

**EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS ON AESTHETICS AND EMOTIONAL LABOUR
EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN WORKING IN TWO DIFFERENT CLOTHING
RETAIL SHOPS IN PORT ELIZABETH AND GRAHAMSTOWN.**

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ABSTRACT

The retail industry is the fastest growing sector in the economy contributing trillions towards the global revenue. In a post-apartheid South African economy that is experiencing increased buying power, the clothing retail sector to be specific is consequently flourishing. However, the economy is faced by structural adjustments; an accompanying concern is how foreign direct investments and pressures of globalization impact the operation of clothing retail shops. The main focus of this thesis based on the qualitative research methodology is emotional and aesthetic labour being experienced by women working in two clothing retail shops in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. Empirical data shows that emotional labour is a dominant form of labour in the clothing retail shops under investigation. The women working as sales assistants are trained to exude a certain emotional aura when dealing with customers to build a relationship that will encourage the customer to purchase from the shop. Aesthetic labour on the other hand is an important public relations strategy used as sales assistants dress in a way that represents their company brand. Edgars employees dress elegantly because they focus more on formal dressing whilst Mr Price employees dress more casually because they focus on casual and relaxed fashion. Besides these external attributes, the study showed that certain aspects of the job are fairly similar. With codes of happiness and strings of dissatisfaction towards their job requirements, the women's social lives suffer the atrocities of their long working hours and limited off-duty days.

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ACRONYMS

CBD	Central business district
EEA	Employment Equity Act
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FMCG	Fast moving consumer goods
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHT	Grahamstown
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MRP	Mr Price
NCRF	National Clothing Retail Federation of South Africa
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Advisory Council
PE	Port Elizabeth
SACTWU	Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
TNC	Transnational Corporation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE

1.1 Introduction

The following thesis falls under the clothing retail sector where I explore the perceptions on aesthetics and emotional labour experienced by women working in two different retail clothing shops in central town of Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. The South African economy is faced by various challenges that have an impact on the working conditions of the working class, the distribution of jobs along the gender line and accessibility to different forms of employment. The clothing retail sector as will be explained in this chapter and those to follow is a diverse industry that is characterised by uncertainty as the clothing seasons change fashion transforms too and the employees have to accommodate the waves of change. As the multinational/transnational (MNC/TNCs) corporation pervade our clothing retail industry, there is globalization of business and a global standard on how clothing retail sector is to be managed.

The post-apartheid South African economy is confronted by various challenges that threaten the labour market structure and the working conditions of the working class population. As South Africa attained democracy in 1994 we see the economy adopting a more heterodox approach economically which is characterised by neo-liberal economic policies. The neoliberal economic policies adopted by South Africa have led to the opening of the trading markets, allowing for free trade between South Africa and other countries as we observe a significant number of TNCs flocking into South Africa to pursue business and open clothing stores. Webster, Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2003: 194) have explained that South Africa is undergoing a triple transition: economically, in a transition to a globally competitive economy; politically, in attempting to consolidate democracy; and, socially by trying to remove the legacy of apartheid.

Luce has explained that global expansion has given rise to flexibility, restructuring and deregulation of labour standards (2013: 4 - 7). The opening of the South African economy has given room to flexible labour practices and the South African labour market is not an exception to this fragmentation. There are modified forms of employment that are being implemented in the South African economy as the country is trying to stabilize and compete with other countries globally. Luce asserts that “changes in global retailing have developed

alongside an increase in precarious work in overall. This is due in part to corporate practices and restructuring, deregulation of labour standards...” (2013: 7). The retail sector has grown significantly and as a result substandard jobs are encroaching the labour market as Klerck explains that “precarious and poorly regulated forms of employment are on the increase worldwide” (2009: 87). As a woman shopping in clothing retail shops, I have noted a continuous face change in the women working there. It can be supposedly due to the instability and flexibility of this kind of job.

