

**LUXURY FASHION CONSUMPTION AND IDENTITY WORK: A
STUDY OF BLACK AFRICAN WOMEN IN LONDON**

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Abstract

Extant research suggests the various motives for consumer behaviour. Within this theoretical context, there seems to be an advancement of knowledge. However, understanding the reasons for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by ethnic minority groups and how this behaviour impacts on identity work is overlooked. Thus, this research aims to extend knowledge of consumer behaviour by enquiring into the motives for luxury fashion consumption by Black African women in London and its effect on identity work. In this backdrop, this research adopts three qualitative techniques: interviews, focus groups and overt participant observation. Forty-seven Black African female consumers in London were interviewed, two focus groups consisting of eight and nine respondents and ten women were observed. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling strategy. Data collected was analysed through inductive content analysis, which means themes flow from the data. Initial and axial coding was used to categorise findings into ten themes that address the objectives of the research. Results of this study reveal various reasons Black African women engage in luxury fashion brand consumption. These reasons include brand relationship, anthropomorphism, consumer and brand personality and aspiration. Findings also show that the location of the brand at the point of purchase plays a vital role in the decision making process. The study is intense in its theoretical advancement as it provides strong support for the impact of the place identity on brand and consumer identity. This research suggests that identity is transferable from place to product and subsequently to the customer. It also supports culture as an influencer in luxury fashion consumption. Within the cultural theme, lifestyle and heritage are common factors that prompt visible consumption. Black African women use luxury fashion products as an heirloom because of its premium price, quality and durability. Furthermore, this research proposes vital frameworks to explain the motive for consumption. The sequential mating model which infers that mate signalling is a strategic process that involves four stages. Consumers use luxury fashion brands as signalling object to attract a mate. After mate signalling is successful, retaining the mate becomes a circular model with the relationship as the principal components. Aspirational frameworks are also evident. They show different groups of aspirational consumers. The first and second group are those who are loyal to a particular brand, while the third, show people who are loyal to luxury fashion brands with no brand preference. Theoretically, the findings of this study provide valuable insights about Black African female consumers who have a positive attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion goods. They use

this practice to reinforce both the self and the social concept. To luxury fashion managers, since Black African women see this behaviour as a way of life, marketing campaigns should be made to focus on this segment. This research is unique and novel as it creates a link between luxury fashion consumption, Black ethnic minority group and identity theories.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated in loving memory of my beloved father, Honourable Vincent Atako, I wish you lived to see today and to my mother, Dr Mrs Christiana Atako. Thank you for your relentless support. I love you a thousand times more.

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CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1- General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The essential focus of this thesis is to examine why Black African women in London consume luxury fashion brands and how this behaviour is used to create or re-reinforce identity. On this basis, this chapter presents an overview of the consumption of luxury brands. It introduces the concept of fashion as well as give insight into the global luxury goods market, the UK market, and it also presents the report on fashion consumption. In this chapter, luxury fashion market facts and figures are demonstrated. Furthermore, the chapter gives a brief background of the UK population and the Black ethnic minority group in London. Additionally, the statement of the problem, research gaps, aims, objective, the scope of the study and questions are discussed. Following this, the chapter establishes the expected contributions and implications of the research. Finally, it concludes with the structure of the research and the chapter's summary.

1.2 Overview of the Consumption of Luxury Brands

According to Teimourpour and Hanzae (2011, p. 309), living and consumption have become synonymous which means as long as life is discussed, consumption follows. This view has made consumption an exciting topic for exploration with increasing discourse in marketing literature by several authors (Zukin and Maguire, 2004; Leonini and Santoro, 2012). Similarly, studies have explored the motive for consuming and how it differs between consumers (Zukin and Maguire, 2004; Teimourpour and Hanzae, 2011). It is reported that some consumers buy in a way to construct, maintain, and enhance their self-identities (Huang, 2009) while others consume based on intrinsic factors (Shin et al., 2011). Consumption behaviour is a broad concept. It is considered a theory which involves the ability to engage in a cultural, economic and social process of identifying and designating goods (Zukin and Maguire, 2004, p. 173). An acknowledged field; which requires adequate research on products and consumers were consumers are the focal points (p. 174).

Consumption serves two purposes: satisfying basic needs and displaying status (Brezinova and Vijayakumar, 2012). It refers to as one of the oldest existing activities, and conspicuous consumption is one of the ancient consumption practices (Berger and Ward, 2010). Although consumption is an old behaviour, the act of consuming more exotic and conspicuous goods is

a significant ritual in modern life (Zukin and Maguire, 2004). This ritual is influenced by factors such as status, peer, societal norms, affluence (Dusenberry, 1949), which becomes a drive for luxury consumption behaviour. Conspicuous consumption has been visible since the eighteenth century. Veblen (1899) explored this behaviour extensively. Thorsten Veblen introduced the term 'conspicuous consumption', when he looked deeply into the critical role money plays in consumption patterns (Veblen, 1899). Veblen's (1899) study reveals that there is a motive for conspicuous consumption behaviour which links to status. Additionally, other studies on consumption behaviour show that different factors determine why consumers engage in conspicuous consumption (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978; Belk, 1988; Holt, 1995; Holt, 1998) which suggests that consumption habits are subjective.

The discourse on consumption behaviour indicates why consumers make purchase decisions. Studies show that people purchase products to communicate desired identities and characteristics (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978; Belk, 1988; Holt, 1995; Holt, 1998). Other researchers show that individuals use the act of consumption to draw conclusions on others' personalities, identities, and class (Belk et al., 1982; Burroughs et al., 1991). Another school of thought explains that conspicuous consumption behaviour is internally driven. This view says that internally driven people may consume luxury brands for 'personal satisfaction' or secure superior quality, not necessarily to signal wealth or communicate self-image to the masses but to feel good about themselves (Silvertein and Fiske, 2003; Truong, 2010). Sundie et al. (2011, p. 664) identify that some people may consume an expensive product 'because they feel the mechanism and quality are intrinsic, such act of consumption may include thoughtful analysis beyond the quality of the product. In support of this view, Shin et al. (2011, p. 101) stipulate that internally driven people are those with personal orientation and this gives rise to self-directed pleasure, experiences, satisfaction and consumer loyalty. A part of this behaviour also involves aspiration; which is also a behavioural pattern of consumers towards luxury consumption (Kim et al., 2003; Grouzer et al., 2005).

According to Berger and Ward (2010) consumption serves as a link in creating and maintaining 'symbolic borders' (Lamont, 1992) as well as grant access to social events (Kanter, 1977). Wilcox et al. (2012) propose that it is crucial for marketers to understand that the reason for the consumption of luxury brands differ between people and culture. This goal can essentially lead individuals to participate in manners that are extremely valued by the society (Wilcox et

al. (2012). It can also create a need for consumers to make a statement and decide what social class they choose to belong by what products they consume.

In Veblen's (1899) study, consuming luxury brands is conspicuous, and conspicuous consumption theory has developed over time with sufficient interest (Veblen, 1899; Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Patsiaoras and Fitchett, 2012). Interestingly, the majority of this research focuses on factors that motivate people to buy luxury brands (Berger and Ward 2010; Hans et al., 2010). Other research interest look at ways marketing executives can more efficiently sell luxury brands to consumers (Mandel et al., 2006; Torelli et al., 2012). Limited studies reveal how the consumption of luxury fashion brands is used to shape and reinforce identity by women of ethnic minority groups. Thus, creating a gap in the marketing literature on the link between conspicuous consumption motives and identity creation. Despite the fact that brands are indicators which assist people to signal through visible logos and specific patterns (Berger and Ward, 2010), particular models that are common, little is known about how the impact of luxury fashion consumption on identity creation.

1.3 Introduction to Fashion

One of the notable views on fashion can be sketched back to the early years when the mode of dressing was first documented (Barnhart, 1988). The word fashion refers to 'a shared way of dressing' (Brenninkmeyer, 1963). Remy (1996) notes the French meaning of fashion as 'la mode' which first appeared in 1482, while the English word 'fashion' comes from the Latin words 'facio' or 'factio' meaning 'doing' or 'making' (Brenninkmeyer, 1963, p. 2). The term has been linked to other alternative terms. Words such as fad, mode and vogue have been used as alternative words for fashion (p. 3). These words vary in meaning. For example, words such as 'fad' are used to describe an aspect of fashion which is adopted comparatively quickly with a great passion for a short-term; hence, the term 'fad' is short lived. The mode of dressing is an alternative word for fashion clothing. 'Vogue' is accustomed to fashion but refers to popularity and is accepted by consumers. As a result of these variances, one could argue that fashion is an on-going trend that never means one thing at any given time (Simmel, 1957).

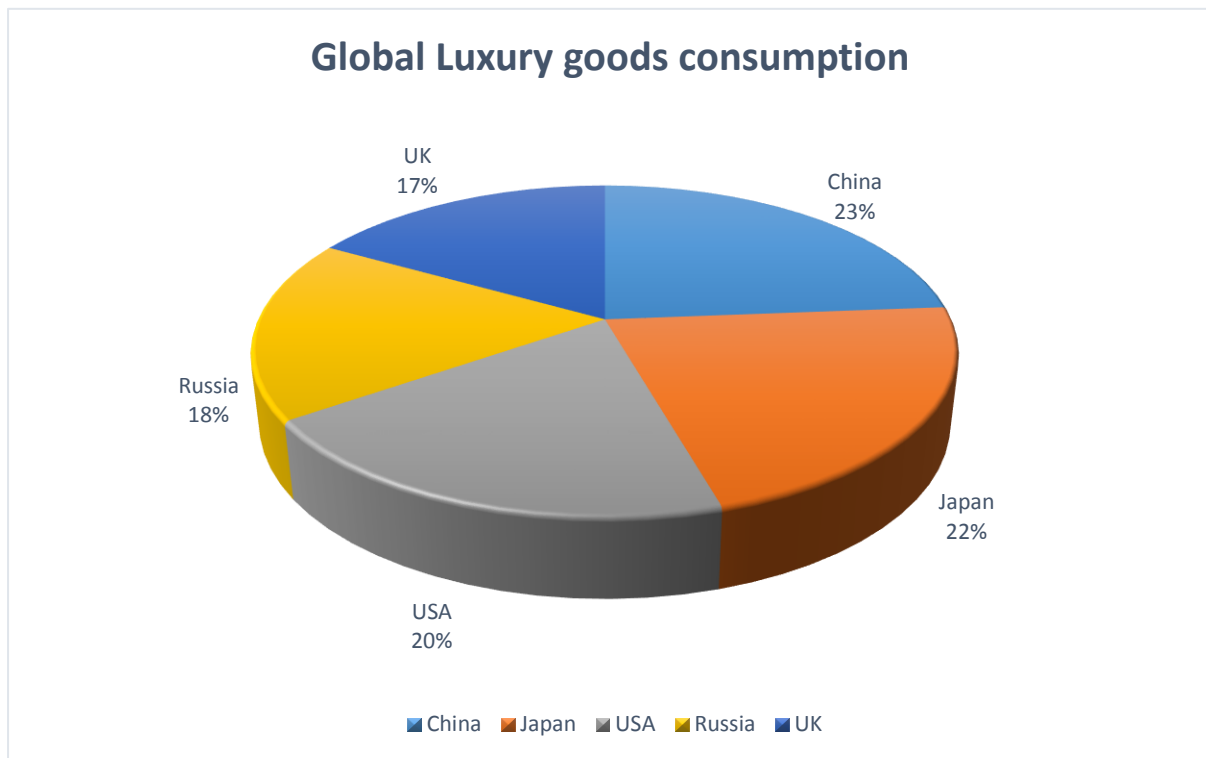
Authors such as Veblen (1898), Simmel (1904), Benjamin, (1982), Wilson (1985), and Maffesoli (1995) have expressed the social and psychological practices linked to bodily adornment. Fashion is considered depraved which means it is corrupt, nevertheless, it still

advances which Simmel (1957, p. 543) terms a 'dialectic performance' and a 'continual search for newness'. As a continual search for newness, Brenninkmeyer (1963, p. 5) links the term 'search for newness to' words like clothing, style, mode and dress. It involves some daily objects, but one simple way of looking at fashion is that it refers to how a person appears. In an attempt to understand the view of fashion in a conceptual manner, it is important to stress that the concept of fashion has to be looked upon in a much wider context rather than being limited to just dressing. Fashion should be considered a part of one's social life and allows consumers to conform to their social environment. Therefore, fashion is a phenomenon leading to particular consumption meanings and choices, permitting consumers to select from luxury to ordinary brands.

1.4 Global Luxury Goods Market, the UK Market and Fashion Report

Extant studies show that the luxury goods market is an important one both in its market value and rate of growth (Dubois and Duquense, 1993; Fionda and Moore, 2009). Evidently, the rate of growth has outpaced that of other consumer goods types (Fionda and Moore, 2009). In 1991, a report by McKinsey and Co showed an estimate of 60 billion dollars by a worldwide survey of several sectors (shoes, leather goods, jewellery, champagne, perfume and watches). Dubois and Duquense (1993) report that prestigious French brands (Chanel, Dior, Hermes and Guerlain) representing fashion and beauty brands attained a turnover of 4.9 billion dollars, an increase of 100%. Luxury goods market has taken over, brands such as Louis Vuitton and Chanel have achieved one billion dollar mark. A survey by Deloitte (2017) show that the consistent growth of luxury goods market is as a result of consumer spending power which has stayed comparatively robust. Deloitte's (2017) report also reveals that consumers in emerging markets are increasingly engaging in luxury goods consumption. According to Bain and Company (2017) report the global personal luxury goods market is estimated to be 254 billion euros to €259 billion (\$284 billion to \$289 billion) in 2017.

Figure 1.1 Global Luxury goods consumption (Adopted from Deloitte, 2017)



According to Figure 1.1, the top five countries with high rate of luxury goods consumption include China, Japan, USA, Russia and the United Kingdom, out of this five UK has 17% of luxury goods consumers (Deloitte, 2017). The growth in the UK luxury market is significant because this was not expected considering the Brexit (Nieto, 2017). Brexit is a word used to describe the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. Following the Brexit vote, the UK market experienced changes such as sterling deflation; the pound fell to the bottom level against the dollar (BOF, 2017). BOF (2017) report reveals that in more than thirty-one years, two trillion dollars was erased from the global stock market as a result of the referendum result. However, Deloitte (2017) notes that in coping with this pound deflation, luxury prices increased by 10% to 15%. The pound sharp fall created a temporary lift for luxury sales in the UK (Nieto, 2017). For foreign customers, the consequence of Sterling devaluation made the UK a spending haven, as charges in dollar fell, comparatively, the spending power in UK stores has increased (Deloitte, 2017). Additionally, McKinsey and Company (2016) report that in the same Brexit period, UK had experienced a high online luxury sales penetration.

Figure 1.2 Global Online Luxury sales penetration (Adopted from McKinsey and Company, 2016)

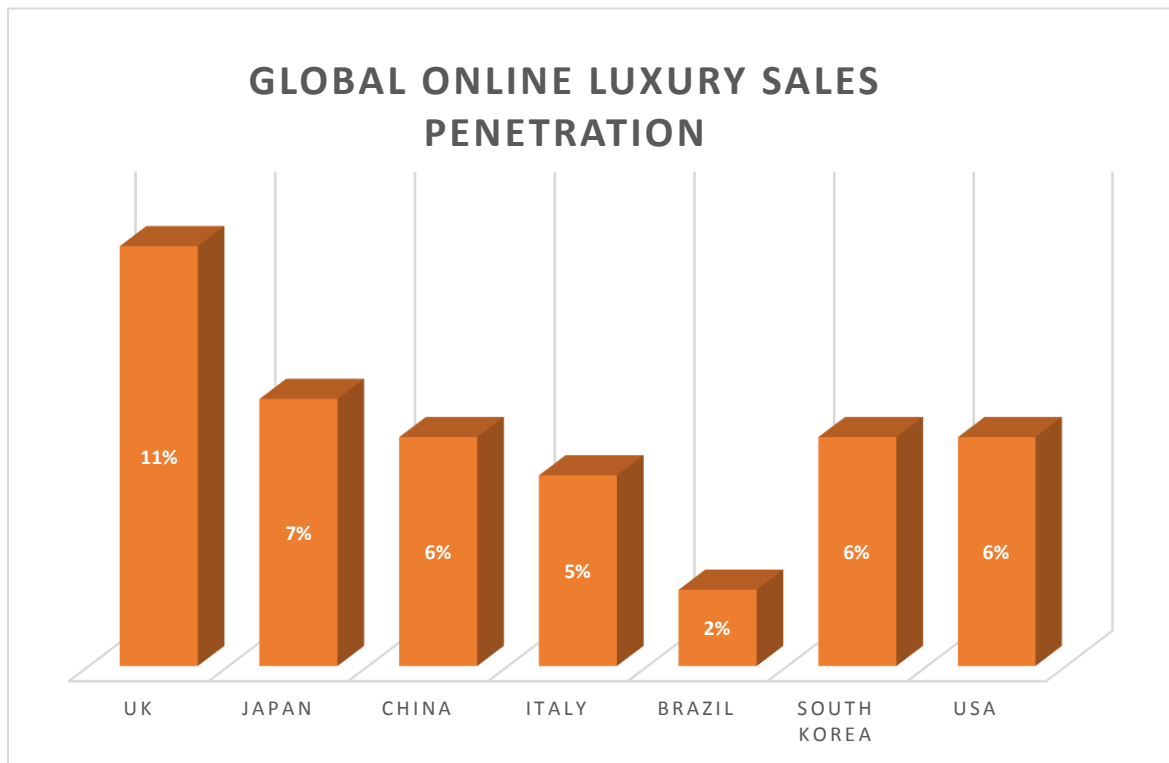


Figure 1.2 shows the sales penetration of UK luxury online buying behaviour. McKinsey and Company (2016) also report that the British market sales increased from £5 million pounds to £500million. Ge (2017) notes that 2016 was a difficult period for companies and customers due to the shock of Brexit, the most stringent year ever for the global fashion industry. Although fashion is well thought-out as one of the world's most essential industries which plays a vital role in the global economy, it was shaken by the Brexit (McKinsey and Co, 2017). However, in 2016 the industry was estimated to attain an astounding 2.4 trillion dollars in total value (BOF, 2017).

Figure 1.3 Rate of growth on consumer spending on fashion (Adopted from Pure London, 2016)

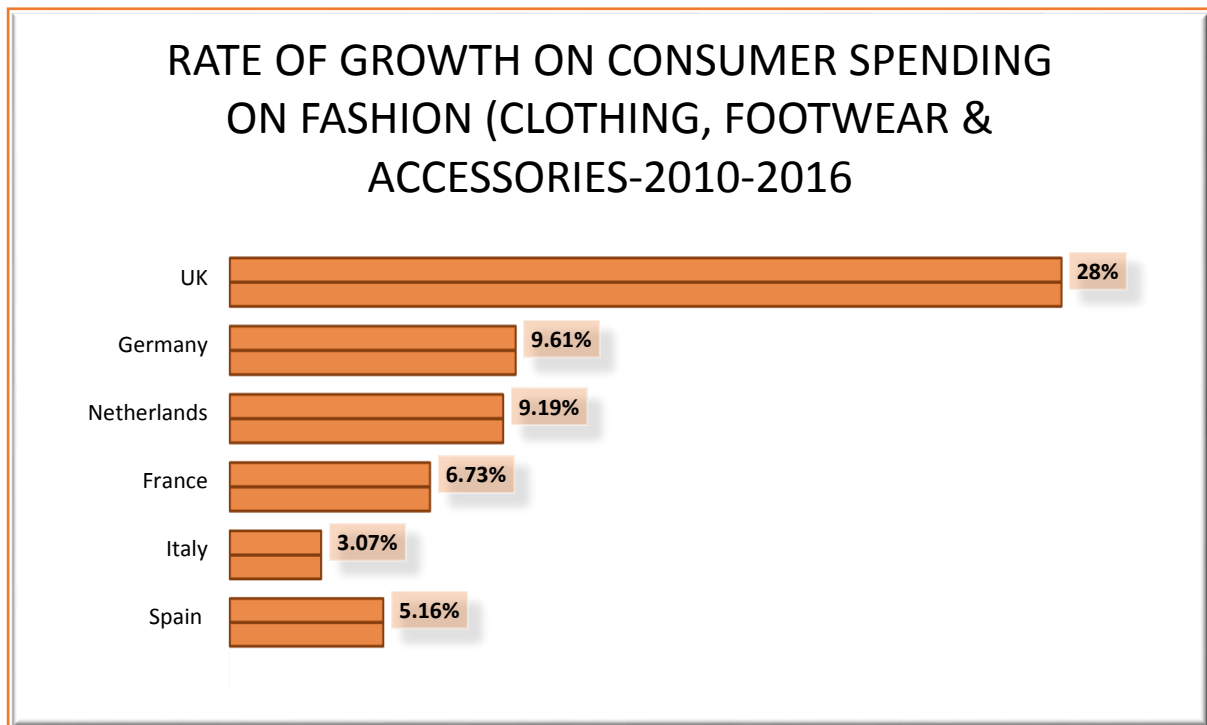
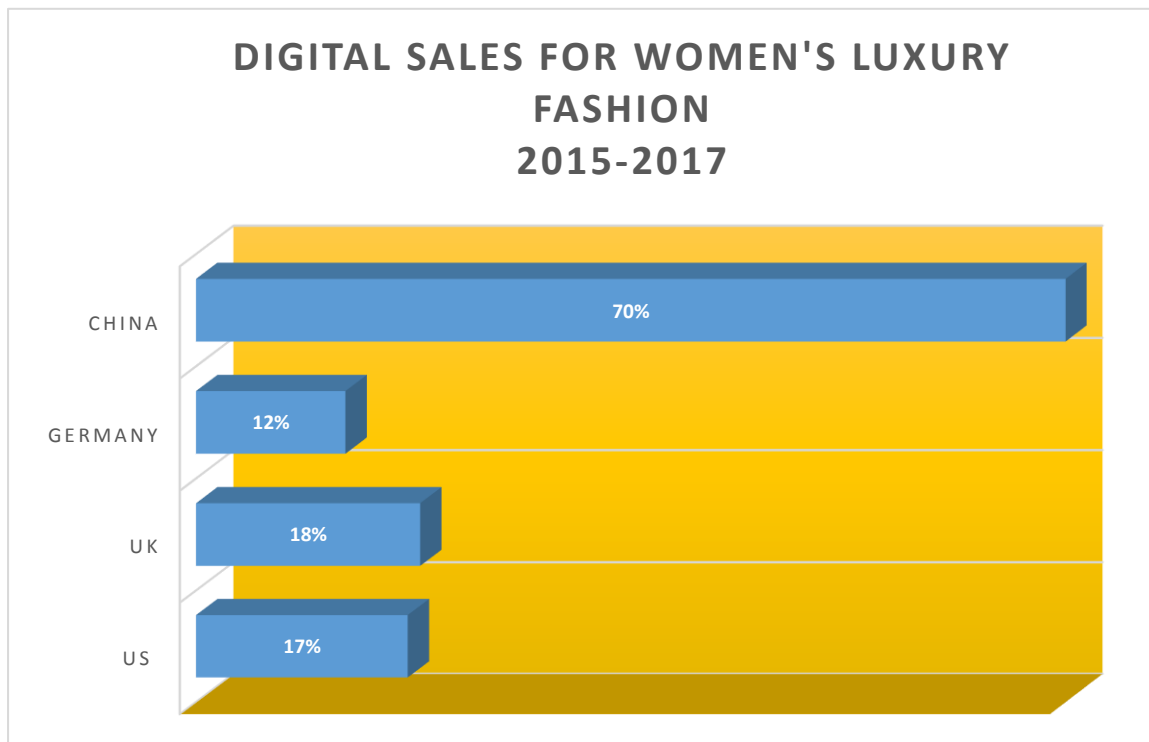


Figure 1.3 illustrates the global consumer's luxury fashion spending, in this chart, UK market has the highest rate of growth in fashion consumption globally. Ranking alongside individual countries' GDP, the global fashion industry represents the world's seventh largest economy (BOF-McKinsey, 2017). The global fashion industry is described in three words: challenging, changing and uncertain due to Brexit, terrorist attacks in France and the instability of the Chinese stock market (BOF-McKinsey, 2017). The report shows that consumers have become more challenging, more perceptive, discerning and less foreseeable in their buying patterns and this is restructured by new technologies and increase in market growth in developed and Western markets and remarkable development in China.

Figure 1.4 Digital sales for women's luxury fashion (Adopted from BOF, 2015)



It is expected that by 2018, digital sales for women's luxury fashion will increase by 14% and a total market size of 12 billion dollars (Schmidt et al., 2015). Online luxury fashion sales for women will be 17% in the United States, 18% in the United Kingdom and 12% in Germany and 70% in China. This report shows the UK digital sales for women's luxury fashion market as the second after China market (BOF, 2015). All the figures show that the UK has a considerable level of luxury and luxury fashion consumers comparatively.

1.5 A brief background of United Kingdom Population and Black Ethnic minority group in London

According to ONS (2017) report, the UK population is 65,648,100 people, and it is estimated that the figure will increase by 9.7 million over the next 25 years. The report also shows that by mid-2027, the population should reach 70 million (ONS, 2017). They have been steady growth in the UK since 2004, and it is reported that this will continue till 2039 (ONS. 2017). UK is considered the 5th largest economy in the world and the 3rd largest GDP in Europe (Pure London, 2016). Quartz Media (2017) also report that London consist of 8.6 million people and 44% of London consists of Black and ethnic minorities. BBC (2015) predicts that London

population growth will reach 11m by 2050. Similarly, Coombs (2014) reveals that the total number of the UK ethnic minority group is eight (8) million representing 14% of the UK population. The Black African community is a fast growing group with females accounting for more than half of this population (Coombs, 2014). These large cohorts live mostly in big cities like London with a rate of 7.0% of Black Africans (ONS, 2012). As a fast-growing group in a developed country, they can be seen as people with a need to consume essential or exotic branded products. However, this luxury behavioural pattern is theoretically overlooked as most extant studies are focused on either the European, Chinese or Western culture. Examples include He and Zhang, 2012; Gul, 2010; Gao et al., 2009; Grouzet et al., 2005; Eastman et al., 1999; Dubois and Laurent, 1994; Dubois and Duquesne, 1993; Grossman and Shapiro, 1988. All these researchers focused on European, Chinese or Western culture leads to the following arguments on the importance of luxury consumption to Black African women in London. Considering that there is a consistent increase in the population of this group in the UK, neglecting or ignoring this segment would be an omission in this field of the marketing study. It is essential for one to look into their luxury consumption behaviour and determine the extent to which Black African women consume luxury fashion brands. The idea, structure and focus of this research are novel, original and creative and will add to the existing literature on luxury fashion consumption, identity theory and ethnic minority studies.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Studies on women reveal the conflicting roles of women, which include: what a woman should and should not be, how a woman should act and respond to situations (Fransella and Frost, 1977; Robinson and Richardson, 1993). However, Fransella and Frost (1977) suggest that to understand a particular gender and why they act the way they do, one has to aim to know how they see themselves and make sense of their lives and experiences. A study by Iglizin and Ross (1978) explore imaging a woman from cultural views. This study reveals that women have been marginalised and the women in Africa lost their powers due to Western colonialism. In trying to colonise the African countries, Western governments, missionaries and merchants concentrated more on the male counterparts which led to ignoring the critical economic, social and political positions held by African women (Heilburn, 1979), thus devaluing the African woman's place. Mirza (1992) adds that this negligence by the Western governments changed the way African women were portrayed and as a result, changed the many roles of African

women by subjecting them to house chores and looking after the family. This behaviour led to the Black African woman being portrayed with regressive stereotypes (Bonner et al., 1992). However, with globalisation and postmodernism, a report reveals that Black African women are breaking out to redefine and recreate themselves (Flax, 1990), by engaging in the act of purchasing products that will give them a more powerful identity (Nicholson, 1990).

Reports also show that Black African women have an immense spending power (Baronowski and Bemporad, 2014). Regardless of social class and status, they engage in consumption (Kaus, 2010; Gbadamosi, 2012; Burger et al., 2014) nonetheless, no research is focused on why the Black African woman buys luxury fashion brands, the extent to which she consumes and how significant this behaviour is to her identity. Furthermore, the consumption of luxury brands has become an essential area of research due to globalisation and other driving factors. The act of buying is said to be motivated not only by practical needs but also by a person's desire to make statements about themselves with regards to others (Kadirov and Varey, 2006). Inadequate attention is given to the consumption of luxury with regards to ethnic minority groups. For example, there is an existing study on Busan (South Korean) students and their luxury consumption behaviour (Shin et al., 2011). Other studies examine luxury fashion consumption in China (Zhang and Kim, 2013; He and Zhan, 2012). These studies reveal the reason for the use of luxury fashion by Asian consumers. Backer et al. (2014) look at the luxury consumption behaviour of American female consumers. These are some of the available studies on female luxury fashion consumption which have left an existing gap for the study of Black African women in luxury consumption literature (Sundie et al., 2011; Wang and Griskevicius, 2014).

There is no recent study focusing on the consumption behaviour of Black African female consumers of luxury fashion in London and how this consumption act helps them redefine their self-identity. Although Gbadamosi (2012) looks at the acculturation of clothing items by Black African women, this study does not reveal the connection between Black African women in London, identity creation and luxury fashion consumption. Therefore, this research aims to address this theoretical gap precisely by focusing on the consumption behaviour of Black African women in London. The following research questions are framed to bring solutions to the global market, the host country and the academic world.

1.7 Research Questions

- What does the consumption of luxury fashion communicate about Black African female consumers?
- What is the motivation behind Black African women's use of luxury fashion products?
- How is the ethnic background of the Black African woman a vital component in creating identity through the consumption of luxury fashion products?
- How do Black African female consumers in London use the consumption of luxury fashion to create and maintain an identity?
- How does the Black African woman use the consumption of luxury fashion brands to mitigate against regressive stereotypes?

1.8 Research Gap, Aims and Objectives

Despite the immense spending power of the Black African woman (Baronowski and Bemporad, 2014) and the growth of the Black African women in London (Coombs, 2014), there is still an unclear theoretical position on the luxury fashion consumption behaviour of the Black African woman in London. Furthermore, with the growing consensus of fashion sector as a feminised one as revealed by several studies (Bruce and Parkinson-Hill, 1999; Ives, 1999; Cassil, 1990), understanding the motives for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by women and applying this behaviour to identity creation has been overlooked by researchers. Hence, this research aims to:

- Investigate the motive for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women
- Explore the consumption of luxury fashion products by Black African women in London
- Understand the extent to which culture is a determining factor in consumption behaviour
- Examine how Black African women in London create and maintain their identities through the consumption of luxury fashion brands
- Probe into how the Black African woman defines herself with regards to luxury fashion products.

- Investigate the extent to which the Black African woman consumes luxury fashion brands.
- Explore how the consumption of Luxury fashion items can be used to mitigate against the stereotype of Black African women by the African culture

1.9 Scope of the Study

This study investigates Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands in London and how the consumption of luxury fashion products aid in creating an identity. The central focus is to establish the fundamental motives for Black African women's consumption patterns with regards to luxury fashion products, the extent to which they consume and how they create, re-create and enhance their identities through this behaviour. The research focuses on Black African women in London. It is evident that there are 54 countries in Africa, respondents from 14 African countries were examined in this study. Apart from North African states, sample population includes the West, East and South African countries. This research focused mainly on Black African women, aged 18 to 60 with an income level of 10,000 pounds to 60,000 pounds per annum (*See Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3*). Black African women who are examined in this research are those living in London at the time of the study. 47 Black African women were interviewed, 2 focus groups' conducted and 10 Black African women were observed.

1.10 Methodology

The approach adopted for this study is the qualitative method. This research uses qualitative triangulation: in-depth interview, overt participant observation and focus groups as suitable techniques. The research confirms that the assumptions are based on communicative and evaluative features (interpretivism) (Hunt, 1991, p. 34). These features argue that social analysis represents profound scepticism towards claims to objectivity and privileged access to knowledge (Clarke, 2009, p. 29). The focus is mainly to grasp the reason, meaning and the motives for every behaviour (Collin and Hussey, 2009), offering a broad view of the philosophy of social science and, thereby, justifies the positioning of the current study. Forty-seven Black African women were interviewed, two focus groups conducted, and ten respondents observed. All events were recorded via tape recorder; images were captured during the observational study. Data collected was stored, transcribed and analysed using the conventional (inductive) content analysis. The coding processed involved both the initial and

focused coding as well as memos. Research findings were categorised into various themes for clarification all aimed at addressing the research questions, aims and objectives.

1.11 Expected Research Contributions and Implications

The expected contributions of this study are in twofold. The study is expected to contribute to the theoretical and managerial levels. Theoretically, this study adds to consumer behaviour literature, luxury brand literature, luxury fashion literature, ethnic minority group and literature on women's consumption patterns. Luxury fashion brand consumption is a type of consumer behaviour that focuses on the visible aspect of consuming premium priced products. Although visible and conspicuous patterns were first developed in 1988 by Veblen, this area is still underdeveloped. The luxury fashion consumption of Black African women has been overlooked, thus, making the investigation of this group an expected theoretical contribution. The aim of this study to explore the motives for consumption, the extent to which Black African women consume and how they express their identity through this behaviour will add to the existing stock of knowledge on consumer behaviour, identity theory and ethnic studies.

Managerially, the research findings will offer luxury fashion brand practitioners an underpinning from which they can start to deliberate, effective methods to organise a more specific marketing campaign detailed to addressing the Black ethnic minority group. It will broaden their marketing scope by giving an insight into why women of ethnic minority group consume luxury fashion and the extent to which they do. This research through its findings will increase awareness of visible patterns observed on how women use luxury fashion to create an identity. Luxury fashion brand owners can use the results of this research to develop products that will serve both functional and emotional purposes for Black African women.

1.12 Research Structure

The study is broken down in the following way:

- Chapter one: This section defines the primary aim of the research, it presents the background and significance of the study. It gives an introduction to women's luxury fashion and an overview of the luxury fashion industry. The chapter discusses the ethnic minority group in London, the Black African ethnic group and the significance of

understanding their buying behaviour with regards to luxury goods. Furthermore, it establishes gaps in marketing literature by framing research questions around the aims and objectives of the study with an explanation and justification of the significance of the study.

- Chapter two: This section critically reviews the literature on the consumption of luxury brands with a focus on the origin and evolution, types and importance of consumption as well as the utilitarian and hedonic aspects of consumption behaviours. It gives a clear understanding of the effect of culture on consumers. Additionally, it highlights the debates on the relativity of luxury showing that there is no consensus on the definition of luxury. In this section, the concepts of luxury, status and conspicuous consumption have been linked together while luxury consumer behaviour is analysed. It demonstrates the role of gender in the consumption of luxury brands, giving a description of brands, luxury brands and luxury fashion brands.
- Chapter three: This section analyses the theories of fashion, femininity, identity creation and ethnicity. It gives an overview of the connection between the concept of fashion, culture and symbolic meaning. In this chapter, women's luxury fashion consumption patterns are revealed, the Black African woman's buying behaviour and her identity. In this section, the consumer identity theory is discussed extensively; the self and social identity concept. It shows the link between self and social identity, the importance of identity interference as well as the connection between identity, symbolic consumption and postmodernism. Finally, this chapter defines ethnicity and how it relates to culture and identity with an overview of ethnicity segment.
- Chapter four presents and justifies a methodological approach essential to accomplish the research aims and objectives. The chapter begins with a debate on the various philosophical paradigms available for any research and explains the decision to use the interpretive model as a suitable approach for the research framework. It also highlights the discussions around the three research methods, giving a clear rationale for choosing the qualitative method. This chapter also shows a triangulation of three qualitative techniques: in-depth interviews, overt participant observation and focus groups. It demonstrates the limitations of the qualitative study, the research design and procedure as well as the research demography. Additionally, it discusses sampling in qualitative research with a focus on homogeneous and snowballing sampling as the chosen sampling methods. Additionally, the ethical considerations are discussed alongside data analysis

and interpretation. It confirms the use of content analysis, coding, memos as ways to achieve a well-analysed data. Finally, it shows how trustworthiness and credibility were obtained in this study.

- Chapter five: This section presents the research findings and reveals the ten emergent themes in this study: evolutionary motives, consumer brand relationship, anthropomorphism, consumer and brand personality, aspiration, location, branding and convenience, cultural orientation and external influences. Others include fear of counterfeits, controllability and identity disconnect.
- Chapter six discusses the ten emergent themes alongside how these categories differ or relate to other studies in marketing literature. It shows how the findings of the study link to previous reviews as well as how it contradicts other research in the areas of women's luxury fashion consumption and identity creation.
- Chapter seven presents an overview of how the research findings address the research questions and objectives. It highlights the theoretical and managerial contributions of the study as well as discuss the limitations of the research and gives direction for future studies.

1.13 Chapter Summary

Reports show the consistent growth of luxury consumption in a global context and the rate of consumer spending on fashion in London which sets the pace for discussion; there are limited studies on ethnic minority conspicuous consumption behaviour. Consumption and identity theory has received adequate attention in the marketing context. Research into why and how people make consumption choices, the effect of self-concept on the decision-making process. There is inadequate information about how luxury fashion consumption impacts on the Black African woman's identity and ethnicity. Hence, this study focuses on investigating Black African women's luxury consumption patterns and the effect of this behaviour on identity creation.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 -Consumption of Luxury Brands

2.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the consumption of luxury brands. It focuses on exploring the various facets of consumption behaviour as relevant to this research. It discusses the origin and evolution, types and importance, hedonic and utilitarian consumption. It looks at the effect of culture on consumption, the impact of luxury on consumption theory, the relativity of luxury. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the link between luxury, status and conspicuous consumption as well as the role gender plays in the consumption of luxury brands. Finally, it establishes the meaning of brand, luxury brands and luxury fashion brands.

2.2 Origin and Evolution of consumption

The role of consumption is driven into a position of distinction in human lifestyle in a way that is historically extraordinary (Fine and Leopold, 1993). Clarke et al. (2003) note that consumer research has received an intensification of interest in the study of consumption. The reason is that many researchers have studied this subject extensively (Fine and Leopold, 1993; Mackay, 1997; Clarke et al., 2003). Although many researchers have discussed this topic, it is vital to understand that consumption theory is a difficult task. One because there has been an explosion of writing and research on this subject and secondly, many people feel soaked in the knowledge of the topic (Fine and Leopold, 1993; Mackay, 1997; Clarke et al., 2003).

According to the origin of the word, consumption comes from the Latin word 'consumere' which means 'to use up entirely or to destroy' (Fine and Leopold, 1993; Clarke et al., 2003). From the origin of the word, it shows that consumption is seen in two ways. The first way is a positive way. This view holds consumption as the act of consuming and an important aspect of the economic world. It involves the ability to engage in a cultural, economic and social process of identifying and designating goods. In commonplace, consumption is an act which involves a huge majority of the world's population as everyone at some point engage in it. Notwithstanding the fact that the huge majority of the world's population still live on the margins of survival, the first World set the terms of reference for debate over consumption (Fine and Leopold, 1993). Within this framework, money increasingly supports leisure and other activities to gratify the five senses and the seven sins, to define a lifestyle if not a persona

itself. In other words, you are what you eat, what you drink, where you live, and the list is endless (Mackay, 1997). Goodwin et al. (2008) claim that consumption is a process involving the final use of goods and services. They define it as ‘the end point of economic activities that starts with an evaluation of available resources, proceeds through the production and distribution of goods and services among people and groups. It is ‘activity’ that results in one of the most meaningful social life experiences (Leonini and Santoro, 2012). This activity is related to the ‘exchange of goods’ (p. 3). A practice present in virtually all human cultures and civilisation (Leonini and Santoro, 2012). There is an extensive and universal agreement on the importance of consumption (Warde, 2014, p. 279).

The consensus on the significance of consumption practices does not suggest that there is an agreed meaning of the term, it only means that regardless of the various definitions, there’s a common fact. This fact emphasises consumption as a driving force behind personal, social and economic expansion (p. 280). However, research on the origin and evolution of consumption shows that it is also portrayed in negative ways (Francois- Lecompte and Roberts, 2006) According to Francois- Lecompte and Roberts (2006) consumption involves wasting, squandering or destroying’ (Mackay, 1997). Formerly, consumption and tuberculosis were linked together as the same (Hiskey, 2014). This report reveals that in 1893, the ancient Greeks named the disease something meaning ‘consumption’, ‘phthisis’, precisely denoting pulmonary tuberculosis, with the earliest references to this being in 460 BC. The main reason why ‘phthisis’ was also known as ‘consumption’ was that the disease seemed to consume the individual (Hiskey, 2014). Similarly, Marx (1972, p. 61) calls it ‘a commodity fetish’, stating that the urge to consume can be linked to social need prompted by capitalism. Even though he admits everyone engages in consumption, Marx (1972) categorises this as an ‘animal function’. Additionally, Adomaviciute (2013) define consumption as an act which causes a lot of social and environmentally related problems linked to a consumer lifestyle. He argues that consumers most times consume wastefully thereby causing environmental problems through their way of life. Adomaviciute’s (2013) argument is linked to compulsive consumption which is a type of addiction that can lead to mental problems that may, in turn, affect the society (Ronald et al., 1987). However, Mackay (1997) maintains that those who portray consumption negatively are social scientists who have chosen to look at it negatively without structured evidence.

Progressively, the term consumption evolves as more people become interested in redefining it as an act which originated from the desire to satisfy basic needs (food, shelter, clothing) (Mackay 1997; Osterberg, 1999). The evolution of the word advanced in the twentieth century, with the introduction of mass consumption and the effort to generate and influence markets. Consumption also advanced with the evolution of advertising and marketing. This advancement has increased the interest of researchers (Leonini and Santoro, 2012; Warde, 2014). Due to the upsurge, consumption is defined in two ways. (Warde, 2014) Looks at it in two contrasting ways and state that any definition of the word will fall under one of this category: ‘destroying (using up) and creating (making full use of). Irrespective of this view, this research would focus on the positive interpretation of consumption because it is more applicable to the context. The positive opinion holds that the term signifies the meeting of basic needs and relate to things that are merely not vital for physical survival- but which make life more pleasant, accessible, friendly and enjoyable (Clarke et al., 2013).

2.2.1 Classification of Consumption

Oysterberg (1999) classifies consumption into two types known as direct or final consumption and indirect or productive consumption. While the former involves the use of goods to satisfy human wants directly and immediately, the latter consists products that are not meant for final consumption but used for the production of other products which can meet human wants directly (Mason, 1995). The direct consumption is a continual process, for example, eating an apple, wearing shoes or clothes and using household appliances, these are activities that are continuous daily. While, the indirect or productive consumption as the name implies may be useful or wasteful (Kyrk, 1923). This idea supports the view that consumption can be seen in two ways; the positive and the negative.

Contemporary economists accurately emphasise the significance of consumption (Oysterberg, 1999). They clarify that it can be the beginning as well as the end of all economic activity (Mason, 1995). An individual may feel the desire to consume a particular item and make an effort to satisfy such craving. Once the effort has been completed, the effect is the fulfilment of the desire or want (Kyrk, 1923). Therefore, want is seen as the formation and achievement of all consumption effort while consumption is the starting and the final point of all economic activity. It is consumption which stretches the original impulse of production. Production, hence, is focused and stimulated by consumption. Consumers do not only give an initial push

of production activity, but all consumer's desire directs the capacity and route of all production action which leads to an increase in consumption rate (Oysterberg, 1999). The increase in consumption rate is significant to a country's GDP; a report shows that once the consumption rate of a society increases the GDP increases (AMI, 2012). As a result of this expansion, a consumer is compared to a king, and his impact spreads out the whole field of economic activity (Kyrk, 1923).

The dominant effect of consumption reflects in all branches of Economics (Oysterberg, 1999). In many cases, consumers' desires regulate prices in the market, which is the ultimate show of power. Consumption, in this case, displays its effects on the exchange (Kyrk, 1923). Therefore, the significance of consumption cannot be over-emphasised (Mason, 1995). It is all-pervasive, and it affects all economic movement and advancement. It regulates the standard of living especially in an era when people buy products for symbolic meaning not just for functional benefits (Levy and Gardner, 1955). This train of thought advanced during the 1960s incorporating an agreement between a consumer's lifestyle and what he/she buys (Levy, 1963). An approach was taken up by the consumer movement (Mackay, 1997). Consumer movement refers to how consumers perceive the act of consumption. Most consumers describe consumption as a symbolic act (Leonini and Sabtoro, 2012), which means people use the 'system of objects as a carrier of culturally given meanings to communicate their position and assert their identity within a social frame' (Leonini and Santoro, 2012, p. 2). Symbolic consumption has given rise to an interesting form of consumption called the 'hedonic consumption' (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

2.2.2 The Hedonistic and Utilitarian Consumption

Hedonic consumption is a new era within consumer research field. It offers an approving model to the one of traditional processing, centring on the experiential facets of the consumption experience which is subjective based (Lacher, 1989, p. 367). Alba and Williams (2012, p. 2) describe hedonic consumption as 'a person driven with products serving merely as a means to a pleasurable end'. It is assumed that consumption recognises the significance of pleasure, happiness and enjoyment (p. 3) as means to a positive experience. Hedonic approach sightsees the buying process not as an information-processing occurrence but via phenomenological or experiential view described as a primarily instinctive state of awareness with a variety of symbolic meaning, hedonic responses and aesthetic criteria' (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982,

p. 132). It maintains the notion that consumption is centred on emotional benefits with hedonic products which helps activate the mood. Hedonic products such as music, visuals, literature and drama (Lacher, 1989). There are four 'hedonic perspectives as described by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982): product classes, mental constructs, individual differences and product usage. According to Lacher (1989, p. 369), the primary concern for hedonic perspective is that it is meant to heighten and not substitute traditional consumer theories. However, conventional views of consumer behaviour in marketing literature subtly accept that consumer decision making is mainly the result of cognitive progressions involving the semantic meaning of product feature (Bettman, 1979; Westbrook, 1987; Sheth et al., 1991). Those attributes affecting feelings are referred to as a secondary role (Westbrook, 1987, p. 258). Regardless of the traditional view on consumption Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) summarises hedonic consumption as essential and that fantasies, emotional arousal and multisensory senses in consumer products is required.

Hedonic consumption label those characteristics of consumer behaviour that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and the emotive facet of a person's experience with products' (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982, p. 92). These three terms 'multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive' are all linked together to create a favourable experience of a product or brand. While the three facets work hand in hand, the multi-sensory consumption involves multiple psychological senses which include but not limited to smell, sight, hearing, touch and taste. These senses are not isolated but work together to frame our experience of the world which creates a strong, logical and consistent understanding of our environment (Fulkerson, 2009, p. 1). Although (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) believe that these experiences are inwardly framed born from an inner desire, Berlyne (1971) presents an internal experience of multi-sensory impulses as an essential form of consumer response. For example, perceiving a perfume may cause a consumer to react not only to the smell but also to create internal imagery consisting sights, sounds and tactile sensations, all of which are also experienced (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982, p. 92).

There are two types of multisensory images. With the perfume, this may remind a consumer of a person who wore it, therefore, evoking a past romantic episode which is called the 'historic imagery' and the second which is the 'fantasy imagery'. This fantasy imagery happens when the consumer's response is not drawn from experience (Singer, 1966). Fantasy and emotive aspects also interpret a consumer's state of mind before, during and after their experience with the brand, it means that the whole decision-making process revolves around a pleasurable

emotion towards a brand. Hedonic items are mostly used up for sensual fulfilment and emotional drives (Woods, 1960) or pleasurable and delightful motives (Holbrook, 1986). Hence, hedonic items produce emotive stimulation (Mano and Oliver, 1993) with benefits that are appraised mainly on a sense of taste, attractive, symbolic meaning and sensory experience (Holbrook and Moore, 1981). All forms of consumer experiences ranging from pleasure, fun, entertainment, fantasies and unpleasant feelings, are linked to the hedonic aspect of consumption (Adomaviciute, 2013). Hedonic consumption focuses both on the pleasurable sensations derived from the use of a product and the experience that may be favourable or unfavourable (Batra and Ahtola, 1990).

Most inquiry about consumer emotions and behaviour focuses on temporary mood, and these studies show that consumer's transient feelings influence their thoughts and decision towards consuming a particular product (Luomala and Laaksonen, 2000; Barone et al., 2000; Fitzmaurice, 2005; Wood and Rettman, 2007). The result of long-term emotions has been proven difficult to influence. Consequently, its role in consumer behaviour is more substantial (Zhong and Mitchell, 2012). The emotional connection consumers have with brands are seen to result in brand relationships (Fitzmaurice, 2005). Authors agree that consumers form an emotional bond with the brands they have experienced. When the experience is favourable, it results in a long-term affair (Luomala and Laaksonen, 2000; Barone et al., 2000; Fitzmaurice, 2005; Wood and Rettman, 2007). The long-term bond between consumers and brands became widespread as consumer brand relationship in the eighties (Raut and Brito, 2014; Fritz et al. 2014; Guhin and Tuhin, 2016).

Increasing number of people have shown interest in how consumers communicate with brands, why one brand is chosen over the other. The first set of researchers evaluated the bond consumer form with brands (Blackstone 1993; Aggarwal, 2004). They mainly focussed on people's feelings about brands and the effect of human characteristics (Levy, 1985), personalities (Aaker, 1997), and brand as a relationship partner (Fournier, 1998). Guido and Peluso (2015) agree that brand relationship can lead to brand anthropomorphism. The idea of attributing human characteristics to brands to sustain such affairs (Waytz et al., 2010). This is driven by brand love (Ahuvia and Rauschanabel, 2014). Epley et al., (2007, p. 864) define anthropomorphism as 'the propensity to imbue the real or fictional behaviour of non-human agents with human-like features, drives, intents, or feelings'. While this definition of anthropomorphism stresses the psychological phenomenon, the term can also refer to human-

like characteristics of objects that stimulate such thinking (Landwehr et al., 2011) which can impact on consumption habits.

In contrast, Alba and Williams (2012, p. 2) suggest that consumption habit is driven by a combination of everything ranging from hedonic to relationships, all the way down to anthropomorphism but the utilitarian motives should not be overlooked. In support, Hirshman (1980) adds that consumption can occur for two reasons: hedonic and utilitarian reasons or the combination of both. Widely, merchandises used for consumption reasons can be categorised as hedonic or utilitarian (Lim and Ang, 2008).

Quite differently from hedonic consumption, utilitarian items have a coherent demand and are less poignant as they provide cognitive benefits (Hirshman, 1980). Utilitarian consumption has been linked to 'rational, functional and product-centric thinking (Rintanaki et al., 2006) while Adomaviciute (2013, p. 756) suggests that 'utilitarian value is characterised as task-related needs fulfilment'. Concepts such as financial reserves and convenience contribute to practical value (p. 757) as against hedonic value which can be examined using interesting and exploration thoughts (Chandon et al., 2000). While financial savings moderate the discomfort of paying (p. 757) convenience is described as a percentage of involvements and outputs, time and effort (Seiders et al., 2000). Both hedonic and utilitarian form reasons why people consume, however, McCracken (1986) introduces culture as another significant influence on consumption; he claims that culture has an impact on buying habits.

2.2.3 Culture and Consumption

Culture is a set of values, ideologies, traditions, beliefs, and ways of engaging with the world through communication over the course of time and place throughout generations (Matsumoto, 1994; Oyserman and Lee, 2007). Across nations culture is not constant: it changes from country to country because humans develop their cultural values (Chung, 1998). Different people are widely swayed by the culture of their society (Matsumoto, 1994). Michael and Becker, (1973) show that individuals share mutual insights and reasoning because they are confined within the same cultural background, and these ideas and rationale may differ from those in another cultural context. Hence, culture controls significant consumption actions and designates a particular lifestyle.

People have needs and cravings centred on the act of consumption which may go beyond the hedonic and utilitarian aspect. Nearly all of these desires are grounded on culturally unwavering beliefs of a way of life (Chung, 1998). According to Johar and Sandhu (1982, p. 70), consumption forms differ between countries, not only in the level of income but also because of differences in culture and lifestyle. For instance, fashion consumption style will vary between countries both culturally and economically, because the consumption of fashion can be influenced by the social coordination and acceptance of a society and by the cultural meanings attached to style (p.71). Consequently, a cultural investigation can improve our understanding of consumer behaviour and the study of consumer goods can be used to preserve and convert consumer culture. Additionally, McCracken (1986, p. 71) maintains that the significance of consumer goods transcends utilitarian character. Goods are an essential medium of culture, and they are a habitation of both private and public meanings (McCracken, 2005). Products come laden with meanings that define identity and structure consumption behaviour based in culture.

