



**Perceptions of beauty enhancement: A case study on the use of hair
extensions among Black women in the
Pietermaritzburg central business district, KwaZulu-Natal**

by

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sciences in Sociology.**

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DECLARATION

This masters by research thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of **Master of Social Sciences in Sociology** at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, **Phindile Monica Ngcobo** declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated or acknowledged, is my original work.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted in full or in part for any degree or examination to any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Student Name: Phindile Monica Ngcobo Signed:  Date: 04/09/2023.....

Supervisor Name: Dr Gerelene Jagganath Signed: 

Date: 4/09/2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to every black woman in the world you are the only person you can find the beauty within you nothing will determine your beauty beside you. Indeed, black child, you are beautiful. I also dedicate this dissertation to my siblings Nompumelelo, Mpilo, and Fezeka and my son Onke I pave the way to study this far now it is your opportunity to study until you have your own master's and Ph.D. degree. Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandmother Solan Margret Mhlongo, great-grandmother Lucy Dlamini and my late aunts Hlengiwe Mhlongo, Thandazile Mhlongo, and Sbhongile Mhlongo and uncles Simphiwe Mhlongo and Sthembis Mhlongo your passing affected me a lot, but I made it in completing this dissertation with good, warm and lovely memories about all of you. I thank you all for the love and care you gave me while you were still alive, continue to rest in peace because I'm also in peace as well.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Central Business District
CCCA	Central Centrifugal Cicatricial Alopecia
PMB	Pietermaritzburg

ABSTRACT

The struggles faced by young women in conforming to traditional beauty standards are influenced by media portrayals, leading to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. The study emphasizes how Western beauty standards impact African women and their cultural identity, while also discussing the role of the media in shaping women's self-perception. In South Africa, beauty is influenced by skin colour and hair texture, with lighter skin and straight hair being favoured. Hair extensions are popular among Black women, reflecting changing social and cultural norms. The cosmetics and hair care industry in South Africa caters to the demand for beauty products. The broader concept of beauty encompasses various physical and intellectual traits, and women face pressure to conform to societal standards, perpetuated by a select group and popular culture. The societal pressure on women to conform to Western beauty ideals is significant and the challenges faced by African women with a dark complexion and natural hair in meeting those standards, together with the role of media in shaping beauty perceptions, are apparent in South African society. This study aimed at examining the perceptions of Black women regarding their use of hair extensions in the Pietermaritzburg CBD. The objectives of the study include understanding Black women's perceptions and definition of beauty, exploring the reasons for their use of hair extensions, and examining how these extensions influence beauty standards. The study aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on beauty practices. The study used a qualitative research methodology to understand the perceptions and experiences of Black women regarding beauty and the use of hair extensions. Fifteen Black women were interviewed using semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and the data collected were transcribed and analyzed. The study acknowledges the influence of media and societal pressures on beauty standards, the challenges faced by Black women in meeting these standards, and the role of Black feminist theory in understanding and addressing these issues. The findings reveal that Black women in Pietermaritzburg CBD prioritize qualities beyond physical appearance when defining attractiveness, emphasizing African body characteristics and inner beauty. Hair extensions are used for practicality, convenience, protection, and desired aesthetics. The study highlights the tension between African identity and the pressure to conform to Western hair standards, influenced by social media and global cultural trends. It utilizes the Black feminist theory to understand beauty perceptions, challenging Eurocentric beauty standards, and promoting inclusivity and self-acceptance. The study provides

recommendations to encourage diversity in beauty standards, improve media literacy, support black-owned businesses, and conduct further research aimed at empowering black women and promoting positive body image.

Keywords: Black women, beauty, identity, media, human hair extensions, hairstyles, Black feminism theory

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Attractiveness has always been associated with being feminine. The concept of beauty in Africa is feminine, and almost every use of the word "beauty" or "beautiful" is usually built to honour women or the feminine spirit. Beauty entails the celebration of worth, value, quality, and attractiveness. As a result, in Africa, the definition of beauty is fairly broad and differs from one cultural community to the next. Matiza (2013) has found that in Africa, the concept of beauty tends to refer to both external and internal attributes of a person or item.

Beauty is such an elusive commodity, it is subject to the ruling class's hegemonic criteria (Matiza, 2013). Beauty is defined differently in different cultures and historical periods. African women are not the only ones who face beauty concerns and are subjected to a dominant standard. There have been and continue to be distinct ideals of beauty and body ornamentation in every culture (Sartwell, 2012). Furthermore, beauty is a subjective social construct (Matiza, 2013). It depends on who you are, where you came from, and other factors. In other words, because people grow up in different times, cultures, values, and views, it applies differently to different civilizations. As a result, the concept of beauty is linked to the dominant culture, which is propagated through print and visual media (Matiza, 2013).

Globally, women of all races, religions, ethnicities, and beliefs strive for beauty and to be accepted in their personal and broader social groups (Shabangu, 2016). According to Donnella (2019) in the past, many women believed that being beautiful meant conforming to the slim body, straight long hair, and white skin standard, entrenched by colonial and western notions of beauty. This standard reflects cultural values placed on women of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds during European colonial history and knowingly or unknowingly accepted as appropriate (Swain, 2012). In South Africa, a nation characterized by cultural diversity and a history shaped by colonialism and apartheid, historical factors have played a significant role in shaping perceptions of beauty. The enduring impact of colonial ideologies, often favouring Eurocentric beauty norms, has particularly affected beauty ideals within the country, especially

for Black women. Throughout the African continent, beauty practices hold unique cultural significance and mirror the diverse identities present across the continent.

Eurocentric beauty standards, deeply rooted in European cultural norms, have historically been upheld as the global ideal, shaping perceptions of beauty in various societies. These standards prioritize specific features associated with people of European descent, perpetuating a marginalization of diverse beauty ideals (Jackson-Lowman,2013). Light skin tone, Eurocentric facial features like a narrow nose and almond-shaped eyes, straight or wavy hair texture, and a particular body size and shape are emphasized (Robinson-Moore, 2008). Fashion trends, makeup preferences, and media representations further reinforce these standards, often leading to the underrepresentation or unfavorable portrayal of non-European features. Eurocentric beauty standards, influenced by historical factors like colonialism, have been globally disseminated through media, contributing to a standardized beauty ideal across cultures (Bryant, 2013). This phenomenon not only fosters feelings of inadequacy but also underscores the importance of recognizing and challenging these standards to promote inclusivity, diversity, and a more accurate representation of beauty across diverse cultures and ethnicities. The call is for celebrating beauty in all its varied forms, rejecting a one-size-fits-all definition of attractiveness.

South Africa has grappled with enduring Eurocentric beauty standards, profoundly influencing perceptions of beauty, self-worth, and identity, particularly due to the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid. During colonization, European ideals were imposed, stigmatizing indigenous features and suppressing cultural diversity (Jackson-Lowman, 2013). The apartheid era further entrenched Eurocentric standards, favoring European features and devaluing indigenous African beauty systematically. In the post-apartheid era, media continued to shape beauty ideals, perpetuating Eurocentric norms (Mthembu, 2017). South Africa has witnessed a widespread use of skin-lightening products, reinforcing the preference for lighter skin tones, while Eurocentric hair textures and fashion aesthetics have been prioritized, impacting perceptions of natural African beauty (Julien, 2014).

Recent years have seen a growing awareness challenging these standards, with movements promoting natural hair, diverse skin tones, and traditional clothing, fostering a broader acceptance of various forms of beauty. Efforts to reclaim indigenous African beauty and the impact on mental health have gained momentum, with activism and advocacy on social media

playing a vital role in reshaping beauty norms (Julien, 2014). As South Africa navigates its complex history, there is a recognition of the need to challenge Eurocentric standards, embracing the diverse tapestry of African beauty, aligning with a global movement toward inclusivity and celebrating diverse cultural expressions of beauty.

Colonization and apartheid have profoundly impacted South Africa's struggle in defining beauty, notably through the exclusion of an Afrocentric beauty norm. During colonization, European ideals were forcefully imposed, leading to the marginalization and stigmatization of indigenous South African features (Gama, 2019). The imposition of Eurocentric standards created a narrative that devalued the natural beauty of diverse skin tones, hair textures, and facial features (Jack-Lowman, 2013). Apartheid further exacerbated this challenge by institutionalizing racial hierarchies that privileged European features and perpetuated a systemic devaluation of indigenous African beauty (Jack-Lowman, 2013). The legacy of these historical injustices has had a lasting effect on South Africa's beauty standards, contributing to a persistent difficulty in establishing a truly inclusive and Afrocentric norm. The preference for Eurocentric features, lighter skin tones, and specific hair textures has been perpetuated over the years, making it challenging for South Africa to embrace and celebrate its rich tapestry of Afrocentric beauty (Mthembu, 2017). Efforts to redefine beauty and challenge these exclusionary norms have gained traction, with movements promoting self-love, cultural pride, and a rejection of Eurocentric standards, marking a crucial step toward a more inclusive and diverse understanding of beauty in the South African context (Mthembu, 2017).

The portrayal of beauty in the media is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by diverse forms of media, including television, film, print media, online platforms, and advertising. Television and film shape beauty standards through casting choices, with the representation of diverse individuals contributing to a more inclusive understanding of beauty (Maree, 2011). Narratives and storylines in these mediums can reinforce or challenge societal beauty norms. Print media, such as magazines and newspapers, play a significant role in shaping beauty ideals through fashion editorials and advertising. Online and social media platforms, like Instagram, Facebook, twitter and TikTok, empower influencers and content creators to impact beauty ideals by sharing diverse perspectives and challenging traditional norms (Mills, Shannon and Hogue, 2017). User-generated content fosters a democratic representation of beauty by allowing individuals to share their personal experiences. Advertising in various forms, including TV commercials and online ads, influences societal perceptions of beauty through

model choices and messaging (Jiang and Yin, 2021). Digital media and entertainment platforms, including streaming services and online publications, contribute to beauty norms by representing diverse characters and providing platforms for varied voices (Stein, Scheufen and Appel, 2023). The dynamic media landscape prompts ongoing conversations about promoting diversity, inclusivity, and authenticity in beauty representations, with crucial efforts aimed at challenging unrealistic standards and celebrating a broader range of beauty ideals to foster positive societal attitudes towards diversity (Stein, Scheufen and Appel, 2023).

Ranging from age-old customs to modern beauty trends, Africa's beauty landscape is a blend of native traditions, global influences, and evolving narratives of empowerment and self-expression. This intersection of varied influences creates a complex environment in South Africa, where the examination of beauty enhancements and hairstyling choices among Black women takes on a heightened significance. Therefore, this chapter contextualizes beauty enhancements and hairstyling among black women in South Africa and Africa, providing a general summary of the study's background. It is important to note that the term "Black" in this study refers to African, Coloured, and Indian South African women, as the researcher acknowledges the social construct of ethnicity and its implications in the context of this study. It will also detail the research problem, which will explain the rationale and significance of the study, as well as present the study's aims, objectives and research questions. In addition, the goal of this chapter is to improve background knowledge and introduce chapters to be discussed in the thesis.

1.2 Background of the study

Young women often struggle with conforming to societal ideals of beauty, which leads them to question their own self-image (Ando et.al., 2021). Media depictions of an artificial standard of beauty heavily influence women's perception of themselves, often resulting in dissatisfaction with their bodies (Szabo and Allwood, 2006). This issue is particularly prominent among black South African women, who increasingly gravitate towards Western ideals of thinness as the epitome of beauty (Kaziga et., 2021). Consequently, these ideals can contribute to the development of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction, particularly among young women who have fuller figures, damaging their self-esteem (Szabo and Allwood, 2006). Groesz (2002), further supports these claims, suggesting that exposure to slim and attractive media images intensifies women's dissatisfaction with their own bodies.

Becker (2004) has demonstrated Western beauty standards' continuous impact on African women, where Western beauty standards govern what the global society considers to be beautiful. According to Okafor (2007), global beauty images such as Barbie doll influence the dynamics of beauty perception in African societies, directly influencing women's well-being and contributing to the downward trend in African indigenous cosmetic usage and practice (Shabangu, 2016). Although the world appears to be trying to appreciate women of all skin colors, hair textures, and hairstyles, Western popular culture represents one image of being thin as the ideal image of beauty, portraying how people think and perceive what beauty is and is meant to be. This image often affects the idea of beauty, such as that of African societies which often appreciate different body figures and hair types. Being curvy is considered to be part of beauty in Africa; traditional African beauty emphasizes a woman's curved yet sensuous physique.

The media plays a significant role in shaping young people's perceptions of beauty, which can be seen as a reflection of society's patriarchal views on women and their bodies. Kwan and Trautner (2009) argue that society has long believed that women who are considered beautiful have more advantages in terms of employment, marriage, and social advancement compared to those who are not. Baron (2005) adds that women face greater pressure to conform to beauty standards than men, as their physical attractiveness is often prioritized over other personal qualities. Consequently, women's self-perception and comparisons with other women are greatly influenced by a society that places a fundamental emphasis on their body image (Baron, 2005). As a result, many young women strive to attain a body image that aligns with societal norms, heavily influenced by the media. According to Grabe et al. (2008), repeated exposure to the media's portrayal of "ideal" bodies leads to body image dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in women. Moreover, individuals with low self-esteem and dissatisfaction with their body image are more likely to experience eating disorders and other behavioral issues (Grabe et al., 2008).

Patriarchal beauty standards, deeply rooted in societal norms and traditional gender roles, significantly shape perceptions of beauty by imposing ideals that prioritize specific physical characteristics associated with femininity. These standards contribute to body shaming, marginalizing those who diverge from the established norms in body size, facial features, and skin tone. The objectification of women, perpetuated by the male gaze, reduces their worth to physical appearance, influencing expectations related to clothing and presentation.

Youthfulness is often prioritized, fostering ageism and pressuring women to meet unrealistic beauty expectations, impacting self-esteem and identity. The internalization of these standards creates a culture of comparison and competition, perpetuating the pursuit of an idealized image. Moreover, the economic and social implications include the beauty industry's influence, linking adherence to these standards to success, acceptance, and happiness, thereby affecting professional and social opportunities. Challenging patriarchal beauty standards necessitates promoting a more inclusive and diverse concept of beauty, acknowledging and celebrating individual uniqueness irrespective of gender or adherence to traditional norms

In addition, skin color plays a significant role in determining beauty standards for Black women in South Africa. Lighter skin is considered more desirable, perpetuating a history of colonial discrimination that continues to impact individuals of African heritage with dark skin (Porano, 2006). Today, many African, African American, and Asian women resort to skin bleaching to achieve a fairer complexion. These diverse notions of beauty contribute to the formation of cultural identity, perpetually influenced by historical legacies and contemporary choices.

According to Hooks (2014) cultural identity is not only about one's past and traditions but also encompasses the process of "becoming" and belonging to the future. For Black women, their identity is influenced not only by their history and traditions but also by the colonial experiences that have complicated black identity in the past. Devoe (2020) further argues that Black women face challenges in decolonizing their minds regarding body perceptions, as they must question societal notions of race and the portrayal of "good" and "bad" images of Black women.

Women attach significant importance to their hair as it plays a crucial role in their perception of appearance and serves as a symbol of identity. However, there exists a prevalent and misguided notion of "good" and "bad" hair within the beauty standards, which has become normalized (Motseki and Oyedemi, 2017). The term "good hair" typically refers to long, straight hair, which is not naturally common among most African women. As a result, many black women resort to using hair extensions to cover their natural hair and conform to the standard of "good hair" (Motseki and Oyedemi, 2017). Oyedemi (2016) conducted a study on the concept of "beautiful" hair among young black South African women and observed that many of them avoid wearing their natural hair due to societal stigma and pressures. Instead,

there is an increasing trend among South African women to embrace long, silky human hair extensions, as well as other styles such as braids and natural hair, as a means to define their beauty (Shelembe, 2014).

Throughout history, hair has held significant social connotations, symbolizing status and serving as a form of self-expression. This cultural significance of hair is not limited to African communities but extends globally, including South Africa, where a strong obsession with hair exists (Erasmus, 2001). The importance of hair within African societies is evident from the initial fascination with a newborn's hair, which continues throughout one's lifetime and becomes intertwined with personal and social aspects of identity and beauty (Erasmus, 2001; White, 2011).

The association between hair and skin color politics can be traced back to the era of enslavement when Black women with lighter skin and straight hair were assigned higher monetary value (White, 2011). This historical connection highlights how discussions surrounding hair are intertwined with broader issues of race and social hierarchy.

While hairstyles can be easily altered based on personal preferences, the general tendency to value hair and skin color according to stereotypes persists to some extent. Throughout history, African women have shown remarkable creativity in managing and styling their hair. Images of the Wolof, Mende, Mandingo, and Yoruba people from Africa dating back to the fifteenth century depict the diverse meanings and symbolism associated with hair (Patton, 2006). Hairstyling traditions in African societies served not only as a means of personal adornment but also as communal bonding activities, particularly among women. Hair was considered more than just a matter of aesthetics; it was deeply intertwined with individuals' sense of self-identity (Patton, 2006). However, the encounter with Western influence, particularly during the era of enslavement, led Africans to adopt new hair styles and practices.

This shift in hairstyles can be attributed partly to the negative connotation that African hair acquired. To assimilate into Western society and improve their social status, African women began desiring straighter, silkier hair (White, 2011). Mixed-race individuals, resulting from a combination of African and white European genetics, were perceived to possess more desirable physical features than their African ancestors with kinky, coarse hair and dark skin, influencing the desire to use hair to signal improved social standing (White, 2011). While the struggle to

meet beauty standards is not exclusive to Black women, this study focuses on the increased pressure faced by Black women and their practices, such as the choice to wear hair extensions (White, 2011).

Hair extensions are now commonly utilized to generate a range of looks, depending on the aesthetic a woman wants to attain. According to Lanto (2021), the South African cosmetics and toiletry business is valued at 2.1 billion dollars and is expected to continue to expand as black people's disposable income rises. Lanto (2021) further claims that ethnics account for roughly 43% of all hair care sales in South Africa, with a large portion of this ascribed to wet hair products like chemical relaxers and perms, conditioners, and after-care products like hair moisturizers. Hair extensions, on the other hand, have become increasingly popular among Black women, and a hairdresser's ability to apply diverse application techniques will contribute to the style's eventual elegance.

1.3 Rationale of the study

Female engaging quality has all the earmarks of being controlled by actual attributes, such as body- size, weight, skin tone, breast size, facial evenness, and hair (Voracek and Fisher, 2005). Women face more strain to be appealing than men since women are often judged more on their appearance than other individual characteristics (Baron, 2005). Thus, women may be impacted by their appearance and self-insight because a women's self-perception is the center of what her identity is (Baron, 2005).

According to Shabangu (2016), any behaviour or idea that is considered negative is socially reinforced over time because a select group approves of them. However, due to historical power dynamics and popular culture, globalization has resulted in an increasingly uniform standard of beauty and attractiveness. Winkler (2009) also contends that young people, particularly females, are engrossed in the complexities surrounding beauty and attainment. Cultural beliefs, particularly among young black South African women, play a significant role in the struggle with body image. Studies have identified that beauty is primarily influenced by mass media, social interactions, and culture (Jiotsa et al., 2021). According to Tambo (2010), each society and culture should have an ideal beauty, and local meaning is most important when considering beauty issues.

According to the researcher's observations, there is a growing trend of women in the Pietermaritzburg CBD who commonly use hair extensions, regardless of how expensive they are. It made the researcher wonder what influences their decisions, how their choices shape their idea of beauty, and the implications this practice has for other social aspects of their life. Additionally, the Diagonal Reports from 2010 indicate that hair care consumption in South Africa differs among consumer segments and ethnic groups, highlighting the substantial spending by the ethnic African segment, especially South African Black consumers, who invest significantly more in hair care compared to whites. In 2013, research by eNCA unveiled that the African hair care industry demonstrated growth with approximately 1.1 billion U.S. dollars in hair product sales across South Africa, Nigeria, and Cameroon. By 2017, these countries had expended over a billion dollars on hair care products, while the entire continent might be dedicating up to 6 billion U.S. dollars yearly on weaves, wigs, and braids (Rambe and Mpiti, 2017). Notably, South African hair care product sales surged between 2010 and 2015 but then declined by 38% within that same timeframe (Euromonitor International, 2018), where the African hair care market in South Africa accounted for around 450 million U.S dollars in sales, equivalent to about 6.3 billion Rand (Rambe and Mpiti, 2017). Therefore, the African hair care industry displays diverse consumption patterns spanning consumer groups and ethnicities, with a noteworthy focus on the prominent African segment, particularly among Black consumers, who allocate substantial resources to hair care. Research reveals appearance significantly affects the social success of adolescent females, especially among young, unmarried, and urban women (Henriques and Patnaik, 2020).

Moreover, the extensive use of skin lightening products among black communities in South Africa, possibly exceeding 4 million users among adult African and Indian females (Dlova et al., 2014). This practice traces back to historical and precolonial beauty ideals, reinforced by colonial laws, and perpetuated through media and the beauty industry. Despite the increasing use of hair and skin products to enhance beauty among South African women, particularly Black women there are limited studies that have explored the perceptions and experiences of hairstyle choices among this group. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of Black women hairstyle choices in the Pietermaritzburg CBD. The study focuses specifically on the use of hair extensions and how it influences their perceptions of beauty, and how they and their peers define beauty. The researcher believes that the study can make a sociological contribution as the rationale of the study addresses the rise in hair extension use, influenced by Western beauty standards, and their implications. It sheds light on the African

hair care industry's dynamics, contemporary beauty trends impacted by media, and the practice of skin lightening. The study aims to bridge a gap in literature by focusing on hair extensions' impact, given that prior research has mainly concentrated on skin lightening.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Society favors women who are considered 'attractive' according to cultural ideals and prevalent social norms. Beautiful women are more valued, considered, thought to have great characters, and sociable (Shahani-Denning, 2003). This perception applies to women of all races. However, African women with a dark complexion and natural ethnic hair do not find a way into the hegemonic Western attractiveness ideal. The Western standard beauty ideal is a thin body, fair complexion, and worthy, straight hair.

The beauty trends of the past, present, and future are all influenced by the media. Since the mid-1970s, feminists have argued that mass media, such as women's magazines, popular television shows, music videos, and so on, is oppressive because it constantly influences women on their bodily inadequacy and draws them into the idea that bodily satisfaction can be purchased (Johnston and Taylor, 2008). According to Odhiambo (2008), the media's role is to disseminate information. As a result, repeated media exposure to certain types of bodily aesthetics is very likely to impact women's body conception. Although the media reflects reality, the media appears to drive the beauty ideal unrealistically to sell products in the case of female appearance. The existing literature shows that various hair choices can be motivated by multiple factors. Therefore, the study is significant because it addresses the complex interplay between media, culture, identity, and beauty standards. By examining the experiences of Black women in Pietermaritzburg CBD and their relationship with hair extensions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of societal pressures and personal choices related to beauty, while also providing insights into potential avenues for fostering self-acceptance and positive body image. As a result, this study is sociologically noteworthy since it considers these factors as well as the findings of Black women in the Pietermaritzburg CBD. Although such findings may not be generalizable to a larger population, the study aims to contribute to the current discussion on the subject.

1.5 Study aim

The overall aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of Black women regarding their hairstyle choices in the Pietermaritzburg CBD. The study seeks to understand how the use of hair extensions influence the perceptions of beauty among Black women and how they and their peers perceive and define beauty.

1.5.1 The objectives of the study are to:

- 1.To establish an understanding of how Black women perceive and define beauty.
- 2.To explore the reasons for Black women to use hair extensions.
- 3.To examine how the use of hair extensions influence the beauty standards of Black women.

1.5.2 This study seeks to answer these key questions:

1. How do Black women perceive and define beauty?
- 2.What are the reasons for Black women to use hair extensions?
3. How does the use of hair extensions influence the beauty standards of Black women?

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study adopts the black feminism theory. According to Rosser-Mims (2010) black feminism is womanism because it is concerned with the struggle against sexism and racism by women who are part of the black community's efforts to achieve equity and liberty. Furthermore, black feminism is a socially based viewpoint that thinks about the logical and intuitive impacts of culture, race, class, sex, and different types of mistreatments (Lindsay-Dennis, 2015).