The shift to non-standard forms of employment is a strategic management style being adopted by managers as a way of keeping their firms in business. Klerck claims that “management’s primary objective in increasing employment flexibility is to remove or dilute the protections that insulate employees from competitive pressures in the external market” (2009: 92). Management seeks to maximize profits by regulating labour standards that will leave workers vulnerable to the competitive pressures in the external market (Klerck, 2009: 92). In a research that was done on the retail sector by Miller in Zambia (2005) and by Klerck in Namibia (2005) indicates that the retail sector is characterized by an increase in casual, temporal and part-time employment as a response to labour market’s shift towards labour flexibility. In South Africa, little academic research has been done of late regarding the retail sector. Scholars such as Radder (2000) and Kenny (2004) have added valuable information explaining that since democracy, the workers suffered “job insecurity, loss of career development and training” (Kenny, 2004: 486).

The retail sector has of past decades been taking the front role in the economy; it has significantly drawn the attention of many both economically and socially. According to Luce (2013: 3) the global retail report highlights that the retail industry is a large and fast growing sector of world economy as it contributes more than US \$15 trillion global revenue. Non-standard forms of employment pervade the retail sector and with the rise of the retail sector it becomes a cause for concern. The emotional and aesthetic working conditions of the sales assistants in clothing retail shops will be explored as this will be a source of knowledge on the backstage of the clothing retail sector.

Marketing is recognised globally as one of the keys of business financial success. Therefore, retail clothing stores invest a lot of money towards the aesthetic appearance of their stores. De Chatel and Hunt agree that “while interior design was aimed at keeping the customer inside the store and encouraging further expenditure, the building’s exterior was designed to

attract passers-by and lure them inside” (2003: 46). The South African retail owners understand that attracting customers into their stores is an important marketing strategy because people will always find something that they love in a store and end up buying even when it is not their intention. Artistic symbols pervade retail clothing stores as a way of advertising the products being sold. For example, it is common to observe manikins in clothing stores including MRP and Edgars. Manikins are a way of encouraging people to buy outfits. Since they have already seen a manikin dressed in the clothes they will have a visual idea of how well the clothes can fit on them if they buy a pair as Schmitt and Simonson agree that “the most prevalent primary elements of styles in the marketing aesthetics arena are visual” (1997: 85).

The stores aesthetics is supposed to be complemented by the people who are working in the store for it to give a clear picture of what is being merchandised, because of this, women who are working in the clothing retail sector are expected to embody a particular structure and personality for them to appeal and relate to the store that they are working for. Jackson states that “the face is the most salient and stable source of information during social interaction, and the most important body aspect for communicating a large and varied amount of information” (1992: 3), As a result, retail clothing stores invest in their employees appearance as they are the ambassadors of the store where their appearance is a direct representation of what is to be expected in the store.

Clothing retail assistants are susceptible to emotional labour which can be described as the ability to manage their feelings so as to give a good outward appearance, it is the clothing retail assistants who endure the pressure to accept emotional labour as part of their work process because many at times they have no other option than to accept their harsh reality. For activities to be human activities they must possess meaning for their actors in the form of motive (Collins 2000). Therefore, every thought and decision to act is ‘engendered by motivation which can be our desires and needs, our interests and emotions. In this context, the clothing retail assistants are motivated by their desire to earn an income and take care of themselves and their families and this motivates them to keep working.

1.2 Main aims

This research seeks to explore and compare feelings and perceptions on emotional and aesthetic labour experienced by women working in two different clothing retail shops which are part of TNCs in PE and Grahamstown. In other words, I try to bring some insight if

women working in clothing retail shops are aware of their emotional and aesthetic labour process during working hours and how they feel about it. The retail sector has gained paramount relevance in the economy for the past few decades and we see more women to be precise working in the clothing retail sector. This research was trying to understand why women pervade the clothing retail sector? And to answer this questions one can note that the increase of flexible labour and the rise of the unemployment crisis in South Africa to a greater extent determine the kind of jobs women can afford to accept and in this context these jobs and using emotional and aesthetic labour. It is evident that most employers recruit on the basis of attitudes and aesthetic attributes presumably so they can avoid having to train and develop these critical 'soft skills' (Grugulis, 2007; Grugulis et al., 2004).