Previous studies have also highlighted the intricate link between culture and consumption (McCracken, 1986; Veeck and Burns, 2005), as well as observed the relationship between lifestyle and consumer's choice of product. The outcomes of these studies are steady with the concept of cultural conditioning advanced by Hirschman (1986). 'Cultural conditioning refers to the shaping of consumers reactions towards products stimuli based on cultural values' (Veeck and Burns, 2005, p. 645). Engel et al. (1990) suggest three main cultural effects. The first effect focuses on decision making which shows that culture is the main factor in consumer decision making. Studies explain that consumers make certain consumption decisions based on their cultural values (p. 646). According to Engel et al. (1990), culture is an important determinant of consumption. Consumers see through the eyes of culture and as a result, despite their emotions and rational thoughts towards particular products, if such products are not culturally accepted the consumer may avoid consumption (McCracken, 1986). Secondly, culture applies connotations to goods and services (Engel et al., 1990). Equally, Belk and Pollay (1985, p. 888) viewpoint suggest that culture creates meaning to the advertising and communication of a product and the act of consumption. Thus, the study of culture clarifies consumer's behaviour towards a particular product and determine the best approach for marketers to adapt to communicate accurately with consumers.

Products are often used to ‘express the categorical scheme established by a culture’ (McCracken, 1986, p. 71). The consumption of products can serve as a chance to create culture material as they help authenticate the demand of culture (p. 72). Thirdly, culture affects the shape of the consumption sequence (Yam, 2013). ‘Social structure determines much of what individual consumer purchases and uses’ (Belk and Pollay, 1985, p. 889). Although there is a high level of global influence on consumption, people’s activities towards buying and consuming are formed by consumer culture (Warde, 2014). In postmodern explanations, cultural consumption is recognised as being the very material out of which we create our individualities and turn out to be what we consume (Mackay, 1997). In advancing the study of consumption, Smith (1776) categorises consumption into various parts which include Luxury and luxury is a part and the focus of this research.

2.3 A Critical Overview of Luxury

The term ‘luxury’ is an interesting facet of the consumption theory, generating a significant level of contrasting arguments among researchers (Grossman and Sharpiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Husic and Cicic, 2009). For over twenty years until date, there is a consistent debate in business literature that there is no collective agreement on the definition of luxury (Heine, 2012, p. 1) making this concept a little blurry (Kapferer, 2001, p. 319 cited in Heine, 2012, p. 1). It is a blurred theory evidenced by the fact that disciplines such as History (Berry, 1994), Sociology (Bourdieu, 1984) and Economics (Veblen, 1899) have distinct views on luxury and its meanings. Academically, one train of thought believes luxury is used to illustrate the dominant class of prestige brands (Grossman and Sharpiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). On the other hand, academics such as Husic and Cicic (2009, p. 231) consider luxury to be ‘the mass marketing of everyday life rather than the embrace of kings and queens of France’. In contrast, Tynan et al. (2010, p. 1137) argue that luxury exists at the end of everyday goods. In other words, where the word ordinary ends, luxury begins. Luxury as an expression stems originally from the Latin word ‘luxuria’ implying ‘extras of life’ (Danziger, 2005). This expression categorises luxury as something not needed for survival (Brockhaus, 1846; Bearden and Etzel, 1982, p. 184). An item which is not a fundamental need but used to gratify self (Bearden and Etzel, 1982).

To give a precise definition of the term, Heine (2012) characterises luxury into a particular dimension ‘Necessity-luxury continuum’. This dimension of luxury is a continuum which

means that it changes over time and it is based on the accessibility and exclusiveness of resources (p.1). 'While necessities are possessions by virtually everyone, luxuries are available exclusively for few people (Bearden and Etzel, 1982, p. 184). As a contrast to this dimension, Chaudhuri (1998, p. 158) measures necessity and luxury as two unrelated elements. In his report, no important connections were seen among these elements supporting the approach. Regardless of his measures, there were goods with low ratings on both elements such as chips, butter and frozen dinners, which indicates the need for another category of ordinary goods. This notion was acknowledged by Bearden and Etzel (1982) who define luxury 'as not needed for ordinary day to day living' (p. 186).

Furthermore, in contemporary consumer culture, luxury is defined with regards to social relationships (Frank, 1999; Nelissen and Meijers, 2012), as people consume leisure to adapt to social norms or be seen as prestigious. Heine (2012, p. 1) defines luxury as 'anything and nothing'. It is dependent on several factors such as affluence, experience, and attachment for its applicability to an individual. While a Chanel bag worth two thousand pounds can mean 'luxury to an unemployed person, it can also mean 'ordinary' to a wealthy person. Therefore, the discussion about the real meaning of luxury continues to evolve. Owing to the conditional nature of this concept, Dubois et al. (2001, p. 7) in a study, choose respondents who are luxury consumers with the criteria that 'all consumers have picked up at least one item they consider luxury'. The study focused on anyone who considered any item of theirs luxury regardless of the researcher's definition of luxury and this study revealed that luxury is defined based on affordability and relativity. However, writers disagree on the factors that give luxury its meaning (Grossman and Sharpiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Tynan et al., 2010). While there is an assumption that luxury derives its meaning from the luxury object (Vickers and Renand, 2003) in conjunction with the social frame of reference (Zhang and Kim, 2013). Some researchers and authors portray luxury as a more individual and personal activity (Shin et al., 2011; Hansen and Wanke, 2011). Also, Hemetsberger et al. (2012, p. 453) propose luxury as an activity that is not 'experienced in enclaves luxurious spaces and contexts but integrated into consumer's everyday life'.

Considering the different views in this disputed area, Berthon et al. (2009, p. 47) define it as an amalgam of the material, the social and the individual'. Li et al., (2012, p. 1517) note that luxury brands speak highly of the owners and gratify both functional and psychological needs'. This nature is the basic differentiating element between luxury and non-luxury or counterfeits

(Arghavan and Zaichkousky, 2000, p. 490). The term luxury is used to bait consumers into purchasing goods which are considered expensive (Tynan et al., 2010) because it focuses on high items which may be a reason consumers use this to display wealth and status.

2.4 The Relativity of Luxury

With so many debates on the definition of luxury, the necessity- luxury continuum as proposed by Heine (2012) gives a clearer understanding of luxury. This dimension creates an opinion that luxury is relative and depends on the perspective (Nyeck, 2004; Kapferer, 2008). According to Heine (2012, p. 7), 'the relativity of luxury splits into different aspects: regional, temporal, economic, cultural and situational. The regional relativity is an aspect of luxury relativity which is based on local availability of the supplies, i.e. centred on geographical region. Most products may be widely available but worth very little in some areas, but acquire luxury status by their rarity in another environment (Merki, 2002, p. 85 cited in Heine, 2012). This aspect of luxury shows that specific products may be considered ordinary in specific regions and luxury in others.

Temporal relativity is considerably different from the regional aspect. In this perspective, luxury resources evolve and changes over time. It is centred on changes in the availability and desirability of the product (Heine, 2012, p. 7). These modifications remain influenced by technological progress and societal trends. For instance, modern technology can enable the adjustment of luxury product into mass-market commodities. The temporal view is peculiar to technical products such as mobile phones, TVs and PCs. As these technology products evolve, new products take over as luxury while the old ones fade off as ordinary which can be given out at take away prices. Temporal relativity can also apply to fashion brands and products.

Economic relativity refers to 'people's perception of luxury depending on their access to resources' (Kapferer, 2008, p. 90). This implies that while most people consider a dress costing fifty pounds as an ordinary item, they are also people who see it as luxury and others who would regard a dress costing five thousand pounds as luxury and vice versa. In contrast to other categories, cultural relativity does not refer to availability and affordability but to the desirability of resources by people depending on their culture (Heine, 2012). This relativity reveals that culture shapes the definition of luxury, for instance, champagne might be seen as a luxury in European countries but has no benefits in Islamic societies (p. 8). Luxury

preferences are rooted in cultural values which differ by demographic elements such as gender, education and age (Kemp, 2009).

Situational relativity suggests that products could be characterised as luxury depending on the circumstances. For this study, this five luxury relativity will be used due to their relevance in the study. Considering that regional relativity focuses on luxury definition with regards to a global perspective, economic relativity defines luxury based on people's perception depending on their access to resources which is affordability. While cultural relativity gives an insight on luxury based on acceptance and the situational relativity defines luxury regarding circumstances. All these concepts provide a clearer understanding of the definition of luxury.

2.5 Luxury, Status and Conspicuous Consumption

Several studies propose a connection between luxury and conspicuous consumption (Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012). One such study by Hemetsberger et al. (2012) reveals that conspicuous consumption involves the flamboyant practices aimed at suggesting the association to a higher social class (Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012). This link was formerly identified by Veblen (1899), who was one of the first to include social status reflections into economic theory. Veblen's (1899) study assumes that consumers will compare themselves to one another based on their financial attainments. As a result, he framed the term 'conspicuous consumption' which portrays consumption as a social status signal. The introduction of 'conspicuous consumption' by Veblen (1899) is revealed in a study conducted on the American consumers who spend their money on things that are unnecessary and 'unproductive leisure'.

Conspicuous consumption relates to the display of wealth and the indication of status symbol (Mason, 1995). To some degree, the advancement and sustenance of social standing can be linked to the act of consumption (Smith, 1776). Even before the introduction of the idea of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899), extravagant and public show of affluence was observable since the existence of the Roman Empire (Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012). During this age, the show of wealth was considered a reckless activity and the consumer whose aim was to advocate pre-eminence was probed (Veblen, 1899). The display of wealth has motivated researchers to carry out studies on conspicuous and luxury consumption respectively (Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Backer et al., 2014; Wang and Griskevicius, 2014). These studies

reveal that the act of luxury consumption is relatively stable', however, 'the notion of a luxury brand is not without tensions and contradictions' (Roper et al., 2013, p. 376). Academic authors propose the academic dimension of luxury; this dimension focuses on how the consumers understand the term 'luxury', which means they define luxury through the eyes of the consumer (Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Mills and Hume, 2013). It gives emphasises on an individual's description of luxury (Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Brezinova and Vijayakumar, 2012). Other authors disclose that most consumers understand luxury regarding cost and others regarding status (Chaudhuri and Majamdar, 2006; Sundie et al. 2011). Which means that luxury consumption is associated with extravagance (Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Although the definition of luxury is complex, luxury consumption conveys reverence and appearance. Luxury approves 'exclusivity, premium prices and image' (Mills and Hume, 2013, p. 462). Consuming luxury brands is a demonstration of conspicuous consumption (Phau and Prendergast, 2000), aiming to display wealth, power and status. As Sundie et al. (2011 p. 664) state 'conspicuous consumption is a form of economic behaviour in which self-presentational concerns override desires to obtain goods at bargain prices'.

Conspicuous consumption is not only for the rich but also for the low income and middle-class earners (Brezinova and Vijayakumar, 2012). In 1983, Colman gives a sociological explanation to conspicuous consumption which stipulates that individuals consume luxury products to display fame as well as impress others. In this context, wasteful and lavish consumption aimed at enhancing social prestige are normal (Chaudhuri and Majamdar, 2006). Some authors have conflicting views on conspicuous consumption and status display, they contend that the presentation of status and show of wealth has evolved since the time of Veblen (Trigg, 2001) and that wealth is exhibited in a more indirect way (Mason, 1992). Alternatively, Eastman et al. (1999, p. 42) argue that the more a person chases after status, the more that individual will engage in the act of consuming status symbols to boost their rank. In addition to this, McEwen and O'Cass (2004, p. 26) state that 'conspicuous consumption and status' are often identified as the same. Studies also show that the motivation to acquire a luxury branded item by consumers varies (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Nelissen and Meijers 2011). However, status is frequently observed as one main factor in the choice to purchase a luxury brand (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Han et al., 2010; Nelissen and Meijers 2011). Since luxury items are termed 'symbols of status' consumer's decision to purchase luxury items is to signal status to others (Hans et al., 2010). Based on Saad (2007), putting on a luxury product can increase an

individual's status and creates an ability to appeal to a potential mate (Griskevicius et al. 2007). Hence, Brekke (2003) describes status as an individual's position compared to others within a society. Hyman (1942) adds that an individual who is classified as wealthy is a person who possesses status. Nelissen and Meijers (2011) posit that 'status naturally go with esteem, influence and power. Consequently, individuals who indulge in luxury consumption are recognised as prestigious (Hans et al., 2010)

Furthermore, Kilsheimer (1993, p. 341) defines status consumption as 'a motivational process' of engaging in the improvement of one's social standing. Although studies connect the two concepts 'status and conspicuous consumption' (Echikson, 1994; Bernheim, 1994), McEwen and O'Cass (2004, p. 26) see this as a problem by noting that 'when one construct is defined in terms of another, this presents significant theoretical and empirical problems'. They suggest that status and conspicuous consumption should be defined separately. Nunes (2009, p. 12) defines status as 'one's ranking in a vertical stratification of social groups, and recognised as an important motivator of human behaviour'. The theoretical rationale for connecting conspicuous, status and luxury consumption can be linked to factors ranging from personal, to social and then to cultural motives (Souiden et al., 2011) which forms a behavioural pattern of consumers.

2.6 Luxury Consumer Behaviour

In an early study on behavioural patterns, Watson (1920) argues that individuals learn to behave appropriately through external events. Thus, Bray (2008, p. 5) states that 'behaviourism is a family of philosophies which insinuates that a behaviour is explained by external factors and that all things that people do including actions, thoughts and feelings can be regarded as behaviours'. It is noteworthy to stress that there are many reasons why people may consume a luxury product. These reasons are peculiar to their nature and related to their actions, feelings and thoughts towards the brand thereby forming their behavioural pattern. Sundie et al. (2011, p. 664) ascertain that some people may consume an expensive product 'because they feel the components and workmanship are intrinsic', nonetheless, such act of consumption may include rational analysis beyond the quality of the product. Sundie et al.'s (2011) study also show that behaviours towards luxury consumption can be explained by the individuals' resolve to demonstrate social status and show wealth. Similarly, research shows that luxury and prestige brands are closely related to an individual's self-image (Wong and Zhou, 2005) and that

conspicuous consumption of brands is a way to communicate one's self-image to others (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002). This notion means that consumption behaviour is an extension of the consumer's self-image (Phau and Lo, 2004). However, from a different perspective, there is a contention that one's luxury consumption can be internally driven rather than being socially driven. Specifically, this view says that internally driven people may consume luxury brands for 'personal satisfaction' or to secure superior quality, not necessarily to signal wealth or communicate self-image to the masses (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003; Truong, 2010). In supporting this view, Shin et al. (2011, p. 101) stipulate that internally driven people are those with personal orientation and this gives rise to self-directed pleasure, experiences, satisfaction and consumer loyalty. A part of this behaviour also involves aspiration; which is also a behavioural pattern of consumers towards luxury consumption (Kim et al., 2003; Grouzer et al., 2005). Nevertheless, considering the universality of conspicuous consumption beyond cultures and history, researchers theorise that this type of consumption emerged as a 'sexually selected mating tactic' (Griskevicius et al., 2007).

2.7 Evolutionary Motives and Luxury Brands

Employing the assumptions of sexual preference and costly indication, most studies suggest that conspicuous consumption among people may assist a function much like that of 'the peacock's tail' (Penn, 2003). Studies on conspicuous consumption have also shown that luxury brands can be used to signal and attract mates (Backer et al., 2014; Wang and Griskevicius, 2014), thereby acquiring relationships through this behaviour. Attracting and retaining mates have been studied as two stages of a relationship (Buss and Shackelford, 1997). In an attempt to retain one's mate, a person may decide to manage threats among romantic competitors by consuming conspicuously thereby making conspicuous consumption a rescue factor (Campbell and Ellis, 2005). This behaviour is revealed in Wang and Griskevicius's (2014) study on mate guarding, which suggests that individuals engage in conspicuous consumption to attract, retain and enhance relationships. Interestingly, the study also shows that women are more likely to portray this behaviour than men. An established theory called evolutionary motive coined by psychologists who believe that consumers use consumption to solve societal problems (Wang and Griskevicius, 2014). Accordingly, it will be theoretically enriching to know how this links to Black African women's consumption of luxury fashion products.

2.8 The role of Gender in the Conspicuous Consumption of Brands

To adequately analyse gender role in the conspicuous consumption of brands, it is essential to clarify that 'gender is a social concept rooted in psychological, social and cultural behavioural tendencies (Moss, 2009). Holmberg and Ohnfeldt (2010) identify three general views on gender. The first view is the 'liberal feminism' (Moss, 2009). This view believes that 'sex differences are the output of social inequalities and not the biological differences (Gilman (1999). The second view is the 'postmodern view' which focuses on 'gender as a dichotomy derived from a cultural understanding of what it means to be male or female' (Holmberg and Ohnfeldt, p. 5). Based on this view, the use of the word woman to identify a 'unitary group is the same as giving a false sense of legitimacy to a culturally specific version of gender identity' (Moss, 2009). The final view is called the 'women's voice of experience'. This perspective gives permanent differences between male and female based on experiences, and this forms the basis for organising a society' (Kamineni, 2005). This view believes that 'the distinction of gender based on sex structures every aspect of our lives and this view is more connected to consumer behaviour (Caterall and Maclaran, 2000, p. 405). Therefore, this study focuses on the assumption that women and men are those whose femininity and masculinity is based on sex structure (Caterall and Maclaran, 2000–; Moss, 2009).

Research suggests that men exhibit self-monitoring qualities and are more money-oriented than women (Eastman et al., 1997; O'Cass, 2001; Kamineni, 2005). These features influence consumption patterns in relation to fashion product category as they are connected to the level of importance in retaining a particular front through fashion, and this can be used to express a precise image of the individual to other people (O'Cass, 2001). Additionally, O'Cass and McEwen (2004, p. 27) find that 'young men attach more importance on the conspicuousness of product use'. On the other hand, in high fashion clothing perspective, women are expressively more involved in the conspicuous consumption than men, and they consume more apparel than men to communicate their status and identity (O'Cass, 2001). Fashion is significant in communicating gender differences as well as offering material differences, which can connect the supposed 'delicacy' of women and the 'strength' of men in our vast culture (McCracken, 1986). Even though women are considered to be more involved with fashion than men, it has also been established that men are more involved with long-lasting goods such as cars (Bloch, 1981). Dittmar et al. (1995) results show the consistency of gender influence on consumption; it shows that men incline to thoughtlessly buy effective and leisure products that

stimulate individuality and activity. On the other hand, findings have proven that women are more prone to buying self-expressive and symbolic products than men. These products reflect the presence and emotional facets of the self. However, in relating Veblen's (1899) work on conspicuous consumption to gender, his work shows that women's consumption pattern worked basically to elevate the social status of men at the turn of the 20th century, who gave them the means to consume (Gilman, 1999) visibly. This was believed in Veblen's time as women earned significantly less than men. As a result, the consumption pattern of women was tied to the display of the male's partner's wealth and furthermore tied to social class (Veblen, 1899; 1994). Additionally, Gilman (1999) records that in a male-dominated culture, women are fundamentally owned by their men and consequently, in this circumstance, all acts of consumption assists to intensify the status of the owning men. This connection additionally strengthens female reliance on the men in patriarchal societies. Hence, Veblen (1899; 1994), argues that the noticeable nature of female consumption moved from conspicuous household products to personal adornment, which was seen as an expression of a husband's wealth (Veblen, 1934). Veblen's observation is also evident in the present living condition (Goetz, 1997; Van Staveren and Odebode, 2007).

The origin of the tale of conspicuous consumption is dated back to the Gilded age between 1860 and 1914 in the US where outstanding expenses during this time comprised household items. The intention for such spending includes the achievement of status and recognition (Mason, 1992). Nevertheless, it was the Industrial Revolution at the turn of the 19th century that changed everything by providing as much for the middle class to arise and also enabled the act of conspicuous consumption to evolve by allowing more consumers to engage in it (Page, 1992). Also, the development of the department store in the 19th century advanced the middle class' ability to buy status through purchasing luxurious, gratuitous objects (Page, 1992). In the early 90s, the London department store mogul and entrepreneur Gordon described women as urban actors who were going to turn buying into a more social and cultural public event (Rappaport, 2000). The department store developed into a centre for observing and showing, thus increasing women's conspicuous consumption. Peiss (1996) also prove that in the 20th-century women's use of make-up increased showing the conspicuousness of their consumption. The evolution of the commercial beauty culture stimulated the impression that all women could attain a level of beauty, as long as they used the right kind of items.

As society evolved, make-up became an essential facet in female-centred conspicuous consumption. Mass market manufacturers portrayed the makeover segment as important thereby, making the consumption of make-up a significant step in a woman's professional and personal success. Considering that women who paid attention to their appearance were more likely to get new jobs which required good looks. Roles such as saleswomen, waitresses, secretaries, and other clerical and service positions demanded a professional appearance (Rappaport, 2000). The cosmetic industry played a significant role in women's participation in conspicuous consumption. Advertisements for cosmetic, skincare and fashion products in the 1980s placed immeasurable importance on luxury, and distinction between the enlightened and less privileged individuals (Douglas, 2000).

Concerning all forms of fashion categories, female consumers are believed to be more involved in the conspicuous consumption of such products and brands than their male counterparts (Page, 1992). O'Cass (2001) also show that women use the conspicuous consumption of fashion brands to portray status and identity. Using luxury brands items, especially luxury to communicate status is the heart of what conspicuous consumption is based on (Segal and Podoshen, 2013, p. 193). This activity has however shaped how consumers see and communicate with these brands.

2.9 Brand and Branding: A conceptual overview

In consumer marketing literature Aaker (1996), terms a brand as a name, term or symbol used to differentiate the products and services of a particular company from others. Wood (2000, p. 662) notes that brands often create the fundamental differentiation between competitive products, and as such, they can be significant to the success of a company. Similarly, Randall (2000) sees it as an exclusive identity which distinguishes it from other related items. More specifically, Ghodeswar (2008) defines a brand as a distinctive term and sign anticipated to recognise the products of either one seller or a group of sellers. A name that distinguishes between goods, which gives the marketplace a well-organised environment. However, Maurya and Mishra (2012, p. 122) state that 'a brand is a complex phenomenon'. It is difficult in the sense that every author comes up with his or her understanding of what it is, which creates complexity in the meaning of brand (Kapferer, 2004). Maurya and Mishra (2012) also add that brands are universal; they infiltrate virtually every facet of human life: cultural, economic and social. Owing to its ability to infiltrate everywhere, they have come under increasing criticism,

but its origin remains the same. A brand is a word derived from an Old Norse word 'brandr' which means 'to burn' to burn heated iron on livestock for identification. The idea came when owners of livestock put a mark on their animals for identification and also to differentiate this animal from others. From its origin, the main essence of branding is 'identification and differentiation'.

Kapferer (2004) notes that branding goes beyond just giving names for identification and differentiation, more recently, it involves transformation and a long-term commitment.

Authors have looked at multiple definitions of the term by various experts. For this research, the framework of De Chernatony and Riley (1998) will be used for the definition of brand. The framework divides the meaning of a brand into twelve (12) themes. A logo, a legal instrument, a company, shorthand, risk reducer, Identity system, an image in consumer's mind, value system, personality, relationship, value and an evolving entity (De Chernatony and Riley, 1998, p. 419). De Chernatony and Riley (1998) examine over a hundred articles from trade and academic journals, which provides robust and valuable viewpoints of the variety of definitions. These themes are built upon these widespread definitions by numerous authors. Although these definitions do not include the categorization of brands, it is still useful for this study. Kapferer (2004) categorises brands into various types: generic, premium, cult, iconic, sub-brands and luxury brands. This research focuses on luxury fashion brands.

2.10 Definition of Luxury brands

From a product/brand centred viewpoint, Fiona and Moore (2009, p. 348) identify some overall features of luxury brands as 'excellent quality, high transaction value, distinctiveness, exclusivity and craftsmanship'. In the same way, Jackson (2004, p. 158) classifies luxury brands as individuality, high priced, image and status, which integrate to make them desirable for reasons other than function. Six components of luxury brands as suggested by Dubois and Laurent (1994) includes 'excellent quality, high price, scarcity and uniqueness, aesthetics and poly sensuality, ancestral heritage and personal history, and superfluosity'. All these components by different authors have a lot in common: excellent quality, distinctiveness, high price and exclusivity. Additionally, there are also various classifications of luxury brands: Luxury automobiles, airlines, banking, tourism, home furnishing, fashion (Couture, ready-to-wear and accessories), perfumes and cosmetics, wines and spirits (Fiona and Moore, 2009).

Amongst these classifications of luxury brands, luxury fashion brand category accounts for one of the largest and fastest growing in the sector (PWC, 2012).

2.11 Luxury Fashion Brands

Due to the significance of growth within the sector, some researchers have investigated the motivation behind the purchase of luxury fashion brands (Tsai, 2005; Tynan et al., 2010; Matthiesen and Phau, 2010). Preceding studies have acknowledged an absence of clarity concerning how luxury fashion brands can be described (Fiona and Moore, 2009). So, in defining luxury fashion brands, it is noteworthy to focus on the significant features. These characteristics include brand name, distinct brand identity, global recognition, craftsmanship, high product quality and innovation, influential advertising, exceptional price, location, high visibility and excellent customer service (Jackson, 2004; Okonkwo, 2007). Fiona and Moore (2009) review the significant features of luxury fashion brands as: 'clear brand identity, luxury communication strategy, product integrity, brand signature. Other ways they look at it include: prestige price, exclusivity, history or a story, globally controlled distribution, and a luxury organisational culture' all these components attributed to couture, ready-to-wear and accessories make up a luxury fashion brand.

2.12 Summary

Consumption plays a vital role in human life, and this is indicated in the origin and importance of the concept. It is a social life experience that progressed as a result of the interest around the theory. Consumption activities link to hedonic and utilitarian approach, and in most cases, it is revealed that these two ways can be observed at the same time. Research has highlighted in this chapter suggest that the reasons people consume are subjective. It could be due to cultural effects, symbolic or the functionality of the product. These reasons for spending is ancient, and many researchers have examined this concept in different context, it is still a concept that is underdeveloped as new areas spring up daily. These areas raise a lot of interest in the field of marketing. Additionally, consuming luxury brands has been in existence since the eighteen century, and its importance cannot be overemphasized. Luxury consumption pattern has also been linked to gender. It is noted that gender impacts on what and how people make buying choices. One significant idea to emerge from this chapter is that there is no consensus on the definition of luxury which poses the term as a relative one. Although some continuum is

explained, defining luxury from the consumer's viewpoint is significant. This view is meaningful because consumers are those who engage in this activity and it is best to understand how they make sense of this buying behaviour. This implies that a study whose objective is to investigate how a group of consumers define luxury is significant in marketing literature. This study aims to understand how Black African women in London define luxury. Their definition of luxury forms the basis of discussion. Furthermore, luxury, status and conspicuous consumption are linked together due to its relevance to each other. Buying luxury brands can be as a result of status, the need to make a statement and be visible to others through brands. The theory of branding, its origin, and its importance are all essential in consumer behaviour. Branding serves as an organiser for the marketplace while helping consumers and marketing manager differentiate between market items. Evidently, luxury brand consumption influences a country's economy as a thriving sector with stable growth rate. Hence, it is significant to explore consumption patterns from consumer's viewpoint. Research also shows that that living and consumption are synonymous and thus investigating the Black African woman's consumption behaviour adds value to the marketing theory and practice.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3- Theories of Fashion, Femininity, Identity Creation and Ethnicity

‘Today we could hardly do without the word identity in talking about ethnicity, immigration and culture. Those who research these words and write on them use these terms casually; they assume the reader will know what they mean. And readers seem to feel like they do, at least there has been no clamour for clarification of the terms’ (modified)

- Gleason (1983, p. 910).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the theories of fashion, femininity, identity and ethnicity. It begins with analysing the importance of fashion, femininity, identity and ethnicity. It gives an overview of the construct of fashion as well as highlights its significance. In this chapter, fashion, culture and symbolic meaning are discussed alongside women’s luxury fashion consumption behaviour. It also analyses Black African women’s consumption behaviour and identity, giving an in-depth review of consumer identity theory by looking at self-concept and social identity theory. This section explains the link between self and social identity. It explores identity interference and also the connection between identity and symbolic consumption. The chapter also examines the concept of postmodernism and its impact on identity, defines the theory of ethnicity. Finally, it analyses the concepts of ethnicity, culture, identity and the Black ethnic minority group in Britain.

3.2 Analysing Fashion, Femininity, Identity Creation and Ethnicity

Theories of fashion, femininity, identity creation and ethnicity have been looked at by several researchers (Barnhart, 1988; Remaury, 1996). These concepts are built upon consumers who make specific preferences about their buying behaviour with more or less emphasis on the subsequent implications for social identification (Hogg and Wilson, 2004, p. 6). This review critically discusses fashion, femininity and identity in light of the various perspectives available. The act of consumption as an extension of self-plays a vital role in creating and communicating identity. Irrespective of what is bought. Although consumption and theories of identity generate a lot of academic debate (Levy, 1959; Holt, 1998; Berger and Heath, 2007), the two are inseparable as they are closely related and rooted in the same social process (Miller et al., 1998). Consumption has developed into a dominant influence on identity creation, in

many cases replacing other factors such as an individual's family, organisations and personal histories (Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Hence, people's consumption behaviours can act as signals of identity (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978). Berger and Ward (2010) reveal that this activity can be linked to any pattern of consumption.

Studies reveal that many consumers are using fashion items as signals of identity which acts as a means to create and maintain their identity (Mandel et al., 2006; Berger and Heath, 2008; Berger and Ward, 2010). Even if, the word fashion can denote a number of items, a lot of people see it as clothing items. In trying to understand this concept in a theoretical way, it is significant to note that the theory of fashion should be looked upon in a broad context. Hence, this chapter focuses on how consumers create meanings from the consumption of fashion products. Inside a social world, it is essential that these interests are proved and identities acknowledged by other people (Richins 1999). The implication here is that first, it is imperative to understand how identity is defined and created, secondly, how the relationship between consumption and society facilitates this definition (Hogg and Mitchell 1996). Positing consumption as a social process, (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978; Bourdieu, 1979) propose that identity is shaped by symbolic rather than material consumption. Their idea implies that individuals understand and construe the self, and hence socially meaningful relationships, in an equal way.

3.3 An overview of the Construct of Fashion: An Integrated Perspective

Fashion is a multifaceted approach, which is abstract and cannot be merely described as involving only material objects. There is no agreement on the meaning of the word, which poses as a relative word. The implications and impact of the concept have developed to meet the clothing practices of individuals belonging to several social structures and customs. The terms fashion and clothing have been misused interchangeably. However, it is essential to state that fashion goes beyond clothing, as clothing is an item of fashion while fashion is an entire system (Davis, 1992) and a cultural symbol (Becker 1982; Wolff, 1983; White and White 1993; Wolff 1993). Finkelstein (1996) adds that it is misleading to identify fashion as exclusively linked to clothing. In the same way, Koenig (1973) opposes the frequently held notion that it only relates to the way one dresses or wears jewellery and ornaments. So, he contends that those philosophies of fashion that focuses entirely on the study of or the history of dress are insufficient (Koenig 1973). Finkelstein (1996) reveals that clothing and fashion are two

separate objects as clothing is a tangible item and refers to what an individual is wearing, while fashion is an intangible perception which is a social practice, incorporating a multitude of social meanings in the minds of consumers (Kawamura 2005). Brenninkmeyer (1963) argues that fashion and clothing go together, while clothes are the raw materials from which fashion is shaped, fashion is uncovered via clothing. On the other hand, Foley (1898) looks at the concept with regards to custom, usage and taste in a study conducted in England. This study leads Foley to suggest that 'it may not be wholly superfluous to distinguish fashion forthwith from custom, usage, or taste. Tastes, whether concerned with the 'what' or the 'how' of our wants, convey more or less the implication of an aesthetically sufficient reason: custom or usage may be based on comfort or morality. But when anything is wanted on the ground that it is fashionable a rational basis seems farther to seek'. On the other hand, Simmel (1957, p. 541) states that 'fashion is a type of copied activity, but, paradoxically, in changing regularly, it distinguishes one time from another and one social level from another. It also connects those of a particular class and separates them from others.

Simmel goes on to explain that fashion is the emulation of the ideal which gratifies the call for social adaptation; it guides a person upon a similar path which everyone follows and provides an overall situation, which resolves the conduct of every individual into a mere example. Simultaneously, it fulfils the desire to be different, the tendency towards dissimilarity, the need for modification and distinction. Additionally, it creates a constant change of contents, which gives to today fashion an individualistic impression that contrasts the fashion of yesterday and tomorrow. Because it varies between different social classes, it symbolises nothing other than one of the many aspects of life by the aid of which we seek to connect in a unified way, the inclination towards social equalisation with the desire for individual differentiation and change' (Simmel, 1957, p. 543). In support of this, Hemphill and Suk (2008, p. 103) state that 'as the most prompt visible label of self-presentation, fashion communicates meanings that have individual and social significance, its innovation produces diction for self-expression that relates individuals to social worlds. For a while, it has been looked at as containing products of social stratification (Hansen, 2004). Additionally, fashion is formed because people of low social class imitate those of the high group. As a result, the high group individuals abandon this trait to differentiate themselves. Consequently, low-class individuals quit the habits too, making fashion a trend that revolves (Belleau, 1987).

According to Simmel (1904, p. 131), individuals have two approaches to fashion. Some are unconcerned while others are selective and particular. The carefree people do not care what they wear and for them 'anything goes'. Others, particularly women, are very selective and particular about what to put on and as a result, spend a lot of money on acquiring fashion items. Women who are particular about what they wear are those who desire to dress according to what is invoked at that time. They follow trends consistently. For some people, fashion means to stand out; it is the need for differentiation while to others fashion is a means of imitating their ideal model. However, with regards to this research and also considering that fashion has no boundaries, it is culturally constituted. This research adopts the definition of fashion by Simmel (1957, p. 541) which states that 'fashion is a form of imitation and so of social equalization, but, paradoxically, in changing incessantly, it differentiates one time from another and one social stratum from another. It unites those of a social class and segregates them from others'. The reason for adopting this definition is that it is robust and widens the application of the term beyond the scope of clothing.

3.4 Fashion, Culture and Symbolic meaning

According to Cao et al. (2013, p. 3), fashion is vital in the evolution of culture and society that it is regarded as second nature to the human being. It has been studied in various cultures (Berger and Heat, 2008; Bently et al., 2007), which proves that fashion is a cultural practice. According to Berger and Heat (2008), fashion should be studied within the context of a cultural practice as well as a figurative product. 'Culture is thereby an individual's constructed meaning and significance of the world' (McCracken, 1986). Consequently, cultural practices and behaviours are formed via 'experiences, interpretations, and activities in which goods are produced and consumed'. With regards to the study of culture, fashion can be regulated as a 'man-made manufactured cultural item' (Belleau, 1987). This cultural item is examined from both consumption and production viewpoints. Fashion as a cultural item which links itself to behaviours and self-identity (Kawamura 2005).

In today's fashion world emphasis is placed on creating a cultural image. This image is then transformed into tangible objects such as apparels, accessories and all fashion products. As a result, culture is passed on to consumers through fashion items. By social psychological

research, as well as on the points of agreement found in most studies (Bernard, 1996) which focuses on the interpretation of fashion and clothing behaviour, we find out that clothing can be a representation of self to the individual. It is a non-verbal communication tool used to convey the 'individual's social status, occupation, role, self-confidence, intelligence, conformity, individuality, and other personality characteristics' (Horn and Gurel, 1975, p. 2). They also point out the flexible role of fashion and clothing as a communication tool used by both marketers and consumers to make a statement about who they are and what they represent. 'The clothing a person wears can denote significance onto the wearer and to onlookers. The meanings generated from clothing can be communicated and is similar to the concept of fashion as they are not static. Peters et al. (2011, p. 292) claim that clothing is vital to human life. Every human being from birth covers the body. Much more than functional benefits, people use fashion and clothing because of emotional and communicative features.

Clothing serves as a link between the naked a body and the social world as a symbol of self (Thompson and Haytko, 1997, p. 18). For over a decade marketers have realized that consumers use clothing for more than a coverage but also to create their self-identities, and transfer those identities to others (Feinburg et al., 1992; Tseelon, 1995; Johnstone and Conroy, 2005; Newholm and Hopkinson, 2009). Research shows that all forms of identities are created through the consumption of clothing and fashion. Ethnic identities (Chattalas and Harper, 2007; Karpova et al., 2007), sexual identities (Jacob and Cerny, 2004; Schofield and Schmidt, 2005), to the collective identities of subcultures of consumption (Dickson and Pollack, 2000; Strauss, 2003). Holbrook and Dixon (1985) link fashion to public consumption which allows people to convey a particular image. This description of fashion comprises three significant elements. The first element explains that public consumption involves conspicuous usage that is visible to others, this means that the consumption of fashion functions as an illustrative purpose which is made noticeable to others. This perspective links fashion consumption to conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1898). Fashion items are intentionally accepted as visible products because it involves clear consumption practices that make the individual's tastes and values accessible to others.

The second element shows that communication with others via consumption can be an indicator to others, which may highlight certain norms shared and agreed upon among a group of individuals. For example, consumer behaviour cannot be termed 'fashionable' if it can only be adopted by one person.

The third element explains how an image is observed as a consumption system. It reveals that the act of consuming is a symbol for communicating 'image'. The image, on the other hand, involves a picture that a person wants to project in an attempt to gain approval, status, or admiration by seeming stylish or classy; this operates within an interpersonal structure (Chai et al., 2007). By nature, fashion is a part of modern culture. It is shaped and recreated over and over which leads to a continuous public appetite for change. Solomon (2002) points out that since fashion is a system, it involves both people and organisations which in turn becomes a medium for the transfer of symbolic meanings to particular goods. He additionally notes that fashion could be thought of as a code that helps an individual interpret these meanings and this is predominant in women. McRobbie (1997, p. 84) also support this statement by stating that 'fashion is an almost feminized activity'

3.5 Women's Luxury Fashion Consumption

Fashion is so important to women in many ways. It turns them into objects to be looked at and admired by both men and women (Berger, 1972, p. 47). Consequently, this motivates them to keep up with fashion trends. It leads us to the general view of the today woman seen as economically active with more decision making power and have also become a more profitable market segment (Cassil, 1990; Bruce and Pakinson-Hill, 1999; Ives, 1999). Stockburger-Sauer and Teichmann (2011, p. 236) state that 'women's attitude towards luxury fashion is more positive than that of men'. The reason for this is that a female consumer irrespective of culture will engage in the act of consuming fashion brands to either improve or maintain her societal image and status (Ives, 1999), thereby making the fashion sector a more feminised one. Although the idea of seeing the fashion sector as more feminised has been revealed by several studies (Bruce and Pakinson-Hill, 1999; Ives, 1999; Cassil, 1990), understanding the motives for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African ethnic minority women is understudied. Additionally, creating a link between women's luxury fashion behaviour and identity creation has been given inadequate attention. Thus, this research seeks to fill these theoretical gaps.

Lin and Xia (2012) state that the women's consumption of fashion is a moderator of personality display. An individual's possession of 'fashionable accessories' can be regarded as an 'extension of self' (Belk et al., 1988). Hence, the consumption of fashion is closely linked to a consumers' self-concept (Grant and Stephen, 2005; Workman and Studak, 2006). Furthermore, women's consumption of fashion indicates freedom and empowerment (Hong, 2013). Women are beginning to redefine their femininity (Lury, 1996) by engaging in the consumption of fashion brands. Whether or not fashion is considered a liberating factor for women, it is widely agreed upon that consuming fashion is meaningful for 'self-presentation' in different ways (Lury, 1996; Hong, 2013). The continual use of fashion by women lead to the presentation of self as well as aid in the creation of self-identity (Hong, 2013).

Female luxury consumption rate has attracted considerable research attention. For instance, Bev and Zolenski's (2011) study show that an average woman acquires three fashion luxury brands each year. Luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Fendi, Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs are religiously purchased by female consumers (Han et al., 2010). In Europe, it is predicted that by 2018, the UK will become the leading luxury fashion industry (Conlumino, 2014). Similarly, in the United States, research has it that spending on luxury fashion brands amounts to as much as \$525 billion per year (Bev and Zolenski, 2011) with female consumption rate accounting for over half of this percentage (D'Arpizio, 2012). In 2010, a report showed that women consume an average of \$100 billion every year on luxury brands (Lemonides, 2010). Stockburger-Sauer and Teichmann (2013) conclude that women are more ready than men, to indulge in conspicuous consumption thereby spending large sums of money on luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Louboutin and Hermes. Comparatively, the price for a female luxury product is higher than that of men (Lemonides, 2010). These figures are huge and significant. However, it is notable to note that this has not reduced the rate of female luxury fashion consumption because while the global luxury market experienced an economic downturn, strong luxury fashion brands such as Hermes, Louis Vuitton and Chanel still maintained a high sale volume (Forbes, 2009). Hence, female luxury fashion consumption has a sustained interest in the society.

Given the associated financial implications, it is logical to argue that the consumption rate of luxury fashion brands, relates to the country's GDP. According to Pithers (2014), fashion industries contribute a lot to a country's GDP, as recent figures show that the fashion industry's

contribution to the UK economy is £26 billion and this amount has increased by 22% compared to the £21 billion in 2009 (McKinsey, 2015).

Consumption of fashion brands is increasingly beneficial to everyone, and this explains the reasons for the massive growth in this sector. The report also shows that luxury fashion accessories category is also evolving and it is estimated to grow by 35% in the next 5 years (BOF, 2014). It is also estimated that female luxury market growth rate will increase by 50% over the next 12 years (Lu et al., N.D). Heinze (2000) claims that in the early 1990s, Jewish women were known to inherit the duty of controlling the intricate system of consumption as dictated in Jewish scripture and also retain luxury products to effectively integrate themselves into the fabric of American culture. This activity has given women the ability to spend and increase their spending power towards luxury fashion goods (Heinze, 2000). Evidently, also luxury fashion consumption allows women to present and express themselves (Wilcox et al., 2009) as well as provide hedonic value and status than non-luxury (Prakash, 1992). It is also proven that women are directed to social and emotional relationships with others (Wang and Griskevicius, 2014); this explains one possible reason why women use luxury products as 'signalling system' (Wang and Griskevicius, 2014).

To further understand women's luxury consumption behaviour, evolutionary psychology gives an in-depth understanding why behaviours occur (Colarelli and Dettmann, 2003; Backer et al., 2014). When relating evolutionary psychology to consumer behaviour, products act as signals of desirable traits and bring status to the consumer (Miller, 2000, p. 64). Women use luxury brands as signals to other women for creating an impression about their relationships (Backer et al., 2014). They also flaunt their luxury possessions as an 'intra-sexual signalling system' (Wang and Griskevicius, 2014), need to make a statement and convey identity.

3.6 Black African Women Consumption Behaviour

A study on Black African women and clothing consumption reveals that several factors can influence what Black African women buy (Gbadamosi, 2012). This study shows social factors as a critical influence on Black African women's consumption style. Within social factors, the need for the women to conform to the society stimulates their purchase behaviour. They act on a stimulus which makes them feel comfortable when they can blend into the community (p.12).

Conforming to societal expectations reflects on the Black African woman's spending power (Baronowski and Bemporad, 2014). The study shows that with regards to consumption, Black African women have an immersed spending power with regards to 'aspirational market' and as a result, she is labelled 'an aspirational consumer' (Baronowski and Bemporad, 2014; Allemann, 2000, p. 52). Globally, aspirational consumers are the largest market segment at thirty-nine percent (39%) of the population with up to two billion people (Baronowski and Bemporad, 2014). Accounting for more than half of this segment are female consumers at fifty-seven percent (57%) (Allemann, 2000). Aspirational consumers are regarded as those who are the first to 'unite materialism, sustainability and cultural influences' (Gauvin, 2014). Aspirational consumers are most driven to buy items that will connect to 'their aspirations of creating a brighter future for them and the society' (Gauvin, 2014, p. 1). They also 'engage in partnering with brands that help them make a difference with their actions' (Baronowski and Bemporad, 2014, p. 1).

Studies reveal that young Black African women have a strong and high educational, occupational and brand aspiration (Mirza, 1992). They are very likely to aspire to a job of high social status, and their choices are independent of parental influence. Furthermore, the aspiration of a Black African woman (Mirza, 1992) stems from her awareness of the society and the age she lives in as well as self – realisation and consciousness. A South African report shows that a Black African woman is conscious, enlightened and more aware of her environment now than ever (Flax, 1990; Preez and Visser, 2003). As a result of this awareness, the Black African woman is regarded as a new intelligent consumer (Johnson and Learned, 2004) whose consumption of fashion brands starts early in her life cycle. In fashion consumption, the aspirational Black African female consumer has high trust in global brands. Though most fashion brands are rooted initially in western culture (Chanel, Gucci, Hermes, Louis Vuitton and Prada) this has not reduced the purchase intent of Black African women towards the consumption of luxury fashion brands (Preez and Visser, 2003).

3.7 The Black African Woman's Identity

In the past, the African culture portrayed the Black woman in negative ways with regressive stereotypes. Some of these ways include being dependent on her man, relegated to the kitchen, not smart enough to make financial as well as purchase decisions except with the permission

of the man. However, globalisation and postmodernism have influenced the Black African woman (Mirza, 1992) on terms she finds favourable.

Globalization and post-modernism have inspired the self-realisation of the Black African woman by making her see herself more than what traditional views of African culture portray (Flax, 1990). In an attempt to redefine herself, the Black woman focuses on activities that will represent her more positively. As a result, she engages in the act of purchasing products that will give her a more powerful identity (Nicholson, 1990).

African women concern themselves with the evolving rights of self-appraisal (BAWR, 2014). This appraisal helps Black African women to describe themselves with desirable characteristics which conflict the derogatory stereotype. These sets of women are more aware of who they are. By so doing they elevate themselves by belonging to groups aimed at re-instating and inspiring them to pursue their dreams. Most of these social communities also uplift women globally, reaching out to those who have lost their self-esteem, their values, those who lack confidence due to the regressive stereotype. The report reveals that these communities are responsible for all Black African women who think they do not have impressive identities (BAWR, 2014). Although, BAWR (2014) reports that Black African women belong to social groups which frame their identity based on their membership, little is known about how they create identity with regards to consumption.

3.8 Consumer Identity Theory: The Self Concept

A standard description of identity as given by the Oxford English Dictionary (2010) shows that it as the uniformity of an individual every time and in all cases. The condition of being one's self and not someone else, individuality and personality. Hence, it could be described as 'self-identity or self-concept' (Epstein, 1973; Smith, 1992; Leary and Tangney, 2003). According to James (1890, p. 299), self-identity is shaped by memories, behaviours and independent events. Hence, self-awareness is significant in creating self-identity. Whatever belongs to a person can be categorised into self-identity, or the 'empirical self,' as James called it (p. 291). This category includes 'I', 'me', and 'my'. This concept originates from 'I think' or 'I feel'. It is not the thoughts or feelings that are significant, but the 'I' ('my' thoughts or 'my' feelings) (James, 1890, p. 291). Without the 'I', thoughts and feelings can be devoid of self-identity. Thus, he acknowledged three categories of self-identities, namely, the material self, the social

self, and the spiritual self (James, 1890, p.292-296). The material self-looks into the extended self which comprises of a person's own body, possessions, interpersonal relationship and family. 'These possessions are not valued simply for their functions but valued because they are a part of the self' (Brown 1998, p.22). The social self, on the other hand, contains the opinions others hold of the individual. Invariably, how an individual is viewed and known by others depends on what social roles he plays (Roberts and Donahue 1994, p. 214). These social roles include personal relationships, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, political affiliation, stigmatised groups and professions (Deaux et al. 1995, p.287). The third, which is the spiritual self, refers to the individual's inner being (James 1890, p.296). It is the psychological self and comprises the intangible belongings of the individual. These belongings include the individual's perceived abilities, attitudes, emotions, interests, motives, opinions and desires (Brown 1998, p.25).

In a broader view, self-identity is a person's opinion of himself (Kinch 1963, p.481; Shavelson et al., 1976, p.411), created from social interaction (Mischel and Morf 2003, p. 25) with significant experience and feelings (Epstein 1973, p.407). It involves qualities that the person assigns to himself. These features comprise of both the terms the individual uses to define himself and the roles in which he sees himself. These qualities can be created, modified, or maintained by self-presentation behaviour (Schlenker 1975, p.1030; Brown 1998, p.160). The self-concept was first expressed in the marketing literature almost thirty years ago (Abdallat, 2012). It combines both the 'cognitive and affective understanding of who and what we are' (p. 1). Some self-concepts have been suggested: actual, ideal, social, ideal social, expected, situational (Higgins 1987, p.320), extended and possible (Markus and Nurius 1986). Researchers have focussed mainly on the ideal and actual self-concept (Abdallat, 2012). In consumer behaviour, the self-concept theory is muddled with vagueness and misperception in regards to the exact conceptualisation of self-concept.

Situational self-concept is the self a person wishes others to have of him/her' (Baumeister, 1998). Thus, self-image is controlled by the status quo (Abdallat, 2012). In the several self-developed practices, self-concept has been theorised as having two or more extents. Some contend that self-concept has to be evaluated as having two mechanisms - that of the actual self-concept and the ideal self-concept (Markus and Nurius 1986). Abdallat (2012) the actual self-concept in this manner has been categorised as 'extant self', 'actual self', 'real self', 'basic self', or simply, 'self' which makes the whole concept difficult to understand. The ideal self is

considered a psychological element of the self (Higgins, 1989; Baumeister, 1998) also known as the as desired social self (Abdallat, 2012). It can be partially conscious or partially unconscious; this varies from person to person (Boyatzia and Akrivou, 2006). It is both privately formed and socially shaped (Nasby, 1997). The old psychoanalytic therapeutic model sees idealism as a self-justifying function of the self and hence in need of corrective interference (Schechter, 1974). On the other hand, within the standpoint of positive psychology, the ideal-self is not measured as a protective function; it is the core mechanism for self-regulation and intrinsic motivation (Boyatzis and Akrivou, 2006). It is visible as a personal vision, or an image of what kind of person one wishes to be, what the person hopes to accomplish in life and work.

The social self-concept also known as ‘looking-glass self’ or ‘presenting self’ (Abdallat, 2012) is described as the kind of image one feels others have of him/her (Hughes and Guerrero, 1971). Thus, self-identity is considered both a cognitive-affective-active system and a social-interactive-self-constructive system (Mischel and Morf 2003, p.28). Identity can also be adopted in a normative sense while having an identity is considered good and desirable, the situation of ‘no identity’ is evaluated negatively. Very fairly, we all have right to our identity (Verkuyten, 2005). Accordingly, it is an interesting theoretical template upon which women’s fashion consumption could be advanced.

3. 9 Social Identity Theory

Verkuyten (2005) identity has advanced into one of the important notions in social science thinking. The word is frequently used, in various positions and for different reasons. Although the term has a history of social science, its obtainable approval is exclusive (Gergen, 1991). Undoubtedly in globalisation, questions of identity have developed to be significant and fundamental than ever, identity now conveys a dominant expressive belief (Gergen, 1991; Michael, 1996). Identity practices also appear to have substituted economic self-interest as prime movers of human history in political and sociological theories (Michael, 1996). The conception and maintenance of identity have become both robust and problematic (McLeod, 2008). Although in social psychology a considerable quantity of empirical work has been dedicated to its reasons and consequences, the concept of social identity per se has traditionally received relatively little attention. ‘Social identity is a person’s sense of who they are based on their group membership(s) (McLeod, 2008). Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggest that the groups

which people belong to are a significant source of pride and self-esteem and these group can either be a social class, family or peers. These groups give people a sense of social identity: a sense of fitting into the social world. Tajfel and Turner (1979) claim that there are three mental practices involved in assessing others as 'us' or 'them' this could either be 'in or out-group'. These three mental practices take place in a specific order.