Black feminist theory is grounded in the historical experiences and perspectives of black women (Collins, 2003). It offers a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, oppressions, and intricacies that shape their lives in contemporary society (Dujon, 2013). Black feminism can be instrumental in analyzing research data, shedding light on how black women navigate their positions within society and negotiate dominant structures and perceptions in

their communities. It provides valuable insights into the struggles and agency of black women as they navigate their social contexts.

Black feminism theory is used as the framework to examine black women's perceptions of using hair extensions, and how it influences their perceptions of beauty. The theory also helps to unpack how black women define beauty and gives a voice to the participants to share their narratives. Black feminism is appropriate for this study because it strengthens the perception that Black women seem to experience pressure and discrimination regarding their physical appearance and beauty issues. Finally, the study is an exploration of beauty perceptions among a small group of black women from a specific cultural milieu residing in the city of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal within the context of a black feminist perspective.

1.7 Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative methodology. The qualitative approach allows research insight into behaviors and perceptions (Blanche et al., 2006). It is an appropriate methodology for this study because it focused on gathering information by asking questions about people's attitudes, conduct, and experiences. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews as they are appropriate for exploring attitudes, values, beliefs, and motives (Ruslin, 2022). Semi-structured interviews also allow the interviewer to probe and guide respondents to provide more elaborative answers or to make their points more clearly, which is important when the researcher's primary objective is to explain the subjective meanings that respondents ascribe to specific concepts or events, as in this study (Gray, 2021). The interview was conducted in English and isiZulu. With the permission of the participants, the interview was voice recorded, and transcribed afterward. The interview took 45 to 60 minutes.

Interpretive data analysis is used in this study to analyze the study findings because it is primarily based on providing a reliable description of the features, procedures, transactions, and contexts that describe the phenomenon being studied and understood in a language not unfamiliar to the phenomenon (Blanche et al., 2006). Furthermore, it aims to put real-life events into context, thereby providing a rich description of the phenomenon of interest in a way that is close enough to the context for people who are familiar with the context of the phenomenon to easily recognize it and for people to see phenomena in a new or better light (Blanche et al., 2006).

1.8 Thesis chapter structure

The thesis will consist of six chapters outlined below:

Chapter One: Introduction

This first chapter contextualizes beauty enhancements and hairstyling among black women in South Africa and Africa, providing a general summary of the study's background. It also provides detail of the research problem, as well as the study's aim, objectives, and research questions.

Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework

This second chapter reviews the relevant literature on the historical background of beauty, skin lightening, hair, hair extensions in South Africa, and the South African market on hair extensions. The focus is on hair even though skin and hair in relation to understanding beauty is interconnected as shown in previous studies and the global discourse. It also presents the theoretical framework used for this study.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This third chapter describes the research methodology adopted for this study. It outlines and explain the process of sampling, data collection and analysis used for the study.

Chapter Four: Presentation of data

This fourth chapter presents the data that was collected for this study during interviews. These chapters are detailed presentations and discussions of the data obtained in the study. The chapters also analyze the data and explore the similarities among the participants' responses based on the sample of 15 participants selected from hair salons in the Pietermaritzburg, central business district.

Chapter Five: Findings and Data Analysis

In this fifth chapter, the important themes derived from the participant interviews are identified and presented. The chapter connects the study's primary findings to both the theoretical framework and the literature review. This chapter has been organized conceptually to explore

the different subjects that developed in both the literature and the key findings about beauty enhancement and the use of hair extensions.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

This sixth chapter provides a summary of the findings reported and a conclusion. Finally, the chapter closes with a presentation of the relevant recommendations and suggestions for further research.

1.9 Conclusion

An overview of the research study was given in this chapter. The following topics were covered: the introduction and background of the study, the study's scope, the problem statement, the research questions and objectives, the study's significance, and the thesis outline.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises two parts. The first part is a review of existing literature and second part presents the theoretical framework that was found relevant to this study. The main purpose of this chapter is to examine black women's perceptions, understanding, and experiences of beauty enhancement, their hairstyle choices, specifically using hair extensions, and how it influences their perception of beauty. Furthermore, the first part of this chapter provides a review of the perception of beauty, an overview of hairstyling, a perception of body image, a perception of skin lightening, and hair extensions market overview. Part two of this chapter describes and discusses the theoretical assumptions critical to understanding perceptions of beauty enhancement and the use of hair extensions from a black feminist perspective.

2.2 Perceptions of beauty and influence of media

Young women often face the struggle of defining their self-image based on societal ideals of beauty, which leads them to question what is considered attractive (Ando et al., 2021). Media depictions of unrealistic beauty heavily influence women's self-perception, often resulting in dissatisfaction with their bodies (Szabo and Allwood, 2006). As Western media and values

gain influence, it has been observed that more black South African women may be attracted to media representations of a particular type of feminine beauty, which is often associated with thinness as the epitome of beauty (Szabo and Allwood, 2006).

Extensive research has been conducted on the influence of mass media, particularly social media, in promoting specific beauty standards. Shen and Bissell (2013) focused on the use of social media platforms for marketing and branding by cosmetic and beauty products companies. Other studies have explored the correlation between social media use and increased body dissatisfaction among young women, along with other social and psychological effects. For instance, Meier and Gray (2014) investigated the relationship between adolescent females' body image issues and their exposure to appearance-related content and engagement in Facebook photo activity. They found that appearance exposure on social media was significantly associated with weight dissatisfaction, a desire for thinness, internalization of the thin ideal, and self-objectification.

According to Tiggemann and Slater (2013), adolescent females who use Facebook scored higher on measures of body image concerns compared to non-users. The authors highlight that the Internet, as a powerful socio-cultural medium, significantly influences the body image of adolescent girls. Similar studies on other social media platforms have also revealed concerns related to body image, including the pursuit of thinness, body dissatisfaction, and eating disorders (Jiosta et al., 2021). Collectively, these investigations indicate that the media, including social media, has a substantial psychological and physical impact on young individuals.

Furthermore, beauty is a broad concept that includes body image, which is always geared towards a beauty ideal. It includes, among other things, physical shape, skin, and hair (Grogan, 2021). Many proponents claim that feminine beauty is hidden in subjectivities and so cannot be defined because its fundamental meaning and essence are subject to a wide range of contextual implications (Budidarma, 2020). However, Brand (1999) focuses on the dominating viewpoint on the perception of feminine beauty, claiming that the criteria for what is considered beauty are the same throughout races. According to Patton (2006), the media's incessant messaging portrays beauty in Eurocentric forms that are marketed as the picture of outer beauty that determines the traits of what a woman's attractiveness should entail.

Beauty is a combination of attractive sight and intellectual characteristics such as form, colour, and texture (Thompson, 2009). Beauty can also be defined as characteristics that appeal to the senses or the intellect (Turnbull et. al., 2010). Beauty has always been at the centre of what it means to be a woman. Women from various nations, races, cultures, ethnicities, and religions have expressed anxieties about being attractive and acceptable in their social circles, both intimate and wider. According to Brand (1999), colour, size, shape, sexuality, and ethnicity are elements of the body that are crucial in the concept of female beauty. Brand (1999) continues to state that a white-dominated culture is accountable for the racialization of beauty, which is used to criticize all women, irrespective of race. However, on the other hand he recognizes that non-Eurocentric cultures may not embrace the same criteria of beauty, proposing an alternative definition of beauty as a contextual quality intimately linked to factual beliefs and moral attitudes (Brand, 1999).

Beauty is a worldwide and culturally relevant idea. Distinct cultures have different ideas about what beauty is (Sarwer et al., 2003). The concept of beauty in some traditional African communities comprises both physical and non-physical features (Azenabor, 2022). In some African marriages, for example, a wife must be obedient, humble, and a role model for excellent moral behaviour. Because moral behaviour is regarded as an aesthetic value, a woman's beauty in this perspective includes non-physical attributes (Azenabor, 2022). Throughout many African communities, a woman's physical beauty is devalued when she has an unsuitable personality, meaning that a person's attractiveness is found in their personality as much as their physical appearance (Azenabor, 2022).

In addition, men are required to purchase their wives' clothing and jewellery for them to appear fashionable. In the case that men do not buy clothing and jewellery for their wives they are accused of being stingy or of squandering their money on other women. As a result, men who buy clothes and jewellery are perceived as striving to improve their wives' physical beauty (Gyeke, 1996). According to the evolutionary perspective, a healthy and disease-free person is considered as beautiful (Sarwer et al, 2003). This is especially true in African culture, where a beautiful, healthy body is considered a sign of health. Choosing a healthy partner is similarly critical in rural parts of South Africa, where the HIV pandemic is rampant and potential partners are judged mostly on their physical attributes (Ribane, 2006)

According to Black and Sharma (2001) the gender dimension of beauty is still important, with feminine beauty dominating. There is not a society in the world that has not developed normative beauty standards for women. In the development of an ideal feminine body, the patriarchal system plays a vital role. In various cultures, there is a strong connection between "doing beauty" and "doing femininity". Women's adherence to traditional beauty standards is not only "acceptable", but also "expected" (Chiodo, 2018). The patriarchal society's "beauty myth" keeps women preoccupied with the dilemma of how to appear attractive. The above literature shows that the struggle young women face to align their self-image with societal beauty ideals, influenced by media and cultural dynamics, underscores the complex interplay between self-perception, cultural norms, and media representation.

The exploration of beauty aesthetics, tracing their evolution from the past to the present, provides a fascinating lens through which to understand societal shifts and changing perceptions. Examining the then-and-now dynamics reveals the dynamic nature of beauty ideals, shaped by cultural, historical, and social factors. Particularly noteworthy is the nuanced conversation surrounding Afrocentric beauty standards, shedding light on a critical discourse that challenges historical Eurocentric norms (Khoo, 2019). The present discourse encompasses a celebration of diverse African features, natural hair textures, and a rejection of one-size-fits-all beauty standards. Afrocentric beauty standards not only serve as a counter-narrative to historical exclusions but also contribute to a broader redefinition of beauty that embraces cultural authenticity and inclusivity (Khoo, 2019). This exploration deepens our understanding of the complex intersections between aesthetics, culture, and identity, offering valuable insights into the ongoing dialogue around diverse beauty standards.

2.2.1 A historical overview of hairstyling

Hair holds significant importance in women's perception of beauty and serves as a means of identification. However, there exists a prevalent beauty myth surrounding the concept of "good" and "poor" hair. "Good" hair is typically associated with long, straight hair, which is not naturally common among many African women. Consequently, numerous black women opt for weaves to conceal their natural hair and achieve a specific definition of "beautiful hair," often characterized by shoulder-length straight hair. Oyedemi (2016) conducted a study on the notion of "beautiful" hair among young black South African women and found that many of them refrain from wearing their natural hair due to societal stereotypes and the need for social

approval. Remarkably, even young girls as young as three years old undergo hair-relaxing treatments to alter the natural texture of their hair. Oyedemi (2016) argues that the pursuit of an idealized hair feature leads to a form of cultural violence that erases individual and cultural identity.

The advent of colonialism and the ongoing interactions between different ethnic groups had a profound influence on the perception of beauty in Africa, particularly among women (Erasmus, 1997). Comparisons of beauty began to be constructed, primarily based on the physical characteristics of different races, with hair being a significant area of comparison alongside variations in skin tone. Historical research has shown that black hair has been associated with negative connotations, shaping notions of "good" and "bad" hair within African black communities (Thompson, 2009). In popular discourse, "good" hair was commonly associated with straight hair, while "bad" hair referred to kinky or "woolly" hair (Thompson, 2009). This distinction fuelled generations of African women to dedicate considerable time and financial resources to straighten their hair in pursuit of what was considered "beautiful" hair. The legacy of slavery and colonialism extends beyond political and economic oppression, as it has also imposed beauty standards that marginalize and disregard the distinctive features of African-Black women (Robinson, 2011). This has placed a significant financial burden on these women in their pursuit of an idealized appearance, according to the standards of that time. Black women have shouldered significant economic expenses due to their attempts to conform to Eurocentric beauty ideals, which prioritize attributes like straight hair and lighter skin that often differ from their natural features. This pressure has driven these women to invest substantial amounts of money, time, and effort in modifying their appearance to align with these standards. These efforts, influenced by historical factors like colonialism and racism, have led to practices such as chemical hair treatments, wigs, and skin-lightening products, necessitating consistent upkeep, salon visits, and specialized purchases that accumulate substantial financial costs. These endeavours extend beyond personal grooming, impacting professional spheres where appearance matters, thereby potentially incurring additional expenses for attire, cosmetics, and hairstyling that match Western beauty norms. Beyond the financial toll, this burden includes the emotional strain of striving to meet standards that do not naturally resonate with their cultural heritage. It is crucial to recognize that these economic challenges are not isolated occurrences but systemic issues that can affect entire communities. The obligation to adhere to these beauty criteria can perpetuate a cycle of economic stress, redirecting resources away from vital needs and avenues for progress.

It is crucial to re-examine the historical association between black hair and negative perceptions. There is a need to develop new narratives and discussions around hair that promote anti-racist aesthetics. Racist beauty standards have consistently prioritized features of the dominant group over those of minority groups (Craig, 2006). This has resulted in many Black women to consider themselves as being at the lower end of the beauty spectrum and accepting racial beauty standards as the norm (Robison, 2011). The racialization of beauty and hair undeniably impacts the identities of African-Black women, leading many to go to great lengths to conform to Eurocentric standards (Robinson, 2011). However, despite their efforts, black women may still fall short of the Eurocentric beauty ideal, which ironically reinforces their internalization of and desire to meet Eurocentric norms.

Moreover, there is a pervasive influence of cultural violence on the perceptions and practices of Black women in Africa including South Africa regarding their hair and hairstyling. Oyedemi (2016) conducted a study involving 159 Black women from South African universities. The findings revealed that Black women have a complex relationship with their African hair, influenced by cultural violence. Many Black women who strive to meet Eurocentric beauty standards through their hairstyles contribute to the erasure of African identity and culture associated with natural African hair. Interestingly, only 15% of the participants considered African natural hair attractive, while the majority regarded European or Asian hair as the most desirable (Oyedemi, 2016). It is worth noting that a significant percentage (87.2%) of the participants reported using hair extensions, artificial attachments, or weaves (Oyedemi, 2016). Additionally, 96.2% of black African female students stated that they chemically relaxed their hair to achieve a straight appearance (Oyedemi, 2016).

Oyedemi (2016), argued that when Black individuals conform to prevailing Eurocentric beliefs regarding hairstyling and beauty, their natural or African hair becomes subjected to cultural, symbolic, and physical violence. This violence, internalized and passed down through generations, is rooted in the notion that beautiful hair should not be frizzy, kinky, or similar to the natural hair of Black women. This harmful narrative is reinforced by local beauty franchises, such as Clicks, which depicted afro-natural hair as "dry," "damaged," "frizzy," and "dull," while contrasting it with straight-blond hair labelled as "fine," "flat," and "normal" (Mazibuko, 2020). Such advertisements perpetuate negative stereotypes, portraying black hair

and black skin as undesirable and unhealthy, thus reflecting a form of racism towards black communities.

Contrary to Oyedemi (2016), Majali, Coetzee, and Rau (2017) present findings that suggest black South African women's beauty practices exhibit an appreciation for both African and Western hairstyling, rather than being solely dominated by Western standards. The study conducted by Majali, Coetzee, and Rau (2017) involved in-depth face-to-face interviews with eight black women aged 19 to 29 from the University of Free State, who came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. These women showcased a variety of hairstyles, including afros, braids, weaves, and relaxed hair (Majali, Coetzee, and Rau, 2017). Employing an interpretive approach, the study focused on the meanings attributed to beauty practices and hairstyles (Majali, Coetzee, and Rau, 2017). The research revealed that hairstyling held symbolic significance for the participants' identities, and it indicated that black women's hair beauty practices were guided by notions of healthy versus weak hair rather than being solely influenced by race or dominant beauty narratives associated with a specific racial group (Majali, Coetzee, and Rau, 2017). Furthermore, the study found that beauty practices were eclectic and black women who adhered to Western beauty ideals through treatments and hairstyling did not experience self-hatred or a betrayal of their African heritage, but rather embraced a multicultural identity (Majali, Coetzee, and Rau, 2017).

Historically, African hair has been perceived in a variety of different manners. Hair has long been regarded as a mark of rank, identity and ancestry in African countries, past and present. The communities around women who specialize in hairdressing hold hair in high respect. Braiding is taught to young women and those who demonstrate proficiency are motivated to reach a career in the area. Individuals who allow their hair to grow wild or unkempt, or who do not properly care for it, are perceived as loose women with few or no ethics, or as insane (Patton, 2006). A black person's hair is a representation of all, however, the precise hairstyle and meaning imparted vary according to the country (Matjila, 2020).

During the colonial days, slavers would gather an average of 300 Africans at a time when the slave trade first began, and each slave's hair would be shaved before they sailed. Slave masters did not do this to smear the slaves' identity but rather for hygiene purposes (Matjila, 2020). Whatever the rationale, shaving the slaves' hair was the first step toward dehumanizing them and degrading their status (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). Hair was a symbol of pride and once

shaved this pride was also removed. House slaves were required to seem "decent" because they were in the presence of their master and his guests for long periods, and their demeanor could not offend anyone of European breeding (Matjila, 2020). House slaves were commonly given time for beautification, and slave women were instructed to straighten their hair in the way of their Western counterparts (Bellinger, 2007). Slaves in the fields did not have much time to style their hair. They were commonly compelled to wear their hair wrapped in a scarf to hide the unpleasant "wool" from White people surrounding them or were forced to maintain their hair untidy to ensure sickness, baldness, or hair breaking (Bellinger, 2007). The women would go to church after their hair was done so that they could all see each other's hair. All the women's hair would be braided in intricate designs and styles, which would be left in for the rest of the week but concealed under a scarf to keep it looking nice; consequently, marking the beginning of the African American hair ritual and importance (Bellinger, 2007).

The process of miscegenation resulted in the emergence of women with "good" hair, characterized by a straighter and softer nature and texture. African American women faced immense pressure from themselves and society to present themselves as white as possible, which was intensified by the presence of good hair and lighter skin (Bellinger, 2007). Even when some slaves had skin that was as light as many white individuals, the slightest hint of kinkiness in their hair would prevent them from passing as white (Bellinger, 2007). Hair served as a definitive marker of blackness, and some male slaves seeking to escape to freedom would shave their heads to erase the genetic evidence of their ancestry (Bellinger, 2007).

Some African women have recently viewed changing their hair from its natural state to be a form of self-hatred (Moodley and Mthembu, 2020). Others began to see hair as a political statement and a symbol of the Black Power movement, particularly in the 1960s (Bellinger, 2007). Moreover, people wore thick, tall afros on their heads to try to change racist preconceptions that black people are monstrously ugly, unwanted, or even malevolent (Hooks, 2014). Hair has evolved into a symbol of authority and recognition. However, instead of being a symbol of power in the 1990s, afro hairstyles became a symbol of delinquency for males and a mark of inferior status for women (Bellinger, 2007). For example, straight hair is still the norm in North America, and it is often required for African American women to get work. Some women would even receive micros (micro-braids), which create the appearance of long straight hair due to their small size. Depending on whose generation your question is, women may do micros for a variety of reasons (Bellinger, 2007).

Hair has always been a significant part of determining one's identity, this is especially true for African Americans (Patton, 2006). Hair used to be a marker of slave status in the 1800s; today, it is a marker of beauty, economic standing, power, and beliefs. In today's African American society, women with straightened hair are still considered beautiful (Patton, 2006). Women in positions of power and privilege frequently get their hair straightened and not in a natural manner. Good-paying or middle-class women have their hair short, long, or braided (Patton, 2006). Lower-class women wear their hair in braids the most, which is interesting because braids are more expensive and time-demanding than getting one's hair chemically straightened. Hair, in essence, defines one's race, heritage, and identity. African Women who have "excellent" hair tend to do more with it and are frequently admired by other women.

According to Dione-Rosado (2004) certain hairstyles like relaxed hair, braids, weaves, and short-trimmed hair are considered more professional and are commonly worn by middle-class women. Conversely, in professional environments, hairstyles such as dreadlocks and twists are seen as more daring. These hairstyles can be used to indicate various aspects of a person's identity, including their gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, political beliefs, religion, and potentially even their age. Onwuachi-Willig (2009) found that African American children as young as three or four years old understand the significance of having "beautiful" hair and how it relates to social hierarchy. She shares a personal experience where her mother discouraged her from engaging in rough play so that her hair would not revert to its natural state after being pressed for Sunday worship services. This early lesson made her feel that her natural hair was not good enough and that she needed to alter it to be considered presentable (Onwuachi-Willig, 2009). Additionally, some young girls feel inadequate because their hair does not meet the desired standards of others.

According to Gardiner (2015), Black women are often taught to view their natural "nappy" hair as something to be ashamed of. They perceive it as clumsy, unattractive, and even repulsive. This negative perception of their natural hair stems from a belief that it represents weakness. However, the idea that hairstyling practices can challenge mainstream beauty ideals and empower Black women is significant for two reasons: giving them a voice and a sense of empowerment. Recent research suggests that hair can serve as a medium for individuals to assert control over themselves and others (Moradi and Tebbe, 2022). Hairstyles like locks and

braids, for example, evoke images of control, royalty, beauty, and grace for Africans. Additionally, there is a belief that a woman's hairstyle can provide insights into her life or personality. Teenage girls' choice of hairstyle is influenced by various factors such as parental influence, friends, boys, and financial constraints, particularly when they lack personal income. The above literature shows that hair has become a symbol of power, beauty, and beliefs, and various hairstyles signify different aspects of identity. Black women have been taught to view their natural hair negatively, leading to a perception of weakness. However, embracing diverse hairstyles can challenge mainstream beauty ideals, empower Black women, and provide a means of self-expression.

2.2.2 Media and perceptions of body image

The media plays a significant role in shaping young women's perceptions of beauty, which reflects societal and particularly patriarchal ideologies regarding women and their bodies. Shelembe (2014) explains that historically, women who are considered beautiful have enjoyed advantages in terms of employment, marriage, and social mobility compared to those who are not. Women face more pressure to be physically attractive than men, as their physical beauty is often prioritized over other personal traits or characteristics (Baron, 2004). Due to a society that places great importance on women's body image, many women are influenced by their self-perception and the perception of significant others and compare their beauty to that of other women (Baron, 2004). For several young women, achieving a socially acceptable body image, which is partly influenced by the media, becomes a goal. Grabe et al. (2008) state that women frequently experience dissatisfaction with their body image and experience low self-esteem as a result of repeated exposure to the media's portrayal of "ideal" bodies. Low self-esteem and negative body image contribute to an increase in the number of individuals who develop eating disorders and other behavioral problems.

Body image refers to how individuals perceive and behave towards the size and shape of their bodies. It comprises a perceptual aspect, which involves how one perceives his/her body in terms of size, shape, weight, physical features, performance, and growth, as well as an evaluative aspect, which relates to how one feels about these qualities and how those feelings impact one's behaviors (Mills, Shannon, and Hogue, 2017). When individuals perceive that their appearance falls far from the cultural ideal in terms of size and shape, regardless of their actual size or shape, they experience body dissatisfaction. An individual's interpretation of societal ideals and one's self-perception greatly influence dissatisfaction with one's body.

Consequently, body dissatisfaction and perceptions of attractiveness are closely intertwined. Body dissatisfaction is identified as the primary risk factor for various harmful behaviors, including clinical eating disorders and persistent dieting (Marks, De Foe, and Collett, 2020). Therefore, understanding the origins of body dissatisfaction is crucial not only for theories related to beauty perception, but also for clinical and practical considerations.

In modern industrialized societies, most people are regularly exposed to various forms of mass media, including television, music videos, films, and publications. These media platforms often promote idealized body images, creating the perception that one can achieve attractiveness by purchasing or consuming specific products (Groesz et al., 2001). Over the past few decades, numerous experimental studies have investigated the impact of media exposure to idealized bodies on individuals' perceptions and evaluations of their own bodies (Groesz et al., 2001). Most of these studies have focused on women, who tend to associate thinness with attractiveness. Cohort studies often examine the relationship between naturalistic media consumption and various body image factors, such as body perception, ideal body size, and body dissatisfaction (Mills, Shannon, and Hogue, 2017). Experimental investigations frequently involve exposing participants to images of extremely thin and attractive models under different conditions, followed by an assessment of their body image. These studies contribute to our understanding of the causal effects of media on body image. In light of these findings, several meta-analytic reviews have been conducted on these studies. Mills, Shannon, and Hogue, (2017) conducted the first meta-analysis on the effects of exposure to thin-ideal media. Their analysis revealed that when women viewed images of slim media models, their body image became significantly more negative compared to when they viewed control photos or images of average or plus-sized models. This effect was found to be of moderate size.