Mr Price and Edgars will be used for fieldwork purpose of this study. I have specifically chosen two locations (Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown) both in a central business district (CBD) where it is believed to be accessible to people from all walks of life. I have chosen these two locations primarily because it is necessary to explore if the requirement of these TNCs are applicable in the same way for clothing shops located in a main or middle-size South African city and a semi-rural small-town of Grahamstown, and secondarily because during apartheid the CBD retail shops only allowed white people to shop, but today after apartheid, South African citizens have the right to walk and purchase in the CBD retail shops, with access to all kinds of clothing and brands. These clothing retail shops are still overlooking the main roads which residents encounter in their everyday life as they are passing-by going to work, study or just walking in the public space.

As globalization has encroached our society, labour has not been excluded, there is a rapid diffusion of job requirements to meet international trends and standards of these TNCs. Clothing retail assistants look like they have a standard that they follow regardless of their country, religion or race. They all have key characteristics that they share and their job requirements seem similar because they follow one standard procedure. A key characteristic of this late capitalist society is the emphasis in which consumer culture shapes the embodiment of the people working in clothing retail shops (Howson, 2013: 115). Therefore, I will attempt to understand if clothing retail assistants in Mr Price and Edgars indeed have the same emotional and aesthetic guidelines or rules that they follow and adhere to in their different locations.

This research tries to unravel the different feelings and attitudes that women working in Mr Price and Edgars have towards their work requirements. The women working in these clothing retail shops have different job requirements that stem from their appearance, uniforms, make-up, perfumes, speech, personal conduct, customer service and working hours. Women working in the clothing retail sector are prone to management control and have their labour process dictated to them; Howson explains that the body is seen as an object that needs to be controlled to maintain discipline (2013: 16). By conducting this research I will manage to understand how the women feel about their job requirements and the control that is associated with being a clothing sales assistant.

In a society where sex sells, women are being used as sex objects that are complementing the store and aiding to the procurement of profits. Wolkowitz states that “in this setting workers’ bodies are treated as a kind of animate hardware, contributing to the design landscape in much the same way as the inanimate decor or gourmet food” (2006: 86). The abuse of women’s body and emotions as part of a company’s strategy is one of the challenges women working in Mr Price and Edgars face. They are expected to be the brand of the store, the face that everyone meets and is enticed with to an extent that they end up buying in the store. As management targets to achieve this branded retail assistant the employee faces major challenges of fitting in with the company’s brand to an extent where they have to act out their personalities to embrace the job they are doing. The purpose of this study is to comprehend the challenges that women working in Mr Price and Edgars have in relation to the management supervision on their appearance and professional behaviour.

The women who work in the clothing retail sector look a particular way in general, be it their dressing, make-up, hairstyle or the shoes they are wearing. With this research I seek to know how they achieve the look that they have every day; I would like to know if they are forced to buy their own make-up, perfume and clothes from the store they work for in order to meet their job requirements that expect them to depict the brand they are advertising. Some literature shows that clothing retail stores differ in terms of employee remuneration as Grugulis and Bozkurt explain that “the labour market spans a range from attractive, middle class dominated style labour markets where workers enjoy heavy discounts on the latest fashion to the poorly paid shift work offered by mass retailers” (2011: 5). In this context, this research aims to search how the employees embrace the challenge of having to sustain their appearance in the workplace and how management plays a role in helping them achieve it.

Our social life intersects in a way that no one can escape domination. The women working in Mr Price and Edgars are dominated by the patriarchal system in their households, and when they come to work where domination runs across racial lines they encounter the same domination from fellow female managers and supervisors. The sad reality is that leaving the household to work in the clothing stores can be seen as an escape from one form of domination to the other as Hill - Collins explains that “women’s paid work is organized within intersecting oppressions of class, gender, race” (2000: 45). As a result there is massive domination between the women themselves.

