stigmatization on their identities?”, “what are the power structures shaping all of these interactions?”*

*“Why do clients wear costly clothes when going to the salon?” “Was it to show a distinction between them and the service workers?”*

*Or was it to earn more respect from other customers while they were being attended to?”*

In relation to this, I began to ponder why such outbursts occurred and made field notes of my reflections to guide my interpretation and data. Also, the observations during the fieldwork helped enhance the validity of the data collected through formal interviews. I was able to double-check some of the information from the interviews against the notes collected during observations. As such, I checked

*“descriptions against fact and, noting discrepancies, [and became] ... aware of systematic distortions made by the person under study” (Becker & Geer, 1957, p.31).*

At the end of the fourth month, during the fieldwork, I started collecting formal interviews. By the end of the sixth month of my fieldwork, I had to return to the UK to begin transcribing the interviews and data analysis. However, while transcribing the interviews, I still had to contact some of the participants (mainly the workers) to clarify some information in the data. Also, while I was transcribing and familiarizing myself with the data, I had the opportunity of travelling back to my country, Nigeria. With emerging findings of the data in my mind, I revisited all three stores. I had some more informal conversations with some of the workers concerning my data, which helped me confirm the findings of this study.

## **5.6 The formal Interviews**

With the formal interviews, I had to consider the design process, the sample of participants to interview, the number of interviews required, and how to analyse the data collected (Doyle 2004). In addition to this, I had to decide on the type of interview to conduct to achieve my research aim. As for Rubin & Rubin (1995, p.17), the interview process requires

*“respect for and curiosity about what people say and a systematic effort to hear and understand what people tell you in a relevant way”.*

Therefore, after some consideration, I opted to undertake interviews attuned to social constructionist research aims and genealogy.

## **5.7 The Social Constructionist Interview Approach**

Previous prominent studies within consumer research contribute to practical and theoretical insights on different consumption experiences by adopting the phenomenological interview (Thompson, Locander & Polio, 1990; Arnould & Price, 1993; Belk, Ger & Askegaard, 2003; Russel & Levi, 2012). However, the social constructionist interview approach was used for this study because it is consistent with the philosophical positioning of this research. While I acknowledge that some may argue that the distinction between phenomenological and post-structuralist approaches to interviews is arbitrary (Fischer et al., 2014), critiques of the phenomenological interview maintain that they fail to fully appreciate the

*“underlying ideological and mythological forces which produce consumer subjectivities as well as the “forms of power” circumscribing consumer agency”* (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011, p.387).

In addition, Moisander et al. (2009) argue that the phenomenological interview is inadequate for gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural contingency and

socio-political complexities of the marketplace phenomenon. This is because its primary purpose is to describe the human experience as it is lived” (Thompson et al., p.136, 1989) rather than separating and identifying aspects of the lifeworld that are contingent on experiences and subject positions.

Further, Moisander et al. (p. 2009) question the belief of an “essential human nature”, which is reflected in the existential-phenomenological tradition, which they argue conceptualizes human beings as “*fairly autonomous agents.*” Similarly, they doubt that consumers as subjects are independent containers of knowledge that can be grasped through narratives of their experience, by a “*neutral*” and detached researcher, in the way that phenomenologists do. Hence, they claim that such an approach hides the interests and power relations that continuously construct consumer subjectivities. Given the clear similarity between these philosophical arguments and those discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Foucault’s power relations, subjectivity and genealogy, my decision to adopt a social constructionist approach for the interviews is clearly grounded. This is because the interview approach will help reveal the power relations that structure and shape the worker's identity and subject positions as they interact with their elite clients in the salons. It is also consistent with Foucault’s (1995, p.31) notion that genealogy is the “*history of the present*” and begins with analysing the contemporary state as an intervention. Alternatively, as Dreyfus and Rainbow (1982, p.118) explain, it is an approach which “*explicitly and self-consciously begins with a diagnosis of the current situation... [ as such, it has] an unequivocal and unabashed contemporary orientation.*”

## **5.8 The Social Constructionist Interview and Data Analysis**

As earlier explained in the preceding chapter of this thesis, this study is “socially embedded” in the respect that it is grounded within the social constructionist thought that recognises the historical, sociological, ideological and institutional shaping of consumption and marketplace phenomenon (Thompson, Arnould &

Giesler, 2013). That is, rather than focusing on lived experiences, the analysis shifts to an effort to reveal the “*complex intertwining of the individual and the social in consumption contexts... [that manifest] ... in consumer lives and living conditions*” (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011, p. 397). As such, in relation to this, the qualitative interview and the analysis that follows are reconceptualised as tools and techniques for grasping the social construction of reality by individuals across a range of socio-historic and cultural settings (Moisander et al., 2009). Therefore, the focus of the interview and analysis changes from the collection of and interpretation of information through people’s narratives about their views and experiences of consumption “to the socially instituted discursive practices or cultural practices through which people produce meaning, make sense of their everyday life and achieve social order, as well as to the cultural discourses or systems of representation that people draw from in doing so” (Moisander et al., p. 337, 2009). It requires exploring texts, language and meanings as they function within the socio-historical context of the study (Gergen, 1994). It means that meaning is derived from its relationship with socio-historically determined referents. Hence, during the interview process, I had to examine the language used with these cultural perspectives. Drawing inspiration from these, I adopted the social constructionist interview and analytical procedure to understand how dominant power structures and meanings related to class and global consumer culture shape the service workers subjectivities through interactions with their elite class customers.

## **5.9 Sampling Method for the Interviews**

Purposive sampling was adopted for the formal interviews in this study. This technique is widely used in qualitative research to identify and select cases to effectively use limited resources (Patton, 2002) to develop theories and concepts relevant to a particular context (Devers & Frankel, 2000). According to Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011), the purposive sampling method involves identifying and



selecting interviewees that have clear experiences about the phenomenon of interest in the study and who must be readily available and willing to participate in communicating their opinions in an articulate, expressive and reflective manner (ibid).

According to Palinkas & Horwitz (2015), there are two purposive sampling designs: selecting homogeneous cases and extreme or divergent ones to examine and understand a phenomenon under study. This allows for the identification of both common patterns, traits and themes, and diversity and differentiation in the sample. However, based on the phenomena under study, I undertook homogenous purposive sampling within a heterogenous context to ensure that I could interview a cross-section of workers, clients, and managers and account for the range of behaviours and interactions I had witnessed in the observational phase of the study.

As a multi-actor study, there was a need to interview all interlocutors of the beauty stores (Dion & Boraz, 2017). However, prior to undertaking participant observation, I had also considered interviewing the owners of the beauty stores. However, this was changed because I soon learned that the owners were not always present to manage daily activities in the stores. Hence, I focused on the managers as they had more experience in the day-to-day operations and interactions in the stores. I realised that the store managers could offer much more information about the service workers' everyday behaviour and consumption practices and how they attend to their clients. I could also inquire if they had noticed any changes in behaviour or self-presentation of the workers over the time they were involved in managing them.

Though it is generally safe to assume that the number of interviewees required in a qualitative ethnographic study is small (McCracken, 1988), it is wise to avoid making assumptions on how large the sample should be before fieldwork begins. Therefore, in this study, the principle of “theoretical saturation” (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967) was used to determine the resulting sample size (Yin, 2003). As such, I continued interviewing until I was satisfied that all concepts regarding the study were well developed and that no new theoretical insight about the relationships between them were being obtained (Fischer, Castilhos & Fonseca, 2014). However, in relation to the specific aim of the study, I made the informed decision to interview more service workers than other actors, as they are the specific focus of this investigation. This decision was based on the idea that in qualitative research, the question and theory informing the study should influence the kinds of places, events, and people included in the sample (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2012). Therefore, in relation to this logic and following saturation, a total of sixteen service workers, seven customers and three store managers were interviewed, using a detailed but flexible interview guide. This is strongly advised for poststructuralist interviewing (Fischer, Castilhos & Fonseca, 2014), whereby questions should be guided by identified themes to elicit detailed responses (Sandy & John, 2011) consistently and systematically but allow for unanticipated or unexpected issues to emerge (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). It depends on the skilful interviewer to modify their style, pace and order of questioning to evoke the entire responses from the interviewees, which is what I tried to achieve during this phase of the study.

### **5.10 Interviewing the Service Workers**

Interviewing the service workers was a bit challenging for me because, during the process, I had to keep repeating the questions and breaking my language into the simplest of forms so that they could understand me. On some occasions, I also had to reassure them that the information they supplied would be safe with me and that their identities would be protected. After allowing them time to develop their confidence and speak up, some informants revealed unexpected responses to why they consume the way they do, their relationships with their clients in the store, and how they feel about themselves. These responses were often quite

surprising to me, and they led to further reading and consultation of the literature to understand and explain their social worlds and testimonies. Indeed, this drove me to learn more about the socio-historical development of the Nigerian state and its class system, which led to the document analysis reported in chapter six.

In relation to the ethnographic interview process, McCracken (1988) suggests that the interview guide should be developed as a series of “grand tour” questions that lead to follow-up questions which will prompt and encourage specific answers from the interviewees who do not initially respond extensively or develop their response in the discussions. This enabled me to ask probing questions to elicit greater richness and understanding of the phenomenon when informants were not very forthcoming (Arsel, 2017).

Unlike the phenomenological interview, which recommends avoiding the “why” question because it “can be perceived as... [a]... request... for rationalizations and can engender feelings of prejudgment and defensive responses (Fischer, Castilhos & Fonseca, 2014), it is well within the realm of possibility for the social constructionist interview. As Moisander et al. (p. 75, 2009) explain:

*“While... existential phenomenology tends to emphasize the need to minimize interviewer intrusion, post-structuralism directs its efforts by identifying the frames and discourses that are at work in the interview encounter, so as to elaborate on, be sensitive to and even make use of the effects that these frames may have...interaction and dialogue with participants can be a powerful creative force or engine for stimulating thought, and for producing cultural talk.”*

So, I asked the ‘why’ questions because they provide an understanding of participants narratives as indicators of cultural discourses, myths or logics relevant to the theory being developed (ibid).

For instance, at the start of the interviews, during grand tour questions related to the informant’s reasons for seeking work in Abuja, the responses from service

workers were not always forthcoming, and this, amongst other places in the interviews, is an example of where I used ‘why’ questions.

*Interviewer: why did you leave your state capital for Abuja?*

*Sarah: I learnt this handwork in my village and then moved to my state capital, Lokoja. Though it was a big store the owner used to pay us irregularly and my salary were not much. I could not do anything meaningful with my salary, for it could not take care of my needs. So, I complained to my elder sister, who advised me to come to Abuja to look for a better job. That was why I left my village and state capital city to start living here in Abuja. I came to Abuja to and start a new life. Yes, to start a new life. That was why I came to this Abuja.*

Also, during the interviews, the planned order of questions could not always be followed as initially designed; in many respects, the conversation took on a life of its own (Arsel, 2017). For instance, the wordings and sequence of the questions were changed and tailored to each participant and the flow of the interview. Moreover, in some cases, new probes were added to help develop a more profound understanding of the phenomenon in relation to specific informant’s lifeworlds in the sample (Berg & Lune, 2012). What is more, as the workers began to speak more freely about their experiences and interactions with their customers, new issues emerged, which made me rethink my prior assumptions before this stage of data collection commenced.

As such, I began to add new questions relevant to this emerging insight and ask more detailed questions about these particular issues that were clearly relevant to the topic at hand.

### **5.11 Interviewing the Store Managers**

Interviewing the store managers was not so much of a challenge as the service workers. This is because they were quite willing to engage me in conversation. However, as very busy individuals, I could not find time to speak to them during their working hours. This meant that I had to arrange appointments with them

before or after work. In the end, I conducted two interviews in the morning and one in the evening after the store had closed for the day. The three managers I sampled were not reticent in speaking to me, and I quickly developed a good rapport in the interviews leading to a willingness to provide valuable and detailed information about their observations and experiences in the salons with the workers and their clients.

### **5.12 Interviewing the Elite Clients**

Although I clearly explained the purpose of the study to the clients during my observations of the stores, I still had some difficulties getting them to agree to an interview. According to McDowell (1998) and Sayer (1989), this is a familiar problem involved in elite interviewing, whereby it depends on the researcher's manner and skill and the research topic in gaining commitment and trust.

Some of the clients I approached claimed to have busy lives and no time to sit for an interview, while others showed no willingness at all. However, with some persistence, I managed to recruit sufficient numbers for the sample, understand their perspective of the salon and their relationships with the service workers. Nonetheless, during the interviews, it became apparent that a few were still uncomfortable responding to some of the questions. Although I tried convincing them about the safety of their responses and that their involvement would be anonymized, some still wanted to know the content of the interview and what I would be specifically asking, even before the interviews commenced. Also, during the interviews, I realized that some remained fairly reticent to talk about their lifestyles and consumption practices. I, therefore, had to find ways of tackling these issues by ensuring that I developed the trust of these informants about the safety of their information. As Sayer (1989) advises, this was essential because researchers should be as open as possible with their research goals and intentions when interviewing elite participants. This will help instil trust and common understanding. Therefore, before each interview began, I clearly

explained: (1) the nature and purpose of the study; (2) the name of the university sponsoring the study; (3) approximately how long the interview would take; (4) how the data would be used; (5) how the results would be disseminated, and (5) the ways in which I would ensure that their information and identity would be protected. Similarly, these participants were duly informed about the use of a recorder during the interview process to avoid any form of suspicion in relation to this.

As a further measure to ensure discretion and learn more about their lifestyles, the interviews with the clients of the stores were held either at their offices or in their homes. Ideally, I would have liked to interview all in their home, in accordance with other CCT studies of this type (e.g., Holt, 1998), but the participants who asked me to interview them in their offices claimed to be busy individuals and that this was their preferred choice. Interestingly, the interviews undertaken in the participants' offices did not last more than forty-five minutes to an hour. They were keen to stress their busyness and did not want to spend too much time elaborating on some questions. This highlights that elite members often try to dictate the interview conditions (Harvey, 2010). However, on analysing these interviews, I found that though those particular interviews did not take as much time as others, there was still lots of valuable information generated from them.

On the other hand, the participants that were interviewed in their homes gave more extensive insights into their family background and social status as they answered most of the questions with a high degree of elaboration (Elwood & Martin, p. 655, 200). Maybe the comfort of their homes made them more comfortable responding to my inquiry. As such, this allowed much more flexibility in the interview, providing the opportunity to ask more detailed questions and seek greater elaboration (Peabody et al., 1990). In trying to build and maintain rapport with these participants, I attempted to make the interviews

more of a friendly conversation to encourage disclosure and for them to share a lot about themselves. The home context was a facilitator of this whereby we could discuss décor and style and valued objects. In all, I found this approach worked well as they were happy to talk about their families and social class backgrounds in relation to this. Also, they spoke freely about their perception of global brands and engagement with luxury, their preferences and choices, their lifestyles and relationships with the salons' service workers more broadly.

### **5.13 Power Relations between the Researcher and Interviewees**

It is argued that during the interview process, power lies with the researcher. This is because they initiate the interview, determine the questions asked, control the interview guide and decide when to end the conversation (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005). In addition to this, the perceived differentials in power can also accentuate the participants' vulnerability or distress, particularly among vulnerable constituencies (Kramer, 2003). However, others argue that the quality and quantity of the data shared during the interview process is determined by a range of power relationships that exist between the researcher and participants. This is claimed because the power structures between the interviewer and the interviewee are complex and unstable (Pile, 1991). Hence, qualitative researchers must create an egalitarian framework between themselves and their participants by ensuring that power relations are considered and confronted in their research practices and strategies. Many qualitative researchers emphasize the importance of being sensitive and flexible to how participants may be influenced and respond to the interview situation (Sandelowski, 1991). Thus, the tactics of the researcher and the sensitivity to the role of power relationships help the interview process by increasing the probability that the participants will respond favourably and thereby facilitate the collection of rich and relevant data.

Having this in mind, I had to make the service workers more comfortable so they could disclose as much as possible. Thus, as I said before, I used a different

language (Pidgin English) to talk to them to understand the questions and facilitate a nice flow in the conversation between us. Nonetheless, my status as a researcher was sometimes a notable impediment during these interviews. I had to ensure that I listened attentively and did not appear too distant from their lives and experiences. For instance, the service workers were encouraged to speak when they were reluctant or too emotional to talk about their experiences. This was achieved by being sympathetic to their plight and reassuring them that the data was safe with me.

On the flip side, there are also complexities involved in interviewing participants with an authoritative position, such as the elites of this study. During the interview process, I quickly realized that interviewing these individuals was a significantly different experience than with the workers. In relation to this, with elite interviews, Smith (2006) presumes that the power the researcher perceives from the interviewee is transferred in some way into the interview space. Furthermore, according to Desmond (2004, p.265), *“the relationship is inevitably asymmetrical regardless of the researcher strategies involved.”* Hence during these particular interviews, I understood the need to be more reflexive about the research process and attentive to the shifting dynamics of positionality and power.

From a social constructionist perspective then, McDowell (1998) argues that during the interview process with informants of different socio-cultural backgrounds, it is inevitable that both the researcher and interviewee are multiple positioned as they do not occupy single identities in each situation. Alternatively,

*“In other words, as interviews develop, we are constantly (re)producing ‘ourselves’ so that both researcher and interviewee may be multiply positioned during an interview.”* (Valentine, p.121, 2002).

As such, it seems understandable that the power dynamics are liable to shift during the interview process, and this was certainly the case in this study as I



moved between participants. In multi-informant studies that cut across cultural categories and personalities like this one, an interviewer's positionality is best described as a slippery process rather than a fixed standpoint (Smith, 2006). Therefore, the relationship that developed between the interviewees and me during this process moved across a 'sliding scale of intimacy' and disclosure (Valentine, p.121, 2002).

#### **5.14 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues were identified and considered throughout the process of this research study, as described in detail previously in this chapter. In relation to their importance, however, utmost priority was given to the way in which I approached the primary research and the storage and reporting of data gathered during the investigation. This is because human participants were involved. As such, I logged my research proposal with Sheffield Hallam University's Research Ethics Committee for approval (see appendix i), which was subsequently granted. According to Diener & Crandall (1978), it is the standard requirement for researchers, especially when human beings are involved, to ensure that any element of a study will not harm the participants. Therefore, before data collection began, I sent a participant information sheet to the potential informants (see appendix ii), which explained the purpose and background of the study. However, while this was documented, in some instances, I had to explain this verbally to the service workers because some of them either did not know how to read or had trouble understanding the meanings of the language used in this document. Thus, all the participants were made fully aware that the research was being conducted primarily for academic purposes and that it was required for my doctoral award.

Further, I informed the participants about their rights to confidentiality and anonymity and that their identities would be protected in reporting the research. This is consistent with Bryman & Bell's (2011) recommendations that the

confidentiality and anonymity arrangements should be agreed upon with the research participants before the commencement of the interviews and data collection. All informants included in the interview sample or observed in the study, were made fully aware of the ethical procedures before fieldwork started. This is consistent with the Academy of Management's Code of Ethical Conduct. Besides that, ethical issues must be considered when the findings of the research are published to ensure the individuals and organisations used are not identifiable (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Also, I made it clear to all participants that they were free to withdraw from continuing in the study if they wished. After they gave their consent, I informed them that the interviews would be recorded to capture the narratives, and that these would be transcribed following the interviews for analysis. I also explained to informants that I would be creating field notes of my observations during this phase of the study. Thereafter, they gave their consent to be interviewed or observed. As mentioned earlier, the elite participants chose the venues and time for the interviews, which were either in their homes or offices. Most of the service workers and store managers wanted their interviews to be conducted before or after work hours. Therefore, I met with them at the venues they chose. All the interviews were conducted face to face.

### **5.15 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined and discussed the data collection methods and research process undertaken in this study. To critically examine how dominant structures and power relationships shape service encounters and the subject positions of service workers through their interactions with elite customers, there was a need to focus on the naturalistic setting in which this unfolds. Observing the participants' daily activities within the beauty salons in Nigeria, where they work through “deep hanging out” (Salvador, Bell & Anderson, 1999), enabled a deep familiarisation with this context and an ability to record everyday interactions.

Along with my review of relevant literature, which produced the theoretical framework that guided the development of the research design, this period of observation also assisted in the formulation of the protocol and questions that would be used later in the study during the interview stage. The observations also provided me with the context for sampling, informal and open-ended conversations, and periodic questionings (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

In relation to my observations, I chose an overt entry strategy because it is considered more ethical than alternatives (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). I wanted the participants to be aware of my research activities in the stores. This also established rapport with the informants before I commenced the qualitative post-structuralist interviews. As I explained in this chapter, the quality of the data captured during interviews is broadly dependent on the trust and cooperation developed with the participants. During this phase of the research, I deployed a combination of descriptive, focussed and selective observations (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987; Angrosino & dePerez, 2000). Again, my awareness of the short period within which I had to carry out the observations and interviews made me concentrate more intensely on the daily interactions between the participants of the study. Further, with the observations guiding the interview guide, I considered and elected to undertake social constructionist interviews as they help to reveal the power dynamics and cultural discourses which shape marketplace interactions and subjectivities.

With this in mind, I interviewed the participants using semi-structured qualitative interviews, which allowed me to modify the style of questions, pace and order of questioning dependent upon the nature of the informant and their willingness to co-operate in this process. This was fundamental, as it helped elicit more detailed responses and vary my style in relation to the interview dynamics. Due to the individual characteristics of the range of informants in my sample, through my reading and experiences, I was aware of the complexities brought into being by

the power relations that may manifest between myself and the interviewees, which may affect their responses and behaviour. This was specifically the case with the elite customers and service workers I sampled, who varied in their relative power, influence and trust in the process. Therefore, I was reflexive to my role as an interviewer in respect to these different groups and how they were responding to my questions. Simultaneously, I was attentive to the shifting dynamics of positionality and power and adjusted my approach to suit.

Adopting a social constructionist philosophical positioning informed by a Foucauldian perspective of power and subjectivity (Foucault, 1980;1982) in this study is not without shortcomings. Nonetheless, it was adopted because it is attuned to examining how cultural discourses and power relations shape interactions and the subject positions of service workers within this context. As such, the methodological choices made here provided an opportunity to develop socio-cultural insight into how the service worker's identity is brought into being and negotiated within the beauty salons of Abuja.

Overall, this chapter's discussion offers a detailed overview and justification for the different data collection methods used in this study and how the research design was implemented. In relation to this, the following chapter will outline the process used to analyse and transform the data to derive the key themes identified in this research and offer biographic detail of the informants sampled in this study.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS AND THEMES**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the way in which the data was transformed and interpreted during the analysis stage of the research. It describes the process of data transcription and how some of the interviews were translated from the local Pidgin English spoken by the service workers to the English Language. It also details the analytic process to show how the four key themes developed from the analysis were derived. First, however, the chapter starts by providing details of the informants sampled for the interview in this study.

### **6.1 Description of the Participants**

The primary research conducted for this thesis both included an observational phase and a series of qualitative interviews. In relation to this latter phase, I conducted 16 interviews with service workers, 7 with the elite customers and 3 with the managers of the salons. In order to demonstrate how this sample corresponds with the aim of this research, the characteristics of each of the informants sampled in these groups are discussed below.

As for the service workers, I detail their backgrounds, social status, the number of years they have lived in Abuja, and where they learned the hairdressing trade. The other biographical information provided here relates to their motives for moving to Abuja from different parts of the country and why they chose to work in the city rather than the suburbs where they reside.

Secondly, the elite participants sampled in this research are profiled in relation to key characteristics associated with their backgrounds and status and their degree of cosmopolitanism in terms of how widely travelled and exposed to the western world they are. Besides this, I provide details of their educational attainment and where they studied. Where possible, the number of years they have been a

customer of a particular beauty salon is listed as well as the period they have known the service workers.

Finally, in terms of the store managers sampled, their educational background and the number of years they have worked in their managerial roles is offered. In total, this section describes the characteristics of seven of the service workers, five elite customers of the store, and three managers. In line with the ethical considerations and processes adopted by this study, the names of the participants have been changed for the purpose of anonymity and to protect their identities.

## **6.2 Description of the Service Workers**

**Gabriel** is a male stylist who is 28 years old. He is from a minority tribe that are traditionally located in the Middle-belt of Nigeria. He was born in Lagos and moved to Abuja when he was eight years old. In respect of this, this informant practically grew up in Bwari, which is one of the economically disadvantaged suburbs on the outskirts of the capital city. He completed secondary school and learned the trade of a stylist. He has worked in one of the salon's sampled in this study for over 10yrs. He has risen to the position of a supervisor in the stylist section of his store. He has a broad customer base with many repeat clients.

**Pye** is a female braider and is 33 years old. Being from a minority tribe in the South-south part of the country, she grew up in Benin and had her primary school education. When her Aunty, who lives in the capital, invited her over for a holiday, she found that she liked city life in Abuja. Hence, she stayed and secured a job in one of the beauty salons. She later moved into one of the suburbs and has been working in the salon for about 12yrs.

**Ruth** is a female stylist. She is 34 years old and grew up in Lagos, the former capital city of Nigeria, before Abuja took on this title. From a minority tribe in the South-south part of Nigeria, Ruth has a secondary education and achieved a diploma from a polytechnic in Lagos, where her family still lives. Having learnt

the trade of hairdressing in Lagos, she moved to Abuja in search of a better life. She lives in a suburb around the city called Lokogoma and has worked in the salon for about 13 years.

**Gloria** is 45 years old and a female braider who left her hometown in the southern part of Nigeria for Abuja after losing her husband. According to her, she needed to find work so she could feed herself and her kids. Being a braider was the only job Gloria could think about doing because that was one skill she learnt from her neighbours. She holds a primary school certificate and has been working in the salon for about 8yrs. Gloria lives in Madela, situated in the neighbouring Niger state, quite a distance from Abuja. She commutes to Abuja daily to work in one of the salons.

**Presh** is 34 years old and a female nail technician who is from the Southern part of Nigeria. Being from a minority tribe, she moved to Abuja after completing her primary school education in her village. Due to a lack of funds to further her education, she moved to Abuja to work as a house help and maid to a wealthy family. Having done that job for a while, she left to learn the art of nail making. Accordingly, she has worked in one of the salons for almost 15yrs. With many years of work experience, she is amongst the senior workers of this particular store. She has a large customer base and is well known for making beautiful nails for customers. Though she lives in a suburb called Dutse, her lifestyle shows that she works in the city.

**Richard** is a stylist from a minority tribe in the middle-belt part of the country. He is 24 years old. His parents moved to the capital city, Abuja, where he was raised. He managed to finish secondary school and later learned his trade. Richard lives in the council area of Bwari, which is under the federal capital territory, Abuja. These are small villages where the Gwari's (original landowners of Abuja) lived before they were taken over by the government. Though it is in a council area, it is regarded as a disadvantaged suburb of Abuja because it lacks amenities

like clean water and good roads. Richard has worked in the salon for about 7yrs and entered the trade in search of a better life.