The media can influence individuals not only by reinforcing beauty ideals and triggering immediate changes in their perceptions and evaluations of their appearance but also by altering their perceived norms. Research has shown that people's feelings about their bodies are influenced by their perceptions of what is considered "average" (Groesz et al., 2001). One reason why the portrayal of thin-ideal images in the media can be harmful is that it shapes individuals' understanding of what is considered "normal" in society. Although there is no specific research on how media images directly impact people's conceptions of normality, there is circumstantial evidence supporting this notion. In a study conducted by Bair, Steele, and Mills (2014) the influence of normative body ideals was investigated through a series of

experiments. Participants were exposed to information about body preferences purportedly favored by their peers, such as desired body types. The study manipulated participants' perceptions of attractiveness in the eyes of others and the gender of the peers whose preferences were being reported. Participants were then asked to choose a body size from a range of silhouettes that represented their desired appearance. The findings indicated that women selected a thinner personal ideal body size in conditions where a thin norm was presented compared to conditions with a heavier norm. This pattern held true regardless of whether participants were informed about the preferences of men or other women (Bair, Steele, and Mills, 2014). These results highlight how individuals adjust their personal body ideals based on their perceptions of what others find attractive, influenced by media representations and societal norms.

Mills, Jadd, and Key (2012) conducted a study examining the impact of body norms on individuals' perceptions of ideal and present body sizes. The study found that in the condition where a thinner norm was presented, women reported a smaller ideal body size compared to the condition with a heavier norm. This suggests that the desired body size is influenced by societal norms and can be flexible. Interestingly, women's ideal body size became thinner than what they believed the average woman's body looked like. The researchers interpreted these findings as indicating that women may set their target weight to be slimmer than the norm in order to stand out or feel unique. The study was replicated with a group of young men, but in this case, body norms were altered by using perceived averages related to muscularity instead of thinness. In the condition with a more muscular norm, men indicated a larger ideal body size compared to the condition with a less muscular norm (Mills, Jadd, and Key, 2012). These results demonstrate that body norms can influence men's ideal body size, just as they do for women, but in relation to muscularity rather than thinness.

Furthermore, the media nowadays plays an important influence in shaping young people's values. Body image is one of the most stereotyped values in public perception, among all concepts. According to Aparicio-Martinez et. al. (2014) skinny and fit people are nearly exclusively featured in television advertising, shows, and movies. The frequency of such photographs on social media is currently at an all-time high. According to studies, young women who use social media on a regular basis are six times more likely to participate in poor weight-control habits. Men are four times as likely as women. Unrealistic body images

presented in social media produce widespread body concern and may result in public health issues.

Traditional beauty ideals were proposed by the media with a strong preference for faultless facial characteristics, skin tone, hair, and figure (Engeln-Maddox, 2006). Groesz et al. (2009) demonstrated that the media's portrayal of a thin figure had a significant impact on the public's contentment with their bodies. The thin body image has evolved into a healthy body image as the trend shifts, but the single-body aesthetic has remained constant. This was highlighted in Tiggmann and Zaccardo's (2018) study of the hashtag fitspiration, which is a combination of the phrases "fit" and "inspiration", which emphasized the significance of flexibility in defining hard-to-obtain body images on the self-customization of female body photographs on Instagram. Media prefer to focus primarily on women's beauty and physical attributes, rather than personality traits or abilities, even when appearance is irrelevant.

The negative concerns surrounding body image in our society can significantly impact the value assessment system. Emerging digital media platforms like TikTok can capture people's attention through their appealing qualities (Liu, 2021). Tags and influencers on these platforms have been found to reinforce stereotypes and contribute to the distortion of societal values. The influence of tags and influencers on social media platforms can perpetuate stereotypes related to beauty, body image, identity, and consumerism, ultimately distorting societal values and ideals. Hashtags and influencers who seek high levels of attention play a role in this process. Empirical evidence indicates that many women compare themselves to media models when evaluating their attractiveness. Ringrose et al. (2013) suggest that the digitally mediated value judgments associated with these media platforms reinforce normative displays of femininity and masculinity, particularly in the context of heterosexuality. Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr (2011) argue that these heterosocial contexts normalize the sexualization of the female body.

The emerging trend discussed above has attracted the attention of individuals vulnerable to eating disorders and body image issues, prompting them to scrutinize their eating habits, clothing choices, and physical appearance. They question their character, wondering if they are lazy, undisciplined, or failures because their fitness routines, eating habits, and fashion choices do not align with the images presented in the popular social media videos. These videos capitalize on people's fears and dissatisfaction with their current lives. Many individuals believe that by emulating the lifestyles of these internet celebrities, they will achieve the same

level of happiness and fulfillment (Siibak, 2010). Consequently, comparisons lead individuals to think statements such as "I should eat better," "Why don't I look like this," and "I wish I could achieve this" (Liu, 2021). As a result, those heavily impacted may experience detrimental effects on their thoughts and behaviors as feelings of self-worth decline.

However, as Rounsefell (2020) points out, these promoted norms are not suitable for everyone's body type and needs. Additionally, when viewed through the internet, a group of individuals may share similar body image and diet concerns. Hutchinson and Rapee (2007) were the first to propose this phenomenon, sometimes referred to as peer contagion. Research has shown that comments from peers about physical appearance are associated with body dissatisfaction and eating problems (Hutchinson and Rapee, 2007). Therefore, peers have a significant influence on young people's body image and the development of eating disorders. These findings highlight the significant impact of new media platforms like TikTok on people's value systems, leading to serious social issues. The above literature shows that the perceptions of body image and hair are intertwined in the context of societal beauty standards and media influence. The pervasive influence of social media on body image is closely intertwined with the portrayal of hair and beauty standards. In today's digital age, social media platforms are powerful vehicles for disseminating beauty ideals and shaping perceptions of self-worth. The images and content shared by influencers and through trending hashtags often emphasize specific hair textures, styles, and overall appearances that align with prevailing beauty norms. This imagery contributes to the cultivation of unrealistic beauty standards and fosters a culture of comparison, where individuals measure their own worth against these digitally curated representations (Hutchinson and Rapee, 2007). Hair, being a prominent aspect of personal appearance, becomes a focal point of this influence. The pursuit of specific hair types and styles promoted by influencers can lead to the replication of homogenized beauty ideals, sidelining the diverse spectrum of natural hair textures and appearances that exist. As a result, social media's portrayal of hair and beauty can exacerbate insecurities, fuel body dissatisfaction, and foster a sense of inadequacy, underscoring the profound impact that digital platforms have on individuals' self-perception and societal values. The media's promotion of idealized body images and certain hair textures can contribute to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and a desire to conform to narrow beauty ideals. However, there is a shift towards embracing natural beauty and challenging these beauty standards, promoting self-acceptance, and celebrating the diversity of hair textures.

2.2.3 Perceptions of Skin Lightning

Skin tone is considered an indicator of attractiveness among many black women in South Africa (Ryabov, 2019). According to this perspective, the lighter a woman's skin colour, the more desirable she is perceived to be. This preference for lighter skin is rooted in a long history of colonial prejudice that continues to impact the attitudes of dark-skinned individuals of African descent (Coetzee et al., 2012). In contemporary times, many African women resort to skin bleaching to achieve a fairer complexion. These various notions of beauty contribute to the shaping of cultural identity. Hooks (2014) emphasizes that cultural identity is not only about "being," but also about "becoming." It is a dynamic concept that encompasses both the past and the future. This means that the identities of black women are not solely rooted in their culture and traditions but are also influenced by the colonial experiences that have historically distorted black identity. In order to challenge the colonial mindset and decolonize the perception of the body, Hooks (2014) argues that black women must confront issues of race and representation, particularly challenging the dichotomy of "good" and "bad" portrayals of black women.

The legacies of slavery and colonialism have played a significant role in teaching racial inequality, skin colour stratification, and colourism. Today, skin colour stratification exists on a global scale, with skin tone serving as a defining characteristic that has profound implications for one's position in society, including the life prospects of African Americans (Robinson, 2011). Colourism, which refers to prejudice based on skin colour within the same racial group, is a pervasive and distressing problem (Robinson, 2011). Hunter (2002) emphasized the importance of this issue as a key concern within African American and Mexican American communities, highlighting its global significance for communities of colour. Skin colour and complexion stratification are crucial issues for all people of colour.

Colourism refers to a privileging process known as skin colour stratification, in which individuals with lighter skin tones are given preferential treatment over those with darker skin tones (Hunter, 2002). This privilege can be observed in various aspects of life, such as income, education, and housing. According to Hunter (2007) light-skinned Mexican Americans and light-skinned African Americans tend to have higher levels of education and reside in more integrated communities. The preferential treatment based on lighter skin colour or complexion within the coloured community is linked to society's prevalent ideals and notions of beauty, and this preference extends to areas like courtship and marriage (Hunter, 2002).

In the Black community, the concept of beauty is strongly influenced by skin tone, with lighter skin traditionally being considered more attractive than darker skin (Hunter, 2002). Pale skin is seen as a desirable trait for African American women and girls. Hunter (2007) suggests that having lighter skin carries a certain level of social and beauty capital. This attractiveness can then be leveraged to gain access to other forms of capital, such as financial and educational opportunities. Due to the high value placed on this beauty capital, skin lightening has become increasingly popular to enhance one's appearance and potentially increase chances of success.

The practice of skin lightening is a common regimen used to achieve lighter skin tone. This is not a new phenomenon for people of colour worldwide. As early as the sixteenth century in Santo Domingo, Indian women employed painful techniques to bleach their skin in order to appear more attractive to invaders (Robinson, 2011). Similarly, indigenous women in Suriname lightened their complexion to enhance their appeal to White male colonists (Menke, 2012). Over the past three decades, women in the Black community have also embraced cosmetic skin-lightening products as a social practice (Pitche et al., 2005). However, the application of such substances to the skin poses significant risks, including deformity and even death (Miyajima de Souza, 2008). Despite these dangers, the phenomenon of skin lightening, known as the lightning syndrome (Hall, 1995), continues to gain popularity due to the influence of popular media and local cultural factors.

In recent years, body modification, specifically skin lightening, has become a widespread and potentially hazardous practice worldwide (Charles, 2003). Skin lightening involves the application of topical lotions, gels, and household products like toothpaste, bleach washing powder, and battery acid to the skin (Lewis et al. 2011). These lightening treatments often contain substances such as Hydroquinone, Glucocorticoids, Steroids, and other corrosive compounds, which significantly increase the risk of serious health issues (Juliano, 2022). Side effects of skin lightening include skin irritations like eczema, bacterial and fungal infections like scabies and acne, and skin damage like lesions and thinning of the epidermis (Mahe et al., 2003).

The desire to lighten one's skin has led individuals to take extreme measures to achieve quick results. Apuke (2018) presents evidence of skin bleaching practices dating back to approximately 4000 BC in Ancient Egypt. During the era of the slave trade, European slave

masters were discovered to have damaged their skin due to prolonged sun exposure, leading them to adopt various methods of skin lightening to improve their complexion (Apuke, 2018). There is growing evidence of the use of substances like Kohl and Henna for skin lightening in North Africa (Apuke, 2018).

The lightness of skin is considered a significant cultural factor in defining feminine attractiveness worldwide, particularly in certain regions of Sub-Saharan Africa (Li, Min, Belk, Kimura, and Bahl, 2008). Skin lightening has gained popularity among black Africans in this area as a means of enhancing their appearance (Li, Min, Belk, Kimura, and Bahl, 2008). The desire to look good, appealing, and beautiful is a universal aspiration for women. Consequently, the practice of beautification has become the norm, extending beyond the mere modification of specific body parts. According to Davids et al. (2016) skin lightening has become the dominant form of body beautification, making it difficult to discuss beauty in the modern world without considering the concept and practice of skin lightening. Skin lightening can be described as a deliberate alteration of the outermost layer of the skin, also known as the epidermis (Apuke, 2018). Similarly, Davids et al. (2016) define skin lightening as the intentional whitening of the skin, often achieved through the use of various substances or processes. Akiibinu et al. (2019) note that skin lightening is practiced by individuals of different ages, races, religions, and philosophies. Even individuals of white race may engage in skin lightening, potentially to maintain their body colour. However, young female adolescents are considered particularly vulnerable to skin-lightening practices.

In a cross-sectional study investigating the determinants of topical steroid misuse, Malangu and Ogunbanjo (2006) found that 35% of 225 pharmacy customers in South Africa admitted to using topical steroids for the purpose of skin lightening. According to the findings, women are the most frequent users of skin lightening products (Malangu and Ogunbanjo, 2006). The study also revealed that being a black female was the strongest predictor of topical steroid usage. Initially, skin lightening was associated with black rural women, but there is an ongoing increase in the practice among educated women who are willing to go to great lengths to purchase expensive lightening products (Pitché et al., 2005). However, it should be noted that due to the stigma associated with skin lightening, available data might not fully capture the actual number of individuals engaged in this practice (Mahe et al., 2003).

According to Durosaro, Ajiboye, and Oniye (2012), the history of skin lightening in Nigeria can be traced back to the early interactions with individuals of lighter complexions. These initial encounters may have raised awareness and motivated the practice, particularly in response to the abolition of the slave trade and other commercial activities. However, the methods and extent of skin lightening back then would have been significantly different from contemporary practices. Skin lightening involves artificially removing the top layer of the skin and can be achieved through various means (Apuke, 2018). Regardless of the specific procedure, the body part that is lightened can indicate the type or form of skin lightening. Edmond (2014) identifies areas such as the face, upper body, lower body, and intimate parts as commonly targeted for skin lightening. In Jamaica, skin lightening was previously more prevalent among younger, rural, and/or economically disadvantaged women.

However, since the 1970s, there has been a demographic shift in those practicing skin lightening, with older, more educated, and cosmopolitan Black women increasingly engaging in the practice (Pitché et al., 2005). In Jamaican culture, a lighter skin tone has long been associated with youth and beauty. Charles (2003) suggests that having a lighter complexion is viewed as advantageous for upward social mobility, with lighter-skinned individuals having greater opportunities for success and prestige. However, this advantage is influenced by factors such as education and ability, as Gonlin (2022), notes that individuals of mixed black and white ancestry historically had more opportunities for advancement compared to those of full black ancestry. In essence, there are clear practical advantages associated with having light skin, which can lead to differences in self-worth and social perceptions between individuals with light skin and those with dark skin.

The practice of using skin tone creams to achieve a fair and beautiful appearance among women has become widespread (Apuke, 2018). The marketing of beauty creams, particularly through social media, has had a significant impact on female psychology, as it promotes the positive aspects of skin lightening while disregarding the negative consequences, thereby encouraging women to engage in the practice (Apuke, 2018). While skin lightening was initially observed among adults, there is a shifting trend that now affects a larger population, particularly adolescent girls. Urban areas have seen a high prevalence of cosmetic skin lightening among young adults (Apuke, 2018).

For instance, studies have shown that 25% of Mali's population and up to 52% of Senegal's population engage in skin lightening (Apuke, 2018). On social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, numerous cosmetic advertisements targeting women can be found, including makeup, hair products, anti-aging creams, skin-firming lotions, and products that promise to reduce black spots and even out skin tone (Swain, 2012). Despite the potential harmful effects of skin lightening, such as skin rotting and unpleasant odour, these products continue to be marketed and used. The entertainment industry also plays a role in portraying the "positive" aspects of skin lightening while ignoring the associated risks (Fokuo, 2009; Charles, 2003). However, it is important to recognize that skin lightening can have severe health consequences, including an increased risk of skin cancer, acne, and loss of skin elasticity leading to wrinkles.

Skin lightening practices in South Africa have been influenced by historical factors such as colonialism and apartheid. While not solely responsible, these concepts play a role in understanding the underlying reasons of self-hatred and low self-esteem that drive many South Africans to lighten their skin (Charles, 2003). The residual racism left by colonization helps explain some South Africans' preference for Eurocentric beauty standards and lighter skin tones (Charles, 2003). During colonialism, promoting white supremacy was a tactic used to control slaves, reinforcing the belief that colonizers were superior in every way (Julien, 2014). This racial hierarchy allowed for exploitation, dominance, and unequal distribution of resources, maintaining the power dynamics between black Africans and white Europeans (Vrousalis, 2013). Black bodies were depicted as inferior and unattractive, while white bodies were associated with virtue, beauty, and desirability (Vrousalis, 2013). Such portrayals equated blackness with filth, disease, pollution, and immorality, further solidifying the dominance of the colonizers (Vrousalis, 2013).

These stereotypes perpetuated the belief among people of colour that white individuals were more entitled, dominant, and superior (Motseki, 2019). To maintain their supremacy, white South Africans enacted discriminatory laws such as the Native Land Act of 1913 (Motseki, 2019). The end of colonialism did not bring about a change in the perceptions of black and white South Africans. Apartheid, established in 1948, further deepened segregation and emphasized white supremacy (Larson, 2019). Under apartheid, new laws were enacted to enforce racial division and limit black political participation, denying non-whites their civil rights and the right to vote (Besteman, 2019; Larson, 2019). Additionally, African children

were forced to learn in Afrikaans instead of English, creating a linguistic barrier that aimed to keep black Africans under control (Ramoupi, 2014).

The approach was to provide black South Africans with an inferior education, limiting their opportunities to low-paying jobs (Ramoupi, 2014). This environment, coupled with the injustices they have experienced, has led them to believe that only those with lighter skin are deserving of success and happiness, attributing their own problems to the colour of their skin. Mandela (1995) highlights this indoctrination in his book, recounting his childhood belief that if he performed well in this life, he would be reborn as a white man in the next life. These deeply ingrained beliefs have influenced many South Africans, particularly women, to engage in skin lightening practices. While skin lightening is not exclusive to women, it is more prevalent among them in certain parts of Africa (Ajose, 2005).

According to Julien (2014), one in three women in South Africa uses skin lightening products. The South African media, including billboards, often reinforce the desire for lighter skin, catering to women's aspirations to achieve a fairer complexion (Hunter, 2011). A study in Tanzania by Lewis et al. (2011) identified five main reasons for individuals, particularly women, to engage in skin lightening. These reasons include addressing skin flaws like rashes, dark spots, and pimples; achieving or maintaining softer skin; conforming to Westernized standards of beauty by whitening the complexion; rectifying uneven skin tone or severe damage caused by skin bleaching; and seeking social approval from peers (Lewis et al., 2011).

The legacy of colonialism and apartheid has disproportionately affected women in South Africa, leading to self-hatred and low self-esteem (Montle, 2021). The stigma faced by South African women during these periods was not only based on their dark skin, but also on their gender, as they were perceived as weaker and subordinate (Julien, 2014). They were treated as second-class citizens and subjected to domestication and servitude by their masters and partners (Julien, 2014). Throughout colonialism and apartheid, black women were dehumanized and seen as commodities, reinforcing the belief that white was superior (Julien, 2014). These experiences left them with an inferiority complex and a constant desire to please others (Julien, 2014). Consequently, these women attribute their perceived unattractiveness to the hardships they face in life and feel the need to lighten their skin to compete and satisfy their partners. In this context, lighter skin tone is associated with socioeconomic status, with the belief that it enhances job prospects, promotions, marital prospects, and respect (Hunter, 2011).

Despite being aware of the health risks involved, these ingrained cultural beliefs and indoctrination lead women to disregard the dangers and continue using potentially harmful chemicals for skin lightening.

Black South Africans, particularly women, believe that having dark skin renders them inferior in society's eyes and that as a result, they will never reach the Westernized standard of beauty depicted in the media (Julien, 2014). Women, in particular, have been socialized to believe that Western standards of beauty are ideal, so they risk their lives by utilizing beauty enhancements that are harmful to their health to achieve social prestige. The above literature shows that the issues surrounding skin tone and hair in South Africa are interconnected. Both stem from historical legacies of colonialism and white supremacy, perpetuated by societal standards and media representations. The pressure to conform to Eurocentric beauty ideals in terms of skin tone and hair texture has had a profound impact on individuals' self-perception and societal acceptance. However, there is a growing movement towards embracing natural beauty and challenging these narrow standards, promoting inclusivity, and celebrating the diversity of skin tones and hair textures.

2.3 Hair Extensions market overview

Many women find getting a new hairstyle to be an enjoyable and exciting experience. The choices women make regarding their bodies and appearances are influenced by a range of factors. The trends and societal ideals surrounding black hair have been shaped by various influencers, including activists and music artists. Hair weaving gained popularity in the 1990s, coinciding with the rise of pop culture (Tsatalis, 2020). During this time, teenagers embraced the trend, while adult women seemed to prefer embracing their natural hair. The introduction of hair extensions revolutionized the hair care industry, allowing individuals to quickly transition from short to long hair. It is important to note that Black women are a diverse group, and there is encouragement for embracing individuality. Some Black women feel content with their appearance and would never consider getting a weave, as they are comfortable with their natural hair and understand that a woman's worth is not defined by her hair texture or style.

A Black woman may choose to wear a weave or wig for a variety of reasons. For some, it is a matter of personal style and convenience, allowing them to experiment with different looks and switch between hairstyles effortlessly. Weaves and wigs offer a level of versatility that permits

creative expression and the ability to adapt their appearance to different occasions or moods. Moreover, they can serve as a protective measure for natural hair, helping to minimize damage and promote healthy growth by reducing the need for constant styling and exposure to harsh environmental factors. Some people prefer the look of natural hair or a weave. Again, society tells black women that their natural hair is unacceptably coarse, or the women may believe that their fine hair is not attractive or feminine enough. When a weave is sewed or bonded into a woman's natural hair, it creates a short-term permanent look that requires less maintenance daily. While the South African hair market is still fragmented, salons are aiming to increase revenue by attracting consumers from all ethnic groups. This means that hairdressers who previously only served white clients would need stylists who can work on African hair (Rambe and Mpiti, 2017).

L'Oreal, the French cosmetics giant, created South Africa's first multi-ethnic styling school, teaching pupils of all races how to style all types of hair, something that would have been inconceivable before apartheid ended in 1994. According to Madlela (2018) natural hairstyles are becoming more widespread and diverse. There are several reasons behind this including that black individuals have the option of presenting themselves to the world in a variety of ways and entertainment culture, particularly music, has been so profoundly impacted by black culture that blacks can wear black-themed clothes and haircuts without fear of losing their jobs.

South Africa presents certain obstacles in developing bankable ideas, human resource development, and a general feeling of responsibility as a growing economic centre (Hagerman, 2012). Hairdressers are a common sight in African markets and taxi ranks, owing to increased earnings and demand from hair-conscious women. According to Mahadea and Kaseeram (2018), South Africa requires 14% of gross domestic product generated by entrepreneurs to meet the economic growth rates required for long-term sustainability and development. To meet the country's goals, 4.5% of South Africa's economically active adults are required to participate in entrepreneurial endeavors. For this reason, hair salons are rated as one of the most successful entrepreneurial ventures.

White and Indian women tend to have more variation in their hairstyles compared to black women. However, Black women can transform their hair from short to long, curly to straight, and from weaves to braids within a few weeks. These hairstyles typically last for about six weeks, although they can be maintained for up to three months. The black hair industry plays

a crucial role in providing employment opportunities, particularly for women who make up a significant portion of the informal economy in Africa (Wilsona, 2018). This industry encompasses various roles such as hairdressers, product vendors, and importers, and it has become a thriving sector for many African women. While human hair is often considered waste in other parts of the world, it has a range of uses and has created complex value chains from collection to processing and marketing of diverse products (Gupta, 2014). There is a growing demand for human hair, both in its natural state ("virgin" hair) and processed forms, although synthetic hair is also available for those who cannot afford human hair. The 1st Annual Africa International Hair Extravaganza, held in South Africa, aimed to highlight the importance of the hair industry in generating jobs and reducing poverty. This event marked a significant milestone in recognizing the African ethnic hair industry as a substantial contributor to the country's economy and business sector (Gupta, 2014).