Store aesthetics is a global concept that affects TNCs and imposes similar patterns internationally to the shop’s aesthetic and to the sales assistants. This study investigates the relationship between store aesthetics and its contribution to the emotional and aesthetic requirements of employees in Mr Price and Edgars. Space is distributed differently, there are several sections in these stores and the employers have different job descriptions and job requirements, for example a cosmetics section employee has a different set of job requirements as compared to the other retail assistants in the clothing section, as how we see later in chapter 4. According to Du Preez, Visser and Van Noordwyk (2008: 50) store image is important in apparel stores as it indicates the interaction between the uncontrollable and controllable consumer needs and the marketing strategy incorporated. The employee’s aesthetics are controlled to fit in the store aesthetics for them to have the same story line.

1.3 Research methodology

This section outlines the research design that was employed in conducting this study. Babbie and Mouton describe a research design as a plan that explains how a research is conducted (2001:74). The section below explains the different steps used in this research. The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown.

1.3.1 Research design

For this research I made use of a qualitative research methodology and specifically used semi-structured or in-depth interviews. According to Rubin (2004: 23), in-depth interviews refer to a technique used to collect qualitative data by setting up a situation (the interview) that allows a respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. Semi-structured interviews are used by researchers to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee’s point of view or situation. The

interviews conducted involved asking informants open-ended questions, and probing wherever necessary to obtain data deemed useful by the researcher as will be shown by my interview schedules in Appendix B.

I chose a snowball non-random sampling technique in accessing participants for this research. Snowball sampling is also known as chain or referral sampling in the sense that the researcher is linked to other participants by the participants whom he or she has contacted or interviewed already (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Samples in qualitative research are usually non-random and purposive. This means participants are selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the project (Neuman, 2000: 424; Matthews and Ross, 2010: 226).

The population for this study consists of women working as sales assistants in Edgars and Mr Price retail shops in the CBD of Port Elizabeth (PE) and Grahamstown (Ght). Sixteen women were interviewed in this study; four from Mr Price in PE, four from Mr Price in Ght, four from Edgars in PE and the last four from Edgars in Ght.

1.3.2 Data collection and analysis

Bloor and Wood argue that “interviews enable researchers to access their respondents’ descriptions, rationalizations and reflections about their behaviour, but observational data enable the researcher to tap into the more chaotic, non-rational behaviour that may be less likely to be disclosed in an interview” (2006: 71), as a result I used a combination of semi-structured interviews and store observation for my data collection. Sixteen semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted lasting at least 1 hour in which a tape recorder was used. Tracy (2013: 139) alludes that with less structured interviews the interviewee is more at ease as they feel like they are having a discussion unlike being dictated to; as a result I got more information than I was anticipating because I could formulate follow-up questions.

In my data collection I also used observation, along with interview where I observe the stores lighting, location, description of the place, etc. I also used cover observation to observe the workers, to look at their aesthetic appearance, the ways in which they are moving and conducting themselves in the workplace, with other colleagues and with the costumers, etc. During the interviews, I was also observing their body language as will be shown in Appendix A and B

Social research has several implications because there are people involved and people have constitutional rights that need to be observed. Ethics help to define what is moral or

legitimate to do when conducting a proper research (Neuman, 2006: 48). In conducting this research I engaged with the Rhodes University Ethics Handbook that upholds ethical codes of conduct in conducting a social research. The participants of this research gave informed consent by participating in this research. I only had interviews with the participants who were willing to do the interviews. Neuman states that “because social researchers sometimes transgress the privacy of people in order to study social behaviour, they must take several precautions to protect research participants' privacy” (2006: 57). Privacy of participants was guaranteed in this research; there was anonymity. The participant’s real names are not revealed in the research.

Data analysis is the process of interpreting data that has been collected to give it meaning and aid better understanding of the situation under investigation (Neuman 2003). In order to analyse the data, I transcribed the interviews from the tape recorder. The interview transcriptions were analysed using a report and thematic content analysis which is the process of descriptively presenting and categorising the qualitative data collected in a manner which does not distort the inherent meaning Braun and Clarke (2006:80). I also analysed data putting into consideration the store observations and interviewee observations to help me understand and link what the sales assistants were saying to their body language.