In this schema, categorisation is the first mental practice where people group things to recognise and identify them. In a very similar way, we arrange people as well as ourselves to understand the social environment. Social categories such as Black, Australian, White, Christian and Muslim are used to describe a particular group of people which turns out to be useful in many ways. For example, when people are allocated to a category, it tells us specific attributes about those people. Likewise, we discover things about ourselves by knowing what group we belong. Behaviours are described with reference to the pattern of groups we belong. It is important to also state that a person can belong to many different groups (McLeod, 2008). The second practice, as argued by Tajfel and Turner (1979) is the identification, in this practice, we assume the identity of the group with which we categorise ourselves. Secondly, we begin to act in a specific manner in which that category behave and conform to the norms of such class (Bendle, 2002). There is bound to be an emotional consequence to one's association with a group, and self-esteem will become bound up with group membership (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

The last phase is the comparison stage. In this frame, after we have identified with a group, we develop a habit of comparing that to other groups. If our self-image is to be preserved, our group needs to compare positively with other groups. 'This is crucial to understanding prejudice because once two groups identify themselves as rivals, they are forced to compete for the members to maintain their self-esteem (McLeod, 2008). Concerning consumption practices, it is necessary to understand that there is a shift from 'individual' to 'social' and considering the collective facets of consumption (Cova, 1997; Holt, 1997; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Scholars have attempted to explore various proportions of the relationship between consumption and social identity (Jafari et al., 2013). The development of this form of research imparts itself mainly to accept the point that consumption even at a distinct level, occurs in a wider atmosphere called the social context. Extant literature divulges that there is a 'symbiotic relationship between consumption and social identity: on the one hand, consumption nourishes sociality, and on the other hand, sociality influences consumption' (Jafari et al., 2013, p. 1730).

Undoubtedly, studies of online communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Muniz and Schau, 2005; Cova and Pace, 2006), tribes (Hamilton and Hewer, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2010) and subcultures of consumption (Belk and Costa, 1998; Kozinets, 2002) confirm that consumers establish social bonds with each other. These studies show that people feel a sense of belonging through consumption (Jafari et al., 2013). However, a study by Holt (1997) on postmodernism shows that consumers establish social bonds without necessarily being aware of a collective social identity. Social identity is therefore connected with the 'linking value' (Penaloza and Venkatesh, 2006) that is rooted in numerous shared consumption circumstances where individuals' sociability can flourish.

Equally, with respect to the influence of social identity on consumption, studies on conspicuous consumption (Sundie et al., 2011) and experiential consumption (Mehmetoglu, 2012) show that 'consumers' activities and experiences can be significantly influenced by social dynamics such as group membership, peer-based referencing, and social interaction (Jafari et al., 2013, p. 1730). Logically, this will be relevant to the discourse of women's consumption of fashion products and could be used to advance knowledge in that research domain.

3.10 Exploring the Link between Self and Social Identity

Deaux (1992) make efforts to create a link between self-identity and to social identity. She contends that most structures of social identity are consensually based and will be communicated along normative lines, while other facets of identities may be based on personal feelings and values and will be expressed along those lines. Consequently, one's identities also called 'idiosyncratic characteristic' are added to normative features of social identities. Even though Deaux (1992) contends that specific personal identities may be linked to precise social identities, she proposes that some personal identities may signify an overall understanding of self and therefore may permeate all the membership groups to which one belongs. Furthermore, in both self and social identity theory, the self is reflexive. It can take, group, organise or label itself in certain ways in relation to other social categories or classification. A practice denoted to as self-categorization in social identity (Turner et al., 1987; Stets and Burke, 2000). In identity theory, this process is called 'identification' (McCall and Simmons, 1978). Thus, identity is formed via the process of self-identification and categorisation.

3.11 Identity Interference

A lot of people have several characters and group memberships with which they identify and find meaning. An individual may have the identities of father, mother, wife, worker, student, daughter or son. Holding multiple identities help the individual such as giving chances for social interaction, economic mobility, and the gathering of skills and abilities (Sieber, 1974; Marks, 1977; Barnett and Baruch, 1985). However, regardless of these benefits and opportunities made available to individuals with multiple identities, the blends of identities are never stress-free to negotiate. Frequently, the consequence of having and holding several identities is ‘identity interference’ (Sieber, 1974), which happens as soon as the weights of one identity interfere with the performance of another identity (Van Sell et al., 1981). A female engineering student who is asked to make less of her gender in the class to fit in with her male colleagues is a good example of someone experiencing ‘genderscientist identity interference’ (Thoits, 1991). This interference can make this person feel that being a woman cannot be expressed when she is enacting the scientific aspect of her identity.

Furthermore, identity interference is connected with numerous negative psychological and physical effects (Cooke and Rousseau, 1984; Gerson, 1985; Coverman, 1989; O’Driscoll et al., 1992; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). A lot of explanations have been presented for why identity interference is connected to negative consequences. One of these reasons posit that interference at some point may impend a person’s sense of self (Thoits, 1991) or generate pressure that can reduce how one copes (Cooke and Rousseau, 1984). Nonetheless, the amount of interference differs among people who exhibit multiple identities. The degree of identity interference may be influenced by other identity-related factors such as the inability for a person to switch between identity roles when it is needed (Coverman, 1989). ‘Identity centrality which is the sign that people place on their identities has been revealed to be important in accepting the relationship between negative events and well-being in preceding research (Branscombe et al., 1999). This study focuses on women and science and the incompatibility between the work and family roles (i.e., spouse/partner and being a parent). This study shows that interference between the work and family roles is linked to negative consequences (Aryee, 1992). Thoits (1991, p. 104) speculates that ‘negative events or disruptions related to an important identity will be more threatening to the self than problems in an unimportant identity’. Therefore, having multiple and significant identities may well result in a higher chance than interference

between these identities will result. Additionally, interference between numerous central personalities may be specifically possible if the cultures related to them are different.

Mainly, scholars discover that having group identifications is valuable for the individual (Turner 1991; Turner et al., 1994). They suggest that social identity provide 'social validation and a framework for interpreting the world'. Which may give people guidelines on how to act or behave (Thoits, 1987). Nevertheless, regardless of these positive features, central identities can be complicated if people find it hard to integrate them into their lives. Hence, 'the culture of an identity can be defined as a shared set of normative beliefs, including values and ideologies, which are held by individuals with a particular identity' (House, 1981, p. 526). Conventionally, culture reflects a group of people within a particular society, in this context, it is defined more intently to describe a group of people within a specific subgroup (p.567). These cultural theories make available a behavioural pattern and guidelines for people who share the same identity (for example, students, wife, mother and father) (Thoits, 1991). Once the cultures of two identities are different, they create disagreements whereby causing identity interference which may happen because some individuals find it difficult to switch between identities with different cultures. House (1981, p. 528) explains that although identities may interfere, it does not in any way affect how people see themselves with regards to other people with different identity; and thus identity interference is not a threat to what and why people consume.

3.12 Identity and Symbolic Consumption

Consumption has materialised into the main leisure activity (Ger and Belk, 1996; Phillips, 2003). Stearns (2001, p. ix) posit that 'we live in a world saturated by consumerism'. Progressively, acts of consumption are being said to be compelled not only by practical needs but also by consumers' yearnings to make statements about themselves to others (Moynagh and Worsley, 2002; Kadirov and Varey, 2006). According to Piacentini and Mailer (2004), this is referred to as 'symbolic consumption'. An aspect of consumption where people use products as tools to construct, reconstruct, improve and maintain their identities. These acts have been argued to be true even in the most common consumption choices (Clammer, 1992; Slater, 1997; Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Therefore, there has been an increasing awareness among social scientists of the connection between identity and consumption (Hogg and Michell, 1996; Piacentini and Mailer, 2004 Wattanasuwan, 2005).

In an attempt to grasp what recent consumption decisions are, Dittmar (1992) expresses it in respect to ‘symbolic communicational link through which the symbolic meanings of material possessions communicate aspects of their owner’s identity to themselves and others. Equally, Ger and Belk (1996, p. 295) theorise that the act of consumption is a ‘communicative act vital to the constitution of self’. Furthermore, O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy (2002, p. 531) state that ‘consumers seek “positional” goods to demonstrate group membership, to identify themselves and mark their position’. Hence, the symbolic meanings of possessions can be essential in articulating not only one’s identity and association of social groups, but also in recognising the identity of others (Solomon, 1983; Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Christopher and Schlenker, 2004). Material possessions are ‘a means of making noticeable and stable the uncomplicated groups by which we classify people in society’. Material belongings can consequently signify and communicate not only the individual assets of a person but also his or her group involvement, social status and social position (Dittmar, 1992; O’Cass and McEwen, 2004).

3.13 Postmodernism and Identity

Postmodernism and its influence on identity thrived in the 1970s and 1980s but ultimately declined in the 1990s (Brislin, 2012). The notion of post-modernism, similar to that of modernism, was certainly not easy to explain. The argument was that capitalism had moved into a new phase, categorised by qualities such as ‘globalization, digitalisation and a semiotic turn’ (Flax, 1990). On the other hand, the argument on self-was that ‘human nature was being transformed as a result of sociocultural developments (Brislin, 2012, p. 10) and the whole concept of self is multifaceted (Giddens, 1991, p. 202). However, Giddens (1991, p. 201) suggests that the person in the postmodern era is still exposed to ‘the dilemmas of self’ (Giddens, 1991, p. 201). The ‘fragmentation, powerlessness, uncertainty and a struggle against commodification’ (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998, p. 131). These dilemmas are motivated by ‘the looming threat of personal meaninglessness’ as the person tries to create and retain a self that will endure over time even during the fast changing pace of the world (Giddens, 1991).

It is important to note that identity in postmodernism is not as a specified ‘product of social system nor as a fixed entity which an individual can simply embrace. It is something the individual dynamically creates, partially through consumption (Giddens, 1993; Gabriel and Lang, 1995; Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998, p. 132). According to Thompson (1995) self as

a 'symbolic project' which the individual must dynamically create out of the accessible symbolic resources, resources which the individual textures into a 'coherent account of who he or she is, a narrative of self-identity'. Narrative means we make sense of ourselves and our lives by the stories we can (or cannot) tell; this task can be aided by symbolic resources' (Ricoeur, 1984).

3.14 Defining Ethnicity

Rubenstein (2011, p. 208) defines ethnicity as 'identity with a group of people who share the cultural traditions of a particular homeland or hearth'. Hence, people of similar ethnic group likewise share a common culture. In other words, an ethnic identity is a form of cultural identity (Yam, 2013). There are two main objections to the definition of a term (Verkuyten, 2005). The first is the postulation that a definition involves a claim to be the 'one and only' correct one and hence, offers an essentialist understanding, while the second looks at a definition as an indication that something is the 'core' or 'essence' if it is fixed. This is a misunderstanding. However, Verkuyten (2005, p. 37) proposes a definition not concerning essence but to distinctions. In other words, a definition is a significant approach in mapping out reality and understanding phenomenon.

Ethnicity is a phenomenon with many sides (Isajiw, 1992), which means that scholars have a duty of summing up what is most necessary and indispensable. A function that will aid in enhancing guidelines of any conceivable distinction. If investigators choose to investigate a few aspects of this many-sided phenomenon, it is reasonably compulsory for them to point out how these particular elements may relate to the other aspects of ethnicity. Isajiw (1992) singles out some methods which have been offered in the past two decades and attempts to critically assess them while noting that there is a distinction in the degree to which these processes are separate, and the degree to which they have been accepted by scholars. He makes a difference between four significant methods and these are: ethnicity conceived as a primordial phenomenon, ethnicity conceived as an epiphenomenon, ethnicity conceived as a situational phenomenon and ethnicity designed as a purely subjective phenomenon.

The primordial method is the most advanced in sociological and anthropological literature. It claims that ethnicity as a phenomenon is rather given, attributed to one at birth, originating

from the 'kin-and-clan-structure of human society', and therefore something immovable and stable (Geertz, 1963; Isaacs, 1975; Stack, 1986). The other methods were developed to refute the primordial method. 'The epiphenomenon method is best characterised by Michael Hechter's theory of internal colonialism and cultural division of labour, and, to a lesser extent, by Edna Bonacich (1972)'. Hechter (1978), splits the financial structure of any society into two segments: 'centre and periphery'. While the periphery comprises of peripheral jobs where products are significant to any society (Isaacs, 1975). As a result, immigrants concentrate more in this peripheral labour sector, improve their own unity and uphold their culture. Hence, ethnicity is a phenomenon that is shaped and preserved by an uneven economy (Nagel and Olzak, 1982).

Research tells us that in the seventies, it was a hostile thought to try to define ethnicity independently (Sanders and Nee, 1987) specifically one which emphasises culture, referring to the American and Canadian tradition called the 'crude Marxist'. Their notion was that all culture was epiphenomenal to class. However, Hechter's method is faced with its own set of critics. As many empirical studies disapprove this notion, proposing the 'situational phenomenon' (Neilsen, 1980; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Makabe, 1981; Portes, 1984; Sanders and Nee, 1987). The situational phenomenon is the third approach. This viewpoint proposes that ethnicity is to some degree not relevant in most situations because human beings have the right to esteem themselves as members of any particular society. If it is to their advantage (Neilsen, 1980; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Makabe, 1981; Portes, 1984; Sanders and Nee, 1987). A good example of this method sees ethnicity as a 'rational choice of any individual in any situations' (Bell, 1975; Ross, 1982; Banton, 1983). Therefore, ethnicity is 'a group option in which resources are mobilized for the purpose of pressuring the political system to allocate public goods for the benefit of the members of a self-differentiating collectivity' (Ross, 1982, p. 445).

The fourth approach is the subjective approach. This approach emerges from two factors: the ethnic group boundaries which had a substantial effect on both anthropologists and sociologists (Barth's 1969). Furthermore, in American and Canadian sociology, the approach was prompted by empirical studies of ethnic generations, mainly the third generation. He took an extreme stance by separating culture from the concept of ethnicity. According to Barth (1969) 'ethnic boundaries were psychological boundaries, ethnic culture and its content were

irrelevant'. Hence, an ethnic group is an outcome of a group's relation whereby the boundaries are recognised through shared insights and not using any objectively distinct culture. Hence, a robust definition states 'ethnicity depends on the meaning of several other concepts, particularly those of ethnic group and ethnic identity' and this refers to ethnicity as the collective phenomenon'. Where the concept of an ethnic group is the most elementary, from which the others are derived. 'Ethnic identity refers to ethnicity as an individually experienced phenomenon' which makes ethnicity 'an abstract theory which consists an implied reference to both collective and individual aspects of the phenomenon' (Isajiw, 1993, p. 5). This definition by Isajiw (1993) is used for this research.

3.15 The Theories of Ethnicity, Culture and Identity

Summarising ethnicity as both collective and individual phenomenon where ethnic group and ethnic identity makes the concept more understandable, it is essential to see the existing link between ethnicity and identity. Identity is a concept which involves 'the self' consisting of the individual and all the factors that make an individual what he is, buys, owns, thinks and feels (James, 1980). However, rather than look at ethnicity with regard to self-identity, it is important to look more broadly. One supportive way of understanding ethnicity with regards to identity is to grasp it as vital to the formation of the individual and collective cognitive maps (Parker and Reid, 2013; Waller, 2013) which directs the world and orient people within it. Ethnicity is established through the blend of numerous factors 'bleeding through' it can both permeate and be formed by other identities, for example, the rise of African churches which merged religious and ethnic identification. Observing ethnicity and identity in this manner aids us to see both the flexibility of ethnic identification and the importance of multiple identities (Bell, 1975). On the other hand, it may be challenging to discuss ethnicity and identity without looking at culture. Ethnicity and culture and their various derivatives are all very familiar in the opinion of Ballard (2002). Rightly, the terms ethnicity and culture are two words that are often used in our everyday speech. Are these words merely synonyms for one another or do they both point towards different directions?

According to Olivia (2011) the terms 'ethnicity and culture' have continuously been muddled by people, though there are distinctions between the two. Ethnicity is grounded in our racial roots when a child is born in a particular country that becomes the child's place of birth, but

the race of the child's parents is the basis of his/her identity (Bonacich, 1972). In other words, a place of birth and nationality is also a foundation or categorisation for the creation of identity. The expression ethnic results from a Greek word 'ethnos' which means 'foreign people (Olivia, 2011). In contemporary society, the word ethnicity is often used to denote 'racial affinities of a person and not necessarily as a derogatory word' (Bell, 1975).

3.16 Black and Ethnic Minority Group (BMEGs) in Britain

Ethnicity and ethnic group are two terms that are used complementarily. Sometimes as the same and at other times as 'alternative framings of difference' (Nagel and Olzak, 1982, p. 128) depending not only on the elements of 'ethnicity' that are being considered but also according to national context and research orientation.

Within any ethnic group, there are values, norms, beliefs and practices that are learnt and shared. Even now people think, the actions they take, and the decision they make in a particular ethnic group seem to be structured in a specific way. This set of norms and practices, beliefs, values and customs are transferred from one generation to another and hence, conserved in a way more complicated than any storage system (Verkuyen, 2005). All these are referred to as culture. Shared values, norms and practices provide each group member with a sense 'identification and belongingness' (p. 122). Inside a particular ethnic group, individuals tend to create an identity for themselves, either identity which is based on group beliefs or needs to sustain the individual's self (Modood et al., 1997). Ethnic groups are those that consider a subjective opinion in their natural origin because of the similarities. The physical type of customs or both, memories of colonisation and emigration. This view must be relevant for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists' (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994, 35).

Additionally, 'ethnic group is accepted in anthropological literature to designate a population which is largely biologically self-perpetuating. This group shares fundamental cultural values, realised in overt unity in cultural forms, makes up a field of communication and interaction and has a membership which identifies itself, and it is recognised by others, as composing a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (p. 75). 'Ethnic group has been measured by skin colour, country of birth, name analysis, family origin and as self-identified on the census question on ethnic group. All these methods are problematic, but it is

accepted that the self-determined census question on ethnic group overcomes some conceptual limitations' (Chapman, 2014). However, the ethnic minority groups are not a consistent group. It is difficult to classify them using a standard format. However, they are groups who claim the right to be different and to define who and what they are or want to be themselves (Verkuyten, 2005, p. 41). These groups consist of 'African, Indian, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afro-Caribbean and Chinese. They are distinct regarding migration history, culture, language and religion (Modood et al., 1997).

According to the UK Census (1991, 2001 and 2011), Britain has become more ethnically diverse in the last 20 years (Calazani et al., 2013). In 1991, Black and minority ethnic communities accounted for 5.5 percent of Britain's population (Gill et al., 1997). The group has grown significantly as the estimated growth level is almost a third of Britain's population by 2050 (Chapman, 2014). The report shows that the number of people from minority groups would double by then. It is estimated that one in four children under the age of ten in the UK is from a minority group and over the next few decades the proportion will ascend. Presently, eight million people, or 14 percent of the UK population, are from ethnic minorities. They account for 80 percent of people, while the white community remains relatively same. Authorities forecast by halfway into the century, they will account for 20 and 30 per cent of the whole population – up to 16million people – will be from a minority community, the report states (ONS, 2012). Available data reveal that 'ethnic minority group in the UK will double by 2050 at the rate of 20 and 30% (Coombs, 2014).

Ethnic minority communities mostly reside in cities like London, Birmingham and Manchester. 50 percent of this number live in London. They are more inclined to live in a city area than their white counterparts. This report also shows that this group will move out of the central city and into outskirts and surrounding towns, echoing the way that white groups migrated in the past with the growth of the middle classes, the report forecasts. Ethnicities are frequently associating. This report shows that one in eight multi-person families comprises people from the diverse ethnic group. Coombs's (2014) report builds upon various studies to build up a comprehensive picture of the five largest black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in the UK – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean. The black African community is one of the largest growing ethnic groups with women accounting for more than half of this population (Coombs, 2014). With the steady growth of Black African women in

the UK, this group has formed a segment to be investigated in terms of their identity and their consumption behaviour.

3.17 Summary

Fashion is a system and surpasses the views on clothing. Even though it expresses itself in the mode of dressing, it is broader and more complex than merely what one wears. It connects to the psychological, the symbolic and above all, the cultural. Fashion as a system reflects people's identity, and the prominence of identity on consumption is an ongoing discourse. Identity creation theory reveals how people use consumption practices to enhance both the self and the social, which means that identity is maintained personally and socially based on responsiveness to individual's psychological factors as well as group cultural and social influences.

Within marketing literature, identity theory, consumption, culture and ethnicity connect. Despite the connection between these concepts, they can be defined distinctively based on the context addressed. Significantly, they are also intertwined within the consumer's self, which means that what people buy reflect who they are in terms identity, culture and ethnicity. This view cuts across diverse ethnic groups. Furthermore, considering how these theories act on each other, it is imperative to understand people based on their ethnic groupings.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4-Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

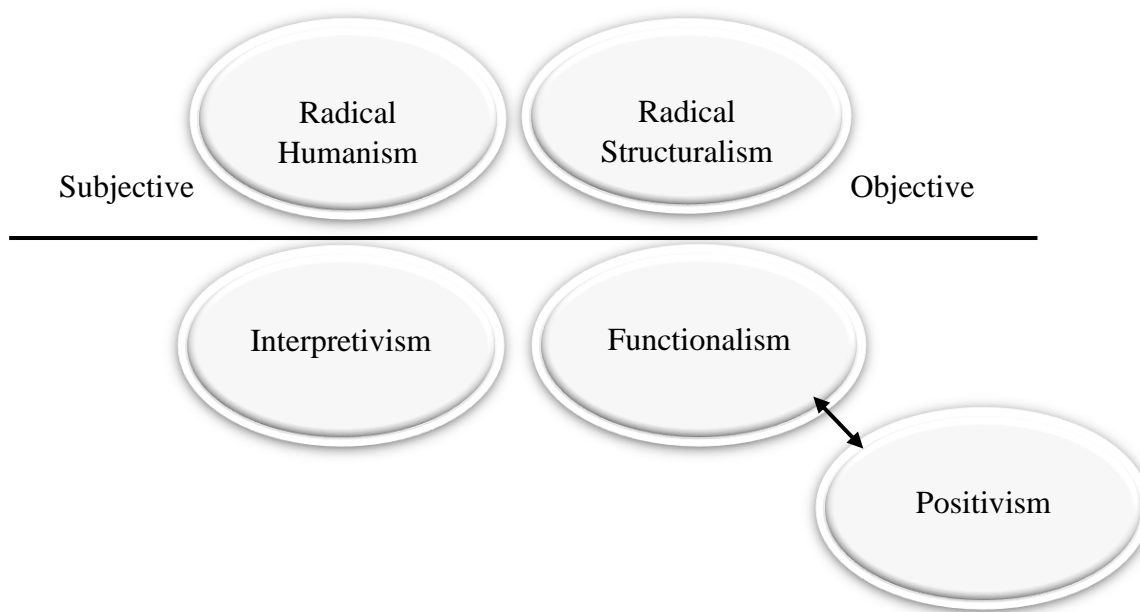
The chapter begins with research paradigms, giving an insight into the different paradigms that can be used in a study. It explains the relevance of interpretivism paradigm in this research. It also introduces the debates around the use of the word 'methodology, the three methodological approaches: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods as well as discussing the rationale for adopting three techniques within the qualitative method. Additionally, this chapter highlights the limitations of the research methods adopted, the research design and procedure and the sampling method used. It pays attention to ethical considerations, data collection, storage, interpretation, coding and memo as vital components to completing a qualitative study. Finally, it demonstrates the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research and gives an in-depth explanation of research credibility.

4.2 Research Paradigms

Kuhn (1970, p. viii) initially defines paradigm as acceptable 'scientific attainments that for a time give model problems and solutions to a population of practitioners'. He characterises it as an accumulation of logically connected hypothesis, assumptions and concepts that determine thoughts and structure research (Bodgan and Biklen, 1998). These assumptions are vital about knowledge (epistemology), how to obtain it (methodology) and of the physical and social world (ontology) (Kuhn, 1970). They are basic beliefs with no specific way to give a clear position of its truthfulness. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107) state that if there were precise means of establishing truthfulness, philosophical and controversies around paradigms, it would have been settled years ago. However, since this is not the case, researchers should adopt whatever paradigm they feel will grant trustworthiness to their approach (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Burrell and Morgan, (1979 p. 23) add that rather than arguing about paradigms, one should see them as viewpoints which bind the work of a group of authors together. Hence, they propose four main paradigms which are based on contrasting views of assumptions about the nature of social science and society' (p. ix). These paradigms according to Burrell and Morgan (1979) originate from the independent perspective of the social world. Each of these paradigm stand as a result of its claims and create ideas and principles which form a necessary base of central importance different from those created in other paradigms. Such a consistent examination of

social theory gives a personal contract with the ‘nature of assumptions which underwrites different approaches to social science (p. ix). Burrell and Morgan (1979) study posit that for a theorist to adequately understand the different perspectives, it is vital that the theorist be entirely enlightened of the inference on which he bases his view. Within their study, they propose four main paradigms within which a framework can base its inference (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Figure 4.1 – The Paradigm Framework Adopted From Burrell and Morgan (1979)



This framework proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) comprises of four paradigms: radical humanism, radical structuralism, functionalism and interpretivism. (see figure 4.1). These four paradigms are the representation of the social world and how theorists interpret events within the social context. Each of them is distinct and can be used independently (Kuhn, 1970). The first paradigm is the radical humanism which is subjective (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). It concerns itself with capturing social restrictions that limit human potential (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). They see the current dominant ideologies as separating people from their selves, and it is mostly used to justify radical change (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). On the other hand, the radical structuralism which appears as the second paradigm helps theorist see inherent structural conflicts within society that create constant change through a political and economic crisis (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The third paradigm is the functionalism: this paradigm adopts coherent human action and accepts as valid that a researcher can comprehend human

actions through 'hypothesis testing' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The primary view of the functionalism paradigm terms 'neo-positivistic, functional, systemic or quantitative' (Sulkowski, 2010). It involves an epistemological model that centres on natural sciences (p.110), which combines the effect of the neo-positivistic idea, the systemic trend with functionalism in sociology and cultural anthropology (Copley, 1980). Functionalism paradigm also involves some assumptions: 'verification, experience cumulating, search for a scientific approach, selection into dependent and independent variables, search for mathematical modelling and quantificational methodology' which sums to be 'heritage of the Vienna Circle' (Hatch and Schultz, 1996). In this paradigm, the cumulating of knowledge suggests that research generates on-ending understanding which is comparatively dependable on the scientific method (p. 529).

The functionalism paradigm is now commonly known as the positivism paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It was formerly invented by the originator of positivism Auguste Comte, a French theorist who held that reality could be experimental and objective. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 9) add that 'Comte' stance was to 'lead to an over-all doctrine of positivism which holds that all original facts is founded on sense experience and can advance only using observation and experiment'. A theory which originates from the eighteenth century labelled as a methodical process, and a philosophy applied to the natural sciences in a period where social or human research should imitate scientific and logical method (Gill and Johnson, 2002). According to Hughes and Sharrock (1997), positivism measures the social world as being observed by assembling objective realities which are peripheral and cannot be influenced. This view implies that two investigators examining the same study will end up with similar suggestions and results regarding features which are typically joined with reliability and validity (Healy and Perry, 2000). Similarly, Easterby-Smith et al. (2004, p. 28) add that in positivism paradigm, the focal facts is that the social world occurs outwardly, and its properties measured through objective measures, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition. This notion makes a positivist researcher one who 'explains predictions by joining and connecting variables (Hunt, 1991, p. 34). A person who detects and explains 'causal linkages' (Collis and Hussey, 2009) with meaning centred on 'communicative features' (Hunt, 1991, p. 33) as well as 'controls experiments to discover causal relations among variables' (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, p. 513). However, Burrell and Morgan (1979) argue that whether or not a positivist understands the world externally, the paradigm results from the functionalism

paradigm and should be used when applicable. Additionally, Cohen et al. (2007) note that its applicability should depend mainly on the nature of the research as it is a scientific paradigm aimed at verifying or contradicting an assumption. A scientific paradigm whose other feature consists of 'statistical analysis and generalizable conclusions. It is also a predominant in marketing and consumer research (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Collis and Hussey, 2003) whose idea emphasises the aim of differentiating values which describes consumer behaviour (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Hence, facts are broadened using accurate reflection and extent (Wass and Wells, 1994).

The last paradigm within Burrell and Morgan's (1979) framework is the interpretivism paradigm. This paradigm seeks to describe the constancy of human actions from their viewpoint. According to Hunt (1991), the core foundations of inspiration are social and humanistic sciences, such as cultural anthropology, sociology and psychology. According to Hatch (2002, p.24), 'the foundation of interpretative epistemology is the supposition about a constructional and conventional character of the social and organisational reality'. This reality is endlessly upheld, recreated and improved by individuals themselves as research results are not objective, but subjectively transferred. This paradigm is different from the first three paradigms earlier discussed within the framework, even though there are some debates about the authenticity of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) framework (Chua, 1988; Sook, 2008). Debates which suggest that Burrell and Morgan's framework is inappropriate and should be ignored (Sook, 2008; Chua, 1986). While debate claims that there are three main research paradigms: positivist, interpretivism and critical and that all other paradigms stem from these three (Chua, 1988), another debate suggests that they are just two major research paradigms: positivism and interpretivism (Sook, 2008). Chau (1986) study fails to outline the other paradigms the study was referring to while Sook (2008)'s study fails to outline the origin of these two major paradigms as detailed by Burrell and Morgan's (1979) framework. Irrespective of the debates around the number of existing paradigms, one consistent fact remains that positivism and interpretivism are included in these debates. Hudson and Ozanne (1988), explain that the reason for these debates is due to the fact the two main philosophical paradigms frequently used are 'positivism and interpretivism'. Both Positivism and interpretivism are significantly observed as 'summary labels that refer to general research approaches that only differ in beliefs. Beliefs that turn into the different ways of conducting research (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, p. 508). Easterby-Smith et al. (2004) claim that the emphasis on one of these paradigms which is

positivism gave rise to the advancement of a new thought, this thought clarifies that the ideologies of positivism are insufficient for understanding complex social occurrences and factual observation. It assumes that these ideologies are not realistic in a world created by human deeds and as such gave rise to the interpretive thought (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The interpretivists thinker does not see the world objectively rather as socially controlled (Williams, 2000). It is termed the 'anti-positivist' paradigm because it was established as a response to positivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), also called 'constructivism' for the reason that it emphasises the capability of the researcher to create meaning. The meaning created is profoundly affected by 'hermeneutics and phenomenology'. Hermeneutics is the detailed investigation and understanding in 'historical texts'. According to Ernest (1994), 'this meaning-making cyclical process is the origin in which this paradigm was initiated'.

Additionally, the robust effect is a general movement, phenomenology which believes individuals personal connotations and opinion of the world is the first step in comprehending the social world (p. 25). The interpretive researcher includes humans and their behaviours, given that the social world can be understood better by taking into consideration what connotations people give to it, and also understanding and translating such connotations from their viewpoint which may lead to inquiries into social occurrences. Social occurrences that can be comprehended by taking into consideration its totality (Hughes and Sharrock 1997; Easterby-Smith et al., 2004; Blumberg et al., 2005). Furthermore, an interpretive researcher is also one whose approach is focused on meanings that are a combination of 'communicative and evaluative features' (Hunt, 1991, p. 34). Rather than predict and anticipate, this researcher tries to 'create an in-depth understanding of behaviours' (p. 35). Reality occurs as several, changing certainties which are mental and perceived (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, p. 513).

4.2.1 Interpretivism and Consumer Research

It is impossible to address people as being separate from their social background. People cannot be understood wholly without delving into the understanding they have of their activities (Collis and Hussey, 2003, p.54), in other words, people are better understood within their social frame. Thus, the interpretive thinker identifies and grasps instinctive actualities by merely proposing interpretive rationale significant to the research framework (Blumberg et al., 2005). As claimed by Weber (2004), the practical principle of interpretivism suggests that the

investigator and reality are inseparable and comprehending the social surroundings is deliberately recognised using a person's existing encounter with the social world. Researchers who adopt this paradigm in consumer research do not externalise individuals and their actions, as an alternative, these researchers try to ascertain approaches linked to achieving knowledge and understanding of the research framework within which these actions take place (Jankowicz, 2005; Gbadamosi, 2012). Interpretivism advocates that research is driven by anthropological interests. It further suggests that techniques adopted for the investigation of human actions should be less measured and controlled as suggested by the positivist's researcher (Blumberg et al., 2005). Additionally, interpretive paradigm proposes that when conducting consumer research, the researcher has a part to play in what is investigated and sometimes participate in the investigation (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Participating in this research helps them obtain significant understanding into human actions and justification, this process is what Hughes and Sharrock (1997) call 'an imaginative reform or empathy. However, Gill and Johnson (2002) argue that both research philosophies are useful mediums that will aid in the conclusion of understanding and knowledge. Understanding is identified as an on-going, unending and continuous process (Hudson and Ozanne, 1998, p. 511), which connects to 'Verstehen', a term used to indicate an 'extended form of understanding' (Hudson and Ozanne, 1998, p. 511). Understanding is the main essence of any study either through investigation or exploration (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Within consumer research, it is important to note that studies conducted aim to get results linked to understanding.

4.2.2 The Chosen Research Paradigm and Theoretical Rationale

This research adopts the interpretivism philosophy aimed at understanding the subjective meanings of Black African women in London and how they make sense of their luxury fashion consumption behaviour (Klein and Myers, 1999). The original notion of interpretivism is to work with these subjective meanings already existing in the social world. This view suggests that there is an acknowledgement of the existence of meanings, the interpretive researcher reconstructs these meanings for proper understanding without distorting them and finally uses these meanings as building blocks in theorising (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). The purpose of all interpretive investigation is to comprehend how members of a social group, through their involvement in social practices, enact their particular realities and provide them with meaning, and to show how these meanings, beliefs and intentions of the members help to establish their actions (p. 13). Black African women are members of the Black African ethnic minority group

in London; this means they belong to a social group. Within their social group, they engage in social practices such as consumption. Because this group of women involve themselves with practices, investigating how they interpret these practices within their natural space is significant. Additionally, probing into the meanings, they create from these behaviours will be appropriate using interpretive paradigm. Furthermore, examining how these actions help them create an identity. This research focuses on understanding these group of consumers from their standpoint as well as observing and understanding events within their natural location. This study links to the core idea of interpretive paradigm: recognising, recreating and grasping meanings which already exist in the Black African woman's world without misrepresentation but use this knowledge as building blocks in theorising (Silverman, 1970, p. 127; Goldkuhl, 2012). This statement was essential in the Verstehen sociology of Weber (1978): the assumption of subjective interpretation. Schutz (1970) advanced the Verstehen sociology with inspiration from phenomenology. He appealed that scientific knowledge concerning social life was of second-order character. It must be based on the meanings and knowledge of the investigated people. The hypotheses involved on a practical experience of the intersubjective world of daily life are the first level hypotheses upon which the second level constructs of the social sciences have to be erected' (Schutz, 1970, p. 274). Interpretivism's central principle is that investigation can under no circumstances be accurately experienced externally rather it must be experienced from inside through the direct experience of the people. Thus, Cohen et al. (2007, p. 19) the part an interpretive researcher plays is to, 'comprehend, describe, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants' which is the central aim of this research.

4.2.3 Epistemology, Ontology and Methodology

Epistemology, ontology and methodology are entwined (Goldkuhl, 2012). These three concepts work together because knowledge is essential in the ontological rules of the structure of the world (Goldkuhl, 2012).

Epistemology signifies the philosophy of knowledge and how we come to know (Grix, 2004), ontology is the philosophy of reality and methodology involves how we obtain this knowledge through practices about this reality (Goldkuhl, 2012).

Grix, (2004, p. 57) advises that researchers who intend to carry out an investigation need to recognise the philosophical underpinnings that inform their choice of research questions, objectives, aims and methods. As a result, how one understands the ideas of reality and social awareness impacts the method they will adapt to discover the knowledge surrounding this reality. Although, Crotty (1998) claims that people can decide what point to start at, epistemological, ontological or methodology. This study identifies that the philosophical underpinnings of this research link to the gap in literature around women's luxury fashion consumption and consumer identity theory. This gap is identified through the lack of research on the motivation behind the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London and how these behaviours can be linked to their identity. Grix (2004, p. 69) adds that research is best done by setting out plainly the connection between three variables. The first variable is what an investigator considers as possible (her ontological position). The second is what we can know about it (her epistemological position), and the third is what approach should be used to acquire it (her methodological approach)'. The ontological stance impacts on what one decides to investigate. Likewise a researcher's ontological inference tells his/her epistemological inferences which can influence the methodology adopted for the study. Thus, while epistemology and ontology are significant to any research, the third variable which is the methodology is also significant.

A methodology is an overall approach to investigation. Silverman (1993, p. 2) states that methodology is a technique an investigator chooses to follow to address any study. Alluding to this same idea, Collis and Hussey (2009) add that it includes everything about the research process: from the subject of enquiry to the analytical procedure. It is a strategy adopted to obtain knowledge about a specific area (O'Shaughnessy, 1992, p. 268). The methodology makes the whole process complete due to its significance; it gives the complete research a detailed structure and a focus. Without a method of enquiry, research may be termed incomplete. Collis and Hussey (2009) suggest that regardless of what form a research follows, or what a study aims to achieve, a method of enquiry should be used. Similarly, Fox (1958, p.108) justifies this claim; He recommends that if research is merely the search for knowledge, adopting a tool for investigation is vital. It should also empower individuals within the contexts. O' Leary (2004, p. 8) argues that the concept of research is multidimensional in current times due to the increase of numerous research methodologies involved mostly in social science and as such, he suggests that rather than narrow the concept down into one definition, the definition should

be subjective. In O'Leary's argument, research and its processes should be idiosyncratic this means that it should only be dependent on what the researcher decides. Similarly, Mertens (2005, p.2) proposes that the true essence of the description of research is subjective and can be influenced by the investigator's theoretical structure with models applied to create a connection between concepts that designates and clarify an event by trying to link it with comparable events. Regardless of the arguments posed by O'Leary (2004), Spiggle (1994) categorises every research into two techniques: qualitative and quantitative, justifying that these two methods can either be used independently or combined to get the third method which is called the mixed method approach (Greene et al., 1989).

4.3 Qualitative vs Quantitative research

Qualitative research roots in the speculative assumptions of the interpretative paradigm, which is founded on the belief that social realism is formed and maintained via an individual's view and experience of the world (Morgan, 1980). This experience is rooted in communication. Morgan's (1980) study explains that qualitative investigators are those that concern themselves with making efforts to describe, understand and interpret the connotations of events taking place in their natural space (Morgan, 1980; Fryer, 1991). Investigators who function within the structure of the interpretive paradigm focus on examining the difficulty, reality, contextualization, shared subjectivity of the investigator and the investigated (Fryer, 1991). They aim to minimise all forms of wrong assumptions within the context as well as carry out the research within the participant's natural space (Denzin, 1971; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Fryer, 1991). The topics under investigation focus on everyday activity as described, achieved, smoothed, and made ambiguous by persons going about their day to day routines (Van Maanen, 1983, p. 255).

A qualitative approach is less driven by particular hypotheses and categorical frameworks and more concerned with emergent themes and idiographic descriptions (Cassell and Symon, 1994). Extending the essential views of the interpretative paradigm, Ting-Toomey (1984) names three features of qualitative investigation. Firstly, qualitative research is the study of symbolic discourse that involves the analysis of texts and conversations. Secondly, it involves the investigation of interpretive philosophies that people use to make sense of their symbolic activities. Thirdly, qualitative research is the study of contextual philosophies, such as the characters of the participants, the physical environment, and a set of situational experiences that guide the understanding of discourse (Ting-Toomey, 1984). These features describe and

give a robust explanation and significance of qualitative methods. It gives a more precise way of understanding the concept of the qualitative approach. Van Maanen (1983) add that it is an approach grouped by its purpose linked to grasping certain facets of social life, and its design focused on creating words, rather than numbers as data for analysis. Barnham (2015) conceptualises qualitative approach as a system of evaluating people grounded in psychology. Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p. 29) emphasise that qualitative method is a creative and informative method of study with no reference to measurements, only the use of words, narratives, texts and quotes (Shield and Twycross, 2003, p. 24). Factors which can give a clear description of the qualitative methodology include interpretation, simplification, in-depth, hypothesis drive and naturalistic (Gelo et al., 2008, p. 267). It is an all-inclusive word that applies to a variety of research methods that have their heritage in a variety of disciplines comprising anthropology, sociology, philosophy, social psychology and linguistics (Van Maanen, 1983). Even though significant range exists in the type of studies that designates as 'qualitative', it is feasible to outline an established features. One feature is that the objectives are focused on generating an in-depth and deduced understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, viewpoints and pasts (Snape and Spencer (2003).

Another feature by Griffin (1985) simplifies it as a research process or technique that focuses on the procedure of social processes in detail, how people make sense and create meanings of their world, and how they experience happenings from their viewpoint. Other features of qualitative research methods include small size sampling which is particularly chosen by significant measures (Crotty, 1998). Data collected usually involves a one on one interaction (interviews), group interactions (focus groups) and observation. These data collected are interactive and developmental which allows the exploration of evolving issues (Shields and Twycross, 2003). It also entails detailed classification of data which focuses on the interpretation of social meaning via mapping and re-presentation of the social world of participants (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p. 5). A qualitative research requires a naturalistic approach aimed at understanding phenomena in context-specific settings, such as real-world setting [where] the investigator does not attempt to manipulate occurrences within the context (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Extensively defined as a type of investigation that produces findings not arrived at using statistical procedures or other means of quantification' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17) instead explores findings resulting from real-world settings where occurrences

develop naturally (Patton, 2002, p. 39). The qualitative research method is a clear contrast to the quantitative research aimed at a causal determination, calculation, and generalisation of findings. Qualitative researchers seek clarification, understanding, and extrapolation to comparable situations (Hoepfl, 1997, p 49) instead. They recommend that one should not assume that techniques used in quantitative research are the only way of establishing the validity of findings from qualitative or field research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), which means that some practices which originate from quantitative studies may be inappropriate to qualitative research. It includes the assumptions that social science research can only be valid if based on operational definitions of variables, experimental data, official statistics or the random sampling of populations and that quantified data are the only valid or generalizable social facts (Bailey, 2014).

Investigators who adopt techniques within this method are guided by specific notions, viewpoints and hunches regarding the subject of investigation (Bailey, 2014, p. 169); one of which is inductive reasoning (Carr, 1994). This form of reasoning can be obtained only via these techniques; interviews, focus groups, observations (Carr, 1994, p. 716). Techniques involved in the qualitative method such as interviews are not limited to detailed questions and are directed/redirected by the investigator in real time. As new data/information emerges, the research framework can be quickly reviewed (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). The facts created on human experience that is acquired is dominant and sometimes more persuasive than quantitative data. Qualitative research reveals the elusiveness and difficulties about the research subjects that often misses by more positivistic investigations (Morgan, 1980). This method is also useful for defining difficult phenomena in detail as well as those that are positioned and rooted in local contexts (Griffin, 1985). The qualitative researcher practically recognises related factors as they link to the phenomenon of interest. Matveev (2002) adds that the researcher can study vigorous practices (i.e., keeping a record of historical patterns and change).

The in-depth nature of the research on Black African women's consumption of luxury fashion brands provides a clear understanding and description of women's personal experiences of phenomena (i.e., the emic or insider's viewpoint) (Fryer, 1991). It also provides detailed information about their consumption behaviours, characteristics, emotion, preferences and cultural values. It includes facts about Black African female consumer's needs, desires and

routines that are vital (Patton, 1980). Thus, a qualitative approach is beneficial in consumer research as it entails flexibility which means that research can efficiently respond to emerging ideas and concepts during the research. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus a qualitative researcher is described as one who can use different techniques to create a cautious but explanatory model about a phenomenon inductively. Hence, qualitative investigation usually employs naturalistic observation such as ethnography or structured interviews (Sarah, 2010). In such case, a qualitative researcher must be observant and take note of actions, words, opinions and all types of behaviours during the research. Although qualitative research method can study social processes in a detailed form, the collection and analysis of data can be time-consuming and thus costly (Griffin, 1985). This method of findings requires skills and expertise and to a considerable extent a right amount of experience. Writers argue that the researcher can sometimes influence findings due to personal preferences and peculiarities (Cassell and Symon, 1994). Facts gathered through this type of research might not be linked to other subjects, people or other settings (i.e., the outcomes of this research might be unique to the relatively few people included in the research study) (Smith, 1988). Smith also notes that it is hard to make quantitative estimations and even more complicated to test assumptions and theories with large participant pools. Findings from a qualitative study is descriptive and thus tricky to convert these descriptions to figures

The qualitative method involves a wide range of data collection techniques alongside epistemological assumptions, of which thoroughness is more problematic to sustain, evaluate, and validate. Additionally, Morgan and Smircich (1980) explain that it can also be difficult to understand. The appearance of the researcher during data gathering, which is often unavoidable in qualitative research, can affect the subjects' responses. Problems of anonymity and confidentiality can form primary concerns when presenting findings. Findings can be more difficult and time-consuming to characterise visually. Qualitative research has an in-depth nature, and this can be a weak point of this approach, due to its in-depth nature, sample sizes are usually small, and there can be 'suspicion that the researcher would have influenced the findings'. On the other hand, the quantitative approach developed around 1250 A.D (Williams, 2007). It was motivated by investigators who needed to quantify data (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). Since then quantitative research methodology is considered a suitable method used for creating meaning and new facts (Creswell, 2003). The quantitative approach involves a numeric or statistical approach to research design. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) assume that

quantitative approach is detailed in its surveying and experimentation, as it builds upon existing theories. The tools of a quantitative method sustain the postulation of an empiricist paradigm (Creswell, 2003). The analysis itself is detached from the researcher. As a result, data is used to measure reality accurately. Quantitative research creates meaning through objectivity uncovered in the collected data.

The quantitative method of research, as different from the qualitative methodology, focuses on 'numbers, proportions and statistics and it is invaluable for measuring people's attitudes, their emotional and behavioural state as well as their ways of thinking' (Shields and Twycross, 2003, p. 24). This method centres on testing, estimations and hypothesis testing (Gelo et al., 2008, p. 267). Einstein (2007, p. 2) holds that the main aim of a quantitative methodology is to quantify by experimentation (Leach, 1990) and positivism (Duffy, 1985). It is considered a systematic method in which numerical data are used to quantify or measure phenomena and produce findings (Carr, 1994, p. 716). This research method is more 'scientific' approach to doing social science research (Tewksbury, 2009, p. 39). The focus is on using precise descriptions and carefully operationalising what particular concepts and variables mean. Worrall (2000, p. 354) states that the main purpose that quantitative research enjoys a high range of respect in the discipline lies in the predictive advantages this method of inquiry possesses. However, Tewksbury (2009) argues that predictions are more qualitative than quantitative. He also explains that a prediction is an act based on theoretical grounds, and testing of theoretical concepts, propositions and relationships that are a product of qualitative research (Tewksbury, 2009).

Predictions in social science are 'marginal or tenuous'. It also requires the uniformity of data collection to enable numerical evaluation (Leach, 1990). The functional or positivist paradigm that controls the quantitative method of analysis is built on the 'hypothesis that social reality has an objective ontological structure and that individuals are responding agents to this objective environment' (Morgan and Smircich, 1980, p. 493). Quantitative research consists of calculating and quantifying of happenings and executing the numerical inquiry of a body of arithmetical data (Smith, 1988). The positivist paradigm postulates that there is a detached truth present in the world that can be measured and clarified systematically. The central concerns of the quantitative research method are that measurement is consistent, usable, and can be generalised in its flawless forecast of cause and effect (Cassell and Symon, 1994).

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) explain that due to its empirical nature, quantitative research method builds upon framing the inquiry hypotheses and validating them empirically on a precise set of data. Additionally, Ting-Toomey (1984) adds that systematic assumptions are value-free; the investigator's personal beliefs, preferences, and biases have no room in the quantitative approach. Investigators can see the communication procedure as real and concrete and can evaluate it without personal contact with real people involved in communication, considering that there are detached from the research (Duffy, 1986, p. 356). The arguments around these methods (qualitative versus quantitative) are on-going especially in marketing research, and these methods are open to criticisms (Silverman, 2001, p. 40) and as a result, 'these arguments are not settled by facts' (Kover, 2008, p. 663).

One main criticism about the quantitative research methods is that the framework of the study or experiment is ignored (Carr 1994) and this may be one core weakness. It does not also investigate things in its natural space or talk over meanings people make as qualitative research does (Cooper and Schindler, 2001). Although the sample size is considered significant, it does not suggest that the result is more reliable than that from a qualitative research (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). The study fails to provide the investigator with facts on the framework of the real situation where the investigated phenomenon occurs (Leach, 1990). It is unable to control the natural space where the respondents provide the answers to the questions in the survey. Additionally, quantitative research does not buoy up the developing and continuous inquiry of a research phenomenon (Tewksbury, 2009). In a quantitative research method, the investigator may miss out on phenomena transpiring due to an intense focus on speculation or hypothesis testing rather than on theory or hypothesis formation (called the confirmation bias) (Williams, 2007). Kover (2008) states that the 'data produced might be too abstract and general for direct application to specific local situations, contexts, and individuals'.

The limitations around the quantitative research give a clear insight into the rationale for adopting a qualitative method in this research, and the limitations of the qualitative method are the rationale for the triangulation of qualitative method in this study. Considering that the main essence of this study is to understand the motive for consumer behaviour and how Black African women in London tell stories of their experiences, a qualitative triangulation method of enquiry is most suitable for this research, which is discussed further in this chapter.

4.3.1 Mixed Method Approach

While quantitative and qualitative research methodologies each has its strengths and weaknesses, they can be tremendously useful in combination with one another (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004 (p.14) every technique linked to both qualitative and quantitative methods has some limitations in some respects such as difficulties of replication and problems of generalisation and is more suitable for one part of a question or proposition than another. They also explained that mixed methods approaches are best to cover these limitations in the way that they enable capturing the multiple perspectives, positions and standpoints to a research question or problem through combining research tools from both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The mixed methods approach emerged in the mid-to-late 1990s (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). With this approach to research, investigators combine the quantitative and qualitative research methods or analysing data in a particular research study (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As a combination of two methods, investigators gather and examine not only numerical data but also narrative data (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For instance, in adopting a mixed method approach, an investigator can gather a combination of data by distributing a survey that contains closed-ended questions to collect the numerical data and conduct an observation using open-ended questions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

This method is considered an add-on of rather than a replacement for both quantitative and qualitative approaches as the latter two research approaches will continue to be useful and vital (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 15). The main essence for an investigator adopting a mixed method approach is to draw from the positive quality of one and minimise the weaknesses of the other. While qualitative research method can be used to detect the issues that affect the investigative space, then this fact can be used to develop quantitative research that evaluates how these issues would affect user preferences (Schwandt, 1989). Though some social science researchers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2000) believe that these two methodological approaches are incompatible, others conclude that an experienced researcher can efficiently mix these methods (Reichardt and Cook, 1979; Patton, 1990). The controversy regularly becomes cluttered because one view contends from the fundamental philosophical nature of each paradigm, and the other view emphasises on the possible compatibility of the

research approaches, delight in the rewards of both numerical and words representation (Johnson et al., 2007). Since the positivist and the interpretive paradigms rest on diverse traditions about the nature of the world, they involve different tools and measures to find the type of information anticipated. However, individuals incline to the method that is in agreement with their socialised worldview (Collins, 2010).

Mixed method occurs when an investigator makes assumptions grounded in realistic terms such as ‘consequence-oriented, and pluralistic’ (Creswell, 2003) and uses research tools from both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer a research question (Collins, 2010). Johnson et al. (2007) categorise the inner drives of using mixed methods approach as follows; providing an in-depth understanding of the investigated subject through the use of methods from the different methodological traditions of qualitative and quantitative research and validating and explicating findings from another approach and producing more comprehensive and valid findings.

In every research, Collins (2010) claims that a method of findings best suitable for the research must be adopted, and this study seeks to adopt the qualitative triangulation method, and the tools include Ethnographic study via overt participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group.