Haircare practices and preferences differ among customer segments and ethnic groups in South Africa. The ethnic African market represents the largest consumer sector with significant potential. South African consumers seek convenience and comfort when it comes to hair services, often relying on salons and hairdressers to provide labor-intensive and intricate services (Okyere and Amoakoh, 2019). Salons must cater to the diverse needs of their customers by offering a wide range of services. It is worth noting that products available in South African salons for these services can be more expensive. The cost of products and services related to wearing weaves or wigs can be relatively higher compared to alternative options. This cost discrepancy can be influenced by various factors, including the quality of products, the availability of specialized services, and market demand.

The financial investment required for maintaining weaves or wigs, including the purchase of extensions, hairpieces, or professional styling services, can place a notable burden on individuals who choose to adopt these hairstyles. This aspect of expense underscores the economic considerations that are often part of the decision-making process for women, particularly in the context of pursuing certain beauty standards or personal preferences (ref). The financial implications can further underscore the broader economic disparities and challenges that individuals may face in their pursuit of specific beauty choices within the societal and economic context of South Africa. African styling, which includes braiding, hair extensions, dreadlocks, bonding, and various combinations, is the second most popular service category after shebeens (Balkaran, n.d.) These hairstyles can last up to three months, requiring

regular conditioning and treatment to maintain the hair's health and prevent damage and breakage.

According to Balkaran (n.d.) the South African black hair market, which includes both wet and dry hair, is valued at a minimum of R4.5 billion. The revenues of this industry have shown an average annual increase of 30% between 2008 and 2013. It should be noted that due to a significant portion of the industry being informal, precise market figures are challenging to obtain. However, an estimated breakdown of the South African market reveals that approximately R3 billion (65%) is spent on dry hair, while R1.5 billion (35%) is spent on wet hair (Balkaran, n.d.). In South Africa, there are over 100 hair brands, with a market value of around \$600 million, which is four times higher than it was in 2005 compare year 2020. Even though the majority of the population lives on less than R20 (\$2) per day, women dedicate several hours and approximately R400 (\$40) to hair care, a significant expenditure in such circumstances (Balkaran, n.d.). Based on the 2011 census data, there are 11.5 million black women aged 15 to 49 in South Africa. Considering an extended unemployment rate of 35% and accounting for an estimated 10% of women who do not spend money on hair care, as well as a monthly average of R80 (excluding installation), the potential value of the hair care industry in South Africa could reach R6.1 billion rand (Balkaran, n.d.).

The South African hair care market is expected to experience a growth rate of 5.7% during the forecast period from 2021 to 2026. The beauty industry as a whole, including hair care, has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to closures of retail and salon shops and a decline in sales of various beauty and personal care products in South Africa. However, in 2020, the Do It Yourself (DIY) trend in hair care contributed to moderate growth in the market's current value (Balkaran, n.d.). The hair care market in South Africa is influenced by factors such as increasing disposable income and a changing demographic profile, presenting significant opportunities in the consumer market (Mokoena, 2022). These changes are creating substantial prospects within the consumer market. As disposable income levels increase, more individuals have the means to invest in personal grooming and beauty products, leading to a greater demand for hair care products and services. Additionally, the changing demographic profile, which may involve shifts in age, gender, and cultural background, has the potential to reshape consumer preferences and expectations. This, in turn, can result in a diversification of hair care products and services to cater to a broader range of needs and tastes. These developments in the hair care market signify not only business opportunities but also reflect

the evolving socio-economic landscape of South Africa, where beauty and personal care have become integral aspects of individuals' lifestyles and self-expression (ref).

The range of hair care products for women in the country is diverse, including braids, weaves, chemical treatments, and other transformative styles. Dry shampoos are projected to have a transformative effect on the hair care market, with key players like Batiste offering suitable product combinations (Thompson, 2009). In the United States, the non-natural black hair care industry is valued between \$1.8 billion and \$15 billion, with black consumers accounting for 30% of all hair care spending despite making up only 13% of the population (Thompson, 2009). According to Mokoena (2022), the black hair care business is significantly undervalued, with Mintel estimating the market at \$684 million in 2012 and projecting it to reach \$761 million by 2017. However, these figures do not include general market brands, weaves, extensions, wigs, independent beauty supply stores, wholesalers, e-commerce, styling tools, and appliances. Taking all these factors into account, the actual spending in the industry could amount to a much larger figure, potentially reaching half a trillion dollars (\$500 billion) (Mokoena, 2022). Therefore, Societal beauty ideals influence women's choices, including hair extensions and hairstyles. The black hair industry in South Africa has grown, offering employment and contributing to the economy. The hair care market is diverse, catering to different customer segments, and is expected to continue growing despite the challenges of COVID-19, driven by factors like increasing disposable income and changing demographics.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Black feminist theory was adopted as a framework to examine black women's perceptions of beauty and more specifically the choice to use hair extensions in Pietermaritzburg CBD. In this study the terms Black feminist and Black feminism will be used interchangeably.

2.4.1 Black Feminist Theory

The Feminist Movement was established with the goal of advocating for and advancing gender equality (McAfee, 2018). Originating in the United States in the nineteenth century, it began as the first wave of Feminism, focused on securing basic legal rights for women, including the right to vote. The second wave of Feminism emerged during the 1960s and early 1970s, aiming to address broader socioeconomic disparities between men and women (Bennett, 1989). Prior to the establishment of the Feminist Movement, human rights predominantly upheld male

dominance and allowed for differential treatment of men and women (Wood, 2013). The challenge in advocating for equal rights lies in the political and intellectual emphasis on anatomical differences between the sexes. This emphasis and interpretation of biological disparities can hinder women's progress toward achieving equality with men. Society traditionally assigned men to the public sphere while relegating women to the private sphere, creating gendered spaces and power dynamics. Consequently, men held authority in the public realm, while women's authority was primarily limited to their households (Wood, 2013).

According to Fannon (2016) it is crucial to examine the concept of beauty from a feminist perspective, as it can still oppress women in their pursuit of self-expression through their physical appearance. Despite advancements in women's emancipation primarily occurring in political power struggles, the pressure for women to conform to beauty standards has continued to intensify (Fannon, 2016). Additionally, Shelembe (2014) argues that women's attitudes towards their bodies have not improved, indicating that women feel constrained by societal expectations and are unable to freely express themselves physically. Wolf (2013) metaphorically refers to the "iron maiden" to illustrate an unattainable standard of beauty that has profound physical and psychological effects on women. The term "iron maiden" refers to a medieval torture device resembling a human figure, in which prisoners were confined and impaled on internal spikes. Wolf (2013) suggests that society has psychologically and physically imprisoned women by imposing rigid beauty expectations. Despite the feminist movement's efforts, women have not achieved complete emancipation, as they continue to face pressure to conform to societal beauty norms. The fight for liberation has primarily focused on the public sphere, while women's private lives remain influenced by societal beauty standards (Wolf, 2013).

Feminist researchers argue that women have a collective history of patriarchal oppression, which is shaped by the political and economic aspects of sexuality and reproduction. These shared material conditions are seen as a unifying factor among women, transcending differences in race, socioeconomic class, religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. They serve as the basis for developing a feminist perspective and understanding (Collins, 1986). This implies that all women have encountered patriarchal oppression in their lives, providing the impetus for the Feminist Movement. However, Collins (1986) takes a nonessentialist stance, acknowledging that not all women's experiences are the same and highlighting the importance of recognizing intersectionality within feminism.

Black feminists have argued that the experiences of Black women differ significantly from those of White women, as they face the triple oppression of race, gender, and class (Springer, 2001). Black women's lived experiences are characterized by intersecting forms of oppression. Traditional forms of feminism have primarily focused on the experiences of White, middle-class women, neglecting the experiences of women of colour. However, during the civil rights movement and the decolonization period in Africa, South America, and Asia, women of different races began advocating for a new kind of feminism that encompassed the experiences of non-White women (Collins, 1986). While White women were fighting for their place in the public sphere, Black women had already been working outside the home, resulting in a distinct development of Black Feminism that differed from the Western context (de la Rey, 1997). The social status of White women differed from that of Black women, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and intersectional feminist perspective (Collins, 1986).

The long period of apartheid in South Africa resulted in the oppression of Black people, particularly Black women, who face significant challenges in attaining political and personal power in contemporary South Africa (Odhiambo, 2008). Historical inequality between Black women and Black men has been further exacerbated by the country's racial policies at the time. In contrast, White women have recently started to establish their position in South African society, benefiting from racial advantages that Black women did not have (Thompson, 2008). While White women in patriarchal South Africa faced inequality compared to White men, the impact of the collapse of apartheid on their political empowerment was less significant compared to the global feminist movement. Consequently, White women were able to achieve higher levels of professional success and exert greater influence outside the home compared to their Black counterparts (Thompson, 2008). Black women have faced socio-political disadvantages based on both gender and race, leading to their socio-political marginalization (Collins, 1986).

Black feminism seeks to address the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class faced by Black women (Combahee River Collective, 1977). It emphasizes the importance of recognizing a gender-neutral identity for Black women and examines the similarities and differences among women of different races without normalizing dominance or subordination. Black feminism also calls for an examination of the interconnected systems of oppression that impact the lives of Black women (Simien and Clawson, 2004). It highlights that the category

of 'women' is socially constructed and influenced by societal forces. To understand and address the unique challenges faced by women, society must acknowledge that gender is not a natural category (Shaktini, 2005).

Black feminism recognizes that societal structures and norms impact women from all backgrounds, but it emphasizes that Black women face additional challenges and pressures (Denis, 2008). Feminism, in general, acknowledges the existence of patriarchal systems and practices in most societies, which relegate women to subordinate roles (Denis, 2008). The goal of feminism is to ensure that women are socialized in a way that allows them to participate in all aspects of society on equal terms with men, without facing additional barriers solely because of their gender (Denis, 2008).

Black feminism goes further by highlighting that Black women experience discrimination not only based on their gender but also due to their race, ethnicity, and historical and socioeconomic factors (Denis, 2008). Feminism has always been concerned with issues related to the female body, recognizing the connection between women's dissatisfaction with their bodies and its impact on their social position, capabilities, and self-esteem (Simien and Clawson, 2004). The literature shows that society places a higher value on women who possess conventionally attractive physical features (Shaktini, 2005).

The Black feminism theory is appropriate for this study as it sheds light on the challenges Black women face regarding beauty standards, which intersect with gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Not only do Black women experience pressures to conform to societal beauty ideals, but they also face additional obstacles because their skin, hair, and bodies often do not align with dominant standards. Black feminism argues that social institutions and systems perpetuate the exclusion of Black women from dominant beliefs and behaviours, resulting in their marginalization and distorted identities (Taylor, 1998). The isolation of Black women from mainstream culture not only reinforces socioeconomic injustices and inequalities but also shapes their sense of self.

Smith (2013) suggests that black feminism advocates for the inclusion of Black women's experiences in the study of women as a whole, allowing them to find recognition and acceptance within society without feeling like outsiders. White women are treated as superior to Black women and this is rooted in the notion that society values all things white or Western

while devaluing all things black. Consequently, Black women often feel compelled to imitate and dissociate from their Black identity to be accepted by society. By applying the principles of Black feminism, research data can be analysed in a way that acknowledges Black women's struggles to navigate their cultural contexts (Smith, 2013). It also helps to elucidate how Black women interact with dominant institutions and perceptions within their communities. The utilization of Black feminism theory in this study effectively underscores the heightened pressure and discrimination Black women face in matters of aesthetics. In contexts where dominant societal norms are prioritized, their physical and socioeconomic characteristics contribute to their categorization as a subordinate and disadvantaged group.

Finally, this study makes several contributions to the body of literature already in existence. The study focuses on Black women's hair choices, specifically the study's primary focus is on examining hairstyle preferences and the use of hair extensions among Black women in Pietermaritzburg CBD. This contributes to the body of knowledge on cosmetic procedures and the impact of societal norms on the hairstyle decisions made by Black women. The chosen theory, Black feminism theory, helps in understanding the challenges, oppression, and complexity encountered by Black women in relation to hairstyle preferences and use of hair extensions. Applying this theory, the study provides insight into how Black women's judgments of their own attractiveness and what they consider to be beautiful are affected by societal beauty standards and ideals of beauty. Additionally, the study uses a qualitative approach, allowing for a thorough investigation of the opinions and experiences of Black women in Pietermaritzburg CBD. The literature review also provides a historical overview of beauty standards as well as a thorough analysis of the literature on beauty, hair extensions, and skin bleaching. Additionally, it looks at how the media shapes how people view beauty and the effect of Western values.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a literature review on the historical context of beauty regarding hair, skin, and the use of hair extensions by Black women in South Africa. It also discussed the theoretical framework used in the study, evaluating its suitability in addressing the research questions and problem statement. Black feminism theory is employed as a framework to explore Black women's perceptions of beauty, specifically in relation to hairstyle choice and the use of hair extensions, within the Pietermaritzburg CBD context.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and approaches employed in the study to explore the perceptions of beauty enhancement and the use of hair extensions among Black women. It discusses the development of research strategies and approaches that were specifically designed to address the research questions identified in the study. The chapter also explains the appropriateness of the research designs, data collection instruments, and data analysis technique, all of which contribute to the overall validity of the study.

3.2 Research Design

The research utilized a qualitative research methodology, which aims to understand the thoughts, behaviours, and experiences of individuals in specific contexts (Neuman, 2003). This approach is particularly suited for exploring questions related to how individuals perceive, interact with, and participate in their communities. In this study, the qualitative approach was instrumental in gathering data that revealed the perceptions of Black women regarding their hairstyle choice and the use of hair extensions.

Qualitative research focuses on understanding the meanings attributed to various aspects of individuals' lives, including the significance of Black women's hair and beauty (Stewart, 2019). Verbal data, rather than numerical values, is central to qualitative research, making it well-suited for this study (Nkwi, Nyamongo, and Ryan, 2001). This approach emphasizes

interpretation and aims to demonstrate how subjective perceptions and experiences of individuals are influenced by broader societal processes and institutions. It acknowledges that perceptions, feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and experiences are socially constructed and shaped by cultural definitions (Blanche et al., 2006).

The qualitative approach adopted in this study recognizes that both the participants and the researcher are situated within social contexts and that the social world can only be understood through the interpretations given to it. The objective of qualitative research is to comprehend human behaviour as it is intuitively constructed by individuals (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Building a strong rapport and trust with participants is crucial for obtaining meaningful results in qualitative and interpretive research (Kothari, 2004). The researcher must establish a positive relationship and be mindful of factors that may influence participants' perceptions. The characteristics and perspectives of the researcher, whether similar or different from those being studied, can impact the research process and participants' willingness to share information (Nowell et al., 2017).

It is acknowledged that an insider's perspective may enhance understanding, but an outsider's perspective can also offer valuable insights due to different experiences and viewpoints (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher should navigate the potential challenges associated with being perceived as an outsider or insider to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. In summary, the study employed a qualitative research methodology, drawing on the interpretive approach to explore the perceptions and experiences of Black women regarding beauty, specifically focusing on their hairstyle choices and the use of hair extensions. The qualitative approach was well-suited for investigating the complex dynamics and meanings associated with beauty and allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences.

3.3 Sample and sampling procedure

The recruitment process utilized non-probability purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling refers to a method of selecting participants without relying on random selection, making it impossible to determine the probability of selection (Richie et al., 2013). Instead, participants are deliberately chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the study's objectives

(Richie et al., 2013). Non-probability sampling is often employed in focused, in-depth studies to ensure that the selected sample possesses the desired characteristics.

According to De Vos (2005), purposive sampling involves the researcher's judgment in selecting participants. The researcher utilized her expertise to identify individuals who possess the specific features and characteristics relevant to the study's phenomenon (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Specifically, the researcher ensured that the participants were Black women who use hair extensions, minimum age of 18 years and residing in Pietermaritzburg CBD. The researcher relied on her knowledge and connections to identify and locate African, Colored, and Indian South African women in Pietermaritzburg CBD. This approach suggests that the researcher drew on her familiarity with the area and her relationships to effectively pinpoint and engage participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds for the study. This was accomplished by reaching out to three salon owners to give participants the contact information of the researcher. After initial contact with the participants, the researcher also used the snowball sampling technique to further reach participants who had the required characteristics. Snowball sampling technique is a type of purposive sampling that allows participants to recommend others in their circle who meet the inclusion criteria and are willing to participate in the study (Polkinghorne, 2005). Snowball sampling was utilized until saturation was reached. A total of seven participants were recruited through snowball sampling.

A total of fifteen (15) participants were recruited to participate in the study. Ten (10) African women, two (2) Indian women, and three (3) Colored women. The participants were selected from three salons because these salons were used by different women from different races, with five participants each from Pietermaritzburg CBD. The researcher purposefully selected participants from different races and the age ranges from 18 years to 35 years because they represent different opinions and social experiences. 'Black women' refers to all women of colour and the term "black" refers to African, colored, and Indian South African women for this study. The study included all women of colour because research has shown that they have diverse and unique aesthetic challenges, particularly in terms of their appearance and hair. The study did not specify or limit the participants based on their region of origin, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, ethnic group, or religious or political affiliation. By keeping these aspects and other aspects of women's lives open, the study aimed to ensure a diverse sample of Black women.

3.4 Data collection instrument and procedure

An interview schedule was developed in both isiZulu and English and used to provide a thematic framework for the conversation and ensure that important points were addressed. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions that were carefully crafted by the researcher taking into consideration the research topic and relevant literature. These questions were designed to elicit detailed explanations from participants regarding their personal experiences and perceptions of hairstyle choices and the use of hair extensions.

In this study, open-ended questions were used in the interview schedule, allowing for flexibility in the conversation. The researcher deviated from the planned questions when necessary, engaging in follow-up questions to gain clarity and gather more detailed information. This flexibility was important as participants may introduce unexpected themes or points of interest during the interview process. The researcher actively listened to participants' comments and sought greater understanding and clarification of the information and stimulating points that emerged from their responses.

According to Fischer (2009), bracketing is an essential step in phenomenological research where the researcher sets aside their preconceived notions and biases to allow the participants to openly discuss their experiences. In this study, the researcher ensured that the participants felt comfortable and non-judged by maintaining an open and engaging atmosphere. Access to the salons was easily obtained with the approval of the salon owners, who were provided with a letter from the University of KwaZulu-Natal explaining the purpose of the study and its potential benefits. Participants were fully informed about the study and its expectations through the informed consent process. They received and signed a consent form that provided detailed information about the study, their role as participants, and the contact information of key individuals involved in the research. The researcher read the consent form aloud to the participants before they signed it. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences. Additionally, participants were informed about the recording of their voices, and none of them expressed distress during or after the interview process.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of Black women's perceptions and experiences related to beauty enhancement, particularly

regarding their hairstyle and the use of hair extensions. These interviews allowed participants to unpack and clarify their thoughts and experiences. The researcher maintained a neutral stance during the interviews, refraining from sharing personal experiences to avoid introducing bias.

Both isiZulu and English languages were used in the interviews depending on the preference of the participants. Where necessary the responses of participants were translated into English during verbatim transcription. Each interview lasted between 20 to 60 minutes. During the interviews, a lot of writing and notes were collected and with the participants' permission, a tape recorder was utilized, and notes were recorded throughout the interviews.

The data collected for this study was transcribed to document the recorded interviews with the participants in written form (Bailey, 2008). The researcher manually transcribed each interview, without the use of NVIVO or a professional transcriber. This process allowed the researcher to thoroughly analyse and familiarize with the study transcripts. Any ambiguities that arose during the interviews were clarified through repeated reading of the participants' responses and sharing the transcripts with the participants for validation. The purpose of transcription was to accurately capture the participants' responses and their emotional nuances toward the questions asked. The study aimed to explore black women's perceptions of beauty enhancement, specifically regarding hairstyle and the use of hair extensions, and how it influences their perception of beauty. It also aimed to understand how black women define beauty. During the interviews, it was important to capture the participants' attitudes and perspectives on beauty enhancement and hair extensions. The transcription included punctuation, individual pauses, moments of silence, laughter, and other sounds made by the participants during the interviews. The transcription process took two to three hours per interview. Manual transcription was time-consuming as the researcher needed to ensure that the participant's responses were accurately represented.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis involves systematically organizing, integrating, and examining the data collected during the research process (Neuman, 2003). In this study, interpretive data analysis techniques were employed to analyse the findings. According to Azungah (2018), data analysis is the process of thoroughly examining the data to derive meaningful insights. To effectively analyse

the data, researchers need to be comfortable with creating categories, conducting comparisons, and being open to considering contradictory or alternative theories. Following Creswell's et al. (2007) eight-step descriptive procedure, the verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were analysed as follows:

- A. **Taking in the big picture**-The researcher carefully examines each transcription and made some notes on interesting ideas as they came to her.
- B. **Choose an interview**- The researcher then picked the briefest, most intriguing interview and listened to it while posing the question, "What is this about?". With this question in mind, the researcher considered the fundamental significance of the interview and recorded ideas in the margin of the transcript.
- C. **Create a topic list**- As the researcher was going through the transcripts, she compiled a list of all subjects and put them into columns that could be organized as significant topics once this process has been accomplished for numerous participants.
- D. **The code**- From the compiled list of all subjects, the researcher developed codes next to the relevant section of the data.
- E. **Categorize** -The researcher grouped related codes to form themes. The researcher will narrow the list of categories by selecting the most descriptive terms and categorized them.
- F. **Sort acronyms alphabetically**-The final acronym for each category were chosen by the researcher, who then arranged these themes in alphabetical order.
- G. **Examine**- The researcher compiled data from each category in one location and conducted a preliminary analysis.
- H. **Record**- Lastly, the researcher documented the current data as needed.

Additionally, interpretive data analysis involves providing a comprehensive description of the characteristics, processes, connections, and contexts that constitute the phenomenon being studied, using language that closely aligns with the phenomenon (Blanche et. al., 2006). Moreover, interpretive data analysis helps the researcher to contextualize real-life experiences, allowing for a nuanced understanding and an accurate depiction of the phenomena of interest within their respective contexts. Consequently, individuals who are familiar with the context of the phenomenon can recognize and potentially gain new or improved insights into it (Blanche et. al., 2006).

3.6 Ethical consideration

It was crucial to prioritize the safety and comfort of the participants in this study. Participants were interviewed in a confidential setting where they were encouraged to freely express themselves in a manner that felt natural to them. Their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences were respected and considered valuable contributions to the study. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants' identities and personal information were carefully protected by use of pseudonyms. Transcriptions and discussions of the data did not include participants' names, contact details, or any other identifying information. Throughout the process, participants' true identities were not revealed.

Participants were fully informed about the study and its expectations through the informed consent process. They received and signed a consent form that provided detailed information about the study, their role as participants, and the contact information of key individuals involved in the research. The researcher read the consent form aloud to the participants before they signed it. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences. Additionally, participants were informed about the recording of their voices, and none of them expressed distress during or after the interview process.

3.7 Trustworthiness and credibility

Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure accurately represents the true meaning of the concept being studied (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). To maintain validity and rigor in this study, the researcher implemented three procedures. Firstly, the researcher acknowledged and addressed any personal biases that may have influenced the interpretation and conclusions of the study. This ensured that the findings were not unduly skewed or distorted by the researcher's subjective views. Secondly, the researcher took measures to ensure the collection and storage of both primary and secondary data for future reference. This allowed for transparency and consistency in data interpretation, as the researcher could refer to the original sources if needed. The availability of complete data also enhances the study's credibility and allows for potential verification or re-analysis by other researchers. Lastly, the researcher plans to make the completed thesis publicly accessible. By sharing the findings with the academic community and the wider public, future scholars and writers will have the opportunity to examine and evaluate the research. This promotes transparency and

accountability in the research process, as others can scrutinize the study's methodology, analysis, and conclusions, thus contributing to the ongoing dialogue and knowledge in the field.