1.3.3 Fieldwork challenges

I encountered a few research difficulties with regards to access. Some of the participants were not willing to co-operate. I was constantly referred to managers who were not very keen on allowing me to have an interview with their employees on the first go, but I had to convince them persuasively to allow me to conduct the interviews with their employees. The sales assistants from Edgars were not willing to participate in the interviews and it took me a considerable amount of time to convince them to have an interview with me.

Another problem I faced was language barrier, I believe the ladies could have expressed themselves better if the interviews were conducted in their mother tongue, however they would throw in some Xhosa words during the interview. But despite the unforeseen challenges, I managed to collect the data that I wanted.

In my observations, I spent a significant amount of time observing the four stores in their respective locations to help me make a comparative analysis on the store aesthetics, aesthetic

labour display and emotional labour investment; which I noted to be very different. The Mr Price and Edgars in Port Elizabeth differed from these in Grahamstown.

1.4 Concepts for discussion

This thesis is guided by three main concepts; store aesthetics, emotional labour and aesthetics labour. The analyses of these concepts help in shaping this thesis and ultimately in understanding the perceptions that clothing retail assistants have on their working environment. These three concepts have been chosen because they interlink to give a wide perspective on the working conditions of women in the clothing retail sector. There are critics like Bolton who disagree with the concept of emotional labour having adverse effects on the employee and this will be further explored.

1.4.1 Emotional Labour

It is important to know that emotion in the workplace is no longer a mystery as it was before, but because of the rise of the service sector, emotional labour has become part of the contemporary employment prerequisite (Bolton, 2005: 1). Organizations have feelings, they are sites of love, passion, conflict and hatred (Fineman, 1993) and the commercialization of these feelings (Hochschild, 1983) is a must because it has ceased to be just a feeling, but emotion has become a valuable resource that management is using for the development of the company (Goleman, 1998).

The expression of feelings privately and publicly is hugely altered in our everyday life because the only consistent thing in life is change. Our society is changing, so are people and the state of affairs. Wouter (1989: 105) expresses that the breaking down of social barriers in the modern society shows how actors are opening up to different cultures and as a result they have developed the ability to switch and swap faces according to the demands of many different situations. This entails that emotional labour is inevitable because it is part of us and this leads to Bolton's question 'why emotion, why now?' since it is who we have always been.

One would argue that modern life is pushing people into a post-emotional society. Not that the society is emotionless, but as Bolton states "the emotions which are presented are manufactured states that devoid human feeling" (2005: 4). This can be described as the death of feelings because now people have feeling rules (Hochschild. 1983) that detect to them how they are supposed to react and manage their biology to fit a situation in a society. This brings

up Hochschild's argument that in this post-emotional society noble savage is only celebrated where real, authentic and natural feelings rule the day (Hochschild, 1983, 2003; Mestrovic, 1997). Most service sector workers especially the clothing retail assistants are denied the opportunity to be authentic and to express how they feel because they are paid to manage their emotions.

Hochschild (1983: 33) has identified two forms of emotional labour in which employee's suppress their feelings as part of the labour process: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting is when an employee deceives the customer about how they truly feel and they give pretence but they do not lie to themselves, whilst in deep acting they deceive themselves as much as they will be deceiving others which bring about false consciousness (Lukacs, 1968). Thompson and Warhurst argue that emotional labour is far from empowering because workers are instructed to respond to the perceived feelings and expressions of customers in a manner which primarily upholds the commercial interests of the company rather than in a manner which expresses their own perception and feeling (1998: 91).

1.4.2 Aesthetic labour

Emotional labour cannot be separated from aesthetic labour because they complement each other on so many levels. A worker who embodies both is at a competitive advantage as compared to that worker who has one or neither of them. In a service society where people skills have taken precedence, a person's figure and demeanour are a valuable resource. Aesthetics have been noted to have an unnoticeable influence on behaviour (Fineman, 2000: 140; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997), which is exactly what is needed in the clothing retail sector to encourage the customers to spend money in the store as Korczynski (2002) has described the service sector as a customer-orientated bureaucracy.