4.3.2 Triangulation in Social Science Research

Social science research is a scientific process aimed at discovering new or old realities, the analysis of categorising, correlation, causal explanations and natural laws founded on the use of a single research method (Young, 1968). It suffers from criticisms connected to the limitations of a single method, the use of various techniques offer the prospect of enhanced confidence (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012). The literature on social science research methods supports the use of several techniques (Denzin, 1978; Denzin, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Caracelli, 1997; Jashmin, 2007; Ashatu, 2009). The argument is that the inadequacies of one technique are adequately managed by adopting several approaches and as a result take advantage of their distinct strengths (Brannen, 1992). The combination of two or more research techniques is known as ‘triangulation’ (Denzin, 1970). Within social science research, triangulation indicates a practice a researcher uses to confirm a finding by revealing that independent models of it agree with or, at least, do not challenge it (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012, p. 115). Social scientists suggest that validation, justification and credibility in the social

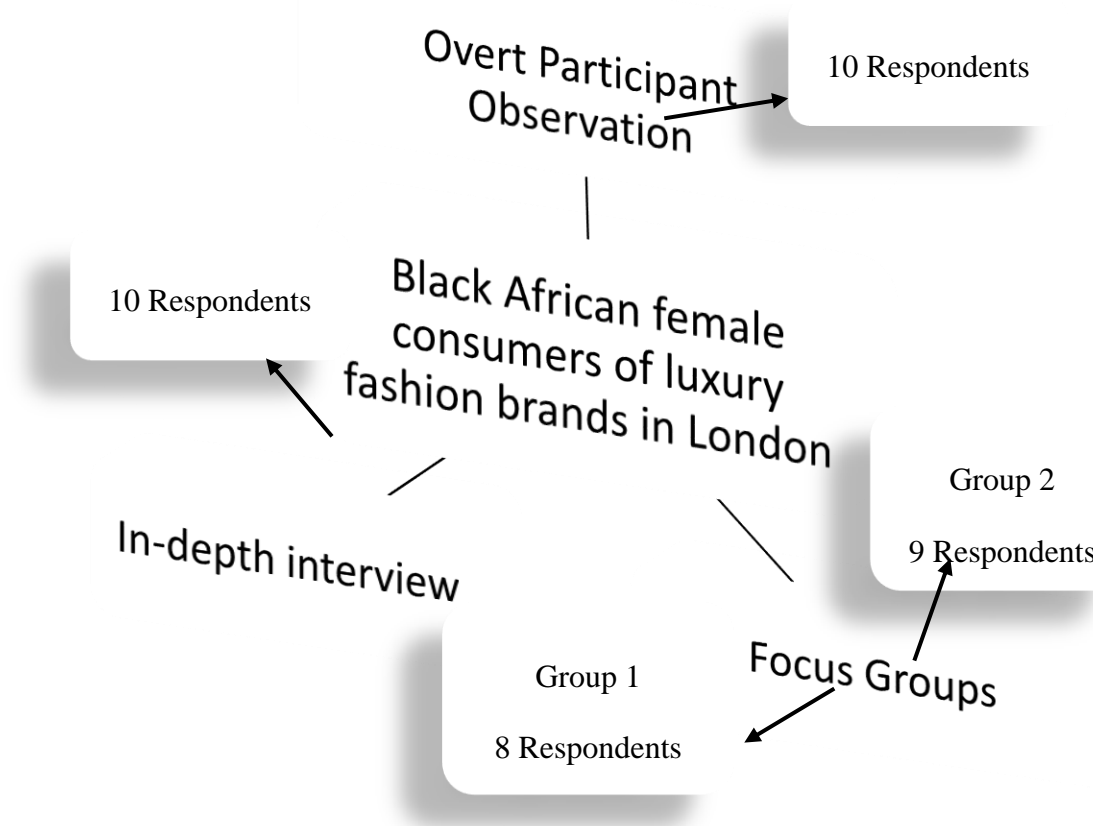
science research become possible by the gathering of corroborating findings from respondents on the same topic, but using diverse approaches (Denzin, 1978; Denzin, 1989; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Social science researchers argue that social certainties are fundamentally multifaceted to be understood in its totality with one approach of exploration (Denzin, 1978; Denzin, 1989; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). They consider it complex which suggests that it is difficult to completely grasp reality by a single way of data collection or technique. Thus, propose the use of triangulation as a way to make the research fully developed, robust and well analysed with a reasonable level of validity and credibility (Norman, 2000). Additionally, research tools have advantages and disadvantages. That is to say; each technique comprises strength and weakness, no single research technique that can prove all the required ideals or meet up with all research biases (Bryman, 2004). Hence, it is useful to triangulate to make up for the weaknesses of each method to have an all-inclusive interpretation of social realism (Denzin, 1978; Denzin, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Denzin (1970) highlights four main types of 'triangulation': data 'triangulation', investigator triangulation, methodological and theoretical triangulation. Data triangulation involves the use of diverse sources of information to form one body of data (Denzin, 1970; Bryman, 2004; Jahmin, 2007; Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012). The second type of triangulation is investigator triangulation also called researcher triangulation. It comprises the use of many observers instead of a single observer in the form of gathering and interpreting data (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012). In a study that depends comprehensively on the researcher's explanations to generate data, one possible way to control trustworthiness and validity is to use many researchers (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). If all researchers using the same research method attain the same findings, this help to confirm data reliability (Harvey and Macdonald, 1993). Theoretical triangulation: this method of triangulation is also known as methodological pluralism or mixed method approach (Ashatu, 2009; Norman, 2000). It involves the use of different research paradigms and methodologies, such as interpretivism and positivism and methods (quantitative and qualitative) to advance a study's reliability and validity (Denzin, 1989). According to Harvey and Macdonald (1993), it is the adoption of more than one academic positions in interpreting data. Finally, the methodological triangulation involves using more than one research method or data collection technique (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012, p. 115). It is the most commonly used form of triangulation, and it can denote the most

ordinary meaning of the term (Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012; Harvey and Macdonald, 1993). This study adopts methodological triangulation. The use of three qualitative techniques: in-depth interviews focus groups and observation. Each technique complements the other and is used to obtained in-depth knowledge into Black African women in London, luxury fashion consumption and identity creation.

4.4 Choice and Rationale for Research Approach

Figure 4.2- Methodological Triangulation Adopted



Having discussed the theoretical underpinning in previous sections, figure 4.2 demonstrates the adopted methods in this research. This section discusses the research method, techniques, rationale, procedure and limitations. Methodological triangulation in this research is aimed merely at expanding and broadening one's understanding of the motive for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London as well as giving an insightful view of how this behaviour impacts on their identity. Triangulation is also used in this research to increase the validity of research findings, the credibility of scientific data by enhancing both

internal consistency and generalizability through combining three qualitative methods: ethnography via overt participant observation, interviews and focus groups.

4.4.1 Ethnographic study via Overt Participant Observation

Ethnographic study emerges from anthropology (Naidoo, 2012), it has been in existence for more than a hundred years (Silverman, 2011). According to Gabo (2011, p. 15), it advanced internally to ethnology, a discipline which in the first half of the century split from traditional anthropology, which at that time was dominated by physical and biological assumptions. Gabo (2011) adds that this concept emerged in the Western world as an exact method of knowledge about faraway cultures (the non-Western ones). Brewer (2000, p.312) terms it ‘a style of research rather than a single method and uses a variety of techniques. This method is usually used as a qualitative study which focuses on the investigation of the beliefs, behaviours and social interactions of small societies (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 337). It involves participation and observation for a period (Berry, 1991; Reeves et al., 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It is difficult to define the term ethnography because there are many viewpoints as well as several definitions. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) state that defining the term has been controversial. For some researchers, it denotes a philosophical paradigm to which one makes an over-all commitment (Junker, 1960; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). To others, it describes a method that one uses as and when appropriate (Brewer, 2001; Fine, 2003; Atkinson, 2005; Reeves et al., 2008). Despite these two diverse views, the ethnographic study refers to forms of social research having a substantial number of the following features (Gabo, 2011). These features give a clearer understanding of the concept.

The first feature is that test cannot verify an ethnographic study; it gives a detailed explanation of other cultures (Barbour, 2007). It is an exploration of a particular phenomenon, rather than the testing of hypothesis’ (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, p. 248). The data gathered in this type of study consist of free and unstructured accounts and the analysis provides interpretation of meaning by the researcher, using observation, description and explanation (Reeves et al., 2008). Gabo (2011, p. 16) adds that three terms unify with ethnography: participant’s observation, fieldwork and case study, however, he emphasises that these three terms should be used independently. Likewise, Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) note that they are four other features observable in ethnographic research. First, it includes a robust importance on analysing the nature of particular social phenomena rather than setting out to test a hypothesis

about them. Secondly, an inclination to work mainly with unstructured facts that have not been listed at the point of data gathering regarding a closed set of analytic categories. Thirdly, an investigation of the small number of cases, perhaps just one case in detail. Fourthly, analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the products of which mainly takes the form of verbal description and explanation with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most. Mannay and Morgan (2015, p. 169) indicate that 'social science research is either qualitative or quantitative in its methods'. Adding that while qualitative research consists of the interpretation of meanings, metaphors and symbols of the social world alongside aiding the researcher to see members of a group create the meaning of a situation (p. 170).

Qualitative ethnography is usually ideal when it involves a small number of respondents, which will help in the understanding of respondent's behaviour in a particular context (Brewer, 2000). This form of research is text-based best for clarifying the procedures for generating rich accounts of people's experiences. Ethnographic research gathers qualitative methods focused on the close observation of social practices and interactions (Asher and Miller, 2007). In a more precise sense, ethnography is a method of findings that highlight the significance reviewing at first-hand what people do and say in particular contexts (Hammersley, 2005). The ethnographic method has different procedures –natural, interpretive, critical and classical (Atkinson et al., 2001; Koro-Ljungberg and Greckhamer, 2005). However, there is a common ground. This common ground is an agreement which explains that ethnographic study involves 'small-scale to engender in-depth study and the analysis of data involves the interpretation of meanings and their relation to local and global context' (Van Maanen, 2009, p. 16). Although there is a growing consensus of the craft of an ethnographer, criticisms also abound. There are two existing critiques of the ethnographic research within the social sciences (Brewer, 2000, p. 25), stemming from practically different foundations which are the natural and the post-modern critiques.

The natural science critique originates from supporters of the natural science model of social research and blames ethnographic researchers of falling short of the standards of science. 'The postmodern critique originates basically from inside the humanistic model of social research, as ethnographers themselves arise to reflect critically on their practice under the impulse, of postmodernist theories' (p. 25). 'This critique reviews ethnography to its constituent processes and accuses ethnography of melting into the air and dissolving into nothingness' (Van Maanen,

1988). This method also gives access to people's social meanings and activities (Naidoo, 2012), which involves close familiarity with the social setting (Brewer, 2000). It does not certainly mean real participation in the scenery, so ethnography's repertoire of techniques includes and builds in the triangulation of method because it involves the use of several methods such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, discourse analysis, vignettes (Barter and Renold, 1999) and personal documents. It also involves the use of visual methods, like video, photography and film (Pink, 2009) and the Internet where necessary.

The use of some or all of these tools is dependent on the researcher; whether or not it is significant to the study (Barter and Renold, 1999). All these methods used in an ethnographic study can be adopted in non-ethnographic research (Koro- Ljungberg and Greckhamer, 2005). What differentiates their application in ethnography is that they are adapted to meet the aims that distinguish it as a style of research. In an ethnographic study, the investigator must be immersed in the daily lives of the participants to observe their behaviour then interpret the culture or social group and systems (Creswell, 1998). This research uses ethnographic approach via overt participant observation. All social science research comprises participant observation because one cannot study the world without being part of it (Atkinson and Hammersely, 1983; Adler and Adler, 1998). From this argument, participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being part of people's world. There are two ways of observing the world: covert and overt. Overt observation occurs when the researcher discloses his/her presence to the group as well as the aims of their research (Bulmer 1982). Within this technique, participants give informed consent to take part in the research (Walters and Godbold, 2014). Interactions take place between the researcher and respondents while observation occurs (Bulmer 1982). On the other hand, covert observation occurs when the researcher joins the study as a participant, without adequately informing the other members of the reasons for their presence (Roulet et al., 2017). The researcher conceals 'their true identity and purports to play some other role' (Vinten, 1994, p. 33). Both forms of observations link to ethnography, which represent a uniquely, humanistic, interpretive approach as opposed to scientific and positivist positions (Atkinson and Hammersely, 1994).

This research on Black African women adopts this approach of observation for data collection. The procedures undertaken in this research stems from the problem of the research which is wrapped around the research questions and so the design is peculiar to this research. However, Koro- Ljungberg and Greckhamer, (2005) gives detailed step on how to conduct an

ethnographic study. The first step in the open study is to gain access to a site or the participants. This research recruits ten participants through the snowballing sampling technique. Secondly, the researcher must establish rapport with the participants and build trust. To establish rapport and build trust with respondents, all participants were observed in different places but within their natural space. The reason for this is that they needed to feel safe and comfortable. Considering that it is an observational study, observing in the natural is advised. The risk factor was considered within this research method. Observation with respondents lasted between three days and one week between 9 am and 5 pm. Six observations lasted for three days; one lasted for one week while the other eight lasted for four days. Field notes and photos were taken, discussions were recorded via tape recorder. Every question asked was recorded while every observation was documented. Every day ended with writing up field notes arising from participant observation and informal interviews. Participant observation recruitment was achieved based on respondent's availability (*See Appendix 2*). With participant's observation, the five senses are used by the researcher to designate current situations, providing a 'written photograph' of the condition under study (Erlandson et al., 1993). Additionally, DeMunk and Sobo (1998) define it as the primary technique used by anthropologists doing fieldwork. Where fieldwork comprises 'active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed field notes, and perhaps most importantly, persistence' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002, p. vii). They term it as a practice that allows researchers to study the actions and events of the individuals under study in the natural scenery through detecting and participating in those actions and events.

It also provides the context for the expansion of sampling guidelines and interview guides (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). Although they are several advantages observing participants in a study, DeMunk and Sobo (1998) point out more than a few drawbacks of using participation as a method. Some of the drawbacks include the researcher not finding interest in staying immersed in the study, how different researchers gain a diverse understanding of what they observe, based on the key informant(s) used in the study. Difficulties linked to misrepresentation of events. To reduce this possible bias problem, Bernard (1994) proposes that participants should be culturally competent in the topic being investigated. Furthermore, Schensul et al. (1999) note that every method has its drawbacks. What is essential to the ethnographic study is that the process of learning involves the disclosure to or engagement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting, giving the

researcher the opportunity of asking questions for clarity where needed (p.91). Kawulich (2005) calls these questions unplanned, spontaneous and informal interview. The unplanned interview occurs when the researcher observes an event or action that is unclear and needs clarification from the observed (Atkinson and Hammersely, 2000). It is always significant within the participatory strategy. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) state that it gives the researcher a deeper understanding of actions and events occurring within the respondent's natural space. These questions are usually unplanned as it occurs very spontaneously, even though this interview helps in clarification, it quite differs from the structured and semi-structured interview method.

4.4.2 In-depth Interview

There are various techniques for collecting qualitative data; this ranges from in-depth interviews with respondents, observation of interactions, people and places, analysis of media (social, written, spoken, drawn), to guided conversations with groups of individuals (focus groups). Each of these forms differs in the source (s) of information and is also significant data collection tools. At the core, qualitative study as this which focuses on meanings, traits and defining characteristics of events, people, interactions, culture and experiences (Carter and Thomas, 1997) adopt techniques that align to this feature. An in-depth interview is an essential technique. It comprises of spoken communication between the researcher and the subject (Carter and Thomas, 1997). They are frequently used in survey designs and exploratory and descriptive studies. Also considered to be an interaction that aims at investigating a subject area, this subject area could be a behaviour, an event or/and a lifestyle (King, 1994). It can take the form of a conversation. Miller (1965) states that there is no insignificant conversation, as long as the researcher knows what to listen for and questions are the breath of life for a discussion. According to Boyce and Neale (2006, p. 3) when interviews take an in-depth form, they can be used to grasp thorough facts about an individual's thoughts and behaviours'. This method of investigation intensifies the capacity to understand an individual's view on a more private basis. 'Every word people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness' (Vygotsky 1987, p. 236 cited in Seidman 2006, p. 7). Thus, qualitative interview seeks to cover both factual and meaning level (Kvale, 1996). Zhang and Wildermuth (N.D, p.1) hold that 'interview is a tool widely adopted to access people's experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes and feelings of reality'.

Within this research, the concept of interviewing means moving away from our daily understanding and knowledge of its features to the use of it as a qualitative scientific method of enquiry and an investigating tool in social science (Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 2). Miles and Huberman (1994) considers it as the most widely used technique adopted in qualitative research, an essential resource for social science. As a critical resource, it has been the foundation for several significant studies across the range of disciplines. However, understanding how to adapt this method to a research and what it means to carry out interviews have moved towards philosophical approaches that aim to understand the social world and how it works (Edwards and Holland, 2013). These plans link to the range of methods to interviewing, from entirely unstructured in which the subject is allowed to talk freely about whatever they wish, to an incredibly structure in which the subject reactions are restricted to answering direct questions (Arvey and Champion, 1982). Nuunkoosing (2005) adds that interviews have different approaches: structured, semi-structured and unstructured which can take various forms. Forms such as face-to-face and or through electronic medium – (email, telephone and Skype. This argument ties the drawbacks of interviews to the different approach. While explaining the various strategies, Bryman (2008) notes that the structured interview method is such that allows the interviewer to prompt interviewee by providing a set of example responses. It gives precise guided questions, and it is usually swift and easy to conduct, considering that the researcher has guidelines on what to ask and look out for a while doing the interview.

Arvey and Campion (1982) add that the data connected directly to the subject of inquiry is quite easy to obtain. However, Cassell (2005) highlights two main limitations of this approach: the researcher may generate bias by the communication style used to deliver questions or possible responses and secondly, there is usually small chance for interviewees to go beyond the set questions unless prompted by the investigator. However, Alsaawi (2014) mentions that quite distinct from the structured interview; the unstructured in-depth interview is essential when the purpose of the research is to ‘gain an understanding of a phenomenon within a particular cultural context. Arvey and Campion (1982) contend with this view, clarifying that the main essence of interview regardless of the approach is to gain an insight into any phenomenon. All interview methods are significant because it is aimed at looking deeply into the researcher’s context and should be used appropriately. Therefore, researchers should decide what approach is suitable in the study.

Building on the significance of interview method to this research, the semi-structured approach is used. Bernard (1988) posits that semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing to allow the researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. It is common for social science researchers to conduct this type of interview (Alsaawi, 2014). This form is a combination of the two types stated above, where the questions are pre-planned before the interview but the interviewer gives the interviewee the chance to elaborate and clarify specific issues through the use of open-ended questions. It is proper to adopt this approach when the researcher has an overview of the topic with that it gives the researcher opportune to ask questions and dictate when an exciting area emerges. Additionally, this research method is most useful when the researcher is ‘working within an interpretive research paradigm in which one will assume that reality is socially constructed by the participants in the setting of interest’ (Zhang and Wildermuth, N.D, p. 1). Considering that this study focuses on investigating consumption behaviour within a particular cultural context, this method is most suitable. However, as far as there are advantages, there are also challenges and limitations to this adopted way.

Considering the nature of the method, a significant amount of time is required for data collection (Patton, 2002) and it becomes a huge issue when the interviewer is relatively new in the field of study. It also takes a bit of time to gain trust from the respondents. As each respondent is individualised, the interviewee must have a precise knowledge of how to relate. Another challenge is knowing the right length and pace the conversation should follow; because if the conversation changes, the interviewer should be able to handle and stay focused rather than explore emerging topics (Whyte, 1960). Another challenge is analysing the data from an unstructured interview, data that is seen as robust, that requires adequate time for transcription (Zhang and Wildermuth, N.D). Although there are numerous challenges involved in the use of in-depth interviews, this study builds upon the strengths of this method as most suitable for this study.

Interviews were conducted among forty-seven participants. An in-depth semi-structured interview with participants was used. It took the form of face to face, telephone and Skype, all subject to participant’s availability and preferences. Twenty participants were interviewed face to face; twenty-six were conducted via phone while the other one was done via Skype call.

Forty interviews lasted between fifty to sixty minutes and seven lasted between thirty to forty minutes. A theme sheet was used as a guide, respondents were prompted about the research focus, and ethical issues were discussed. Respondents were given a consent form to meet the ethical guidelines. All proceedings were recorded with a tape recorder. The theme sheet used was focused on investigating how Black African women create identity through the consumption of luxury fashion brands and the motive for the consumption of luxury fashion in London (*See Appendix 1*).

4.4.3 Focus Groups

Merton and Kendall (1946) note that focus groups originate from sociology discipline used primarily by market researchers in recent times to investigate consumer behaviour (Templeton 1987). Smithson (2000) adds that it is adopted as a research tool in social science and has become rooted in the discipline. The main characteristics of a focus group are that it can take any form of interviews; it can be structured, unstructured and semi-structured. This method is a type of interview method, but in this case, it is done within a group of people usually six to twelve interviewees (Alsaawi, 2014). It can produce high-quality data which is productive for the interviewer (Dornyei, 2007). Interviewees can share ideas, argue, challenge, debate each other, and this research usually leads to the emergence of in-depth and rich data (Alsaawi, 2014, p. 151). Carey (1994, p. 226) states that the focus group method is one of the best qualitative approaches for explorative topics that aim at understanding behaviours. However, Dornyei, (2007) suggests that this method is difficult to transcribe, specifically when overlapping occurs. Compared to interviews, some questions are fewer, and confidentiality becomes a complicated issue (Robson, 2011).

Nunkoosing (2005) claims that all categories of interviewing; structured, semi-structured, unstructured and focus groups are not exact. He is confident that all interviews are highly structured when the interviewer is in control, this argument raises the issue of the interviewer's control of the interview structure which leads to the validity of the outcomes. Campion et al. (1997) agree that once the interview structure decreases the reliability of the study drops. However, a study by Conway et al. (1995) shows that problems with reliability were commonplace in selection interviews. They explain that attaining reliability is challenging because each interview is distinctive in some way. The disparity can be because there are

differences between interviewers regarding the question asked, the data collected and the way that the data is interpreted. Robson (2011) adds that it is not a cautious effort by the researcher to misrepresent the interview data slightly due to the interactive nature of the interview and the various preconceptions and parameters that influence human decision-making.

This research adopts the focus group method because of its in-depth nature and the ability to interact with multiple participants at a time. The Focus Group method was conducted on two groups. The first group consists of eight participants while the second group comprises nine participants. This method aimed to deepen understanding of the research as well as to guide against biases from interviews. It was applied as a validity tool to complement the interview and observation approaches. Respondents were given a consent form to complete as required by the university ethical guidelines. All proceedings were recorded with a tape recorder. The theme sheet used was focused on investigating how Black African women create identity through the consumption of luxury fashion brands (*See Appendix 3*). Furthermore, At this point in the research, data collected were broadly the same and thus sampling more data lead to no new information relating to the research. Hence, the research reaches a point of data/thematic saturation. O'reilly and Parker (2012) define thematic saturation as a point where no information, patterns or themes emerge from the data. Wray et al. (2007, p. 1392) argue that hypothetically and systematically a rigorous qualitative research stresses an extensive period of fieldwork and the use of multiple methods to achieve data saturation such as participant observation and interviewing (Rice and Ezzy, 1999).

4.5 Sampling in Qualitative Research

Sampling is significant in every research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), Bernard (1995) notes that it is not possible to collect data from everyone in a community to get conclusive findings. However, in a situation where the sample size is small, it is possible to collect data from every participant. Sampling is a subset of a population selected for a study (Marshall, 2003) and a sample is a percentage and portion of a populace (Etikan et al., 2016). In qualitative research, Marshall (2003) explains that a subset is selected for any given study out from a whole population and this depends on the research objectives. Bernard (1995) adds that selecting a sample is also determined by the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity). Two types of sampling exist random and non-random sampling (Palys, 2008).

However, qualitative research offers us three of the most common sampling methods: purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). This study uses the purposive and snowballing sampling methods.

Purposive sampling is considered one of the most common sampling strategies within qualitative research (Palys, 2008). This method groups participant according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (Palys and Atchinson, 2008). Purposive sampling shows that the researcher sees sampling as a sequence of planned alternatives (Palys, 2008), this means that the researcher's sample combines to the research objectives. It is almost synonymous with qualitative research, however, because there are many aims of the qualitative research, the list of strategies within the purposive sampling method that is endless (Palys and Atchinson, 2008). Purposive sampling has various types: Homogenous sampling, maximum variation, typical case, critical case, heterogeneous and expert sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). Becker (1998) states that sample sizes are not determined before data collection because this depends on the resources accessible and the study's objectives. Theoretical saturation drives purposive sample sizes. The point when fresh data no longer bring extra insights to the research questions (Stake, 2005). It is for that reason most successful data review, and analysis is done in combination with data collection (Barreiro and Albandoz, 2001).

According to Etikan et al. (2016), data collection is vital in any research, because the data is set out to contribute to a better understanding of a theoretical framework, which makes sampling very significant as it consists of choosing the way of obtaining data and from whom. Sampling should be done with sound judgment, especially since no amount of analysis can make up for improperly collected data (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). Purposive sampling terms judgment sampling and a non-random method that does not need fundamental theories or a set number of participants. The investigator determines what needs to be grasped and sets out to find people who can and are prepared to produce the information by knowledge or experience (Oppong, 2013). To investigate how Black African women in London create identity through luxury fashion brand consumption, the purposive sampling method would be adopted. Within the purposive sampling method, two techniques were applied in this research: homogenous and snowballing. Homogeneous sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique that aims to achieve a consistent sample (Palinka et al., 2015). A sample whose units such as people and cases share very similar traits, a group of people that are similar regarding age, gender,

background and occupation (Kaplan et al., 1987). It is often chosen when the research question is particular to the peculiarities of the particular group of interest, which is consequently examined in detail (Sudman and Freeman, 1988). The sampling population of this research is Black African women living in London at the time of the study, those who mainly consume luxury fashion brands.

A note was posted around the University premises, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and London asking Black African women who consume luxury fashion brands in London to be part of the study. Participants were selected through this means. (See Appendix 10). Additionally, participants were chosen through the snowball sample. Vogt (1999) defines snowball sampling as a procedure for obtaining research participants. One respondent gives the investigator the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on. This technique is often used as a response to overcoming the difficulties connected with sampling concealed populations and difficulties arising in lack of interest in the research objectives (Atkinson and Flint, 2001, p. 33). Spreen (1992) clarifies that it is within a broader set of link-tracing methodologies which tries to take advantage of the social networks of observed respondents to offer a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts (Thomson, 1997). This practice focuses on the notion that a connection occurs between the initial participant and others in the same target population, which allows a chain of recommendations to be made within a circle of associate (Berg, 1988). Atkinson and Flint (2001) apply snowball sampling for two main reasons. Firstly, it is an easy way to reach a purposeful group. If the purpose of research is principally explorative, qualitative and descriptive, then snowball sampling offers practical advantages (Hendricks et al., 1992; Atkinson and Flint, 2001). Secondly, snowball sampling is a more formal methodology for making inferences about a population of individuals who have been challenging to count through the use of descending methods such as household surveys (Snijders, 1992; Faugier and Sergeant, 1997; Atkinson and Flint, 2001)

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Research is often initiated to create information and contribution to any discipline (Khan, 2006). It is usually significant to consider the wellbeing those who engage in it. Therefore, in a discussion on ethical issues in an investigation when dealing directly with human participants,

moral issues are important. This section of the research looks into ethical considerations and steps to reduce harm to all research participants. Ethical concerns in qualitative research are very significant and involve some rules that should be adhered to (Halai, 2006). A careful investigation is a proper and moral effort is concerned with assuring that the affairs of participants are not wrecked as a result of research. Essentially, universities set out laws and guidelines for researching in an ethically suitable way and expect the investigators to gain permission from ethics committees.

This study adheres to all ethical practices including approval from the university research ethics committee. (*See Appendix 11*). Informed and Voluntary Consent: this is significant to every qualitative study including this one. All participants were given a consent form before the research which explains the purpose of the study, time, procedures, and rights of the participants to withdraw from the research and contacts of important persons when issues arise (*See Appendix 9*). Investigators are required to receive informed permission from participants. This policy adheres to a general subject of regard to the participants. This system is to guard against researcher's coercing participants (Kerkale and Pittila, 2006).

Secondly, confidentiality of information shared and anonymity of research participants. Before data collection, participants were informed of how confidential their data will be and reassured of anonymity. Thirdly, no harm to participants, beneficence and reciprocity: the research comprise of no risk factor and as such participants were assured of their safety and no damage was done to any of the participants during the study.

4.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Ratcliff (2011, p. 1) states that there are different methods of data analysis: 'typology, taxonomy, analytic induction, logical/ matrix analysis, domain analysis, content, hermeneutical and discourse analysis. This research uses content analysis as the analytical procedure of this research. According to Schoenbach (2004, p. 452), data analysis is the main essence of any research. Data provide answers, and they present another opportunity for creativity which comprises breaking out of popular forms to look at things differently', (Bono, 2011). The analysis of qualitative research comprises of an aim to uncover and understand the research by adopting the data to define the phenomenon and what it means (Downe-Wamboldt 1992).

Whether qualitative or quantitative research, both involve labelling and coding all of the data with the aim of highlighting both similarities and differences (Babbie, 1992). The qualitative researcher does not need system precoding since the research centres on words, however, identifying and labelling or coding of data is developed and modified for every research, and this route is called content analysis (Elo and Kyngas, 2007). The study on Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands and identity creation adopts the content analysis as an analytical procedure.

4.7.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis can be adopted when qualitative data gathers through a range of ways: observation, interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis (Downe-Wamboldt 1992). It is a process of categorising verbal or behavioural facts to classify, summarising and tabulation (Barcus, 1959). The analysis of content involves two stages; the basic and the higher stage. The first stage comprises of a detailed explanation of the data. What was said with no use of comments and theories as to why or how it was said, the higher also called the latent stage of analysis is a more interpretive analysis that is concerned with the response, what it inferred and implied (Hickey and Kipping, 1996). Content analysis is considered a research technique that is systematic and used as an objective means of labelling phenomena and analysing documents (Krippendorff 1980; Downe-Wamboldt 1992; Sandelowski 1995). Through content analysis, it is possible to draw out words into fewer content connected groups (Elo and Kyngas, 2007). When data is classified into the same categories, words, phrases and the likes share the same meaning (Cavanagh 1997). Also used to analyse written, verbal and visual communication messages (Cole 1988).

Qualitative content analysis is one of several research approaches used to examine text data (Shannon and Hsieh, 2005). Research using qualitative content analysis is always centred on the features of language as communication with a concentration on the content or contextual connotation of the text (Budd et al., 1967; Lindkvist, 1981; McTavish and Pirro, 1990; Tesch, 1990). Kondracki and Wellman (2002) clarify that text data might be in different forms: verbal, print, or electronic and might have been acquired from diverse research methods: open-ended survey questions, focus groups, narrative responses, interviews, observations or print media such as articles, books, or manuals. Weber (1990) adds that it goes beyond counting words to investigating language intensely to categorise large amounts of text into a well-organised

number of categories that denote comparable meanings. These categories can signify either clear communication or deduced communication. According to Downe-Wamboldt, (1992, p. 314), the leading essence of a content analysis is to present facts and knowledge of the phenomenon under study. Thus, Shannon and Hsieh (2005, p. 1278) define it as a means of subjectively interpreting the content of text data through the systematic organisation process of coding and classifying themes or patterns. Although it is widely used within the qualitative research method, Shannon and Hsieh (2005) explain that instead of being a single method, they are three separate approaches to content analysis: conventional/inductive, directed/deductive, or summative. All approaches interpret meaning from the content of written data and, hence, follow the naturalistic (interpretive) paradigm. The main differences among these three approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness (Shannon and Hsieh (2005, p. 1277).

In conventional/inductive content analysis, coding categories result mainly from the text data. While with the directed approach, the analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. On the other hand, the summative content analysis comprises counting, evaluations and comparisons, generally of keywords or content, supported by the understanding of the underlying context. Bergin (2011, p. 3) considers qualitative data analysis as a process that demands clear and deep thinking on the part of the analyst. As a result, the analytical procedure used in this research is ‘the inductive content analysis alongside categorisation’ (Spiggle, 1994). Categorisation is the process of ‘classifying or labelling units of data’ (p. 493).

This study draws analysis from the research data with prior knowledge rooted in theories of consumption and identity creation. The rationale is that with the conventional/inductive content analysis categories are obtained directly from the data with no pre-conceived categories. Categories and names for categories will flow from the research data. This approach allows the researcher immerse themselves in the data to allow new insights to arise (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002). Mayring (2000) terms this approach an inductive approach that allows categories develop. According to Shannon and Hsieh (2005, p. 1277) conventional content analysis is usually adopted when the research design and procedure aim at describing a phenomenon, events, reality and occurrences. This style of design is usually suitable when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is inadequate, and there are gaps to be

filled (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002). Mayring (2000) approves that conventional content analysis permit investigations to be specific to the participant's comments rather than the pre-existing theory. Questions such as 'Can you tell me more about that?', this is an open-ended question to probe participant's response (Shannon and Hsieh, 2005, p. 1277). While with the directed/deductive content analysis the structure of analysis is operationalised by preceding knowledge and the objective of the study is theory testing (Kynga's and Vanhanen 1999). A method which bases on inductive data moves from the precise to the general, so that particular cases are observed and then combined into a larger whole or general statement (Chinn and Kramer 1999).

A deductive approach builds on an initial theory or model, and therefore it moves from the general to the specific (Burns and Grove 2005). Within these approaches, data analysis goes through the same stages. First, it begins with reading all data continually to attain involvement and engagement as well as obtain a sense of the complete (Tesch, 1990). After that, data are read word by word to develop codes (Morse and Field, 1995; Miles and Huberman, 1994) by first underlining the main words from the text that seem to grasp significant views or thoughts (Morgan, 1993). Next, the investigator addresses the text by making notes of his or her initial impressions, opinions, judgement and initial enquiry (Morse and Field, 1995). As this process develops further, labels for codes reflecting more than one critical thought emerge (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These usually stems from the text and then develop into the initial coding scheme (Morgan, 1993). These initial codes are then organised into categories based on how different codes are related and linked (Shannon and Hsieh, 2005). These evolving categories are used to unify and group codes into expressive clusters (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Patton, 2002). On the other hand, the summative content analysis' main aim is to identify and quantify specific words or content in a text with the goal of understanding the contextual use of the words or content (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

In this research, the conventional/inductive content analysis was used. This analytical method is used to describe the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London. No pre-conceived categories were used, all categories flow from the data.

4.8 Coding in Qualitative Research

Bailey (2006) defines coding as a process of categorising an enormous amount of data into smaller sections that, when needed, can be regained. It involves data reduction and simplification. Coding is classified into types: initial, focused coding, Memo, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis. This research will focus on the types adopted: initial, focused coding and memo.

Initial coding also termed open coding by Strauss and Corbin (1990) is a process of breaking up several pieces of text into controllable and convenient sections that can be gathered together and used throughout the analysis (Hense-Biber and Leary, 2006). With the open coding, investigators continually read their data as code as much as they can (Bailey, 2007). Warren and Karner (2005) note that not every bit of data from the fieldwork would be coded. Nevertheless, investigators should read every line of the data and code any data they think might be hypothetically beneficial for the analysis, understanding that as the research evolve, they may be changes, codes may be added, changed, and a significant amount of the data will be unused (Bailey, 2007).

During the initial coding of this research on Black African women and luxury fashion consumption, 31 themes emerged as possible themes that give an in-depth and clear presentation of data. (*See Appendix 4.1*) All themes represent data collected from the three qualitative techniques used in this study: in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observations. They were theoretically valuable for the analysis but could flow together when merged. Thus, the second coding process was adopted which was the axial coding. (*See Appendix 4.2*).

Focused coding also known as the axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) occurs when identification and combination further reduce data, which means that in axial coding, initial codes are either merged or reduced. The aim is to move from objectively literal code (zipper) into a more conceptual one (closure items) (Bailey, 2007, p. 137). During the axial coding, the initial 31 themes were merged into 10 themes. Combined based on its link to each other. Both initial and focused coding have played significant roles in the analysis of data. However, some scholars criticise whether coding is analysis and as such opine that rather than an analysis, it only informs the analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Regardless of the criticisms, this research develops on Miles and Huberman (1994)'s contention that coding is analysis (p. 56). Similarly,

Bailey (2007) supports this view and adds that coding is vital and a sufficient activity for analysis (p. 133). (*See Appendix 4.2*). A second focused coding was required at a closer look at the themes, and 12 themes were further merged into ten themes. (*See Appendix 4.3*).

Bailey (2007) proposes that in combination with coding, field investigators concurrently involve in the process of memoing which entails writing memos to oneself regarding insights one derives from coding and reflecting on the data. Corbin (2006, p. 117) defines Memos as a specific type of written records—those that contain the products of our analyses. They are analytical or mini-analyses about the research. Memos and diagrams are more than just sources of thought. They are working and living documents (p. 118). According to Strauss (1987, p. 110) ‘even when an investigator is working independently on a project, he or she is involved in continual internal dialogue—for that is, after all, what thinking is’. A certain degree of analysis occurs when an analyst writes a memo, it is the evaluation of what one learns in the process and also gives an insight into the research process. (*See Appendix 4.4*)

In a qualitative study, Patton (2002) links memos to field notes and says ‘recording and tracking analytical insights that occur during data collection are part of fieldwork and the beginning of qualitative analysis’ (p. 436). Every time observations of events occur, the observations filters through the eyes of the researcher who cannot help but start thinking about classifying the information (Corbin, 2006). This action is spontaneous because the researcher thinks consciously at every point of the research. When this spontaneous act occurs, there is no reason why the investigator should not jot analytic ideas while in the field. According to Patton (2002, p. 406) ‘suppressing analytical insights may mean losing them forever, for there’s no guarantee they will return’. Patton’s (2002) argument links to the real nature of events that occur in the field, noting that while in the field collecting data, the researcher is faced with theoretical ideas motivated by data and it is correct to jot those theoretical ideas down before the researcher forgets them. Similarly, Wolcott (2001) notes that it is nearly difficult to be purely descriptive when writing about incidents out in the field because we naturally name and categorise what we see. On the other hand, (Corbin, 2007) makes a distinction between the two concepts in order not to complicate issues for new researchers about the significance of each. While ‘field notes are data that may contain some conceptualisation and analytic remarks memos, on the other hand, are lengthier and more in-depth thoughts about an event usually written in conceptual form after leaving the field’ (Corbin, 2007, p. 124). Considering that memos can be

elaborate, this research focuses mostly on the relevant bit as subject to the researcher's discretion. (See Appendix 4 for Coding Memo Samples).

4.8.1 The Coding Process

The coding process of this research is explained in this section. During the initial coding, 31 themes emerged. To further reduce the initial codes into key themes, some literature and theories were used to merge and reduce most of these codes into key themes.

Table 4.1

No	Initial Themes	Existing Theorist	Key Themes
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mating, ➤ Status, ➤ Making Friends 	The concept of evolutionary motives have been explored extensively and researchers have linked this concept to fundamental motives such as mating, status and making friends (Penn, 2003; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Backer et al., 2014; Wang and Griskevicius, 2014)	Evolutionary Motives
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Love ➤ Trust ➤ Devotion ➤ Attachment ➤ Attraction ➤ Satisfaction 	Various constructs have been used to express the concept of consumer relationship. This constructs include love, commitment, trust, devotion, attraction and satisfaction (Shimp and Madden, 1988; Fournier 1998; Thompson et al., 2005; Belaid and Behi, 2011)	Consumer Brand Relationship
3	<p>Attributing human qualities</p> <p>Attraction to brand personality</p>	Attributing human qualities to inanimate objects such as brands have been explored in literature as anthropomorphism	Anthropomorphism, brand and consumer personality

	Buying as inspired by personality	(Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Nicholas et al., 2014)	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Saving ➤ Hope ➤ Dreams 	<p>The term aspiration was first discussed by in Cyert and March (1963) with regards to organisation and relationship. Lant (1992) notes that people who aspire are expected to act to increase their degree of success in attaining their aspirations and performance and also, aspirations will regulate the intensity of behaviours (Ansoff, 1979). These actions for luxury fashion consumers include saving up for these items, hoping and dreaming of these items and it drives them towards performing to attain their goals.</p>	Aspiration
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Where the brand is situated/location ➤ Convenient shopping 	<p>Although studies have linked place to identity (Lappergard, 2007), place and space (Creswell, 2009), the significance of place branding (Bamber et al., 2009), linking place to women's consumption of luxury fashion products is underdeveloped.</p>	Location, Branding and Convenient
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lifestyle ➤ Heritage ➤ Heirloom ➤ Good mother discourse 	<p>Culture and consumption are two terms connected terms (McCracken, 1986; Matsumoto, 1994; Oyserman and Lee, 2007). Culture links to lifestyle, heritage, ritual and tradition of a group of people.</p>	Cultural Orientation

7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Social media ➤ Celebrity lifestyle ➤ Advertising 	While studies link these consumption behaviours to intrinsic factors (Shin et al., 2011), others relate it to extrinsic factors (Berger and Ward, 2010). This study adds to the view on extrinsic factors which links to the external elements that motivate consumers to buy luxury fashion products. They external elements that serve as a drive for female consumers are celebrity influences, social media influences and advertising.	External Influence and Luxury fashion consumption
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Control over resources 		Control over resources
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fear of counterfeits 		Fear of counterfeits
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identity disconnect 		Identity disconnect

4.9 Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

The trustworthiness of qualitative research usually is often questioned by positivists, possibly because their notions of validity and authenticity cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work (Shenton, 2004). However, several writers on research methods, especially Silverman (2001) have established how qualitative researchers can integrate methods that deal with these matters, and researchers like Pitts (1994) have tried to react openly to the subjects of validity and reliability in their qualitative studies. Naturalistic researchers have chosen to adopt different vocabularies to space themselves from the positivist paradigm (Shenton, 2004). One of such is Guba (1981), who recommends four benchmarks. Benchmarks that he considers

appropriate when discussing trustworthiness, reliability and validity within qualitative research. The first is credibility (in preference to internal validity). The second is transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability), and then dependability (in preference to reliability) and the last is confirmability (in preference to objectivity) (Guba, 1981, p. 76). Even though lately, Lincoln (1995) writes that the whole concept of qualitative investigation is still evolving, Guba (1981)'s ideas are acknowledged by many (Shenton, 2004). However, Joppe (2000, p. 1) argues that reliability is the degree to which findings are consistent. He adds that data must be an accurate representation of the total population under study, which is referred to as reliability. When the findings of a study reproduce under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable, irrespective of method. Additionally, Golafshani (2003, p. 598) notes that although the terms reliability and validity are adopted for testing and evaluating quantitative research, it is used in all forms of research. To make sure that qualitative research is reliable, the analysis of trustworthiness is vital. According to Seale (1999, p. 266) to ensure proper quality through reliability and validity in qualitative research, the trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability. In testing the reliability of qualitative research, Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 250) propose that the 'usual canons of 'good science require redefinition to fit the realities of qualitative research'. However, Stenbacka (2001, p. 552) contends that since reliability issue concerns measurements, then it has no relevance in qualitative research'. Also, she states that the debate on the relevance of reliability in a qualitative study is of no essence. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 316) propose that there is no validity without reliability and as such a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter' With regards to qualitative research Patton (2002) adds that reliability is a consequence of the validity of a study.

This study adheres strictly to the focus and objectives of this research to ensure the reliability, validity and trustworthiness. The investigation focuses on Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands in London It adopts the various processes defined by Guba (1981) as a clear way of ensuring trustworthiness. These processes will be discussed in five different steps and align to one of the four processes of Guba (1981).

4.10 Credibility

Within this process, Guba (1981) explains that credibility is one of the leading benchmarks argued by positivist investigators is that of internal validity, in which they seek to clarify that their study tests what is proposed. Merriam (1998) points out that the qualitative researcher's comparable notion credibility addresses this question, 'How congruent are the findings with reality?' (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that ensuring credibility is one of most significant features in establishing trustworthiness. Thus, Guba (1981) provides numerous ways in which a researcher can achieve credibility. This study adopts some of these ways: the use of research methods well recognised both in the qualitative investigation in general and in information science in particular (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). This research adopts well-established methods used within consumer research such as interviews, focus groups and observations. Secondly, triangulation of methods: Shenton (2004) triangulation comprise the use of several methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews, which constitutes the main data collection approaches for qualitative research. In the study on Black African women, three qualitative techniques were employed: in-depth interviews, focus groups and participants observation. These three techniques were used to validate data and identify the consistency of emerged themes. Though focus groups and individual interviews are seen as similar and share common methodological shortcomings (Shenton, 2004), their separate features also result in individual strengths. Guba (1981) emphasises that using different methods compensates for their shortcomings and exploits their benefits. Thirdly, Shenton (2004) points out that to ensure credibility each participant should be given chances to refuse to take part in the project to guarantee that the data collection sessions involve only those who are sincerely prepared to take part and prepared to offer data freely. Participants were given consent forms to sign before data is collected and the form highlights the rights of the respondent which includes an opportunity to decline or be part of the study. The right also states that participants are free to withdraw their data at any point of the study. Fourthly, frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and his or her superiors (Shenton, 2004). This step-through dialogue may widen the vision of the researcher. It is attained through dialogue with a research director. The whole research process follows this pattern as continual dialogue with research director occurred. Lastly, peer examination of the research project: this research has been scrutinised in conferences by colleagues, peers and

academics. Papers written from this research have been presented in conferences, subjected to peer reviews both within and outside the UK.

Morrow (2005) adds that there are two ways in which qualitative data can be validated to reduce bias and increase trustworthiness: respondent validation and peer review. While respondents' validation consists of returning to the study participants and asking them to authenticate analyses, peer review involves another qualitative researcher analysing the data individually. For validation, this study adopts the respondents' validation process. Out of 47 interview participants, 25 were asked to carefully read through their interview data analysis for them to authenticate, or disprove, the investigator's interpretation of the data.

4.11 Reflexivity

The interest in this study was born out of a personal experience within the Black African community. Within that community, Black African women were observed as well informed and quite aware of luxury items. It was a way of life and tradition rooted in the African culture to consume conspicuously. The more visible their consumption patterns, the more the interest to explore this group of consumers developed into a career path in marketing. As marketing knowledge advanced, they were visible studies reflecting the consumption behaviours of different consumers (See example: Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012; Backer et al., 2014; Wang and Griskevicius, 2014), however no research explores this context. These studies form the background for theoretical underpinning and reveal that product decision making is subjective. Additionally, they present possible areas for further studies within marketing literature which prompts the success of this research.

During the field work, the difficulty in recruiting Black African women prompted the use of snowball sampling method. Snowballing sampling procedure creates accessibility and guards against gate keeping issue within qualitative observation. Research participants were very expressive of their luxury fashion consumption behaviours which can be linked to the fact that they could relate with the study and the researcher as a Black African woman investigating Black African women. The role of the researcher as a Black African woman influenced the in-depth nature of this study. Furthermore, data collection process detailed and focused on the research questions and objectives as clearly stated and understood before the field work commenced. Data collected gave insight into the motives for the consumption of luxury fashion

brands by Black African women and their identity work and also revealed more aspect of consumer behaviour for further study.

4.12 Summary

In relating reality to theory, this research follows a subjective ontological and epistemological research approach. The central purpose of research is to investigate the unknown and methods of findings are rooted in the search objectives. Thus, to fully complete this study, the research adopts a triangulation of qualitative methods: focus groups, interviews and observation. It is significant to understand that the choice of research philosophy and methodology forms an essential part of any research. This choice stems from the objectives of the study and the researcher's judgement on what method to use. Every segment of this research centres on qualitative method and interpretive paradigm whose aim is to understand the Black African woman and her luxury fashion consumption patterns. In addressing this, the natural space is crucial, since the essence is to interpret and make sense of their actions. All actions interpret as data, and they are analysed through the conventional/inductive content analysis. Findings are categorised into various themes through initial and focused coding. Additionally, memos are a way to analyse and organise the researcher's processes.

CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5- Presentation of Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings. It demonstrates the various ideas revealed in the study of Black African women luxury fashion consumption in London and how this behaviour helps them to recreate their identity. It categorises all findings into themes. All themes presented in this chapter addresses the research questions, aims and objectives. They are ten themes which include: evolutionary motives, consumer brand relationship, anthropomorphism, consumer and brand personality, aspiration, location, branding and convenience, cultural orientation and external influences. Others include fear of counterfeits, controllability and identity disconnect. Additionally, considering that this study adopts three qualitative research methods as stated in the previous chapter: interviews, focus groups and participant's observation, this section draws specific attention to the consistency of the findings across the three chosen methods. Each method has its unique demography as represented in tables (*See Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4*). The methods used in this research reinforce and complement each other. All thematic categorisation represent data from the research methods used in this study. This study proposes different frameworks applicable for demonstrating the motivation for luxury fashion consumption by Black African women in London, the extent to which they consume as well as how this behaviour links to their identity. The frameworks include components of luxury fashion consumption behaviour, an evolutionary framework for luxury fashion consumption, the sequential mating model and the mating retention model. This chapter also displays the aspirational model 1 and the aspirational process model (*See Figure 5.6 and 5.7*). It summarises the entire research findings by discussing the critical data.

5.2 Demography Tables

Table 5.1: Interview Respondents' Demographics

Interview Respondents	Age	Country of Origin	Annual Income £
IR 1	55-60	Nigeria	40,000-50,000
IR 2	30-35	Congo	20,000-30,000
IR 3	30-35	Togo	30,000-40,000
IR 4	25-30	Gambia	20,000-30,000
IR 5	30-35	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
IR 6	25-30	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
IR 7	20-25	Ghana	10,000-20,000
IR 8	30-35	Rwanda	20,000-30,000
IR 9	40-45	Ghana	30,000-40,000
IR 10	40-45	Nigeria	20,000-30,000

IR 11	25-30	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
IR 12	20-25	Senegal	10,000-20,000
IR 13	25-30	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
IR 14	30-35	Nigeria	25,000-35,000
IR 15	45-50	Nigeria	40,000-45,000
IR 16	55-60	Malawi	42,000-45,000
IR 17	25-30	Ghana	10,000-20,000
IR 18	45-50	Nigeria	30,000-35,000
IR 19	30-35	Kenya	30,000-35,000
IR 20	20-25	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
IR 21	35-40	Congo	20,000-30,000
IR 22	40-45	Ghana	30,000-40,000

IR 23	25-30	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
IR 24	30-35	Gambia	25,000-35,000
IR 25	55-60	Gambia	40,000-45,000
IR 26	40-45	Nigeria	40,000-45,000
IR 27	30-35	Mali	20,000-30,000
IR 28	25-30	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
IR 29	40-45	Ghana	10,000-20,000
IR 31	40-45	Liberia	40,000-45,000
IR 32	25-30	Nigeria	25,000-35,000
IR 33	30-35	Nigeria	25,000-35,000
IR 34	40-45	Ghana	25,000-35,000
IR 35	40-45	Cote'd'Ivoire	30,000-35,000

IR 36	55-60	Nigeria	50,000-55,000
IR 37	35-40	Nigeria	25,000-35,000
IR 38	60-65	Cameroon	30,000-35,000
IR 39	40-45	Nigeria	30,000-35,000
IR 40	50-55	Gambia	20,000-30,000
IR 41	30-35	Nigeria	25,000-35,000
IR 42	25-30	Rwanda	10,000-20,000
IR 43	45-50	Cameroon	15,000-25,000
IR 44	45-50	Rwanda	40,000-45,000
IR 45	35-40	Ghana	40,000-45,000
IR 46	30-35	Guinea	20,000-30,000
IR 47	30-35	Rwanda	20,000-30,000

Table 5.2: Focus Group Respondents' Demography

Group 1

Focus Group Respondents	Age	Country of Origin	Annual Income £
FG 1	55-60	Nigeria	50,000-55,000
FG 2	55-60	Nigeria	40,000-45,000
FG 3	35-40	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
FG 4	30-35	Ghana	25,000-35,000
FG 5	30-35	Nigeria	30,000-35,000
FG 6	35-40	Nigeria	30,000-35,000
FG 7	35-40	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
FG 8	25-30	Ghana	15,000-25,000

Table 5. 3: Focus Group Respondents' Demography

Group 2

Focus Group Respondents	Age	Country of Origin	Annual Income £
FG 2.1	30-35	Nigeria	20,000-30,000
FG 2.2	30-35	Ghana	25,000-30,000
FG 2.3	25-30	Gambia	25,000-30,000
FG 2.4	50-55	Nigeria	25,000-30,000
FG 2.5	25-30	Malawi	30,000-35,000
FG 2.6	40-45	Ghana	40,000-45,000
FG 2.7	30-35	Kenya	50,000-55,000
FG 2.8	45-50	Cameroon	50,000-55,000
FG 2.9	20-25	Nigeria	25,000-30,000

Table 5.4: Participant's Observation Respondents' Demographics

Participant's Observation Respondents	Age	Country of Origin	Annual Income £
PO 1	25-30	Kenya	28,000-30,000
PO 2	45-50	Congo	40,000-45,000
PO 3	20-25	Ghana	10,000-20,000
PO 4	25-30	Kenya	25,000-30,000
PO 5	30-35	Malawi	20,000-32,000
PO 6	25-30	Ghana	20,000-22,000
PO 7	40-45	Nigeria	20,000-25,000
PO 8	25-30	Nigeria	30,000-35,000
PO 9	20-25	Mozambique	25,000-30,000
PO 10	35-40	Malawi	25,000-30,000

5.3 Evolutionary Motives

'That doesn't sound like a question to me, well the question should be why buy a luxury brand when you don't want to display your worth? I mean that's why I buy what I buy like Christian Louboutin. When I wear the shoes, you need to see the way people look at me. People just know where you belong with what you wear. I am particular about stating clearly where I belong, what I mean is the class I belong. It's called status symbol. Christian Louboutin is not like every other. I bought one of their shoes with 755 quid (Pounds), and that shoes just stand out. Status is everything, ok I sound vain, but status is important. People respect you, and you tend to make friends within your class. If you want to choose friends, it should be within your class because just like racism, there's something I call classism' (laughter). (IR 2)

It is interesting to note that when discussing the concept of luxury fashion consumption, factors like status, mating and making friends appear to be essential motives. These motives are summed up as evolutionary, and these drives serve as a rationale for the Black African woman's luxury fashion behaviour. Evolutionary motives concern itself with fundamental basis. Motives that help in explaining consumer attitudes through evolutionary perspectives. This study reveals how participants link their luxury consumption habits to status; the need to belong to a particular social class. It also shows that Black African women in London are selective about what they wear, how they portray themselves to others and how others see them. (IR 1).