3.8 Possible bias

This study considers the researcher's perception, beliefs, comprehension, as well as researcher's encounters with hair extensions and beauty enhancements, which may create a possible prejudice. The researcher's perspective of black beauty and hair may have unknowingly influenced comprehension and interpretation of primary and secondary study data. However, the researcher's position as a black woman may have contributed to collecting relevant responses because the researcher was able to easily comprehend and relate to participants' perspectives and responses.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the methodologies and processes used to collect and analyse data in the research study. The selection of these strategies and methods was driven by the objective of obtaining comprehensive and nuanced data on the topic of beauty enhancement and the use of hair extensions as perceived by black women. The researcher employed various qualitative approaches and data collection tools to ensure gathering of accurate and insightful explanations of black women's perspectives and understandings of these topics in Pietermaritzburg CBD. In the next chapters, specifically chapters four and five, the presentation of data and the in-depth discussion of significant findings will be explored.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the demographic information gathered from various participants for the purpose of this study. It presents data gathered on the use of hair extensions and how it influences their perception of beauty and how they perceive and define beauty. This section will begin with background information on the profile of fifteen participants in this study, and detailed information on the age, marital status, occupation status, residential location, race of participants, and the type of hairstyle they use. Secondly, it will discuss the frequency of salon visits for hair extensions. Thirdly, it also discusses the cost of how much black women spend on their hairstyles and on once-off purchases of human hair extensions. Also discussed in this chapter are the negative hair conditions that black women encounter when they use hair extensions. Lastly, the other beauty enhancements that black women do in the salons besides hairstyles or hair will be discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Demographic information

The demographic information provides fundamental information about the study's participants. Due to their prior experience with utilizing hair extensions and beauty enhancement, all the participants who were interviewed were considered to be appropriate respondents. Table one (see the table below) provides the background data for all participants who were all females of African, Indian, and Coloured descent.

Table 4.1: Background information of participants

Participant Name	Gender	Age	Race	Relationship Status	Residential location	Geographical area	Occupation	Type of Hair extensions hairstyles
Zandile	F	25	African	Single (not in a relationship)	Dambuza	Rural	Post-graduate student	Knotless Braids Swirling Cornrows Brazilian Hair
Busisiwe	F	28	African	Dating (Never married)	Eastwood	Urban	Administrator	Mongolian Hair Knot Braids Straight up
Carlyn	F	30	Coloured	Dating (Never married)	Northdale	Urban	Cashier	Natural Perm Knot Braids Straight back Brazilian Hair
Shireen	F	35	Indian	Dating (Never married)	Northdale	Urban	Unemployed	Peruvian Hair Knotless Braids
Lindelwa	F	18	African	Single (not in a relationship)	Dambuza	Rural	Matric student	Brazilian Hair Knotless Braids Straight back
Thabile	F	34	African	Dating (Never married)	Oribi	Urban	Unemployed	Swirling Cornrows Knotless Braids Brazilian Hair Hair Extension Perm
Jabulile	F	35	African	Married	Scottsville	Urban	Domestic worker	Brazilian Bra Straight back Natural perm
Nobuhle	F	29	African	Dating (Never married)	PMB CBD	Urban	Unemployed	Knot Braids Brazilian Hair Swirling Cornrows
Sweetheart	F	31	Coloured	Dating (Never married)	Alexandra	Urban	Post-graduate student	Natural Perm Mongolian Hair Knotless Braids

Amahle	F	26	African	Dating (Never married)	Dambuza	Rural	Undergraduate student	Knotless Braids Straight up Mongolian Hair Hair Extension Perm
Billy	F	24	Coloured	Dating (Never married)	Oribi	Urban	Nurse	Mongolian Hair Straight up
Snenhlanhla	F	18	African	Single (not in a relationship)	Scottsville	Urban	Matric student	Peruvian Hair Straight up
Avisha	F	28	Indian	Dating (Never married)	PMB CBD	Urban	Teacher	Mongolian Hair Natural Perm
Lungile	F	30	African	Married	Alexandra	Urban	Domestic worker	Peruvian Hair
Nomawethu	F	33	African	Dating (Never married)	Dambuza	Rural	Administrator	Mongolian Hair Hair extension perm Straight up

The demographic data demonstrates that every participant was a Pietermaritzburg resident, originating from various sections such as Scottsville, Oribi, Eastwood, Northdale, PMB CBD, Alexandra, and Dambuza. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 35 years old. The researcher concentrated on the salon regulars, who always maintain their hairstyles and other beauty enhancements in the salon. There were ten African women, three Coloured women, and two Indian women among the participants. This indicates that there was an attempt to explore the different perspectives from all the racial groups in South Africa.

4.3 Age of participants

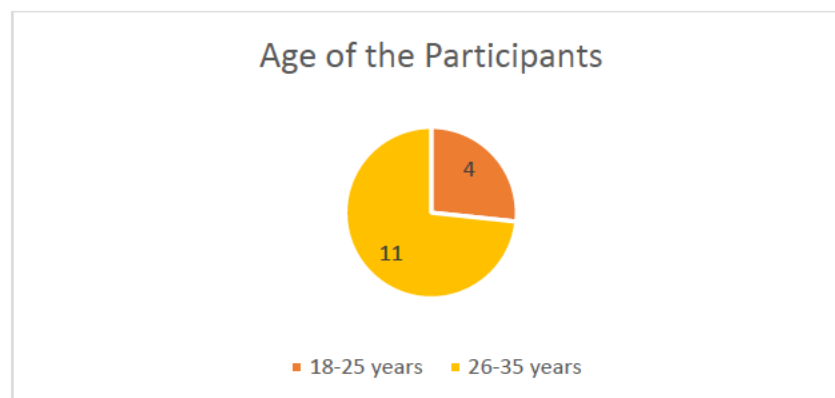


Figure 4.1: Age of the participants

The chart above shows the age of the participants of the study. The table shows that four participants were from the 18-25 age group and eleven participants from the 26-35 age group. The age distribution suggests that in Pietermaritzburg CBD salons most women who are doing hair or hairstyles and other beauty enhancements are middle-aged women. The different age groups provided a more realistic perspective on the use of hair extensions as they had different needs, values, and resources concerning beauty.

4.4 Marital status of participants

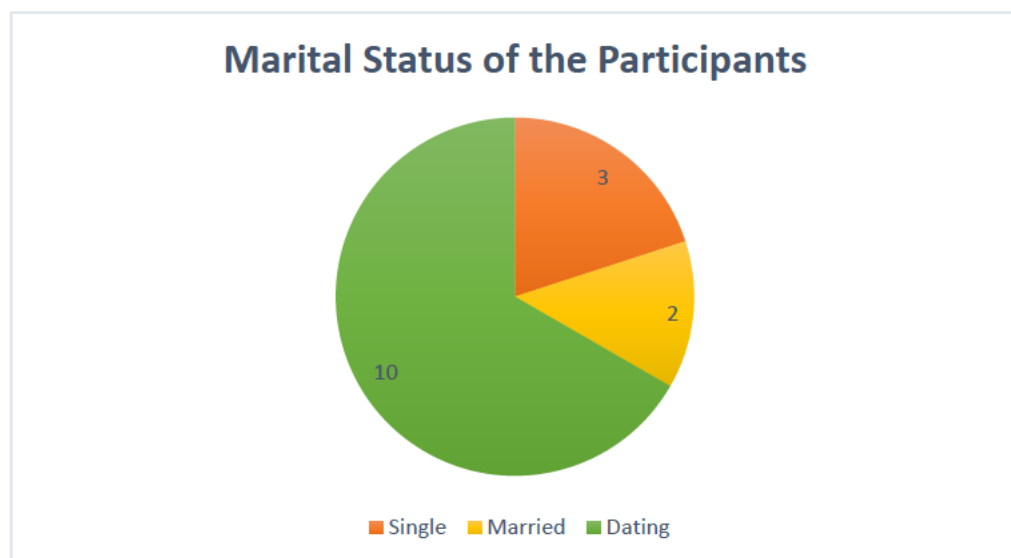


Figure 4.2: Marital status of the Participants

The above chart illustrates the marital status of the participants that were interviewed. Out of 15 participants, three were single (not in a relationship), ten were dating (never married) and two were married, which shows that there is a marital gap between these women because they were different in their hair experiences (observed economic disparities between those who are married and those who are single), and have different beauty enhancement they use and shows that dating (never married) participants are the one who visits salons the most, followed by single (not in a relationship) participants then lastly married participants.

4.5 Race of participants

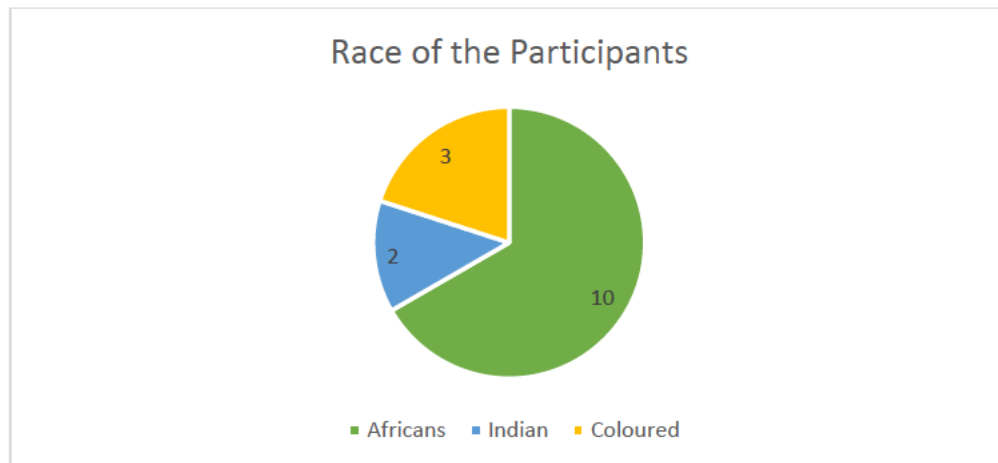


Figure 4.1: Race of the participants

The above chart illustrates the race of the participants in this study. This study was focused on Black women only, where the term “black” refers to African, Coloured, and Indian South African women. The researcher acknowledges that it is not only Black women who experience the struggle to be beautiful. However, increased pressure faced by Black women and their practices, such as the choice of wearing hair extensions, is of interest here. Therefore, out of 15 participants, there were ten African women, three Coloured women, and two Indian women.

4.6 Occupation of participants

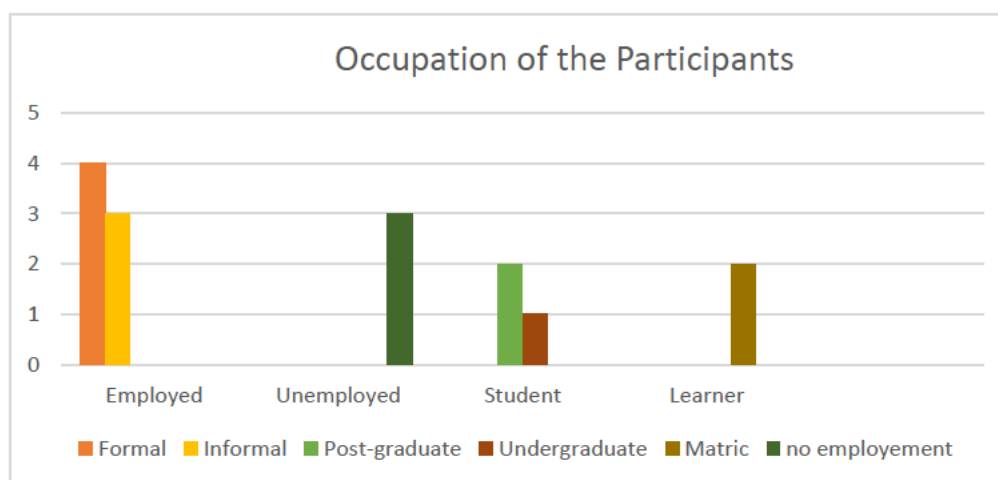


Figure 2.4: Occupation of the participants

The above figure shows the occupation of the participants interviewed. Five out of fifteen participants were employed in the formal sector as a cashier, nurse, teacher, and two as administrators. Two participants out of the fifteen participants were employed in the informal sector as domestic workers. The term “formal sector” is referred to all salaried workers that pay taxes and are subject to regulation, and the term "informal sector" was used to describe a sector of the economy that is not taxed nor regulated by the state such as domestic workers and street vendors. Three participants were unemployed, and five out of fifteen participants were students from different universities, colleges, and schools. Two were post-graduate students, and undergraduate student, and two matric students.

4.7 Residential location of the participants

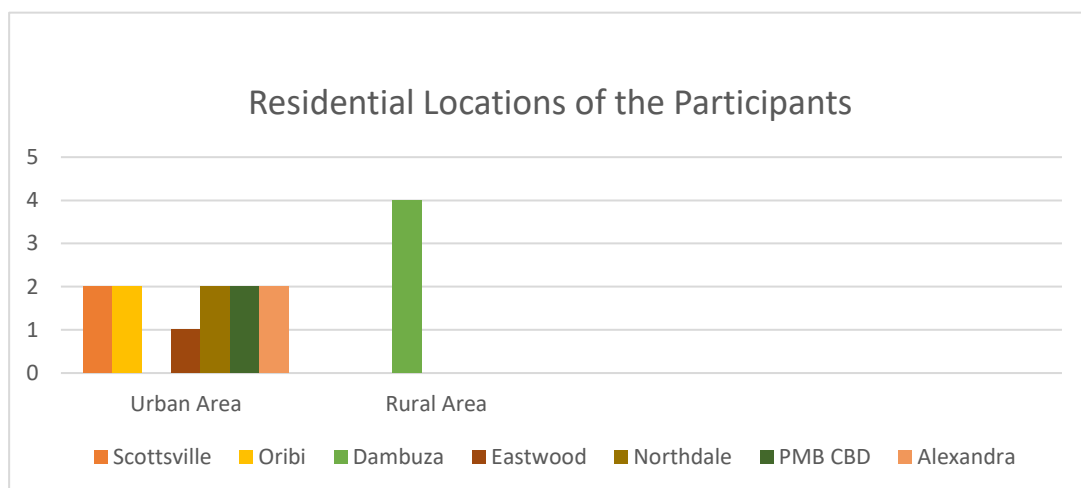


Figure 4.3: Residential locations of the participants

The above figure illustrates the residential locations of the participants. Eleven participants reside in urban areas that are close to Pietermaritzburg CBD salons. Specifically, two were from Scottsville, two from Oribi, two from Northdale, two from Alexandra, one from Eastwood, and the other two from PMB CBD. Four out of fifteen participants reside in rural areas far from PMB CBD salons and all of them are from Dambuza. There are differences in hairstyles or hairdos between women from urban areas and women from rural areas because

there is a regular change of hairstyles or hairdos and the use of different beauty enhancements in urban areas as compared to women in rural areas.

4.8 Frequency of salon visits for hair extension

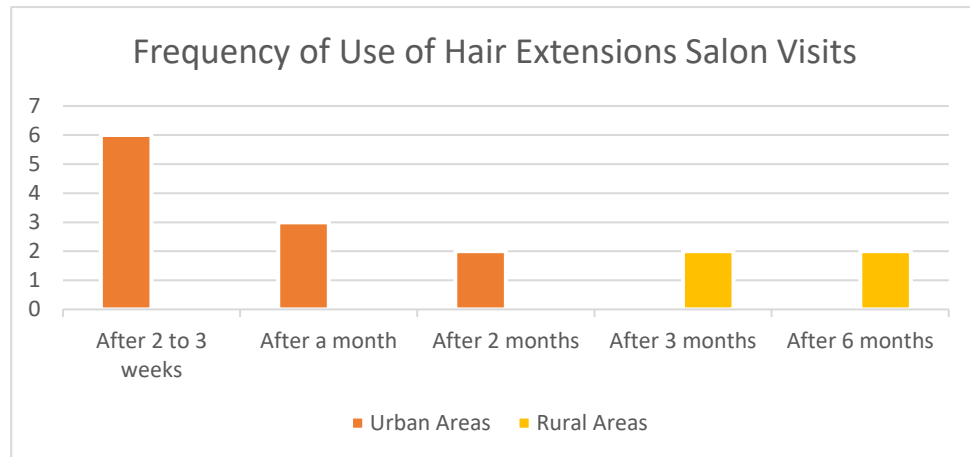


Figure 4.4: Frequency of salon visits

The above figure illustrates the frequency at which the female participants visited hair salons. Six participants from urban areas change their hairstyles after two to three weeks and the other 5 after one month or two months. It also shows that four participants from rural areas change their hairstyles after three months to six months. This suggests that women from urban and rural areas have different hairstyle habits which are influenced by place of residence and the affordability of maintaining their hair extensions. These statistics show that the participants from urban areas frequently visit salons or do their hair in the salons, and they prefer PMB CBD services and products because they live nearby, and it is less expensive for them than participants from rural areas who visit the salon less frequently because they are staying far from PMB CBD, and they have to pay costs for transport and hair services, and products every time they visit salon which is too expensive for them.

4.9 Types of hair extensions

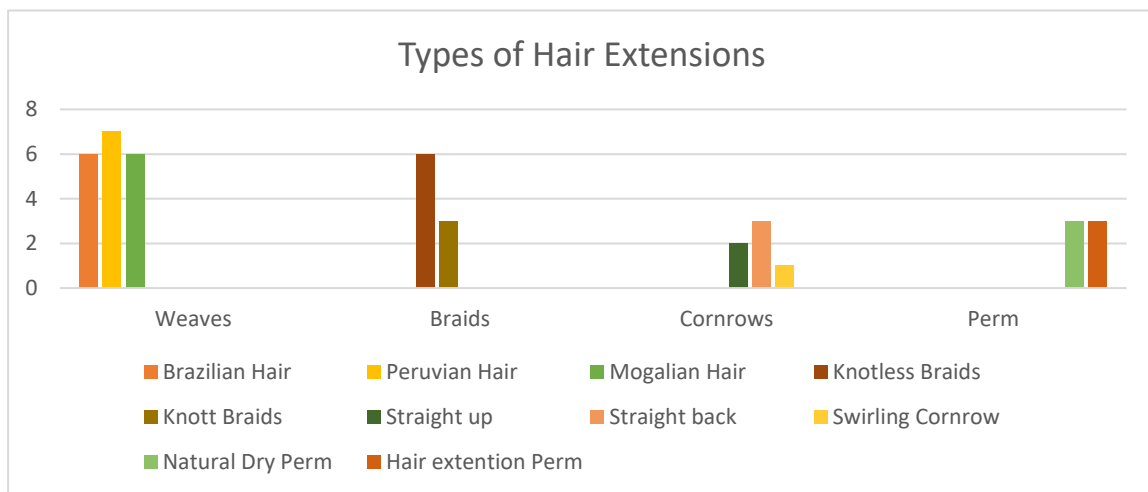


Figure 4.5: Types of hair extensions

The above figure shows the type of hair extensions used by participants in PMB CBD. They use different types of hair extensions to change their hairstyles. Most participants use weaves, braids, and cornrows respectively, and a few use perm. The participants use weaves with different types of hair extensions because each type is different in its texture. Six participants preferred Brazilian hair extensions and another six preferred Mongolian hair extensions. The remaining, three participants preferred Peruvian hair extensions. These hair extensions or weaves were preferred by participants because they last longer, are easy to maintain, and have a good texture. In terms of a good texture others are shiny, straight, and curlier than others. Even though these extensions are expensive to purchase, they are cheaper because it is a once-off payment than other hair extensions.

Furthermore, braids are the most common hairstyle that was done by black women before weaves or human hair extensions were introduced in African or West African countries (Mokoena, 2022). The findings indicate that there are two types of well-known braids that individuals can choose from. Out of a total of Nine participants that have braids, six participants do knotless braids and three do knot braids. All these types may seem to be the same, they are different in terms of how one plat/braid them. Braids are different in length, there are small, medium, and long. Also, different form sizes, there are small, medium, and large sizes. These braids come in different colours which the individual can choose from, and they are cheap and affordable.

Moreover, there is another hairstyle that participants are preferring which is also popular like braids, it comes in different hairstyles, but the same hair extension is used which is Cornrows. Twelve out of fifteen participants, three participants are doing straight back, six participants are doing straight up, and three participants are doing swirling cornrow. In all the hairstyles and human extensions that are used by these participants in PMB CBD, few participants are doing perm with their natural hair and others do perm using hair extensions. A total of Six participants are doing perm, with three participants doing perm with their natural hair and another using human extensions to do perm. This shows that perm is not a popular hairstyle these days because, in the early 80s and 90s, perm hairstyles were more popular (Mercer, 2000). A possible reason for participants to still do perm is because of affordability. It also shows that women have different preferences when it comes to hair extensions and hairstyling.

4.10 The labour cost and cost of human hair extensions (weaves/wigs)

Table 4.2: Labour costs

Participant name	Labour costs per month
Zandile	R800
Busisiwe	R1500
Carlyn	R1200
Shireen	R600
Lindelwa	R2000
Thabile	R1500
Jabulile	R1000
Nobuhle	R2000
Sweetheart	R1000
Amahle	R1500
Billy	R1000
Snenhlanhla	R500
Avisha	R1000
Lungile	R1500
Nomawethu	R1000

Table 4.3: Costs of human hair extension (weaves/wigs)

Participant name	Type of human hair extension	Costs of human hair extension
------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

Zandile	Brazilian human hair	R 4000
Busisiwe	Mongolian human hair	R5000
Carlyn	Brazilian human hair	R4000
Shireen	Peruvian human hair	R3500
Lindelwa	Brazilian human hair	R3000
Thabile	Brazilian human hair	R3500
Jabulile	Brazilian human hair	R3000
Nobuhle	Brazilian human hair	R3000
Sweetheart	Mongolian human hair	R4000
Amahle	Mongolian human hair	R4500
Billy	Mongolian human hair	R5000
Snenhlanhla	Peruvian human hair	R3000
Avisha	Mongolian human hair	R5000
Lungile	Peruvian human hair	R3000
Nomawethu	Mongolian human hair	R4500

Table 4.3 shows the labour costs of hairstyles per month and table 4.4 shows the cost of human hair extensions. The participants spent a significant amount on their hairstyles to look beautiful, with costs ranging from R500 to R 2000 per month. Out of fifteen participants, only three participants spent R500 to R800 per month to do their hairstyles. Ten participants spent between R1000 to 1500 per month to do their hairstyles, and two participants spent 2000 per month to do their hairstyles. The cost of spending depends on the hair extensions that participants use and the hairstyle they are going to do. For instance, perm and cornrows range from R500 to R600 per month, whilst braids and weaves range from R1000 to R2000 per month. The once off purchasing costs for human hair extensions (Brazilian, Peruvian, and Mongolian) was costly with eight participants spending from R 4000 to R 5000 to purchase human hair extension. The remaining participants spend R 3000 to R3500 on purchasing human hair extensions. This shows that women have different spending capacities on their hairstyles and hair extensions per month and this may depend on the individual's preference and the length of the human hair extension they are purchasing.

4.10 Negative hair conditions from using hair extensions



Figure 4.6: Negative hair conditions from using hair extensions

The negative hair conditions experienced by Black women using human hair extensions in PMB CBD. Fourteen participants stated that they experience dandruff and itching, and ten participants experience dry scalp and loss of hairline. Eight participants reported experiencing loss of hair and nine participants experienced headaches. The participants stated that as much as they like to do hairstyles or use human hair extensions, they experienced some health-related problems such as headaches, loss of hairline, and loss of hair due to the tight hairstyles. They also experience dandruff, dry scalp, and itching due to the heat resulting from having extensions added to their hair. Additionally, taking too long to change the hairstyle results in damaging their natural hair. Therefore, these results show that Black women from PMB CBD experience common negative hair conditions when they are using human hair extensions.

4.11 Other beauty enhancements

tend to be more noticeable. Nine participants were using mink eyelash extensions because they are very thin, they add volume and gave them a natural look. These eyelashes are also resistant and last longer about 19 to 20 days. A few of the participants were doing micro blading, which is a semi-permanent method for improving the appearance of the eyebrows. This style involves scratching pigment into the skin in thin, short strokes that resemble hair with a hand tool that has a blade made of microscopic needles. This style is popular currently because it is considered to be timesaving and lasts about a year or more compared to using the old method of shaping and shading eyebrows.

Most of the participants in the sample were using skin lighting products such as face creams, body creams, and soaps to lighten their skin and have smooth skin. They stated that they preferred light complexion as it is associated with beauty than a dark complexion. Participants also used to skin-lighten products because they had skin problems such as shingles, acne, sunburn, and hive.