**Sarah** is a 26 years old female braider who is from a neighbouring state to Abuja. According to her, she finished her secondary school education in her village. She moved to Lokoja, the capital of her state, to learn to braid hair. However, Sarah was not happy with her job because she could not make ends meet. Hence, she moved to Abuja for a better job and salary. She lives in a local and crowded suburb called Dutse. Sarah has been working in the salon for about 6yrs and has a large customer base as she is recognised for her skills as a braider.

### **6.3 Relationships between the Characteristics of the Service Workers**

The brief characteristics of the service workers explained above show that many of them are from minority tribes who mainly reside in the middle-belt and southern part of the country. As earlier discussed in the context chapter, these minorities are mostly marginalized economically and have not been able to acquire higher education. As such, most settle on learning trades that will provide them with a reasonable standard of living in comparison to others in their socio-economic strata. Having learned the trade of hair styling or nail technicians, they have left their villages searching for a better standard of living in the country's capital city.

All of these participants live in suburb areas and commute daily to work in the city. Most of them have worked in big salons and have had a broad experience of interacting with higher-class individuals who live in the central part of the city. The similarity in the relationship between the participants enables an understanding of how service encounters impact their self-conceptions and subject position. In relation to this, the following section describes the key characteristics of their elite customers, which gives a picture of the wide socio-cultural and economic disparity between these actors.



## 6.4 Description of Elite Customers

**Ronke** is a Radiologist who works in the National Hospital Abuja. She is 46 years old and does part-time consultancy with a private hospital in the city. She is from a majority tribe called the Yoruba's, and her family is well-known in the country. As such, she was born into an elite family. While she had her early education in Nigeria, she moved to the United States to attend University. As a Radiologist, she is widely travelled and has lived in the western world before moving back to Nigeria. She engages in the cosmopolitan lifestyle and goes to the United States and United Kingdom for most summer holidays. Ronke lives a life of affluence and has been a regular customer of one of the salons for about 9yrs.

**Kaka** is a 33-year-old Hausa-Fulani lady from the Northern part of Nigeria. As a daughter of a former minister in the country, she studied for her first degree and Masters in the United Kingdom. After university, she worked with clothing store companies like Debenhams and New Look before returning to Abuja, where she works with the government. As a child of an elite, she has experienced life both abroad and locally in Nigeria. She visits the salon very often and has been a customer of one of the stores for about 7yrs.

**Michelle** is a female customer of one of the stores. She is 40 years old and from a dominant tribe in the Eastern part of the country. She was born in the United States and lived most of her childhood before her parents moved back to Nigeria. She holds a first degree that she studied for in Nigeria and a Masters secured in the UK. On returning to the country, she has lived in Abuja and worked in a bank for some years before setting up her own business. Michelle has been a regular of one of the sample stores of this study for about 7yrs.

**Tina** is a 29-year-old regular female customer of one of the sample stores. She is from the Eastern part of the country and was born to a modest family. Tina's first degree and masters were undertaken in Nigeria. She has worked in a bank for

over 12yrs where she holds a managerial position. She travels to different countries such as Dubai, the UK, America, and Italy on most holidays.

**Daniel** is a 37-year old male customer who regularly visits one of the salons for his haircut and pedicure. He holds a first degree and two master's degrees. Daniel works as a government official in a top position. As a deputy director in the government, he is widely travelled. His job takes him to many countries for seminars and courses. In addition to this, he goes to the United States with his family for the summer.

### **6.5 The Relationship between the Characteristics of Elite Clients of the Salons**

From the description of the elite clients who visit the salon's sampled in this research, it is clear that most of them have travelled widely, are well-educated, and have obtained higher degrees from their home country or the United Kingdom and the United States. Most expect to visit other countries for both official and holiday purposes. As such, they follow cosmopolitan lifestyles and have the economic capital to purchase global brands and luxury. Some of these samples are children of the traditional elite families in Nigeria who still hold cultural significance today, while some are from middle-class families and the new wealthy, who have acquired a good education and now live a life of affluence. Most of these elite customers have been visiting beauty stores as regular customers for some years. In relation to this, it is expected that these informants will have intimate experiences with the salon and relationships with the workers. Therefore, they are well placed to provide essential information and testimonies related to the research objectives of the thesis.

### **6.5 The Description of the Salon Managers**

**John** is a 35-year old male Bachelor of Science graduate from one of the universities in Nigeria. He is a manager of one of the beauty stores and has worked for about eight years. Being from a minority tribe in the middle-belt of

the country, John does not have a wealthy background but has managed to advance economically through acquiring a good education. As a country with a high unemployment rate, he decided to settle as a manager in the store when he could not get a job with the government parastatals. Though he is educated and reasonably remunerated in his job, he lives in the slum areas around the city because he cannot afford the high cost of living in Abuja itself.

**Grace** is a manager who holds a higher diploma from a polytechnic in Nigeria. Born into a family from the South-south part of Nigeria, she is 31 years old and middle-class background. She moved to Abuja after completing her university education for better job prospects. However, being similar to John, due to the high unemployment, she started working in her particular salon as a manager and enjoys the job. She has worked there for about six years.

**Julie** is a manager in the third salon. She is 36 years old and married with children. She holds a higher diploma and is from the South-south part of Nigeria. She was born and raised in the middle-belt part of the country. She moved to Abuja after getting married. Though her husband works with the government, both live in the semi-suburb area around Abuja city, which is not prestigious. Julie started working in the salon as a manager after she lost her job in banking. She works in the highest-profile salon in the sample located near where the wealthiest elites live in Abuja.

From the descriptive characteristics of the managers, it is clear that they are graduates who have worked in the salons investigated in this study for quite some time. As earlier explained in the methodology chapter (Chapter 5), the store managers helped provide more information about their experiences concerning the interactions between the service workers and their elite customers. As such, they were able to offer third party insight.

Brief details of the key characteristics of these informants are provided in the tables below (6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). Table 6.1 one offers details of the full sample of the service workers interviewed in this research.

**Table 6.1**

<b>Names (pseudonyms)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Job experien ce</b>
Presh	Female	30-35yrs	Primary Sch certificate	Nail technician	15yrs +
Fatima	Female	30-35yrs	GSCE	Stylists	17yrs+
Gloria	Female	40-45yrs	Primary Sch certificate	Braider	10yrs+
Richard	Male	20-25yrs	GCSE	Stylist	6yrs
Ruth	Female	30 - 35yrs	Diploma certificate	Stylist	13yrs
Tessy	Female	35-40yrs	GCSE	Stylist/Nail technician	12yrs
Sarah	Female	25 -30yrs	GCSE	Braider	6yrs
Steven	Male	25-30yrs	Primary Sch certificate	Nail technician	8yrs
Dave	Male	25-30yrs	GCSE	Nail technician	4yrs
Michael	Male	30-35yrs	Diploma certificate	Nail technician	10yrs
Pye	Female	35-40yrs	Primary Sch Certificate	Marketing Executive	12yrs
Chinyere	Female	40-45yrs	Primary Sch certificate	Stylists	15yrs

Angela	Female	35-40yrs	Primary Sch certificate	Braider	15yrs
Bukky	Female	30-35yrs	Primary Sch Certificate	Nail technician	12yrs
Omotola	Female	25-30yrs	Primary Sch Certificate	Braider	7yrs
Gabriel	Male	25 – 30yrs	GCSE	Stylist	13yrs

**Participant information of the service workers**

**Table 6.2**

Name (pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Used sample store
Ronke	Female	45 - 50yrs	BSC, MBBS	Radiologist	9yrs
Kaka	Female	30 - 35yrs	BSC, MSC	Marketing Executive	7yrs
Michelle	Female	35 - 40yrs	BSC, MSC	Manager	7yrs
Tina	Female	25 - 30yrs	BSC	Banker	8yrs
Amaka	Female	35 - 40yrs	BSC	Banker	6yrs
Zainab	Female	30 - 35yrs	BA, MBA	Financial Manager	5yrs
Daniel	Male	45 - 50yrs	BSC, MBA, MSC	Government Official	5yrs

**Participant's information of the elites**

**Table 6.3**

John	Male	30-35yrs	BSC	Manager	8yrs
Grace	Female	30-35yrs	Higher Diploma	Manager	6yrs
Julie	Female	35-40yrs	Higher Diploma	Manager	10yrs

**Participant's information of the store managers**

## 6.6 Manual Coding

Though the popularity of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) within qualitative research is growing, particularly in relation to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), qualitative content analysis and frame analysis (Koenig, 2004), the analysis of the data collected in this study was undertaken manually. So, while CAQDAS Software is described as a tool used for most qualitative research, it helps researchers categorise and sort data into a system of codes (Richards & Richards, 1994). Also, it helps organise and search data, especially when it involves managing large quantities of text. Hence, I opted for a different approach. This is because it is argued that

*“There are some forms of qualitative research where there is little use for CAQDAS... [which]... is true of approaches like narrative and conversation analysis, biographies, and discourse analysis”* (Gibbs et al., 2002, p. 6. 33).

Further, some researchers explain that this software has limited functions in relation to the complex process needed in cultural analysis, which involves a fine-grained and nuanced analysis of socio-cultural texts (MacMillan, 2004). For example, Fowler & Kress (1979, p.198) argue that any tool, or method which creates distance between the discourses and practices encountered in a study, and which lifts them out of their context to consider them in isolation *“would be the very antithesis”* to the investigative approaches and aims of the post-structuralist

tradition. In addition, the use of CAQDAS is not enough in itself to count as a method of analysis. An in-depth analysis of a smaller selection of data will generally yield much more insight in the case of the data produced in such a study (MacMillan, 2004). Therefore, though CAQDAS is helpful for practical tasks such as searching and retrieving data segments, coding segments of texts, maintaining links between codes, and providing a framework for making summary judgments, it was not used in this study.

So, while I acknowledge that to an extent, such software can be useful in the early stages of cultural analysis, in the respect that you can hold text and search the data, and in some cases engage in rudimentary coding, it cannot be used for a detailed, in-depth analysis of the role that context plays in a research setting (MacMillan, 2004), which is what I was aiming to achieve in my analysis of the data. Thus, to achieve such a rigorous and contextually grounded analysis requires an involved and highly immersed researcher who should be in charge of the data from the moment it is collected through its (re)production as a research narrative. Hence, I found manual coding much more attuned to these ends.

## **6.7 Data Analysis Process**

After the data had been collected from the field notes, informal conversations and interviews, it was transcribed verbatim. Simultaneously, the testimonies of the service workers were translated from pidgin English to proper English. Although this was not an easy task, I had to ensure a degree of accuracy during this translation by maintaining and reproducing the implied meanings and language used by the service workers, so they were not lost. However, I did not translate all words and some of the slang they used as this would be reused and explained in the discussion in the following chapters

## **6.8 Data Familiarization**

The analysis of qualitative research data starts with familiarization. As such, this process started during my observations in the stores but mainly from the period of transcribing the interviews. This process reminded me of each salon context. It revealed the particular socio-cultural realities of the participants in relation to their feelings, interactions, experiences, and how they used language and meanings to express themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). While familiarizing with the interviews and transcribing them, I began to identify which of the interviews were more informative and contained detailed accounts that were representative of and particular to the phenomena under study. Resultantly I selected sixteen interviews, which I found comprehensive enough to represent the others. These were interviews with Gabriel, Gloria, Fatima, Steven, Richard, Pye, Sarah, Michelle, Amaka, Ronke Kaka, and two managers. When choosing the number of interviews and data used for preliminary coding, there are no specific rules or guidelines to the numbers. However, Brooks et al. (2015) explain that if the selected interviews are comprehensive enough in relation to the research questions in hand, then that is acceptable.

Before I began a more systematic coding of the transcripts, I read each of them several times. It gave me more understanding of the phenomenon of the study and how the service encounters that unfold in the salons are constituted through the interactions of the participants and the wider socio-cultural and historical context. As such, this was helpful in providing initial insights into the would-be themes that would be derived later in the analysis. As I continued to read through the scripts, I was able to identify the main cultural categories and power relationships from the interview data that would explain the phenomena at hand.

In addition to familiarizing myself with the interview scripts, I also read through the field notes gathered during the observations. These reminded me of some of my observations. Hence, I reflected and related these to the testimonies of the



participants. In particular, reading the field notes enabled me to clarify my thoughts about the interviews and afforded more insight into the themes of the study even before the coding process began. To aid this process, as I read through the interview scripts and field notes, I made notes by the sides of the scripts concerning my thoughts and initial impressions of the data

## **6.9 Coding Process**

In reading through the interview scripts to familiarise myself with the data, I began to identify some of the emerging research themes. This is because I could identify similarities across the transcripts (Thompson et al., 1989). This was achieved by repeatedly reading the data and focusing attention on reoccurrences in the data in both individual accounts and across the data as a whole. Thereafter, I started the coding process, which was done by identifying and linking data elements that had both internal consistency within a testimony and over the sample studied. That is, I undertook what Potter and Wetherell (1987) refer to as a research process that involves the identification of a “*body of instances*” (p.167) in large volumes of qualitative data. In relation to this, Potter & Wetherell (1987, p.167) say that coding involves squeezing an unwieldy body of discourse into manageable chunks, whereby you essentially “*lump*” internally consistent extracts of data together (Saldana, 2016). It is a preliminary analytic process that prepares a much more intensive and systematic analysis of the remaining data after the majority is culled through this selective coding process.

Thereafter, the chunks of data that had instances supporting a particular theme were put together in a file I had created to manage this process. In terms of the sequence of the analysis, the transcripts from the interviews with the service workers were the ones coded first, followed by those of the customers and finally, the managers of the stores. After the themes were put together into various files, they were subject to textual and intertextual analysis. In doing this, I made brief notes concerning the use of vocabulary, syntax, grammar, local slang, and the

functions of the texts. I also began to interrogate the data regarding what was being said by each informant and their underlying interactions in the stores. Then, the questions in mind were: why do these workers refer to themselves as '*us*' and the elites as *they*? What do these words mean within that context? "how does Nigeria's cultural and socio-historical context structure the expressions of workers when narrating their experiences and interactions with their clients"? Hence, these texts were interrogated to uncover the unspoken assumptions and power relationships inherent within them that have shaped the very form that they take in the first place. Therefore, I moved beyond a simple examination of verbal and written interaction to facilitate an appreciation of the broader socio-cultural and historical context, as well as their material and psychological implications (Grand et al., 2004).

This helped me achieve a more detailed contextual analysis of the transcripts and data by applying an approach that allowed me to analyse and focus on the power dynamics and discourses that gave rise to such texts in the Nigerian context.

As such, I reflected on the way in which dominant global flows and the socio-historical setting were structuring the subject positions of services workers and the interactions that unfolded in the stores. With this genealogical approach, I began to notice how the textual elements of data and the meanings therein provided me with an understanding of the power relationships coming into play here and how they were revealed and (re)produced in this setting through the manifold interactions and subject positions of the actors involved in these marketplace relationships. Hence, this approach provided a more meaningful and critical understanding of the interpretations of the language used by the interviewees, more generally, and how these texts practically configure the beauty salons of Abuja and the actors and actions within them. Besides, this analytic process enabled me to link the micro-analysis of these texts to the macro-

level analysis of the socio-historic context of Nigeria and the formation of its class system. As such, the analytical approach taken here:

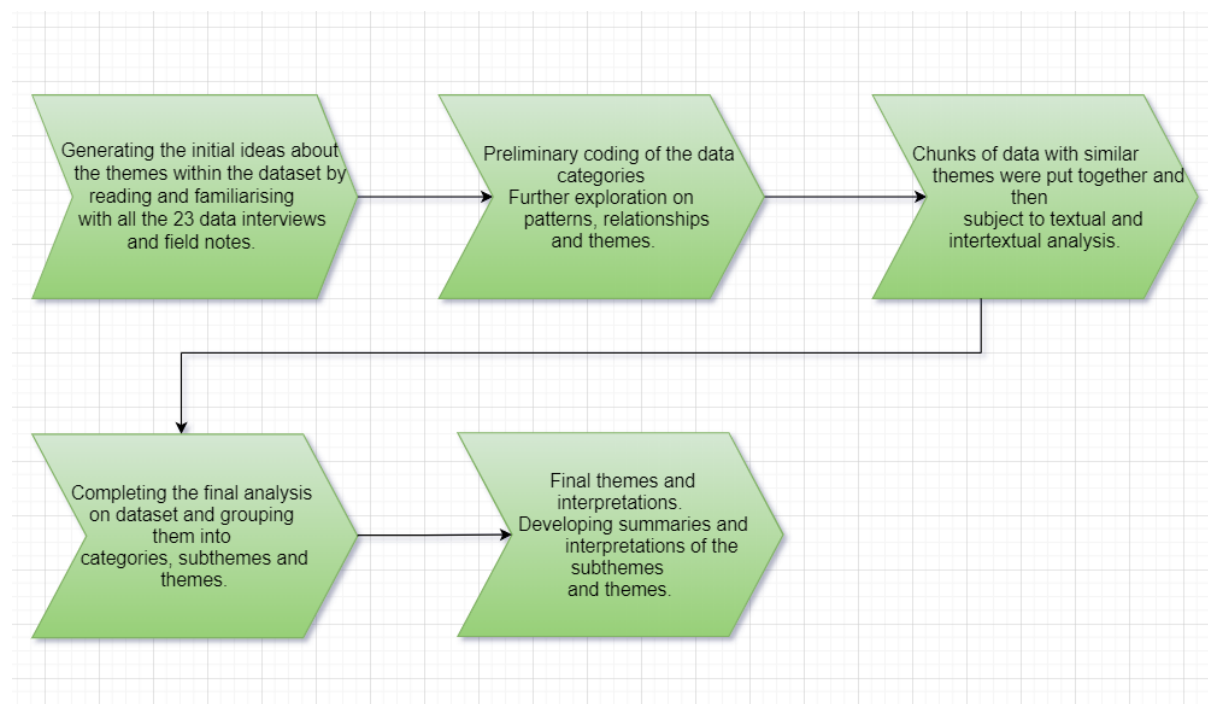
*“Mediated... [a]... connection between language and the social contexts... [that]... facilitate... [a]... more satisfactory bridging of the gap between texts and contexts” (Fairclough, 1995, p.189).*

Thereby, through exploring the intertextuality of the various texts within the data, I was able to piece together,

*‘Why this was said and not that... why these words... [and] ‘where... the connotations of the words fit...[within]... the different ways of talking about the world’ (Parker, 1992, p.4).*

That is to say, I was able to regard the narratives produced in the interviews and the behaviours observed in the ethnographic fieldwork as historical and social constructions (Foucault, 1980).

**Fig 6.1 The Process of the Qualitative Data Analysis**



## **6.10 Identifying the Sub-Themes**

As demonstrated in figure 6.4 and discussed above, I started the analytic process by coding large chunks of data based on the uniformity within each transcript and across the whole data set. Following this, I moved on to a higher level of abstraction, collapsing these recurring features of data into the subthemes listed and briefly discussed below. After bringing these subthemes together for more detailed analysis, I subjected them to further textual and intertextual analysis, which produced the categories inherent to the subthemes. This process enabled a more in-depth understanding of the patterns in the data.

### **Subtheme 1: Commercial Friendship.**

During the fieldwork and through the data analysis, it was clear that commercial friendships develop amongst the workers and their clients that are based upon a set of particular interrelationships and dependencies. This phenomenon relates to the concepts developed by Price and Arnould (1999), but in this instance, they are structured by class consciousness.

### **Subtheme 2: Social Class Differentiation.**

In relation to the sub-theme above, I found that social class differences restrain these commercial friendships. Unlike the egalitarian societies of developed countries, the postcolonial context of Nigeria is characterised by wide class disparities. Hence, the commercial friendships between the clients and the workers were constrained by economic inequality, financial restraint, social class differentiation and status hierarchy.

### **Subtheme 3: Global Flows.**

Global flows were found to be quite notable, especially during the observations of the beauty stores. Most of the customers of the stores engage in and participate in global consumer culture through their consumption of global brands and

luxury. These are then introduced into the salon, which brings the workers into close and proximate contact with the forces of globalization and western consumption practices.

#### **Subtheme 4: Emulation.**

As the display of global consumer culture was profoundly observed in the consumption practices of the elite customers during the fieldwork of this study, the emulation of this culture by the service workers was also apparent. In this way, the workers are subject to globalization-based acculturation, which is when the service workers are acculturated to global consumer culture through their service interactions with their customers in the beauty salons.

#### **Subtheme 5: Inferiority.**

This category reflects the fact that the workers are subjected to significant asymmetric socio-cultural relationships between their lifeworlds and their clients. The majority of the transcripts were punctuated with statements that inferred social distance and estrangement. Therefore, this sub-theme reflects the feeling of being downcast and marginalized in their interactions and experience with their clients.

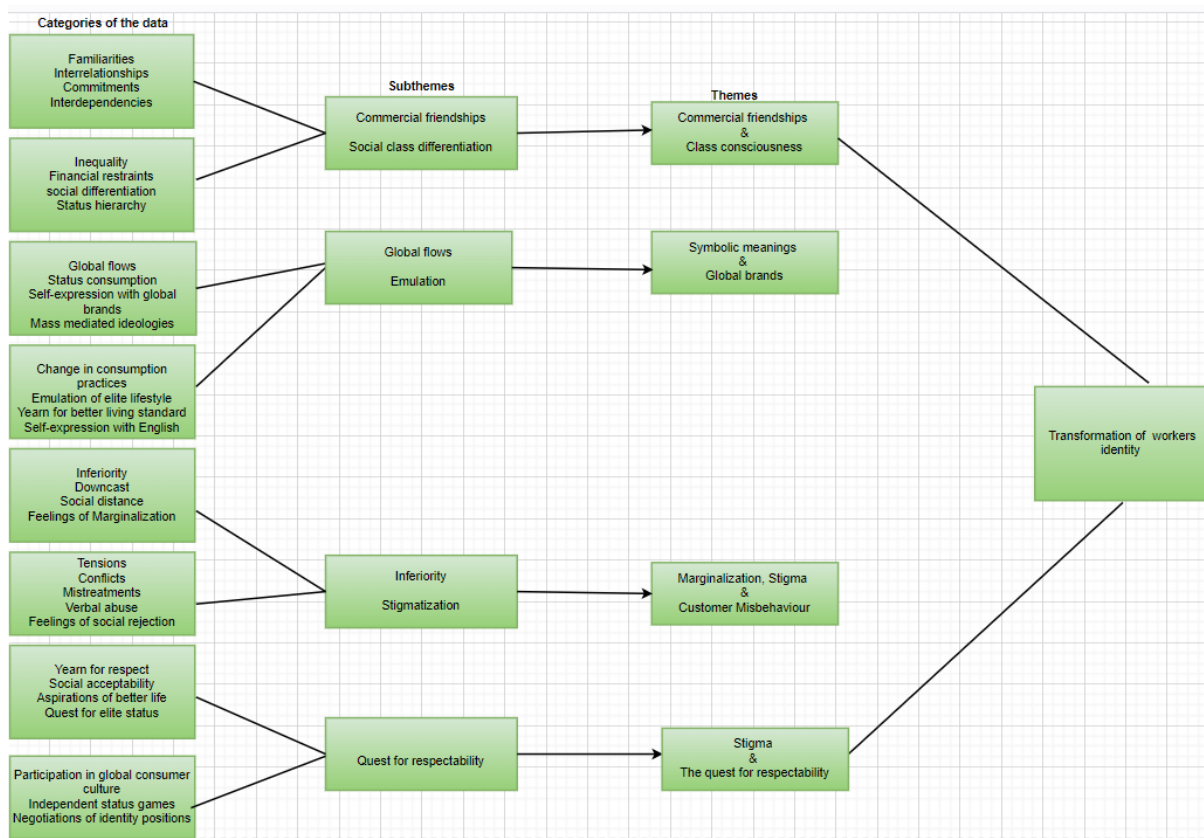
#### **Subtheme 6: Stigmatization.**

This thematic area relates to the numerous unpleasant scenes that were observed in the stores during the fieldwork. During their daily interactions with their clients, the service workers were often mistreated. In addition, the analysis of the interviews reveals the tensions and conflicts that unfold in the store. The majority of the participants interviewed expressed feelings and experiences of negativity with their customers. The theme is characterised by feelings of inferiority, conflict, tensions, mistreatment, verbal abuse, and social rejection.

## Subtheme 7: Quest for Respectability.

In relation to the worker's narratives about stigma and inferiority, it is clear that they respond by engaging in the consumption of global brands and other related behaviour to garner the respect of their clients. As such, while a minority resist the socio-cultural impositions of their clients and global consumer culture more generally, they must engage in a quest for respectability to mask their salon specific stigmatised identities and inferior subject positions. As such, this subtheme is categorised by practices related to a yearning for respect, social acceptability, and the negotiation of identity through financial constraints.

**Fig 6.2 The Analysis of the Data (Categories, Sub-Themes & Themes)**



### **6.11 The Emerging Themes of the Study**

In a further move of abstraction, I finally sought to merge the sub-themes into higher-order themes. This is because the outcome of inductive cultural analysis is to develop categories into a framework that summarises the raw data and conveys the study's vital socio-cultural themes and findings (Thomas, 2006). By identifying and making connections between the sub-themes, I created four themes that had greater explanatory power. Accordingly, the four broad themes that emerged from this process were: (1) Symbolic Meanings of Global Brands; (2) Commercial Friendships and Class-Consciousness; (3) Marginalisation, Stigma and Customer Misbehaviour and (4) Stigma and the Quest for Respectability. These themes will be discussed along with the data in the following five chapters of this study.

### **6.12 Conclusion**

This chapter offered a detailed explanation and justification of the analytic procedure and process that was undertaken to transform the data into themes. It also provides key details of the informants sampled for the interview in this study. In relation to this, from the analysis of the data through to the development of the themes and findings, I am now able to explain how the service workers in Abuja negotiate their subject positions in relation to their interactions with their elite clients, which is what will be discussed over the remaining chapters of the thesis.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY AND CLASS SYSTEM**

### **Introduction**

This chapter responds to the first research objective of this thesis by examining the socio-historical development of Nigeria and how its class system has emerged from Postcolonial rule to (re)produce an elite class in the country. As earlier described in the methodology chapter, the primary purpose of using Foucault's genealogical analysis is to emphasize a re-conceptualisation of current phenomenon (Kearins & Hopper, 2002) by unearthing the socio-historic context that is involved in rendering current behaviour and social relations into being (Anais, 2013). This approach enabled me to critically examine how the historical development of Nigeria and its class structure potentially shape the interactions and socio-cultural outcomes in the beauty stores in Abuja. In the following sections, I discuss Nigeria's historical development and the formation of the Nigerian state. In so doing, I demonstrate how the class structure and the traditional elite of Nigeria were constituted and how the break from colonial rule led to an emergence of new elites in the country. The chapter also discusses the prevalence of poverty in Nigeria and how this was historically rendered. Lastly, I describe the suitability of the research context for achieving the theoretical research objectives of this study.