In reality, Black African women associate luxury fashion consumption to success, which eventually grows into a belief that shapes attitudes.

Figure 5.1- Components of Luxury fashion consumption behaviour

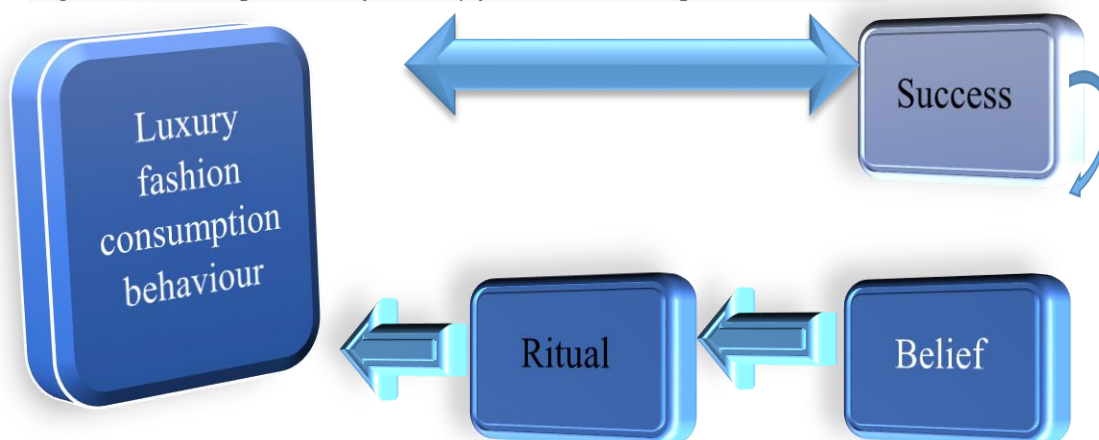


Figure 5.1 shows the connection between the luxury fashion consumption components. This study shows that luxury fashion consumption links to success, success turns to a belief which becomes a ritual that shapes the behaviour. These elements serve as a driver of luxury consumption behaviour which stems from the assumption that wearing a luxury fashion brand means one is successful. Considering that people want to be identified as affluent as well as want to identify with the wealthy, they are drawn towards items that assist them to achieve such goals. Thus, the shaping of attitudes is incited by self and societal awareness. The awareness of self and society prompts an inner desire to purchase brands that can reflect who they are and what class they belong to and also portray them as successful. Furthermore, conspicuous consumption is motivated by class, status and the need to make a statement and stay relevant within the society. It also serves as a measure for identity work. Reinforcing self-identity only means that these brands are used to emphasise who they are in the actual sense. Also, participants believe that portraying oneself in a particular way determines how they are perceived and addressed. This notion is explicitly affirmed in this study; luxury fashion consumption does not only determine how people are received, but it also enhances the feeling of success within. Therefore, the consumption of luxury fashion is an act as well as a means of self-categorisation; categorising one's self within a group. A segmentation tool: used to separate one's self from a group while integrating with another.

'I teach my daughter. I teach her that appearances can bring success. When I look at her, I feel she has improved a whole lot on herself, and I am beginning to see the rich kids around her' (IR 1).

It is thought-provoking to see that participants pass this behaviour unto their children. This action shows that status is recognised as one of the motives for the consumption of luxury fashion brands. There's desire to pass this consciousness unto children, meaning that women who are self-conscious and aware of luxury fashion brands tend to transfer this brand awareness attitude to their children, thereby making luxury fashion brand consumption a conveyable demeanour. Within the evolutionary theme, this study also displays that there is a longing to attract the right kind of friends within a particular social class. The evolutionary motive involves status alongside other factors such as the urge to make friends, urge for mating and mate retention. On the other hand, for some others who's motive for luxury fashion consumption falls under the evolutionary framework, what appears to be more significant is how this behaviour helps them signify what class they belong. Evidently, specific brands attract

respect for brand users, this regard sets them apart and drives them towards repeat purchase and loyalty for that particular brand.

'That doesn't sound like a question to me, well the question should be why buy a luxury brand when you don't want to display your worth? I mean that's why I buy what I buy like Christian Louboutin. When I wear the shoes, you need to see the way people look at me. People just know where you belong with what you wear. I am particular about stating clearly where I belong, what I mean is the class I belong. It's called status symbol. Christian Louboutin is not like every other. I bought one of their shoes with 755 quid (Pounds), and that shoes just stand out. Status is everything, ok I sound vain, but status is important. People respect you, and you tend to make friends within your class. If you want to choose friends, it should be within your class because just like racism, there's something I call classism' (laughter). (IR 2)

(Would you please throw more light on the word Classism?)

'I doubt if that word is found anywhere other than my mouth. I use Classism to refer to a state where you discriminate based on class and what people wear'. (IR 2)

Belongingness is also evident in this study under the evolutionary motive framework. Women link what drives them toward luxury fashion brands to the need to belong to a group. Furthermore, while luxury fashion brand consumption is inspired by belongingness, it also can be rooted in status and serves as a tool used to ascertain what class a person belongs, it also functions as a discriminating tool for consumers. Hence, this study finds that luxury fashion brands are used by consumers as a benchmark for measuring others. It also helps in facilitating their process of finding potential friends:

'I had this friend once that was so obsessed with status, I never understood why until I started working. There's hierarchy everywhere even when you want to deny it. It's staring at you. From home to work and wherever. But I find that each time I wear my Louis Vuitton bags or shoes to a party certain people just feel comfortable around me. I realised that those who felt so relaxed around me are always those using similar kinds of stuff. So I said to myself- to attract the best people, the rich ones I have to wear what they wear. DO you know why celebrities hang out with themselves? It's the status thing; it's the class thing. They just want to stick to themselves. As a person of lower class, all you do is admire from a distance. Using my Louis Vuitton serves me the stress of looking

for friends. They just warm up to me naturally. I love making friends, but I'll prefer someone walks up to me in a party than for me to warm up to anyone. And again, here is London people feel people don't care about what you wear, but that's not entirely true. People judge you by what you wear. I judge people by what they wear too, and I think all these luxury fashion goods help to create some class distinction'. (IR 3)

'I feel comfortable using my luxury fashion items and trust me the feeling is unbelievable. There is also this feeling I get around people who use similar brands. Some sort of safety, It may be a bias feeling but that's just me. Rich people have a particular aura around them' (IR 4)

There is evidence that luxury fashion brands bring comfort for consumers. This comfort is motivated by respondents need to feel safe around people who they consider the right set of people because they display the right kinds of products/brands. When the feeling comes, it brings some ease and creates a conducive environment for them. As a result, respondents connect the sense of comfort and safety to the products that attract the elite class towards them.

'Seriously when I bought my first LV (Louis Vuitton) bag I was thinking if I did the right thing and was walking out the shop sweating and felt like returning it the next day. But when I started using it to show off it feels terrific having it and from then on I stopped buying cheaper ones. I end up saving money now to buy bags because it's pricey! Luxury bags are worth buying. They are worth buying because they help you relate who you are to people. I see luxury as a term that distinguishes. For a while, I have gotten used to buying and using my items, and I like the way people see me, I can tell when people smile at me and even walking up to me in some cases. It is a good way to start a conversation and make friends'. (IR 4)

Even though women connect luxury fashion brands to comfort and safety, at the point of purchasing such luxury fashion item the ease is not felt. Instead the experience a nervous feeling which generates fear and uncertainty. The reason behind this is that for most consumers buying a luxury fashion item means a lifetime investment that requires a lot of resources such as determination, money and sometimes letting go of other priorities.

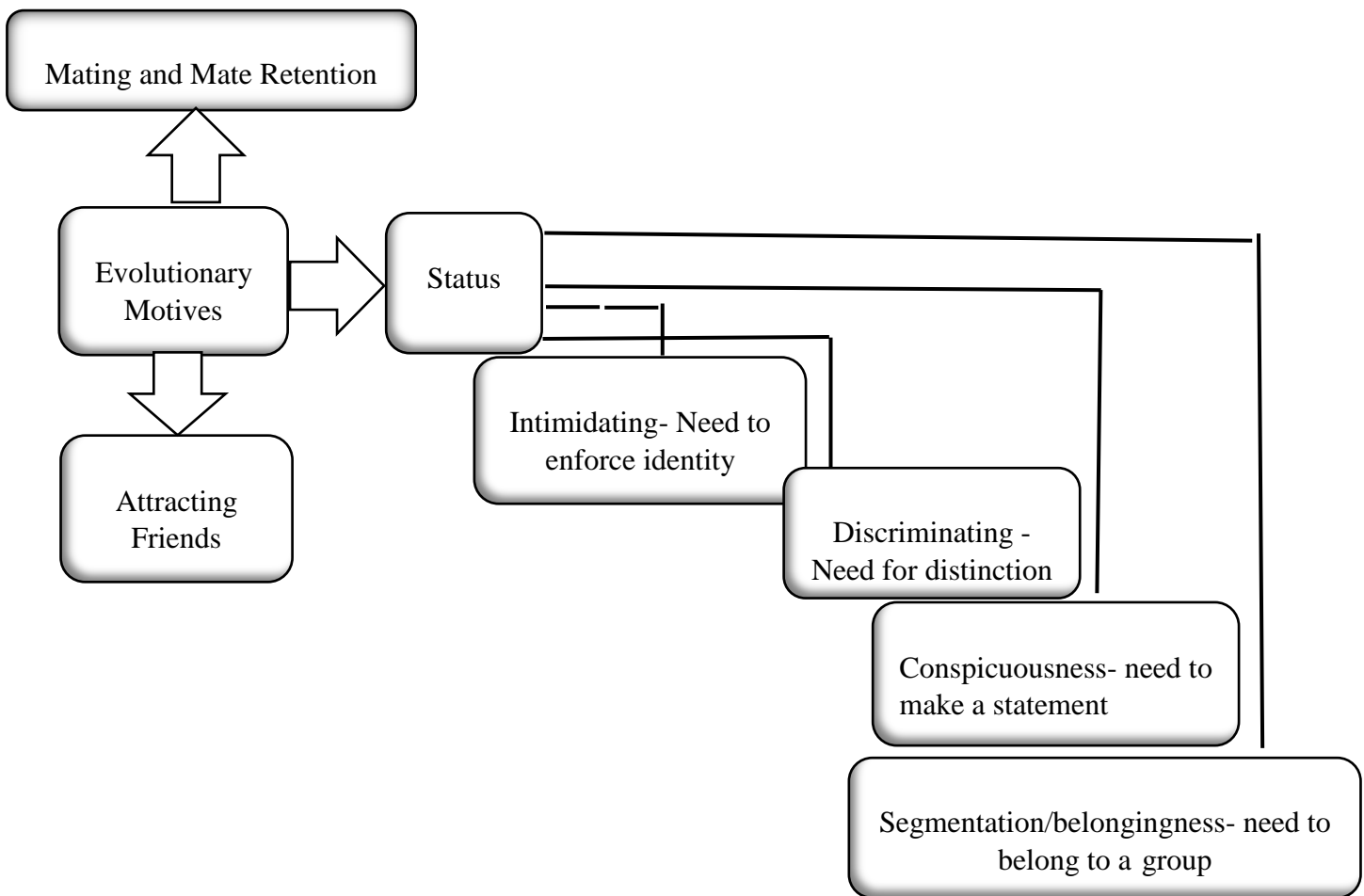
'If you attend Nigerian weddings here in London, you will understand why luxury fashion brands are important. A lot of times people are just there to intimidate others

with what they put on. Display of gold and so many other things. For example, this is something that happened to me. I have this Hermes bag that cost so much to buy; I saved for a year to buy that bag. Wore it to a wedding somewhere in South East London, that's where you find a lot of us Blacks. When I walked into the place everyone who knew the cost of that bag turned and looked at me. I became the attention for that day. Then a lady walked up to me and said I know that bag I've got one of those, they cost a fortune. She sat with me all through the event trying to be my friend. Apart from the fact that the bag is expensive it gives me all the attention I need and people just respect me for it. All I need for a party is an expensive stuff to attract anyone I have eyes on'. From my experience I have noticed how Black women can identify the real luxury bags, I think because we are attached to it. Just wearing a luxury item, if you are not familiar with these things you can hardly tell but Nigerian women always know when it is real or the fake. I wonder how they know this even including the price. (IR 6).

Luxury fashion brands are important to women because of how others make them feel. They use these items as signals to other women. There is an inner desire to use luxury fashion products to make statement, signal others, display status, discriminate and intimidate others form a framework which can either stand alone as motivational factors or as factors within the evolutionary framework

'I wore a Gucci shoe to a Chanel store to buy a bag. At the door the security just gave me this cute smile like -that looks good on you kind of smile. The truth is that this guy was so cute. I couldn't resist talking with him over and over. People just identify what you wear before they even take a second look at you. There's a difference between a Primark shoe and a Gucci one. That guy didn't have to say anything for me to know that his smile was not the usual smile. I think my shoe attracted him, he kept looking at me, but at the same time, he tried to keep it professional' (IR 19).

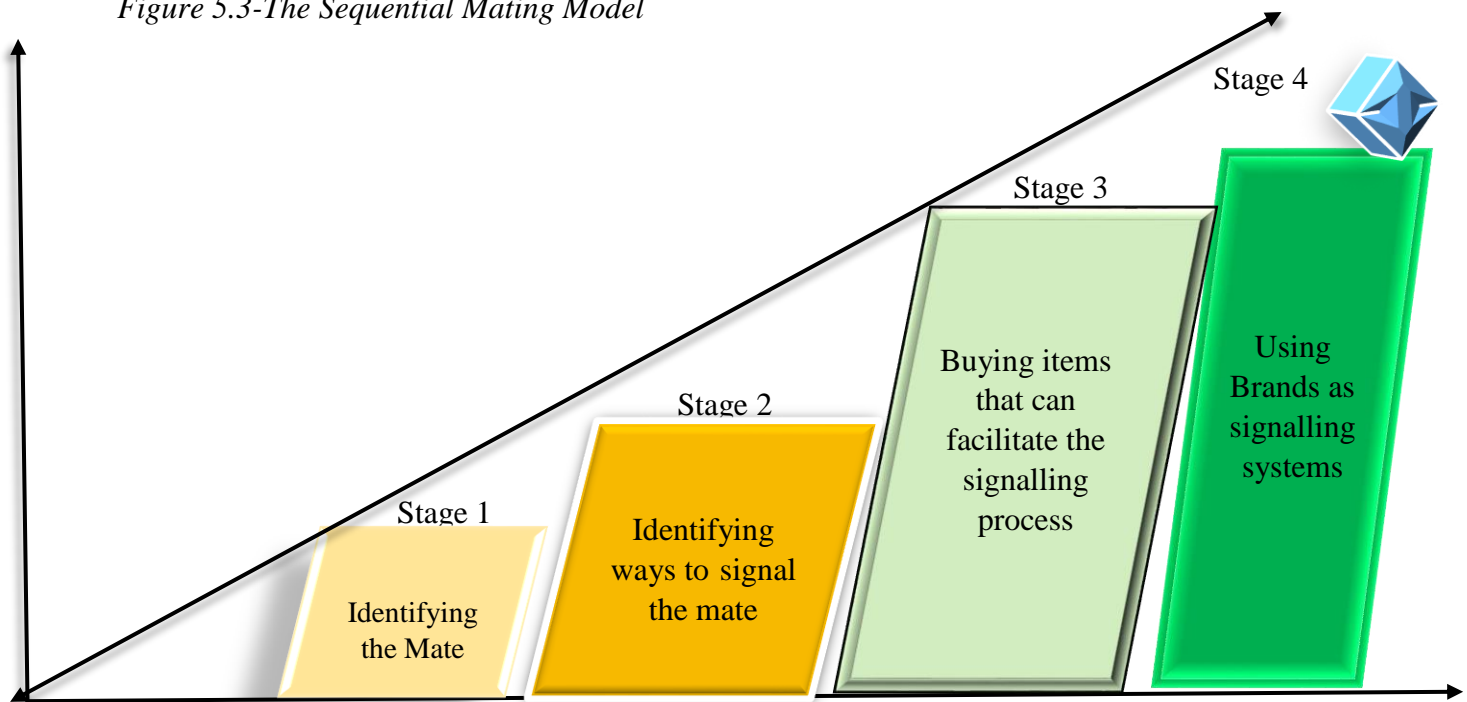
Figure 5.2: Evolutionary Framework for luxury fashion consumption.



The findings of this study show an evolutionary framework for luxury fashion consumption. The structure shown in Figure 5.2 suggests that within status as a motive for luxury fashion consumption, there are some elements embedded. Elements that explain why status is significant to consumers when it comes to luxury brands. These include discrimination, intimidation, segmentation and conspicuousness. All these features serve as ways in which status is played out within evolutionary motive. The framework links factors such as mating, attracting friends and status to evolutionary motivations. It suggests that consumers use luxury fashion brands as status signalling systems to other women. They use this behaviour to decide who they want close. Luxury fashion brands are used as sexual signalling systems. To attract a wealthy mate one who falls into the particular class spur people into engaging in luxury fashion habits. Consumers are compelled to buy specific products that can help them attract the kind of man they want based on his persona. In this context, the man becomes an object,

and his persona is revealed by a consistent observation by the consumer even when it means observing from a distance. This observation opens her up to discover what he values and the best way to get his attention when signalling occurs. This study proposes a model called the sequential mating model to express how mating occurs.

Figure 5.3-The Sequential Mating Model



The sequential mating model shows the different stages in which consumers go through to signal a mate. This study finds that mate signalling is a strategic process which occurs sequentially. Before the actual signal happens, there are four stages people go through to guarantee the success of signalling a mate.

In stage 1: the consumer identifies the prospective mate, one who appeals to her based her personality. In stage 2: She identifies ways to signal the mate. This phase involves observing the mate from a distance. Making enquiries about what this person likes and what ways to appeal to him as well as what brands work for him. This stage varies in time between consumers. In stage 3: She buys items that link to the personality of the object (mate). This product could be any luxury fashion brand that she thinks from her observation will appeal to

the object. This stage depends on two factors. Either the consumer buys the identified brands immediately, or she saves money for a period to be able to afford such items. Stage 4: At this stage, brands are used as sexual signalling systems. It is at this stage that signalling occurs.

‘Then again I have never attracted any poor dude (covers face), the reason is that to get a rich guy you have to call for it. I love clubbing, and I can hardly go to certain clubs in London with cheap things. Like my boyfriend tells me your Jimmy Choo’s shoe attracted me to you. He says when I saw that shoes I knew you were a lady with class, an independent lady. He doesn’t know this, but my secret is that I had been watching him for over six months, so each time I went to the club, I’ll look at what he wears then google the price, I found out that he loved flashy and expensive fashion too. So I bought this very flashy Jimmy Choo shoes, wore it that day and walked passed him just to draw his attention to me, and I got that stunning look, and we are still together. So just using a shoe got me a guy I had worked so much to get’. (IR 5).

Apart from interview findings revealing evolutionary motive via status, making friends and mating as a motivation for consuming luxury fashion brands, findings from focus group and participant’s observation also show that the consistency of evolutionary motive is a factor that determines the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London.

‘When I think of luxury brands, I think of class, I think of peculiarity regarding status, price, position in the society and durability. A brand that stands out and makes me different from other people. Something that places me in a unique class makes me feel distinct, important and respected especially in a society where class makes you belong to a group. People associate themselves with those who belong to a particular class especially the affluent. A spectacular brand’. What motivates me is so I belong to a class that’s a motivation, in fact I can’t stress how important I feel when I buy one. Like the last one I bought was because I believed that I would be somewhere someday and I was looking at the class of people I will find myself with so I felt if I held that then I’d belong to that class. They cannot segregate or look down on me because I already have something that looks like theirs that’s my motivation. Something they can relate to’. (FG 1).

‘For me, I agree with what she says, class and status are my main reasons, I hardly can think of anything else’. (FG 2).

When the question to investigate the motive for the consumption of luxury fashion brands was asked, participants agreed that class and status was a determinant factor in their purchasing habits. The study shows that status via what is consumed makes one stand out in the society as well as places them in a suitable class. The class factor has become one of the dominant factors when it comes to consumption thereby emphasising as status brands. It is clear that luxury in itself is tied to the affluent. Even when participants do not belong to such classes, they believe that owning an item can place them where they wish to belong without any form of unjust or prejudicial treatment. This action can reflect an aspirational group in some ways because they believe and hope that buying an item can put you where you wish to belong, motivates them to purchase such products. It also emphasises on evolutionary motivational factors as driving force for luxury fashion consumption.

‘I will say luxury fashion brands help me make some noise like you know that feeling of not wanting to talk about yourself or sound too vain yet something speaks of your class. That’s what drives me to buy Louis Vuitton. Those huge LV logos are killing. They make statement’. (FG 3).

Evidently, while consumers are concerned about status and how to make a statement about themselves, they also engage in subtle signalling via visible logos. Consumers will participate in luxury fashion products with visible logos. According to these consumers, visible logos can determine how people portray themselves to others.

‘To add to this I will say, I do not think of anything other than how will people see me? What would they perceive of me if I use this item, what class does this brand belong?, I feel very conscious of what I wear. At first, I use to deny the fact that I was classy but now I do because sitting right here, I have realised that my main purpose of buying is to fit into a particular group of people’. (FG 4).

Others pay attention to what people make out of their possessions and so there is this consciousness of others when making purchases. The decision-making process for these luxury fashion consumers is influenced by the people around them.

‘Very true, I have never really thought of why I buy luxury brands until now. This question is an eye-opener. I quite agree that there’s some sort of status in luxury

brands. To be honest, I will say I buy because I think it's a good way to decide what class one belongs. I mean let's look at it this way. I bought a bag from Harrods some time ago, and a friend of mine met me using the bag, and she goes- why are you using this bag just anyhow, don't you know this bag is classy and makes you look like you have all the money in the world. Trust me I had no money inside that bag. So now I am beginning to think that if you wear an expensive stuff, whether or not you have money at the moment people will just conclude that you have all the money in the world' (FG 5).

'This is quite funny to hear, but it's the truth. I posted a picture of a bag on Facebook, and I hadn't even bought the bag yet. Then people kept commenting on the bag, but funny enough almost all comments were centred on me as a big girl or a rich girl'. (FG 6).

Within the focus group, luxury fashion brands were described with regards to belongingness, conspicuousness, subtle signalling, class, status, price, quality and durability and the motivation for the consumption of luxury fashion brands were linked to these preconceived understanding of the concept. Additionally, to show the consistency of this findings. A third method was adopted- the participant observation. Participant observation also reveals that evolutionary motive dictates why Black African women buy luxury fashion goods.

Findings from participant observation are used to deepen and widen the research scope as well as a means of attaining reliability and validity. The theme evolutionary motive was also evident in the observational study. Similarities exist among observed participants about how items are placed. Every item was neatly placed, and every piece seems to have a designated area; shoes, bags, clothes and pieces of jewellery were placed skilfully. Another similar thing among participants is how they present themselves with charisma which suggests that they feel quite comfortable about consuming luxury fashion brands, this is also reflected in how they speak about these brands. They talked extensively about their possessions as an achievement and linked this to their ability to maintain status. Participants are quite enthusiastic about these possessions and place emphasis on how they became attached to consuming luxury brands and the motive for keeping up with the behaviour. (See *Appendix 6*).

'My boyfriend is a very social and classy person, and he gets to meet up with so many ladies because of his of work. He is always exposed to lots of ladies. I used to feel so threatened by them, and so I decided ok I needed to keep them off at the same time protect my boyfriend from them. I am 28 and getting a guy is so hard. Because I know he loves classy women, and he is classy himself, I decided I was going to be classy. I started buying some expensive pieces of stuff, my first was a Chanel bag, and when I brought it home, he felt so impressed. Ever since then I have been saving up to buy so I don't look odd within that class. That's why you can see all these bags and shoes here'. (PO 1).

Considering how the participant stressed the way in which the need to keep her relationship is a motivator, a question was prompted:

(Is that the only reason why you have all these luxury fashion brands?)

'That isn't the only reason, but that's the main reason I started buying. I feel it's the best way to tell people off and a right way to stay within your circle. I don't have all the money in the world, but I feel good when people look at me as a rich girl. Even my boyfriend respects that. He can hardly compare me to all those ladies jumping around him. I have realised that it is important to have a circle and stick to it.' I mean class or social status, people who belong to the same group as me, it is important to me because like I said it is a good way to tell people off. These luxury brands also keep people off. You see that in the pricing and how they are positioned. They just make you know that if you do not have money you do not belong. So if you cannot afford it then stay off. So that's how I use these brands too, a way to position myself for the right sets of people. The right kind of friends. I don't know why people are so particular about luxury brands in this case fashion and all but my reasons are just what I have told you'. I also respect everything I buy, because it is as a result of these items that I am grouped into the class I want. Secondly, these stuffs make my boyfriend respect me (PO 1).

Figure 5.4: The Mating Retention Circular Model

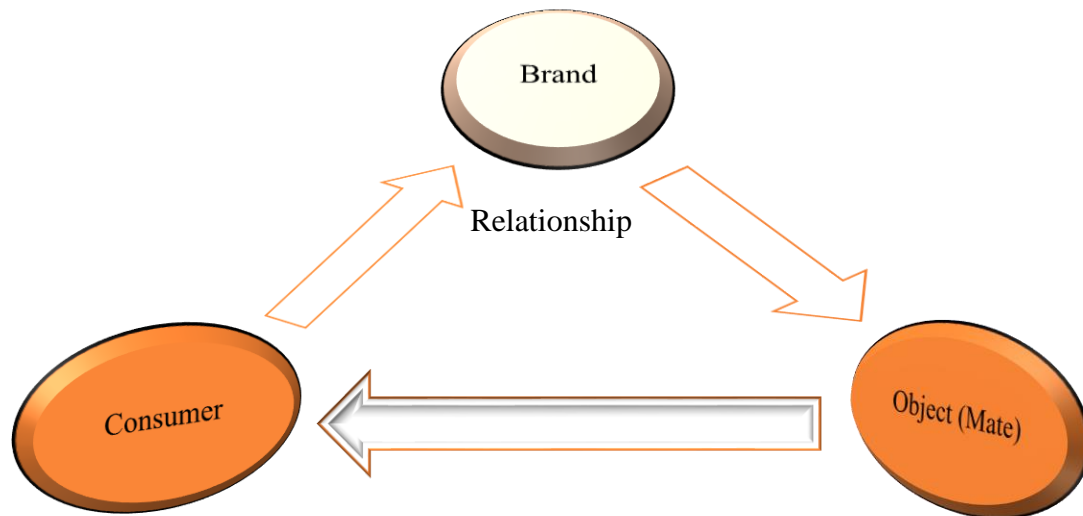


Figure 5.4 shows the mate retention circular model. This model reveals that the process of retaining a mate is in a circular form which differs from the method of signalling the mate. In this model, three elements are observed, the consumer, the brand and the object (mate). The consumer uses the brand to retain the mate, so the more she engages, the more her relationship with the object solidifies. This phase goes round in circle, as the circle revolves, two things are established: brand relationship and relationship with the object. The relationship with the brand is seen to shape the whole process. In the middle of the circle is a relationship that occurs with the brand and the object, this means that the relationship with the brand will determine the relationship with the object and the success of one depends on another.

5.4 Consumer Brand Relationship and Hedonism

Another significant theme evident in this study is relationship and hedonism. Participants have displayed emotional connection with luxury fashion brands due to their experience. Some of the ways this concept is identified are through the common relationship constructs. Within this theme, some of the ideas that personify relationship include love, attachment, devotion, attraction, satisfaction and nostalgia are observed.

'I Have several of their purses and etc....love the classics...they never go out of style.'
(IR 7)

'Love Chanel and their products, but they need a different model. Like Black Models one, we can identify. I always say to them at their store. Get Black Models. I am Black,

and one thing I wouldn't mind seeing is a Black Chanel Model because of how much I love Chanel and want to connect and be part of it. I always suggest ways they can improve that's if they care to listen. Anytime I am at their store I say a lot to the salesperson, that's is how passionate I am about it, and I can worship my Chanel' (IR 8).

Respondents were very open and responsive towards their motive for the consumption of luxury fashion consumption. At this point, the study reveals a clear emotional display by the participants, the tone of admiration and attachment were evident during the discussion. The feeling of satisfaction and love was not only verbally displayed but none verbally, these participants were very positive about their words and could demonstrate with actions like wrapping hands around the chest and smiling uncontrollably. All participants expressed a reasonable level of admiration towards the fact that they consume luxury fashion brands. The relationship portrayed in this study is mutual in that it involves the interaction between the participants and the brand.

'Like this watch, I am putting on I've had it for more than 15 years, and that's the only watch I have, some people would have had like about 10. It is durable. When I bought this watch, I paid about 800 plus for it then, but now if you go to the market Raymond Weil, it's a 1000 plus. I also know that some people have Rolex, so I'll say it's about what you love and attached to as well and what it means to you. So for me, it means the feeling of attachment that sense of satisfaction that I think no other brand can meet (IR 1).

With regards to luxury fashion brands, people have different preferences, which means that choice may vary, but it is a dominant component, this also suggests that all luxury fashion brands may be similar in price range but differ in consumer acceptance and preference. Consumer preference is linked to the brand features as well as the connection to the brand. Participants express what brands they prefer within the luxury fashion category. This attitude is evident in the way they speak about such brands and how conscious they are of the brand name and qualities.

'I mean I have a sister who is very trendy, and she will buy things that are only in fashion afterwards no matter how expensive they are she gets tired and discards them by giving them out or selling them off. But I am not like that I love my items, I can't imagine discarding them or giving them away. There's this feeling of attachment, and

sometimes my husband will say if you are as devoted to me as you are to these bags life will be better. Because after using I carefully clean them up. I keep them very safe, and I notice that because I pamper them they last longer. You know what they say 'relationships last when nourished (IR 9).'

While some use the word love to state their connection categorically, others use words such as passionate, satisfaction and trust. These words emphasise the existence of a relationship. Even though luxury fashion is considered for the upper class, this study reveals that consumers irrespective of income levels choose brands that link to their personality.

'The reason I love Mulberry, they are very discreet, you won't see me with Louis Vuitton because I think it shouts, because the branding is so out there, whereas Mulberry is very expensive, unique and discreet at the same time. I love them for that (IR 1)

Some participant would instead go for brands such as Mulberry because according to them the Mulberry brand is not a conspicuous brand even though it is a luxury, it is a discreet luxury. While some consumers prefer cautious luxury brands, others prefer conspicuous luxury with large visible logos. People who are drawn towards items that are inconspicuous are more interested in the intrinsic value they get from the brand than they are in how people see them. For these consumers, they do not want others to identify the value of what they possess or what they wear at any particular time. This discreet personality becomes a driver for consumer brand relationship. Furthermore, consumers form relationships with brands when they realise the relationship is mutual metaphorically. In this context, mutuality means the link is in two ways and correlative. Not just the consumer getting attached but also the brands serving the purpose of consumption through personality connection; this means how the brand connects to their personality. This may differ between participant as some participant only want a product that is durable and of good quality.

'That I am not being represented by luxury fashion companies as someone who buys luxury fashion brands doesn't mean I can't buy them. It is even too late now that I am in love with them and feel this emotional force towards them' (IR 10).

The relationship in this context shows that consumers are mindful of every detail about the brand, including their marketing campaigns. Just like interpersonal relationships where expectations arise, it is so with this form of relationship. Consumers are concerned about how the Black African woman is ignored by luxury fashion companies and expect that they should

be carried along with their campaigns. Regardless of how they feel about the company's lack of care towards also focusing on the Black woman, they still buy.

'I have this lv (Louis Vuitton) twist clutch in every colour and print LOVE it. Love is fundamental in anything I do. If I don't love something, I really can't stay long with that thing. I love my job, and I also love my luxury bags. I just got this coat from Louis Vuitton online, and I can't wait to wear it during winter. I am so much attracted to it. It's an excellent way to end the year. London can be a very lonely place if you aren't with family, so I make myself happy by buying these things (IR 11).

'I trust brands that have good quality and are durable as well. I don't like buying things every time; I spend my money on items that will last. I admire products from Little Liffner (IR 12).

Remarkably, a brand relationship is evident in the focus group study. Focus group participants also reveal a form of bond with luxury fashion brands. What was a bit distinct from that of the interview is that the participants emphasise on the excitement derived from owning these items. This enthusiasm comes from a desire that is met.

'I love my Louis Vuitton bags, I bought mine in their shop in New York when I visited my daughter, and yes they are expensive, but they are an investment. One thing I am pleased about is the fact that I have this inner satisfaction that it will just last as long as I want it to last. When I buy any luxury fashion item I feel so excited because this is something that I yearn for, this is something that I feel attached to and for me as well I am very attracted to those LV bags with huge logos on them'. I am 50 in age but 20 at heart and fashion' (the group laughs), I love the way this brand treats customers whether in their store or on the phone. They make you feel like a queen which draws me quite close'. (FG2.4)

Firstly, there is a desire to own a luxury fashion product; the next is the ability to meet that desire and then finally once the need is met, there is an inner satisfaction that the product is possibly going to last with them as long as they want. This pleasure also produces an external reaction which is the excitement. The whole experience process ends in a feeling that is identified as a relationship. Additionally, the experience process also involves the means in which the brand was purchased whether online or in store, how participant feel they are treated

by these brands keeps them connected for a longer time thereby causing repeat purchase and aspiration towards the brand.

'Is there any word stronger than love? I would have rather gone for such a word to describe how I feel'. (FG2.5)

In certain situations, women find it difficult to express how they feel about their brand relationship experience. They become in-expressive and blank due to lack of words to convey how they interpret their relationship with the brand. This attitude differs between consumers. While some consumers do not know what they make out of the bond, others understand how to communicate their feelings.

'My main motivation is the fact that I trust that they cannot fail me. For example, I have been using my Gucci bag for over 5years now, and it is still the same as the first day I bought it. I care for it, I LOVE Gucci, and I think it also discreet'. (FG2.6).

The brand relationship theme also links consumer feelings to the brand feature; it shows that people form a connection with brands as a result of what it offers. The fact that luxury fashion brands are durable due to premium quality motivate consumers to buy. This factor enhances the experience process thereby prompting the feeling of trust. The sense of confidence drives people's loyalty and relationship.

'I love Chanel would love to go to that exhibition hope it comes to London. I buy a lot of their products too. My love for Chanel products is that they are satisfying, I have this self-satisfaction. I have had it for a while now, and any day I come to it, I find it the same way as I left it. I don't need to clean it up. You know how relationships are. There's that friend you love so much, you don't necessarily have to see each other every day, but the moment you are together you feel this strong connection and bond like you have been talking daily, that's why I have stayed with this brand. Chanel brand gives me this feeling of fulfilment and satisfaction'. (FG2.5)

Furthermore, the relationship is also expressed through components such as satisfaction, love and fulfilment. The more an individual finds fulfilment in a brand, the more she is likely to stay attached and loyal to such brand.

'I will just say I love them and I feel so attached to them planning to buy another LV this Christmas as a present for myself. Crazy about LV. I am so crazy about them especially Louis Vuitton'. (FG2.7)

'My one is some weird attraction, and this started with just admiring people who wear it, then I got so attached to admiring people that I decided to start buying them for myself. So what motivates me will be attraction plus attachment'. (FG2.9)

'I love Louis Vuitton bags; I got two of them. Great quality and a good investment. I fall in love with any brand that gives me value for my money'. (FG2.9)

Respondents show an attachment to luxury fashion brands that they own through verbal and nonverbal expressions.

'I want to own every Louis Vuitton bag. I have purchased over 20, and I'm not exaggerating... all the employees at LV in Santa Clara valley fair mall, Palo Alto and San Francisco already know me even the people from the Las Vegas stores I'm their BEST customer. I have been in London for about 6months, and I am beginning to explore their online store since I do not have time to go around. It seems like this is the one brand that keeps me loyal. They know how to keep our thing going (Smiles). You are at my place now, and you can see all these items in my closet. That should be enough for you to know that I stay loyal and committed. After I lost my husband, he was very fond of buying things for me especially the expensive ones. He usually takes me out; then we lived in San Francisco. When he died I couldn't stand that environment I had to move here to London and even at that when I want to stay connected to his memories I buy those same things I know he would have bought for me like a Hermes bag or Louis Vuitton accessories. Because of his memories, I feel so attached to my luxury fashion stuff, and I will go on as long as I can. That's what I mean by our thing going. It's like a relationship that draws me closer to my husband, and I miss him so much. I remember getting a new job after series of exams on the role. I had to cross three stages to get that role when I eventually did. The first thing that crossed my mind was to buy myself a gift as my husband will always do; he rewards all my achievements with gifts. For me, this has also become a tradition and something I have to keep up with to hold his memories close. I doubt if any man can do that (PO 2).*

The participant was quite outspoken about her loyalty and commitment to the brand. This devotion is driven by nostalgic attachment because it brings back memories of her spouse.

Memories that connect her to her spouse. This relationship is sentimental, a constant reminder of the things her husband would have done for her if in a similar situation. The study suggests that connection can be formed for different reasons, while others develop relationships because they are mutually beneficial, others do because they are nostalgic. What is most interesting in this is that irrespective of why bonds are formed, they can be dictated with different constructs. Furthermore, this research suggests that relationships built towards brands are relative: dependent on the individual, the context and the scenery, which means relationships do not occur in a linear motion. Another extract from this study shows that because consumers are loyal to luxury fashion brands, they find alternative ways to buy these brands. For instance, going to outlets to buy them, out of season products, which seem a bit cheaper than the seasoned ones or even waiting for sale periods before purchase.

'I come here almost every time to shop. I get my items from here. People say items here are out of season, who cares? I love Burberry for even thinking of having outlets for people like me who cannot afford full price. Look at this bag a season ago it was about £1,000. See it cost £500 at the moment, that's half price, which makes it affordable for me to buy. I love this outlet (PO 3).

'This is another brand I love so much. I prefer this to some brands out there. There are very expensive but at the same time, give people opportunity to wear their products. The price slash is what attracts me. You should come here after Christmas, and then you find so many items slashed down just because it is out of season. I love love love. Look! How sexy this wallet is. I must get it (PO 3).

Reflecting on the field notes and events of the day, events reveal that irrespective of the fact that the prices at the outlet had gone down, the respondent was still particular about more slashes. At this point, it is clear that there is an inner desire to buy. A relationship in this context is reflected in how consistent, and patient the participant was in checking the price of the product. The respondent's attachment to the products was also revealed in that the products were considered 'out of season', it did not matter to her. Participant's patience although not stated is demonstrated on her ability to look through all the prices on the products. The smile at the Burberry store by the respondent while repeatedly saying 'who cares', suggests that this participant is in self-denial. She cares but cannot come to terms with the fact that she cannot afford full priced products, however, this does not change the way she feels about the brand by constantly emphasising the word 'love'.

5.5 Anthropomorphism, brand and consumer personality

As a result of the relationship, respondents tend to attribute human qualities to brands. Features that can be associated only with humans was palpable in the study. These attributes were used to emphasise feelings derived for and from the brand, feelings that occur as a consequence of a relationship. Words like bae, are used in relationships to address one's spouse or partner.

'For \$3,400 I treat it like a baby. I wrap and put it back in the box every after use.' (**IR 13**)

'When you spend so much money on an item you can't help but pamper such item. Look at this shoes, its Christian Louboutin shoes, I have come to love her, and she means so much to me. I always say she's my luck, but recently a friend came to ask to use this, I couldn't stand giving this particular bae out' (**IR 14**)

Anthropomorphism is expressed in what participants say about the brands, how they treat them and how they expect others to handle them. They pay particular attention and attribute care to their luxury fashion possessions.

'This dress from Armani is my bae' (**IR 17**)

'Brands speak, but Saint Laurent speaks better' (**IR 10**)

'She means everything to me when I say everything I mean everything. I take it personally when my sisters don't understand how much she means to me. Sometimes my sisters use this particular bag just anyhow so to avoid any damage on her I keep away from people' (**IR 16**)

Consumers derive pleasure in their attitudes towards the brands. They cannot bear the loss of the products and cannot also take others acting a bit laid back about how they feel about these items. Here there is a clear view of the value people place on possessions. This respondent places value on her Victoria Beckham, she refers to the bag as a 'she' and would want every other person to treat the bag like a person.

'I went for party ones, everywhere was filled up. I managed to get myself a seat. Because everywhere was filled up as I wanted to go to the loo, I dropped my Victoria Beckham bag on my seat by the time I came back, and a lady had dropped the bag on the floor and sat on the seat. I almost tore her into pieces. I was so mad, and people just didn't understand why I was so particular about that bag. I told the lady this bag is more important to me than you are, I value this bag she's my baby. Why the hell will

you put her down? You needed to see me that day. This lady was so uncomfortable, and she had to leave the seat. The point is that I value my possessions, I will never drop any of my expensive items on the floor not for any reason. I carry them on my lap or keep them on a clean seat. Just because you consider it an ordinary bag I don't. I can't stand unnecessary treatment on it' (IR 10).

According to these respondents, spending money on expensive items such as luxury fashion brands is a good reason for attributing value to these brands. The value placed on luxury products are expressed in how they attribute human characteristics to their luxury fashion brands. Not only do consumers associate human attributes to luxury fashion brands, but they also treat them with special care, like not dropping the item carelessly and taking it personally when others do not understand the way they feel.

'I swear, do you know that Louis Vuitton logo?, I mean the new season logo bag. I love.

I have drooled over it. I later bought the bag, and she's one of a kind' (FG 1.1).

'Did you hear that? She took those words off my mouth. That bag is bae and very legit. (FG 1.8)

Participants are observed to have lots of items (see Appendix 7), owning a lot of luxury fashion items display attachment and commitment to these brands. Not only do they hold these items, but they also show affection to luxury fashion products, regardless of what brand. These commitment and attachment make participants attach human characteristics to them.

(Why do you have all these things?)

'Point of correction Christiana, these are not things, these are worth a fortune. They are people, that's why when you walk on the red carpet, people ask who you are wearing not what you are wearing. These items have got traits that can change how others look at you. I can't help but educate people about the importance of knowing what to call a thing. I treat them like myself. I don't roughly treat them. I can spend hours just cleaning out my closet, and this is like a ritual I get to do almost every Saturday or when I am not at work. I wear people, I wear names not things, Louis Vuitton, Saint Laurent, and they are all names and people. I am aware of that. One has to learn to appreciate this fact' (PO 4) (see Appendix 7)

Cleaning her closet and particularly her luxury fashion items show the extent of care. It becomes a habit and a routine which shows consistency, and she calls it- a ritual, a tradition that must be observed. The way in which the participant points out the right word to use when addressing her luxury fashion brands. She stresses that these items are people and names rather than things. Throws more light on how people should treat luxury products, this confirms that consumers have a connection with these things. This study also reveals that things are taken personally when they are some definite link. (*see Appendix 7*)

'Are my crazy? I think something is going wrong with my brain. How can I let you fall off? You have to be treated like the girl you are. I call her Ashley Chanel. I really can't put her on the floor; even when I am on the train, she's always on my lap. I feel bad each time I mistakenly drop my Ashley (PO 5).

Screaming out because a bag has fallen means that it is not just an ordinary bag but a bag that creates meaning for the participant. The participant was so furious and upset with herself because of what she considers as a terrible mistake. The use of swear words signifies the extent of her anger. Additionally, this respondent calls her pink Chanel bag Ashley. In this case, Ashley is a name of a girl, and the girl represents her late little sister who she loved dearly. So to this respondent, letting this bag fall from her hand seem like a big offence to her.

From this study, anthropomorphism links to personality. An element within anthropomorphism is personality. This theme suggests that most consumers would buy products that carry certain traits than products that reflect who they are. It also suggests that what is most important to these set of consumers is the value they get for the money they spend. So these traits are what participants look out for when making consumption choices. Some of these characteristics include quality and durability. This study shows that consumers who are more interested in what the brand has to offer and its functionalities are those above a specific age and income level. Women above thirty-five were much more interested in the quality and durability of the brand than younger women.

'I love Louis Vuitton bags; I got two of them. Great quality and a good investment' (IR 43)

'I got one and it worth buying. The quality and the style tremendously very nice' (IR 44)

In addition to quality and durability, the increased value of the brand is another motivator. Participants express that the increased value of the brand irrespective of when you buy it

fascinates them. The fact that they can pawn their products in at any time makes them want to invest more.

'For me whatever I'm buying my main motivator is quality. For example, if I have three bags, I will rather have three bags of quality rather than have ten, if you see what I mean. I am somebody who will spend a thousand pounds on a bag, and I have about five bags that I have spent that amount of money. But if you see me in 10 years' time, I will have those bags. For me, luxury is about quality and spending my money on the right things' (IR 36)

The value of the brand does not depreciate, meaning that it stays the same. So when consumers are in need of funds or desire some other luxury fashion brands, they pawn the old ones. On the other hand, the participant also mention that the value of things have changed tremendously due to the economy, although this event has changed their style of buying it hasn't changed their taste for luxury fashion, so in this consumers look for alternative ways to engage these brands. These ways include buying from outlets as well as buying pre-owned luxury fashion brands.

'Another thing for me also its durability honestly it is better to buy one and save money for other things than to keep buying one thing over and over, that's waste of money. The experience I have is that whenever I buy a cheap item, I tend to buy many of those and at the end, they don't serve me but when I buy one that is a luxury I use that for a long time, and I have value for my money. It gives me value for money. I have lots of fake bags that have peeled off and trust me it a total waste of resources' (IR 36).

'At this stage when things are pretty hard, I mean Nigerians; the economy is so bad with the new government. Years ago when I use to visit I had all the money to throw around. £1,000 was not a big deal considering the exchange rate at that time but now £1,000 means over 600,000naira. You can imagine. What I do is I buy my stuff from outlets like the pre-owned outlets. I use versatile collective. You will find almost all the luxury items you want there at a fair price, but this time it is pre-owned. Despite the change in economy my taste for luxury hasn't changed, so I look for other ways to get those items' (IR 18).

This study suggests that even though the economic situation influences consumer's buying behaviour, it does not affect their taste, it only creates an alternative way for them. So economic

downturn is significant but what is most meaningful to the Black African woman is her taste for luxury fashion brands

'Spending a pound is a big deal. Things have changed now. The way I use to buy has changed too. Our economy is bad awful. I don't know if you are aware of this. Visiting now is just a habit but because I can't spend so much money I travel from London to Bicester village to get those out of season stuff especially when they are on sales. This Christmas season is the best time to buy things (IR 39).

'Sometimes when I need money and the fashion of that accessories have gone I pawn it. Because I just didn't like them anymore and they are no longer trendy I pawn. You can also trade them off they have second-hand value, in 2013 I had no money I traded off one of the bags I had, and it became their vintage, and I traded it for almost the same amount I bought it like seven years ago. So it is an investment' (FG 1).

'Luxury brands for me is when you talk about brands like Louboutin, the things that celebrities wear, the popular names and all of that. For me, that's luxury brands. I know Chanel, I know Gucci. I see high-quality brands as luxury brands, but I haven't considered 'gold' a luxury product, I see them as just good and high-quality accessories and for me so that it last longer not having to buy stuff all the time. I go for luxury brands for my wristwatch' (FG 3).

'For me buying luxury bags, this season means buying Aba made. Aba made has become luxury due to the economic issues in Nigeria. A bag that used to be 5,000naira in Aba is way over 30,000naira. (Laughter) But it is the truth. Why do we focus on luxury when it has to do with foreign brands? Don't we have expensive things in Nigeria? Look this bag (lifts up her bag for the group to see) is handmade in Aba, I bought it 200,000niara. That is a whole lot of money and while at the airport people loved it but it isn't a foreign brand. I think we should take our minds a bit away from the Western brands and look inward. I have a Ghanian friend who goes to Ghana to buy African fabrics when she brings them here, she makes bags from them and sells them very expensive, and people buy them' (FG 1).

Another element within this theme is consumer personality. It relates to traits that define consumer self. Within this study, qualities are seen as factors that shape consumer's preferences and taste. These traits are features that are distinct to individuals and characteristics that define who they are. In this study, it is shown that consumer self-impacts on the kind of brands they buy.

'The reason I love Mulberry, they are very discreet, you won't see me with Louis Vuitton because I think it shouts, because the branding is so out there, whereas Mulberry is very expensive, unique and discreet at the same time. I love them for that. For instance, as I am sited here I am putting something worth more than 2,000 pounds, but you will never know while looking at me. I enjoy the fact that only me knows what I am putting on at any point in time. Like this watch, I am putting on I've had it for more than 15 years and that's the only watch I have, some people would have had like about 10. It is durable. When I bought this watch, I paid about 800 plus for it then, but now if you go to the market Raymond Weil, it's a 1000 plus. I also know that some people have Rolex, so I'll say it is about what you love and attached to as well' (IR 1).

Consumers who are flashy may go for brands that reflect this trait. This behaviour happens in both way; where introverts feel attracted to discreet brands and unattached to any other that suggests otherwise. Brands have become symbols consumers use as communicating tools. Within this theme, traits such as discreet, trendy and panache have revealed that consumer self is a motivator for consumption. This study also explains that consumer self-determines how brands are received. For instance, one consumer may consider a visible brand but another thinks otherwise.

- *'I LOVE Givenchy, and I think it is subtle. I don't like the idea of wearing anything that has huge logos. I love expensive luxury, and I feel it should be unnoticeable. I don't want to work around with people having an idea of what I am putting on. It is my busy and should stay that way. If everyone can determine the worth of what I wear, it defeats the purpose of luxury. Luxury should be distinct and discreet. It should carry some aura and command respect. It should reflect who I am. Maybe this is just me, but I don't wear anything I fill people can tell what it is and how much it cost. That's why I love brands like Givenchy, if you do not come close you will never know. Simple but sophisticated that's me, and I go for things that reflect who I am' (IR 9).*

Within this study, participants express how comfortable they are putting on products that portray their identity. Fascinating how consumption choices differ between individuals based on identity. Evidently, self-identity influences consumption choices. However, it shows that consumers also refrain to use products that disconnects them from their true identity.

'I don't like flashy brands, maybe because I am not a flashy kind of person so I'll rather buy a Prada bag than buy a Louis Vuitton bag, I mean they are both luxury brands but they are represented differently. Prada suits my personality better. I like the feeling of having to tell someone the worth of what I am putting on without them knowing before that time. I like seeing the look on people's faces when I do. Do not rate me based on what I wear, I hide from such situations' (IR 37).

'I will say regarding buying anything whether luxury or not all I think of is a product that reflects who I am and helps me relate that to people. I love Mulberry, oh my I love. They just suit the purpose. I am a very discreet kind of person, yes I wear them because you will never know how expensive they are until I tell you' (IR 42).

Furthermore, the study suggests that being attracted to brands as a result of self-leads to a long-term relationship through repeat purchase and this serves as a motivational element towards such brands. Additionally, consumers who have discreet personality do not necessarily like people dictating the value of what they wear, so they prefer to go for brands that are less likely to have huge logos and vice versa. These respondents tend to differ in their reason for using luxury brands. Instead of buying to attract people, they buy to stay inconspicuous to people, which brings exciting facts about consumption and proves that consumers never buy for the same reason.