Finally, the participants in the sample were concerned about their body image and engaged in exercises and laser treatment (e.g., lipolysis). Nine participants were exercising to maintain their weight and body shape. Six participants were doing lipolysis laser treatment in different parts of their bodies. Some were using this treatment on their faces focusing on the chin and cheeks so that their faces look slim and have that v shape. Others were using the treatment to remove the blackness between the thighs as it made them uncomfortable around intimate partners and it affected their self-esteem. A few of the participants were doing lipolysis laser treatment to the stomach to remove fat cells to achieve a figure or a small waist. The participants stated that they use lipolysis laser treatment because it is easy and does not require much effort compared to exercising. All this participant favors the Lipolysis are working that is why they afford doing it then exercising. They also stated that the side effects such as pain and stinging sensation of using laser treatment were bearable and temporary, typically weathering off within a few hours after the procedure.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has provided demographic information of the participants including information such as gender, age, race, marital status, residential location, geographical area, occupation of

the participants, and the type of hair extensions they were using. Secondly, the frequency of use of hair extensions salon visits was discussed in this chapter. Thirdly, the labour costs for hairstyles and costs of buying human hair extensions per month were discussed. The negative hair conditions that Black women encounter when they use hair extensions were discussed. Lastly, the other beauty enhancements Black women do in the salons besides hairstyles such as nails, eyelashes, makeup, micro-blading, and lipolysis laser treatment were discussed in this chapter. The next chapter will analyse the result collected in chapter four using the black feminism theory.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the study. The themes (Table 5.1) presented in this chapter provide an understanding of the perceptions and choices of Black women regarding their hairstyles, particularly their use of hair extensions, and how this practice influences their conception of beauty. The chapter delves into various aspects such as how Black women define beauty, the significance of body image, the role of hair, perceptions of beauty related to the use of hair extensions, the dynamics of the beauty industry market, and the association of hair with women's beauty standards. The findings presented in this chapter address the main research questions concerning black women's perceptions, definitions, and practices related to beauty and

Table 5.1: Themes and Subthemes

Theme one	Defining beauty
Theme two	Body image <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Societal Influence on body image• Exposure to idealized media representations
Theme three	The importance of hair
Theme four	Perceptions of beauty relating to the use of hair extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Types of human hair extensions• The negative effects of using hair extensions.
Theme five	Market of the beauty industry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other beauty enhancements
Theme six	Hair as a beauty marker for women

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5.2 Defining beauty.

The participants in the study had different ways of defining beauty. Most of these women viewed beauty as consisting of traits other than physical attributes. They claimed that an individual's behaviour and character have an impact on beauty. Furthermore, they argued that inner beauty, as opposed to outward appearance, is what defines beauty. The key qualities that make a person beautiful include being well-groomed, clean, and neat, as well as having a charming smile and way of speaking, and mannerisms. Similarly, Gyekye (1996) asserts that the idea of beauty includes both physical appearance and non-physical qualities in several traditional African communities.

“There is inner and outside beauty, but I believe that outer beauty is more significant because it has to do with one's appearance” (Billy, 24 years, nurse).

“There is inner and outside beauty. That's just my view, but some physical characteristics go well together and look good on a person; but, if that person doesn't personify inner beauty, then it's just not true; they can be just as ugly as anyone else”. (Sinenhlanhla, 18 years, matric student).

In certain African marriages, wives are expected to possess qualities such as obedience, humility, and good moral behaviour, which are considered essential for being a role model. According to Gyeke (1996), moral behaviour is seen as an aesthetic value, and a woman's beauty encompasses her non-physical attributes. Consequently, if a woman demonstrates unfavourable character traits, her perceived physical beauty diminishes in many African communities, indicating that beauty is derived from both character and outward appearance. These principles appear to be valued in present-day African societies. Shabangu (2016) further emphasizes that women possess internal and external qualities that contribute significantly to their beauty. Similarly, Matiza (2013) suggests that beauty encompasses both the external and internal aspects of a person.

“According to the proverb "beauty is in the eyes of the perceiver," I believe that beauty is merely a matter of perception; it refers to how one views oneself. I do not believe that

beauty is something that can be seen physically but rather refers to a person's attitude". (Nomawethu, 33 years, an administrator).

"Beauty resides inside. You might have an appealing or beautiful individual, but true beauty comes from the inside. It's something that emanates from within and illuminates the outer. This is revealed, and this is made clear. Not everyone can be attractive. A pretty person might also be attractive. The concept of beauty is simply unique. Everything about beauty is perfect. It's what's inside the person"(Ingaphakathi lomuntu). (Jabulile, 35 years, domestic worker).

Historically, the concept of perfect beauty has primarily revolved around women and femininity, placing immense pressure on women. Although men are increasingly gaining recognition in the beauty industry, women's bodies continue to represent the prevailing ideal of beauty. Some participants in the study stated that for women physical appearance is a crucial aspect of beauty. How a woman presents herself and her body shape and size are considered significant factors. The participants deemed a body with "thick, curvy buttocks, wide hips, a narrow waist, and appropriately sized breasts" as an attractive physique.

"uh, beautiful you must thick body shape as well as big breast and hip. You know have those African body because wow African body shapes are beautiful that is definition of beauty for me" (Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

The size and shape of a woman's body were believed to play a crucial role in her overall attractiveness, as women could alter their bodies to align with their preferences. Several participants specifically emphasized the importance of slim body and a small waist. The participants' descriptions reflect the popular conceptions of physical attractiveness in Western societies as explained by one of the participants that:

"Being fair-skinned, having large breasts, slim, flat tummy or having a huge butt are all considered to be beautiful" (Lindelwa, 8 years, matric student).

Body shape plays a significant role as a socio-cultural indicator of beauty, influenced by media representations of an ideal female body. Both men and women conform to societal beauty norms largely shaped by media influences. In Western cultures, there is a strong emphasis on thinness as the ideal body shape, leading to unrealistic standards that many women struggle to attain. Studies involving Black and White South African women, as well as African American

and White American women, consistently reveal a widespread desire for a slimmer body regardless of participants' initial body types (Kelly, Bulik, and Mazzeo, 2011).

One of the participants was of the belief that one's appearance is matters most in terms of attractiveness. She emphasized the importance of having a desirable body, face, and hair when describing a woman's beauty as follows:

“But you know how some people believe that to be considered beautiful, a woman must have a presentable face, not just any face, either with a particular type of nose, eyes, and lips as well as a certain face shape, body shape, and hair as well. In contrast, I believe that a lovely, clear face is attractive”. (Avisha, 28 years, teacher).

Other participants stated that beauty goes with self-confidence and self-esteem. They defined beauty as the way one carries himself/herself and linked beauty to self-love and purity. Beauty also included taking care of all elements of oneself and having a strong sense of self-worth. Beauty was also regarded as how one perceives and represents themselves, not as how one appears. Finally, the definition of beauty was given as the awareness, appreciation, acceptance, and comfort of one's inner and outer self, free from any obligation to meet social norms. Some of the participants specifically expressed beauty as follows:

“It's all about confidence, your appearance and mannerisms add to your beauty and appeal. As well as how you conduct yourself, what your beliefs and ideals are, and how you, uh, convey those to other people. The most attractive woman in the world, according to them, is Beyonce. That's absurd because there are a ton more attractive individuals in the world, and I believe they made their decision based solely on the appearance of the woman in question. However, appearance alone does not make one attractive. You are the cause of it. I believe that the issue is in the way you conduct yourself and what you do in the outside world” (Thabile, 34 years, unemployed).

“I believe that the qualities of being in your comfort zone, being able to do what you love, and being happy by yourself constitute beauty” (Amahle, 24, undergraduate student).

An Afrocentric view of beauty signifies a transformative shift in how women define and embrace their own standards of beauty. Rooted in celebrating the natural features and cultural expressions of individuals of African descent, this perspective challenges Eurocentric norms that have historically dominated beauty ideals. Afrocentric beauty emphasizes diverse skin tones, natural hair textures, and traditional aesthetics, fostering a profound sense of identity,

pride, and authenticity. This shift signifies a departure from imposed standards toward self-determined criteria that prioritize cultural heritage and individual uniqueness. The Afrocentric view of beauty reflects a broader societal evolution, promoting inclusivity, empowerment, and a recognition that beauty is diverse and multifaceted. In embracing this perspective, women assert agency over their self-image and contribute to a more expansive and inclusive definition of beauty that resonates with diverse cultural backgrounds.

5.3 Body image

The participants in this study explained the physical features of beauty in women. Most of their responses describing a favourable body image of a woman were influenced by prevailing cultural and societal norms. The participants also stated that exposure to idealized media representations had an impact on how women perceive their bodies.

The response of the participants in the sample on what makes a woman beautiful to them on the outside is body image. Most of the participants appreciated having hourglass figures, large buttocks, broad hips, and round breasts because possessing such body types or features as a woman makes one desirable to the opposite gender. They also claimed that it was unattractive to be slender as the women depicted on media platforms like television, magazines, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tick-tock. The beauty of the woman from the outside is specifically expressed as follows:

“Mmm, uhh. so, curves in the shapely, hourglass-figure sense. You are aware of your breasts. You have a sort of cinched-in waist, or we have hips, so in the Black community, it's just hips, concentrated around hips, that is the beauty of the woman from the outside”(Ubhle muntu wesifazane indlela akhiwengayo ngaphandle) (Zandile, 25 years, postgraduate student)

“Having a small waist or figure and being thick and fit as a woman, I consider that be outside beauty of a woman” (Busisiwe, 28 years, administrator)

“Mmm eyi”, African body shape is a woman should look from the outside. That shape is beautiful and desirable. Having curves, hips, big buttocks, a small waist, and big round breasts that a body image a woman must have” (Lungile, 30 years, domestic worker)

Some of the participants also stated that the beauty of a woman from the outside is her hair. If a woman does not maintain or take care of her hair, that woman is not beautiful regardless of how well dressed or clean she is. Additionally, having long hair and using hair extensions on

one's hair as a woman contributed to one's beauty. The importance of hair for beauty is specifically expressed as follows:

"Hair has long been a representation of beauty. Long, straight hair was regarded as beautiful by women. so umm, the woman with hair can experience or feel that beauty"(Ubhle bomuntu wesifazane buqala ekhanda) (Nobuhle, 29 years, unemployed)

"Regardless of how neatly dressed a woman is if her hair is messy. I believe that a woman's hair greatly enhances her beauty. When it comes to beauty, human hair or virgin hair extensions are important. It enhances your appearance, completes your outfit, and there's just this shine that appears when you style an original hair that cannot be explained, she remarked, beaming with delight" (Lungile, 30 years, domestic worker).

One participant stated that the physical beauty of a woman is her complexion. Skin tone is significant in defining beauty in the Black community (Hunter, 2002). Lighter-coloured skin has been and continues to be considered more beautiful than darker-coloured skin. This notion of associating light complexion with beauty is expressed below:

"Uh, uh, I remember when I was younger and the folks who, um, were regarded more popular or more attractive were always people with lighter skin. They were not even people we would consider to be highly yellow, but simply browner. So, purely based on my early experiences. That is what describes the beauty of a woman" (Thabile, 34 years, unemployed)

One participant in the sample emphasized that being beautiful is about you be comfortable and confident about the shape and size of your body. In such a way that other people's comments and opinions about you are not bothering you. Body image may be a multidimensional shape that alludes to one's discernment of and demeanors around the size and shape of one's body. It has both a perceptual component that alludes to how one see's their body size, shape, weight, physical characteristics, execution, and development and an evaluative component, which alludes to how one feels about these qualities. The confidence and comfort of one's body is specifically expressed as follows:

"I believe that a woman is more attractive from the outside when she is self-assured. She is kind, caring, and ambitious. She isn't deterred by our historical issues with Black people in general or Black women in particular. You know, just keep moving on and don't let anything, no matter how minor, get you down because it's always something

geared toward a woman in general and particularly a Black or African woman. Because of the differences in our hair and complexions, as well as other factors that, if you're not a Black woman, you do not comprehend, So, Ummm, in my opinion, having confidence is key. When you gain self-assurance, everything else seems to fall into place” (Billy, 24 years, nurse).

5.3.1 Societal Influence on body image

The standards of behaviour for both men and women have always been set by society. For instance, if one identifies as a woman and practice feminism, love to dress up, and put on makeup, one may be criticized for being vain and attention-seeking, and if one does not do those things, one may be advised to take better care of oneself. Society also has many of these conceptions about what constitutes a perfect body. If one is too thin, others may suggest that one should eat more. On the other hand, one is urged to lose weight if one consumes a healthy amount and are a healthy weight. Modern society's preferences are expressed below:

“In my perspective, some African women are thin and very small, and in society, people embrace your curves and your thickness, being “Stufuza” (Chubby). They desire to gain weight but are unable to do so, but I believe that regardless of your position in society, people will accept you for who you are, and as a woman, you should as well. I'm curvy, then. I accept that I'm a touch thick” (Busisiwe, 28 years, administrator)

“Although I don't try to be tiny, I like to be in shape. as if I had never been thin. "I wish to have this shapely figure," is a constant refrain. Someone thin appears to be ill; you know. Like, "You need to eat something because I can see your bones," which you hear all the time. When we look at that or when you look at going to varsity. "That's not cute." If you don't have something to shake it with, you can't shake it. Simply put, in those depictions, it's "Hmm, yeah. Although I'm attempting to reduce weight, I'm not trying to look particularly thin. That is what I think women make a woman beautiful in my mind”(Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

Women have various preferences about their bodies or how they want to be perceived. However, society has not been receptive of various body preferences. Society still seems to value a thinner, healthier shape or image more than a thick, voluptuous one. However, one of the participants believed that in an African setting a bigger and fuller body was the ideal body size and most women did not aspire to be slim as prescribed by the Western standards of beauty.

She stated that: “Sizes 28 or 30 are not for everyone. When I refer to a specific body form, a 38 is probably the shape that most Black women fit into. But there are a lot of

chubby women in our society. Since that is improbable in our culture, I don't believe that everyone aspires to reach a 28/30 average. Everyone would probably be glad to be 38 and regarded as a beautiful woman in society, even though most of us are on the thicker side” (Snenhlanhla, 18 years, a matric student)

In contemporary society skinny and plus-sized models are expressing themselves and their bodies on a variety of media platforms such as television, magazines, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tick-tock. The presentation of different body types, particularly “chubby” or “thicker” body structures is a way of de-constructing the notion that only slim body is considered as beautiful. This especially the case in African settings where most women embrace a “thicker” body structure. After all, societies have their own body image about how women should look from the outside (Clark et.al, 2021).

Most participants in the study explained that society prefers an hourglass body structure with average hips and bust. Pietermaritzburg CBD had a diversity of body images that seemed most preferable. Participants in this study generally seemed to have body images that differed from Western beauty ideals. The thick and curvy body was said to be in line with the expression of African women’s pride and accepting their African identity. In addition, also the thick body is ideal which is called “*Ostufuza*” in Zulu meaning big woman or fat woman, which is desired by most African men.

5.3.2 Exposure to idealized media representations

The researcher sought to understand the impact of media on body image. All the participants in the study stated that there is external pressure on women to look beautiful, including from family, the media, and friends According to Ribane (2006), ideals of beauty have cultural roots, therefore pressure on women to look attractive is likely a result of social discourses about what women should look like. Additionally, in an increasingly interconnected society (Odhiambo, 2008). the media has had a hand in determining what women should look like. One participant in the study expressed the notion that people feel compelled to apply what they learn from the media to their own life. She further claimed that exposure to glamorous celebrities in the media causes some trends in physical appearance to become fashionable.

“Pressure means from the media which are the things we see on TV ...hmm to be up to date, I guess. hmm, a lot of girls like to look like someone or someone has a certain weave or has a certain look or is using this and that so you want to also use that because that other person was using that, they branded and then we get attracted to it cause celebrities or it trending to the social media and we using it.” (Amahle, 26 years, undergraduate student)

Another participant stressed that there is pressure from the media for women to be beautiful and she felt that teenagers are the most receptive to the message conveyed by the media.

“hmm. I can say in a way there is pressure. Okay looking around the adverts on tv, adverts, hmm the way people, the way people are, just the whole media thing. It does influence, or it does pressure women to be beautiful. If you look now at hmm teenagers, they’ve already started using make-up, why because of the pressure to be beautiful. They believe you have to look beautiful all the time. So yea I do believe there is pressure for women to be beautiful.” (Avisha, 28 years, teacher)

Wood (2013) contends that the media popularizes the slender body type by idealizing it. Thus, if this is how young girls are portrayed in the media, those who fall short of this ideal of beauty may be more likely to experience body dissatisfaction. In light of this, one participant, who was a matric student asserted that the media promote and advertise the kind of beauty they perceive. She also claimed that the kind of beauty portrayed in books, movies, and fashion models often has white characters because these are the idealized beauty standards in the media. It has been established in the literature that the production of beauty is centered on white females (Gyeke, 1996), and that implicitly devalues black beauty. The young participant explained that:

“I think, basically you see what the media advertise and advocate for as beauty you see that on the ramps, like models and all that kind of thing. So you know your blonde blue-eyed type of people. Those are the ones that are regarded as beautiful and I mean those are your models and everything, so you kind of see that’s the ideal, you can’t miss that, in the literature and movies you just can’t miss that.” (Lindelwa, 18 years, matric student)

Given that the media frequently portrays beauty as something that many women cannot achieve, one participant explained that there is a difference between what is real and what is

fake. She mentioned that there are some restrictions on what women can do to fulfill the standards of beauty. Woods (1994) argues that women are frequently portrayed in media in a way that deviates from what is accepted as normal. As a result, what the media portrays could not be an accurate representation of reality. The difference between what is real and what is not real in the media depiction of beauty is expressed as follows:

“You find some who do compare what they see on TV and expect that in real life because they feel like if she can do it on TV, why can't you and they don't realize that we are completely different because this person on TV, you know like Nicki Minaj (a glamorous popular musician) and them and all these American artists, I mean that's what they do for a living, to keep us entertained sort of and it's the extreme lengths that they go through but as a normal person, even finance wise, they have the money to do extravagant things. I being a university student can't have red hair on this day then purple the next or funny nails or funny hair.” (Sweetheart, 31 years, postgraduate student)

Another participant felt that the media promoted a specific beauty ideal and this put pressure on women to aspire to that ideal. Additionally, the participants' narratives suggest that particular areas of women's bodies are the focus of body augmentation and facial beauty. This demonstrates that when comparing how much the media values face beauty against physical beauty, they believed that sometimes the emphasis may be shifted from a woman's facial features to specific types of young, voluptuous body shapes.

“Uhhh okay, models I believe it's more about their bodies than their faces, though their faces count it's more about their body's rights. But what I've noticed, I was watching some time back these whole Tyra Banks show and there was this girl, she had scars I can't remember what happened to her. She had scars but still, she was a model, she qualified to be a model. What normally happens is if you have that good body structure you can be a model. Okay but if you, if you okay. if you're taking their face right? If you could put models here, like their faces they're not all beautiful. Yeah, they are beautiful but they're not all beautiful, so with models, I believe it's more about their body structure, yea” (Shireen, 35 years, unemployed).

Most of the participants believed that mass media portrayed idealized images of women and that after repeated exposure to these images, women felt pressured to uphold this ideal of beauty.

5.4 The importance of hair

Comparisons between different racial groups' physical characteristics, particularly related to beauty, have been a prevalent practice. One key aspect that has been frequently used for comparison is hair, alongside variations in skin tone. Historical associations have attached negative connotations to black hair, influencing how African groups perceive "good" and "bad" hair (Mercer, 1989). Straight hair has often been considered the ideal type in casual conversations about good hair. On the other hand, discussions about bad hair typically refer to it as "kinky" or "woolly." This distinction has led generations of African women to invest significant time and money in straightening their hair, as they strive to attain societal notions of "beautiful" hair. The consequences of slavery and colonialism extend beyond political and economic exploitation, as they have also marginalized and disregarded the unique features of African-Black women in favour of conventional beauty standards (Robinson, 2011). Achieving the prevailing ideal of good hair back in history and presently imposes a substantial financial burden on Black women.

The participants were questioned about the significance of hair in enhancing women's perceptions of beauty. Some participants claimed that having long, straight hair makes one feel powerful, gorgeous, and healthy. They also emphasized how attractive a woman can be with a good hairstyle as explained below:

“Umm, all I can say is, the power of a good hairstyle may make you look attractive in even simple clothing” (Busisiwe, 28 years, administrator)

“I occasionally have good hair days and occasionally I don't. I do feel powerful sometimes, you know, thanks to my hair. If my hair is attractive and healthy. And if I appear attractive and a man is attracted to me, I will have control over him lol.” (Avisha, 28 years, teacher)

Other participants in the sample believe that it is hard for them to maintain a good hairdo on their damaged hair, which is categorized as "bad" hair. One participant believed that having thick hair was important and that it demonstrated a woman's concern for her own well-being as noted below:

“umm, a decent hairstyle is impossible with damaged hair. Shiny and voluminous hair is essential for a beautiful hairstyle. It implies that you care for yourself” (Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

The participants stated that hair plays a significant role in conveying messages about oneself to others. Regardless of style, hair is seen to be important in enhancing people's confidence. They gave the hair a variety of meanings and believed that it was an integral component of a woman's daily experiences in their culture. Hair is essential because it is a sign of how well someone takes care of oneself daily as explained below:

“As much as maybe I may not like certain hairstyles on certain people, I do feel, like your hair is an expression of a part of you. It’s also a look, it also forms part of a look you have. It also says how much you take care of yourself. So, it’s also hygienic, it’s also fashionable. But it’s also natural. You know, you should take care of your hair. You should make it part of who you are...It is important to do your hair every day. It should form part of your everyday life” (Nomawethu, 33 years, administrator)

Other participants were of the view that hair attracted the opposite gender. They consistently received compliments from their partners or boyfriends, which made them feel valued and beautiful all the time.

“When I was dating this guy, I can recall a time when I altered my hair. I had the impression that he was growing less interested in me, therefore I felt the need to change how I looked. The simplest option is usually to use my hair. A new wardrobe is too expensive to purchase. Regarding your face, there is nothing you can do. Therefore, you can go get your hair radically changed and you'll seem like a whole different person. That is, at least, how I perceive it. Therefore, I recall that I was dating this man while I was away at school. I went home for the weekend, and he was going to visit that following week. I then went home and had my hair cut. I took off roughly seven to eight inches, giving it a quite extreme haircut that was again asymmetrical and given a crimson colour. And he exclaimed, "Whoa! Ayi bandla!" as soon as he entered my home and saw me. Oh my God, look at it, he exclaimed.” (Zandile, 25 years, postgraduate student)

“Uh, my ex-boyfriend once claimed that the reason I was beautiful was because of my gorgeous hair. To demonstrate that I am more than simply my hair, I purposefully kind of cut it off, somewhat for fun. After I trimmed my hair, I felt strong. Maybe in the sense that I felt free to set my standards because I believe that men appreciate long hair. And its kind of like, having control over your hair gives you a certain amount of power” (Amahle, 26 years, undergraduate student)

“When I first meet someone, I'd probably wear my hair straight. Yes, the lines will remain straight. The majority of males like women with straight hair. Most men also

enjoy Barbie women. They have a secret crush on Barbie girls lol. They merely want to gaze at the Barbie doll every day but are too embarrassed to admit they'll marry a girl with curls. so basically, hair plays a huge role to obtain some standards in life” (Nobuhle, 29 years, unemployed)

“Because hair is like this market for heterosexuality and femininity, it plays a part in how women see their beauty. I have male friends who have made it obvious to me that they enjoy having long, flowing hair. I've noticed that when I have fake hair on my head, men react to me more favourably than they did when I had my natural hair and wore it naturally. I feel more beautiful” (Billy, 24 years, nurse)

One of the participants claimed that having good hair can make one look better because, no matter how gorgeous one's dress may be, messy hair would make one feel unattractive.

“Regardless of how neatly dressed a woman is, if her hair is messy, she isn't prepared to arrive. I believe that a woman's hair greatly enhances her beauty. When it comes to beauty, human hair or virgin hair extensions are important. It enhances your appearance, completes your outfit, and there's just this shine that appears when you style an original hair that can't be explained, she remarked, beaming with delight” (Lindelwa, 18 years, matric student)

Finally, one participant claimed that hair is significant since it is one of the ways one expresses their individuality to others.

“Umm, uh. All I can say is that one of the first things people notice about us and one of the main ways we communicate our identity to others is through our hair. that's why it consistently makes one feel beautiful” (Thabile, 34 years, unemployed)

The way one is treated by others and, in turn, how one feels about himself/herself are both influenced by the way one styles their hair. For women, hair is more than just a plaything; it is a message-laden object. Hair appealed to racial identity politics as well as the bonds amongst African American women (Rooks, 1976). The appearance of one's hair could influence whether or not particular social groups and classes accept it.