### **7.1 The Historical Development of Nigeria**

Nigeria is situated in West Africa and is the biggest country on the African Continent. Based on the most recent United Nations estimate, the country has a population of 206 139 589 people (Worldometers, 2020) with a total landmass of 910,770 km<sup>2</sup> (351, 650 square miles). With an urban population of 51.9%, the remaining 41.1% live in rural settings (Worldometers, 2020). While the country comprises 374 ethnic groups, three are considered major. They are made up of



the Hausa-Fulani in the North, Yoruba of the South, and Igbo of the Southeast (Oтите, 1990). Larger minority groups consist of the Ijaw, Kanuri, Edo, Ibibio, Nupe and Tiv (Afolayan, 1978). Still, they are less significant in their influence and power.

Nigeria is organised under a federal structure that comprises the central government and 36 federating states, including Abuja's federal capital. There are also 774 local government areas within the six geopolitical regions: The North-east, North-west, North-central, South-east, South-west, and South-south.

## **7.2 The Formation of the Nigerian state**

Past literature on African studies shows that countries within Africa in pre-colonial times were an assemblage of well-organised city-states with unique civilisations (Ira, 1988; Imhonopi et al., 2013). In tracing the history of Africa and pre-colonial times, Ira (1988) explains that the continent had about 10,000 different states and was characterised by many different sorts of political organisation and rulers before the advent of colonialism. These studies show that during the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, a dynasty of states included the Hausa, which stretched across the Sub-Saharan Savannah from the Western regions to Central Sudan in the North-Eastern part of Africa. Also, the continent had powerful empires and kingdoms such as Ghana, Gao, and the Kanem-Bornu Empire, the Kingdom of Nri and Arochukwu people of Igbo, as well as the Ife kingdom under the Ooni of Ife, the Alaafins of Oyo controlling both the Yoruba city-states and the Great Benin Kingdom (Imhonopi et al., 2013). However, in today's Nigeria, the ethnolinguistic group in the North are the Hausa-Fulani in the North-east and North-west, Yoruba in the South-west, Igbo in the South-east, and Ijaws in the South-south parts of the country. (Crowder, 1978; Sagay, 2008).

Following the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria in 1914, the colonial government began a systematic process to control the country under the

Hausa-Fulani aristocracy (Ofonofua, 2011). The centralised theocratic authority of the Sultan and the Caliphate made the imperial administration in the north cheap and less problematic (Crowder, 1987); hence, it established a system of indirect rule wherein the Sultan of Sokoto was made subservient to the British authority (Apter, 1999).

Following several decades of colonial rule, the leadership of the southern parts of the country became aggressive in their clamour for independence. It was found resentful by the colonial government. So, they tackled the problem under the guise of administrative control. Through this, the southern part of Nigeria was divided into the eastern and western regions while the northern region was left intact (Crowder, 1987; Sagay, 2008). This resulted in a division between nationalities in the South and created ethnic rivalry between the East and West of Nigeria. The government also conducted a series of censuses deliberately rigged in favour of the North (Omoruyi, 1999). For instance, the first-ever National Census conducted in 1931 was rigged to give the northern part of Nigeria a numerical advantage over the South (Okonofua, 2011). Presently, out of the 774 local councils in the country, the North has 418 seats, and the South has 356. Again, out of the 335 seats in the Federal House of Representatives, the northerners are allocated 182 seats. In comparison, the southerners have 154 seats, thereby enforcing the British colonial legacy of centralising control under the leadership of the caliphate. (ibid).

### **7.3 The Dominance of the Northern States and Traditional Elites**

With the dominant control of Nigeria been taken by the North after the amalgamation (Okonofua, 2011), the region held a permanent majority in the future federal legislature and consequently, control of power fell to the Hausa-Fulani elite (ibid). Thus, it set the stage for the eventual Hausa-Fulani ethno-political hegemony experienced in the country to date. (Okonofua, 2011). As a result, the Hausa-Fulani elite has an active hold of Nigeria's political and

economic power. The dominance of the government ensures that the bulk of the nation's wealth, which is obtained from the oil wells in the southern part of Nigeria (Okonofua, 2011; Sagay, 2008; Ukeje et al., 2008), goes into providing infrastructure in the North, even though they contribute the least to the country's revenue and wealth. For instance, most of the prominent indigenous companies in the country are owned by them or in alliance with foreign economic interests. Though they are northerners, about 83% of all present oil blocs are held by them (Josiah, 2013). During the fieldwork, I observed that most elite customers who come into the expensive beauty stores sampled in this research are usually Hausa-Fulani women. I noted that they always wore expensive attire and Abayas with high-quality gold accessories and handbags in relation to my observations. Thus, I began to reflect on the apparent expense of these items as they adorned themselves. I pondered whether it reflects the political and economic hold these families have on the country's wealth, how this would be experienced and interpreted by the service workers in the salons.

In the South of the country, the southern feudal kings like the Oba's and Igwe's who used to rule over the people as the link with the colonial government exploited the masses (Adilieje et al., 2013). As agents of imperialism, these rulers became the beneficiaries of colonialism because they controlled the economic fortunes of their societies (Odubanjo & Alabi, 2014). They used their positions as tax collectors to swindle part of the tax revenue collected in the country. Then they took the best interests of the land in their communities, thereby amassing wealth for themselves. In relation to this, they traded in smoked fish, kola nuts, livestock and other import commodities. Thus, they had political and economic elites' qualities as they held political power and commercial interests (ibid). These were and still are the traditional elites of Southern Nigeria. The majority of these families still hold powerful political and economic positions in the country, and their family names have been legislated as the primary elites in southern Nigeria.

However, the vast majority of the people from the southern part of the country suffer from colossal poverty. For instance, the oil-wealthy states such as Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta and Cross Rivers lack basic amenities like roads, pipe-borne water, electricity and hospitals (Okonofua, 2011). During my observations and informal interviews, I found that most of the service workers sampled are from ethnic minorities who migrated from the country's southern parts to Abuja in search of better living standards and economic fortune.

#### **7.4 The Emergence of New Elites in Nigeria**

Prior to the country's independence from colonial rule, a new class of elites emerged in Nigeria. These new elites obtained their status by acquiring western education (Odubanjo & Alabi, 2014). They were able to accrue academic credentials to cross the barrier from the non-governing class to the governing one, which empowered them politically and economically (Pareto, 1935). According to Lloyd (1970, p.4), these elites are *"those who were western educated and wealthy to a high degree relative to the mass of the population."* As such, they were able to continually apply their economic prowess to mobilise the rest of society, specifically the battle for national leadership and not restricted to particular localities (Odubanjo & Alabi, 2014). Immediately after the country's independence, these new elites took over the administration of various country regions (Onimode, 1982). According to Ake (1981, p.47), this move was to ensure that the new elites who have been exposed to western indoctrination were the ones who had the opportunities for leadership roles and upward mobility.

In relation to this, they were placed high above the traditional elites because they were involved in national politics. As Lloyd (1970, p.1) explains,

*"Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, political power has been rapidly passing from the colonial rulers to members of indigenous national elites- men who are predominantly young, highly educated and comparatively wealthy."*

However, the traditional elites did not readily accept the superiority, dominance and claim to the national leadership of the new elites (Odubanjo & Alabi, 2014). To measure up, the children of these traditional elites and merchants attended British public schools, studied at European universities for higher education, and returned as doctors, lawyers, journalists, teachers, engineers, etc. Thus, these elites in Nigeria were able to hang onto their status by acquiring cultural knowledge, skills and experiences, which translated into linguistic competence in terms of modes of speech and vocabulary as well as patterns of thought, factual knowledge and world views (Allen & Anderson 1994). On accumulating this cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) in the West, these prominent individuals engaged in westernised cultural lifestyles. According to Lysonski & Durvasula's (2013), the majority of upper-class Nigerians have cosmopolitan tendencies because they are widely travelled and continually exposed to international mass media and global brands.

However, the negative effect of the activities of the new elite in Nigeria served to deepen social divisions and widen the gap between the social groups in the country (Adilieje et al., 2013). As Onimode (1982) reports, the

*“More aggressive sons and daughters of these feudal chiefs who were given imperialist education became recruited into the ranks of the Nigerian petty bourgeoisie and they entrenched neo-colonial capitalism in the continuation of exploiting the masses after flag independence.”* (Onimode, 1982, p., 40).

As I reflected on the historical development of the country's class system, which has resulted in the emergence of both traditional and new elites, Frantz Fanon's (1963) writings in his book *“Wretched of the Earth”* came to mind. According to him, these new rulers draped themselves in the nationalism and aspirations of the anticolonial revolutions to facilitate accumulation in which they would become the primary beneficiaries. He says,

*“Spoiled children of yesterday’s colonisation and today’s governing powers, they oversee the looting of the new national resources. Ruthless in their scheming and legal pilfering, they use the poverty, now nationwide, to work their way to the top through import-export holdings, limited companies playing the stock market, and nepotism. They insist on the doctrine of nationalisation for business transactions, i.e., reserving contracts and business deals for nationals. Their doctrine is to proclaim the need for rationalising the theft of the nation” (p.12).*

The above narrative concerning the activities of the elites in Nigeria illuminates that though the country has gained independence from colonial rule, the experiences during the following decades bring to light how the ghost of colonisation still looms in the postcolonial world of Nigeria (Imhonopi et al., 2013). In so doing, this psychological reminder of colonialism and the activities of the elites more generally, have created a material legacy in the institution of the state and social class formation in Nigeria and most other African nations (Imhonopi et al., 2013).

## **7.5 The Nigerian Social Class Structure**

From the research tradition in CCT (Bourdieu 1984; Holt, 1998; Henry & Caldwell, 2008), social class is positioned as a multidimensional social space within which social groups are placed in relation to each other. The boundaries between these groups are defined by the volume and forms of economic, social and cultural capital deployed in their respective social settings. However, arguably the class system in Nigeria operates in different ways. As I have explained in the preceding sections, though Nigeria had a traditional social class system, the spread of industrialisation and urbanisation has ushered changes in the traditional social organisation of the country. That is, social class status could now be achieved rather than ascribed as in pre-colonial times. Following this, a new value system has emerged that rewards commercial endeavour, political action, and education. However, this class system's defining feature and value in

Nigeria is money and position (e.g., high political positions, government, or public offices) (Imhonopi et al., 2013).

As such, apart from the traditional offices of real stature and chieftainships like the traditional Obas, Emirs, Oni Alafins, Alake, and Sultan, the class structure of the urbanised areas and cities, is now socially stratified into; Upper class or high public officers (government appointees and cabinet members, judges) and the professionals or upper-middle-class (permanent secretaries, directors and deputy directors of parastatals, lawyers, doctors, engineers, lecturers, professors) Others are the businessmen (multi-interest entrepreneurs, class 'A' or 'B' contractors, listed under the government award system, and proprietors) and the lower middle class (government civil and public servants, teachers, and some petite business owners). Lastly, the working class (receptionists, junior civil service workers, police, shop assistants, skilled technicians, nurses, office clerks) and the underclass (skilled artisans, barbers, building labourers, hawkers of foods and domestic wares and the unemployed) who are mainly referred to as the masses.

The lifestyle of the elites and upper-class Nigerians depicts that of affluence as they own expensive western automobiles, live in well-organised and secluded environments, and usually have domestic employees such as housemaids, security guards, and drivers etc. While in contrast, the majority of the underclass live in poverty and swing with seasons and economic circumstances to secure survival (Lukacs, 1972). This situation is deeply entrenched and persists till date as the urban dwellers see themselves as belonging to an elevated social class which prompts the rural dwellers to see nothing good in their rural villages and forces them to drift to the urban towns and cities in search of the “golden fleece” (Imhonopi et al., 2013).

## **7.6 The Prevalence of Income Inequality and Poverty in Nigeria**

According to Nwokoye et al. (2019), global income inequality is possibly the most crucial policy threat facing the world today, and there are considerable contentions about it worsening over time. The findings of this study confirm it as it shows that the prevalence of inequality between the large proportion of those living in affluence and the masses in abject poverty has continued unabated (Olayiwola, 2014).

Some anti-globalisation agitators have argued that globalisation significantly contributes to this ever-increasing inequality (ibid). However, other studies say that the prevalence of poverty is actually due to corruption and bad governance by the political class (Canagarajah, Nwagafon, & Thomas, 1997). Proponents of this perspective report that the nationalist leaders and elite class who ruled over the masses during the early days of post-independence caused the wide disparity between the rich and the poor. According to Seteolu, Komolafe & Aje (2018), the nationalist leaders were the economic moguls and national bourgeoisie. They became increasingly greedy and plundered the economy for personal and social class gains as they had access to the national treasury. On the other hand, about two-thirds of the low-income class groups were mainly involved in rural farming, which paid very little.

Although the country now ranks as the world's 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> oil producer and exporter, most of the populace are plagued with poverty (Ogbeide & Agu, 2015). This is because about 80% of the nation's wealth is in the hands of very few individuals (Renton, Seddon & Zeilig, 2007). Therefore, the country's oil wealth does not translate into improved social conditions for the masses (Seteolu et al., 2018) or trickle down. Unfortunately, during the transformation from colonial rule, there was not much resistance from the urban poor and rural peasants because of their low levels of national consciousness. According to Fanon (1963), p. 172),



*“In these poor underdeveloped countries, the rule is that the greatest wealth is surrounded by the greatest poverty.”*

He goes on to argue that there are no true elites similar to those in developed countries in Africa, for this class of greedy and voraciously corrupt individuals accepted the dividends handed over by the colonial powers and have broadly failed to display a capability for great ideas or inventiveness. Whatsmore, in the case of Nigeria, it is argued that the oil sector is characterised by corruption and theft amidst the relentless pursuit of power and economic benefit of the governing and administrative classes (Seteolu, 2015). Unfortunately, these groups encountered little resistance from the urban poor and rural communities because of their low levels of national consciousness and inability to organise politically. It is also claimed that the masses were of the belief that the new political class of elites were actually working for their benefit and that they would be their saviour. That is, they had no idea that the elites were using their political power to enrich themselves through their access to the national treasury (ibid, 2015). The upshot of this is that the control of state power and incessant accumulation of resources deepened social inequality into two extremes which has resulted in Nigeria having very few rich people at one end of the socio-economic scale and huge masses of low at the other end (UNDP, 2009, p. 21). This has widened income gaps and disparities between the rich and the poor in this country (Mani, 2001).

Indeed, according to Oxfam International,

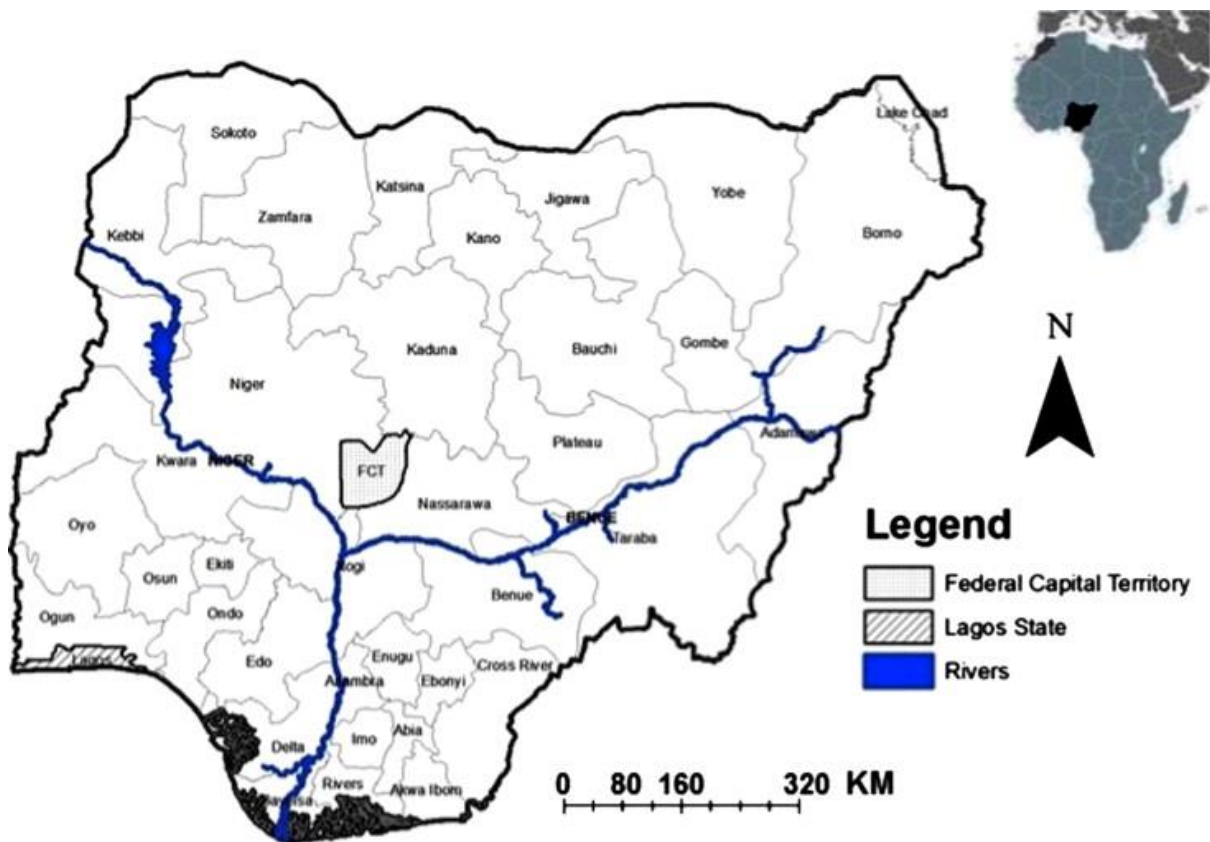
*“...the combined wealth of Nigeria’s richest men - \$29.9 billion – could end extreme poverty at the national level, yet 5 million face hunger. More than 112 million people are living in poverty in Nigeria. Yet, the country’s richest men would have to spend \$1 million a day for 42 years to exhaust his fortune (Oxfam International, 2017).*

Other causes for the increasing income disparity in Nigeria have been cited to include the increase in the illiteracy rate (Bakare, 2012), a rural and urban skills disparity (Ladipo & Adesimi, 1981), and the lack of gainful employment from lower socio-economic groups (Olayemi, 1995). The consequences of this, it is argued, have led to inadequate levels of consumption by the poor, which has reduced market demand and business efficiency, leading to the bankruptcy of weaker SME's, and increased unemployment (Nwokoye et al. 2019). While on the social level, the rising income disparity in the population and lack of gainful employment affect people's perception about themselves, leading to growing levels of unhappiness in the country and feelings that life in Nigeria is too hard and unfair (ibid). As such, despite its wealth, Nigeria continues to have a high unemployment rate, with high-income inequality and is characterised by low-quality human capital and a growing culture of welfare support (Seteolu, Komolafe & Aje, 2018).

## **7.7 The Research Context**

The context of the study is situated in Abuja city, the capital of Nigeria. This city is located in the central part of Nigeria. As part of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), it has a land area of 8000 km<sup>2</sup> (Abubakar, 2014). The city's location at the geographical centre of Nigeria gives it a strategic position at the intersection of two highways linking the northern and southern parts of the country. The centrality and accessibility of Abuja within Nigeria are the reasons why the new capital city was created. Six local area councils were created within the FCT, namely Abuja Municipal, Abaji, Bwari, Kuje, Gwagwalada and Kwali. The city is cited within Abuja Municipal and directly administered by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), headed by a minister appointed by the country's President.

**Fig 7.1 The map of Nigeria illustrating the Federal Capital City, Abuja.**



Presently, Abuja has high population growth with an urbanization rate of 8.32% per annum, making it the fastest-growing city in Africa (Myers, 2011). According to Iro (2007), Abuja's population during the daytime doubles night-time because the majority of the people who live in the suburbs come out during the daytime to work. In actual fact, the increasing population growth into the city is due to the migration of rural people from other parts of the country, due to the perceived social and economic opportunities in Abuja combined with the quest for urban life and the belief that the city is much safer than other parts of the country (Abubakar, 2014). The lack of investment in Nigeria's smaller towns and villages is also cited as a driver of migration into the capital city (ibid).

The design of Abuja is quite similar to other modern cities across the Globe, with low-density development and landscaping. Indeed 32% of the land area is

dedicated to open spaces and parks, which is a template of land-use allocation that is undeniably a western concept that is quite alien to African culture (Abubakar & Doan, 2010).



**Fig 7.2 Abuja: The Federal Capital City of Nigeria.**

Although created as a dream to provide equal access to Nigeria's diverse population (IPA, 1979), there is an ongoing acute housing shortage in the city. This housing problem is partially due to the relocation of the capital city from Lagos to Abuja without adequate accommodations for both public and private channels (Ikejiofor, 1998; Morah, 1993; Olaitan, 2004). This has led to a situation whereby only the wealthy and political elites live in the exclusive homes in the designated areas of Maitama, Asokoro and Wuse districts. These areas serve as

the seat of government and therefore receive top priority in providing adequate infrastructure and amenities (Abubakar & Doan, 2010; Abubakar, 2014).

Importantly, the housing units provided by the private sector proved to be unaffordable for the city's poor as the building and planning standards have ensured that the rents of these are well beyond their reach (Abubakar, 2014). This situation is worsened by the difficulty of securing housing mortgages for those other than the wealthy or well connected. Most of the populace lack the collateral to engage in this market. The high mortgage interest rates of over 20% are a significant barrier to all but those of substantial financial means (Abubakar & Doan, 2010). In addition, most of the lower classes, who make up 47% of the population, cannot even afford the rent for one room in the city. These cost at least three times the average salaries of these workers. Moreover, since rents have to be paid one to two years in advance, city accommodation is placed further out of reach (ibid).

This housing situation has resulted in the emergence and growth of several shantytowns and squatter settlements on the city's outskirts that are occupied by the lower middle class, the working and underclass citizens (Abubakar & Doan, 2014; Onochie et al., 2018). These settlements branded as slum areas are generally unplanned, overcrowded and lack basic amenities and infrastructure (Jubril, 2006; Onochie et al., 2018). Indeed, it is argued that the uneven mixture of housing types in these areas (Myers, 2010) have been born out of the disorganised treatment of pre-existing settlements in the FCT by the city's administration (Abubakar, 2014). Moreover, according to Jubril (2006), these squatter communities constitute about 8% of the settlements outside the boundaries of the city. When comparing the central area of Abuja and the suburbs around, it is clear that there is a wide disparity in living conditions, standards, and wealth between the elites in the central areas and the poor on the city's outskirts. So, while the centre of the city consists of beautiful neighbourhoods that are



landscaped and contain shopping plazas filled with Western luxuries and brands, in contrast, the city's suburb and satellite settlements house the majority of Abuja's urban poor (Abubakar & Doan, 2010). These areas and the quality of accommodation herein constitute a visible expression of the poor people's side of the contest with the elite in Abuja city. They are a clear material and socio-cultural example of the stark contrast between the worlds of prosperity and poverty in the country.



**Fig 7.3 A Settlement Area around the Boundaries of Abuja City.**

Most poor urban migrants who live on the outskirts of the city are usually artisans who are in constant demand by the elite class for their hospitality and personal care (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012). For these less privileged individuals to service and scrape a living in Abuja, they must secure a skilled profession and be competent enough in cultural capital practices that are relevant to the social worlds of their more affluent countrymen (Ustunier & Holt, 2009). Thus, the beauty salons in Abuja offer a clear opportunity to observe exchanges in global and local culture and meaning as they unfold in situ through social interactions

and consumption practices. This is because they are a prime commercial setting, in which Nigeria's poor come into direct and close contact with the country's elite.

**Fig 7.4** A Beauty Salon in Abuja.



## **7.8 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter presents a socio-historical analysis of Nigerian society's development and its social class structure. In so doing, it responded to this study's first objective by highlighting the contextual setting through which marketplace interactions between the wealthy and poor in Nigeria unfold. As such, I explored how Nigeria developed from its colonial past and how this led to the creation and emergence of the new elites and a vastly unequal society that is characterised by a prevalence of inequality and abject poverty, which is a social condition that is clearly reflected and (re)produced in the salons of Abuja. Resultantly, this context harbours the unexplored potential for examining the power relationships and interdependencies between these socio-economically differentiated class groups and how this manifest in the subject positions of service workers is which will be discussed over the following four chapters.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT: SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION OF GLOBAL BRANDS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter responds to the second objective of this thesis by assessing the role that global brands and related consumer behaviour play in the beauty salons of Abuja. As discussed in the analysis chapter, the findings highlight the prevalence of brand consumption in this context and how brands are utilised as cultural resources to enact various socio-cultural goals and status games. Due to their symbolic power and significance, it is clear that these resources play a significant role in the configuration of the relationships and interactions that unfold in this setting and have a central role in shaping and (rep)producing the identities and subject positions of the actors involved.

### **8.1 Symbolic Consumption; Hierarchical Class Status in Nigeria**

As the people of the less developed world become more exposed to global consumerism (Goodman, 2007; Hopper, 2007; Ger & Belk, 1996), they are compelled to adopt different consumption patterns to make sense of their everyday lives (Jafari & Goulding, 2013). Previous studies have argued that wealthy individuals in developing countries have an extensive desire for accumulating material possessions (McCracken, 1988). The majority of these individuals consume global brands known for their consistency, quality, and premium prices (Arnould, 2010). Within a highly stratified society (Dion & Borraz, 2017) such as Nigeria, these consumers display these goods conspicuously to convey their status (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). As mentioned in the literature review chapter, these brands are well known for their high prices, perceived quality, aesthetics, extraordinariness, and other high-level non-functional associations (Heine & Phan, 2011; Kapferer & Bastien, 2012, p. 313) like self-enhancement (Shukla, 2011; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

Regarding Foucault's technology of the sign system (1988), the symbolic meanings and values attached to these global luxury brands are avenues for consumers to channel their status and create a sense of achievement as an aesthetic pursuit. Given that the brands are primary sources of symbolic consumption (Askegaard, 2006; Ekinici et al., 2013), it allows these individuals to convey and communicate collective and social identities (Askegaard, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). They can also associate with successful consumers from across the globe (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004).