'I mean I have a sister who is very trendy, and she will buy things that are only in fashion afterwards no matter how expensive they are she gets tired and discards them by giving them out or selling them off. But I am not like that I love my items, I can't imagine discarding them or giving them away. There's this feeling of attachment, and sometimes my husband will say if you are as devoted to me as you are to these bags life will be better. Because after using I carefully clean them up even before use. I keep them very safe, and I notice that because I pamper them they last longer. You know what they say 'relationships last when nourished' (IR 9).

In this research, findings reveal that consumer self, lifestyle and cultural values can lead to consumption behaviour. When Black African women see others within their ethnic category wear similar brands, they relate to it on the level of lifestyle and culture. It is considered normal for these group of women to engage in luxury fashion consumption habits.

'I feel normal because it's just normal to see a black African woman with style, it's in our nature. We are stylish people and will always dress in style' (IR 15).

'Any woman who carries the type of brand I carry has got a style. It is stylish to carry a Prada bag. I have a couple of friends who are stylish as well; they are also Black women. I think stylishness is a trait and fashion luxury helps you bring out that trait' (IR 42).

'I think it's a Nigerian thing to wear expensive things. It gives you this feeling of being different and makes you feel like you stand out. Luxury fashion makes you stand out like a lady. You find out that anywhere you find yourself you stand out and you are exceptional. People respect you and regard you. You look important just too important because of the worth of what you are wearing at that time' (IR 33).

Another trait that defines consumers is the need for uniqueness. This study explains that in an attempt to stay unique, consumers tend towards brands that represent these qualities.

'Louis Vuitton is one of the top targets of investment, it is gorgeous and exquisite with elegance and trust me I stand out when I wear one. I always desire to stand out and look unique, this is just who I am, so I thrive to use products that play out who I am' (IR 15).

'I have bags of 50 pounds, but if I am going out for a high-end wedding or occasion, I use one of my luxury bags because with them I look different from the crowd, you know what I mean. Especially my Mulberry bags' (IR 16).

5.6 Aspiration

The theme 'aspiration' was observed in this study to explain the extent in which the Black African woman will go to own a luxury fashion product. The need to possess a luxury fashion brand drives consumers into the state of aspiration. The need is transferred cognitively into desires, targets and goals. This desire motivates the Black African woman into setting up goals

that can help meet these requirements. Some of these goals include saving up for a long duration of time, dreaming and hoping to own these brands. This study demonstrates that Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands are aspirers and can be called the aspirational consumers. Consumers who in spite of their income or status are hopeful towards getting what they want. Not only are they hopeful, but they also have practical ways of exhibiting this hope.

'I save up for them if I do not have money at a particular time. Planning to buy another LV this Christmas as a present for me. Crazy about LV' (IR 19).

'I do not have an LV bag yet, will get one shortly, I'm saving up for that. I desire to own one. I saw one advert on their Facebook fan page since then I have been dreaming of getting one' (IR 20).

'Yea like I said I've started saving up for LV Clutch, You know the new one in trend, I want one! So pretty' (IR 47).

Consumers also dream of this product, this suggests that this brand is often in their thought. This theme can also be linked to a relationship; it reflects how hard Black African women work to buy one luxury fashion item. Some of them go to the extent of selling off their possessions especially those they consider untrendy.

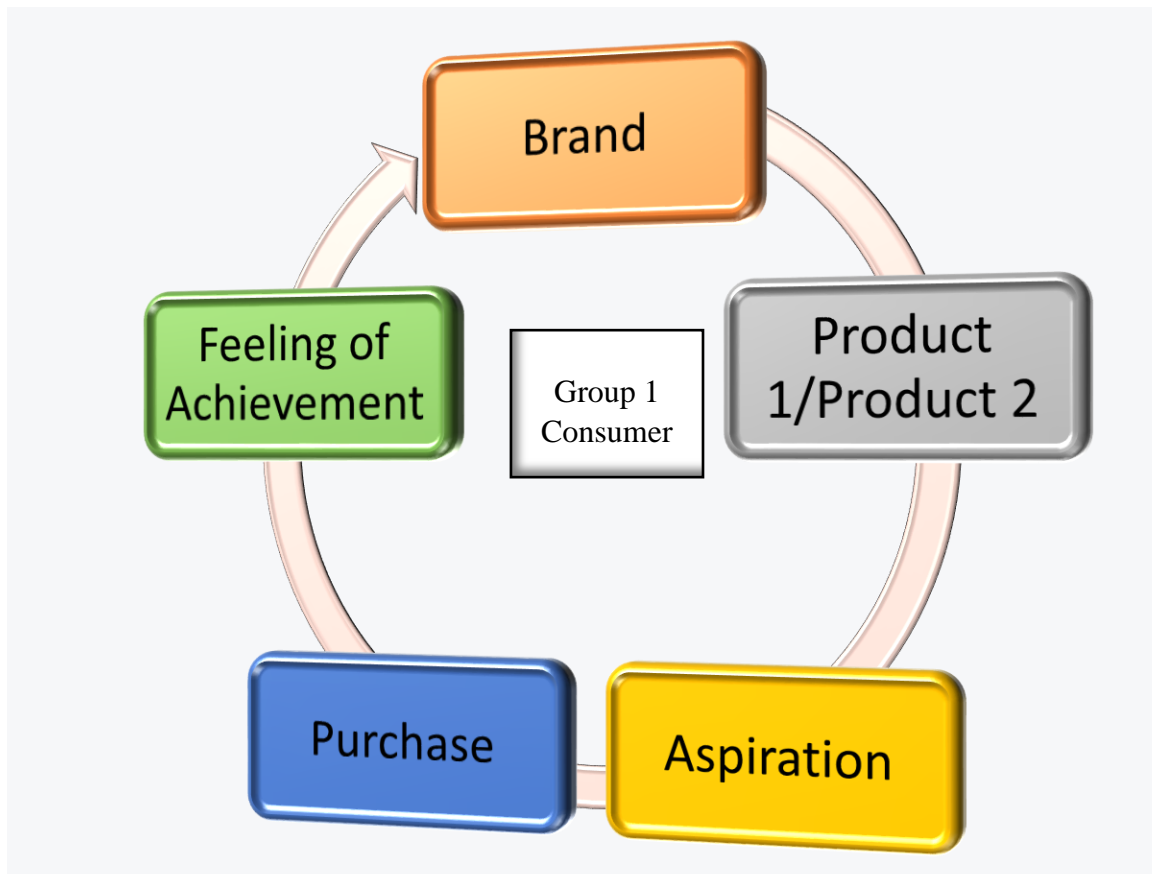
'LV (Louis Vuitton) bags are gorgeous, and it is my dream to have it ever since it was released in the market, but the sad thing is I couldn't afford the price it's so costly but still working on it though. Like selling off some of the things I have that aren't so trendy just to get one that is trending at the moment' (IR 21).

Even though consumers understand that owning a luxury item is an investment that requires a lot of money, they also link their desires towards the emotional meaning rather than the functionality of the brand.

'Louis Vuitton is a luxury product. You will splurge to own a luxury product. Don't talk about function on luxury products because it will not make any sense. Owning a luxury product is a dream. And I dream endlessly to own it. The sad thing is that these brands are hardly on sale. Well since I couldn't get the Louis Vuitton I saved up for I got a Mulberry bag for that price, and to me, I love the fact that luxury is a luxury any day.' (IR 22).

'It was my dream bag, and dream does come true! I just got my lv (Louis Vuitton) bag Normandy, and I love it. For \$3,400 I treat it like a baby. I wrap and put it back in the box every after use. I have an eye on twist lv \$4,800 I can only dream at this stage, but again dreams do come true' (IR 23).

Figure 5.5. The Aspirational Process Model 1



This model reveals the aspirational process of consumers. The first stage, the consumer identifies a brand and a product offering of the brand, aspires by saving up before the actual purchase. When the product is purchased, it comes with a feeling of achievement and more desire to hope for another product within the brand. This attitude becomes a continuous process which may lead a long-term relationship with the particular brand and shows that consumer needs are insatiable and on-going. It also shows that people's desire towards luxury fashion products does not end the moment they can buy these brands, it only creates a new desire towards another.

'Seriously when I bought my first LV bag I really thought if I did the right thing, I saved up over a year to get that bag. As I was walking out of the store, I was sweating and felt like I should return it the next day. Although I was very fulfilled and excited, I wasn't sure if it was the right decision. But when I started using it to show off it felt perfect having it and from then on I started wishing for another bag and still saving up for the new one I intend to buy. But this time around it is a more expensive one. I also want to add that since I bought that one I have stopped buying cheaper ones. I end up saving money now to buy bags because it's pricey! Luxury bags are worth buying' (IR 24).

The aspiration towards luxury fashion brands can be driven by how consumers perceive that luxury fashion brand can last a lifetime due to its quality and durability. This perception helps participants engage on a long-term basis. Not only do participants aspire to consume luxury brands, but they also want to make them heritage brands that can be handed down from one generation to another. This study reveals that when participants aspire for brands, they do that not only for themselves but also to hand it over another.

'LV(Louis Vuitton) lasts forever, if you treat them right, my oldest bag is 26 years old, and she still looks great, my wallet is the same age and has no tears or scratches it's worth the price, I own 4 and I've used them over and over again. It is expensive but if you save for it, why not. YOLO. My daughters will inherit them no doubt' (IR 25).

'Same here, I save up to buy my luxury bags, they are so expensive so for me my best option is to save. No matter how little until the money is complete, then I buy' (FG2. 2)

(You have been staring at that particular bag for a while now, do you mind telling me why?)
(See Appendix 8)

(Laughter) 'You are so funny and very observant. Each time I walk into this store I look at that particular bag, it cost about £5,000 at the moment, and I can't afford it at the moment. I'll keep admiring it until I get the money to buy. I love the bag, I see her in my dreams, I even droll for it. Well let me shock you I have been saving up for this for a while now, and each time I come here, I just come to reassure myself that the bag is still available. Look how sexy she looks (laughs. Just to be sure the bag isn't gone. I can't bear to lose it' (PO 6).

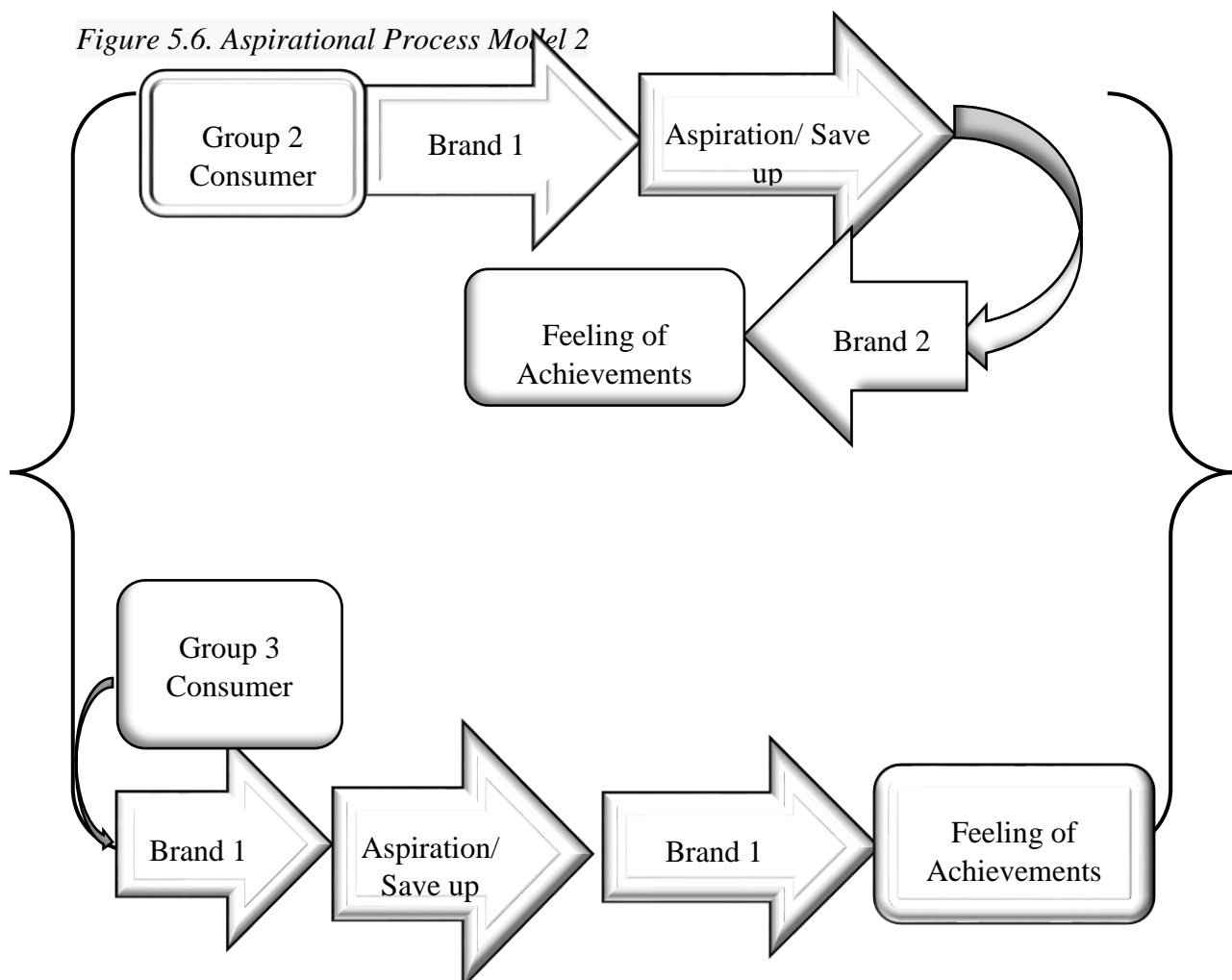
After the conversation, the participant moves away from the bag and decides to inquire about another make of bag within the store. She asks for the sales lady to give her access to the bag.

While looking at this particular bag, decides to take a photo of her using the bag and continues the conversation.

'I am so crazy about Gucci bags; I still wonder what these people have done to me. I will have to buy this one. Saw this online and it's quite cheaper than the one I am saving up for, but they are the same brand, right? I am so buying this; I can't leave here without any of them. I am happy I have some money at the moment. I don't need to save up for this one. Christiana, what do you think? (PO 6).

With a broader thought around the event of the day, although the participant has been saving up for a particular bag which motivates her towards visiting the store always to check if this bag is still available, this behaviour doesn't stop the participant from buying another which is quite affordable for her at that time. This attitude adds another turn to the aspirational framework. Aspiring for one yet having a spontaneous interest in another which appears to be a lower price but same brand. This group of consumers is presented in Figure 5.6:

Figure 5.6. Aspirational Process Model 2



Aspirational process model 2 as shown in figure 5.6 represents two different groups of consumers. Group 1 show that these consumers aspire towards a particular product and brand, they save up for it but end up buying another brand. To these consumers, what is significant is luxury fashion products regardless of what brand it represents. On the other hand, the second group of consumers, aspire, save up but end up with a cheaper product of the brand. What is common among these consumers is the feeling of achievements attained at the end of the whole process.

Saving up was commonly used to describe the extent in which consumers can go to own a luxury fashion brand. Supporting the aspirational framework 2,

'I save up my monthly salary to get my luxury fashion brands. I decided I will buy once a year because to me that seems very achievable. I have kids back in Nigeria, and I send money to them very often. After sending to them, I divide what is left and assign to whatever I want. Like bills, transport, feeding, whatever is left I keep it aside for my shopping at the end of the year. At that time a lot of brands go on sale, so I can buy as much as I can. So, yes that is how far I can go to get a luxury fashion brand. Years ago I used to go and cue up in front of Selfridges when I know that there's going to be a sale like Black Fridays. Sometimes when I get there, some people would have been there earlier on. Some people even sleep there just to wait for the opening. I believe it's insane, but if you genuinely want something, you will always go for it no matter what. It is imperative for me to own a luxury fashion brand because I go out a lot. Apart from work, I attend events, weddings and anything I am invited to participate. Even if I do not end up buying the item I want, I still end up buying something within the same category (PO 7).

5.7 Location, Branding and Convenience

Location emerges as a significant finding in this study. Place as a theme emphasises more on the availability of the brand and convenient shopping.

'Another drive for buying them (luxury fashion brands) is because I find them here. We all find them here. How can you buy what you don't see? That's not possible. I can quickly go online or walk to the stores to get them, and I even like the stores because they treat you like a queen. In all honesty, if you are a Black African woman in London

who has money, you will be so excited because with your money you can sit at home and have things get delivered to you. This particular experience of getting things offered to you is more convenient than buying in the store. I don't think we have such in Nigeria or some part of Africa. When you go to some of these sites the state apparently that they don't deliver to certain parts of the world and Nigeria is part of it. So it is convenient to buy anything when you are in London. They have policies that protect consumers. You can exchange and return items if you don't like them. Nigerians do not have that kind of provision for consumers unless it is a big store but if you must do that you should be ready to fight. So London offers you an excellent opportunity to spend your money and be happy. That alone is a good motivator for me (IR 28).

Convenience is another reason why people buy; this links to the accessibility of the product, consumerism, consumer protection and the location of the brand which in this case London. Consumers are concerned about issues of consumer protection laws in other countries mainly African countries. They feel at ease buying premium items from cities that have laws protecting them because purchasing these products is a considerable investment and safety for them should be guaranteed.

'I think it is convenient to buy. The stores are easily accessible if you live in London, in some cities in the UK you can't find some of these luxury stores but here in London, walk through New Bond-street you will find a lot of them, I think almost all of them can be found here in London. You can also find at Selfridges and Harrods. London makes it easy to buy because you are exposed to these brands on daily basis' (IR 28).

Additionally, the city of London attracts consumers because it gives easy access to luxury products. Luxury consumers who are also visitors in London tend to enjoy their stay in the city as a result of buying convenience.

'I am from Guinea, and I haven't lived here for long, but the first thing that crossed my mind when I came here was 'where are all those luxury things have been dreaming off?', my husband then took me to a place called Harrods and bought two bags for me. I was quite happy to finally come to London, especially because I think London people like high fashion. London is only fun for me because I have access to some excellent things' (IR 46).

Furthermore, apart from the fact that consumers perceive London as a luxury fashion hub, people who reside in other cities and countries, especially African countries, believe that

whatever brand is purchased in London has high value and quality. This notion is rooted in the way the city is portrayed. Individuals feel positive about London, and this feeling is transferred to the brands irrespective of their origin. In this case, participants do not pay so much attention to the brand's country of origin as long as the product is situated in London. This study uncovers that the place (location) where brands are situated influences brand perception, this perception, on the other hand, impacts on brand acceptance and thereby stimulating buying behaviour.

'You know that saying when you are in Rome behave like the Romans. That's what I can say here 'when you are in London behave like a Londoner. London is a luxury fashion hub, and I am here for a one month visit. When my friend asked if I was interested in an interview about my love for luxury fashion brands, I quickly said yes. She knows I love luxury brands and my fashion goods I get them here in London. I live in Kenya, but I come to London very often during or after summer-it depends on when I have the time. I always go back with a bag packed full of fashion attires, bags and some shoes. I am not so particular about shoes but for bags –I love them. I must buy every time I am here. London is a good place to shop and spend some money. Even when I say I won't buy so much, I end up buying more than I intend. Then when I get back home a lot of people just run around me like a queen just arrived. People value items from here' (IR 31).

Within this study, it is revealed that the identity of the place where the brand situates is conveyed to the brand and all product offerings. The brand carries the identity of the place location and conveys this to the consumer's self. At the point of purchase, participants think not just about the value of the brand and what it means to them but also about how the value of the location reflects on their identity. Place in this context serves as a motivational element. An element that is demonstrated through the availability and accessibility alongside the added effect it has on the product offering. For instance, a luxury fashion brand bought in a remote area of Africa, although of the same price value may not receive the same attention as a brand purchased in London. This study confirms that even though consumers are attached to luxury fashion brands and are motivated to buy, place is also a determinant factor. Additionally, findings in this study point to convenience and location as great sources to understanding the Black African woman's luxury fashion buying behaviour in London:

- *'The thing is I love shopping, I love buying, and one thing I think of before I buy is where do I find this thing? Sometimes you have the money, but you can't even have access to the item. Here in London, it is very convenient for me to be able to get my bags online. I find it quite convenient; I am always online looking for new releases if I have to go to the store is probably to feed my eyes to see if I am missing out on anything. To answer that question I will say I buy luxury fashion brands because it is easily available which makes it very convenient' (FG 4).*

'I agree with what she just said shopping online for me makes me want to buy everything. When I was in Nigeria, I had a few issues with buying my goods online. The reason is that some of these brands don't deliver to Nigeria, maybe because they do not trust Nigerians –I am just saying though but it's not as convenient as it is here where you can either buy online or walk straight to the stores. These stores are easily available. How many luxury fashion stores do we have in Nigeria? Even if they are you can only find in certain cities, but I doubt if we do but here you can either go to Selfridges, Harrods or even the individual stores which makes life easy. You do not need to sweat for it. So if you ask what drives my buying of luxury fashion brands, apart from the fact that I love the exclusive looks it gives to me, it's because I can quickly gain access to them (FG 5).

Another intriguing point within the place context is the accessibility to the internet connection. Respondents express how online shopping is paramount to their buying decision process. The study demonstrates that online shopping does not only motivate buying of luxury fashion brands, but it is seen as a convenient way of shopping when it comes to conspicuous consumption. Participants establish that when it comes to shopping in London, apart from the fact that these brands are readily available in stores, they are also online. That means their online system works and the place (London) is known for its easy access to the internet.

'The online system here is fantastic, and the fact that internet connection is fast is a good one too. I come to London every year at least twice, but I don't miss summer at all. The point here is that I love buying my things online if I have to go to the store that means I have my friends with me. In London you find lots of things, London gives you an opportunity to see these top brands. They may not be made in London, but London is a place where you get exposed to several brands whether cheap or expensive, almost

everything sold here has a name. It is very convenient to buy things here. You don't have return or refund issues. I love London. (FG 6).

In this study, online shopping relates to convenient shopping. The fact that people can buy any luxury item from the comfort of their homes is a driving force for consumption to occur. Although consumers love these things, have a relationship with these products, they also appreciate when they can buy easily. In addition to this, they are also able to compare prices, view more products and compare items from different brands in a discreet way.

'I feel so happy to see that people here share my view. I am of the opinion that you can have all the money but not know how to spend it simply because what you want to buy is too stressful to achieve. As much as I love luxury fashion, I also would want to be suffering to get one. Here in London, you find so many luxury brands; I prefer to buy from Harrods because they have what I want and its exclusive, you can't find Harrods everywhere. Even in the UK, I think there's just one which is the one here in London. You get to a particular age when you have worked so hard you just don't want to work hard to buy. Online is convenient, but I get to do that when my kids can help, I am not good with computers (laughter), so I just take a bus from here to Harrods so yes I agree with everyone that it is convenient shopping in London. London is a right place that I know (FG 5).

Quite fascinating how participants link place to the respect they attract from people outside the country. People outside London, appreciate them for their ability to buy. It reveals that irrespective of price or the brand itself, the place of purchase groups consumers within a particular class. As a result, the identity of the place is transferred both to the brand and to the consumer.

'I know, and when you go back to Nigeria to say you bought something from London, it makes the item more valuable. People hardly talk about Paris or Italy in terms of luxury except you are exposed to that knowledge, but London is a name that rings a bell. I will also add that people think highly of you when you buy a luxury product, but when you buy a luxury product from here, they treat you with higher regard. I always have this experience from people back in Nigeria, when I go home with gifts for people, and they know that gift is from London even if it is low quality, low price item they esteem it simply because it is from London. London gives more value to whatever one buys. A lot of times they just celebrate the place not the product from my experience' (FG 2).

'So true I get that a lot, when you tell them back home it is from London, they celebrate it. Sometimes I send things home to my family, and I get all the appreciation, so you hear someone say 'that bag you bought from London' is nice. I wonder why London will not be out of the comment. It is so interesting to know that people appreciate the goods because of the place where they buy from' (FG 4).

This study also proves that irrespective of the kind of product purchased and the consumer. If the place symbolises status, this symbolic meaning is transferable.

'London will always come up in comments even if it is from Primark or a Pakistan store it doesn't matter as long as it is from London (everyone laughs). People just respect you. This London thing too also adds some status to the whole thing. Even when you aren't aware of it, people will always consider you to be in a particular social class because you buy stuff from London' (FG 2).

5.8 Cultural Orientation

Culture appears as a factor in the Black African women consumption of luxury fashion brands. It is identified through elements like lifestyle, heritage and good mother discourse. Participants stress that it is a way of life and quite reasonable for a Black African woman to wear a luxury fashion brand.

'I am black and a typical Nigerian babe. Do you want to prove a point? Do not buy me flowers or box of chocolate. That does not move a real black woman. A real Black African woman loves the style; it is in our DNA, buy me Givenchy, Gucci and some of those bad ass luxury products. That is who we are, and I am proud to be one. I wear many luxury brands, and I love them as gifts too. All these flowers that people through around White babes do not freak us. That is not how we roll' (IR 32).

From this study, it is clear that conspicuous consumption is a tradition that is embedded in the culture. This behaviour can be linked back to the history of passing on items from generation to generation, so based on this consumers are motivated to buy products that are durable. Participant also explicates that this behaviour differentiates them from other cultures.

'I think it is a Nigerian thing to wear expensive things. Society may not recognise us, but it does not stop me from buying it. Nigerian women love good things. Have you seen a

Nigerian woman excited about flowers unless she is not a typical one but the real Nigerian woman knows that flowers fade, but Hermes bag would not? You can dress anyhow to a white party but when it comes to one that organised by Blacks everything about your dressing is different. I think it is just our lifestyle. We are so self-conscious and aware of our society now and always have been. We may have been denied certain things, but you cannot take style away from a Black African woman (IR 33).

Participants express genuinely how this buying behaviour defines who they are and portrays their identity. They also demonstrate that it is an attitude rooted in them and this begins early in life. Black African women see it as unnatural for a Black African woman not to be conscious of what she wears. Even when they do not have the means to, because it is their way of life, they always find a way.

'I am originally from Cote d'Ivoire, but I was adopted years back by my foster parents, and they are South Africans. Growing up with a family like that opened me up to so many things like the kind of life they lived. I admire my foster mom so much. She looks after herself, spends money on herself. She has one daughter, and that is my foster sister. I just think Black women have class and they are stylish, whether rich or not when it comes to good things they are good at it. The Burberry purse I have my foster dad got it for me for about \$400. Whenever I buy something that seems cheap, my mom will say why you do not save that to buy something more appealing. She is so particular about what we wear out. I do not have so many luxury items because at this level, I do not have much money but I have learnt that Black women have style and when I get to the stage of buying, I will certainly buy. I have very few, and those are gifts –I have a Louis Vuitton bracelet and some other accessories too' (IR 35)

This study displays that the Black African woman is aware of her environment and tries to live favourably in it irrespective of the stereotypes and marginalisation. These group of consumers use brands that can help represent who they are to others. For them, the intent is not to recreate identity through luxury fashion consumption which means to re-enact instead the primary purpose of engaging in this behaviour is to re-emphasise this identity to others. For luxury fashion consumption to be seen as a way of life, suggest that these women are aware of who they are and know ways to communicate this to others distinctively. These findings imply that consciousness of self-leads to aspiration towards products that enhance the self.

'Black women know what is good, out there they are not much about Black African women. You open the magazines; there isn't enough portraying who we are. That is why I feel pleased when I see a Black woman wear a luxury fashion product; it is a way to prove this society wrong. We have been marginalised in a way; no one is talking about us positively. Some people may not be so happy that we are not featured so much compared to how we love these brands, but for me, it does not stop me from buying and if they are truthful. Their record will show that we have this in us. I went to a Louis Vuitton store at New Bond Street with my friend she is a Nigerian, and she came from Nigeria and needed to buy a bag after we choose the bag together. It was time to pay, and she looked for her country in the system and asked the sales guy 'why is Nigeria on top of the list' the guy said because Nigeria is one of their top countries regarding buying. So you see -why would a Nigerian woman come to the UK to buy a luxury brand if it is not her way of life. Oh yeah, that is culture. So then I SAY it is our culture always quote me (Laughter) (FG2.1).

Lifestyle plays a significant role in consumption habits when people believe in a particular way of life; they act accordingly. The Black African woman connects with luxury fashion brands through lifestyle. It is a standard practice for them to consume and display conspicuous goods.

'I love to see other Black African women wear luxury fashion because this is who we are. Yeah, we may not have all the money and be so recognised, but it does not change the fact that what has been fixed in us will always be there. First and foremost I am a Black woman, I love fashion, I love good stuff. So buying a luxury fashion brand is an extension of that. That lifestyle is there, so all it does is showcase it. It helps me portray myself in the way I want people to see me. I do not know if I am making sense. Let me try and explain. I am a fashion, conscious person. I love expensive pieces of stuff naturally, so I buy them to help reflect who I am not to make me who I am not. The main reason when I see a fellow Black African woman wearing it, I feel excited because I know that is what we have in us. I cannot say how people perceive me, but I always want people to perceive me as someone that knows quality, has taste and uses quality. Nothing out of the ordinary just being me. I think that is the identity part of the whole thing. I do not do show off intentionally. I love people to see me as I am. (FG2.4).

In the same way, they consider luxury consumption as a way of life and also love seeing other people from the same minority group display these products. Some consumers explain that they

do not pay attention to what others think of this behaviour because to them it is who they are. What they buy reflects who they are.

‘(Screaming) I am Black, and I like it, I cannot be any other (waving the accessories up and down with continuous excitement. She continues: ‘You know what? My mom buys me stuffs, lots of it. My mom is a typical Nigerian woman with taste, and that is how all her siblings are. Moreover, one day she told me that for everything she is doing for me her mom did double. It looks like it is just a trend within the Nigerian women to take care of their kids irrespective of age. I am working and making money, but I still find mom buying so much for me, and these things are luxuries. I feel so good to be a Black African woman, and I think we have the style and the taste even the ability. We are very aware of the good things of life. Then again my mom says I buy these things so that when you eventually get married your husband will know your worth and not make you feel less of yourself. I wonder why African women are being looked down on even at work here people just don’t see the African woman as intelligent but that is a lie. All the African women around me are super intelligent just that their men do not just see them. People do not notice, but I am sure this will change someday. (coughs) The way we are portrayed is crazy yet again we spend all the money. Well, I have a boyfriend who tells me with you I see a different African woman, those stereotypes are outdated, and only sick people think that way’ (PO 8).

Looking through the field note and reflecting, the event suggests that the participants emphasise on being Black when she receives her gift demonstrates a way of life. This behaviour is a common practice within her family. Participants find stereotypes on Black African women as a myth. They do not believe that they cannot be anything without the permission of their men. It is also observed that there is no point for the Black African woman to be looked down on regardless.

‘From what my mom taught me, I will spend money on accessories like gold that are 18 carat and above. The reason is that during the Biafran war if you had gold you carry your goal as a safety net. That if anything could happen you could pawn that, so my mom embedded that in my brain. So I will always spend money on any accessories that have over 18carat gold like the 24-carat gold’ (IR 36).

This study reveals that although luxury fashion consumption is a way of life, it can also be heritage. It is reflected in this study that as a way of life, parents within the African culture

have some belief which is centres on passing things unto children. It is a prevalent practice and ritual that has moved from one generation to another.

‘When I consider buying wristwatches, I do not think of buying luxury what comes to mind is what will last long and durable too. Maybe because when I was a kid, I lived in Nigeria, I remember my dad will come to the UK every year and will buy us expensive accessories especially his girls like my sisters and I and then that was when I started having interest. That exposure from my dad makes me not to settle for anything cheap by cheap I mean products you can find just everywhere’ (IR 37).

The rituals are within the African custom and have been in existence for a long time. African women hold this strong. It is also clear that this tradition prompts parents to buy things that are good value and quality and one that will not lose its value with time. Before now African parents were seen to leave behind landed properties to their children. This behaviour remains the same even though there is a new twist to it as Black African women are more interested in using luxury fashion brands as an heirloom.

‘We have this tradition of passing things on to our kids. There’s this gold bangle that my mom passed onto me on my wedding day, and she said her mom passed it to her as well on her wedding day. I hope to pass it to my daughter too. For some reason when I went to Dubai I asked how much it was worth and I was told the value was 4,000 US dollars, I could not believe that something my mom passed me worth so much. I mean I know it is pure gold, but the value even makes me appreciate it more, and I know my daughter will’ (IR 1).

Consumers consider this attitude as part of their African tradition which has symbolic meaning. They pay attention to the significance of passing items from generation to generation.

‘I think its tradition though because I learnt my fashion life from the women around me. I grew up with lots of women, elder sisters no brother, in a family of 6 girls and I had lots of aunties too. So learning fashion and knowing about luxury fashion was not a struggle for me. We used to wear lots of golds back then, and now all I see is the same tradition among my four daughters. They will buy me Fendi, Jimmy Choo and some outstanding products because they just know mama will love it’ (IR 38).

Heritage and cultural values increase interest in premium and durable products. Products bought for this purpose are always of high quality and has a level of long-lasting guarantee on its quality. The characteristics of luxury fashion brands such as quality, high premium and

iconic drives Black African women into investing in these products. As much as they invest in luxury products, they also pay particular attention to how these items are treated and handled.

'LV(Louis Vuitton) lasts forever, if you treat them right, my oldest bag is ten years old, and it still looks great, my wallet is the same age and has no tears or scratches it is worth the price, I own 4 and I have used them over and over again. It is expensive but if you save for it, why not. YOLO. My daughters will inherit them no doubt' (IR 40).

The tradition of passing items from one generation to another by Black African women is consistent with this research as a motive for luxury fashion consumption.

'For me whatever I am buying my main motivator is quality. For example, if I have three bags, I will rather have three bags of quality rather than have 10. I am somebody who will spend a thousand pounds on a bag, and I have about five bags that I have spent that amount of money. However, if you see me in 10 years' time, I will have those bags. They last longer and I am also looking at passing those bags to my daughter particularly' So I think with age you tend to think about the long-term reason for buying rather than just the show off' (FG 1).

This study also affirms that the older women are, the more conscious they are about their motives for buying luxury fashion brands.

'This whole idea of passing something unto your kids also motivates me to invest in Luxury. So I am planning to pass a lot of my expensive and durable things to my only daughter. So I love buying things that she can also use and be proud of' (FG 2).

5.9 External Influence and Luxury Fashion Consumption

As revealed in this study, people have diverse reasons for consumption. Another emerging theme for luxury fashion consumption is the external influence. Many consumers have reflected on the internal factors. However, this study also presents external factors as drivers for luxury fashion brands.

'It is a thing, if you ask me what motivates me, I will just say the society. To be honest, sometimes it is down to celebrities when you go out there, watch videos, documentaries, and reality Tv programs, these women using these products are fascinating then you feel ok I can use this too. That is mostly my motivation, to be honest. I do not wear to be like the celebrities, but to feel this connection to them. Probably also because it looks

good on them, it will look good on me. I do not necessarily want to be known, but want that aspect of them to be in me. Celebrity lifestyle is suggestive and trendy at any given time. It is motivational to me in a way' (IR 26).

Some influences link to advertising, celebrity lifestyle, societal pressures, belongingness and social media. In this study, findings show that irrespective of age, with regards to luxury fashion consumption, external influences play a role. These influences are all tied to the society and its expectations on women.

'This is society; we belong to this society, and the society judges you as you are. The society does not know you or where you reside. All it cares about is that you conform to it. It is a motivator, wanting to look and represent yourself appropriately, this puts much pressure on the younger people. With age one tends to let go of pressures. The need to belong, and be accepted and so on is drives people. I am aware because I see how glued my daughter is to what Adele or Beyonce wears. They want to be like that because the society has made them believe that is the ideal. However, when you get to a particular age, it becomes part of you to be conscious of your environment' (IR 40).

The society creates an image of what a woman should look like and be like, emphasises this image through different media in a subtle manner. Even though this perception of what a woman should look like is subtle, it appeals to a good number of women, and this is evident in this research. In addition to this, when an image is passed on through the celebrities, it is easy for the women to connect especially when the celebrity is their favourite. To be like these celebrities, they try to imitate them by wearing what celebrities wear.

'The society we live in structures many things. From who I am to what I wear. The pressure becomes an influence. Social media platforms are there always to tell what and what not to wear. I follow many fashion bloggers when I see what they wear it gives me an idea of what I can wear. The luxury fashion bloggers those who display all form of luxury fashion brands motivate me a lot, and most times I think of how to be like them, this thought drives me to wear what they wear. I understand that social media is full of lies, but no matter how much lies they have going on there I still want to wear

what I see others wear. People live fake lives just to belong to the setting. Well for me it spurs me to get the real item'. (IR 6).

Consumers try to use luxury fashion items to conform to the identity of others. On the other hand, participants also feel that if they do not conform to this image portrayed by the media, they may be judged. The fear of being wrongly judged motivates consumers to consume luxury. Furthermore, the need to belong, to be accepted and to conform puts pressure on the consumers. In this study, consumers who are easily pressurised by the society's expression of a woman are the younger ones, even though a small number of older consumers reflected these concerns majority were between the ages of 18 and 40, because it is the generation in which they find themselves and the need to belong is unavoidable.

'I will also add that wanting to be like celebrities is one of the reasons I buy. I mean who would not want to be like them. They are always at their best. I feel cool with myself when I see a celebrity wear a particular brand that I can afford. It cannot be the same product but as long as it is the same brand I am so cool with it. Let us say for instance I find my favourite celebrity wear a Hermes bag costing about £15,000, hmmm, if I can buy a Hermes purse for just £200 I feel like I am the one wearing that bag. Celebrities for me have driven me crazy, what they wear is killing damn too exclusive. I am not that rich, but will never stop buying a brand that my favourite celebrity wears' (IR 19).

Since, the social structures how people should think, it becomes a societal pressure which results in a motivational element. It is noteworthy to state that participants are aware of this pressure, the pressure that comes from the fake lives people live on social media, portraying who they are not, they still want to meet up with the standards and competition. These research findings also show that most times participants go as far as wanting to wear what they find on social media even if it means borrowing from a friend. They go to any extent to be what the society has made them believe is the ideal. In most situations, consumers lose who they genuinely are in pursuit of whom the society reflects.

'Do you know that popular Nigerian celebrity Funke Akindele?, she is my favourite celebrity, I bought one Louis Vuitton bag once because I saw her use that bag on Instagram. I thought that was going to be the last of it, but now I find out that I am so attracted to what she wears. I try to buy them or save up for them. When I eventually buy any, I take a picture and tag her into it on Instagram. Celebrity lifestyle has become

a factor to me and I do not regret it though. It is a good feeling wanting to be like someone you truly admire' (IR 41).

'Oh, I have found what to wear. I am sure you have been wondering what I have been doing. Well, let me show you look at this blog, (stretches her hand towards the screen of the computer) I have been following this blog for 2years. This lady is a fashion blogger from Nigeria, and her name is Shirley Beniang. I like her fashion sense. She deals only with luxury fashion brands. Look at this shoes; I have the same type. I bought it when I saw her wear it with this gown for a party. Tried sending some messages for a while to see her but no response. She influences my choice of products and fashion sense as well. Now see this other one, her name is the dynamite chic she is also a Nigerian blogger but trusts me these two ladies are goo when it comes to fashion sense and my luxury fashion heroes. They know how to play with these items, all the mix and match' (PO 1).

The comment on a broader note brought a conversation about what she was doing and why. The exciting thing about this is that the participant did not stop at that she went unto other Instagram pages by fashion bloggers and was criticising almost all except those two. The criticism felt more like something very personal because of comments like:

'This one sucks, I think she is not real, she may just be copying Kim, and I hate the Kim vibes. Many bloggers are fake you know? They want you to believe they have got it but they do not. It is not all about money but about who has the most style. So you can have money and not have style. I hear some of them go to the extent of borrowing attires, owing debts just for fame. Gosh, that is what I call irritating'. I love Shirley a lot. She keeps it real. I have some of the items because of how she rocks it, maybe because I connect with her' (PO 1).

Respondent's attitude confirms the celebrity influence on luxury fashion consumption, however, what this study reveals is that this influence is driven by the participant's connection to the celebrity, not just the brand. This connection is seen as a strong tie, regardless of whether or not the object (celebrity) is aware. The relationship flows in a linear form where the participant is giving and not receiving. This relationship also serves as the basis or a yardstick for how others are seen. For instance, the way at which this participant disregards other celebrities

believing that others are not real is structured by an emotional attachment. Additionally, this study shows a link between celebrity influence, lifestyle, relationship and consumption choices.

'Celebrities are to be blamed for my obsession. I think I am obsessed about these brands. My favourite celebrity is Anya Hindmarch; she is a fashion designer. I love her products a lot. At first, it was all about what she wears, and now it is about what she makes. I feel quite attached to her I must say. She is so simple yet sophisticated. I can say that celebrity's influence me a lot. Another celebrity who influenced me into buying is Jil Sander; I think she is German. I love her and love what she wears. She is a very good fashion designer. So I stick with these celebrities because they influence me towards buying' (PO 9).

External influences emerged within this study, other evidence visible include comments from observed participants, actions which include personalising relationships with celebrities, blaming consumption attitudes on celebrity lifestyles, watching celebrity life, expressing thoughts on social media and advertising.

'I am truly thrilled about what celebrities wear. I mean these things cost a fortune, but I like the way they look when they wear certain types of brands. I try to mimic them by wearing what they wear. It is expensive I must say, but if you save up, then it is worth it. I always aspire to be a celebrity one day. I am trying to start up a fashion blog, but I need to have all these fashion products ready before I start. I love celebrities, and I love their lifestyle. It is a big-time motivation for me' (PO 9).

5.10 Fear of Counterfeits

The fear of using counterfeits brands emerges as an essential theme in defining Black African women's luxury fashion consumption behaviour. Fear in this context links to how people are treated when they use counterfeits brands as well as how unreliable these copy brands can be. Due to this fact, respondents are conscious of what they buy.

'I am sure I cannot survive fake items that can explain why I will rather wait to buy the real ones or forget it. Fake is not an option' (FG 2.3).

'One thing that motivates me to spend my money on luxury fashion products is because of how others treat me. Some airports you find yourself in if you are with counterfeits bags right there, they will take it off from you and give you bill to pay for the original

of that bag, and they will get it for you. They try to stop it. A friend said that she had that experience when she went to the airport either Germany or Paris. I sell luxury fashion bags so I must buy the original brands so that my customers will not be embarrassed, they can fit in anywhere (FG 2.2).

Participants note that these counterfeit goods are always of inferior quality compared to the original ones. As a result, do not meet up to the standards of what participants want. They are usually known as knockoffs, forgeries or fakes. These products are imitation products offered for sale by third parties not connected to the brand owner. Since they are made to look like the original, consumers find it difficult to differentiate the original from the counterfeit. However, consumers are beginning to be aware of this and are being cautious as to whether or not it is worth buying. In this case, participants relate their concerns about it and the feeling of fear they have about owning one:

'If I buy maybe the copy bags one year they peel off because they are fake. They can embarrass you, but these luxury bags that I have the leather is solid they last so long. They can stand anywhere. For me durability, quality and value for money. Moreover, the most important part is that it makes you belong to class. Especially when I go back home, you know we Nigerians are so conscious of expensive things and class. I have Hermes, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Burberry and Versace just to name a few. They are durable, and regarding quality you can never regret having them. I cannot stand counterfeit bags at all' (FG 2.4).

(Interrupts the previous speaker): yeah, that is so true, I cannot stand these fake products at all. I wonder how they do it. People who patronize them. I rather save up to buy than spend my money on something that will not last one day. Some of these fake products, from the very first day you buy them you will know they will not last. Sometimes the start reaping off before you get home (FG 2.7).

Luxury fashion consumers also highlight the fact that counterfeit items are of low quality and are inconsistent.

'I understand that things are pretty hard in Nigeria and getting bringing money here for shopping is really difficult, but that does not mean I will buy counterfeit bags. If it is not the real one, then I forget it. I dread fake bags, and for me, I will rather save up to buy an original item or get the pre-owned ones' (FG 2.4).

5.11 Control over Resources

The study suggests that people buy luxury fashion brands to display control over their resources. This control is derived from the ability to earn money and be able to use this to portray the feeling of achievement and empowerment.

'I love being in control. I make money and spend money, buy what I choose to buy without depending on anyone. I love the power that gives, being in charge of my life. Buying certain things just exudes that power. That is how I feel as well when I see a young Black African girl with luxury brands. I see them as people who are exercising power within' (IR 41).

Within the theme, participants show that being in control over their income helps to stay in control over their spending habits. In some cases, this feeling can lead to superiority over others.

'Do you know what it feels like to run your life, this means that you have control over your life. I am a single girl, but I want to be married with the impression that I am in control of my life. I want my partner to see me as independent and strong. Most men are beginning to think life is all about them and so expects a lady to ask for just anything from them. It is not bad if a man can take care of his woman but that woman needs some control and authority. She needs to be able to afford her things. Luxury fashion brands portray such power and charisma about a woman. So a Black African woman luxury fashion products depict power' (IR 7).

Consumers do not only feel this way about themselves, but they also feel this way about others. For instance, when a Black African woman sees another using luxury fashion brands, she believes this person has some control. Displaying luxury fashion communicates control and superiority about Black African women. Control and superiority, on the other hand, describes why they buy.

5.12. Identity Disconnect

Identity disconnect defines the motive for buying luxury fashion brands. Consumers use luxury fashion brands to disconnect from who they are. While they disconnect from their real identity, they pick up another identity, the one that suits whatever purpose they choose to reflect. It may mean switching between identities. However, the study shows that this is entirely different. In

this situation, consumers do this just for others. They have no connection to the brands; these brands are only a means to solve a problem. Sometimes, participants are quite unable to explain what they truly want to achieve doing this but luxury fashion brands help them achieve this resolution.

'I buy to disconnect from myself, to move away from the real me. The very boring person and I just feel buying and wearing certain things will help detach from myself. I use luxury items to help myself out. I do not have friends, and I do not even know how to make friends. When I get into a luxury store like Chanel, I love the way I am treated. They have become my friends. I do not know if you understand what I mean. I may not be able to express it exactly, but that is just it for me. I do not like people seeing me as boring especially at work so when I work into the office with my Jimmy Choo shoes; my colleagues tend to have a different impression of who I am. They think I am lively and trendy, they think I am an extrovert but in the true sense that is just what I want them to believe about me. I do not want to be seen as uninteresting even though I truly am' (IR 22).

Identity disconnect comes from the fear of being discovered by others and the fear of letting people into their real space; this may be as a result of a childhood event or otherwise. Participants feel others may not fully accept them for who they are. Being afraid of letting people into their spaces drive them towards brands that can help them live a lie.

'Don't misinterpret what I am about to say now- I like who I am, but I also do not like people knowing me for who I am. I cannot stand people entering my real space. So I choose to give a different image of myself to people outside. For example, when I have to stay around people I wear some very expensive things like Hermes and all. Even my car key holder is branded as well. It is Louis Vuitton. People just feel I am damn too sophisticated and relate with me that way but contrary to their opinion I am not what they perceive. I separate myself from my true self when I am out, but once I am within my space, I put on the true me. You may think I have a double personality, but I do not. All I do is disconnect from the main one and connect back when people are not around. I know it is hard to understand. 'When I was much younger I had people making fun of me, people saw me as timid and one who is unable to face the world. I grew up and realise that this is who I am and no matter how hard I try I will never be able to fit into people's expectation. When I got a well-paid job and was still isolating myself from

people at the work-they thought, something was truly wrong with me. So I figured out that rather than give people reasons to talk me down I will only give them another impression of me. Then I started buying luxury items; I do not go to work without wearing anything expensive. I do not love or like luxury brands at all, but I just see luxury as something that helps me separate from my true self and at the same time help me create the wrong image of me- they kind of image that will make me perceive me differently. Other than that I would not spend money on anything expensive. So yes this is my motivational factor. If someone wants to be around me, it is up to them to figure out who I truly am' (IR 47).

People are attracted to what they claim to be as against who they are. Acceptance is very valuable for people who are concerned about what others like. A woman who considers herself an introvert may end up engaging in luxury fashion consumption behaviour to appear to others as someone who is trendy. In reality, the brand relationship may not seem to be the essence of this behaviour, but it appears as a factor that is rooted within the theme.

5.13 Summary

This study reveals themes that address the research questions. Themes such as evolutionary motive, relationship, anthropomorphism, aspiration, location, culture and external influences answer the research question which aims aimed at understanding the motive for the consumption of luxury fashion consumption by the Black African woman. Findings like control address the question that enquires about what this consumption behaviour communicate about Black African women. Furthermore, to understand how the ethnic background of these women is a vital component in creating an identity, culture via lifestyle, heritage and heirloom create a link between the Black woman's identity and her ethnicity, this confers that Black African women reinforce rather than create an identity. In mitigating against regressive stereotypes, Black African women emphasise the use of luxury fashion as an element to help them stay and display control. This study also addresses questions about how African women in London define luxury fashion and the extent to which they can go to buy these products. Status, price, quality and durability are common ways they defined the term luxury, and as such, they aspire to own any of the brands they desire. Considering that price is a determinant factor towards defining luxury, women save up for as long as possible to be able to buy and sometimes when the money does not add up, they buy the alternative product within the brand category or

alternative luxury fashion brands. The study of Black African women reveals some factors that can aid in understanding consumption behaviours. It shows that evolutionary motive is a drive for luxury fashion consumption and it is expressed through factors like status, mating and attracting friends. In an attempt to acquire status, people use items to enforce their identity, make a statement about themselves by creating a distinction between themselves and others. They also crave belongingness. Furthermore, while making an effort to attain status, consumers use products as signals to other people and also as sexual signal structure. The study emphasises that while luxury brands can be used as mating systems, there are various steps involved which makes mating a strategic process. Thus, this research proposes the sequential mating model as shown in Figure 5.3. The model explains the strategic process involved in mate signalling and suggests that before a strong mate signally occurs, consumers go through the various steps. Additionally, this research also presents the mating retention circular model as shown in Figure 5.4. This model shows that after a successful mate signalling, retaining the mate is an essential element that should be acknowledged and this becomes another process that occurs in a circular or continuous motion. The mating retention circular model is an on-going event that occurs within three elements: the consumer, the brand and the object (the mate).

CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6- Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion relating to the research findings. It highlights how the research reflects, differs and extends current research in the area of luxury fashion consumption and identity creation. The discussion in this chapter centres on the emerged themes of this study: evolutionary motives, consumer brand relationship, anthropomorphism, aspiration, location, branding and convenience, cultural orientation, external influences, consumer and brand personality, fear of counterfeits, control over resources and identity disconnect.