5.5 Perceptions of beauty relating to the use of hair extensions

Hair extensions are artificial hairs that can be attached to one's own hair, providing a desired look. They are easy to use with clips and can be used for styling purposes or to cover up hair loss. These extensions are long-lasting and resemble real hair, allowing for elegant and

confident appearances. They are particularly beneficial for individuals with hair problems, offering the ability to achieve a variety of hairstyles that may not be possible with natural hair. Quality hair extensions come in different styles and require regular maintenance to maintain their improved appearance.

Participants in the study expressed that they would consider wearing human/hair extensions. They provided various reasons for wearing these extensions, including ease of maintenance, timesaving, energy-saving, added volume, easy styling, reusability, desired length, and affordability. One of the participants mentioned that she chooses to wear a weave because it allows her to experiment with different colours for the human extensions instead of dyeing her natural hair.

“Yes, because you can use a different hair colour shade for the hair extensions instead of dying your natural hair if you want to add some colour and depth to your hair” (Lungile, 30, domestic worker)

“Yes, umm you know If you use different-coloured hair extensions, the illusion of streaks is created as well as added volume and length to your hair” (Nomawethu, 33 years, administrator)

Participants also stated that they considered wearing hair extensions to avoid changing hairstyles every month. Additionally, a once-off payment for hair extensions as they last longer than maintaining natural hair every day.

“Yes, umm, uh to avoid changing hairstyle every month because with human extensions I paid once and use it as much as like. It stays longer than natural hair” (Nobuhle, 29 years, unemployed)

Other participants stated that they preferred wearing human/hair extension because they give them confidence, pride, and improved self-esteem making them feel beautiful even in the absence of compliments:

“Yes, uhh you know having human extensions gives that confidence, pride, and high self-esteem as an individual. And you feel maaan!!! that I’m beautiful before anyone says so” (Calryn, 30 years, cashier)

“Yes, uhh wearing human extensions gives you a card to be beautiful all the time regardless of what hairstyle you do either human extension or braids” (Shireen, 35 years, unemployed)

For others, wearing human/hair extensions seemed not to be a matter of choice. The participants explained that they used hair extensions because they have thin hair and others had receding hairline:

“My reason for using hair extensions is because it is the best way for increasing length and volume without damaging your natural hair. So, acquiring a pair of extensions is a simple option if you have short, thinning hair or fine hair that never gets full” (Billy, 24 years, nurse)

“Uh, umm, I have thin hair, so using hair extensions will give me the length I want and possibly thickness”. (Avisha, 28 years, teacher)

“I use hair extensions to cover my hairline because my hairline is very bad and I don't like it” (Busisiwe, 28 years, administrator)

For others human/hair extensions were a useful way of avoiding damaging their natural hair which may be caused by heat or chemicals. Thus, they argued that hair extensions come readily processed and cannot be easily damaged:

“Umm, the reason I use the hair extensions is that my real hair won't be harmed by chemicals or heat because the extension has already undergone processing and has been given protective treatments” (Amahle, 26, undergraduate student)

Some participants argued that human hair extensions are easily maintainable than natural hair.

“Uh, I don't have to worry about my own hair being tangled, unclean, damaged, or unmanageable while wearing the extension, hair extensions are considerably simpler to maintain than natural hair. That is the reason I use hair extensions” (Thabile, 34 years, unemployed)

The participants seemed to provide almost similar reasons for choosing to use human/hair extensions. They stated that they wear human/hair extensions because they are easy to maintain, they add volume and give the desired hair length. Additionally, human/hair extensions save time and energy, easy to style, reusable, and affordable.

“Uh, umm, the major reason for using hair extensions is how beautiful you look. So, whether you desire a change, more volume, or longer hair”, (Zandile, 25 years, postgraduate student)

“Uh. I have less worry if I use hair extensions to my hair because it is simple to maintain” (Lindelwa, 18 years, matric student)

“Umm, I use hair extensions simply because Extension is much easier to style” (Sweetheart, 31 years, postgraduate student)

“The reason I like to use hair extensions is that I have the choice to obtain whatever style I want without cutting off my natural hair” (Snehlanhla. 18 years, matric student)

“I use hair extensions or human/ hair extensions because are reusable” (Jabulile, 35 years, domestic worker)

Furthermore, one participant stated that they wear human/hair extensions because it allows her to express herself and gave her an appealing look.

“Uhh, I use hair extensions because hair extensions allow me to express myself in a variety of ways while adding glam as needed” (Snehlanhla, 18 years, matric student).

5.5.1 Types of human/hair extensions

Human hair weaves and hair extensions are popular styling techniques among various ethnic groups, providing added length and volume to natural hair. Most human hair weaves are sourced from Asian women who sell their hair commercially. These extensions undergo chemical processing to alter their colour and texture to match the customer's hair. Human hair extensions offer adaptability and can be styled with conventional products, while synthetic hair weaves are made from modacrylic fibres that mimic the appearance of real hair but cannot be changed with heat styling. Different techniques are used to apply hair weaves, including sewing extensions onto cornrows or weaving nets, attaching them with clips or tape, or using adhesives such as bonding glue. However, the removal of glued-in extensions can lead to hair breakage and skin irritation.

The participants described the type of extensions they normally use. Some of the participants stated that they use and prefer using synthetic hair extensions because they can have different hairstyles whenever they want, and it is affordable. They also do braids, cornrows, and perm.

“uh umm mainly I use, synthetic hair extensions because if affordable but most of the time I relax my hair or permed my hair” (Zandile, 25 years, postgraduate student)

“Umm for me I wear it all-time hair extensions either human hair extensions or synthetic hair extensions, braids, cornrows. Kahle kahle (basically) I use extensions in order to have a new hairstyle each month” (Nomawethu, 33 years, administrator)

Other participants stated that they wear both human or synthetic extensions for different occasions such as outings or parties and synthetic extensions are affordable and have low maintenance:

“Ummm, uh, for me I use both hair extensions for different occasions. For example, I wear my Peruvian on parties or outings than synthetic hair extensions I change or wear them every month because it is affordable and it has low maintenance (Nobuhle, 29 years, unemployed)

Women seem to prefer using weaves or wigs because they give a more natural appearance. Lace frontal weaves or wigs are increasingly popular in South Africa because they resemble the natural look and have a transparent attachment that enables a more accurate simulation of the frontal hairline (Weffort et. al., 2021). Wigs on social media claim that lace front wigs do not need cutting of the front lace part, as improper trimming can ruin the appearance, feel, and lifespan of the wig. Smart lace front wigs offer a more natural look and are easy to wear with a wig cap to protect the scalp. Some of the participants preferred human hair extensions like Peruvian, Brazilian, Malaysian, and Indian hair. They used various extensions like weaves/wigs, and pre-bonded extensions, and styled their hair in knot/knotless braids, straight up or back, swirling cornrows, and natural or human extension perms.

“Uh umm, I use Malaysian human hair extensions, because of their texture, I do not like synthetic hair extensions because are too shiny, and also like to do straight up or straight back” (Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

“I use or wear Brazilian and Peruvian human hair extensions because I can be able to change their color any time I want to and it has been a while since I have my Brazilian and Peruvian human hair extensions. It last longer” (Thabile, 34, unemployed)

“I normally use Brazilian and Malaysian hair extension, uh umm I wear that because of its longevity and texture, you know human hair wigs can be worn every day for up to a year with proper care” (Lungile, 30 years, domestic worker)

“Umm, I use Brazilian human hair extensions, uh because it is to maintain and also, love to do cornrow and perm” (Amahle, 26 years, undergraduate student)

“I use Peruvian human hair extensions, umm well, human extension is well convenient for me and easily maintained” (Lindelwa, 18 years, matric student)

The presentation above expresses different preferences for various types of human hair extensions. Malaysian hair extensions are preferred for their texture, while synthetic extensions are disliked for appearing too shiny. Brazilian and Peruvian hair extensions are favored for their ability to change color and their longer-lasting nature. Brazilian hair extensions are known for their longevity, allowing them to be worn daily for up to a year with proper care. Despite being more expensive, Brazilian extensions are preferred over other types and can be alternated with knotless braids and dry perms. The ease of maintenance and suitability for cornrow hairstyles are mentioned as additional reasons for preferring Brazilian hair extensions. Peruvian extensions are favored for their convenience and easy maintenance. Indian hair extensions are highly versatile when it comes to styling. Lastly, Malaysian hair extensions are specifically preferred for their texture.

The results indicate that most participants from urban areas change their hairstyles after two to three weeks or at most after a month to two months. Participants from rural areas changed their hairstyles after a period of three months to six months. This shows that women from urban and rural areas have different hairstyle habits, and they make different choices depending on where they live, which may reflect their financial position.

The participants explained the perspectives of their extended family, friends, and partners regarding use of hair extensions:

“They always say I look beautiful and they like my hairstyle and when they go to the stylist, they going to do the exactly as I did” (Shireen, 34 years, unemployed)

“Nothing much, they will be that one family member that will say waze wamuhle bo!! (you look beautiful)” (Busisiwe, 28 years, administrator)

“umm they always compliment every hairstyle I do” (Billy, 24 years, nurse)

Another participant emphasized that her family has nothing to do with what she does with her hair so they cannot make any comments and she is the one who decides about the hairstyle or hair extension she uses.

“Nothing because I'm the only one who chose the hairstyle, so they don't have any say about what I do on my hair” (Amahle, 26 years, undergraduate student)

Another participant stated that she always gets comments, which are usually negative from her family especially when her hairstyle is not suiting her.,

“Umm, (Laugh) they always have something to say especially if the hairstyle I did is not suit me or ugly. They will make comments. Uh, umm I remember the other time I did short braids they said I look like a sangoma (Traditional healer)” (Lungile, 30 years, worker)

however, most of the participants stated that they always get positive comments when they use hair extensions or when they have new hairstyles. They get positive comments and compliments such as they look beautiful. This shows that the beauty of the woman starts from the head and hair represents the self-care. The compliments and positive comments are specifically expressed as follows:

“uh, they always compliment and say I look beautiful, and ask questions such as where you did your hairstyle, how much, who did your hair and what is the name of your hair extensions I used” (Sweetheart, 31 years, postgraduate student)

“umm they always compliment me and say I look beautiful” (Jabulile, 35 years, domestic worker)

“They normally view me as beautiful, whenever I use hair extensions” (Snenhlanhla, 18 years, matric student)

The participants in the sample stated that their partners gave them positive comments about their appearance when they use hair extensions and told them that they look beautiful and attractive. The positive comment from the opposite gender is specifically expressed as follows:

“(laugh) My partner normally says I'm beautiful whenever I did a new hairstyle” (Thabile, 34 years, unemployed)

“My male friends, normal compliment my new look” (Nobuhle, 29 years, unemployed)

“Yazi (you know). he once said when I did my hair, I look more beautiful to him and others. He said he noticed that when I have new hairstyle people always look at him” (Busisiwe, 28 years, administrator)

“Uh, he always says I look beautiful, and he always notices whenever I change my hairstyle”.

He said I look beautiful, and I always do hairstyles that suit me and my complexion”
(Billy, 24 years, nurse)

A few of the participants stated that their male friends or partners did not care much about them using hair extensions.

“Umm(laugh). He does not care about this beauty enhancement, especially hair extensions” (Lindelwa, 18 years, matric student)

“Well, my partner does not care much about the hair extensions, and I do think he knows the different” (Lungile, 30 years, domestic worker)

5.5.2 The negative effects of using hair extensions

Hair extensions have gained popularity worldwide, but they also come with drawbacks and potential damage. Issues such as hairline loss, itching, heat, dandruff, headaches, and tightness have been associated with the use of hair extensions. Research suggests that women with central centrifugal cicatricial alopecia (CCCA), a type of hair loss, are more likely to wear hair weaves, cornrows, and tightly braided extensions. According to Asbeck et.al., (2022) recommend that individuals with CCCA avoid hairstyles that cause stress or weight on the hair around the scalp vertex, such as long heavy dreadlocks or tightly braided extensions. The exact role of these hairstyling practices in the development of CCCA is still unknown. In some cases, using wigs or weaves stitched over a net may be advised to minimize further scalp trauma. CCCA, a form of alopecia more prevalent in Black women, can lead to permanent hair loss, but treatment options are available to prevent further damage.

In this study, participants were asked about the negative effects they experienced when using hair extensions and hairstyling. The findings align with the existing literature, as Black women in the study reported similar negative effects such as experiencing itchiness and dandruff when using hair extensions or engaging in certain hairstyles.

“Yes, for me I normally experience dandruff and itching” (Zandile, 25 years, postgraduate student)

“Yes, I experience too much dandruff” (Sweetheart, 31 years, postgraduate student)

Other participants stated that they experience itching and headache due to the use of hair extensions.

“Yes, normal is headache and itching” (Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

“Yes, I do experience itching and headache” (Avisha, 28 years, teacher)

One participant stated that whenever she uses hair extensions, she experiences headaches because of the tightness of the hairstyle.

“Yes, for me is a headache for the first day I have done my hair because it is too tight” (Lungile, 30 years, domestic worker).

Other participants experienced similar side effects and stated that due to the hotness and tightness of hairstyles and wearing tight weaves for too long, they lost their hairline.

“Yes, the tightness of my hairstyle and weave that makes me lose my hairline” (Snehlanhla, 18 years, matric student)

“Yes, these hair extensions are too hot and making lose your hair” (Nomawethu, 33 years, administrator)

Another participant mentioned that having hair extensions on her hair makes her scalp dry and itchy.

“Yes, having extensions on your head makes my scalp so dry and itch all the time” (Shireen,35, unemployed)

5.6 Market of the beauty industry

The Beauty and Personal Care market is thriving, especially in the Cosmetics and Skin Care segments, experiencing rapid growth due to factors such as generational shifts and the influence of social media, globalization, and eCommerce on consumer behaviour. The market is being shaped by global trends that are transforming beauty and care routines worldwide. In South Africa, for instance, there is a significant number of women of working age, reaching approximately 20.2 million in the first quarter of 2022, compared to about 19.8 million men of working age, representing a year-on-year increase of 1.4% and 1.5% respectively compared to the same period in 2021. Factors such as improving quality of life, the positive impact of

skincare on self-esteem and social connections, and a growing consumer preference for premium and luxury brands are expected to drive further market growth in the projected period.

In this study, the participants were asked about the expenses of beauty treatments such as going to the salon for services such as hair extensions, doing nails, and also amount spent on skin products. The participants in the study spent so much money on their hairstyles to look beautiful ranging from R500 to R 2000 per month. Their cost of spending on hair/hairstyles/hair extensions depends on the hair extensions they use and the hairstyle they are going to do. For instance, perm and cornrows were ranging from R500 to 600 per month, and braids and weaves were raging from R1000 to 2000 per month. As for human hair extensions (Brazilian, Peruvian, and Mongolian) once of purchasing costs, most of the participants spent between R 4000 to R 5000 to purchase a human hair extension. Few participants spent R 3000 to R3500 on purchasing human hair extensions. This shows that women spent differently on their hair/hairstyles/hair extensions per month, and this depended on the individual's preferences and the length of the human hair extension they purchase.

Some of the participants who are unemployed, and students depended on their families, bursary, and partners' income to maintain their hairstyles and beauty enhancement. Other participants who are employed were independent and had their own income to maintain their hair and beauty enhancements.

“From my boyfriend obviously (laugh)” (Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

“I budget it from my salary” (Lungile, 30 years, domestic worker)

“From my family” (Lindelwa, 18 years, matric student)

5.6.1 Other beauty enhancements

The study also sought to understand better other beauty enhancements used in the salons besides doing hairstyles. Participants used different types of beauty enhancements which include nails, such as manicures, pedicures; and makeup such as foundations, concealer, eyelashes, eye-shading, and micro-blading. They also use skin-lightening products such as face creams, body creams, and body laser treatments such as Lipolysis on the targeted areas such as chin and cheeks, stomach and both inner and outer areas of thighs. These beauty enhancements are more common around Pietermaritzburg CBD. All the participants mentioned that they do

nails, specifically manicures and some also did pedicures. These nail extensions come in different colours, shapes, and sizes, depending on individual preferences. Prices also vary depending on the salon chosen.

Most of the participants are applying or doing makeup on their faces to look beautiful or have a Western look. The makeup they use or apply is foundation cream and concealer, and they do eye shading. The foundation cream and concealer depend on the skin type to determine the colour one is going to use. Eye shading comes in different colours and the colour chosen depends on individual preferences to suit their skin for an attractive look. Most of the participants were doing eyelash extensions which came in different sizes (short, medium, large, and extra-large). They also have different types of eyelash extensions such as silk and mink lashes. They use these eyelash extensions because they add volume to their natural lashes and last longer about two to three weeks and if you are lucky enough it would last a month. Five out of fifteen participants are using silk eyelash extensions because they are the most affordable, thicker and they tend to be more noticeable. Nine out of fifteen participants are using mink eyelash extensions because they are very thin, they gave them a natural look and feel like your own and add volume and they are resistant and last longer about 19 to 20 days. Also, five out of fifteen participants are doing micro blading, which is a semi-permanent method for improving the appearance of the eyebrows that involves scratching pigment into the skin in thin, short strokes that resemble hair with a hand tool that has a blade made of microscopic needles. It is more popular in our days because they say it saves time and lasts about a year or years than using the old method of shaping and shading eyebrows.

The participants in the sample are also using skin lighting products such as face creams, body creams, and soaps to beautify their skin. There was a preference for light skin completion as it was associated with beauty. Others used to skin-lightening products because they had skin problems such as shingles, acne, sunburn, and hives.

Finally, the participants are concerned about how their body looks and they used different methods to maintain their body shape such as exercising and laser treatment. Out of fifteen participants, nine were engaging in exercise routines to manage their weight and body shape, with a focus on maintaining their figures. Additionally, eight participants were undergoing Lipolysis Laser treatments on various body areas. Among them, four were targeting their faces,

concentrating on areas like the chin and cheeks to achieve a slim and V-shaped facial appearance. For some participants, the treatment was applied to the inner and outer thighs to address discomfort caused by skin darkening between the thighs, which impacts their self-esteem when around partners. Two participants were utilizing the treatment for stomach fat removal to attain a desired waistline. The motivation behind opting for Lipolysis Laser treatment was convenience compared to exercise, despite acknowledging its short-term side effects like pain and a stinging sensation. These effects are typically temporary, subsiding within two to three days after the procedure. This shows that women can go beyond majors to look beautiful in their faces, skin, body, and hair. The other beauty enhancement is specifically classified as follows:

“I normally extend my lashes and nails such as pedicure and manicure” (Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

“I do my eye shading using different eye shades” (Lungile, 30 years, domestic worker)

“Mmm, I always wear makeup because it makes me feel more beautiful” (Avisha, 28 years, teacher)

“I do micro-blading to give me temporary eyebrows then keep on shaping my natural one” (Sweetheart, 31 years, postgraduate student)

Other participants stated that they use skin-lightening products to brighten their skin, areas such as the face, and the whole-body using drips.

“I normally cream my face because I do not like my skin tone” (Jabulile, 35 years, domestic worker)

“Mmm, due to my body marks, I get my ruch and pimples, I end up using drips to clear those marks and have a bright skin color. Drips such as glutathione” (Billy, 24 years, teacher)

One participant stated that she used body laser treatments to improve certain parts of her body.

“I did laser treatment because I did not like my stomach and inner and outer areas of the thighs to get the looks are love” (Busisiwe, 28 years, administrator)

5.7 Hair as a beauty marker for women

The study sought to understand the importance of hair as an important part of their overall beauty as a woman. Most participants believed that hair and specifically hairstyling enhanced their beauty. After all, a beautiful style can significantly enhance one's overall appearance and it adds on natural beauty.

"Yes, umm because it enhances your beauty. Hairstyle makes you beautiful, and it adds to your natural beauty" (Nobuhle, 29 years, unemployed)

"Yes, because hair is a beauty enhancer. A beautiful style can significantly enhance your overall appearance! There's nothing like getting a lovely new hairstyle. Finding and trying out new hairstyles is always enjoyable, whether they are for a special occasion or a fresh appearance every day" (Jabulile, 35 years, domestic worker)

"Yes. Women must have hair because hair is a beauty enhancer to us as women" (Sweetheart, 31 years, postgraduate student)

Other participants stated that hair and hairstyling elevate their confidence and self-esteem:

"Yes, because, women and their self-esteem place a lot of importance on the topic of hair. Because it is both private and public, we frequently perceive our hair as a reflection of who we are. The way people see your hair can have a big impact on you as a woman" (Avisha, 28 years, teacher)

"Yes, it will give you confidence as a woman if you have good or nice hair or hairstyle" (Billy, 24 years, nurse)

One participant claimed that having bad hair or hairstyle can affect a person's entire day and make one feel more self-conscious and vulnerable:

"Yes, because you're more affected by a bad hairstyle than you realize. A bad hairstyle will not only make you appear horrible, but it will also negatively affect the rest of your day and make you feel more self-conscious and vulnerable" (Carlyn, 30 years, cashier)

Also, one participant stated that having good hair is associated with one's intelligence and capabilities.

"Yes, because having good hair makes you feel more knowledgeable and competent" (Thabile, 34 years, unemployed)

The research findings revealed that South African Black women view their hair as a means of expressing self-love and authenticity, aligning with previous studies highlighting Black women's use of hair as a form of self-expression (Mokoena, 2022). Notably, the participants in Pietermaritzburg CBD associated their hair with both self-expression and beauty enhancement. It was interesting to note that beauty and self-expression were perceived as closely intertwined, with the participants viewing their hair as a means of expressing their true selves. However, the research also unveiled that in certain contexts, particularly corporate environments, Black women felt that expressing love for their hair could lead to them being perceived as out of place despite simply embracing their authentic selves. Moreover, the research findings support the notion that Black women may experience imposter syndrome as they navigate the tension between presenting their genuine selves in social situations and adhering to societal expectations for appropriateness in those environments (Hills, 2020).

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings and discussion of the study. The findings reveal that Black women in PMB CBD have diverse opinions of beauty and various ways of describing it. It also demonstrates that they are critically and reflectively engaged with topics concerning beauty perceptions. Furthermore, these Black women have diverse motives for using hair extensions, and the findings demonstrate that they are various reasons that push them to these choices. Finally, these Black women are also influenced society and social media constructs of what beauty for a woman entails. The next chapter will provide an overall discussion of the findings linking with the black feminism theory that guided the study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study focused on the experiences of Black women who reside in PMB CBD. Examining women's perceptions of beauty, specifically in relation to the use of hair extensions, formed the basis of this study. The theory of black feminism shaped this study, and it has been previously used to fully comprehend the challenges, suffering, oppression, and complexity of daily life in contemporary society. This chapter will include a review of the study, a summary of the research findings, the implications of the theory, the study's contribution, and recommendations.

6.2 Review of the study

In this qualitative study, the perception of black women and their hairstyle preferences in PMB CBD were investigated. It specifically focuses on the usage of hair extensions and the impact on how people view and define beauty both their own and that of their peers. The Pietermaritzburg CBD served as the study's location. The study included a sample size of fifteen (15) black women who lived close to PMB CBD. To accomplish the aims and objectives of the study, the research was organized as follows.

Chapter one: This chapter provided an overview of the study which included the background, problem statement, rationale, aims, and objectives. It also defined key concepts in the study and the key research questions to be asked.

Chapter two: This chapter provided a comprehensive review of relevant literature and the theoretical framework used in the research. The literature covered various aspects such as the history of beauty, hair, hair extensions, and skin bleaching, as well as the market for hair extensions, with a specific focus on Africa and South Africa. Black feminist theory was employed to examine the experiences, challenges, and complexity faced by black women in PMB CBD, particularly regarding hairstyles like hair extensions and their impact on defining and perceiving beauty. The literature also highlighted the influence of media representations and societal beauty standards on women's body image and emphasized the significance of hair as a symbol of identity and attractiveness.

Chapter three: This chapter focused on the study's methodology and research design. The researcher described the methods utilized for data gathering and analysis, which included qualitative research techniques. The research site was the Pietermaritzburg Central Business District and fifteen (15) black female participants from the surrounding area were interviewed.

Chapter four: The data presentation for this study were presented in this chapter, including the background of the sample, detailed information on the age, marital status, occupation status, location, the race of participants, and the type of hairstyle they use. It also, included the frequency of use of hair extensions, and the cost of how much black women spend on their hairstyles and hair extensions. As well as the negative hair problems that black women encounter when they use hair extensions will be discussed. Lastly, the other beauty enhancements black women do in the salons besides doing hairstyles or hair will be discussed.