In relation to this, the findings from the excerpts generated from the interviews with the salon customers clearly show that some of them engage with luxury brands to mark out their status. That is to say, such consumption befits their social standing and hierarchical positions in society. For instance, Michelle, an elite participant of this study, highlights that she consumes global luxury brands because they suit her class. With her background as the granddaughter of a traditional elite, she was born and raised in the United States. Though her family moved back to Nigeria during her secondary school years, she opted to stay in the West and undertake her higher education in the United Kingdom and the United States. According to Michelle, her consumption of high-end brands is integral to her lifestyle because of her social class background.

Michelle: The truth is that when you are in a particular class. You are just in that class, so you do not go out and pick something not in "that class." because it is just who you are. It is just who you are, really, so I would not say it's like trying to belong or trying to show that "Ok, that I am here" or "I am there." yeah, "this is me"... It's especially when you have been there, and it's your status, it's your class. It is like this is me, especially when you have been there, which is your status. This is your class. I remember when growing up and working in the bank, I was living with my parents then. There were times when I wanted to like to buy a suit. It is a certain amount, and I am talking to my mum, "*mummy, why can't I just get this one*"? and she would look at me, and all she says, "*you*

*should not even be saying this, you do not even have to ask because this is not, you are not meant to wear this.*" Yes (saying empathetically). It is like you are already there. You were born at that level, and yes, you want to keep it because it is who you are, and you cannot change it. That is how you have always been.

From this testimony, it is clear that Michelle believes that elite consumers of her standing do not necessarily engage with luxury brands to socially express their status to others. On the contrary, according to her, wealthy consumers of her status are expected to consume products befitting their class. Her narrative about her parent's comments, '*you are meant to wear this*', shows that class distinction clearly structures the consumption of affluent Nigerians from the lower-class individuals; it is expected of them. Moreover, in relation to this, in light of the other reference to the comments made by her mum when she was out shopping with her and wanted to purchase a suit that was clearly beneath her standing, she was bluntly told, '*this is not, you are not meant to wear this*'.

Also, through her words, '*that I am here,*' or '*I am there*', Michelle asserts that the consumption of expensive brands is not meant to express their class status because they are born elites, and such consumption is quite ordinary. However, she reveals that not all in wealthy positions in Abuja behave in this way, in the respect that those that come into money use brands specifically to signal their status and wealth.

Michelle: It is a different thing when you have not been in that status, and you are not in that class and you are trying to get there and then it will be a case of you are like, "let me do this to show them that I am in the class but if you were born in that level... it is just like trying to tell people that this is me. It is not like it is a different thing if you are starting and you are not in that class initially, and you are going there, and then you try to show them that you are in that level.

Askegaard (2006) reports that brands are regarded as meta-symbols for globalization, consumerism and western culture. It is because they have become

part of the nuanced interplay of ideologies that structure marketplace performances and social life. In relation to this, the findings reported here show that some customers like Sarah see them as distinctive markers of their status in society. In essence, these wealthy customers who frequent the stores of Abuja consume expensive Western brands as an extension of the self (Belk, 1988), with the qualities believed to be associated with them and their conveyed cosmopolitan values. Consider Kaka, for instance; my observations in the stores were always adorned in well-known high-end global brands like Michael Kors, Prada, Gucci, and Luis Vuitton. In being questioned about this, she says:

Kaka: I cannot help it. I just cannot help it. I do not know, but I love bags. I am a Channels person, I am a Hermes person, I am a Prada person, a Gucci person. I find them beautiful, and they last me for a long time. I have had this bag for *(looking and pointing to her bag on the table)*. I have had this bag for 6yrs, and it is good. Yes, I can give it out. That is why other people would instead go abroad and buy all their needs. That is why I do that.

While Kaka finds luxury items irresistible, she describes herself as being ‘a Hermes person,’ ‘a Prada person,’ and ‘a Gucci person.’ In this way, by personifying the qualities of the luxury brands she loves, she is essentially ascribing her own social identity in relation to the perceived values and qualities she believes they hold through this ‘grooming ritual’ (McCracken, 1986). For Kaka, her attitude towards the brands she speaks of, highlights their effect on her own behaviour, but through their consumption and display in the beauty stores, by implication, she becomes a channel for global cultural flows and western ideologies when she interacts with the workers in the stores. From the Foucauldian perspectives of the sign system (1988), Kaka’s personification of luxury brands refers to a set of discursive strategies and practices that elite consumers use to construct distinctive and exclusive meanings that enhance their social identity. This resonates with Askegaard’s (2006) opinion that branded

products are part of a distinct interplay of ideologies that structure marketplace performances and social life.

As stated earlier, Michelle has a similar inclination for expensive designer brands, but as the interview progressed into a rhythm and she became more at ease with my questions, she spoke about her Hermes bag and how for her, such luxury items serve different purposes for different people in different contexts.

Michelle: When I carry a Hermes bag, hmm, me carrying a Hermes bag. Looking for how best to put this, other people, like I say I always like dividing and I do not like being that vague, some people will see it and say Hmm...." she has arrived," and some other people will look at it and because it is also their lifestyle as who they are and they will say "oh nice bag," "you got this bag, I have something like this, where did you get it?" and some other people will see it and say "where is she carrying this bag to?", "was it necessary?" "Did she need to spend so much"? and so different people with different perspectives, me carrying the bag is because it is beautiful and will serve for a different purpose and sometimes when I buy it. I will say that I could use this here or there. It is usually, well, these Hermes bags are significant.

So, to Michelle's mind, the same branded luxury goods in some hands would convey to others that someone has '*arrived*.' Meaning that the brand user would be regarded as a '*lady*' that has achieved high status for herself in society. Hence the Hermes bag would signify economic achievement. On the other hand, Nigerian consumers in the higher echelons of society, much like herself, would perceive the bag as befitting her class background. As an elite in Nigerian society, she believes that the bag suits her social class status. In this case, her use of the word 'big' does not refer to the size of the bag. Instead, it emphasizes her perception that it is of very high quality and craftsmanship and has outstanding aesthetic looks. In this way, from what is expressed here, it is clear that Michelle believes that in Nigerian society, an individual's social class position and

aspirations are reflected by their possessions and consumption of global luxury brands.

Then, in accordance with the arguments of Ozsomer & Altaras (2008), albeit in a different context, the global marketplace for luxury provides Nigerian consumers with a rich palette of cultural and mythic resources that are used in enacting and personalizing their cultural scripts of identity, which aligns with the structural imperatives of a consumer-driven globalized economy, which supports Ustunier & Holt's (2009) assertion that the status consumption practices of elite consumers in the developing world are entwined within identity performances that are rooted in the dominant forces of globalization. In this instance, global luxury brands.

## **8.2 Symbolic Consumption; Extension of the Self**

Consistent with the arguments from previous studies, a vast range of consumers indulge in luxury brands for status consumption; that is, this is not a practice only associated with the affluent (Aciklain et al., 2009; Eastman et al., 1999). It is because the socio-historical and cultural discourses that shape the consumption of global brands are now diffused across a wide range of contexts, including the developing world (Ustunier & Holt 2009). Hence, this research reveals that the middle-class clients investigated herein also engage in conspicuous consumption to associate with the wealthy elites of Nigerian society, who sit above them in the socio-economic hierarchy. These consumers are found to use these possessions to extend and strengthen their sense of self. Belk (1988) states that the "self" should not be defined uniformly across individuals and cultures. What constitutes the self is a subjective construct that changes between people and places over time. Consider Angela, a middle-class Nigerian who works in one of the country's leading banks in Abuja. During most summer holidays, she travels with her family abroad for vacation and shopping. During the interview, Angela's narrative about her preference for global luxury brands is primarily based on the symbolic meanings attached to the brands within the socio-cultural context of

Nigeria. The associations link her to global citizenship ideals and project an image of wealth and responsibility. She says,

Angela: Well, for my kids I use shops like Next in the UK and when my kids were a lot younger, I used to do Mother care products and for myself, I like shopping in the US and I do shops like Macy's and others, Calvin Klein and a lot of Michael Kors and you find out that things you bought some five years ago are still very good, trendy and durable. So that is just it. So, all these things are what make me a global citizen. Yeah.

Interviewer: how so?

Angela: well, part of the reasons I go for these products is that I express myself through the dressing. People here in Nigeria address you how you are dressed as a wealthy person and a responsible woman. So, to get that kind of appreciation from people around me, I have to dress in a classy way with well-tailored clothes.

Here, Angela says that she consumes global brands because of their trendiness and durability and that she can express her wealth and status to others around her. In a society with such socio-economic inequalities, Angela explained that individuals are revered based on how expensively they have adorned themselves in luxury attire and brands. This aligns with previous literature (Sprott et al., 2009; Ustunier & Holt 2009), showing how elite consumers in the developing world use branded products from the western world as powerful global symbols to express their identities and signal their status as elites in society. Referred to as a Parvenus (Han et al., 2010), Angela prefers to consume expensive, well-tailored clothes, which she believes will enhance her status and give her the desired high-class look. Angela's words depict that she thinks such consumption will position her as *'a wealthy person and... a responsible woman'* and shows that she perceives herself as a significant social standing in Abuja who should be respected. It illuminates her desire and needs to show off her distinctive and elegant style to align with the wealthy and command admiration from the lower-

class individuals around her. Apparently, from her utterances, Angela's cosmopolitan attitude and lifestyle accord her the global cultural capital for designating her class status (Kim, 2011) within Nigerian society. As mentioned in the literature review chapter of this thesis, her tastes and preferences for global luxury brands act as markers of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) from the lower-class people and inclusion with the elites.

In confirming Angela's beliefs about how the consumption and display of luxurious global brands interact with the social context, Manager Mike explains that his clients often adorn themselves with conspicuous global brands on their visits to the salon to signal to others. Mike works in the salon where both the very wealthy and middle-class regularly visit and believes that while not all engage in this practice, the middle-class customers are keen to express their status through brands and mark out their advantaged position in relation to the workers. Thus, he says:

Manager Mike: I can say that they do express their wealth by the way they are dress. They dress to show the boundaries between them and the workers to show the class difference, but not all of them do that actually. Some of them wear these brands to show the boundary to show that "we are of a different class of different categories" ... most of them do designers, the western clothes.

According to his words, "*we are of a different class, of a different category,*" throws light on how subject positions and class inequalities and distinctions are expressed and manifest during interactions in the salons. These social practices related to the display of goods to signal wealth are theoretically referred to as invidious comparison and relate to the ways in which conspicuous items are consumed to enable a consumer to disassociate from lower-class people or those without taste (Phau, 2000). This finding highlights how class distinctions and power relations are brought into sharp focus in the salons of Abuja and experienced by the workers through the consumption and display of global brands.



In relation to this, the findings derived from the analysis of the service workers' testimonies also reflect that they also engage in such practices to elevate their status in relation to their colleagues. In this instance, this appears to be based around being viewed as more professionally competent by clients. In this way, Gabriel says,

Gab: there is this *placement* that I get for even if they do not say it. Let me say, for example, that they bring two stylists for Bwari, and I am one of the stylists and the other one is also from Bwari. There would be a difference between us. They will rate us that I am different from the other stylist. Yes, though we are both from Bwari, they will still rate us differently.

Interviewer: why do you think so

Gab: why do I think so? Yes, with my dress sense first and foremost and my interactions with clients, I am being exposed more than them...my relationship in general with them.

From this, it is clear that Gabriel consumes brands for status recognition and to disassociate from his colleagues. According to him, he gets this '*placement by customers even when they do not say it*'. He believes that the customers acknowledge his fashion sense; hence, his social status is appraised. In respect of this, he believes that the customers perceive him to be better than his fellow stylists. In comparing himself with other stylists from Bwari, Gabriel believes that the difference between himself and the other stylist is related to his consumption of famous brands. Although from his testimony, it is quite apparent that he has never travelled outside of Nigeria to visit any other country. His narratives assert how he is influenced by western culture and the mass-mediated ideologies expressed in global brands. In addition, he is fully aware of how these ideologies mediate his relationship with his clients and allow him to compete in the marketplace and rise above his fellow workers in the salon.

Using Foucault's technologies of power and the self provides a critical lens to understand how the power dynamics of global cultural flows amidst inherent socio-historical discourses allow Gabriel to conceive of his identity. Also, it shows how Gabriel observes and transforms himself with the consumption of global brands as a form of self-care or self-creation (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Rose, 1998). As an autonomous entity, Gabriel can shape and actualise his desired identity by exercising his freedom to choose in the market (Du Gay, 1996). Hence, he believes that he is perceived as one better than his colleagues. Foucault referred to this as “*the self which has to be created as a work of art*” (1984, p.362).

Similar to previous studies, these findings demonstrate how globalization diffuses in culture and penetrates across the globe. They also show how the ideologies it circulates provide the symbolic capital through which consumers organise their lives and animate their subject positions. As such, in engaging with these globally mediate signs and images through their consumption practices (Friedman, 1994; Featherstone, 2004; Gabriel & Lang, 1995), the elites in Abuja act as mediators of socio-cultural transformation (Olsen & Gould, 2008), which is clearly evidenced in Gabriel testimony recounted above. Hence, through a Foucauldian (1980) lens, participants of this study are caught up in the power dynamics and ideologies that inflect the city's salons through the brands on display. These are a significant mediator of the variety of subject positions (re)produced in this context.

### **8.3 Symbolic Consumption; Subtle Global Luxury Brands**

Although it is clear from the interview transcripts that most elite customers in this context engage with global brands for signalling and express their status, a minority reveals that they do not use conspicuous signals to show off their prestige or social class affiliations. As reflected by Han et al.'s (2010) *Patricians*, these consumers are primarily concerned with associating themselves with other

*Patricians*. They prefer to associate with individuals in their socio-cultural group rather than in dissociating themselves from lower-class consumers. Hence, they use luxury brands with subtle signals, which in most instances can only be recognised by other Patricians like themselves.

For instance, Kaka, who is a wealthy lady from an elite family in Abuja, says she does not engage in the consumption of luxury brands with conspicuous symbols. As such, she can never be found with a handbag that has the brand logo attached to the bag. She prefers brands without acronyms or those that do not have a conspicuous brand name, for she does not have to signal her social class status through her possessions to people of lower status.

Kaka: no, one thing with me is that I never carry a brand that bears its name all over it. My bag is just a plain bag; most people will never know what brand it is because I do not feel I have to show off.

Interviewer: but most people do that

Kaka: yes, most people do that, but I find it tacky. That is my own opinion...I know. I have worked for Channel Boutique; I have worked for Hermes Boutique. I have some of their products and so it is not something that trips me. I know how we are here for it is not everyone that has what you have so, I do not have to rub it on their faces.

Kaka explains that most people will not know or recognise the name of her expensive bag because it is not common or popular. Her words “*most people*” means that middle or lower-class individuals would not recognise the brand of her bag. Even with class differentiation and social signalling being a key feature of developing nations (Ustuner & Holt, 2009), she does not feel it is necessary to disassociate from lower-class consumers by expressing her superior class status. For Kaka, this ‘*is tacky*’. Contrary to Veblen’s (1899) works, most wealthy consumers use conspicuous brands to dissociate themselves from lower-class individuals. Also, it is converse to my fundamental assumptions, as explained in

the introduction chapter of this thesis, that the service workers are subject to the conspicuous displays of wealth by the elites. Thus, the finding reveals that not all the elite consumers visiting the salon adorn themselves in prominent global brands to show off their status.

On confirming Kaka's narrative, Charles, a manager in the salon, admits that some wealthy consumers do not engage in conspicuous consumption to express their social class status with expensive luxuries.

Manager Charles: not all of them, for instance, let us take Vicky; for example, her father was a one-time senator in Nigeria, but I never knew about it until recently when I got to know through her surname. Another customer like Eno, I never knew she is the daughter of a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). There is a saying that "not all that glitters are gold" some will come here wearing all the designer clothes and shoes, yet they are not as wealthy as we think. Even I am better than some of them (both laughing). While some of them will come in here with ordinary bathroom slippers and clothes and you will never know who they are, and they do not speak aloud. They will just sit down, make their hair and leave. When she is about to leave, then she will press her car remote, and you will see the flashing lights of the car brand and then compare it to the slippers she wore to the store. That means she did not want to come here to say like "I have it, I am rich," but some of them will come here and behave as if they have everything in the world, whereas they have nothing. They are not wealthy people.

Despite being a postcolonial country with significant class inequalities, it is clear that some of the wealthy consumers of these stores do not engage in the conspicuous consumption of luxury brands. In his use of the phrase "*not all that glitters are gold*," Charles implies that not all customers who wear luxury brands to the store are wealthy or elite consumers. The opposite can be quite true.

From Charles' experience and observations, many elite consumers visit the salon in very modest clothing and do not '*speak loud*.' In this context, the word 'loud'

shows that these wealthy customers are gentle in their behaviours and subtle in their use of language. Also, they are not boastful about their wealth or social class backgrounds. He compares the wealthy customers' simple-looking slippers with the expensive car brands in his narrative. In this way it appears that there are some inconsistencies in the behaviours of these customers. While they are not signalling through their clothes, their choice of transport conveys a different story.

Nonetheless, this testimony shows how the workers and managers assess their customers' social status by evaluating their material possessions. Even when customers are simply dressed to the salon, they look out for their rides to assess their 'real' social class positions.

#### **8.4 Symbolic Consumption; Class Hierarchies and Lower-Class Oppression**

Another finding derived from the analysis of the data in the thesis demonstrates how some clients of the stores engage in conspicuous consumption through luxury brands to assert their positions over the service workers. For instance, while having an informal conversation with Kaka about my observations concerning how customers display their luxuries of high-end mobile phones, footwear, gold jewellery, and handbags in the store, she says,

Kaka: we have a hierarchy complex

Interviewer: Is that what you think?

Kaka: yes, that is what I know. Some people want to oppress others and want to like 'I am better than you'... to oppress people in Abuja. When you see people with their friends, they grew up together... say he studied abroad. They studied here, they are usually totally different because he would know the values of people, he would see that money is not all, the brand is not everything. Yes, good brands are not everything.

As the conversation above reveals, Kaka believes that some consumers who display such luxuries in the store do so because they have a 'hierarchy complex.'

Her words depict that such consumers lack self-esteem or are not confident about their relative social status. On further enquiry, for Kaka, such behaviours are typical of the local elites who have not been exposed to western culture and values. In relation to the discussion in chapter eight about the development of the Nigerian class system of this thesis, these individuals to whom Kaka refer are mainly drawn from the traditional local elites who are not as educated and have not been as frequently exposed to the western world. Though these are a large population, few rich people are amongst them, and the vast majority are poverty-stricken (Khan & Cheri, 2016). Hence, it is possible that those who do sit amongst the traditional elite engage in luxurious lifestyles to disassociate themselves from the less fortunate in their tribal groups.

Kaka, goes on to say:

Interviewer: So, you say that some people use these products because they want to be revered by others?

Kaka: that is the problem we have in our country, and I always tell people there is something that my father has told me. My father was a Minister, and when I was home for a holiday, he made me take food to the security guard. He is a Minister, he was the boss, and I being his daughter, he still made me take food to the security guards at the gate of my house just to 'ground me.' To make them feel that they are humans like me, that I am not better than them'.

The sentiment displayed in this narrative illuminates the degree of social class disparity between the rich and the poor, which is so prevalent in the country, and she feels about it. By describing her wealthy background and how her father makes her take food to the security guards in their compound to 'ground' her offers insight into how poor people in Nigeria are usually mistreated. In her words, 'ground me' means that her father wanted to bridge the divide between her and the security guards so she would see them as 'humans' like her. It throws light on the fact that in Nigerian society and post-colonial countries more broadly,

lower-class people are disregarded mainly by the elites as less human. Thus, Kaka believes that those customers who engage in conspicuous consumption essentially oppress the have-nots like the service workers through their consumption practices. Kaka concludes our interview by saying that ‘money is not all, and brands are not everything’.

### **8.5 Symbolic Consumption; Practices of Emulation and Counterfeit Brands**

Though some of the workers admitted to emulating their customers' consumption of these brands, the findings from the fieldwork show that the elites are not the only source of their interest in consuming global brands, that is to say; the workers explained that they are equally inspired by social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and others. This finding aligns with Tomlinson (1999) and Wilk (1998), who argue that the emulation of western consumption practices and lifestyles has increased in relation to the growth of western media and advertising in the developing world. The influx and presence of global brands through these mass-media channels stimulate new consumer desires in relation to these commercially mediated ideologies. Moreover, this is clearly occurring in the salons of Abuja. For instance, though David confirms his interest in global brands but insists that much of his exposure has been through social media technologies:

David: first of all, I like them because they are branded name products. Ok, fine. However, I will not say only from the customers. The internet is everywhere now, and I watch, do Instagram, Facebook, and do WhatsApp, and watch television, so I have seen most of these things there. Yes, I see people wear them, but I still infuse my fashion sense into it. That is how I like to dress. The fact that I see the customers wear them does not mean that I would want to wear them the same way. I can put the same together and even then, it will look better than that person.

David explains that though he is exposed to global brands, he infuses his fashion ideas to make them distinct to him. In some way, this makes them better than the

ones consumed by his customers. Furthermore, he feels confident in his knowledge of global consumer culture with his exposure to social media. This throws light on the pervasion of global cultural flow and how it enters the salon and the developing world through various vehicles and individuals. As emphasized by the theory on deterritorialization (Appadurai, 1990; Bauman, 2000) discussed in chapter two of this thesis, the interpenetration of global flows on culture is no longer confined to a defined geographic locality, for distinct cultures are replaced and linked together through the growth and omnipresence of mass-mediated messages and technologies (Pieterse, 2019; Hermens & Kempen, 1998). Thus, David's narrative confirms that global cultural flows create opportunities for commonalities between individuals from different nationalities, languages, ethnicity and social groups, as they come to share similar lifestyles, values and consumption interests (de Burgh-Woodman, 2014; Emontspool and Georgi, 2017; Figueiredo and Uncles, 2015; Hannerz, 1990).

However, some of these individuals from lower-class backgrounds cannot successfully engage with expensive brands because they do not have the financial means to do so. These are known as *Poseurs* (Han et al., 2010). Given their awareness concerning the symbolic properties of these brands in enhancing their status and respect within the Nigerian context, these individuals often turn to counterfeit products as cheap substitutes for the originals (Wee et al., 1995). It demonstrates how they seek to satisfy their desires to associate with wealthy people in society. Michelle explained that some less affluent citizens of Abuja purchase copies of some brands because they want to associate with the elite in society and be identified within that class range.

Michelle: Yes. Yeah (laughing), now I work for [anonymised company], and their product is a textile factory that has been in existence for over a hundred and seventy years. It is known... It is identified with the Northern woman. One of the class products is called [anonymised brand]. When you wear the original



one, there are so many counterfeits. Some people wear counterfeit. I will not even think of going to buy or wear the counterfeit one,

Michelle refers to the 'Northern woman', which denotes females who belong to families in the higher echelons of Nigerian society, who live in the Northern territories. Such high-class women should avoid products that do not fit their class. In accordance with this narrative account, the women and wives of these wealthy families are known to have excellent tastes in fashion and for luxuries and expensive global brands. They are known for conspicuous consumption of expensive gold accessories, Abayas, Vlisco wrappers, French and Dutch laces, Gucci handbags and Louis Vuitton slippers, etc., but this is quite normal. However, Michelle says, 'some people wear the counterfeit of the original'. Michelle's phrase "some people" refers to lower-class consumers who lack the financial capital to engage in such luxuries. In their desires to associate with the elites, they consume counterfeit products with conspicuous signals because of their perceived symbolic meanings and values (Wee et al., 1995)

Regarding Foucault's technology of the sign system (1988), this finding sheds more light on how lower-class consumers purchase counterfeits of global luxury brands because of their perceived symbolic meanings and values within the Nigerian context. Though these lower-class consumers purchase the counterfeit, they believe that the esteemed values of global brands (Ekinci et al., 2013) would enable them to associate with the elites by breaking into the material world that symbolically defines and marks out the class divides (Castle, 1986).

However, reports from the interview data show that the copies of the luxury brands purchased by the service workers sit below their general level of awareness. For instance, Fatima says,

I did not even know the name for you are the one telling me about the bag's name. How much do I earn to buy such an expensive bag? Do I work in the

Central Bank of Nigeria or the Nigerian National Petroleum Commission? I bought it for 6 thousand Naira. It is a copy of the original! (*She was laughing*)

Interviewer: What does the logo MK mean to you?

Fatima: I did not know for I just saw the logo like that, and I thought it was for fashion. They do bring such bags here when they come. Even when there is a new design in fashion, they carry the bag here, but I did not know that was the bag's name. A lady brought things to buy, and I saw the bag, liked it, and then I bought it. I thought that the logo was just for fashion. I never knew that the bag has a name.

Fatima's interview narrative resonates with the homogenisation perspective of globalisation, which opines that consumers in the developing world lack agency. That is, they are merely receptive and seduced by the products from developed countries (Sharifonnsabi et al., 2019). Given the workers' first-hand experience, it is conceivable that the elite's conspicuous consumption of branded luxury products (Sprott et al., 2009; Ustunier & Holt, 2010) will rub off on them. Thus, leading to emulation practices by the service workers. In essence, Fatima's report sheds light on the pecuniary emulation practices (Veblen, 1899) of the workers as they attempt to copy the elite's choice of conspicuous global brands. Also, this narrative extends our understanding of branded consumption in Nigeria by illuminating how lower-class consumers in the capital of the country seek to emulate local elites (Ozsomer & Altaras, 2008).

## **8.6 Symbolic Consumption: Brand Mediation of Customers Experiences in the Store**

Another way in which brands function in this context is how they mediate customer experiences in the store. This is evident from Ronke's comments below.

Ronke: yes, it happens. It happens everywhere for an adage that says, 'you dress the way you want to be addressed'. You know this tends to happen to people who are not familiar with you because it is not every day you adorn yourself with all those brands. For someone that does not know you too well and she sees

you wearing bath slippers, and she sees another lady wearing Gucci slippers and carrying a Prada bag, it is just normal for you to want to lean towards the one that is well packaged. You will believe that this person has more to offer than the one wearing the bathroom slipper. It is just the truth. It happens everywhere you go and one long gown like this. I think it is only human nature.

Interviewer: does it affect the kind of services that you get?

Ronke: it does to an extent. It does. They size you up because they will be like, "this person can pay for our services, this person if I tell her this product is such an amount, she looks like she can afford it. Oh, this person looks like ah...is she sure she wants to be here, can she afford our services?' you know they size you up immediately they see you. So, it affects the kind of service that they give you. However, again, that happens if they do not know who you are, but if they know you then, they are familiar with you, and if they know that you can afford it, then they will still accord you that respect. So that is just it. However, if it is the first time you are going to that place, it will affect how they receive us.