6.2 Evolutionary Motives

The concept of evolutionary motive emerged in this research through factors such as status, acquiring mates, retaining mates and attracting friends. The study indicates that in consuming luxury fashion brands, evolutionary motives play a considerable role for Black African women in London. These motives are also termed fundamental motives. Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) propose a fundamental motive Framework which upholds that humans have natural psychological variations for solving a set of specific ancestral social challenges. These social challenges include: making friends, evading physical harm, attaining status, avoiding disease, acquiring and keeping a mate and caring for family (p. 372). In an attempt to confront these challenges, consumers encourage behaviours and habits that can help facilitate solutions for managing them. In line with this, luxury fashion consumption is identified in this study as one of the behaviours people use in dealing with social challenges. The consumption of luxury fashion items serves as an aid for consumers in managing societal expectations. Expectations which end up as motives for conspicuous consumption. Motives have been extensively researched on as fundamental motives by authors such as Saad, (2007), Griskevicius et al., (2009), Kenrick et al., (2010), Sundie et al., (2011) and Griskevicius and Kenrick, (2013). These authors link fundamental motives to both human motives and human psychology. Although these motives have been discussed within consumer behaviour (Griskevicius and Kenrick, 2013), this research supports the existence of the theory as an implication for consumption and choice, product preference as well as one of the factors visible within the Black African woman's motive for the consumption of luxury fashion brands. It reveals that within the concept of status as a fundamental motive, there are four elements revealed:

discrimination, intimidation, segmentation and conspicuousness. These elements are the hidden reasons why consumers aim to attain status, giving insights and a clear explanation of why consumers aim to attain status. Furthermore, showing that there are many more definitive factors embedded in luxury fashion consumption practices than the behaviour itself (See Figure 5.2). Although Griskevicius and Kenrick, (2013) explain that evolutionary motives provide insight into consumer preferences and decision processes, their study does not explain the motive behind consumers attaining status in this context. Hence, this study suggests an evolutionary motive framework (see Figure 5.2). A framework which differs from works on evolutionary motive. It shows that people have unseen reasons for aiming to attain status, so rather than treat status as a single element, status should be seen as the final point or a means to an end. Also, Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) study add that an evolutionary perspective emphasises that all living things develop to act in ways that give them an evolutionary advantage, this infers that contemporary humans are capable of processing information and making decisions in a manner that have allowed our ancestors to persist, thrive, and replicate. This general idea of the belief underlying an evolutionary viewpoint on psychology was also evident in Confer et al., (2010) studies on evolutionary psychology. From this viewpoint, cognition, motivation, and behaviour are integrally entangled—they are parts of adaptive systems designed to solve recurrent ancestral problems. Supporting Griskevicius and Kenrick, (2013)'s work, Confer et al., (2010)'s study adds that evolutionary needs influence consumer behaviour, but does not explicitly state if this consumption behaviour cuts across both low and high-income products. Their viewpoint shows that the status system is activated by prompts of dominance, prestige, or competition, such as accomplishments, rivalries, or highly-regarded products or people (p. 378). Also, emphasize that the motivation of status adjusts individuals to where they stand in the pyramid, and raises people's inclination to value links with high-status people and objects while cutting off association with those lower-ranked. These two become elements that motivate people to attain status. Evidently, the study on Black African women consumers of luxury fashion brands reveals that women buy luxury fashion brands to segment themselves within a group, discriminate and intimidate people outside such groups.

Another interesting factor within evolutionary motive shown by this study is mating. According to Greary (2000) for 95% of all living creatures, mating is a temporal event that ends immediately after intercourse, but this only gives rise to another challenge for human: retaining the mate. These two challenges are quite different from each other (Griskevicius and Kenrick,

2013). Finding and keeping a mate requires a lot of effort and in some cases a lot of money goes into sustaining relationships. Simpson et al' (2012) support the notion, they suggest that this behaviour is also reflected when consumers make consumption choices. A lot of consumption decision making is shaped by relationship partners (Simpson et al', 2012, p. 304). This study aligns with the idea that consumption choices are shaped by relationship partners, which is considered positive behaviours used to sustain present relationship ties, as well as behaviours used to handle fears from possible romantic competitors (Campbell and Ellis, 2005). Retaining a mate requires motivation. Motivation prompts individuals to act in a manner which safeguards their relationship. It compels people to strive for defence of their current affairs by improving on their love and care towards the person (Buss and Shackelford, 1997; Saad and Gill, 2003). One of the ways people show this love and care is through consumption. Although this research supports findings on mating, it also reveals that mating is a strategic process which occurs in stages. For the Black African female consumers, acquiring a mate occurs in a linear form. It follows through in four major stages: identifying the mate, identifying ways to signal the mate, buying items that can facilitate the signalling process and using these brands as signalling systems (*see Figure 5.3*). While the first stage is driven by a need for a relationship partner, the second stage is influenced by the partner's preference: what they like and what appeals to them. In this case, consumers use luxury fashion brands to attract and retain mates but this process does not end at that. It compels them to keep up the habit of buying these brands in order to retain the relationship. By so doing, they final point becomes a relationship with the brand itself (*see Figure 5.4*). Because at the end of the process, three things are achieved: attracting the mates, keeping the mates and developing a relationship with the brand that helps in facilitating the whole process. (*See Figure 5.3*). Although the initial point is mating, the endpoint becomes attachment to the brand, respect for the brand, repeat purchase and loyalty for the brand. All these constructs establishes a type of brand relationship (Fournier, 1998). Between the points where the consumer attract and retain a mate, three fundamental elements exist: value of the brand (rooted in the cost of the brand), value placed on the brand (rooted in the significance of the brand to the objects and value placed on the relationship with the object. This infers that the rate at which the relationship will go will be determined by the rate in the consumer engages with the brand.

6.3. Consumer Brand Relationship and Hedonism

Consumer brand relationship is observed in this study through constructs such as love, trust, devotion, loyalty, nostalgic attachment, satisfaction and commitment. These constructs have been linked to the relationship theory by Fournier (1998). Even though this theory has been discussed broadly by Fournier (1998), the very first article introducing consumer behaviour was by Shimp and Madden (1988). In their paper centring on consumer object relationship using Sternberg (1986) 'Triangular theory of love', they described this type of relationship as consumers establishing bonds with consumption objects (products, brands, stores, etc.), which goes from a feeling of dislike, to insignificant liking, all the way up to what really exist between human beings, such as love (Shimp and Madden, 1988). This research emphasizes that the concept of brand relationship exist and also stresses that this can be used to explain Black African women luxury fashion consumption. The most widely accepted paper on consumer brand relationships by Fournier (1998) states that brand may become an active partner for the consumer and provide meanings in a psycho-socio-cultural context, Fournier (1998)'s study was not focused on luxury fashion brands and such this study bridges the gap in this area of study. Additionally, authors such as Kumar (2006) highlights on long-term commitment, he suggests that the whole essence of brand relationship is to be able to ascertain how consumers make long-term commitments to inanimate objects: brands and products that they buy. Many authors have looked at brand relationship in different ways: feelings about the brand in regards to personality (Aaker, 1997), brand as a relationship partner (Fournier, 1998), relationship consumer establish with brands (Blackstone 1993; Aggarwal, 2004) and attributing human characteristics (Levy, 1985). Some have discussed the relationship constructs broadly: commitment (Sung and Choi, 2010), attachment (Thomson et al. 2005; Belaid and Behi, 2011), love (Ahuvia, 2005), trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001) and loyalty (Jacob and Chestnut, 1978). Considering how broadly brand relationships have been explored, it is clear that consumer brand relationship is multidimensional and multidisciplinary (Fetscherine and Heinrich, 2014; Blackston and Lebar, 2015; Ghni et al., 2016). It is a theory that helps explain the motivation for consumption and the significance of emotional factors. In this research, consumers reveal a lot of emotions for the luxury fashion brands they own and how deeply involved they are with these brands. This study also shows that relationship is a significant factor when considering consumption. It is this relationship that motivates consumers towards repeat purchase. Within this study, people's experiences with brands determine how attach they

will be to the brands. These experiences is the beginning, it leads to the feeling of satisfaction, trust, love, commitment and then loyalty for the brand. This research displays brand love as a very strong element when interpreting the motivation for luxury fashion consumption by Black African women in London. Hatfield and Rapson (1987) explain that love has been in existence throughout human history. It is a vital component that determines the success of any relationship (Simpson et al., 2001). Within consumer brand relationship theories, love has been discussed a main element (Hatfield and Rapson, 1987; Simpson et al., 2001; Albert et al. 2008; Batra et al. 2012). It has been revealed that people have love relationships with non-human entities like brand which comprises of three dimensions: intimacy, passion and commitment (Shimp and Madden, 1988). Black African women's expression of love for luxury fashion brands indicates these three dimensions as proposed by Shimp and Madden (1998), even though their work is focused on the analogously on Sternberg's triangulation theory of love, these dimension are applicable to consumption practices as shown in this research. This research suggests that brand love exist between consumers and it can be seen as what motivates them to consume specific brands. Thus, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006, p. 80) define brand love as the amount of 'passionate emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular trade name'. Ghani et al. (2016) argue that this may just be brand liking. But, brand love is not the same as brand liking as brand love is linked to consumers and their deep emotions for the brand which can lead to a long-term connection to the brand. It always last longer than brand liking. This is evident in this research, as consumers have a long term relationship with luxury fashion brands, relationships that last more than a five year period and some last even longer than ten years. The core consequence of the brand love as revealed by this study is that it is observed through positive word of mouth, loyalty, self-expressive, commitment and hedonistic brand. Additionally, the study shows that brand love plays a significant role in maintaining these relationships. It establishes that love and relationship can be linked together as suggested by others such as (Albert et al., 2008; Pang et al. 2009; Batra et al., 2012; Albert and Merunka, 2013). All these studies show that as much as there is a link between love and relationship, brand love is a strong relationship construct which can impact on both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty because it affects what consumers say about the brand and how willing they are to spend on the brand (i.e. premium price). Hence, brand love is a relational construct that determines the existence of other significant factors in luxury fashion brand consumption behaviour by Black African women in London. Additionally, within this theme, consumer relationship is born out of an experience with the brand which links to hedonism. Hedonism

suggest that consumption behaviour is subjective based and differs between consumers. Increasingly, consumers are being observed as emotional shoppers which means the perception of the brand becomes significant for the shoppers. This theme takes into account not just the difference between consumers in terms of motivation but also the pleasure derived from using the brand.

6.4 Anthropomorphism, brand and consumer personality

Anthropomorphism is a concept that often comes to play when dealing with relationship theory. Evidently, this study suggests that anthropomorphism links to the relationship with the brand. Consumers attribute human features to brand, sometimes the motive for this is an attempt by the consumer to give strong emphasis on the relationship with the brands. Authors describe anthropomorphism as a process of attributing mind, intentions, effortful thinking, emotional states, consciousness, and behaviours to nonhuman entities (Aggarwal and McGill 2007; Nicholas et al., 2014). Landwehr et al. (2011) suggest that human faces are identified in a range of objects, such as fashion accessories. A wealth of studies which cuts across a range of fields has shown much concerning the factors that trigger the tendency for people to anthropomorphise (Waytz et al. 2010; Nicholas et al., 2014; Delgado-Ballester et al., 2017). These factors include: cognitive causes of anthropomorphism; such as the openness of human understanding at the time of perception (Waytz et al. 2008; Rocereto et al., 2009), the need to control one's environment and the need to belong (Waytz et al., 2010; Puzakova et al., 2011). Aggarwal and McGill (2012) add another dimension to this which is how consumers humanise brands. In their study, they focus on how brands trigger social goals that are constant with a brand's image. Although the primary definition of anthropomorphism is focused on attributing human-like attributes to non-human, within the consumer framework it is discussed in a narrowed way (Waytz et al., 2010). It is how consumers perceive a product or a brand as having human features. This research attaches this attitude to the relationship. Consumers who have love relationships with brands tend to have anthropomorphic thoughts towards the brands. These thoughts and perception have significant implications- it shapes how the brands are treated, what consumers say about these brands and how they want others to perceive these brands. The research shows that consumers will naturally place value on brands that mean a lot to them. However, the value is drawn not just from the relationship but also linked to the premium pricing of the brands within this category. Guido and Peluso (2015) link

anthropomorphism to perception, they suggest that this concept links to people's inclination to perceive items as humanlike entities (Guthrie, 1993). Although Guido and Peluso (2015)'s study emphasises perception as the primary motivator for this behaviour, Epley et al. (2007) associate anthropomorphism to impulses stemmed from a connection to an object. These impulses are internally stimulated to create a motivation for a behaviour. Similarly, this research emphasises that internally stimulated impulses are driven by various elements: the need to emphasise one's preference to others, a motivational factor to engage in a particular behaviour or/and a means to portray one's preference over another. Psychological research has widely shown how people tend to anthropomorphize objects like personal computers (Waytz et al., 2010) and cars (Windhager et al., 2010), as well as non-human agents such as supernatural entities (Epley et al., 2008a) and pets (Chartrand et al., 2008). This tendency seems to be quite prevalent that it has attracted much attention of marketing scholars (Kim and McGill, 2011; Aggarwal and McGill, 2012), those who have linked the concept of anthropomorphism to branded products.

Guido and Peluso (2015, p. 3) explain that the concept of brand anthropomorphism is the level to which a branded product is seen as a real person. Explicitly, they add that an anthropomorphic perception of branded products might arise through two diverse, but not mutually exclusive, practises. First, it might occur using a perceived similarity between the external appearance of such products and some human physical attributes (for example, a product package that looks like a human body (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Epley et al., 2007; Puzakova et al., 2009).

Secondly, it may arise through a perceived agreement between such products and some aspects of the consumers' self-concept (Fournier, 1998; Aaker et al., 2004). The self-concept theory is connected to how people see themselves and it consist of different, albeit related, aspects: the 'actual' self-concept (who one thinks he or she is), the 'ideal' self-concept (who one wishes to be), the 'social' self-concept (who one believes others think he or she is), or the 'ideal social' self-concept (who one wishes others think he or she is) (Sirgy, 1982; Aaker, 1999). Hence, Guido and Peluso (2015) point that an anthropomorphic perception of branded products might occur to the extent to which consumers perceive such product as congruent to how they view themselves actually, ideally, or socially. Evidently, this research agrees to the self-concept theory with regards to the anthropomorphisation of luxury fashion brands; it also emphasises more on the premium pricing of these brands.

Within the marketing context, consumer personality is described in several ways to link personality with the choice of product. Consumer personality and its impact on consumption choices have been extensively researched upon (Bosnjak et al., 2007; Mulyanegara et al., 2009; Sarker et al., 2013). The consensus that whom consumers reflect on what they buy cuts across previous works (Bosnjak et al., 2007; Mulyanegara et al., 2009; Sarker et al., 2013). Thus this research supports previous studies on consumer personality and consumption choices. Consumer personality has also been linked to the experience consumers have with the product, service or brand (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007). This interaction leads to product evaluation which results in satisfaction and loyalty (Tsao and Chang, 2010). Furthermore, researchers have examined the similarity between consumer personality and brand personality, a link which motivates consumers to buy the brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Homburg and Giering, 2001; Barkus et al., 2009). Research has also revealed that the interaction between consumer personality and brand personality facilitates the consumer emotional attachment to the brand (Louis and Lombart, 2010; Orth et al., 2010; Seimiene, 2012; Dikcius et al., 2013) thereby leading to repeat purchase, it means that consumers are attracted to brands that define who they are and also brands that relate to their identity; both self and social. Researchers like Costa and McCrae (1992), Norman (1963), have explored consumer personality, which has led to the extensively used Big Five personality traits model. However, Aaker (1997) argues that granting that studies in personality psychology have categorised the 'Big Five' as human personality dimensions, no comparable study has been directed to understanding the dimensions of brand personality. Thus, this prompts the advancement of a scale comparable to the 'Big Five' with five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness. She defines brand personality as the set of human characteristics that consumers associate with a given brand (Aaker, 1997). The study on Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands supports the findings of Chow et al. (2004)'s study. The findings reveal that there is a substantial relationship between consumer personality trait and brand personality in the buying behaviour related to sports shoes. Chow et al. (2004)'s study shows that people who are outgoing and open minded are more likely to be affected by the personality of the brand. The study on Black African women confirms that irrespective of who consumers are whether extrovert or introvert, consumers tend to buy brands that reflect their personality. Consumers with discreet personality are drawn to luxury fashion brands that are discreet while consumers with a conspicuous personality are open to brands that are visible. Those brands that have huge logos displayed that can be noticeable as well as help them display a

conspicuous lifestyle. This research also reflects the study of Mulyanegara et al. (2009) on the relationship between consumer personality and brand personality in the context of fashion products. Furthermore, it is established that the link between the consumer's personality and that of the brand plays an active role in fondness for and preference towards the brand. It also plays a major part in building a consumer-brand relationship (Lin, 2010). Personality traits such as the desire for uniqueness was observed in this study. The desire for uniqueness relates to how an individual's need for uniqueness can affect brand choices and the need to be different from others (Tian et al., 2001) via material goods (Knight and Kim 2007). Snyder and Fromkin (1977) discovered that different people demonstrate different levels of need for uniqueness in comparable situations which can have an important influence on their purchase decisions. Although one may agree with Veblen's (1988) that using a luxury brand is conspicuous, this study finds that within luxury fashion brands, there are two kinds of consumers: those who are attracted to subtle/no signal display of logos and those who are attracted to huge logos. The first set of consumers are driven by intrinsic motives; the need to feel good about themselves while the second group are those who are motivated are extrinsic, these consumers seek to make a statement about themselves.

6.5 Aspiration

Aspiration is one of the fundamental findings of this research. This theme describes the extent to which consumers buy luxury fashion brands. In an attempt to manage status as a social challenge, consumers choose to take up conspicuous consumption as a means. By so doing, they cognitively transfer these process into different elements: targets, dreams, goals and desires. These elements sum up as factors that help consumers manage societal expectations and challenges. The term aspiration was first discussed by in Cyert and March (1963) with regards to organisation and relationship. They note that those who aspire form and adjust based on past experiences and that aspiration is a critical factor in determining strategic behaviour. Although Cyert and March (1963)'s study is linked to organisational behaviours, it is important to note that buying luxury fashion brands is a strategic behaviour for consumers because it involves the process of planning, thinking, calculation and many considerations. Lant (1992) notes that people who aspire are expected to act to increase their degree of success in attaining their aspirations and performance and also, aspirations will regulate the intensity of behaviours (Ansoff, 1979). These actions for luxury fashion consumers include saving up for these items,

hoping and dreaming of these items and it drives them towards performing to attain their goals. Similarly, Kasser (1996) emphasises aspiration as a goal focused on motive which composes of two crucial elements the intrinsic and extrinsic aspiration. While intrinsic involves the pursuit of goals that in themselves satisfy basic psychological needs, extrinsic aspirations concentrate on superficially valued goods that are not fundamentally satisfying but are sought to develop positive regard or rewards from others. Aspirations are observed to shape insights, decisions, and behaviours (Kasser, 2002). Several behaviours disclose the reality of active aspirations, such as intense personal emotion with the aspiring object (Vining et al., 2008), personal mindsets and less selfish decision making (Mayer and Frantz, 2004). The concept of aspiration has been studied in a different context; aspiration for career and educational achievement (Beaman et al., 2012), relationship aspirations, which is goal orientation toward establishing close ties with others (Weinstein et al., 2009). Be that as it may, aspiration shapes life context and establish general life structures such as having a particular kind of lifestyle (Roberts and Robins, 2000; Sreejesh, 2015). Other aspirational studies include aspirations for economic success, an alluring appearance, and social recognition (Kasser and Ryan, 1996). Likewise, in marketing research (Solomon and Englis, 2004; Amaldoss and Jain, 2005; Truong et al., 2010). Truong et al., (2010) propose that consumers can cultivate aspirations to purchase luxury goods for their symbolic content such as status and prestige. Truong et al., (2010)'s study is reinforced by this research on how Black African women in London aspire to buy luxury fashion brands for representative content. Furthermore, Markus and Nurius (1986) suggest that such aspirations reflect an emotional bond, between the consumer and the brand. This bond motivates the consumer to perform in a particular manner, a manner that will aid in achieving the goal. In line with these, Park et al. (2006) document that the diversity of aspirations include: status, success, and achievement. All these describe consumers' emotional attachment towards brands through representing one's ideal future self. However, the research suggests a variant for aspiration. The variant is coined as a framework for aspiration towards luxury fashion consumption. It is called the aspirational process model 1 (See Figure 5.5). The framework defines one group of consumers (Group 1). It explains the process these consumers go through in their aspiration for a particular brand in four stages. It shows that when a consumer aspires to buy a luxury fashion brand, they follow these four stages.

Stage 1: Identify the product offering of aspiration. At this stage, their interest is not driven by physiological (basic) needs as proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943, needs which include

food, water and shelter. It is driven by esteem (psychological) needs which are prestige and the feeling of achievements.

Stage 2: Once the product has been identified, consumers save up for the purchase. This stage is not restricted by time but by how effective they are in saving.

Stage 3 and Stage 4 are aligned: The purchase and feeling of achievement. Once the product has been purchased, the consumer derives a feeling of achievement from the process which prompts the aspiration for another product offering by the same brand, this makes the process model an on-going experience. Consumers who fall within this framework are driven by an emotional bond for the brand, which means that regardless of other luxury fashion brand offerings, they stay loyal, attached and committed to one brand. Some studies in marketing have considered brand attachment and commitment as long-term outcome-oriented elements and an effect of effectiveness (Park et al., 2006; 2010), while brand commitment is seen as the level to which a person sees the relationship as a long-term investment. Additionally, has a willingness to stay with the relationship irrespective of how many other similar brands are available (Van Lange et al., 1997; Thomson et al., 2005), the brand attachment is defined by a perception that the object is irreplaceable (Thomson et al., 2005). Garbarino and Johnson (1999) add that commitment is linked to brand loyalty. The three constructs: loyalty, commitment and attachment are connected to the aspirational framework for luxury fashion consumption proposed in this research.

The second aspirational framework proposed in this study is the aspirational process model 2 (*See Figure 5.6*). This model presents two different groups of the consumer (Group 2 and Group 3). The second group of the consumer (Group 2) go through the first and second stages as the first group of consumers (group 1), but at the purchase stage, they end up buying a luxury fashion product from another brand which differs from the initial product and brand. It could be as a result of a cheaper offer by a different brand. Regardless of the brand and product, they end up with; stage four is still achieved. This group of consumers are not particularly loyal to any specific luxury fashion brand but attached to luxury fashion products. On the other hand, the third group of consumers (group 3), go through the all the stages as group 1 consumers but end up buying a different product from the same brand. The similarity between these three sets of consumers is the feeling of achievements acquired from this process.

6.6 Location, Branding and Convenience

Location, branding and convenience are significant themes in this research. These three concepts connect to the place (physical environment) where the brand is situated. Where the brand is situated is a motivation for the purchase decision. Although studies have linked place to identity (Lappergard, 2007), place and space (Creswell, 2009), the significance of place branding (Bamber et al., 2009), linking place to women's consumption of luxury fashion products is underdeveloped. This research reveals that although luxury fashion brands have a premium price, the identity of the location of the brand at the time of purchase is significant. It shows that place, where the brand is situated, adds value to the brand or the product. Because London is considered a luxury fashion hub (BOF, 2017), the identity of London is transferable to the product/brand and from the product to the consumer. It becomes a direct process. This study shows that identity is transferable. Additionally, the branding of a place becomes significant for both consumers and luxury fashion brand owners. Furthermore, in this finding, it is shown that desiring the consumption of luxury fashion is one thing, while the availability and accessibility of the item are another. This study demonstrates that London as a place is known for making available luxury fashion products both in-store and online. The easy access to items makes buying of luxury fashion brands convenient for participants. This convenient shopping serves as a motivator. Likewise, the study observes that there is a perception about London and what the city represents. Participants associate London to Luxury because of an extensive awareness of both brands and the place. It is an undeniable fact that most of these luxury fashion brands in London are foreign brands from Italy, France and the United States. In London, consumers are continually faced with many brands, whether or not they are interested. This experience gives participants access to brand information, awareness and with that, they are quite able to make informed choices. Consumers understand where to go when they need specific information.

6.7 Cultural Orientation

Culture and consumption are two terms connected terms (McCracken, 1986; Matsumoto, 1994; Oyserman and Lee, 2007). These studies reveal that culture has an influence on why, how and what people buy. In this research, similar findings have emerged, how culture shapes the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women. Although this investigation proposes that culture is a motivational factor for luxury fashion consumption, it also reveals

three different elements in which culture acts. The first element is the lifestyle. Lifestyle is a word very similar to culture because it highlights what culture is, a way of life. Black African luxury fashion female consumers purchase these items because it is who they are and what they represent. Within the Black African culture, luxury consumption is a regular activity, irrespective of class and status. Low and middle-class consumers are not exempted from this behaviour, and that explains why they are seen as aspirational consumers.

Baronowski and Bemporad (2014) report that Black African women spend many resources on luxury items and with regards to the aspirational market, a Black African woman is seen as an aspirational consumer (Allemann, 2000). Baronowski and Bemporad (2014)'s study also reveals that these consumers are the most massive market segment at thirty-nine percent (39%) of the population with up to two billion people. This rate could further give a more precise insight on how lifestyle benefits the consumption process. This research proposes that people who see luxury fashion consumption as a lifestyle are open to consuming without any form of restrictions. Another element seen as a way culture is linked to consumption is through heritage/heirloom. The concept of heritage has been linked to brands (Wiedmann et al., 2011; Akbari et al., 2015). Authors agree that the elements of brand heritage are explained as longevity and sustainability (Allemann, 2000). This research shows that consumers prefer brands with heritage because these brands are perceived to be more credible, trustworthy and reliable (Wiedmann et al., 2011). They often associate good quality brands and premium pricing to the durability of the brand which in this case the many years of existence (meaning the longevity). Heritage is appreciated when brands are being passed on to other consumers by recommendation and by inheritance. Moreover, these consumers who recommend these brands to others serve as a reference to others, and they are referred to as reference groups. Reference groups are people whose rules, norms and values are used by an individual as a base of his daily behaviour (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Heirloom/heritage is a motivator, and the study suggests that as much as mothers aim to transfer items unto their children, children to have a role to play. This role is to aspire to reach a stage where they can do same for their children, which may be one item or a range of items. It is a significant practice that has become a ritual observed within the African culture. Very similar to heirloom is the good mother discourse in this context, a mother aims at giving something precious to her daughter. These items transferred are items that mean a lot to them. In most situations, mothers have to save up for years to get such an item, and this motivates the older women to buy luxury fashion brands.

Apart from the fact that they can buy this item, they also find fulfilment in being able to use this before passing it on. Buying luxury items have become ritual for consumers who use this as a means to communicate a particular lifestyle across generations. Hakala et al. (2011) conduct a study on brand and cultural heritage. They associate heritage with inheritance: something transferred from one generation to another (Hakala et al., 2011. p.448). Heritage works as a transporter of historical values from the past (Nuryanti, 1996). Supporting this notion, Banerjee (2008, p. 314) adds history, image, expectancy and equity as the four pillars of a brand's heritage. History signifies its rich, eventful past, and the image 'an after effect of the brand communication and positioning based on the benefits to be enjoyed by the consumers' (Hakala et al., 2011, p. 449). Brand expectancy refers to the physical and emotional benefits that consumers receive from the brand. Finally, equity comprises two subsets: a homogeneous and a heterogeneous set of competencies. These studies on brand heritage investigate the concept from the brand perspective, looking from the consumer's perspective on what heritage means, this research expresses that consumers use luxury fashion brands as a means of inheritance. Heritage is a critical finding in this study. As a critical finding, it shows that the attraction towards luxury fashion brands goes beyond relationship and aspiration, it is a ritual that must be observed within the African culture.

6.8 External Influence and Luxury Fashion Consumption

Research has shown that there are different reasons why consumers consume luxury fashion brands (Douglas and Isherwood, 1978; Belk, 1988; Holt, 1995; Holt, 1998). While studies link these consumption behaviours to intrinsic factors (Shin et al., 2011), others relate it to extrinsic factors (Berger and Ward, 2010). This study adds to the view on extrinsic factors which links to the external elements that motivate consumers to buy luxury fashion products. The external elements that serve as a drive for female consumers are celebrity influences, social media influences and advertising. These three elements have been studied individually as having effect on what people buy, however, this study links all elements together. Celebrity influence in this study have been linked to celebrity lifestyle and celebrity endorser. Bell and Hallows (2005) lifestyle is central to contemporary consumer culture. Celebrity lifestyle on the other hand is made public through the internet and the emergence of social media platforms. Consumers are able to follow trends by their favourite celebrities as much as they engage with these people. Mohr (2013) reports that technology encourages customers to interact with

celebrity both as endorsers and as role models. Luxury fashion brand owners use this way to engage with consumers. From the consumer's standpoint where this research is focused, they do not necessarily consider the brands when making purchase decisions. Purchase decisions are made based on an attachment to celebrity lifestyle. Black African female consumers are motivated to buy whatever their favourite celebrity displays. They follow up trends from celebrity and try to imitate the trends. This study reveals that celebrity lifestyle impacts on consumer identity, who they are and how they want to be perceived. It is noteworthy to say that brands have taken advantage of the fact that celebrities have the ability to attract consumer's attention to the brand, make advertising messages memorable and create identity for the product (Cooper, 1984). They also are able to refine the company's image, add charm to the product, and make it more wanted, reliable and trusted (Spielman, 1981). Thus, brand owners hire celebrity endorsers. Bradley (1996) reports that about 20% of commercials use a celebrity endorser and around 10% of all advertising money goes to celebrity endorsements. This shows that brand owners understand the impact of celebrity lifestyle on consumption patterns. According to Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands, celebrity lifestyle via social media platforms places demands on women. These demands put women under pressure to conform to a particular way of life. Belongingness is vital when making consumption choices, it shapes what people buy. In this theme, the main reason is to be like someone else and thus, it is an extrinsic motive.

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6.9 Fear of Counterfeits

Ian et al. (2009) report that consumers are very willing to purchase counterfeits luxury brands knowingly. However, with regards to luxury fashion brands, this study shows that Black African women are sceptical about purchasing counterfeits products. This scepticism prompts the feeling of fear of counterfeits. The feeling of fear of counterfeits is as a result of the dangers associated with the behaviour. Some dangers include the low standard quality of counterfeits brands and the perception of people about consumers who display such characteristics. Consumers who fear counterfeit luxury fashion brands are those who are cautious about their personality, those who do not want to be seen as associating with a fake. The study reveals that with regards to luxury fashion brands, consumers are more concerned about the impression people have about them than about the premium pricing of these items. As a result, they are willing to save up as long as they can to buy the original version. Sometimes, they look for

alternatives like sale periods, second handed items and outlets products which may be out of season. This concept is a bit underdeveloped in the marketing literature as a motivation for luxury consumption. Researchers have been focused mainly on the love of counterfeits brands than the fear of it. The love for counterfeit brands may motivate consumers to seek out counterfeits brands as an alternative to luxury brands, but the fear of it makes consumers seek other ways to own luxury fashion items. Consumers who are interested in high-quality brands also see counterfeits brands as a waste of resources because according to them these brands do not last and may cause embarrassment in the long run. Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000, p. 485) report that counterfeiting high-visibility, strong brand-name luxury consumer goods is a significant problem. Global losses from counterfeiting of luxury brands have occurred. Counterfeit products accounted for 5 percent of world trade (Nill and Shultz, 1996). Previous studies have investigated the demand side of product counterfeiting (Bloch et al., 1993; Wee et al., 1995; Cordell et al., 1996). The consumption behaviours of the wealthy (Stanley 1989); or the steps luxury brands follow before being fully accepted by consumers (Dubois and Paternault, 1995). However, no prior work has examined the attitudes and reactions of consumers of genuine luxury goods towards counterfeits, and this study fills that gap. Significantly, it is noteworthy to state that there are two types of counterfeiting: deceptive and non-deceptive. Grossman and Shapiro (1988a) explain the difference between both types of counterfeiting. While deceptive counterfeiting occurs when consumers are not aware of purchasing a counterfeit product at the time of the purchase, non-deceptive counterfeiting occurs when the consumer is fully aware that the product purchased is a counterfeit product at the time of purchase. In understanding the motives for luxury fashion consumption behaviour by Black African women, this study discloses that consumers fear the consumption of counterfeits brands, and so avoid situations that will make them act otherwise. They seek other ways of owning luxury fashion items, which suggest that Black African women are attached to luxury fashion brands.

6.10 Control over Resources

One of the motivational factors for Black African female luxury fashion consumers is the ability to re-emphasise control over their resources; this is a means through which these consumers reinforce their identity. The capability of portraying rights over their purchase decision as against stereotypes. The Black woman uses the consumption of luxury fashion

brands to exercise power. In a marketing context, the concept of control has been linked to consumption with regards to self (Gul and Pesendorfer, 2000; Benhabib and Bisin, 2002). However, no research has linked consumption motives to control. This study reveals an area to be explored by marketing scholars. Although researchers have indicated that there are various reasons why people consume (Benhabib and Bisin, 2002), this aspect is lacking in marketing literature. Hence, this research adds to the existing stock of knowledge on consumption and motivational factors.

6.11 Identity Disconnect

Identity theory is an advanced concept in marketing literature. Self-identity (Brown, 1998; James, 1980), the self-concept: the actual self, ideal self, social self (Higgins, 1987), possible self (Hughes and Guerrero, 1971), social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Mcleod, 2008) and identity interference (Sieber, 1974; Marks, 1977; Barnett and Baruch, 1985). Self-concept is a very important thought on the subject of consumer behaviour. Therefore it has been the core in the context of consumer behaviour and brand preference. It is also an essential concept in the study of consumer behaviour. Linking consumption practices to the identity project is also a well-established fact (Marks, 1977). How what people buy is influenced by who they are and how they want to be perceived, which means that consumers use the act of consumption to portray an image. The ideal social self-image is also called 'the very social self'. It communicates how individuals like others to have perceptions of them (Mohannad, 2012; Koolivander and Lotfizadeh, 2015). In Grathwohl and Grebb (1967)'s study self-concept was found to be the result of an interface process between a person and others, and that the person will aim for self-improvement in the communication process. Sirgy et al. (1980) also propose that the consuming behaviour of a consumer is directed toward advancing and improving his self-concept through the consumption of goods as symbols. This study on Black African women shows that consumers of luxury fashion brands consume products that portray them in a specific way. They use the consumption of these luxury items to switch identity from their ideal self to the actual self and back. So why people perceive them in a particular way, it differs from who they indeed are. Identity disconnect occurs as a motive for consumption which supports previous findings on identity theory.

6.12 Summary

The discussion led to a detailed explanation and evaluation of each theme, relating to previous works and indicating how they support and differ from previous works on luxury fashion consumption, identity creation and Black African women. Though previous works have been expressive about these concepts, the findings of this study confirm that there is still some underdeveloped concepts within the marketing literature. Although this research supports studies which reveal the effect of culture on consumption by showing the impact of culture on Black African women's luxury consumption behaviour, it also extends knowledge into specific cultural components that influence conspicuous consumption. Components such as heritage and heirloom are observed in the African culture, and Black African women use luxury fashion products as a way to engage in this tradition. The reason behind this is that luxury products are known for their premium prices, quality and durability. So these items are bought, used and passed on from one generation to another as rituals. Black African women reflect on their luxury fashion behaviour as a lifestyle rooted in their cultural orientation.

Results also show the significant connection between relationship, anthropomorphism, and personality. This result confirms studies on consumer brand relationship, anthropomorphism, and personality can be adopted within the luxury fashion context. It shows that consumers are drawn towards brands that reflect their personality and the moment the experience is favourable, they develop a relationship with the brand and assign human characteristics to sustain this relationship. Besides cultural orientation, consumer brand relationship, anthropomorphism, and personality, this research suggests that Black African women are influenced by peers and celebrities when consuming luxury products. These women usually compare themselves with a group of people that they admire, for example, people who are wealthier and have good taste in fashion. By imitating these people, consumers get the ideas of brands and styles. Findings show that external influences impact on consumption. The need for belongingness and make a statement about possessions as influenced by celebrity lifestyle is supported by this study. Additionally, Black African women aspire to be like celebrities as well as to achieve their psychological goals as shown in aspirational studies. Although this study agrees with the ideas around aspirational consumers, it also advances this theory by revealing three sets of consumers within the aspirational framework. The first group are those who aspire for a particular product, saves up to buy the same product. The second group are consumers who aspire a particular product but buys a different product of the brand, and the third set are

those who aspire for a product but end up buying a product from a different brand. These three group of consumers achieve the same result which is the filling of fulfilment. The first two sets of consumers are loyal to a specific luxury fashion brand while the third set is loyal to any luxury fashion brand.

Furthermore, this study shows the effect of location on branding and convenience. It reveals that the location of the brand at the point of purchase is a significant factor in the decision-making process. The location which is place carries an identity which is transferable to the product and subsequently the consumer. Within this theme, there is an advancement in the literature on place identity and consumption practices.

CHAPTER 7

Chapter 7- Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the final thoughts and ideas in this thesis. It draws up a conclusion for the entire research. The chapter is structured into different sections aimed at giving a detailed and clear explanation of the study. First, it demonstrates how the findings of this study have addressed the research questions and objectives. Furthermore, it discusses the research contributions and implications about marketing theory and Luxury fashion practitioners. It also highlights the limitations of the study as well as a discussion of further research directions.

7.2 Addressing the Research Questions

This part recaps the research questions and objectives and reveals how the research questions and objectives have been addressed. In addressing the research questions and objectives, a methodological triangulation of qualitative approach was adopted. The study aimed at investigating:

7.2.1 Research Questions

- R1. What does the consumption of luxury fashion communicate about Black African female consumers?
- R2. What is the motivation behind Black African women's use of luxury fashion products?
- R3. How is the ethnic background of the Black African woman a vital component in creating identity through the consumption of luxury fashion products?
- R4. How do Black African female consumers in London use the consumption of luxury fashion to create an identity?
- R5. How does the Black African woman use the consumption of luxury fashion brands to mitigate against regressive stereotypes?

7.2.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this investigation are to investigate the motive for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London and how this behaviour is used to create

and maintain identity. It thereby advances knowledge in women's luxury consumption behaviour, identity theory and ethnic minority group.

7.3 Research Questions, Objectives and Findings

RQ1. What does the consumption of luxury fashion communicate about Black African female consumers? In addressing this question, some findings are evident through various themes. For the Black African woman, the consumption of luxury fashion brand is a way of life. It is cultural and considered a tradition. Within the cultural orientation theme, components such as lifestyle, heritage, and rituals appear to explain how Black African women interpret their luxury fashion buying behaviour. This research reveals that consumption communicates cultural values for the consumer. Lifestyle, ritual, heritage, heirloom and tradition are cultural components which infer that culture is crucial in the decision-making process. These components are practices that segment a cultural group, thereby making them distinct from other groups. Black African women buy not just to reflect a way of life but to observe an essential system of passing products from one generation to another. Findings show that heritage is common in the African culture and has been in existence for many years.

Participants confirm that landed properties were used as heirloom by African parents, however, in recent time, women are beginning to use luxury products as heirloom because of its quality, price and durability. It is a common custom in the African culture, and so when they see others within this ethnic category engage in this practice, it communicates culture, tradition, lifestyle and heritage. Additionally, this study also shows that Black African women consider consuming luxury items as a way of life because they grow up within a community that practices it as ritual. Also, in addressing what consumption of luxury fashion brands communicate about Black African women, control emerges as another factor. This group of women consume visible products to reflect their control over their resources as well as make a statement about their success stories. They use these items to mitigate against stereotypes such as lack of control. The Black African woman believes that this stereotype has defined them for an extended period and so they take-up habits that help lessen the gravity of the stereotype such as luxury consumption. They also use items as a means to communicate control, power and success. Another emerging theme that answers this research question is consumer personality. People consume to communicate self to others (Deaux, 1992). They communicate who they

are and represent through the product they choose to buy. This research shows that consumers who have discreet personality buy luxury fashion products that are discreet and vice versa. Products that do not carry visible logos attract customers with inconspicuous and subtle personality. These set of consumers are more interested in the intrinsic value of the brand and how the brand makes them feel, while Black African women who are attracted to visible logo luxury fashion brands are more interested in how people see them. Consumer self is a relevant part when discussing consumption (Moynagh and Worsley, 2002; Kadirov and Varey, 2006). This study presents luxury fashion consumption as a way Black African women communicate themselves to the rest of the world. By this, the self-concept is also vital for the Black African woman. The situational self (Baumeister, 1998), the self a Black African woman wishes others have of her.

The second research question RQ2 focuses on the motive behind Black African women's consumption of luxury fashion products. Findings of this investigation show that the motive for the consumption of luxury fashion brands varies between consumers, which supports extant studies on consumption (Grant and Stephen, 2005; Workman and Studak, 2006).. While most Black African women buy products as a result of evolutionary motives: status, mating and attracting friends, others buy because there is a connection between them and the brand. This research reveals that there is a link between evolutionary motives and consumer brand relationship. The link is highlighted in the mating retention model (*See Figure 5.4*). The model confirms that to retain a mate, Black African women engage in a continuous buying of luxury fashion items. The more they buy, the more their relationship with the object (mate) and the brand grows. In this study, consumers who use luxury fashion products for mate signalling end up developing relationships with these brands to sustain the relationship with the mate. When a relationship is established, they anthropomorphise the brand, thereby giving human characteristics to the product. This attitude occurs when they want to feel that there is a mutual connection between them and the brand. Findings of this research show that mate signalling is a motive for luxury fashion consumption. Brands are used to signal prospective mates and to attract attention from other.

To further explain the motivation for luxury fashion brands, location is significant. Where the brand is situated at the point of purchase appears to be an essential driver for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London. In this context, consumers do not necessarily pay attention to the country of origin but to the place where the brand is located.

The place 'London' is considered a motive for buying luxury fashion brands because of accessibility, availability, convenience and how consumers perceive the place.

Participants express that when they buy things from London and take it back to Africa, people in Africa associate those items with quality, premium pricing and durability. People consider London as a hub for luxury items (BOF, 2017). Although most of these luxury fashion brands have their origin in Italy, France and New York (McKinsey, 2015), Black African women link luxury fashion items to the identity of the place 'London'. This study reveals that London is a place that carries an identity which prompts luxury fashion consumption behaviour. Respondents buy products that carry a particular identity and can be transferable to their self-concept. Furthermore, another interesting fact within the theme 'location' is the convenience in online shopping. Black African women feel more comfortable using online stores in London, this creates convenient shopping and makes consumers buy a good number of items from the comfort of their homes.

Besides location, respondents maintain that they buy luxury products because of the personality of the brand and how it reflects their personality, which means that they purchase items that identify with their beliefs and image. Other participants reveal that they buy due to their lifestyle, a way of life (culture), external influences such as celebrity lifestyle, social media influence and societal pressures. The study also reveals factors such as aspiration (the ability to save, hope and dream), identity disconnect (shielding oneself, so people do not know who their real identities), fear of counterfeit brands (low quality) and communicating power and control over resources.

The next research question is: How is the ethnic background of the Black African woman a vital component in creating identity through the consumption of luxury fashion products? Findings of this study link ethnicity, identity and culture together. It reveals that the ethnic background of the Black African woman is identified through cultural orientation, lifestyle and heritage. It reflects the practices, beliefs and rituals that occur within a particular group and what it means to belong to such group. The Black African ethnic group shares similar values and beliefs. These beliefs shape how people see themselves and how they see others. This collection of people becomes a vital component in consumption practices. Studies reveal how culture shapes what people buy (McCracken, 1986; Matsumoto, 1994; Oyserman and Lee, 2007). This research emphasises the significance of culture to luxury fashion consumption by

revealing the various components of the African culture on the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London.

Another research question addressed in this study is how Black African female consumers in London use the consumption of luxury fashion to create an identity. Reflecting upon the findings of this research, it is evident that Black African women engage in luxury fashion consumption by lifestyle and culture. Thus, they do not interpret their consumption habits as a means to create an identity. However, as a means to reinforce and re-emphasise their identities, Conspicuous consumption is an attitude embedded in the African culture, so Black African women use luxury fashion items to strengthen and communicate this cultural belief to others as well as to switch between identities, which means using products as a means to switch between identities.

The last research question aims at addressing how Black African women use the consumption of luxury fashion brands to mitigate against regressive stereotypes. Black African women display luxury fashion brands which shows control over resources. They use these items to lessen the gravity of the stereotype by signalling success and achievements.

Furthermore, the research findings also address the research objectives by investigating the extent to which Black African women consume luxury fashion brands and to understand how they define luxury. This research addresses the extent to which Black African women consume luxury fashion brands. It shows that the Black African women are aspirational consumers. Those who develop aspirations to purchase luxury goods for their symbolic content such as status and prestige (Troung et al., 2010). Also, individuals' whose aspiration towards the object predicts their pursuit of goals that in themselves satisfy basic psychological needs, namely relatedness, intimacy and affiliations (attachment) and intention to maintain relationships (commitment) (Winnel, 1987). In this context, Black African women pursue their luxury fashion consumption goals by saving up buy brands that represent something much more than product benefits. They want brands to symbolise an exhilarating feeling. The research also investigates how Black African women define luxury. Considering that there is not yet a commonly agreed definition of luxury, Black African women have a standard way of describing luxury. Such standard components connect to status, quality, premium pricing and durability.

7.4 Research Contributions and Implications

This research presents a contribution towards understanding women's luxury consumption and identity. The contributions of this study are in two folds: theoretical and managerial.

7.4.1 Theoretical Contribution

Some studies advance knowledge in ethnicity (Nagel and Olzak, 1982; Isajiw, 1992; Verkuyten, 2005; Rubenstein 2011). Studies on Black ethnic minority group (Gbadamosi, 2012) and Black African women's consumption behaviour (Flax, 1990; Mirza, 1992; Preez and Visser, 2003; Gbadamosi, 2012; Baronowski and Bemporad, 2014) set the pace for future studies in this area. There are also existing studies on identity creation theory (James, 1890; Epstein 1973; Smith, 1992; Deaux et al., 1995; Brown, 1998; Leary and Tangney, 2003) and luxury fashion consumption (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Truong, 2010; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang and Griskevicius, 2014). Still, there is no research focusing on Black African women luxury fashion consumption on identity creation. Hence, this research addresses these theoretical gaps by linking these theories: Black ethnic minority group, identity creation and luxury fashion consumption to develop knowledge on the motivation of luxury fashion consumption by Black African women in London. This study reveals vital evidence regarding the motivation for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women. It shows that evolutionary motive is one component that describes what prompts African women to buy luxury fashion products. Drawing attention to mating via evolutionary motives and supporting mating as a fundamental motive in human psychology (Campbell and Ellis, 2005; Saad, 2007; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Kenrick et al., 2010; Sundie et al., 2011; Griskevicius and Kenrick, 2013). Findings extend evolutionary motive by proposing two models of mating: sequential mating model (*see figure 5.3*) and the mating retention model (*see figure 5.4*).

The sequential mating model suggests that mating is a sequential and strategic process, which involves four detailed steps. The various steps involved in a successful mate signalling. This contribution implies that luxury fashion consumption occurs as a result of mate signalling because these products are used as indicators. Black African women buy luxury products to signal a mate. Once mate signalling is successful, they move to the next model called the mating retention circular model (*See Figure 5.4*).

Retaining the mate requires efforts. Thus, this model creates a link between mating and brand relationship. It shows that while individuals use luxury fashion brands to signal mates, they end up developing a relationship with these brands to sustain a relationship with the mate, which implies that the relationship with the brand determines how far mating can be sustained in this context. It also infers that mate signalling and retaining is an expensive process for consumers who use this as a tool and time is not a determinant factor when it comes to successful signalling because it varies between people. Within these two models, the value of the brand (price) becomes a significant tool for determining the value placed on the relationship. At the end of the entire process of mating (signalling and retaining), two vital elements are achieved: brand relationship and interpersonal relationship with the object (mate). This theoretical contribution is significant in consumer behaviour and psychology literature. It reveals another aspect of behavioural patterns of consumers and how brands are used. In this context, it shows that consumers buy products to signal other people within a particular class as well as confirm the significance of premium brands as signalling objects used to convey one's emotions to another.

Evidently, this research shows another vital motivational component which is heritage via cultural orientation. Heritage is an essential finding in this research; it proves that the Black African woman's intent for consuming luxury fashion products is born out of a way of life and a long-term practice which has become a norm and ritual within African culture. Buying with the intention to pass items unto generations as inheritance is a motivator for consumption. In this study, consumers who are concerned about using these products as cultural heritage are those above a particular age, which insinuates that the older women get, the more conscious they are towards buying products that are durable and can be used as an heirloom. On the other hand, the findings also reveal that younger consumers below this age range buy as a result of the influence by reference group such as family members.

Furthermore, Black African women reveal the impact of London (place) on their choice of brands. They confirm that the accessibility, availability and convenient in buying influences the decision process. The study reveals that the place carries an identity which is transferable, which means the identity of place can be transferred from to the products and subsequently to consumers. When a Black African woman buys a luxury fashion brand, the location of the brand at the point of purchase carries an identity which the consumer associates with more than the price. The study demonstrates that buying a luxury fashion product from London and

buying the same product in another country is not received in the same way. Hence, consumers would instead buy from a city like London called 'luxury fashion hub' (BOF, 2017) than buying from another city. Additionally, this research discloses the definition of luxury by Black African women. Studies show that there is no agreed definition of luxury (Grossman and Sharpiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Husic and Cicic, 2009). However, this research reveals the consistency of how Black African women define luxury. It shows that they define luxury with regards to premium pricing, quality, durability, vintage and heritage.

The research findings extensively reveal the motives for the consumption of luxury fashion brands by Black African women in London. Although this research provides knowledge about this segment and how they make sense of their experiences, it can be transferable to other ethnic groups especially with regards to women as it explores all categories of luxury fashion items in London.

7.4.2 Managerial Contribution

Managerially, the research supports the principle that the display of luxury fashion brands can be stimulated by the personality of the brand, thus enhancing consumer brand relationships which in turn influence repeat purchase and loyalty towards the brands. It reveals that Black African women are aspirational consumers with regards to luxury fashion brands as well as see this behaviour as a lifestyle embedded in their culture. Hence, luxury fashion brand managers should aim at designing products that appeal to the Black African ethnic minority group and campaigns to stimulate their emotional attachment towards the brand.

Luxury brand managers should understand that Black African women seek exclusivity which can create more positive emotions throughout the buying decision stage. To handle this, they can adapt to using African materials to designing some of their products to appeal to the Black African community. The findings of this study may be transferable to the luxury fashion industry in accessories and attires. Because it looks at luxury fashion items as a whole and not limited to one product category, this may provide a general foundation to help companies to reposition themselves and develop effective targeting strategies, for example, a more individualistic or socially focused positioning stance concerning Black African women in the UK.

Furthermore London luxury market is fast growing, a report shows that the UK market has the highest in fashion consumption globally (Pure London, 2016), this study provides an insight of the consumption behaviour of a particular segment- Black African women. Considering that London is a luxury hub (BOF, 2017), managerial choices for both domestic and global luxury fashion brands should be placing their products in cities that are more receptive to luxury.

7.5 Limitation of Study

The findings of this study support and extend several existing theoretical frameworks, specifically with luxury fashion consumption behaviours, identity creation and ethnicity. It explains that the motivation of luxury fashion consumption by Black African women in London centres around a relationship, personality, anthropomorphism, evolutionary motives and identity disconnect. The study supports culture as an influence on luxury fashion consumption as well celebrity lifestyle, the location of the brand, aspiration and control over resources. Even though the study is rich in its theoretical advancement, it may not apply to other luxury product categories or other ethnic minority groups, because it is more valid within the addressed context. Hence, the study is more focused and specific to luxury fashion brands and Black African women in London. Additionally, the difficulty of recruiting participants prompted the use of snowball sampling which means that the researcher has no idea of the true distribution of the population and the sample size. The research focused mainly on African women in London. Although not all African countries were represented in this study which may pose as a limitation, this research attains its data saturation. A point where no new data emerged.

7.6 Future Research Directions

This research could be extended to test whether the findings obtained from this study are specific to Black African women in London or the results would be the same across other parts of the UK or other parts of the world. A cross-cultural approach should be adopted. It can also be used to examine if women from different ethnic minority groups in London have similar interests towards luxury fashion brands and consider what role their cultural orientation plays in luxury fashion consumption behaviour. Studies should be used to ascertain if gender has a role to play by conducting similar research on Black African men to explore similarity in findings and how luxury fashion consumption impacts on men's identity. With regards to method, a quantitative approach can be used to investigate the scope of this research with a

broader sample size. Due to the emergence of the internet and the high level of the use of social media platforms, there is now an emphasis on online shopping; therefore, studying the impact of online shopping on the purchasing decisions of Black African women with regards to luxury fashion brands may be an exciting area for exploration in future. There is a need to research specific areas such as online shopping methods in the context of luxury fashion categories such as accessories and attires as this may enhance a more detailed data. Furthermore, there is also need to explore each research findings such as the impact of place on luxury consumption, celebrity lifestyle and effect on the decision-making process.

7.7 Summary

Luxury fashion consumption among Black African women has not been developed in the literature. As shown in chapter 5, themes such as evolutionary motives via status, mating and attracting friends give a clear understanding into why a Black African woman buys luxury products. For a Black African woman, status as a means of segmentation and discrimination. It is used to reflect what group they choose to belong. In this research, status is a means to a desirable end. Evolutionary motive revealed through mating shows that consumers use brands as indicators to others. Luxury brands are used to attract mates from a high class and to retain this mate, a consistent use of products are evident. The consistency in using luxury fashion products as signalling object leads to a relationship with the brand. The research reveals that Black African women's relationship with luxury fashion brands enhances the way they see these products, thus, attributing human features. Additionally, this study links anthropomorphism to both the brand and the consumer relationship. It reveals that Black African women develop a relationship with brands that relate to their personality and subsequently assign characteristics to sustain the bond. Furthermore, concepts like lifestyle, heritage are vital components in women luxury fashion consumption. The study confirms that Black women use luxury products because it is rooted in the African culture. For this group of consumers consuming visible items are used to re-enhance both self and social identities.