Chapter five: The key findings from the data are presented in this chapter. This chapter presents data that is based on the key research questions, which included how black women perceive and define beauty, what are the reasons for black women using hair extensions and how do these hair extensions influence the beauty standards of women. And are related to the following major themes: defining beauty, body image, the importance of hair, perceptions of beauty relating to the use of hair extensions, the market of the beauty industry, and hair as a beauty marker for women.

Chapter six: This chapter acted as the dissertation's final chapter, and it offers an overview of the study, an executive summary of the findings, the study's implications, suggestions, and closing remarks.

This study aimed to examine the perceptions of Black women regarding hair choices in PMB CBD. It focused specifically on exploring how the use of hair extensions influences Black women's perception of beauty. The study also sought to understand how Black women perceive and define beauty. The findings suggest that social media and society values have an impact on perceptions of beauty among Black women's residing in PMB CBD. Further research reveals that these Black women have distinct perspectives on the use of hair extensions and hairstyle options, and they believe that a woman's attractiveness begins on the outside, with her hair.

It was evident from the data gathered that Black women in PMB CBD have a certain manner of defining and evaluating beauty. The study's analysis of the literature identified problems with how Black women are perceived as being not beautiful. Social media and peer pressure have an impact on how women view and are viewed in relation to conventional beauty ideals, as well as how they identify with or within these ideals. Additionally, society has its own ideals of beauty, which women are more willing to abide by. For instance, society and social media actively promote and favour women with Western-looking features, a smaller body, a figure, and pale skin. However, the Black women in PMB CBD do not perceive themselves in the manner that society and the media have made them out to be. They favour the African physique, which includes having thick, curvy buttocks, wide hips, a thin waist, and breasts of the right size, and they refer to or name this type of African woman "Ostufuza" (Chubby woman). The study also showed that social media platforms like TV, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have since begun to encourage and promote having a thick body image because they now include thick models in their advertisements. In the past, social media portrayed beautiful women as having to adhere to Western beauty standards, such as having a slender body image and light skin tone.

Furthermore, the results also demonstrated that these women have a certain definition of attractiveness. Most of these women believed that beauty was composed of qualities other than physical features. They asserted that people's attitudes, behaviours, and personalities all had an effect on beauty. The notion that inner beauty, rather than external appearance, defines beauty was also brought up. Being well-groomed, tidy, and neat, as well as having endearing smiles, speaking styles, and mannerisms, were considered to be the main characteristics that define a person as being attractive. The findings demonstrate that Black women in PMB CBD are engaged critically and reflectively with the phenomenon of beauty as they have various definitions that do not only include physical attributes. Their responses showed that they understood the difficulties and complexities encountered by Black women in relation to their bodies, hair, and hair extensions.

Despite the expensive costs associated with hair and using hair extensions, participants had a desire to always look attractive in public. In this study, the Black women in PMB CBD discussed their motivations for using hair extensions. Some of the reasons were that hair extensions are more practical and require less upkeep. Most of the women in the study were working or studying and argued that having hair extensions was more convenient for them,

saved time, and extensions are easier to maintain than combing natural hair every morning. They are also chose hair extensions to avoid damaging their natural hair and hairline which was usually caused by hairstyles like braids and cornrows. Women who frequently cover their natural hair with human hair extensions deprive it of the necessary air, care, and washing it needs, which weakens the hair and causes dandruff and itching to accumulate. Some Black women may choose not to wear their own hair because they have grown accustomed to wearing human hair extensions and consider it to be their own style.

Finally, the length, volume, and texture of these human hair extensions was also a determining factor for using them. Black women in PMB CBD expressed a desire for long hair and hair with volume, and they added that using human hair extensions gave them a glamorous appearance. Additionally, they used extensions to look presentable as they argued that a woman's head or hair symbolizes contributed immensely to her overall appearance. It is also clear from the research that in everyday speech, straight hair is considered to be good hair, while unflattering hair is commonly described as kinky or woolly. Furthermore, even though human hair extensions have been around for a while, most women in this study were unaware of their presence. Due to globalization and technology, Black women in PMB CBD are more familiar with human hair extensions and are readily choosing to wear such hair extensions.

The profound shift in consumer behaviour, where everyone is more cognizant of saving money and wants to get more for their money also reflected in the participants' choices to use human hair extensions. Black women in PMB CBD realized the significance of investing in human hair extensions because it ensured that their investment would last longer and that they can reuse it. Generally, in the study human hair extensions were used for practical maintenance reasons, to increase confidence levels, and because of the extensions' aesthetics. Black women's perceptions of themselves, particularly in South Africa, are strongly influenced by social media and culture. Standards and ideals are imposed on Black women through media images. Women use the media to set standards for themselves and others. Social media platforms including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter pressure and impact Black women about beauty standards. The study's findings suggest that Black women in PMB CBD do not entirely subscribe to the Western ideals of beauty. It was intriguing to see how these Black women approached the issue of body image and how they acknowledged societal expectations and preferences in this subject matter. The Black woman in this study chose a body type that was closer to that of African or black societies compared to a Western body image.

While there is pressure to adopt the ideas and perspectives of dominant groups and to behave in a way that displays adherence to Western perceptions or standards of beauty. The way that beauty has been conceptualized makes white ideals appear to be more alluring than African ones. However, findings from the study show that Black women in PMB CBD are proud of their African identity, especially when it comes to their bodies, but they also feel intense pressure to maintain their hair in accordance with Western ideals.

6.3 The implication of Black feminism theory

The use of human hair extensions and hairstyles, as well as how people perceive beauty, are all significantly impacted by Black feminism theory. Black feminism highlights the insights and experiences of Black women while acknowledging and combating the interlocking forms of oppression they endure, such as racism, sexism, and classism (Jacobs, 2019). Black feminism emphasizes how these interlocking systems of oppression shape and impact notions of beauty, as well as the ways in which Black women navigate and oppose these norms while looking at beauty standards and practices.

Additionally, Eurocentric criteria that value characteristics typically associated with whiteness, such as straight hair, pale skin, and Eurocentric facial traits, have historically had a significant impact on how people see beauty (Mady et.al., 2023). As a result, the natural hair textures and diverse cultural hairstyles of Black women have frequently been overlooked or thought to be less attractive. Black feminism offers a critical lens through which to examine these decisions, and human hair extensions and hairstyles offer Black women options to either oppose or adapt to these aesthetic standards. As manifestations of identity, culture, and resistance, Black feminism promotes the reclamation and celebration of Black women's natural hair textures and cultural hairstyles. It questions the idea that the only legitimate or desirable criteria of beauty are those that are centered on Europe. Human hair extensions are a means of self-expression and creativity for black women, enabling them to try out various appearances and styles. However, it is crucial to consider the reasons for these decisions. To express their individual preferences or to preserve their natural hair, some Black women may decide to wear extensions or adopt new hairstyles. Others could feel under pressure to meet Eurocentric ideals of beauty or to fit in with largely white settings.

The exploitation of Black women's aesthetics by the beauty industry is criticized by Black feminism as well. Eurocentric beauty standards have frequently been catered to in the creation and marketing of hair products, extensions, and wigs, propagating the idea that natural Black hair is not acceptable or beautiful as it is. Black feminist viewpoints support the development and marketing of goods and fashions that highlight and promote the beauty of Black women's natural hair. Discussions in Black feminism also emphasize the socioeconomic factors influencing beauty practices. Many Black women are unable to afford human hair extensions due to their high cost and the time needed to maintain particular hairstyles. This underlines how crucial it is to consider how race, gender, and class intersect when analysing beauty practices and their effects. In conclusion, Black feminism theory questions Eurocentric ideals of beauty, promotes an appreciation of Black women's natural hair textures and traditional hairstyles, and criticizes the beauty industry's exploitation of Black aesthetics. It examines the broader cultural background and structural oppressions that shape these choices, while also acknowledging the intricacies and specific groups within decisions relating to human hair extensions and hairstyles. Based on the results of this investigation, the implications for the Black feminism theory that has been used in this study are as follows.

6.3.1 Perceptions and definition of beauty

The results show that Black women in PMB CBD have their own ideas about what is and is not beautiful, which frequently diverge from the notions of beauty that are marketed by the media and society. According to Black Feminism theory, it is critical to identify and resist prevailing beauty ideals that place a premium on Western characteristics like fair complexion and lean bodies. These Black women are reclaiming their own standards of beauty and defying social norms by respecting their African body image and embracing characteristics like a curvaceous figure, broad hips, and natural hair. The need of showcasing inner beauty and character qualities rather than concentrating simply on physical appearance is also emphasized by Black Feminism theory. This encourages a more holistic and empowering sense of beauty by challenging the objectification and superficiality frequently associated with women's beauty standards.

6.3.2 Reasons for using hair extensions

In PMB CBD, Black women's use of hair extensions reflects both individual preferences and the impact of societal norms. The Black Feminism idea accepts that Eurocentric standards have

frequently been imposed, which have traditionally devalued and shamed Black women's hair. Black women can express their individuality while navigating social expectations by utilizing hair extensions for ease, care, and style. In accordance with Black Feminism theory, Black women's perceptions of themselves and their hairstyle preferences are influenced by beauty standards. The results indicate that Black women use hair extensions to show themselves as more acceptable and conform to dominant beauty ideals, reflecting the notion that a woman's beauty begins with her hair. In addition to questioning the idea that beauty is only defined by hair texture and fostering self-acceptance and self-expression, Black Feminist philosophy would urge critical engagement with these criteria.

6.3.3 Influence of beauty standards

The results show how social media and conventional beauty standards affect how Black women view themselves. The intersectional aspect of these pressures is highlighted by Black Feminism theory, which takes into account how race, gender, and beauty interact to influence Black women's lives. The philosophy of Black Feminism urges Black women to fight and oppose prevailing beauty standards that put white ideals first. The significance of self-love, pride in African identities, and the rejection of beauty standards that support racism and colourism would also be emphasized. According to Black Feminism theory, Black women should be empowered and given the choice to define their own definitions of beauty, defy social constraints, and embrace their true selves.

In conclusion, the application of Black Feminism theory to these findings emphasizes the significance of acknowledging the intersectional experiences of Black women, fostering self-acceptance, challenging prevailing beauty standards, and appreciating many meanings of beauty. The empowerment of Black women is urged, along with a group's commitment to resisting mainstream constraints and embracing their distinctive experiences and expressions of beauty.

6.4 Recommendations

According to the study's findings, the following suggestions can be made:

- 1. Encourage diversity in beauty standards:** Society ought to embrace and promote a range of body types, complexion tones, and natural hair textures as acceptable forms of beauty. This

can be accomplished through encouraging a positive body image, educating people, and using media portrayal.

2. **Improve media literacy:** Black women should have the knowledge and tools necessary to evaluate and question the standards of beauty presented in the media. They may be able to withstand social influences and establish a more positive self-image as a result.

3. **Encourage self-acceptance and self-love:** Programs and initiatives should be created to encourage these traits in black women. The development of self-esteem and the promotion of a positive body image can be the focus of workshops, support groups, and mentoring programs.

4. **Produce inclusive beauty products:** The beauty business should place a high priority on inclusivity by producing goods that are suitable for a variety of skin tones and hair textures. By giving Black women additional alternatives for self-expression, they can provide them with a sense of representation.

5. **Education and awareness programs** should be put in place to spread knowledge about the cultural significance of black hair as well as its history and significance. This can work to dispel misconceptions and encourage acceptance of various hairstyles.

6. **Availability and affordability:** Black women should have better access to affordable high-quality hair extensions and hair care products. Collaborations with local companies, initiatives in the community, and price lobbying can all help achieve this.

7. **Encourage support for black-owned companies** that are specialized in providing goods and services for hair care. This might open economic opportunities and give Black women more power in the beauty sector.

8. **Further research:** to acquire a deeper understanding of the variables affecting Black women's perceptions of their beauty and experiences in various circumstances, additional study should be done on the experiences and perceptions of black women in those contexts. This can help in adjusting interventions and programs to particular communities and cultural circumstances.

Overall, while questioning idealised beauty standards and prejudices, these recommendations aim to empower Black women by promoting inclusivity, self-acceptance, and diversity. By putting these recommendations into practice, it is believed that Black women will have more autonomy and flexibility to define their own sense of beauty.

6.5 Limitations and challenges in this study

Research findings from the study may be context-specific due to the subjective character of the research study. Furthermore, the results are not representative because qualitative research methodologies use small samples. They might only be representative of the sample from which the data were collected. The study's research findings would not be indicative of or applicable to a broader context or population as a result. The results of this study could be attributed to the peculiarities of PMB CBD, where the data was gathered. However, it is anticipated that the research findings will add to the body of knowledge about people's attitudes toward beauty enhancement and the use of hair extensions.

The first challenge the researcher encountered in this study was the location of collecting data which was the salons. Some of the salons were looted and burnt due to the civil unrest that happened on 29 July 2021 in South Africa. That resulted in a decrease in the sample size because the researcher was supposed to use five salons to collect data and ended up using three salons as it took longer for the other salons to be repaired. The intended sample was supposed to be twenty-five, with five participants from each salon. The last challenge was the implementation of lockdown measures during the coronavirus epidemic. This caused a shift in the way data was collected. The researcher had to apply all lockdown regulations during the interview process, and it was difficult to hear the participants' responses due to the social distancing and masks over participants' mouths.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The hair preferences of Black women residing in PMB CBD were explored in this study. The use of hair extensions, their impact on perceptions of beauty and definitions of beauty were the subject of this study. The study was shaped by the Black feminist theory, which made it easier to comprehend the difficulties and oppressions that Black women currently experience in society. A sample of fifteen Black women living in PMB CBD was used in the study, which used a qualitative design. Semi-structured interviews were used in the research to gather data, which was then analysed using a thematic approach.

The study's findings made clear several important facts. Firstly, unlike how society and the media portray Black women, the Black women in PMB CBD have their own distinctive notions of beauty. They value characteristics of the African body, such as a curvaceous physique, broad hips, and natural hair. The importance of inner beauty and character qualities was also emphasized. Secondly, the study outlined the justifications for Black women's use of hair extensions. Hair extensions help individuals to save time, money and for ease maintenance.

Additionally, their natural hair was protected from harm by other hairstyles using hair extensions. Their decision to utilize hair extensions was also driven by their desire for longer hair, volume, and texture. The impact of beauty standards on Black women was also investigated. Black women's perceptions of themselves were found to be moderately influenced by social media and societal pressures. Although they were aware of Western standards of beauty, the Black women in PMB CBD showed pride in their African identities, especially in their physical appearance. However, they also experienced pressure to meet Western ideals, especially in terms of hair styling.

Overall, the study emphasizes the value of the Black feminism theory in understanding Black women's conceptions of attractiveness and hairstyle preferences. Black feminist theory opposes Eurocentric ideals of beauty and promotes the appreciation of ethnic and natural hairstyles. It also criticizes how the beauty industry exploits Black aesthetics. The study's findings have significance for current theory and provide insight into Black women's experiences in PMB CBD. The research advances knowledge of how Black women deal with social constraints and establishes their own standards of beauty. Considering the current findings, recommendations can be made to encourage inclusivity, diversity, and self-acceptance in beauty standards and practices.

The experiences and opinions of Black women in PMB CBD in relation to their hairstyle preferences and aesthetic standards are thus clarified in this study. The study opposes Eurocentric ideas and underlines the importance of valuing and respecting diverse of beauty. The results contribute to the body of existing knowledge and provide insights for further study and interventions aimed at helping Black women develop good body images and feelings of self-acceptance.

The conclusions of the study are supported by the literature evaluation, which advances our understanding of these subjects. The report also discusses the research findings, emphasizing how black women in PMB CBD view beauty and the motivations for their use of hair extensions. The results show how society and media leads affect beauty standards as well as the significance of social identities and individual preferences in influencing beauty choices. These results advance knowledge of the variables affecting Black women's opinions of beauty. The study concludes by discussing the findings' implications for current theory, notably black feminism theory. In proposing a more inclusive and empowering notion of beauty, it emphasizes how this theory helps in understanding and questioning prevailing beauty standards. The study also discusses how the beauty industry exploits Black women's aesthetics and stresses how crucial it is to take into account how race, gender, and class intersect in beauty practices. Overall, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by revealing how Black women in the PMBCBD perceive beauty and the use of hair extensions. It advances knowledge of the intricate relationships that social norms, individual preferences, and cultural identity have on choices related to beauty.

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APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



23 September 2021

Phindile Monica Ngcobo (212560576)
School Of Social Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear PM Ngcobo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003016/2021
Project title: Perceptions of beauty enhancement: A Case Study of the use of Hair Extensions Among Black Women in Pietermaritzburg
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 20 September 2021 to our letter of 03 August 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year until 23 September 2022

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours faithfully



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 6: INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Phindile Ngcobo I am a Sociology Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus, South Africa. I am interested in learning about young black women's perceptions of beauty in a diverse environment such as Pietermaritzburg Township. The main focus of this study is individual and social perspectives on hair extensions. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions in the form of a semi- structured / in- depth interview

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 20-30 minutes.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action. (Voluntary Participation)
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

Willing Not willing Audio equipment

Audio Equipment	
Willing	
Not Willing	

I can be contacted at: Email: maphindyngcobo@gmail.com Cell: (+27) 064 900 9078

My supervisor is Dr Gerelene Jagganath who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Department of Anthropology, Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email: JagganathG@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: (+27) 031 260 7332

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office, Tel: 031 260 4557

E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

APPENDIX 7: GATEKEEPER LETTER

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at your salon in Pietermaritzburg CBD

My name is Phindile Ngcobo, I am a Sociology student at the school of Social Science UKZN. I will be running a study titled: 'Perceptions of beauty Enhancement: A Case Study of the use of Hair Extensions Among black women in Pietermaritzburg CBD'

The purpose of this study is to examine black women's perceptions on beauty and the use of hair extensions in Pietermaritzburg CBD. The word "black" in this study will refer to black women of all South African races, such as Black African, coloured, and Indian.

Participants will be required to participate in one-on-one interviews, adopting a social distancing protocol. All necessary ethical precautions (including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation, and freedom to withdraw from the study) will be adhered to throughout the study.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or need any further clarification, please feel free to contact me on my mobile number 064 900 9078 or my research supervisor Dr. Gerelene Jagganath on 033 260 7332

Phindile Ngcobo phindile.ngcobo@ukzn.ac.za
Phindile Ngcobo phindile.ngcobo@ukzn.ac.za

Yours Sincerely

Phindile Ngcobo

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

APPENDIX 8: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

PLEASE MAKE A CROSS ON THE ANSWER CATEGORY OF YOUR CHOICE

1. What is your gender?Male
Female
2. What is your race?Black
White
India
Color
ed
3. What is your relationship status?Single
Dating
Divorce
d
Married
Widow
ed
4. What is your age?
5. What is your geographical region do you identify with?
Rural
Area
Urban
Area

APPENDIX 9: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE: ENGLISH

Questions for Clients Respondents

1. How would you define term “Beauty”?
2. What makes a woman beautiful to you on the outside?
3. What role does hair have to play in terms of making a woman feel beautiful?
4. Have you ever considered wearing human/ hair extensions? Why or why not?
5. What type of extensions do you normally use? Is its human hair extensions or synthetic hair extensions? And why?
6. How frequently do you incorporate hair extensions into your hairstyle?
7. What is your reason/s of using hair extensions? If you do not use hair extensions, please state your reason/s.
8. How does your family view your use of hair extensions? (a) immediate family (b) extended family (cousins, aunts/uncles, grandparents)
9. How do your female friends view your use of hair extensions?
10. How do your male friends/partners view your use of hair extensions?
11. Are you aware of the debates surrounding the use of hair extensions e.g. natural vs synthetic hair debate?
12. Have you experienced any negative hair problems (hair/scalp condition) with the use of hair extensions? If not, are you aware of anyone who has experienced such problems?
13. On average, what does it cost you per month & per annum to purchase and maintain hair extensions (hair extensions, products, salon visits, and any other related cost)?
14. How do you able to afford and pay for this product and related services?
15. Overall, what do you spend on beauty treatments (salon and related beauty products skin and nails) and hair extensions services (and related services) per month?
16. Do you consider your hair an important part of your overall beauty and image as a woman?

ISIQONDISI SEZINGXOXO

Isithasiselo 1 - Imibuzo Yabahlanganveli

1. Ungalichaza kanjani igama elithi “Ubuhle”?
2. Yini eyenza umuntu wesifazane abe muhle kuwe ngaphandle?
3. Ngabe iyiphi indima edlalwa yizinwele maqondana nokwenza owesifazane azizweemuhle?
4. Wake wacabanga ukugqoka izandiso zomuntu / izinwele? Kungani noma kunganikungenjalo?
5. Hlobo luni lwezandiso ojwayele ukuzisebenzisa? Ingabe izandiso zayo zezinwele zomuntunoma izandiso zezinwele zokwenziwa? Kungani?
6. Ufaka kangaki izandiso zezinwele ekhanda lakho?
7. Yini izizathu / izizathu zakho zokusebenzisa izandiso zezinwele? Uma ungasebenzisi izandiso zezinwele, sicela usho izizathu / izizathu zakho.
8. Umndeni wakho ukubheka kanjani ukusebenzisa kwakho izandiso zezinwele? (a) umndeni oseduze (b) umndeni owandisiwe (abazala, obabekazi / omalume, ogoto nomkhulu)
9. Abangane bakho besifazane bakubheka kanjani ukusebenzisa kwakho izandiso zezinwele?
10. Abangane / abalingani bakho besilisa bakubheka kanjani ukusebenzisa kwakho izandiso zezinwele?
11. Ngabe uyazi ngezimpikiswano eziphathelene nokusetshenziswa kwezandiso zezinwele isb. impikiswano yezinwele zemvelo vs zokwenziwa?
12. Uke waba nezinkinga zezinwele ezingezinhle (isimo zezinwele / sekhandu) ngokusetshenziswa kwezandiso zezinwele? Uma kungenjalo, ngabe ukhona omaziyo owakewabhekana nezinkinga ezinjalo?
13. Ngokwesilinganiso, kubiza malini ngenyanga nonyaka ukuthenga nokulungisa izandiso zezinwele (izandiso zezinwele, imikhiqizo, ukuvakashelwa esalon, kanye nezinye izindlekoezihlobene)?
14. Ukwazi kanjani ukukhokhela futhi ukhokhele lo mkhiqizo nezinsizakaloezihambisanayo?
15. Kukonke, yini oyisebenzisayo ekwelapheni ubuhle (i-salon kanye nemikhiqizo yobuhle ehlobene nayo isikhumba nezinzapho) kanye nezinsizakalo zezandiso zezinwele (kanye nezinsizakalo ezihlobene) ngenyanga?
16. Ngabe izinwele zakho uzithatha njengengxenywe ebalulekile ebuhleni bakho kanye nasemfanekisweni wakho njengomuntu wesifazane?
- 17.

APPENDIX 10: LETTER OF EDITING

VENENCIA NYAMBUYA

LANGUAGE EDITOR

CONTACT

Researcher
University of KwaZulu-Natal

+27 63 307 6880

NyambuyaV@ukzn.ac.za or
paidanyasha11@gmail.com

31 August 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: Perceptions of beauty enhancement: A case study on the use of hair extensions among Black women in the Pietermaritzburg central business district, KwaZulu-Natal

I write to confirm that language editing was performed on the above dissertation.

Technical changes on spellings, grammatical expression and scientific writing were made.

The editor shall not be held liable for errors imported in later versions of the dissertation.

Sincerely,



Venencia Nyambuya (PhD)

PhD in Media & Cultural Studies: University of KwaZulu-Natal [UKZN]
Master of Arts in Media & Cultural Studies (Cum laude): UKZN
Bachelor of Science Honours in Media & Society: MSU- Zimbabwe

APPENDIX 11: TURNITIN REPORT

Phindile Ngcobo's Final Thesis			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
11%	9%	1%	5%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	hdl.handle.net Internet Source		3%
2	wiredspace.wits.ac.za Internet Source		1%
3	core.ac.uk Internet Source		1%
4	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper		1%
5	Submitted to Columbia College of Missouri Student Paper		<1%
6	library.oopen.org Internet Source		<1%
7	Submitted to University of Johannesburg Student Paper		<1%
8	scholar.ufs.ac.za Internet Source		<1%
9	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source		<1%