From Ronke's testimony above, it is clear that the way customers dress and present themselves in the salon determines the level of service and attention they receive. As such, the service workers are usually warm towards customers who convey wealth and prestige. On the contrary, those who are not perceived as such are not welcomed so warmly. Sometimes, they may receive a cold reception. So, when Ronke was asked if the workers give her a warm reception, she responds by saying that the customers are welcomed based on their assessment by the service workers in the salon. This is supported by data gleaned from an interview with one of the store managers, Betty, who said such attitudes from the service workers are typical of Nigerian society.

Unlike the egalitarian societies in the western world, the display of social class status in Abuja salons usually determines the reception given to wealthy people by the service workers in the store. By narrating her observations from a third-

person perspective, Betty explained the differences in response to a customer based on how they are perceived by the workers,

Manager Betty: hmm..., for both cases, the receptions are usually different. There is this warm welcoming for the affluent customers and a cold one for wealthy customers. Suppose a customer comes in here looking very casually dressed. In that case, the workers will be cold towards them, like, “what can this customer offer? Let me do her hair, let her go” Then maybe after several visits and the customer comes here with her friends. They see that their friends are rich people. You begin to know that they will start to build respect for the customer, like “this customer is not just an ordinary person, she is an elite, let me give her the respect that she deserves.” If she comes here looking simple and “regular” then, they will be cold and unfriendly.

In this way, it is clear that there is some instrumentality in the behaviour of the workers. For Betty, in reference to the phrase, *‘what can this customer offer?’* demonstrates the worker's perception about variances in the client base of this particular salon and how customers may not be perceived to wealthy enough to show benevolence by giving tips to them. However, if, after several regular visits, they find that the customer has rich friends, or they learn that they are wealthy through other means, then they begin to accord them the respect that they *‘deserve’* in the store. In this way, it is clear that the service workers deploy global brands and luxury in this context as heuristic resources to assess the value of a customer and their ability to financially reward them for their services. This finding aligns with Dion & Borraz’ (2017) study, which sheds light on how luxury brands play a crucial role in shaping consumer subjectivities and behaviour by making the interlocutors in Abuja’s salons perform as class subjects. From a Foucauldian (1988) perspective, these symbolic goods are instrumental disciplinary mechanisms of power that are crucial to processes aligned with technologies of the self. In addition, this finding adds to the literature by positioning global brands as vehicles through which status games are

structured within service-based settings in Nigeria. More specifically, it extends the study and findings of Ustunier & Thompson (2012), who found that service interactions are marked by interdependent status games between wealthy customers and service workers. In light of this, how global brands are consumed in Nigerian salons act as a constant reminder of the elites and service workers positions on the social hierarchy.

### **8.7 Symbolic Consumption; Through the Lens of Foucault's Technology of the Sign System**

By drawing from the Foucauldian notion of the technology of sign systems, the findings discussed above provide clear insight into the symbolic meanings and values attached to the global luxury brands in Nigeria and their disciplinary power in the particular context of Abuja's salons.

The chapter reveals that most elite customers visiting the beauty salons of Abuja engage in the consumption of global luxury brands for marking out their class positions and disassociating from lower groups in society. In these instances, brands are arguably used to assert cultural authority over the workers in a form of symbolic violence to maintain the status quo over this subordinate group (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2002). Consequently, the conspicuous symbols of these brands act as markers of distinction for the elites as they disassociate themselves from the lower-class consumers such as the service workers.

On the contrary, the discussion has also shown that some wealthy consumers consume subtle luxury brands because they do not want to show their class status. It confirms Han et al. (2010) viewpoint on patricians as discussed above. Hence, though consumers use symbols and signs (Foucault, 1988) as markers of distinction and status, a few elites in the study do not engage in such conspicuous consumption.

On the other hand, the findings have also shown that the consumption of luxury brands is not restricted to the very rich in the society, and that less affluent

customers of the stores and even the service workers indulge in luxury brand consumption and derivatives thereof to garner the respect and admiration of others (Shaikh et al., 2017).

Additionally, Foucault's viewpoints on the technology of the self (1988) highlight how the symbolic meanings of these global luxury brands are utilized to create cultural notions of the self and through which desired lifestyles are acquired and sustained (Ahuvia, 2005; Askegaard, 2006; Dittmar, 1992; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007; McCracken, 1988; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). For instance, while the elites (re)produce their class identities and affiliations through these cultural resources, some workers use the brands and counterfeits to bridge the class divide between them and their clients and to compete with their colleagues. What is more, others deploy them to assess the value and prestige of their customers and the probability that they will offer tips for their services.

All of this implies that in a developing society like Nigeria, which is increasingly subject to global culture flows that promote materialism and the centrality of consumption, brands are vessels that perform a range of material and immaterial functions in the salons of Abuja. Thus, in accordance with Askegaard's (2006) assertion, brands in this context should be conceptualised as central historical and institutional forces that have profound impacts on this marketplace and the social categories and subject positions they (re)configure and (re)produce. In the following chapter, I discuss commercial friendships in the store and class consciousness.

## **CHAPTER NINE: COMMERCIAL FRIENDSHIPS AND CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the first broad theme which emerged from the analysis of the data collected for this study, and in so doing, offers a preliminary response to the research objective; to examine the nature of service encounters between the participants of the study. Thus, the discussion focuses on the nature of interpersonal interactions and the relational dynamics between the service workers and their clients and how these manifest in commercial friendships that are structured by class consciousness. As such, this chapter sheds light on how the service workers enact their roles and develop relationships with their clients in relation to their respective socio-cultural backgrounds. Thus, the following analysis demonstrates how the relationships that unfold between the parties within beauty salons in Nigeria are negotiated in relation to the class-based power relationships that animate this setting.

### **9.1 Commercial Friendships**

As reported by previous studies of hair salons and beauty parlours (e.g., Price & Arnould, 1999; Ustunier & Thompson, 2012; Yeadon, 2012), the service providers and clients in these settings generally share a range of behavioural characteristics and attitudes that are characteristic of commercial friendships. These studies illustrate how interactions between service workers and clients create opportunities for sociability as they involve a degree of intimacy, which manifests in affection, social support, dependency, loyalty, and reciprocal gift-giving. In addition, Locke (1996) and Price, Arnould & Deibler (1995) demonstrate that the delivery of services between hairstylists and their clients are usually highly interactive processes requiring inputs from both parties. For instance, the interactions involve intimate proxemics, whereby the relationships are affectively charged, and the processes that unfold between the parties are

repeated at semi-regular intervals over time (ibid). Therefore, even though these relationships are often characterised by significant variations in social class and status between the parties involved in these commercial exchanges, it is expected that there would be friendly relationships between clients and their hairstylists.

In relation to this, during the fieldwork for this study, it became clear that the interactions that unfold in this setting create a sense of familiarity and mutual commitment between the parties involved. With a range of interrelationships and interdependencies shared between them. Similar to past studies; therefore, the notion of a ‘commercial friendship’ was found to be a feature of the service being delivered and experienced in this context, albeit with new dimensions that will be explained and discussed in the following sections. Notably, these dimensions relate to the differences in social class and status that are clearly in play in the everyday interactions and experiences that unfold in this context and which, in many ways, work to constrain mutually fulfilling commercial friendships.

## **9.2 Familiarities and Commitments**

Kurth (1970) argues that one of the recurrent characteristics of service encounters in salons is the friendly exchanges that lead to the development of more intense friendships. During the fieldwork, I observed that, as regular customers come into a store, the workers welcome them with beautiful smiles and usher them to their seats. Pleasantries are usually exchanged, followed by discussions about the hairstyles the customer wants, and the stylist attentively listens to them.

In the present study, during the interviews, when the service workers were asked about their relationships with their clients, most of them said they had developed a good rapport with them. The majority, who have been working in the salons for some time, expressed their friendly relationships with the clients. For instance, Gloria explains that she has clients whom she relates within a similar fashion to good friends, and in rare occurrences, these commercial friendships extend beyond the borders of the salon. Gloria has been working in one of the stores



sampled in this research for about 8yrs and has regular customers. For her, a friendship between herself and the customers is key to a successful client relationship. However, on close inspection of the way in which she expresses these points, it becomes clear that this is geared towards being a valuable employee rather than through an autotelic drive per se. In the following data extract, for instance, when she was asked about her relationship with the customers, Gloria reports:

Gloria: my relationship with the customer is that if you want to work in the salon, then you have to open your mind and love the customers for you need to be friendly with the customers because if you are not, for instance before I got here, I never liked to play and joke with people, but immediately I started working in the salon, I realised that I have to learn how to laugh and play with people. I have jokes with the customers when attending to them. Even with the children's hair, if I want to do a baby's hair, I have to play with the child and make her happy, the child will be happy, and their parents will also be happy with me. This has helped me over the years. Like now a customer can come into the store and she will request that I attend to her for it is because of the way I used to attend to them, joke them and laugh with them.

The finding from this narrative seems consistent with other studies as it supports the idea that commercial friendships are developed through the regular interactions between the clients and their customers (Price & Arnould, 1999, Ustunier & Thompson, 2012; Yeadon, 2012). The warm and positive attitudes of service workers towards customers over time contribute to forming these relationships (Price and Arnould, 1999). Gloria's narrative about her behaviour in the store shows that for a service worker to have a good experience with the clients, and be valued, then they must be warm and receptive to the customers. Gloria spoke about being an introvert before she started working in the salon; however, she realised that such an attitude was not appropriate in this context, especially when dealing with the customers who come to these stores. It seems

that her convivial social behaviour of '*having jokes*' and '*playing with the children*' when attending to her clients is essential to her commercial relationship with them. From her testimony, it is clear that these friendly interactions with her customers over the years have led to a loyal client base who regularly come to her to attend to them. As such, Gloria's emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) clearly leads to satisfied customers and repeat business.

In most service contexts that necessitate prolonged periods of interpersonal interaction, a common feature of commercial friendships is that the clients and service workers often occupy different social worlds regarding gender, age, social class, educational backgrounds, etc. (Price & Arnould, 1999). This is clearly the case in the salons of Abuja, where the interlocutors are drawn from significantly different socio-economic strata in Nigeria. Despite this, in some, albeit rare, occurrences, it is evident that the hairstylists' relationship with their clients become cordial and brotherly. For instance, Rick explains how he tries to cheer up his customers when they come to the store stressed or in a bad mood. However, in a similar manner to Gloria, there seems to be commercial instrumentality in this, in the respect that convivial relationships and attentiveness are good for business and personal recommendations. Arguably, through their attentiveness and care, they are working with the client.

Rick: over-friendly, as if I am not friendly with them, they will not direct their friends to me because any time they come, I used to do what will make them smile and happy. Even when they are a bit disturbed, I use to cheer them up, I ask them about what is troubling them, saying, 'why are you like this, I hope things are well with you? Most of my customers are very friendly to me. Although some may not be, I try to cheer them up while attending to them. It has helped my relationship with them a lot. Most of the customers are usually very happy with me as I try to deal with them in a very friendly manner. No matter how difficult that they are, I try to make them happy while I am attending to them.

Rick's account illustrates how his warm and friendly behaviour towards the customers creates such a relationship that his client's pass on referrals to him. As this attitude and behaviour resonate with Gloria's, it is clear that these convivial relationships are central to customer satisfaction and business development. It also demonstrates the hairstylist's commitment to ensuring good customer experiences and maintaining the salon's image and reputation, regardless of how difficult the customer may be to them.

An interpretation of this using the Foucauldian (1988) perspective of technologies of power shows that the power relationship within the marketplace of the salon determines the behaviour of the service workers. As the norm (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982), the workers are expected to submit themselves to certain forms of domination and control during their interactions with the elites. In similarity to previous studies (Price & Arnould, 1999; Gimlin, 1996; Ustunier & Thompson, 2012; Yeadon, 2012), their collective narratives emphasize the need to position themselves in a subordinate manner to act warmly and receptive to the customers to ensure a positive customer experience. As such, the salon workers are encouraged to express their individuality, albeit in a tightly scripted way, to align with the salons' expected fun but complicit self-identity (Motion & Leitch, 2002), especially when they interact with their primarily wealthy clients. In marketing terms, they are attending to the process and participant components of Booms & Bitners (1980) extended marketing mix for services to create value for the client and capture value for the salon (Armstrong & Kotler, 2012).

### **9.3 Interdependencies**

While the perception exists that hairstyling is a "*simple, unskilled or low occupation job*" (Eayrs, 1993:32), past studies have consistently shown that stylists engage in more complex forms of technical, interpersonal and interactive work which requires various types of skill, knowledge and expertise (Gimlin 1996; Lee et al., 2005; Cohen 2010). During the fieldwork, I observed that the

customers walk into the store or make bookings demanding or expressing their preferences for hairstylists with high aesthetic skills. Most clients who request such treatment are regulars to the beauty salon's understudy, who feel at ease making such demands. As such, the findings from the data are consistent with previous research, which maintains that salon customers indicate a much higher degree of dependency and loyalty towards hairstylists who regularly attend to them and provide good service (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012). Most of the customers explained that they put in a great personal effort to ensure their stylist gets used to their standards of conduct and understands their aesthetic preferences and ways of interacting. For instance, Kaka has been a regular customer to one of the salons sampled in this study, and in response to her preference for certain workers in the store, says:

kaka: for me, I will say it is Gabriel like when I say, 'Gabriel do not do this hairstyle for me and he will say 'I am going to do it (*both laughing*) so, he will say that I will look better that way, but another person will just stop it when I tell them not to do a particular hairstyle for me.

This narrative shows that Gabriel has grown to understand Kaka's tastes in fashion and hairstyles. Hence, over time, he has gained some form of control over this client, and to a large degree, can exercise his professional discretion over the aesthetic styles he creates for Kaka. This shows the level of commitment of the workers in terms of ensuring customers satisfaction and pleasant experiences, but also a shift in power from one party to another as the performance and display of capital (Holt,1998) convinces the client that they should loosen control and trust the aesthetic judgment and skills of the stylist. This transfer of power indicates how relationships develop in the store and how interdependencies are created, which help build customer loyalty.

Conversely, consider how the stylists feel when their clients are not so dependent on them for their skills or if they shop around for their respective treatments.

Gab: first of all, I will say that the relationship between us has been such that if they should go somewhere else to make their hair, it will be as if they are cheating on me. It is such that whenever I see that they have gone to some other salons to make their hair, they do know that I will feel slighted. Aside from the fact that maybe the customer is not around or out of the country but if not, it will make me think that perhaps I could not meet up to your satisfaction. Anyway, I believe they get what they want, and that I can give them good service to their satisfaction.

Gab's use of the words 'first of all' shows the importance of his relationship with his customers. The findings from this data corroborate with others because Gabriel says he feels 'cheated' if a customer goes somewhere else. Results from Ustunier & Thompson's (2012) research, for example, reveal that hairstylist skills often function as a form of symbolic capital which they leverage to claim interpersonal power and control over their customers. When customers move on to other beauty salons, Gabriel believes they are unsatisfied with his services, which often leaves him insecure about his talent and skills. A similar response from another stylist, Richard, illustrates how his management of his clients and how he styles their hair enables him to exert some form of control over the customers.

Rick: well, when they come to the salon, they are usually under my 'custody' (both laughing). Yes. They are under my custody as I tell them what to do as per what will suit them, and they take to my advice as one that will give them the best service. Most of the customers take me as if I am their brother. When most of the customers that I attend to come to the store, you will think that we have known each other for a long time.

Being similar to what was reported by Gab above, this account from Rick indicates the type of relationship shared with his elite clients. Though they come from different social worlds, he uses the word '*custody*' to describe his control over the customers. It shows that Rick converts his cultural capital as a skilled

hairstylist into symbolic capital (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012). From this narrative, it is arguable that despite the significant social class differences that exist between the participants of this study, the salon is a place where the customers can temporally relax their status hierarchies, and the workers are able to transcend theirs. Hence, in creating a context for control based upon a combination of aesthetic skills, commitment, and familiarity, Rick believes that the relationship between him and some of his clients is brotherly. Also, due to the apparent dependence on Rick for aesthetically pleasing and fashionable hairstyles, the customers create a perceived salon specific status advantage for him, as they are both willing to pay for the services and recommend their friends to the store for similar treatment.

However, though it is clear from the interviews that the stylists proclaim themselves as highly skilled artisans -and indeed the examples cited above concur with this- in most cases, this ‘orchestrator’ role is dismissed by customers as fashionably limited. In these instances, the customers feel that the hairdressers are mere technicians who contribute little distinctive skill to the service outcome. In this way, they are clearly substitutable. As some of these customers know what they want and how to get it, they invert the hairstylist's hierarchy of expertise by bringing the aesthetic vision which the stylists must adhere to while attending to them. Through these acts, the customers delegitimize the hairstylist's primary display of symbolic capital by claiming a particular kind of authority through aesthetic judgement while being attended to in the store. For these types of customers, in relation to the degree of dependency on the stylist in the beauty stores for a satisfactory outcome, in their mind, they have the upper hand concerning the decisions on their needs, and that through their strict supervision and direction, anyone can potentially attend to them.

Grace: nobody is indispensable. I think it depends on the client and the person that is providing the service. Some people have made those girls as if “*it is*

*either you or no one else can attend to me*”, which causes those people to begin to feel that way. Still, I think that some of these girls believe that *“I am too good in this, and I am the only one that can do this”* In the end, I think it is neither here nor there. I think it is how you present yourself before the girls. Like, *“if I do not see this particular person to attend to me then I will go back home”* then the person, the worker, begins to feel that ‘oh, this is my customer and maybe the next time that she sees her with somebody else she would feel betrayed. I think it is a two-way thing, you know. Personally, I am not like that, for I have seen in the course of life that no one, absolutely no one is indispensable. There is nothing, and most of the time, when you find new things, you will find out that there is nothing, but there could be others that are better than what you thought.

From Grace’s narrative, it is apparent that she has patronised several salons and does not have any reason to get attached to a particular stylist because she has invested her time and effort in training the stylists to meet her standards and tastes. She explained that the hairstylists feel indispensable because some customers make them feel so important that they are the only ones that can give them such satisfactory services. However, according to her, there are always experienced stylists around; hence, they do not need to be loyal to any particular stylist for their ‘*superior*’ aesthetic skills and knowledge of fashion. In this way, she works to delegitimise any claims to status or field-specific cultural capital and skills that the stylists may perceive (Arsel & Thompson, 2011).

From my observations during fieldwork, this form of behaviour is commonly found amongst young female customers who are widely travelled to developed countries worldwide and have visited more expensive salons elsewhere. Often, they like to show their authority and dominance over the workers by their assertions and aesthetic judgements during the interactions. Sometimes, they come with styles they have seen on fashion websites and magazines and demand the same for them. Whilst so, the workers respond to these challenges by

displaying their expert skills and making every effort to please the customer. From the observations, the stylists essentially feel humbled when attending to such clients because they believe that their elite clients are widely travelled and far more informed about the most recent fashion trends and vogues no matter their level of skill and symbolic capital. That is, in comparison, they have accumulated far more cultural capital through their cosmopolitan lifestyles (Holt, 1998).

#### **9.4 The Restraints by Social Class Differences.**

Findings from prior studies suggest that beauty salons are perceived as spaces where social exchange and inequalities are negotiated during service interactions (Arnould & Price, 1999, Ustunier & Thompson, 2012). However, the ways in which social or economic inequality is evaluated by the parties involved in these interactions varies due to the socio-cultural context. As this study examined service interactions between differentiated class groups in the postcolonial context of beauty salons in Nigeria, the findings show that commercial friendships and relationships are significantly restrained and shaped by the wide class disparities between the participants. From the interview excerpt reported below, Gabriel explained that though he has been working as a stylist for about ten years and has some regular customers, the friendship between himself and the customers is constrained by the socio-economic inequalities between them.

Gab: I have been able to have a cordial relationship with the customers to a good extent though not all of them. Some see me as their younger brother, some see me as their child, and some as their friend. Those are the type of relationships that I have had with the customers. For instance, I have been attending to customers for like 4-5 years, the likes of Kaka, Zainab, Eno...and they are children of wealthy people. We are close. We are very close, but I will say that though they have been my customers for a long while, I still keep the relationship with them at a customer/stylist level to not overstep my bounds with them. The fact that some customers see me as their brother or a younger



brother or their son does not make me a blood relation to them; still, I keep the relationship to a limit.

Interviewer: so, you say that though you make friends with them, you keep that distance?

Gab: yes, though I am close to them, there is a limit to which I can say things to them.

To begin with, Gabriel's use of the words, 'we are close...we are very close', throws light on the quality of his relationship with his customers, despite the class differences. As elucidated by Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry (1989), salon stores potentially provide the sacred space set apart from ordinary activities where special and intimate friendships can take hold and thrive between customers and service workers. A probable reason for this is that the salon setting brings these interlocutors together into a prolonged and recurrent interaction that encourages reciprocal disclosure (Price & Arnould, 1999).

However, despite Gabriel's close relationship with these customers, his awareness of the class differences between them is undeniable, especially when he says the customers are '*children of rich people*'. This shows that he is fully conscious of the class inequalities that exist between himself and his clients and that this creates boundaries around their relationship. From Gabriel's narrative, it is clear that though he has developed good commercial relationships with the customers, there are clear socio-cultural differences and class distinctions that will always exist between them (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1971). Thus, he keeps the relationship on a stylist and customer level because he understands the limits. During his interactions with his clients, he manages the relationships in a most professional manner.

## 9.5 Commercial Friendships; Service Workers Keep a Distance

Another worker, Helen, says she cannot be friends with her clients because of social class differences. She lives in the suburbs and wants to work in the city so she could meet wealthy people. When asked about her relationship with the customers, she says,

Helen: they are just my customers. I only make their hair for them.

Interviewer: are you friends with them?

Helen: no, I cannot be friends with them as I am not their class, many of them, because most of them are rich, and they are well educated. I cannot make friends with them, and they cannot make friends with me as well. Many of them like me, but outside this place, I do not have anything to do with them like calling them on the phone. No, though many of them are very friendly. I cannot be their friend.

This response by Helen shows that she is very conscious of her social class background and status in Nigeria. As an ethnic minority from the southern part of the country, she believes that her customers will not socially accept her due to economic and socio-cultural differences. Using the words *'just my customers'* demonstrates that though she attends to them regularly, there is no form of mutuality attached to the relationship, especially outside of the context of the beauty store. This finding supports those observed in earlier studies (Price & Arnould, 1999) which argue that the context of the salon creates boundaries around commercial friendships. Few develop outside of the commercial context, and the differences that are often apparent between the interlocutors in these relationships, such as those related to social class in this instance, shape the extent to which people relate and develop familiarities inside too. As this study is based in the postcolonial context of Nigeria, in Abuja, which holds inherent class disparities, the class boundaries between the service workers and the elite customers are clearly defined and often brought up in the interviews as a topic of

contention. Hence, Helen feels estranged from her clients in relation to this and from forming any kind of relationship which could lead to self-disclosure or reciprocity, as also explained in the case of Gabriel above.

Ruth also maintains a professional position as she attends to the customers. She works in a salon that is particularly known for attracting customers from the government and their families in Abuja, who occupy positions at the top of the Nigerian social hierarchy.

Interviewer: What is your relationship with the customers?

Ruth: our relationship is strictly on business. I do not have any relationship with the customers. I do not know about the other workers, but I do not have any close or personal relationship with any of my clients. What I am here for is just to give them the services. When they come, I do attend to them and that is it. Some of them do ask for my personal number after I have attended to them that they like my work, but then taking my phone number does not mean that they will ever call to say "hi" or call to ask me for a date or something, no...no, they do not. For collecting my number is for them to book an appointment, for the next they want to come here or to ask if I am free at a particular time for them to come but not for any personal reason.

This narrative from Ruth shows that she does not have any form of friendship with her clients. Her words, *'our relationship is strictly on business levels'*, highlights that she does not have room for any familiarity or personal relationship between herself and the customers. Obviously, she thinks that the customers would never want to have anything to do with her outside the walls of the salon; hence she does not expect to have close relationships with them. Thus, similar to the other workers who were interviewed, she emphasizes the importance of maintaining a professional position in her work.

The Foucauldian perspective on power and resistance (Foucault, 1982) provides a lens to see how the service workers rebuff commercial friendships with the

elites because of class differences. It explains why Foucault says that there are no power relationships without resistance, for both are formed simultaneously. From this theoretical lens, the power relationships underscoring the commercial friendships that develop in this context are strictly dependent on the class disparities and socio-economic inequalities that exist between the participants of this study. Though the service workers may be complicit in their relationships with the elites, there is evidence of underlying resistance to these friendships, especially in the case of Ruth. This finding thus extends the work of previous studies (Arnould & Price, 1999; Ustunier & Thompson, 2012) into the nature of commercial friendships in salons. As shown from the interview excerpts, the workers are clearly conscious of their class background whilst in the stores because they believe that the elites would never regard them as real friends and equals.

However, an elite participant offers an alternate account by explaining that she does not get to have any familiar or close relationships with the service workers because, in the instances where she has tried to engage with them on *'their'* level, they are rude to her or take her for granted.

Angela: Well, before, I used to get familiar with them to be able to help like maybe if any of them gives birth to a baby or they need help in one way or has a baby or the other, but I realised that out that it does not pay off. When you get too familiar with these service workers to be familiar with them, they think that you cannot do without them. Also, they feel that you have low self-esteem, and that is why you are talking to them, or you are not an upper-class person or something. They have a way of behaving.

Interviewer: how do you mean?

Angela: yes, it is in them. They are insulting when you try to come down to their level, and so the best I do these days is that when I go there, I greet them, and I do not go into a chat with them. Yes, I tell them what I want to do, and that is all. Moreover, that is why I am not over-dependent on any particular person who

actually does my hair, as I do not want to depend on anybody. So, should it be that if a person is not there tomorrow, I will still have to do my hair.

Echoing the significance of the class differences between the participants of this study and their role in shaping relationships, Angela does not have a friendly rapport with the workers because, in her mind, they lack the necessary etiquette to interact with the customers. Her narrative is significantly different from what Ustunier and Thompson's (2012) found in their study of the relationships between service workers and clients in salons in Turkey. According to their research, the service workers are usually trained to develop the practical skills of the hairdressing craft. Over time they are conditioned into acceptable behaviours and learn new practices of etiquette, cultivating a new sense of personal style. These hairstylists internalize rules, norms, values and expectations, which manifests as embodied cultural capital. As a result, the workers understand that in order for them to be accepted marketplace performers, they must acquire the natural fluency of an entirely new form of cultural capital (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012; Yeadon-Lee, 2012).

However, based on the testimonies of the service workers in this study, the hairstylists are not formally trained. Most learn the trade in their rural villages before moving to Abuja city for better-paying jobs. While others mentioned that they did not have any formal training, they acquired the skills of hair making from their relatives or friends. As a result, it is possible that they have not been able to cultivate the symbolic and cultural capital required to successfully converse with their clients and resultantly concentrate their efforts on the technical demands of the job at hand. In this way, due to the way in which Angela articulates her feelings on this, they forgo the opportunity to create dependencies with their clients. That is, they become dispensable and not worth interacting with on any other level than the business at hand.