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APPENDICES

Appendices

Appendix 1- Interview Questions

What is your understanding of luxury brands?

Would you consider Gucci, Hermes, Prada, Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Burberry luxury fashion brands? If yes can you tell me more about these brands?, if no? why do you not consider these brands luxury fashion brands?

What are some of the luxury brands you know?

Do you buy luxury fashion brands?

What motivates you to buy luxury fashion products?

What do you think of when you buy luxury fashion brands?

What is the first thing that crosses your mind when you buy luxury fashion products?

How do you feel when you see other Black African women with luxury fashion brands?

To what extent do you think buying a luxury fashion product impact your identity?

Would you say being a luxury fashion shopper has anything to do with your ethnicity? Explain what you mean in details?

How does buying luxury fashion brands tell who you are?

What category of people do you think you belong to when you use a luxury fashion brand?

To what extent does luxury fashion brands change who you are and how you feel about yourself?

Is there any other information on this topic you would like to share with me?

Appendix 2 -Topic Guide for observation

The focus of this observation is on Black African female consumers of fashion luxury brands in London.

THEME 1: CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

Display of luxury brands

Comments on luxury brands

Luxury fashion brand possessions

Observation of frequent use of relationship constructs such as ‘love, trust, like, devotion, attachment, satisfaction and experience.

THEME 2: CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR

Observation of luxury fashion brands display

Positive and negative comments about luxury fashion brands

Motives for the consumption of luxury fashion brands

Observation of how Black African female consumers portray their luxury fashion brand possessions

The extent of the consumption behaviour.

THEME 3: IDENTITY CREATION

How the consumption of luxury fashion brands help in identity creation

What discussions participants have about their luxury fashion possessions in relation to their identity and ethnicity?

The non-verbal motivation for the consumption of luxury fashion items in relation to who they are.

How far consumers go to prove their self-worth with the use of luxury brands.

Appendix 3- Focus Group Questions

What is your understanding of luxury brands?

Would you consider Gucci, Hermes, Prada, Louis Vuitton, Channel and Burberry luxury fashion brands? If yes can you tell me more about these brands?, if no? why do you not consider these brands luxury fashion brands?

What are some of the luxury brands you know?

Do you buy luxury fashion brands?

What motivates you to buy luxury fashion products?

What do you think of when you buy luxury fashion brands?

What is the first thing that crosses your mind when you buy luxury fashion products?

How do you feel when you see other Black African women with luxury fashion brands?

To what extent do you think buying a luxury fashion product impact your identity?

Would you say being a luxury fashion shopper has anything to do with your ethnicity? Explain what you mean in details?

How does buying luxury fashion brands tell who you are?

What category of people do you think you belong to when you use a luxury fashion brand?

To what extent does luxury fashion brands change who you are and how you feel about yourself?

Is there any other information on this topic you would like to share with me?

Appendix 4- Coding And Memo Sample

Appendix 4.1 The Initial Code: Identification and Categorisation

Categorisation of themes:

1. Mating
2. Status
3. Making Friends
4. Love
5. Trust
6. Devotion
7. Attachment
8. Attraction
9. Satisfaction
10. Savings
11. Hope
12. Dreams
13. Where the brand is situated
14. Convenient shopping
15. Lifestyle
16. Heritage
17. Heirloom
18. Good mother Discourse
19. Social media
20. Celebrity
21. Advertising
22. Trendy
23. Penanche
24. Discreet
25. Quality
26. Durability
27. Need for uniqueness

28. Fear of counterfeit
29. Power
30. Economic value
31. Identity Disconnect

All themes emerged cut across the three methods used, however, thirty themes is just too rigorous and may overlap. So compressing themes into main and subthemes may be a better approach.

Appendix 4.2 Focused Coding 1 – These Reduced into Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Evolutionary Motive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mating • Status/Class • Making Friends
2. Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love • Trust • Devotion • Attachment • Attraction • Satisfaction
3. Anthropomorphisation	
4. Aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saving • Hope • Dreams
5. Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the brand is situated • Convenient shopping
6. Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifestyle • Heritage • Heirloom • Good Mother Discourse
7. External Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Celebrity • Advertising
8. Consumer Persona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trendy • Penanche • Discreet • Need for uniqueness

9. Brand Persona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality • Durability • Economic value i.e. second hand value/ Timeless
10. Fear of Counterfeits	
11. Control	
12. Identity Disconnect	

Appendix 4.3 Focussed Coding 2

Evolutionary Motive
Consumer Brand Relationship
Anthropomorphism

Aspiration
Location, Branding and Convenience
Cultural Orientation
External Influence and Luxury fashion consumption
Consumer Personality
Brand Personality
Fear of Counterfeits
Control over resources
Identity Disconnect

Appendix 4.3b Focussed coding 3

Evolutionary Motive
Consumer Brand Relationship
Anthropomorphism, Consumer and Brand Personality
Aspiration
Location, Branding and Convenience
Cultural Orientation
External Influence and Luxury fashion consumption
Fear of Counterfeits
Control over resources
Identity Disconnect

Appendix 4.4 Memo: Theme 1

'That doesn't sound like a question to me, well the question should be why buy a luxury brand when you really don't want to display your worth? I mean that's why I buy what I buy like Christian Louboutin. When I wear the shoes, you need to see the way people look at me. People just know where you belong with what you wear. I am particular about stating clearly where I belong, what I mean is the class I belong to. It's called status symbol. Christian Louboutin is not like every other. I bought one of their shoes with 755 quid (Pounds) and that shoe just stands out. Status is everything, ok I'm sounding vain but status is important. People respect you and you tend to make friends within your class. If you want to choose friends it should be within your class because just like racism, there's something I call clacism' (laughter). (IR 2) (see Chapter 4 table 1).

'I had this friend once that was so obsessed about status, I really never understood why until I started working. There's hierarchy everywhere even when you want to deny it. Its stares at you. From home to work and wherever. But I find that each time I wear my Louis Vuitton bags or shoes to a party certain people just feel comfortable around me. I realised that those who felt so relaxed around me are always those using similar stuffs. So I said to myself- to attract the best people, the rich ones I have to wear what they wear. DO you know why celebrities hang out with themselves? It's the status thing, it's the class thing. They just want to stick to themselves. As a person of lower class all you do is admire from a distance. Using my Louis Vuitton serves me the stress of looking for friends. They just warm up to me naturally. I love making friends but I'll prefer someone walks up to me in a party than for me to warm up to anyone. And again, here is London people feel people don't care about what you wear but that's not entirely true. People judge you by what you wear. I judge people by what they wear too and I think all these luxury fashion goods help to create some kind of class distinction'.

(IR 3) (see Chapter 4 table 1).

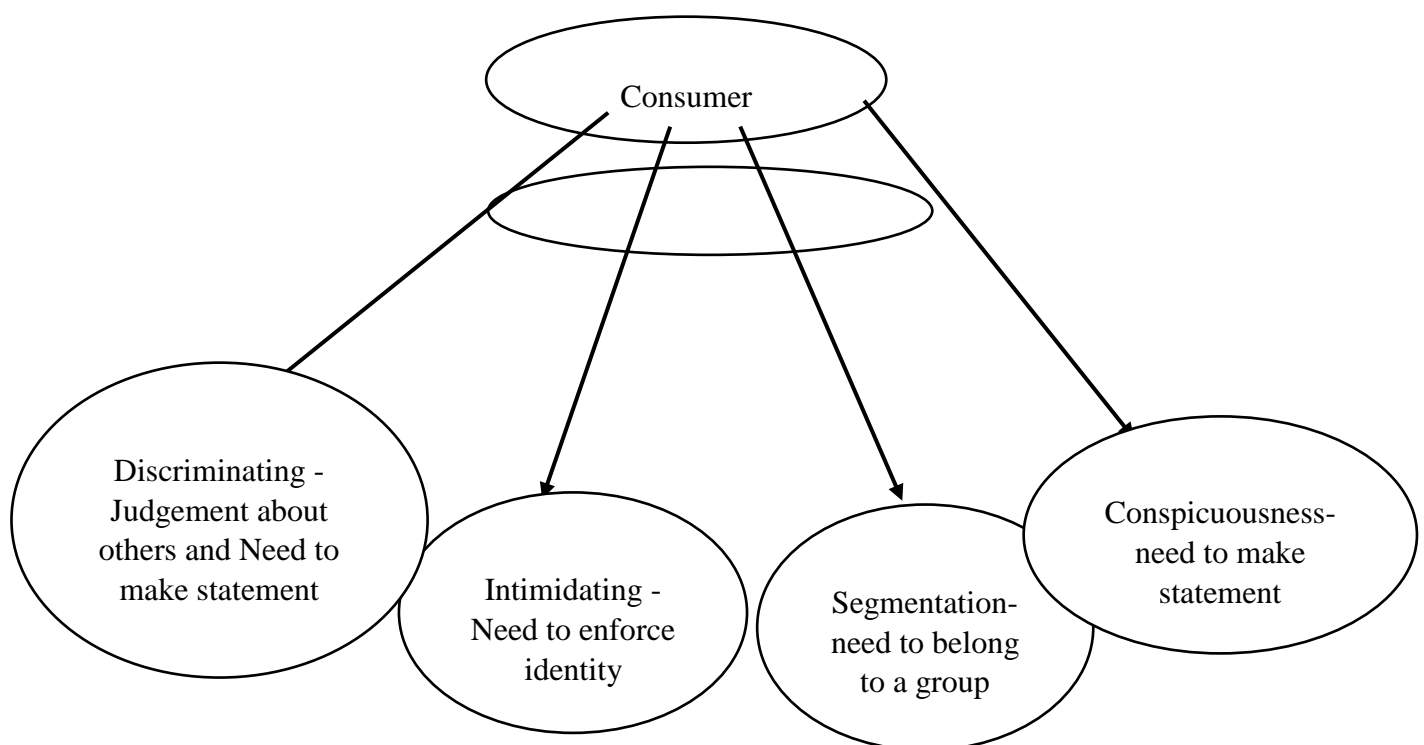
'If you attend Nigerian weddings here in London, you will understand why luxury fashion brands are important. A lot of times people are just there to intimidate others with what they put on. Display of gold and so many other things. For example, this is something that happened to me. I have this Hermes bag that cost so much to buy, I saved for a year to buy that bag. Wore it to a wedding somewhere in South East London,

that's where you find a lot of us Blacks. When I walked into the place everyone who knew the cost of that bag turned and looked at me. I became the attention for that day. Then a lady walked up to me and said I know that bag I've got one of those, they cost a fortune. She sat with me all through the event trying to be my friend. Apart from the fact that the bag is expensive it gives me all the attention I need and people just respect me for it. All I need for a party is an expensive stuff to attract anyone I have eyes on'. From my experience I have noticed how Black women are able to identify the real luxury bags, I think because we are attached to it. Just wearing a luxury item, if you are not familiar with these things you can hardly tell but Nigerian women always know when it is real or the fake. I wonder how they know this even including the price.

(IR 6) (see Chapter 4 table 1).

Within this theme, the notion that what you wear indicates how successful one is and in what group one belongs reveals status as a motivator for luxury fashion brand consumption. This is a strong re-occurring theme within this study. However, status is not the only motivation, the need to segment oneself, make statement, and discriminate among people is appearing as factors that can be linked together. Another emerging theme within this is making friends and attracting mates. This infers that if people buy luxury fashion brands to segment themselves and belong to a group, it can lead to making new friends. The theme 'status' remains the same but other elements have emerged which may put status as a subtheme rather than the main theme. The main theme that puts all these elements together should be evolutionary motive because it concerns itself with fundamental basis. Basis that help in explaining consumer attitudes through evolutionary perspectives.

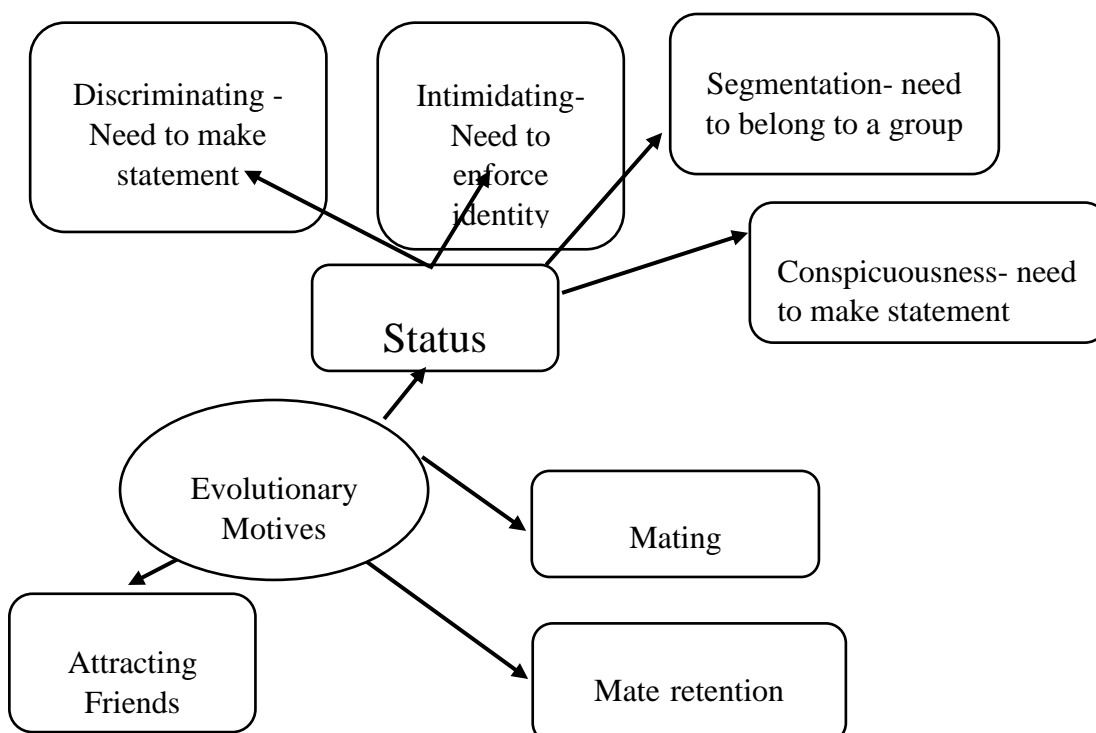
Initial Framework: status Framework for luxury fashion consumption



This framework was consistent within the theme ‘status’. It shows that when consumers are motivated by status to buy luxury fashion consumption, four needs arise and these needs are linked to four main elements. However, this framework was adjusted when the status became a subtheme within evolutionary motive. This change occurred when evidence of making friends, attracting and retaining mates.

‘Then again I have never attracted any poor dude (covers face), reason is that to get a rich guy you have to call for it. I love clubbing and I can hardly go to certain clubs in London with cheap things. Like my boyfriend tells me your Jimmy Choo’s shoe attracted me to you. He says when I saw that shoe I knew you were a lady with class, an independent lady. He doesn’t know this but my secret is that I had been watching him for over six months, so each time I went to the club, I’ll look at what he wears then google the price, I found out that he loved flashy fashion and very expensive fashion too. So I bought this very flashy Jimmy Choo shoes, wore it that day and walked passed him just to draw his attention to me and I got that stunning look and we are still together. So just using a shoe got me a guy I had worked so much to get’. (IR 5) (see Chapter 4 table 1).

Final Framework: Fig 1: Evolutionary Framework for luxury fashion consumption.

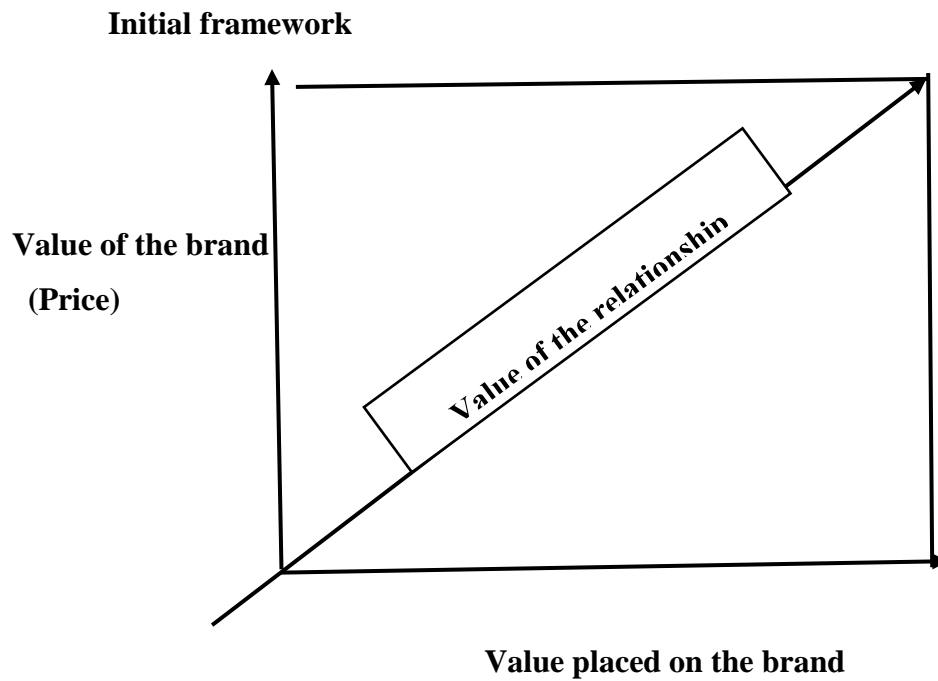


Merging status, mating, attracting friends and mate retention into one main theme and subthemes explores findings further. Finding from Mating and Mate retention shows that people buy luxury fashion brands to attract and retain mates.

‘My boyfriend is a very social and classy person and he gets to meet up with so many ladies because of his line of work. He is always exposed to lots of ladies. I used to feel so threatened by them and so I decided ok I needed to keep them off at the same time protect my boyfriend from them. I am 28 and getting a guy is so hard. Because I know he loves classy women and he is classy himself I decided I was going to be classy. I started buying some very expensive stuffs, my first was a Chanel bag and when I brought it home, he felt so impressed. Ever since then I have been saving up to buy so I don’t look odd within that class. That’s why you can see all these bags and shoes here’. (PO 1) see chapter 4 table 4

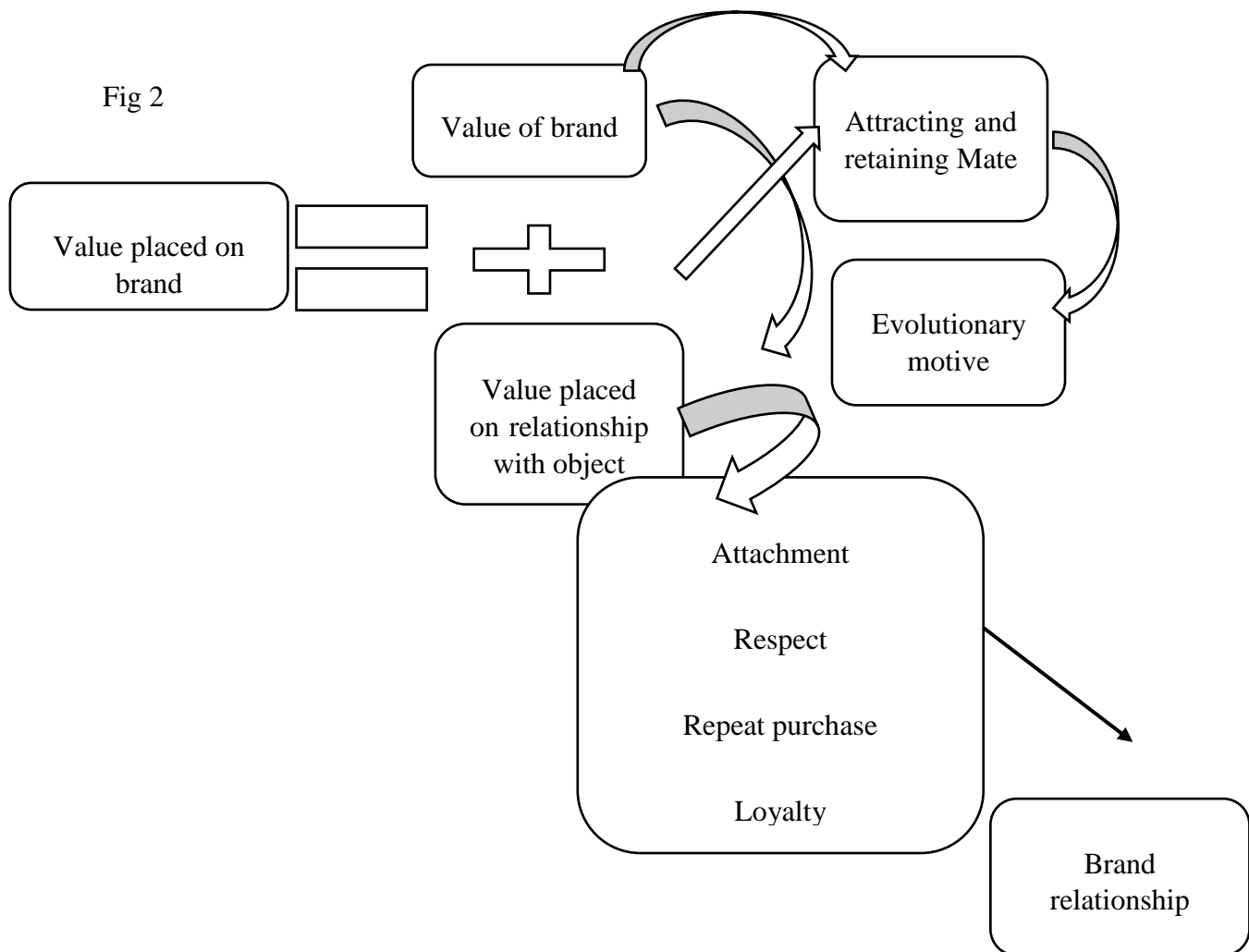
(Is that the only reason why you have all these luxury fashion brands?)

‘That isn’t the only reason but that’s the main reason I started buying. I feel it’s the best way to tell people off and a good way to stay within your circle. I don’t have all the money in the world but I feel good when people look at me as a rich girl. Even my boyfriend respects that. He can hardly compare me to all those ladies jumping around him. I have realised that it is important to have a circle and stick to it’ I mean class or social status, people who belong to the same group as me, it is important to me because like I said it is a good way to tell people off. These luxury brands also keep people off. You see that in the pricing and how they are positioned. They just make you know that if you do not have money you do not belong. So if you cannot afford it then stay off. So that’s how I use these brands too, a way to position myself for the right sets of people. The right sets of friends too. I don’t know why people so particular about luxury brands in this case fashion and all but my reasons are just what I have told you’. I also respect everything I buy, because it is has a result of these items that I am being grouped into the class I want. Secondly, these stuffs make my boyfriend respect me (PO 1). See chapter 4 table 4



The initial framework shows that there is a connection between the value of the brand which is determined by price, the values placed on the brand (determined by how items were placed systematically at the participant's home and the value of the relationship with the object. It also shows that the value of the brand and the value placed on the brand influences the value of relationship and affects how the relationship develops without these two, there will be no occurrence of relationship. This framework is the same as the final framework, however, the final one demonstrates how these elements can be linked to both brand relationship and evolutionary motive

Fig 2



Theme 2

'Is there any word stronger than love? I would have rather gone for such a word to describe how I feel'. (FG2.5)

'My main motivation is the fact that I trust that they cannot fail me. For example I have been using my Gucci bag for over 5years now and it is still the same as the first day I bought it. I care for it, I LOVE Gucci and I think it also discreet'. (FG2.6)

'I will just say I love them and I feel so attached to them planning to buy another LV this Christmas as a present for myself. Crazy about LV. I am so crazy about them especially Louis Vuitton'. . (FG2.7)

'My one is some kind of weird attraction and this started with just admiring people who wear it, then I got so attached to admiring people that I decided to start buying them for myself. So what motivates me will be attraction plus attachment'. . (FG2.9)

Love, trust, attachment, attraction, loyalty can all be treated separately but may overlap considering that these concepts can reveal relationship with the brand. Rather than look at these concepts separately, it will be appropriate to link them all to relationship and discuss them within the relationship paradigm.

Theme 3.

Relationship most times make participants attribute human characteristics to inanimate objects. Especially when the consumers have a connection with the brand. As in these cases

'For \$3,400 I treat it like a baby. I wrap and put it back in the box every after use' (IR 13)

'When you spend so much money on an item you can't help but pamper such item. Look at this shoe, its Christian Louboutin shoe, I have come to love her and she means so much to me. I always say she's my luck but recently a friend came to ask to use this, I couldn't stand giving this particular bae out' (IR 14)

Theme 4

'I save up for them if I do not have money at a particular time. Planning to buy another LV this Christmas as a present for myself. Crazy about LV' (IR 19).

'I do not have a LV bag yet, will get one in the near future, I'm saving up for that. I desire to won own. I saw one advert on their Facebook fan page since then I have been dreaming of getting one' (IR 20).

LV (Louis Vuitton) bags are truly beautiful and it is my dream to have it ever since it was released in the market, but the sad thing is I couldn't really afford the price it's so very expensive but still working on it though. Like selling off some of the things I have that aren't so trendy just to get one that is actually trending at the moment' (IR 21).

Savings, dreams and hopes about a product explains that participants aspire for these product. These three concepts emerge whenever the respondents are trying to explain the extent to which they want to acquire a luxury fashion brand. Then again, these words are consistently used to express their experiences and relationship with these brands. Participants explain that when they see a new luxury fashion product, one that appeals to them, if they do not have money to buy at that time, they save up for it, this action does not end there. It appears like loyalty to the brand and it is easy to pin this action to the relationship theme. However, there is a separate angle this.

Angle 1) they see a product, aspire for it, dream about it and save up for it but end up buying a different product within the brand. This appears as loyalty to the brand. However, the action would not be pinned to relationship with the brand because, participants have expressed that they end up spending the money on a different brand. What matters most to participants is owning a luxury fashion product regardless of what brand it is and the feeling of achievements obtained at the end of the whole decision making process . This leads to two frameworks.

1. **Diagram 3. Aspirational Framework for Luxury Fashion Brands 1:** this framework explains how consumers see the whole decision making process of a luxury fashion brand. It is a continuous process. In this framework, the consumer sees the product from a particular brand, aspires, saves up and buys this product. This action produces a feeling of achievement and success which further drives this consumer towards aspiring for another offered by the brand and the flow continuous leading to repeat purchase of the brand and relationship with the brand. However, the second framework
2. **Diagram 4. Aspirational Framework for Luxury Fashion Brands 2,** takes the same form as the first framework but rather than the consumer ending up with the initial product, they end up with a different brand. This framework does not link to relationship with any brand but attachment to luxury fashion brands as a whole.

APPENDIX 5- Participant's Observation 1



Appendix 6- Participant's Observation 2



Appendix 7-Participant's Observation 4



Appendix 8-Participant Observation 6



UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Applications for the Approval of Experimental Programmes Involving Human Participants

Information to Participants and Forms of Consent and Undertaking: A Model

1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The following models are intended to assist you in drawing up a hand-out for the information of participants and a form of consent and undertaking. It is not possible to provide a pro-forma which would be appropriate for all eventualities. It is designed to provide a check-list of points to help you to ensure that you have included what should be included.
- 1.2.** You should read carefully the notes for the guidance of applicants to ensure that you prepare forms which are relevant to your participant group. For example, the form of consent required from adults is different to that which is required from children who are

not old enough to give consent in their own right, but require the consent of a parent or guardian on their behalf.

2. Information to prospective participants

2.1. Annexe 1 sets out the information which should be included in the hand-outs which you prepare for the information of prospective **participants**. You should use the model as a checklist to ensure that you have included all that is relevant. The points highlighted under the heading ‘Project Description’ may be not appropriate in all cases nor will all programmes involve remuneration, but it would be unusual for any of the other points highlighted not to be included.

3. Form of consent to participate

3.1. Annexe 2 provides a model form of consent. In the case of experimental programmes involving minors consent is obtained from the parent or guardian on behalf of the child, so the wording should be amended to reflect this.

3.2. The model does not provide for the form to be witnessed by a person other than the principal investigator. In most cases the witnessing of the form by an independent third party would not be considered necessary, but in experiments involving some physical exertion or examination (most notably in clinically-related programmes of research) it may be prudent to make provision for the form to be witnessed by a third party.

3.3. If participant groups are composed of people who could be considered particularly vulnerable, such as the visually impaired of the elderly and infirm, consideration should be given to whether provision should be made to have the form witnessed by a third party to whom the purpose of the programme has also been

explained and who is competent to explain what is required to the participant and ensure that their interests have been protected.

Annexe 1

University of East London

Stratford campus

Water lane

London, E15 4LZ

University Research Ethics Committee

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

**Catherine Fieulleateau, Research Integrity and Ethics Manager,
Graduate School, EB 1.43**

University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD

(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk).

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Student Researcher

Christiana Emmanuel-Stephen

UEL, Stratford campus,

School of Business and Law

u1027479@uel.ac.uk

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

Luxury Fashion Consumption as a Means of Identity Creation: A Study of Black African Female Consumers in London

Project Description

Luxury sector has a massive growth of \$180 billion and it is estimated to grow more rapidly over the coming years (Bain and Forsythe, 2011). The value of luxury brands will continually experience many changes (Shin et al., 2011). A report from the international consultancy Frontier Economics reveals that the value of sales from British luxury industries

reached £32.2 billion in 2013. The British luxury market is forecast to be worth up to £54bn in the next four years according to a new report into the value of the sector (The Telegraph, 2015). Hence, this study aims at investigating the luxury fashion consumption behavior of Black African Women in London. The focus of this research is Black African women in London who consume luxury fashion brands. Participants are expected to give information about their luxury fashion behavior and how this helps them create their identity.

There is no risk or hazard associated with this research

Confidentiality of the Data

During observation, conversations would be recorded using audio devices, afterwards, data will be transcribed into word document. Once data is transcribed, audio recordings will be deleted. Field notes will be taken as observation take place. Word data will be stored on a computer with a password. The names of respondents will be coded for confidentiality purpose. No recorded data will be divulged or shared with a third party.

Location

Participant's observation would take place in luxury fashion retail outlets in Selfridges Central London: outlets such as: Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Prada

Remuneration

NOT APPLICABLE

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study, and are free to withdraw yourself at any time during tests. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. However, once data analysis is done, data cannot be withdrawn.

Annexe 2

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in a Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Luxury Fashion Consumption as a Means of Identity Creation: A Study of Black African Female Consumers in London

I have read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what it being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS): CHRISTIANA MBANG
EMMANUEL-
STEPHEN.....

Investigator's Signature

.....
.....

Date:

Appendix 10 Poster Information

I am a PhD research student investigating Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands in London.

The research is aimed at investigating the motive for this behaviour as well explore how the Black African woman's luxury fashion consumption helps her create identity. These research involves various methods

- 1) Participant Observation: this involves the researcher observing and interacting with the participant on how she does her luxury fashion shopping in her preferred luxury store and at her home. While observation is taking place, events will be recorded via audio recorder. This will last between 10am to 5pm for 3days.
- 2) Interviews: this will be conducted either through skype, telephone or face to face and it is subject to participant's availability and preference. It will last between 50 to 60 minutes
- 3) Focus groups: this method involves a group discussion of 10 Black African female consumers of luxury fashion brands. Participants who are comfortable to take part in a group discussion.

If you are a Black African female consumer of luxury fashion brands living in London and are interested in any of these methods or know someone who might be interested please contact me:

Christiana Emmanuel-Stephen

University of East London

School of Business and Law

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, E15 4LZ

Email: u1027479@uel.ac.uk

Appendix 11- UREC Acceptance Form

Appendix 12 -FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT Sample

What motivates you to buy luxury fashion products?

‘When I think of luxury brands, I think of class, I think of peculiarity in terms of status, price, position in the society and durability. Something that stands me out and make me different from other people, something that places me in a unique class, makes me feel distinct and makes me feel important and respected especially in a society where class makes you belong to a different group and people associate themselves with people who belong to a particular class especially the affluent. A spectacular brand’. What motivates me is so I belong to a class that’s a motivation, in fact I can’t stress how important I feel when I buy one. Like the last one I bought was because I believed that I will be somewhere someday and I was looking at the class of people I will find myself with so I felt if I held that then I’ll belong to that class. They cannot segregate or look down on me because I already have something that looks like theirs that’s my motivation. Something they can relate to’. (FG1)

‘For me I agree with what she says, class and status are my main reasons, I hardly can think of anything else’. (FG 2).

‘I will say luxury fashion brands help me make some noise like you know that feeling of not wanting to talk about yourself or sound too vain yet something speaks of your class. That’s what drives me to buy Louis Vuitton. Those huge LV logos are killing. They make statement’. (FG 3).

‘To add to this I will say, I really do not think of anything other than how will people see me? What would they perceive of me if I use this item, what class does this brand belong?, I feel very conscious of what I wear. At first I use to deny the fact that I was classy but now I do because sitting right here, I have realised that my main purpose of buying is to fit into a particular group of people’. (FG 4).

‘Very true, I have never really thought of why I buy luxury brands until now. This is an eye opener. I quite agree that there’s some sort of status in luxury brands. To be honest, I will say I buy because I think it’s a good way to decide what class one belongs to. I mean let’s look at it this way. I bought a bag from Harrods some time ago and a friend of mine met me using the

bag and she goes- why are you using this bag just anyhow, don't you know this bag is classy and makes you look like you have all the money in the world. Trust me at that moment I had no money inside that bag. So now I am beginning to think that if you wear an expensive stuff, whether or not you have money at the moment people will just conclude that you have all the money in the world' (FG 5).

'this is quite funny to hear but it's the truth. I posted a picture of a bag on Facebook and I hadn't even bought the bag yet. Then people kept commenting on the bag but funny enough almost all comments were centred on me as a big girl or a rich girl'. (FG 6).

I will also want to add quality to this too. I really love brands that have high quality and can last long. (FG1)

I think a lot of us do as well (FG 7) now that you have mentioned quality, it gives me an idea of what makes me buy. I have just been thinking to myself, what makes me buy. Now I can say quality. At first I wanted to say I don't even know but listening to you ladies, I just know I am attracted to good quality goods.

You may say that again, who is like me who feels particular about price? I have this impression that once a thing is expensive that means it is of high quality. I tend to link both together (Fg 8).

Group laughs

I think its just normal to want to think that high price and quality goes together. I quite agree but then again if I can pay cheaper for these items, I wouldn't mind. (Fg 3)

(Interrupts) Then it will no longer be luxury (Laughs) Fg 8).

'I am sure I cannot survive fake items that can explain why I'll rather wait to buy the real ones or forget it. Fake is not an option' (FG 3)

Researcher- Any other thoughts on what motivates you

I think the fact that I belong to a particular class of people too makes me want to buy. Imagine using a bag a celebrity uses. It just puts you in the same class as them or let's say a president's wife (very funny). (Fg1)

That sounds correct. When you walk into certain gatherings, you may just be looked upon like Obama's wife (hahahaha). FG I the class thing and trying belong to as well counts for me.

What is the first thing that crosses your mind when you buy luxury fashion products?

'The thing is I love shopping, I love buying, and one thing I think of before I buy is where do I find this thing? Sometimes you really have the money but you can't even have access to the item. Here in London it is very convenient for me to be able to get my bags online. I find it quite convenient, I am always online looking for new releases, if I have to go to the store is probably to feed my eyes to see if I am missing out on anything. To answer that question I will say I buy luxury fashion brands because it is easily available which makes it very convenient' (FG 4).

'I agree to what she just said shopping online for me makes me want to buy everything. When I was in Nigeria, I had a bit of issues with buying my goods online because some of this brands don't deliver to Nigeria, may be because they do not trust Nigerians –I am just saying though but it's not as convenient as it is here where you can either buy online or walk straight to the stores. These stores are easily available. How many luxury fashion stores do we have in Nigeria? Even if they are you can only find in certain cities but I doubt if we do but here you can either go to Selfridges, Harrods or even the individual stores which makes life easy. You do not need to sweat for it. So if I am asked what really drives my buying of luxury fashion brands, apart from the fact that I love the exclusive looks it gives to me, it's because I can easily gain access to them (FG 5).

'The online system here is amazing and the fact that internet connection is fast is a good one too. I come to London every year at least twice but I don't miss summer at all. The point here is that I love buying my things online, if I have to go to the store that means I have friends that I am going with. In London you find lots of things, London gives you an opportunity to see these top brands. They may not be made in London but London is a place where you get exposed

to several brands whether cheap or expensive, almost everything sold here has a name. it is very convenient to buy things here. You don't have return or refund issues. Main I love London for that (FG 6).

'I feel so happy to see that people here share my view. I am of the opinion that you can have all the money but not know how to spend it simply because what you want to buy is too stressful to achieve. As much as I love luxury fashion, I also would want to be suffering to get one. Here in London you find so many luxury brands, I prefer to buy from Harrods because they have what I want and its exclusive, you can't find Harrods everywhere. Even in UK, I think there's just one which is the one here in London. You get to a particular age when you have worked so hard you just don't want to work hard to buy. Online is convenient but I get to do that when my kids can help, I am not good with computers (laughter) so I just take a bus from here to Harrods so yes I agree with everyone that it is convenient shopping in London. London is a good place that's what I know and when you go back to Nigeria to say you bought something from London, it gives that item more value. People hardly talk of Paris or Italy in terms of luxury except you are exposed to that knowledge, but London is a name that rings a bell. I will also add that people think highly of you when you buy a luxury product but when you buy a luxury product from London they treat you with higher regard. I always have this experience from people back in Nigeria, when I go home with gifts for people and they know that gift is from London even if it is a low quality, low price item they esteem it simply because it is from London. London gives more value to whatever one buys. A lot of times they just celebrate the place not they product from my experience' (FG 2).

'Quite true I get that a lot from people too, when you tell them back home it is from London, they celebrate it. Sometimes I send things home to my family and I get all the appreciation so you hear someone say 'that bag you bought from London' is really nice. I wonder why London will not be out of the comment. It is so interesting to know that people appreciate the goods because of the place where they buy from' (FG 4).

'London will always come up in comments even if it is from primark or a Parkistan store it really doesn't matter as long as it is from London (everyone laughs). People just respect you. This London thing too also adds some sort of status to the whole thing. Even when you aren't aware of it, people will always consider you to be in a particular social class because you buy stuffs from London' (FG 2).

‘For me whatever I’m buying my main motivator is quality. For example if I have 3 bags, I will rather have 3 bags of quality rather than have 10. If you see what I mean. I am somebody who will spend a thousand pounds on a bag and I have about 5 bags that I have spent that amount of money on. But if you see me in 10 years’ time, I will have those bags. They last longer and I am also looking at passing those bags to my daughter particularly’ So I think with age you tend to think about the long term reason for buying rather than just the show off’ (FG 1).

‘This whole idea of passing something unto your kids also motivates me to invest in Luxury. So I am planning to pass a lot of my expensive and durable things to my only daughter. So I love buying things that she can also use and be proud off’ (FG 2).

‘Some times when I need money and the fashion of that accessories have gone I pawn it. Because I just didn’t like them anymore and they are no longer trendy I pawn. You can also trade them off they have second hand value, in 2013 I had no money I traded off one of the bags I had and it became their vintage and I traded it for almost the same amount I bought it like 7 years ago. So it is an investment’ (FG 1).

‘Luxury brands for me is when you talk of brands like Louboutin, the things that celebrities wear, the popular names and all of that. For me that’s luxury brands basically. I know Chanel, I know Gucci. I see high quality brands as luxury brands but I really haven’t considered gold a luxury product, I see them as just good and high quality accessories and for me so that it last longer not having to buy stuffs all the time. I go for luxury brands for my wrist watch’ (FG 3).

‘For me buying luxury bags this season means buying Aba made. Aba made has become luxury due to the economy issues in Nigeria. A bag that used to be 5,000naira in Aba is way over 30,000naira. (Laughter) but it is the truth. Why do we really focus on luxury when it has to do with foreign brands? Don’t we have expensive things in Nigeria? Look this bag (lifts up her bag for the group to see) is handmade in Aba, I bought it 200,000naira. That is a whole lot of money and while at the airport people really loved it but it isn’t a foreign brand. I think we should take our minds a bit away from the Western brands and look inward. I have a Ghanaian

friend who goes to Ghana to buy African fabrics, when she brings them here, she makes bags from them and sells them very expensive and people buy them' (FG 1).

To what extent do you buy luxury fashion products?

By extent do you mean they length I will go to own the product? (FG 8)

Yes that's what I mean

Okay! I will say I save up. I don't know if this will apply to anyone else in this place but I can save my money for a long time to acquire an item (FG 8)

Even a year. I think I prioritize. When I get paid my wages, I assign my money to different things and then buy when I feel the money is complete. (FG 1).

Me I buy out rightly. Once the money enters my hand, I just buy what I want to buy without thinking. As long as it is luxury I am ok not to think. (FG 2)

It's an investment, so I think and plan. I even strategise. While at it, I can be hoping and dreaming of using it before I eventually buy. (FG 7)

Quite similar to me, I plan before I buy. I can't just buy like that. I don't have such money. Unless it is a gift from someone who cares and is rich enough. (FG 5)

I don't think before I buy. The moment I start thinking I always find many reasons not to buy and that is bad. Because I end up buying nonsense in return. (FG 2)

I think we all have something in common. I plan and save up for my products. It is too high end for me to just buy o. I can't depress myself. (FG 4)

Hahahaha, sometimes after buying you just get so depressed but when you start using the brands and people start respecting you. You begin to forget your sorrows (FG 1)

(laughter)

I love the fact that I can see a product and think of owning it. Then save up to buy them. Because they are so expensive. Somehow these brands don't let you do contracts which would have made it a lot easier to handle. So savings seems like a good approach. (FG 4)

Even my mom as well will say –do you know how long it took me to afford this bag? So funny but it also shows that she tends to save to be able to afford the premium price assigned to the products. (fg 3).

To say the extent I go can be explained in one simple way. I can wait for it to go out of season to buy it cheaper or even buy a fairly used one just to own one. (Fg 4). This happens when I know that saving would not solve anything. I wait till it's out of season. Brands like mulberry and Burberry do sales. So in that situation buy when they are on sale. Which makes it a lot more affordable at any given time for me.

For me the brands I love no longer do sales, I mean Gucci. Unless I buy fairly used or from outlets (Fg 8)

I am so freaked about any particular brand though. As long as it is luxury fashion, the brand does not matter. I prefer a range of them Variety is a spice of life you know. (FG 1). I can buy any brand. I went to a store and I found one Ghanaian woman in a Louis Vuitton store. She asked me where she could get it cheaper. I advised her to check outnets.com for cheaper options. I just feel good when I see a fellow Black woman interested in luxury.

What comes to your mind when you see another Black African woman wear luxury?

It's not a big deal. Even those women who can't afford it, work hard to stay among. I think it a common thing in our community. (Fg 2)

You need to see Black women in parties rocking with luxury attires. Gold jewelries. I think we have high taste for quality and luxury. I just keep admiring and giving compliments but the part I do not like is people who look down on others. (Fg 3). I met this famous Nigerian actress at the airport, she was so full of herself. I was so upset. I just kept thinking why on earth should you feel superior to anyone.

But it happens though. I mean I respect people but luxury is all about class. I can only identify with a Black woman within my class because people can be so nasty. (FG 4)

I agree with you completely. You buy luxury to stand out and be different, so when I see a Black African woman wear luxury that's the impression I get. She was to be different and unique. (FG 5)

True (nods) (FG 8)

Any other thoughts?

Silence...

Appendix 13- OBSERVATION TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE

Findings from Observation

Findings from participant observation are used to support the themes and subthemes in the study. The theme evolutionary motive was also evident in the observational study.





Summary of Field notes

Arrived at the participants apartment, the area around West London was quite sophisticated, looked more like an area for the elite. Got into the participant's room, while sited at the participant's room, the first thing observed was how neatly arranged the respondent's wardrobe was almost with no faults. Every item was neatly placed, and every item seem to have a designated area; shoes, bags, clothes and jewelleries were placed skilfully. When the respondent walked into the room, it was with charisma which suggest that the respondent felt quite comfortable about the topic and was ready to discuss. Without any prior question, the respondent stated talking about her life and all she has achieved in a short time. She talked extensively about her possessions as an achievement and linked this to her ability to maintain status. Quite enthusiastic about her items, she offered to talk briefly about what brand she has acquired the last six months. Moving away from just her possession, she also made emphasize on how she became attached to luxury brands and why she is still into the habit:

‘My boyfriend is a very social and classy person and he gets to meet up with so many ladies because of his line of work. He is always exposed to lots of ladies. I used to feel so threatened by them and so I decided ok I needed to keep them off at the same time protect my boyfriend from them. I am 28 and getting a guy is so hard. Because I know he loves classy women and he is classy himself I decided I was going to be classy. I started buying some very expensive stuffs, my first was a Chanel bag and when I brought it home, he felt so impressed. Ever since then I have been saving up to buy so I don’t look odd within that class. That’s why you can see all these bags and shoes here’.

Considering how the participant stressed the way in which the need to keep her relationship is a motivator, a question was prompted:

(Is that the only reason why you have all these luxury fashion brands?)

‘That isn’t the only reason but that’s the main reason I started buying.

I feel it’s the best way to tell people off and a good way to stay within your circle. I don’t have all the money in the world but I feel good when people look at me as a rich girl. Even my boyfriend respects that. He can hardly compare me to all those ladies jumping around him. I have realised that it is important to have a circle and stick to it’ I mean class or social status, people who belong to the same group as me, it is important to me because like I said it is a good way to tell people off. These luxury brands also keep people off. You see that in the pricing and how they are positioned. They just make you know that if you do not have money you do not belong. So if you cannot afford it then stay off. So that’s how I use these brands too, a way to position myself for the right sets of people. The right sets of friends too. I don’t know why people so particular about luxury brands in this case fashion and all but my reasons are just what I have told you’. I also respect everything I buy, because it is has a result of these items that I am being grouped into the class I want. Secondly, these stuffs make my boyfriend respect me

Reflecting on the field note, the study suggest that regardless of what the participant had to say there is more to it and this may be a relationship. This study reveals that the attachment placed on the brands and the passionate tone used to talk about these brands goes beyond status, attracting the right people and the need to keep a relationship. The initial attachment may have

generated from wanting a relationship but the interaction with the brands is more of a relationship than status. Evolutionary motive has well played out in ways such as: the need to make her boyfriend stay consistently attracted to her, the importance of keeping rivalry off and maintaining her self-respect both in the eyes of her partner and in the eyes of others but what is more dominant is a connection to the brand. Although this connection was not clearly stated, everything ranging from her tone and how items were placed neatly and orderly tells of an attachment, respect to the brand and value place on the brand. The value placed on these brands result from the value of the brand and the value placed on the relationship with the object. These three elements determine how the brand is treated.

Appendix 14- Interview Transcript Sample

What is your understanding of luxury brands?

I see luxury brands as expensive premium priced item. It cost a fortune to buy. That's the best way I can explain it. Sometimes I look at luxury with regards to quality. For example, if I have three bags, I will rather have three bags of quality rather than have 10, if you see what I mean. So I am somebody who would spend a thousand pounds on a bag. Yeah, I have about 5 bags that I have spent that amount of money on but if you see me in 10 years' time, I will have those bags. You see what I MEAN and I am also hoping to pass those bags unto my daughter particularly (laughs). And things like jewelleries, from what my mom taught me, if I have to be real jewelry. I will spend money on 18 carats because that's what my mom taught me. The reason behind it, you know during the Biafra war, if you had gold, you carry your gold as a safety net, if anything should happen, you could pawn that. So my mom embedded that in my brain. It has happened that when I need money and the style of that jewellery is gone, I pawn it. So for me, luxury is about quality and spending my money well.

Would you consider Gucci, Hermes, Prada, Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Burberry luxury fashion brands? If yes can you tell me more about these brands?, if no? why do you not consider these brands luxury fashion brands?

Why not? All these are of prestige class. I mean you do not see everyone wearing it unless they buy the counterfeits. These brands are high end. Not for anyone. I also think it is out there especially when its so loud with big logos. YEAH, I will consider all these luxury but I will also add Mulberry, they may be discreet but they are luxury and one cannot deny this fact.

What are some of the luxury brands you know?

I know a lot, apart from the ones you mentioned, 'Like this watch I am putting on I've had it for more than 15 years and that's the only watch I have, some people would have had like about 10. It is durable. When I bought this watch I paid about 800 plus for it then but now if you go to the market Raymond Weil, it's over a 1000 plus. I also know that some people have Rolex, so I'll say it's about what you love and attached to as well and what it means to you. So for me it means the feeling of attachment that feeling of satisfaction that I think no other brand can meet. I also know Mulberry, Burberry, Versace.

Do you buy luxury fashion brands?

Yes I do, I won't stop. They may be expensive but they are worth it. They last a lifetime. I talked about my watch earlier, so yes I do. I just keep buying. I am so used to them. For the fact that they last a lifetime. Is enough reason to make me engage.

What motivates you to buy luxury fashion products?

A lot of things motivates me. I love things with good quality, that's the first reason and then again you do not find everyone using similar products like you. When you do that means they belong to a particular class of people. Again I will say, Sometimes how you portray yourself determines a lot. It determines how you are addressed, how successful you are and it even determines the people you attract. I have from my experience seen that people always want to be around successful people. How would someone know how successful you are if you do not dress appropriately. I have found that I have been attracting the right audience whenever I wear any of my luxury brands and this is exactly what I teach my daughter. I teach her that appearances can bring success. When I look at her I feel she has improved a whole lot on herself and I am beginning to see the rich kids around her. Again when I look at how she's progressing and the changes she's made in her appearance because she watches how I carry myself and how it has impacted in my success, she's beginning to be like that. I really don't dine and wine with just every one, you have to be of the same level or even higher with me. I love class and truthfully this is who I am. I prefer a certain kind of class. One thing that will help anyone know the class you belong is in what you wear. That's the more reason I buy a lot of this expensive brands like Calvin Klein and the rest of them. Luxury fashion brands have really helped me a great deal. I mean the kind of friends I have now, we all share similar views on life and so on. I don't think I have any friend who complains about wearing good things because I really cannot stand anyone who does that. So from my angle all I can say that spurs me to indulge is making friends and the right ones at that. I cannot be bothered about people who do not spend resources on themselves. I don't care if anyone shares my views but when you go out there you will find that people are so particular about class even when they fail to mention, you will always tell with their actions towards you'. To a great extent I will say yes. That's the first thing that crosses my mind and the major reason too.

'I teach my daughter. I teach her that appearances can bring success. When I look at her I feel she has improved a whole lot on herself and I am beginning to see the rich kids around her'

What do you think of when you buy luxury fashion brands?

'The reason I love Mulberry is because they are luxury but they are very discreet, you won't see me with Louis Vuitton because I think it shouts, because the branding is so out there, whereas Mulberry is very expensive, unique and discreet at the same time. I love them for that. For instance as I am sited here I am putting something worth more than 2,000 pounds but you will never know while looking at me. I enjoy the fact that only me knows what I am putting on at any point in time. Like this watch I am putting on I've had it for more than 15yaers and that's the only watch I have, some people would have had like about 10. It is durable. When I bought this watch I paid about 800 plus for it then but now if you go to the market Raymond Weil, it's over a 1000 plus. I also know that some people have Rolex, so I'll say it's about what you love and attached to as well'

What is the first thing that crosses your mind when you buy luxury fashion products?

'We have this tradition of passing things on to our kids when they are grown. There's this gold bangle that my mom passed unto me on my wedding day and she said her mom passed it to her as well on her wedding day and I hope to pass it to my daughter too. For some reason when I went to Dubai I asked how much it was worth and I was told the value was 4,000 US dollars, I couldn't believe that something my mom passed to me worth so much. I mean I know it is pure gold but the value even makes me appreciate it more and I know my daughter will'

Is there any other information on this topic you would like to share with me?

'I remember sending my daughter to New York to spend time with my sister and one day my sister called me and said this your daughter is like you o, she's busy looking for all the luxury fashion outlets here, so for some reason I decided to bring her to Chanel and she's busy picking the very trendy bags and taking pictures with them. She says my mom will never go for anything cheap and I will grow up to be like her. The truth is that my daughter does not have money of her own because she's just starting life but one thing I am sure of and I have actually seen is

that she will hardly be anything other than what I have instilled in her and that's the same way my mom instilled luxury fashion in me.