Consequently, Angela keeps her distance whenever she visits the salon. She explained that sometimes when she had to descend to the level of the workers, they behaved as if she had no self-esteem or that she was not from the elite strata of society. Hence, her visits to the salon are conducted very business-like without any form of familiarity or friendship with the workers. Perhaps, this explains why the workers are treated as social inferiors (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012).

In contrast to Angela's position concerning her relationship with the service workers, a middle-class customer has a different experience with the workers. Having worked in a retail clothing store as a manager, she explained that some elite customers are usually unfriendly to the workers during the interactions. According to her, the display of status by these wealthy customers makes the girls feel incompetent and confused about themselves. As she has been a regular customer of the store for over seven years, she says her relationship with the workers is quite warm.

Michelle: I can say that I have been with them, we have been together for a long time, so I do not think...when I come to the store, I see them as friends. I do not wait for them to greet me. I relate with them appropriately. Another reason for sometimes as they are not from well to do backgrounds, they do some things and do not even know that they are wrong. In communicating with them initially, I used to get upset, like *'why you do this and why did you do that'*, but now I am in retail, and I know what I see.

Interviewer: how do you mean?

Michelle: sometimes when you greet them, they will not even respond, they look at me like *"she is just a salesgirl"* and the truth about it sometimes in my mind I feel like saying *"maybe you should do your research very well for every staff there we were given three weeks training for this is a multinational company, they pay even better than the banks which most people do not know and the girls were trained for everyone here is a graduate"*. For such customers, I have gone past that. For I do not, when they say or behave like that, I keep smiling; I understand they are ignorant. For I understand that with other

workers, they do not have as much experience as I do in the store and they are young and so you see them saying to me that *"that one just come in and she was looking at me like who are mine? what are mine?"* and I will talk to them and say *"look, do not let that bother you."*

Interviewer: so, because of your own experience from your job, do you relate with these girls differently?

Michelle: yes, I do not relate to them the way I could have if I have not had that experience. So now, we are like family, and I could just talk to them... yes, we talk, we relate well so...

Given that Michelle works in a retail clothing store in Abuja, her relationship with the workers is quite different because of her experience with the customers. She explained that as a manager of the store, she encounters some very unfriendly customers. Before she started working in retail and was subject to these experiences, she was not happy about the attitudes of some of the workers during her interactions with them in the salon, and she used to question their behaviour. However, she explained that she now understands their behaviour as being a result of their impoverished backgrounds and that they were not trained in etiquette and the dispositions that are considered acceptable and desirable in this setting.

With her experience as a manager in the retail clothing store, she found that the elite customers in Abuja often disregard the salesgirls in her store. As they interact with the workers with similarly disdainful looks on their faces, the girls feel low about themselves; it impacts their self-esteem. She explained that they begin to lose self-confidence and question their identities by complaining about how they feel when interacting with their customers.

In addition to this, Michelle also expressed her experience about her interactions with some of the other customers in the retail store she manages as well. Even though she is well-educated and trained for the job, the customers seemingly treat

them as under-class individuals because they work in a store as sales workers. For me, although this is a single account, this illustrates that class difference structure service encounters in Abuja more broadly, and the phenomena are not peculiar to the salons under study in this thesis alone.

As a result of the tensions and experiences with the customers in her workplace, Michelle says her relationship with the hairstylists in the salon has changed. She feels for them because of their apparent disadvantaged position as lower-class individuals. She empathises with them. Hence, from Michelle's perspective and those reported in the other testimonies in the study, it is clear that the workers are subjected to experiences that result in them becoming conscious of their class positions in the store and at work.

## **9.6 Commercial Friendships; the Restraints by Class Consciousness**

As mentioned in the literature review of this thesis, previous studies have discussed the presence of class inequalities in a range of service and marketplace settings. This interest is because such contexts bring people together who occupy distant societal positions in one physical space (Dion & Borraz, 2017). Therefore, these studies focus on the analysis of the linkages between 'social status' and the service encounter and how these manifest in the experiences and outcomes of those involved. Most of these note the importance of how class inequalities are expressed, performed and rendered during service interactions (Dion & Borraz, 2017; Ustunier & Thompson, 2012; Yeadon-Lee, 2012) as well as record how relationships between service workers and elite class customers are stripped of all forms of reciprocity and mutuality (Hanser, 2008). As interactions in these contexts are regarded as performances that produce interdependent status games and power struggles (Hanser, 2008; Ustunier & Thompson, 2012), it is unsurprising that commercial friendships and relationships that unfold in the salons of Abuja are constrained on account of social class differences, which is a finding that clearly parallels that of Ustunier & Thompson's (2012) research.



Similar to previous studies, therefore, this chapter acknowledges the role that class differentiation plays within service encounters (Hanser, 2012), especially on the experiences of those charged with tending the services. Also, through the Foucauldian technology of power and domination, this chapter reveals how class inequalities are central to understanding service settings where class distinctions and boundaries are performed and manifest (Williams, 2006). By placing the interactional dynamics of class at the centre of the analysis, this thesis further shows how social status is manifest as an “*emergent effect... [in] the dynamics of social action*” (Martin, 2009, p.2). As such, the pattern of interactions and relationships that emerge within these salons not only illustrate ‘inequality in action’ but also offer an understanding of how social structures like class operate within service settings (Hanser, 2012). In particular, this thesis’ findings extend the body of literature by revealing that the quality of commercial friendships can be constrained and limited (Foucault, 1980) because service workers are consciously made aware of their class background by their clients during their interactions. In addition, the finding reflects Spivak (1994) and Guha’s (1982) description of the subaltern group, who are subjected to the hegemony of the ruling classes. In this study, the class disparities between the participants define the difference between them, especially in the face of forces of cultural globalization.

In relation to this, the notion of class consciousness can be traced back to Marx’s earlier thinking about capitalism. According to him (1846/1999), “*the combination of capital has created for this mass... [of workers], a common situation. This mass is thus already a class against capital but not yet for itself*” (p. 189). For Marx, class consciousness is an underlying psychological construct and attitude of workers when they acknowledge their shared status as labourers and hold a collective interest in changing labour relations. This being so, Keefer et al. (2015) psychological and practical perspective on class consciousness is

more appropriate for this study. These theorists claim that individuals psychologically situate themselves within the structural and historical relations that animate and assemble their social class over time. Referred to as class identification, this process is a central component of class consciousness (Keefer et al., 2015). Thus, the social groups that people find meaningful are the fundamental references for how they identify themselves in relation to others (Haslam et al., 2010; Hogg & Reid, 2006).

However, class identification is only one aspect of an individual's awareness of their social position. This is because they may have personal experiences that may contradict or reaffirm their beliefs about the class structure and how they fit into it (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Lemieux & Pratto, 2003). As such, people may experience discrimination based on their class (Lemieux & Pratto, 2003) or sometimes feel that others treat them differently because of their standing in society (Keefer et al., 2015). Therefore, class consciousness requires a process of identifying with one's class group, as well as experiences of the social world as a member of that class (ibid). In the case of this study, then, this theoretical viewpoint has clear resonance, as the workers are clearly subject to experiences in the salon that (re)produce their subject positions, which will be examined in more detail in the following two chapters.

## **9.7 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter presents preliminary findings related to the nature of service encounters between the participants of beauty salons in Nigeria. By outlining the familiarities, commitments and interdependencies found between these actors, it reports the anatomy of the commercial friendship and relationships that unfold between the workers and clients in this setting. Doing so shows how status is negotiated and rendered in relation to the power relationships that structure this commercial context. That is, it offers insight into how, in some albeit limited instances, the service workers are able to use their aesthetic skills

to leverage symbolic capital to exert temporal control over their clients. While on the other hand, it shows how the salon is yet another social context through which the elite of Abuja exercise and reaffirm their social class dominance. In this way, this chapter offers more insight into how the socio-historical context that animates these beauty stores structures service marketing relationships and marketplace interactions and the subject positions of the actors involved in co-creating them. In the following chapter, I will discuss the workers' experiences and identity construction and formation processes as they interact with elite clients.

## **CHAPTER TEN: MARGINALISATION, STIGMA AND CUSTOMER MISBEHAVIOUR**

### **Introduction**

As a study that set out to examine the ways in which service workers in a highly stratified developing African country become acculturated to global consumer culture through their interactions with elite consumers, the principal aim was to provide theoretical insight into how these experiences manifest in identity construction and negotiation. Moreover, while the data collected in this research clearly addresses this - by offering insights into the process of worker acculturation and identity formation - an unanticipated finding that unexpected was the ways in which experiences of stigmatisation prevailed amongst the workers in the beauty stores of Abuja. Specifically, the findings reveal that the majority of the workers from all the stores sampled in this study reported abject feelings of inferiority and social rejection from their clients during their interactions with them, alongside experiences of mistreatment and stigmatisation. As such, this chapter responds to the fourth research objective of the study by outlining and discussing the experiences of the services workers from their interactions in the salons with their elite customers and how these manifests in relation to the dominant social structures that shape the relationship between the various strata of people in Abuja. Thus, when combined with the content of the previous chapters related to commercial friendships and the symbolic consumption of global brands, the discussion in this chapter further illuminates how the socio-historic context and class system in Nigeria shape the service interactions and commercial relationships that unfold in the salons of the capital city.

### **10.1 Feelings of Inferiority and Social Stigma**

First, it becomes apparent across the interview testimonials that the workers hold deep feelings of inferiority in relation to their clients, who perceive them as

unequal. For instance, Gabriel, who lives in Bwari, a suburb around Abuja, describes his class position as a suburb around the city's boundaries. Of interest here is how he thinks his current customers perceive him and how this compares with his thoughts about his previous clients from the time when he worked in the suburbs:

Gabriel: let us say four years back when I was working in Bwari, the class of customers is quite different, for we are all in the same class. We reason the same way on a low level as we feel that we are from Bwari, and Bwari is where we are meant to be. Most of these clients think that it is our class and that is our place. To have left that place to come into the town for greener pastures has made me believe that I can become a better person one day.

From his narrative, it is quite apparent that Gabriel locates his identity position in relation to where he lives and previously worked. In so doing, he infers a discourse that frames '*Bwari*' people as inferior and lower-class. Furthermore, while he believes that his current work holds the potential to elevate his status in some way, according to him, his customers think otherwise. He remains a citizen of Bwari, and that this place is a fitting environment for people like him. In Gabriel's mind, the class divide is apparent. Further, he believes that his clients feel that the socio-cultural differences between them should remain intact and maintained.

These feelings are echoed in testimony by a female worker in the store. During an informal conversation with this worker, where she begins by recalling a disagreement with a client, she goes on to report how the customers, in general, disregard them as inferior beings:

Fatima: you know that we are human beings, all these customers that come here for our services look at us as village people and that who are we?

Interviewer: how do you mean?

Fatima: yes, they think that nothing good will ever come out of us. Maybe that is why they talk to us like that. They are not God, but we do not have a choice,

we do not have another job, this is the job that God has blessed us with, especially as we are uneducated, but I know that even if it is in old age, we will still go to school one day.

This response neatly summarises the general feelings of inferiority expressed by the workers and how they feel stigmatised. In reference to Fatima's particular choice of words, that *"they look at us as village people"*, highlights that the workers generally believe that the customers of the store look down on them as primitive and unrefined people. In addressing her feelings of the relationship between the workers and customers of the store, Fatima refers to 'us' and 'they', and in so doing, clearly articulates the socio-cultural differences that she believes exists between them. This form of domination that Fatima experiences arguably occurs at the level of self-consciousness as she recognises and acknowledges herself as the Other (Fanon, 1952; 1967, Spanokos, 1998). As such, Fatima's phrasal expression above relates to how postcolonial subjects, especially lower-class individuals, react to and depend upon the west for modernity and civilization. That is to say, as the workers come to perceive the elites as a representation of western culture, they feel placed on the margins of society and social action; they experience themselves as stigmatised individuals (Fanon, 1967).

According to Goffman (1963, p.3), stigma is

*"An attribute that is deeply discrediting,' whereby based on perceived 'difference or 'deviance,' the bearer is reduced 'from a whole, and usual person to a tainted discounted one."*

In this way, stigma may be considered a combination of stereotyping, labelling, and discrimination, leading to loss of status and dehumanisation in extreme cases (Adler-Nissen, 2014). In relation to labelling, Link & Phelan (2001) note that this connotes a separation of 'us' from 'them', which is clearly how Fatima recalls how she believes her clients view her and her colleagues. Furthermore, in

accordance with her testimony, in Fatima's mind, the workers belong to a labelled group of lower-class individuals who face significant discrimination and stigma because of their socio-economic status and lack of education.

This reference to education is also a further indication of Fatima's understanding of the stark disparities that exist between the people who come together in the beauty stores. Furthermore, in her expression that her clients believe that '*nothing good will ever come out of us.*' and that "*even if it is in old age, we will still go to school one day*" illuminates the contrasting feelings of despair and optimism that feature in a range of the workers' narratives. Here, Fatima's words reveal the perceived constraints towards upward social mobility experienced by the workers in their everyday lives and their hopes about climbing the ladder of prosperity in Nigeria one day.

According to Sharma & Sharma (2010), these are typical experiences of lower-class individuals in the developing world, who tend to suffer from increased levels of stress, alienation and feelings of injustice due to the unequal distribution of wealth and their treatment by more privileged groups that limit the educational and developmental opportunities open to them. In most cases, the less fortunate of these societies become socially disconnected (Sharma & Sharma, 2010) and develop a growing sense of confusion and uncertainty (Arnett, 2002; Kinnvall, 2004) about themselves and their futures. Similar to previous studies (Bohm & Brei, 2008; Ghosh & Chandrasekhar, 2000), the workers' experiences show an outcome that can deepen perceptions of inequality and social injustice.

## **10.2 Tensions and Customer Misbehaviour**

With the workers in this study facing and experiencing socio-cultural struggles and stigma concerning their everyday treatment and ambitions, they also report how their consumers mistreat them. Upon analysing the data produced in the interviews with the service workers, it became apparent that the majority spoke

about how they have been verbally abused and intimidated because of their backgrounds. The following interview from Sarah is an example of this mistreatment and how the workers typically feel about the behaviour of their clients:

Sarah: yes, when she came, and she was shouting at us because she feels that she has money and so she can intimidate us and they treat us as if we are slaves because we are working in the salon, sometimes these customers will even frustrate you that you will feel like quitting the job. Yes, I do feel so because some of these customers that come here think that they have money, and they want to frustrate us as if we are slaves because we work in the salon as if we are not humans. Sometimes, they come here very late to braid their hair as if we are not human beings and we do not have our homes to go to. Such times, I will look at them and shake my head, saying, “oh God, the next life I will come to this world, I will not come from a poor family, I will just be thinking so many things (*she got emotional and started crying*).

This extract from Sarah’s testimony and other excerpts from the interviews depicts broader experiences of mistreatment of the service workers by the customers and how they feel undervalued. Sarah’s reflections on her daily experiences in the store reveal how the differences in social class and economic status between the rich and poor in Nigeria manifests in marketplace interactions and performances. The narrative shows how the ‘elite’ customers exercise their wealth as a form of social control and utilise their status to place demands on the workers to serve them out of reasonable working hours - to the point that the workers feel like quitting their jobs. What is more, during the observations undertaken in this study, a range of relatively unpleasant scenes were encountered whereby clients spoke down on the workers and sometimes raised their voices when they were unhappy with their treatment. Therefore, alongside the worker’s experiences of stigmatisation, the data produced in this research reveals the



tensions experienced in the store during interactions and how this manifest in customer misbehaviour.

While related studies of salon interactions report similar tensions, these are generally managed by adopting high-quality customer service and related working practices (Yeadon-Lee, 2012), alongside the construction of gendered identities that spread the notion of ideal gendered enactments to customers (Gimlin, 1996). So, while these studies report that tensions arise from the low-skilled occupational status of the job as compared to the high cost of the service being provided to customers (Yeadon-Lee, 2012) and that social class differentiation is implicated in this (Ustunier & Thompson, 2012), normally the relationship and interactions between customers and clients are relatively benign and civil. In contrast, this does not seem to be the case in the beauty salons of Abuja.

For instance, during fieldwork observations, a customer walked into the store and was told that the workers were very busy and that they could not attend to her at that time. This resulted in the customer becoming irritated and angry, which led to an unpleasant verbal exchange with the worker that spoke to her. From the narrative of the worker:

Glory: the lady and I had never had any misunderstanding before since she started coming here. I was surprised yesterday when she behaved like that. Nobody heard us when I was talking to her. While we were talking, I was already thinking about looking for someone to loosen her braids. Besides, then I was still trying to attend to other customers that came before her. Just then, I heard her shouting that 'look at me, that I was wearing rags and even had the guts to tell her to go home that we could not loosen her braids. Then, she said that her housemaid in her house is better than me. Just imagine the insult, which was why I said she does not feed me. She should not say that I am dirty and not up to her housemaid. That I am a dirty woman and seeing the clothes I was wearing. I was looking very dirty. Why did she insult me like that? I am still

thinking because I do not understand why she spoke to me like that...that I was looking dirty...I was wearing rags. I did not see my clothes as rags. They are good clothes. I washed them, ironed them before I left the house, and wore a jacket. I thought that I looked good and she told me that I look dirty and am not up to her housemaid.

From Glory's narrative, it is clear that up to this point, she had never had a misunderstanding with this particular customer. Thus, she was completely surprised by the behaviour that was directed towards her. Obviously, the customer was not happy that she would have to wait for a while before someone would be assigned to attend to her. Still, from Glory's recollection of the conversation that unfolded, the customer's behaviour seems to reveal how she felt about her own status in relation to the salon workers. By drawing comparisons between her state of dress and that of her housemaid, this customer was clearly signalling her privileged social position and how she should command respect and deference from those who are permitted to 'serve' her.

This is an extension of the literature on service encounters because while past studies have revealed the standards that customers expect from service organisations such as a beauty salon, which include short wait times, immediate gratification, impeccable interpersonal treatment, lack of mistakes and the fulfilment of unpredictable needs (Bitner et al., 1994), they rarely report the outcomes from when these expectations are not met with satisfaction. Apparently, this finding extends the literature by highlighting the consequences of having customers delayed or waiting, especially in a class-based social context.

Indeed, to minimise the likelihood of customer dissatisfaction and misbehaviour, recommendations from service marketing studies generally maintain that workers should be restricted from deviating from the service standards or blueprint (Yagil, 2017). To prevent tensions, most service organisations should set realistic standards for service workers to satisfy the customers (Yagil, 2017).

However, the several studies that have reported customer misbehaviour reveal how incidences of customer aggression result in severe worker outcomes relating to negative emotions (Gabriel et al. 2015) and burnout (Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005; Dormann & Zapf, 2004) which are outcomes that have clearly been experienced by informants in this study. In recollecting her experience with a customer in the store, Sarah, for example, revealed the following:

Sarah: A customer complained so badly the other day though we did our best to please her. Yet, she was shouting at us and saying, *“if my hair does not come out well the way I want it, I will deal with you people today. I do not care how you want to manage it or when you will leave here today. All I know is that I want an excellent job done for me.”* Such times I really get very frustrated as I will not even know how to please the customers anymore though we were obviously trying to do our best for her.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Sarah: it makes me feel bad, but I will just tell myself that I will try my best for her so she can go... and I will only be feeling that if I had known that she is very troublesome, maybe I should have avoided her by lying that I was not feeling well so that I would not have been the one assigned to attend to her.

Sarah’s narrative shows how stressed out she felt while attending to this customer, despite her efforts to offer optimum satisfaction. The use of the words *“I will deal with you today”* highlights how forceful this particular customer used her social standing and ‘customer sovereignty’ (Yagil, 2017) to dominate and control the situation to intimidate the workers (Foucault, 1988; Motion & Leitch, 2007). As such, Sarah was left feeling distressed and bad about herself. In retrospect, she wishes that she had feigned illness to avoid this particular client.

Adopting Foucault’s views on power and domination as lens highlights the power differentials brought into being by the ideology of customer sovereignty (Hochschild, 1983; Sliter et al., 2010), which increases the customer’s dominance over the workers (Korczynski, 2009). In this situation, the imbalance of power

that manifests through the client's social prestige and wealth also causes stress for the workers. For instance, while the slogan such as “*the customer is always right*” evokes associations of the customer’s infinite privileges, as well as implying the inferior position of the service workers (Yagil, 2017), the workers are also rendered inferior due to their socio-cultural backgrounds and economic standing vis-à-vis their clients. Hence, in accordance with the marketplace setting of these experiences, alongside the socio-cultural context of the country more generally, the customers are allowed to express their anger (Sliter et al., 2010) and dissatisfaction through complaints (Yagil, 2017) and other forms of customer misbehaviour, while the workers are not granted any form of reciprocation in response to the customer’s mistreatment (Hochschild, 1983; Yagil, 2017).

Along with the reports recounted above, Ruth’s account is also remarkably revealing in relation to this observation:

Ruth: sometimes, they do feel that we are just a stylist or a pedicurist or a nail technician, and they look at us and think that after all, they are paying for the service that we are giving them. They believe that they can talk to us rudely and then get away with it. There was a time I was attending to a female customer, and when you see her, you will know that she is a very wealthy person, and I heard she is a family relative to the past President Ibrahim Babangida. I think she is Fulani by tribe due to her looks. She came here with her friend to get her pedicure and nails done for her. I was assigned to attend to her. While I was doing the pedicure, maybe she got angry and was complaining. I did not know why? I did not see any fault in the way I was attending to her. I thought I was giving her the best service, and the next thing she did was being rude to me, saying, “do this side properly,” and I said, “are you fine with this? Can you feel it”? And the next thing she (hesitating to speak) spat into the water.

Interviewer: really?

Ruth: yes, she spat inside the water and looked away. I looked at my colleagues, who were watching what was happening. I felt very bad and swallowed the saliva inside my mouth. I put my hand inside the water as I had removed her

feet from inside the water. I had to put my hand into the bowl to open the drain and the water drained away. Then, I cleaned her feet and polished them.

Although the workers seem to experience these forms of aggression and misbehaviour on a relatively frequent basis, they never retaliate or complain. A possible explanation for this is that the salons' relationships are characterised by wide class disparities that normalise worker experiences of verbal and physical aggression. These differences seemingly inflate the customer's perceived superiority and sense of entitlement while simultaneously serving to deflate the worker's self-worth and value (Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Korczynski & Evans, 2013). Therefore, unlike the workers in Ustunier & Thompson's (2012) study, who perceive themselves as providers of aesthetically pleasing and fashionable appearances, Ruth's narrative depicts an asymmetric relationship that is deeply imbalanced, whereby the customers do not recognise the worker's skills as a form of cultural capital. Hence the customers feel obliged to dominate the workers and potentially mistreat them because they are merely paying for the perceived low skilled services being rendered for them. Nonetheless, it is clear that the workers are left profoundly unhappy and disturbed by these interactions, for in Ruth's words, *'I swallowed the saliva inside my mouth'*, which clearly expresses her pain and feelings of disdain as she continued attending to the customer. This mirrors the findings of similar studies, which reveal that workers must suppress and manage their feelings towards a customer.

In contrast, the customer is free to express their anger towards the service workers. (Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005; Grandey et al., 2007). Thus, in Ruth's testimony and Sarah's narrative before her, it is clear that the workers in the salon are left to patiently absorb and manage the customer aggression directed towards them while wishing they could avoid these situations entirely. In regard to Foucault's (1988) perspectives on power, this narrative shows how the set rules,

norms (Motion & Leitch, 2007), and class differences between the participants structure the conduct and subjugation of the workers during the service encounter.

### **10.3 The Gaze: Workers Appraisal by Elite Clients**

In addition to their reports of mistreatment and aggression, most of the workers also reveal that they believe that their customers appraise the way they look while in the stores and sometimes pick fault. That is, they are constantly under the gaze of their clients, who scrutinise their appearance. Alongside Glory's testimony reported earlier, whereby her client said that she '*was looking dirty... wearing rags*', the narrative from Charles, who is a manager in one of the stores, is a clear indication of this,

Manager Charles: yes, I will say that it is an influence on how we look and as I rightly said earlier on, some customers look at us, and they downsize us. First, they look at our appearance and they judge us with that. They look at us as "what is this person wearing"? "How is dressed"? "Does she smell nice?" and all of that. So those are the things, whether the rich or the middle-class or the elites when they come here, look at the service workers, and assess them. So that is it. It goes a long way to affect the lives of the service workers as they will not want to look like...when a customer comes in here on several occasions and the worker wears a particular pair of shoes every time and that is when they begin to size the person as "this person, why is she always wearing these shoes?"

Interviewer: really?

Manager Charles: yes, they look at everything we wear down to our nails or hair if they are well kept. It is necessary that we must not wear the best quality products but the way we put the outfit together and we look nice and composed. So, when they come, they will be like, "this person is well packaged" So, it influences them a whole lot.

In the above testimony, Charles explains that the customer's appraisal of the worker's dress, demeanour and self-presentation influences the way in which they behave towards them. That is to say, their self-presentation is a mediator of social

acceptance. This reveals how, and in what ways, the workers are under constant inspection by their clients and another example of how the asymmetrical power relations between the parties unfold in the stores and remain one-sided and fixed. The clients have a strong and enduring influence on the way the workers look and think about themselves in this context. According to Charles' narrative, "*they downsize us at first,*" "*they look at our appearance and they judge us with that,*" "*they look at us as,*" "*what is this person wearing*"? "*How is she dressed*"? "*Is she smelling nice*"?. It brings to light the worker's feelings of how the elites perceive them.

In accordance with Charles' narrative, this amounts to a product to be experienced; a product to induce customer satisfaction must be "*well packaged*". Moreover, in their efforts to satisfy their clients and garner social respect and legitimacy while avoiding insult and rejection, the service workers make conscious efforts to manage their appearance through a set of self-reform tactics.

Drawing from Foucault's notion of panoptic surveillance and Fanon's account on the pervasiveness of "*the white gaze*", it seems that the service workers in this context always feels under constant inspection by their elite clients during the service encounter in the salon (Nielson, 2011). Importantly, Foucault's (1974) concept of the gaze conveys the sense of which the workers feel objectified, subordinated or threatened by the look of another. Here then, we can draw similarities between the workers and Foucault's prisoners who come to embody the gaze as "*panoptic surveillance*" and as a form of social control. Foucault's metaphoric concept of the panopticon, a prison design where the cells are arranged in a circle around a central observation point, helped him explore the relationship between systems of social control and people in a disciplinary situation. In relation to this, the behaviour of prisoners is not achieved through total surveillance per se, but by panoptic discipline whereby they are induced to conform through internalization of a reality in which they never know when they

are not under observation. Thus, prisoners who are subject to the “gaze” of the panopticon constantly monitor their actions and behaviours. In relation to this, the workers in this study seemingly engage in self-reform tactics due to their feelings of being under constant inspection and appraisal by their elite clients. Hence, the workers are very much conscious of how they present themselves in their interactions with their clients during service encounters in the salons.

Alongside this, Fanon’s conception of “*the white gaze*” helps to show how the appraisal of the workers by the elite’s, results in their identity work. In relation to this theory, the scrutiny of the workers by the customers can be conceptualised as the “*elite gaze*”. As an ideological mechanism, this construct perpetuates and determines the workers subaltern identity within this particular postcolonial context. That is to say, Fanon’s (2008) writings on the gaze illustrate how the workers’ experiences of otherness during their service encounters with their clients lead to them becoming even more aware of the class divide, which up to this point had not existed for them to this extent. From Charles’s narrative above, it is clear that the elite’s gaze in the salons is a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1984) through which the workers begin to feel overwhelmingly oppressed. Fanon says,

*“I am overdetermined from the outside...the white gaze, the only valid one is already dissecting me. I am fixed. Once their microtomes are sharpened, the whites objectively cut through sections of my reality.”* (Fanon 2008, pg. 92).

Thus, the experience of the elite gaze during service encounters sheds insights into how the worker’s identity becomes transformed by a subtle form of social control that acts upon their behaviour and self-presentation.



Consider the following account by Sarah and Pye:

Sarah: sometimes, you know that the way you are dressed is also how you will be addressed because I know that the way you dress will determine how they will respect you. I do not try to look well-dressed necessary because of my colleagues in the store. As I have said earlier, I actually do that because I want to be respected and appreciated by the customer. The thing is that I work in an organised place and I meet a lot of wealthy customers and some of them the way you are dressed makes them respect you more. I have learnt a lot from Precious, my colleague. You know Precious dresses very beautifully well. Sometimes, even when attending to a rude and troublesome customer, they are usually very mindful of how they talk to Precious because of how she dresses and carries herself. Some of these customers can be very rude, and so if they want to insult someone like Precious, they will see that *“this girl, it is not that she is hungry, it is just that she just wants to be humble and that is why she is working here in the salon, it is not like she is hungry.”* So, sometimes I think about that too. I have learnt a lot of things from her

Pye: everyone working in the salon needs to dress very well and also look neat, for we attend to the wealthy people. When we are assigned to make their hair for them, some customers look at the person and instantly reject the person. There was a day that Deborah was assigned to attend to a customer and she rejected her and said she did not want Deborah to attend to her. She said she wanted me to attend to her. So, when I was making her hair, the customer asked me why they assigned that girl to make her hair initially that she was not looking good. I replied that Deborah is just like that. Then, the customer said that Deborah does not look good at all and all of that. Many of them do treat us like that. I just used Deborah, but they treat most of us like that. It happens every time here, for if a worker is not looking well dressed, the customers do reject them, so that is why we need to look good. That is the usual occurrence here.

While previous studies have argued that *“perpetrators of most acts of deviant customer behaviour are ordinary-seeming people who cannot be differentiated from other customers [and that] ... misbehaviours are representative of*

*customers overall, not a group apart*” (Fullerton & Punji, 1993. p.1). It is clear that in this particular case, experiences of marginalisation and maltreatment are everyday occurrences in the salons of Abuja. Across much of the interview data reported in this chapter, the service workers expressed their experiences of stark marginalization and social rejection by their elite clients. Also, the well-presented looks and deferent behaviours are key to their acceptance. In their quest for social legitimacy, these workers must adapt their manners and styles to match the customers' aesthetics, taste, and expectations in this high-class setting (Dion & Borraz, 2017).

As such, from the insights generated from the genealogical analysis conducted to contextualise this study, it is quite possible that these phenomena and experiences can be explained through the lens of the class system in Nigeria, and theoretical arguments that show that despite emerging from colonial rule many decades ago, lower-class individuals in Nigeria, still feel internally and psychologically colonised and segregated.

As such, an understanding of this phenomenon can be drawn from strands of postcolonial theory, such as the work of Spivak (1994), who argues that lower-class individuals in postcolonial countries are still broadly subject to the hegemony and activities of the ruling class and as a result, experience stigma and mistreatment in their daily lives. That is, they are ‘subaltern’ to the dominant class and broadly experience feelings of inferiority which are further deepened by the fact that the national bourgeoisie adopts the western way of life. Also, as Fanon (1952) puts it, the less fortunate in a post-colonial society perceive the national bourgeoisie as symbols of western civilisation and domination. This, it is argued, is amplified by attitudes and behaviours of the ordinate class, who, in turn, look upon the lower classes with pity and disgust and who have internalised a profound set of prejudices towards these strata of society. As such, lower-class individuals, including the service workers in Abuja’s beauty salons, feel differentiated,

stigmatised, stereotyped, and cast into the inferior role as the '*other*' because of their class backgrounds (Fanon, 2008; Spivak, 1988). Alternatively, as Spivak (1994) explains, the essential subjectivity of the lower-class people is constrained by the dominant discourses of post-colonial societies, within which they are materially and socially constructed as oppressed people (Spivak, 1994). As such, many of these lower-class individuals suffer increased levels of stress, alienation and feelings of injustice due to the unequal distribution of income (Sharma & Sharma, 2010) and socio-cultural resources. A factor that is clearly echoed in the data presented in this chapter.

Although some authors have identified a network of structural relations that reconfigures the asymmetrical distribution of class-based resources between different class factions (Belanger & Edwards, 2013; Price & Arnould, 1999; Sherman, 2011; Ustunier & Thompson, 2012), the findings of this study further extend the literature by showing how social class inequalities go much deeper than material differences in wealth and economic status. That is to say; they show how these inequalities manifest in power struggles and experiences of domination in the shared marketplace within postcolonial settings. Thus, shedding insight into how the elite gaze is part of a complex process through which worker identity is constructed and shaped through service interactions in these contexts.

#### **10.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings of stigma as a postcolonial subjectivity whereby the lower-class consumers, such as the service workers, are differentiated, stereotype as inferior individuals. Therefore, I highlighted the worker's experiences concerning feelings of inferiority, tensions, verbal abuse, and customer misbehaviour in the store. Also, I discussed the elite gaze and worker's appraisal as they are often rejected by the elites' clients, especially if they do not look good and presentable. However, the findings show that elite clients usually approve of the workers who engage in self-reform tactics and

presentation. Hence, in the resistance of stigma and yearning for social acceptance, the service workers adopt new etiquette and high fashion styles, which matches the aesthetics taste and expectation of the elites. As such, the discussions will focus on the worker's quest for respectability as they engage in self-reform tactics and presentations. These findings would be discussed more elaborately in the following chapter below.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN: MARGINALISATION, STIGMA AND THE QUEST FOR RESPECTABILITY**

### **Introduction**

Previous studies report how marginalised consumers seek to resist stigma by demonstrating how they adopt coping strategies or develop skills to promote acceptance and social legitimacy (Joshi, 2012; Kates, 2002). This resistance to stigma, also known as the politics of respectability, consists of a range of strategic actions that involve mobilising a diffused arrangement of constantly evolving consumption practices and tactics (Crockett, 2017). Given the broad propensity for the workers investigated in this study to experience significant subjugation, this chapter offers insight into how they seek to manage their feelings of inferiority and repair their ‘shattered identities’ (Ustuner & Holt, 2007) through these self-reform tactics. Thus, this final discussion chapter outlines the workers' process and consumption practices in their quest for respectability and socially desirable identities.

### **11.1 Stigma and the Social-Reform Tactics of Service Workers**

By adopting a range of legitimising consumption practices, it is argued that stigmatised individuals are able to refashion their identities to make them feel more appreciated and presentable. According to Lamont et al. (2016), these self-reform tactics help consumers align their identities with non-stigmatised norms and practices, which the data in this study clearly shows. In relation to this, Foucault's writings clarify how power constitutes the socially situated identities of the workers in this respect. According to him,

*“Power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise, and which others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings to the word ‘subject’: subject to someone else by control and*

*dependence; [secondly: subject] ... that are tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge (Foucault 1982, p.781).*

He emphasizes the socially constructed mechanisms through which individuals understand and experience themselves as subjects (Shankar, Cherrier & Canniford, 2006). As such, this perspective reveals the power relationships involved in the self-determining agency of the workers as subjects. In relation to this, it is apparent that the workers engage in self-reform tactics to resist stigma and garner their clients' respect. Drawing from Foucault's (1988) technology of the self, individuals are permitted to transform themselves to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom etc. In this case, the service workers engage in self-reform tactics to construct identities deemed acceptable to their clients during their service encounters in the salons.

The following excerpt from Gloria's narrative, for example, demonstrates how the workers embrace coping strategies for self-reform and presentation. As someone who has worked in the salon for several years, Gloria recounts the familiar narrative of the salon's struggle for acceptance and respectability. In so doing, it also reveals her understanding of the need to engage in self-reformation. She says:

Gloria: but now if I want to buy things, I know the type of clothes that I will wear because we attend to high-class customers and not just ordinary citizens. We should know how to arrange ourselves, even our hair, so we will look neat and not say, "look at you are making my hair, you are looking so very dirty. I wear makeup and make sure that I look good. Then, I use good perfume, which is very important because when I am washing their hair, I will not be smelling. It is so bad that the customers will reject a worker making their hair because she may have washed their hair before, and she was smelling. They will call me saying, "that girl has got body odour" that is why it is imperative for a woman who works in a salon to have a good shave and be very clean. We should dress up responsibly so that when the customer enters the shop the way, you will walk

up to the customer and then say, “Aunty, what do you want to do? How can I help you?” the customer will know that you can handle her hair very well. She will then agree that you should attend to her. Also, it is a reason for if you want to wash a customer’s hair and have a foul smell from my body, that customer will not allow me to attend to her.

In clearly highlighting the power relationship in the salon, Gloria describes the wealthy customers as “not just ordinary people.” To her, the customers in the store should be held with high esteem and reverence because of their social class status and positions in Nigerian society. For her, to resist being marginalised and socially stigmatised, the workers should engage in self-reform tactics to bridge the social class disparity between them. They must make their hair, dress well and wear perfume to avoid body odour. According to Gloria, the service workers must mobilise their resources to resist stigmatisation and construct a socially desirable identity in this setting that aligns with their client's specifications and expectations (Crockett, 2017); to promote their legitimacy as competent professional individuals.

In the same way, another worker who is a nail technician recalls how a male customer educated him about practices of self-presentation:

Steve: some of my customers are doctors and some particular customers made me know the importance of wearing good perfume. One of them is a doctor. I do pedicure for him. He is a very neat man, and any time he comes here, he looks at what I am wearing first.

Interviewer: why?

Steve: because he likes cleanliness. He told me that cleanliness is close to Godliness. So, he says that if you are not clean here, you are not clean in your house where you live, and as such, you are not pure in your heart. He made me understand that I need to be clean and that I should dress very neatly. Since then, I started making myself presentable even though I had been trying before, but now I have made more effort to look good. It has helped me a lot because some

customers would come here, like Senators' children and top government officials. When they arrive, the first thing they look at is the way we are dressed. Suppose we are not appropriately dressed, the way they will talk to us. That is, they will speak to us' commoners we do not have class, or that we are just ordinary people when they come and they see you dress well, the first thing that they will do is to greet you, and so I try to dress well because of that. So, I have found out that the way I appear gives me respect before the customers. So, I do study things a lot for if I am well dressed, and the way a customer talks to me will make me know that it is because of the way that I am dressed, and that was why the customer spoke to me respectfully, so it encourages me to dress well and better.

From Steve' narrative, it is clear that his client's attitudes and behaviour significantly influence him. In this case, the advice was proffered by one of his clients. Similarly, like Gloria, he seeks to align himself with these guidelines and social etiquette rules to garner respect and acceptability from his clients. Due to his study of his client's dress and self-presentation, he seeks to emulate them in some ways. Although he has continued first-hand exposure to the consumption of global brands and expensive products such as perfume, Steve's narrative suggests a degree of unawareness about the specificity of the luxury brands his clients wear and consume. His words '*good perfume*' refers to the quality of fragrance, but not the brand. Indeed, in following up on this in the interview, he was unable to elaborate and specify particular labels.

Thus, similar in nature to Crockett's (2017) study, Steve's narrative shows how the workers accept their customer's advice and begin to appreciate the essence of self-reform as a counter-narrative and practical approach to managing stigma reflecting his understanding of high-status display. According to Steve, his consumption of some relatively expensive brands earns him respect from elite clients during interactions. For him, if workers do not engage in self-reform tactics, they risk being looked down upon and less tolerated. His use of words,



‘commoner,’ ‘ordinary,’ and ‘do not have class’, highlights his feelings of how the customers generally perceive them. This shows the depth of class inequality on a cultural level in the salon and how it possibly manifests in more broadly marginalisation and stigmatisation in Nigeria. Notably, it offers further evidence of how it affects lower-class people’s self-conception and behaviour and the service workers in Abuja’s salons.

Drawing from Foucault’s perspective of power and the subject to understand this phenomenon, we can extend our understanding of the relationship between cultural globalization and identity construction. These findings show how the participants of this study are subjected to the complex shifting power relations of cultural globalisation, and economic inequalities inherent in the socio-historical discourses that continue to (re)produce class identities in Nigeria (Allen, 2002). Notions of western luxury and global brands, alongside discourses associated with inequality and privilege in Nigeria, clearly circulate and interpenetrate the interactions between the actors in the salon and the workers’ behaviours more generally. As such, the workers in this study are compelled to take up positions of a ‘desired’ or partially ‘accepted’ subject in and through these power relations. At least, in this marketplace context where they serve the elite of Nigerian society.

## **11.2 Resistance to Stigma and Coping through Global Brands.**

In as much as these testimonies reveal the self-reform tactics of the service workers, they also demonstrate how in the bid to break away from identities perceived as inferior and economically disadvantaged, the workers engage in the consumption of global brands. During the fieldwork, I observed that the workers actively employ well-known brands as coping strategies to mask their stigmatized identities and assuage their feelings of inferiority. For instance, during my observational fieldwork, I noted how Gab, a stylist in the store, usually wore Coach cross-body bags, Nike trainers and cap, Gucci print belt, Wrangler and

Jeep shirts, and various Ralph Lauren Polo shirts items. In his testimony, during the interview where I enquired about this, he reports,

Gab: I will not say that it is for me to look good alone, not just for me to look good before people but also for me to look presentable. So, whoever client that I am interacting or talking to for with that they will know that this person knows what is up and not me looking *tartared* because no matter how good that I am with my handwork for at the first they will size you then know what your values are at first. These are some of the reasons that made me purchase those global brands. At least on that get that level of, they will not give me that slum look. Though I am from the slum, even if I am from *Bwari*, to be precise, they will see that though I am from *Bwari*, I am different from the people that live there in *Bwari*. They will see a clear difference that though this person lives in *Bwari*, his sense of being is not the *Bwari* type of person.

The emerging insights from Gabriel's testimony show that to avoid being socially rejected and referred to as '*tartared*' in the salon by wealthy clients; he tries to mask his identity with recognised brands. Regardless of how skilful the job one may be, he believes that engaging in such behaviour will enable him to bridge the class divide between himself and the elites during service encounters. In so doing, he says his clients and other store customers will not give him the '*slum looks*'. Though the clients know that he is from *Bwari*, a suburb area and principal residence for impoverished people of the lowest economic stratum in Abuja, their perception of him would be mediated because he would be regarded as someone different from the majority living there. That is, his status will be elevated, if only in the salon during business hours.

Interestingly, these insights parallel Fanon's (1952) writings, explaining how colonial rule has been replaced by dominance, surveillance and coercion by the indigenous bourgeoisie. That is to say, the new elites often look upon their fellow citizens, who are mainly underprivileged minorities, with disgust, anger, and pity (Rizvi et al., 2006; Spanakos, 1998). What is more, in their quest to break away

from their postcolonial subjectivity of inferiority, it is argued that the subaltern consumer subject seeks to emulate the elites through their behaviours and consumption practices (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1952). In relation to this, Gab's narrative clearly suggests that he is fully aware of being subjected, even subjugated, to the gaze of his wealthy clients and that he adapts his identity through the consumption of Western brands in response to this.

In so doing, this finding offers more insight into the symbolic power of brands in this context and their role as cultural resources (Arnould, 2006) that are used to negotiate and shape worker identities (Dion & Borraz's, 2017). In addition to this, it also draws attention to the ways in which brands shape and mediate the social game in service encounters and how consumers enact certain positions in the status hierarchy to maintain their dominance (ibid). Thus, in line with Goffman's (1967) arguments, these outcomes and practices reveal how status is expressed and experienced through implicit evaluations in everyday social interactions in the salons of Abuja. These involve micropolitical acts through which the actors involved continuously negotiate their positions.

To develop these arguments further, we return to Gab, whose continued testimony reveals how the service workers engage in the consumption and display of popular global brands to create associations with upward social mobility through which to sell themselves to their elite customers.

Gab: even the customers themselves, for if I am not well dressed and not looking presentable, they would not want to associate with me. It takes the grace of God for a few of them to see that the people who are not in their class as humans. Yes, some of them down-size us when they know that we are wearing regular clothes that anyone can get or buy from anywhere, then they will look down on us. Suppose we wear good brands like Rayban or Tomford. In that case, they will say, "fine, this person, even though we know that he is not an elite but yet

he is of this high class, and I cannot just talk down or look down on him” ... I like to look that good and to sell myself still.

This narrative highlights the fact that the service workers believe that their clients do not necessarily recognise them as humans because of their socio-economic status. Hence, they consume popular and widely recognised brands to uplift them from being perceived as underclass individuals to globally aware citizens who aspire for upward social mobility. In his reference to marketplace logic, Gab also reveals how this drive to *‘look good’* is a crucial and necessary ingredient for being accepted as a valuable component of the salon’s marketing mix, through which the workers can promote themselves to their clients. Hence, Gab insists that he likes to *look good*. His use of the phrase *“to sell myself”* depicts his concerted effort to achieve recognition from his clients by self-extension (Belk, 1988) through popular global brands.

In making sense of this in relation to Nigeria’s socio-historic context, I returned to Fanon’s (1954) perspective of *‘Othering’* to explain this phenomenon. This postcolonial theoretical perspective suggests that colonisers -who in lieu of the arguments presented in Chapter 9 are represented by the elite customers in this study- not only devalue and dehumanise the colonised- who are the service workers- they also place them on the margins of society and social action. In addition, these theories suggest that the colonised body and, by implication, an individual’s subjectivity is objectified and made dependent upon the coloniser for its characterisation. Thus, the workers in this study are rendered into being and defined by their wealthy elite clients (Spanakos, 1998). Their subject positions are brought into focus and questioned during daily interactions with their customers, which compels them into practices leading to the identity transformation. Alternatively, as Goldberg (1997: p.81) puts it, *“Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognised by him.”* As such, due to this apparent domination of the

'other', the self-consciousness and behaviour of the services workers are manifest within the complex power relations that come into sharp relief within the walls of the salon, that in themselves unfold with regard to the socio-cultural context and historical development of Nigeria more broadly (Spanakos, 1998).

### **11.3 Coping Strategies and Upward Social Mobility**

As with previous studies, these findings shed light on how the pervading spread of globalisation influences individuals' outcomes and subject positions in the developing world (e.g., Varman & Belk, 2008) and inflects changes on the identities of subaltern individuals such as Nigerian service workers. Consider Mike's testimony, who had worked for big salons in Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria, before migrating to Abuja. From his account, it is clear that his interactions with the elites in Abuja have been much more influential upon his perception of upward social mobility and self-betterment than when he lived and worked in Lagos.

Mike: Based on Logistics. I have moved. My life has changed. You know when somebody says from the streets, from grass to grace. I have moved. I am moving. I am seeing things. You know, when I worked at the nail place in Lagos, I met so many people. The nails place is also prominent, and I worked with a different calibre of people, but you see in Abuja here, levels pass levels! (Both laughing). The thing is that the way Abuja people carry themselves, in fact, the way they speak English, forget, I will just be confused.

As a lower-class individual who has lived in the southern part of Nigeria, Mike's interview highlights his assumed movement up the social ladder. In his words, "I have moved," *"my life has changed," "from grass to grace"*. This reveals his thoughts about how his daily interactions with the elites in the store have made a significant and positive impact on his life. By moving geographically, he has better himself. As such, he says, *"I am seeing things"*. This juxtaposition and comparison with his previous working life in Lagos illuminate the differences in

the social order between Nigeria's regions and how his wealthy clients introduce him to new forms of cultural expression, cultural capital, and sociality. Hence, in comparing the elites in Lagos to those in Abuja, he used the words "*levels pass levels*". By being at the helm of government, business and power, the elites in Abuja are not only wealthier; they are far more exposed to western culture and modernity than others in the country. In this way, along with the other testimonies that reveal insight into how global brands are central to the experiences of the workers in the beauty salons of Abuja, Mike's narrative provides further insight into the dominant spread of global cultural flow into the capital of Nigeria, and how his wealthy clients are diffusing this to touch aspects of people's lives who are neither wealthy nor widely travelled.

This finding resonates with other narratives provided by the stores' customers in this research, particular Ronke, a regular customer of one of the salons investigated in this study. In her mind, she believes that the elites' eloquence influences a positive behavioural change in relation to the workers' consumption practices and attitudes.

Ronke: in terms of their attitude, most of them improve, some of them will not have the temperament, and for some, you will know that underneath they are trying to keep their bad attitude. Some of them do try to relate to time. Even with their dressing has changed by the time they spend a few months there, I have noticed a significant change in them from when they were new. Generally, most of them actually do change.

Although Ronke admits that though some of the workers may simply try to suppress unruly behaviours or not change at all, in most cases, through their interactions, they adapt to the setting and expectations of the customers. This is supported in an interview with one of the store's managers, who also suggests that along with their customers' influence, co-workers' styles and behaviours also rub off on newer staff members during their interactions in the salons. However,

from Charles' testimony, it is clear that some do not change, or indeed do not want to change, at all.

Manager Charles: yes, for some of the workers, when they come here, they are not usually well organised as the way they look, but when they see their colleagues or the customers that come in here, then they begin to change their lifestyle or their fashion style to fit the same environment.

Interviewer: the majority of the girls change?

Manager Charles: Some have not changed, and I can say it is their way of life. They do not care. They do not care about the way people look at them or how you see them. Their life is just like that. That is how they want to be. They do not have the drive to be better people. They do not wish to follow the trend. Let the trend be there, and they are not bothered. I will say that about 70% of them change their way of thinking and behaving in their attitude. Some do not change as they are comfortable in their space, for they still behave rudely. They do not care about whatever way anyone looks at them or says anything about them. If a customer walks into a store where the staff or the service workers are not cultured and well mannered, it tends to discourage them from coming back there. If a customer walks into the store and it is well organised, and the workers are well behaved, they mind their use of language. The customer would always want to come back here and even bring her friends along. On some other days, when the same customer comes in here and is not behaving correctly or fighting, that discourages many customers.

This conversation illuminates the fact that though the majority of workers seek to emulate the consumption practices of their wealthy customers or align with their expectations to overcome their subaltern subjectivities and stigmatised identities, some of them do not show any form of change in their behaviours and consumption practices at all. From what Charles reveals here, it is clear that some of the workers are "*comfortable in their space*". Their interactions with the elites do not influence them to the extent of some of their colleagues. In these instances,

while these workers may be fully aware of their presence, they seek to avoid or bracket out the global cultural flows spread through the mass-mediated ideologies channelled through western luxury and global brands. Neither are they interested in emulating the elites' consumption practices or making conscious efforts to transform their identities. For Charles, these workers "*lack the drive to be better people,*" which reveals the extent to which the discourses that interpenetrate the salons of Abuja through the consumption practices and behaviours of their customers take hold of the subjectivities of the staff involved in both managing and delivering the services. In this way, based on Charles' narrative, these in-compliant workers' attitudes and behaviours do not go unnoticed, and he fully believes that ultimately, they negatively impact the image of the store and, in some cases, discourage customers from becoming regular clients.

From a Foucauldian theoretical perspective (Foucault, 1980), these examples of resistant workers reveal that subjectification is a complex process whereby socio-historical discourses and power relationships produce hegemonic and counter-hegemonic subject positions. So, he suggests that all individuals are equally trapped within a system of power relations beyond their complete and total control. There is no such thing as a liberated subject; there is scope for resistance (ibid, 1980). Thus, it is argued that identity and subjectivity are believed to unfold through a complex co-production process shaped through a range of socio-historical discourses and interpersonal relationships that produce a range of subject positions available to individuals at any time (Wartenburg, 1990). Furthermore, in these particular cases from the salons of Abuja, the '*resistant*' workers seemingly elect to maintain the identities that are arguably aligned with the discourses traditionally associated with their strata of society, or at least hybrids thereof.



## **11.4 Conclusion**

To conclude, using the Foucauldian perspective on power and the technology of the self helps to understand the power relationships involved in the self-determining agency of the workers as they transform their identities. Additionally, through his lens on power and resistance to understanding this phenomenon, it can be argued that while all of the workers may be exposed to global consumer culture through mass-mediated ideologies that manifest in the daily interactions with their elite clients, not all respond in the same way. That is to say that while the majority begin to adopt and transform their identities through self-reform tactics and micro-practices of re-signification, others have committed to remaining in the same subject positions as formed through their socio-historical class backgrounds. Hence, this phenomenon broadly aligns with Foucault's (1980;1982) notion that the socio-historical discourses involved in subjectification are inevitably and invariably multiple and contradictory.

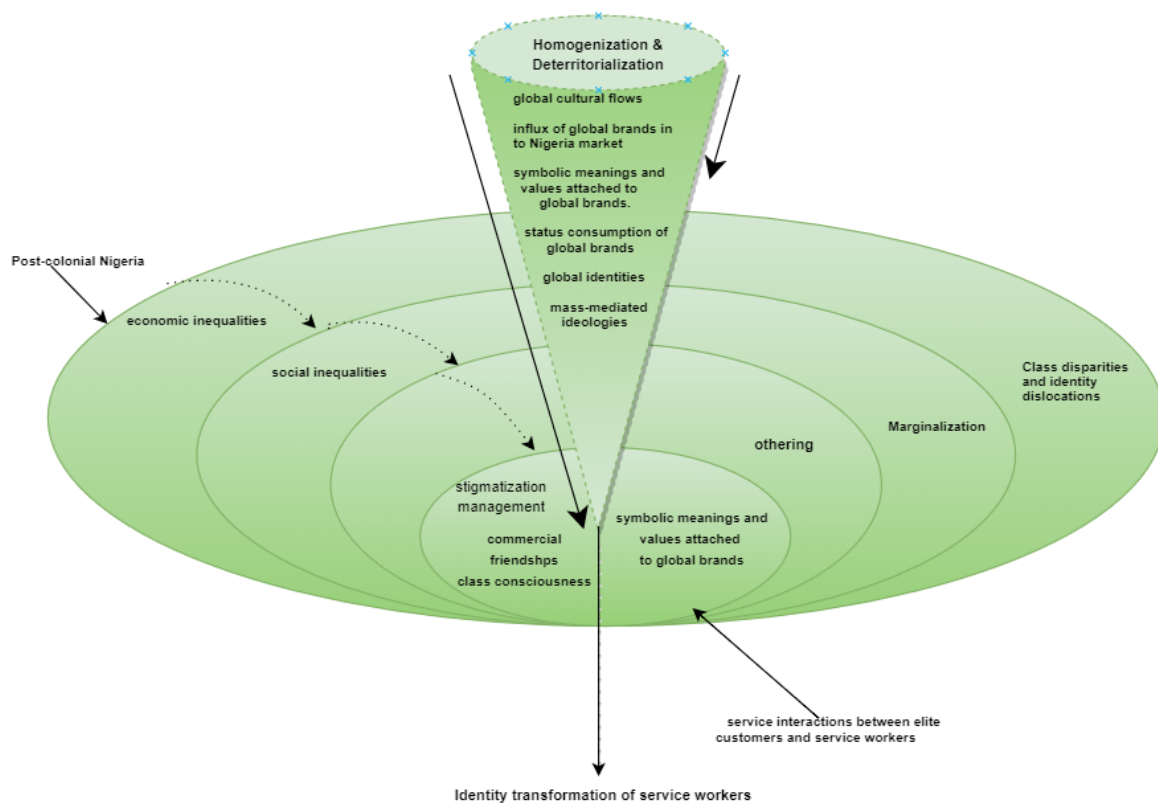
The next chapter discusses this theoretical model and findings of the study, contribution to knowledge, recommendations and future research.

## CHAPTER TWELVE: THEORETICAL MODEL, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND CONCLUSION

### Introduction

Through a social constructionist genealogical study of service interactions within beauty Stores in Nigeria, the findings from this research have facilitated the development of a theoretical model (fig.12.1), which illustrates how service workers negotiate their identities in relation to their elite clients and the socio-historic discourses and global cultural flows that manifest in this setting as power relationships.

**Fig 12.1 The Theoretical Model and Findings of the Study**



## **12.1 The Theoretical Model**

Within this framework, the outer circles portray the inherent socio-historical discourses associated with Nigeria's class system and how they (re)produce the economic and social inequalities and wide social class disparities, leading to marginalization and stigmatization of the service worker through 'othering'. The cone in the diagram represents the dominant structures of cultural globalization and global flow, and how these penetrate the salons through the consumption practices of the elites and the symbolism associated with global brands and western luxury that they frequently adorn. Therefore, the pinnacle of the cone represents mass-mediated ideologies and hybrid western identities that are brought into sharp relief for the workers through their interactions with the clients. Finally, the central circle of the model reflects the identity struggles and negotiations, as well as the self-reform tactics and forms of resistance, undertaken by the workers as they are made acutely aware of their 'inferior' subject positions through their treatment and interactions with their customers in the stores. As such, the model represents the micro political identity struggles of the service workers vis-à-vis their wealthy clients in relation to the socio-historic and global context of this setting. Moreover, in so doing, it offers a clear visual representation and processual map of this studies contribution to service marketing and consumer research knowledge.

## **12.2 Contributions to Knowledge**

Based on the theoretical model and findings above, it is clear that in the desire for safety and freedom from social sanctions, previous studies have revealed that stigmatised individuals often resort to masking their real identities (Crockett, 2017; Crosby, 2012; Goffman, 1967; Varman & Belk, 2012). Furthermore,

through the findings reported and discussed herein, this study extends the literature by shedding light on the ways in which subaltern groups engage in a range of self-reform tactics, including masking (Sandicki & Ger, 2009; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013), to align their identities with non-stigmatised norms and practices. However, in this particular case, the focus is on service workers in a postcolonial setting rather than consumers per se.

The study and findings are developed in relation to a Foucauldian perspective of power-relationships and socio-historical discourses, instead of phenomenology, which usually frames such research. As such, the findings from the narratives and testimonies from the interview excerpts reported here are clearly novel and new. Through Foucault's (1988) theories of the sign system and technologies of the self, insights have been developed into how the symbolic meanings and values associated with global luxury brands and elite customers become disciplinary mechanisms through which subjects are substituted in the salons. The findings from this study, therefore, contribute to the literature by showing how global brands and consumer identities can be understood as contextualised vehicles through which status games are structured and lifestyles and identities are either acquired, disrupted or become disrupted (Ahuvia, 2005; Askegaard, 2006; Dittmar, 1992; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007; McCracken, 1988; Thompson & Arsel, 2004), within service-based settings in Nigeria. Thus, by showing how asymmetric relationships are constituted and play out between elites and service workers in postcolonial contexts as a form of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1988) and symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2002), this research extends previous work into identity struggle and status games in service settings by Ustunier & Thompson, 2012).

In relation to this, the findings help develop our understanding and academic knowledge of the outcomes of service work in developing countries, particularly regarding service work identity. This is because this research clearly shows that

the service workers suffer from a profound crisis of identity and feelings of inferiority in relation to their clients and that this condition of social instability is worsened by their continued exposure to western culture through luxury consumption and global brands (Varman & Belk, 2012). Hence, on top of the existing class differences that inflect the workers' perceptions in this context through the socio-historical discourses that animate the class system in this country, and through their treatment by customers, this exposure to the west through global cultural flows creates fresh anxieties and a desire to mask and/or refashion identities by emulating western culture, and the practices of their clients (ibid).

As such, by drawing insights from the genealogical analysis of the socio-historical development of Nigeria, which was conducted to contextualise this research, the findings of this study reveal how the wealthy elite clients that are encountered in the salon's -who are perceived by most of the service workers as symbols of civilisation – are catalysts to identity negotiation and construction.

Therefore, the findings from this research also hold the potential to extend Fanon and Spivak's theories of the postcolonial subject to contemporary marketplace interactions in the developing world. This research illuminates how service worker identity manifests from an internalization of inferiority, the dissolution of the self and a struggle to assemble a subject position deemed acceptable (Fanon, 1952) by their clients. As the object of "*Othering*," which seemingly embeds a psyche of an oppressed individual, that produces feelings of alienation, estrangement, and depersonalization, the service workers in the beauty stores of Abuja are compelled to change or resistance.

What is more, as these workers begin to engage in the consumption of popular global brands to mask their identities and emulate their customers, by implication they are cementing the spread of a homogenised global culture, which according

to Bello (2010), gives rise to American norms, values and practices (also see: Nicolaides, 2012; Ugbam et al., 2014). Thus, as Crick (1989) suggests, this process of homogenisation unfolding in Abuja's salons threatens to erode cultural authenticity and encourages similar aspirations and more uniformity in lifestyles. Through Foucault's lens on the technology of the self, the findings in this study have clearly shown that many of the service workers see this lifestyle and the consumption of Western brands as the route to social legitimacy and cultural acceptance.

Arguably, the consequences of such consumption practices and identity struggles are that Nigeria's rich culture is being slowly eroded and degraded as inferior. As such, outside of Abuja's salons, it is conceivable that many other lower-class individuals in Nigeria, especially the youth who are yet to enter the workforce, may suffer similar feelings of inferiority that threatens to drown their culture (Umeogu, 2012). Perhaps this is why Aimiwu (2004) accuses globalisation of entrenching poverty and ruthlessly grinding the continent's lower-economic strata into submission. It is like 'Dracula' thriving on the blood of the poor. Therefore, according to Afisi (2009), the question that must befuddle most individuals in developing nations, and the workers in the salon's studied herein, is, "*how can I survive?*". So, while it is clear from this research that some resist the cultural logic and consumption practices of the elites by seeking refuge in the traditional discourses that circumscribe the social fabric and class system of Nigeria, it is clear from the findings reported here that most have not.

### **12.3 Recommendations and Future Research**

Future research could seek to explore the phenomena investigated in this research in other service settings in Nigeria to assess the extent to which these findings are reproduced in different contexts. Examples could be luxury clothing stores, car showrooms and barbershops that potentially cater to a clearly specified gendered audience. Equally, studies could be undertaken in other developing African

countries to assess the extent of cultural homogenisation that may be unfolding in relation to wealthy consumers' consumption styles and their influence on the people they come into contact within the marketplace more broadly. What is more, researchers could try to identify examples of resistance similar to what was reported in this study to develop a clearer and more detailed understanding of why this outcome manifests in general. Also, how and when it is clearly at odds with the dominant power relationships and cultural discourses that seemingly inflect the commercial settings that attract wealthy clients in the developing world. By doing so, researchers will develop a more nuanced understanding of the acculturation processes and outcomes that unfold in service industry contexts.

#### **12.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, then, the relevance of the findings produced in this research show that when poverty meets wealth and global consumer culture in the confines of service work in the salons of Abuja, it necessitates a rethink about the role of markets and the service industry under capitalism in the developing world more generally (Varman & Vikas; 2007). In this way, due to the overwhelming dominance of research studies that concern western markets and behaviour, it is fundamental to continue studying marketplace settings and interactions in the developing world so as not to consign non-western subject positions to an imaginary waiting room of history (ibid).

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## RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST (SHUREC1)

This form is designed to help staff and postgraduate research students to complete an ethical scrutiny of proposed research. The SHU [Research Ethics Policy](#) should be consulted before completing the form.

Answering the questions below will help you decide whether your proposed research requires ethical review by a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). In cases of uncertainty, members of the FREC can be approached for advice.

**Please note:** staff based in University central departments should submit to the University Ethics Committee (SHUREC) for review and advice.

The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research and with the principal investigator for staff research projects.

Note that students and staff are responsible for making suitable arrangements for keeping data secure and, if relevant, for keeping the identity of participants anonymous. They are also responsible for following SHU guidelines about data encryption and research data management.

The form also enables the University and Faculty to keep a record confirming that research conducted has been subjected to ethical scrutiny.

- For postgraduate research student projects, the form should be completed by the student and counter-signed by the supervisor and kept as a record showing that ethical scrutiny has occurred. Students should retain a copy for inclusion in their thesis, and staff should keep a copy in the student file.
- For staff research, the form should be completed and kept by the principal investigator.

Please note if it may be necessary to conduct a health and safety risk assessment for the proposed research. Further information can be obtained from the Faculty Safety Co-ordinator.

### General Details

Name of the principal investigator or postgraduate research student	Evelyn Azikiwe
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SHU email address	<a href="mailto:B4039484@my.shu.ac.uk">B4039484@my.shu.ac.uk</a>
Name of supervisor (if applicable)	Dr Craig Hirst
email address	<a href="mailto:Slmch1@exchange.shu.ac.uk">Slmch1@exchange.shu.ac.uk</a>
Title of the proposed research	A critical examination of consumer acculturation and technology adoption in African Markets.
Proposed start date	01/02/2016
Proposed end date	30/01/2020
Brief outline of the research to include rationale & aims (500 - 750 words).	<p>RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY.</p> <p>As the globalization and the diffusion of technological brands are increasingly being considered a developmental imperative for the emerging economies ( Shambare, 2014), there has been growing interest amongst academic researchers seeking to understand the impact of the social-cultural and environmental forces on consumer decisions (Andriopoulos &amp; Slater, 2013).</p> <p>With the influx of global brands from both developed and developing countries into emerging markets, researchers have focused on the performance of these brands because consumer evaluations of products differ (Demirbag et al., 2010; Sharma, 2011). Notably, consumers in emerging markets evaluate global brands from developed countries more positively than those brands from developing countries (Zhou &amp; Hui,2003) and the distinction of these brands, in terms of their symbolic content, is essential for consumers' brand preferences (Guo, 2013).</p> <p>From prior research, the globalisation and adoption of technological brands have been investigated in emerging markets like China and India (Joo and Sang, 2013), but less attention has been paid to developing countries in Africa. Although Nigeria is currently ranked amongst the ten top countries in the world for the adoption of technological brands (Davidson, 2014; Guardian 2015), there has been no prior research into the relevance and influence of global orientation and acculturation into the global brand culture on the consumption and adoption of technological brands in such an emerging market. Nor has there been a prior study of how consumers in emerging markets (African context) perceive and adopt the brands from both developed and developing countries.</p> <p>To add a little perspective, Nigeria has a population of over 151 million people (EIU Views Wire, 2008) and is one of the world's oil-producing countries. This has positively affected the living standards of the populace, encouraging the adoption of many global brands. Although Gannon and Pillai (2010) refer to Nigeria as a "marketplace" due to its history, which has been steeped with world trade, Lysonski and Durvasula (2013) mentioned that there had been a lack of research on the consumer behaviour of Nigerians. This impedes the understanding</p>

	<p>of consumers in such developing economies as well as Nigeria as an emerging market.</p> <p>Globalization signifies <i>“the worldwide diffusion of practices, expansion of relations across continents, organisations of social life on a global scale, and growth of a shared global orientation”</i> (Ritzer 2004, p.42). Closely related to globalization is “Global orientation”, which reflects an individual’s shared consciousness of the world as a whole or shared global consciousness (Guo,2013) and as such people with global orientation see themselves as living in a global world and having global identities (Guo,2013). Global Consumption Orientation refers to the consumer attitudinal responses to the diffusion and consumption choices towards the global brands in emerging markets (Alden et al., 2006; Zhang and Khare, 2009; Guo,2013).</p> <p>Going forward, there is a need to explore how Global Consumption Orientation and attitudes of Nigerian consumers more broadly affect the adoption and post-adoption of technology brands. This theoretical gap in understanding consumer culture and how global orientation influences the consumption of technological brands in emerging markets can be attributed to the earlier propositions of the universality of consumer behaviours especially those related to the branding of products (Cayla and Arnould, 2008).</p> <p>An earlier study by Wright et al. (2005) explains how the institutional context in emerging markets presents significant departures from the assumptions of theories developed in the western world. As a result, there have been further arguments for the need to explore the extent to which the theories and methodologies used in research studies undertaken in developed economies can be suitable for the unique socio-economic and cultural context and contingencies of emerging economies (Wright et al., 2005; Burgess &amp; Skeenkamp, 2006).</p> <p>As well as this, there are increasing calls by current marketing scholars for further research to understand the significance of brands as socio-cultural entities to enhance the overall theoretical understanding of brands in the marketplace (Cayla &amp; Arnould, 2008). Besides that, there is also a call for further research on how consumers pro-global orientation (both global and glocal) influence their attitudes towards the complex interaction of brands in emerging economies (Guo, 2013). Such studies are relevant because success in emerging markets is crucial for the future of most firms in developed economies (Burgess and Steenkamp, 2006) who are already operating in saturated business environments (Guardian, 2015).</p> <p>Aims of the study</p> <p>To critically examine the theoretical understanding of consumer culture, consumer acculturation on global orientation towards technology adoption of global brands in the emerging markets.</p>
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	<p>To investigate how these brands from developed and developing countries are diffused and globalised in Nigeria.</p> <p>To shed more light on how global technology companies from developing and developed countries can better manage their brand portfolios and formulate their branding strategies.</p> <p>Add value to the current efforts by marketing researchers in understanding the complexities of emergent and evolving phenomena across international boundaries.</p>
Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymisation, storage and disposal procedures if required (300 -750 words).	<p>Given that my main interest is exploring how global orientation and attitudes affect technology adoption in the Nigerian market, the poststructuralist approach would be adopted for several reasons. I acknowledge that existential-phenomenological interviews may be appropriate for this research because it is a helpful research paradigm and methodological approach which conceptualises the study of consumer experience from an individualistic perspective (Thompson, Locander &amp; Polio, 1989, p.139). However, as a qualitative study which is to explore the influences of global orientation and attitudes towards technology adoption in the emerging economies involving cultural analysis which aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the socio-political complexity of marketplace phenomenon (Mosiander et al., 2009), the existential phenomenology may not be adequate.</p> <p>Going further, Mosiander et al. (2009) explain that for an acceptable cultural analysis of consumption and marketplace activity, a shift from the focus of empirical analysis to the cultural dynamics of consumption is required. My interest is not to test the causal relationship but to explore and achieve a deeper understanding of how acculturation influences global consumption orientation towards the adoption of technology brands in Nigeria.</p> <p>The data collection method for this study is the semi-structured interview. Many different methods and materials can be used for cultural analysis (Belk, 2007), but the interview method has been argued to be the most penetrating and powerful (McCracken, 1988). From the perspectives of Mosiander &amp; Valtonen (2006), as cited in (Mosiander et al., 2009), interviews are conducted to produce "cultural talk". The researchers explain that "cultural talks" refer to the social text produced, shared, and used in culturally specific, socially organized ways. These texts are studied for the cultural discourses and practices that are realized and made available.</p> <p>I propose to use purposive sampling for this study (Saunders et al., 2012). This is because it allows for detailed exploration and</p>

	<p>understanding of the central themes and questions which the researcher wishes to study (Bryman, 2012)</p> <p>The sample for this study will be the users of technology brands in Abuja, the capital, and the most affluent city in Nigeria, comprising different consumer socioeconomic classes. I will interview about 40 participants for the study. The research sample will be respondents between the ages of 20-55 years. This is to allow for exploration of the interaction of global consumption orientation and the different cultural levels across the sample. The decision to extend the sampling beyond the 'youth' group is informed by concerns that existing global market research has primarily omitted the older population and "excluded them from theoretical and management attention"(Pralhad 2004 as quoted in Cayla and Arnould (2008)p.89). The data for the study will be locked in a password-protected laptop and the university computer.</p>
Will the research be conducted with partners & subcontractors?	<p><b>No</b></p> <p>(If <b>YES</b>, outline how you will ensure that their ethical policies are consistent with university policy.)</p>

**1. Health Related Research involving the NHS or Social Care / Community Care or the Criminal Justice System or with research participants unable to provide informed consent**

Question	Yes/No
<p>1. Does the research involve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care</li> <li>• Relatives/carers of patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care</li> <li>• Access to data, organs or other bodily material of past or present NHS patients</li> <li>• Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients</li> <li>• The recently dead in NHS premises</li> <li>• Prisoners or others within the criminal justice system recruited for health-related research*</li> <li>• Police, court officials, prisoners or others within the criminal justice system*</li> <li>• Participants who are unable to provide informed consent due to their incapacity even if the project is not health-related</li> </ul>	No
<p>2. Is this a research project as opposed to service evaluation or audit? For NHS definitions, please see the following website <a href="http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/">http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/</a></p>	N/A

If you have answered **YES** to questions **1 & 2** then you **must** seek the appropriate external approvals from the NHS, Social Care or the National Offender Management

Service (NOMS) under their independent Research Governance schemes. Further information is provided below.

NHS <https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx>

\* Prison projects may also need National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Approval and Governor's Approval and may need Ministry of Justice approval. Further guidance at: <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/applying-for-approvals/national-offender-management-service-noms/>

**NB** FRECs provide Independent Scientific Review for NHS or SC research and initial scrutiny for ethics applications as required for university sponsorship of the research. Applicants can use the NHS proforma and submit this initially to their FREC.

## 2. Research with Human Participants

Question	Yes/No
1. Does the research involve human participants? This includes surveys, questionnaires, observing behaviour etc. <i>Note If YES, then please answer questions 2 to 10 If NO, please go to Section 3</i>	Yes
2. Will, any of the participants, be vulnerable? <i>Note 'Vulnerable' people include children and young people, people with learning disabilities, people who may be limited by age or sickness or disability, etc. See definition</i>	No
3 Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	No
4 Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?	No
5 Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	No
6 Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	
7 Is there any reasonable and foreseeable risk of physical or emotional harm to any of the participants? <i>Note Harm may be caused by distressing or intrusive interview questions, uncomfortable procedures involving the participant, invasion of privacy, topics relating to highly personal information, topics relating to illegal activity, etc.</i>	No
8 Will anyone is taking part without giving their informed consent?	No
9 Is it covert research? <i>Note 'Covert research' refers to research that is conducted without the knowledge of participants.</i>	No

10	Will the research output allow identification of any individual who has not given their express consent to be identified?	No
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If you answered **YES only** to question **1**, you must complete the box below and submit the signed form to the FREC for registration and scrutiny.

#### **Data Handling**

Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymization, storage and disposal procedures if these are required (350-750 words)

If you have answered **YES** to any of the other questions you are **required** to submit a SHUREC2A (or 2B) to the FREC. If you answered **YES** to question **8** and participants cannot provide informed consent due to their incapacity you must obtain the appropriate approvals from the NHS research governance system.

### **3. Research in Organisations**

Question	Yes/No
1 Will the research involve working with/within an organisation (e.g. school, business, charity, museum, government department, international agency, etc.)?	No
2 If you answered YES to quiz question 1, do you have granted access to conduct the research? <i>If YES, students please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain safely.</i>	N/A
3 If you answered NO to question 2, is it because A. you have not yet asked B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access.  <i>Note You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted access.</i>	N/A

### **4. Research with Products and Artefacts**

Question	Yes/No
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1.	Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes, existing datasets or secure data?	No
2.	<p>If you answered YES to question 1, are the materials you intend to use in the public domain?</p> <p><i>Notes</i> <i>'In the public domain' does not mean the same thing as 'publicly accessible'.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Information which is 'in the public domain' is no longer protected by copyright (i.e. copyright has either expired or been waived) and can be used without permission.</i></li> <li><i>Information which is 'publicly accessible' (e.g. TV broadcasts, websites, artworks, newspapers) is available for anyone to consult/view. It is still protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice. In UK law, copyright protection is automatic and does not require a copyright statement, although it is always good practice to provide one. It is necessary to check the terms and conditions of use to find out exactly how the material may be reused etc.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>If you answered YES to question 1, be aware that you may need to consider other ethics codes. For example, when conducting Internet research, consult the code of the Association of Internet Researchers; for educational research, consult the Code of Ethics of the British Educational Research Association.</i></p>	N/A
3.	<p>If you answered NO to question 2, do you have explicit permission to use these materials as data?</p> <p><i>If YES, please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain permission.</i></p>	N/A
4.	<p>If you answered NO to question 3, is it because:</p> <p>A. you have not yet asked permission</p> <p>B. you have asked and not yet received an answer</p> <p>C. you have asked and been refused access.</p> <p><i>Note</i> <i>You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted permission to use the specified material.</i></p>	N/A

### Adherence to SHU policy and procedures

<b>Personal statement</b>	
<p>I can confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures</li> <li>– I agree to abide by its principles.</li> </ul>	
<b>Student / Researcher/ Principal Investigator (as applicable)</b>	
Name:	Date:

Signature:	
<b>Supervisor or other person giving ethical sign-off</b>	
I can confirm that completion of this form has not identified the need for ethical approval by the FREC or an NHS, Social Care or other external REC. The research will not commence until any approvals required under Sections 3 & 4 have been received.	
Name:	Date:
Signature:	
Additional Signature if required:	
Name:	Date:
Signature:	

**Please ensure the following are included with this form if applicable, tick box to indicate:**

	Yes	No	N/A
Research proposal if prepared previously	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any recruitment materials (e.g. posters, letters, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participant information sheet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participant consent form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details of measures to be used (e.g. questionnaires, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outline interview schedule / focus group schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Debriefing materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health and Safety Project Safety Plan for Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Data Management Plan*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

If you have not already done so, please send a copy of your Data management Plan to [rdm@shu.ac.uk](mailto:rdm@shu.ac.uk)

It will be used to tailor support and make sure enough data storage will be available for your data.

**Completed form to be sent to Relevant FREC. Contact details on the website.**



## **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Full title of Project:

**ACCULTURATION IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF MARKETPLACE PERFORMANCES.**

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

**Evelyn Azikiwe.**

Doctoral Researcher

Unit 5, Science Park,

Sheffield Business School

Sheffield Hallam University,

Howard Street, Sheffield. S1 1WB

Email: [Evelyn.Azikiwe@student.shu.ac.uk](mailto:Evelyn.Azikiwe@student.shu.ac.uk)

Tel. +447459752668.

*Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies*

- |  | <i>yes</i>               | <i>no</i>                |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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**Name of Participant**

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**Date**

---

**Signature**

---

**Name of Researcher**

---

**Date**

---

**Signature**

## **Participant Information Sheet**

### **Project Title:**

#### **Acculturation in Nigeria: A Critical Examination of Marketplace Performances.**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before your decision to take part in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

This study explores the symbolic meanings and values attached to western culture, consumption practices and lifestyles through service interactions between elite class consumers and service workers in Nigeria. Given the spread of globalization that stimulates consumers' reflections on their consumption practices and lifestyles as a progressive intercultural learning, the consumer behaviour of Africans is less represented in consumer research. With the emergence of firms from the developed countries into Africa, there is need for this study as it will enable them better understanding of the consumer behaviour of the Nigerians.

### **Why have I been invited to Participate?**

You are invited to participate in this study as you are:

- An Upper-middle class consumer who is widely exposed to western cultures and global brands.
- A service worker (Stylists, Braiders, Nail Technicians, Barber, Skincare specialists)
- A beauty store owner or manager.

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to your decision to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Your involvement in the project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied without giving reasons.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will participate in an in-depth interview, scheduled for approximately one hour. The date and time will be scheduled at a convenient time for you. You can also choose to have a face-to-face or Skype interview, whichever is more convenient. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Your participation will throw more light into the process of how acculturation evolves through service interactions within marketplace performances in Nigeria. The study will be beneficial to firms in the emerging markets as it would enable them more understanding of the consumer behaviour of Nigerians as they will be able to resonate with the expectations of the consumers which will make them successful in the Nigerian market. Moreover, as this research is being carried out as part of my partial fulfilment of a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), you will be helping achieve the award through your participation.

**Will, what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

All information collected will be kept confidential. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material. Data generated by this study will be securely stored in devices and encrypted and password-protected locations. The data generated during the research study will be kept securely in paper and electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been approved by the university Research Ethics Committee of Sheffield Hallam University.

**Contact for Further Information**

For further information, contact me: Evelyn Azikiwe.

[Evelyn.Azikiwe@student.shu.ac.uk](mailto:Evelyn.Azikiwe@student.shu.ac.uk) Doctoral Researcher - Sheffield Business School, Unit 5 Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield. S1 1WB. Telephone: +447459752668. Should the participant have any concern about the conduct of the study they can contact the chair of the university Research Ethics Committee on [researchsupport@shu.ac.uk](mailto:researchsupport@shu.ac.uk)

**Thank you**

**Date**