The concepts of emotional and aesthetic labour are frequently applied to service jobs in order to understand the pressures and demands placed on employees that are facing the customer each day and representing the company. The concept of aesthetic labour was developed to expand on the idea of emotional labour and foreground issues of embodiment, revealing how the corporeality and not just the feelings of employees are organizationally appropriated and packaged for commercial benefit (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). In studying the aesthetics of a clothing retail assistant one is able to understand emotional labour on a whole new level.

Kerfoot and Korczynski (2005) have pointed out that service work appears to be gender-neutral, both the customer-orientated and the bureaucratized elements of service work are deeply gendered, which explains why the clothing retail is mostly dominated by women as sales assistants, which is not because they are the only people applying for these jobs, but as Dashper explains “many men may prefer to be served by a woman, organizations are simply responding to customer demand” (2013: 136). Women’s aesthetic appearance gives them an advantage over their male counterparts because their looks and soft natural skills appeal more to people than those of males, so due to the gendered assumptions of many managers that women are more “naturally” suited to customer-facing roles and interaction (Dashper, 2013: 137).

In the clothing retail where the economy is facing stiff competition especially now in South Africa where we have many international brand opening stores in our numerous malls, it becomes a challenge for the local stores to compete in such an environment. Having employees who have the “right” look, the right sound, or the right attitude to appeal to customers’ senses, many managers believe it will provide a competitive advantage, and so looks, voice, accent, and attitude are becoming increasingly important in the recruitment and selection of service sector workers” (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009).

Clothing retail employers are constantly looking for workers who “physically embody the product and are walking billboards” for the company (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996: 304). This places increasing demands on service workers to portray the right look, sound, and attitude in order to gain employment. Warhurst, Nickson, Witz and Cullen (2000) found that employers within the service sector wanted young, attractive, and clean employees. Voice and accent were also considered important; workers needed to project an ‘aural smile’. These aesthetic requirements have clear gender- and class based implications as Bourdieu (1984) explains that aesthetic qualities are shaped by class.

1.4.3 Store aesthetics

Creativity has been defined differently depending on the context it is being used in, but a rather preferable definition is: “the ability to combine ideas in new ways to solve problems and exploit opportunities” (Bruce and Bessant, 2002). Retail clothing stores are being creative in their design and layout as a way of solving the problem of competition with other stores and exploit opportunities by encouraging people to come spend in their store. The retail sector is facing a boom, and the clothing sector has become very prominent, as a result

the competition is stiff and apparel stores face the challenge of being creative and enhance on their store aesthetics to get a competitive advantage.

Light and Smith have defined place as “culturally formed and defined by reference to the human body” (2005: 41) because a store alone does not say anything, but the person in the store help to complete its meaning to the world. In this context, the retail clothing store is expected to blend with the shop assistants working there for it to be complete. The mere design and layout of shelves are structured in a way that gives a certain impression on the customer and it also entails the emotional and aesthetic requirements of the clothing retail assistant who is stationed at a particular location of the store.

Store design and layout tells a customer what the store is all about and it is a very strong tool in the hands of the retailer for communicating and creating the image of the store in the mind of the customers as Wileman and Jary claim that “in retail sector, a store’s distinctive look and ambience can reinforce the product brand image and become an integral part of a consumer’s purchase decision” (1997: 62). The lighting, scent and music played in a store builds on the brand that the owners of the store want and it helps to tell a story of the store. In a store with good lighting and space, the retail assistant is seen clearly by the customers and they can engage with them and this is when they are obliged to display their emotional and aesthetic skills to encourage the customer to purchase.

Store aesthetics creates a certain environment for the store. The environment created in the clothing retail store, is a combination of the exterior look of the store, the store’s interior, the atmosphere in the store and the events, promotions and the themes. For example during the festive season, there is Santa Clause in the store to encourage parents to come into the store with their children, not just to take pictures with the Santa but they are forced to buy something from the store as well as Wileman and Jary claim that “fashion retailers may have a very recognisable house style that is reasonably consistent from season to season” (1997: 57). Stores are decorated in a theme that complements the season celebrations to keep the customers wowed and excited. With the change of display and season celebration, the clothing retail assistants are expected to change their work strategies and embrace the occasions, for example during the festive season the clothing retail assistants are encouraged to chant a Christmas statement to all the customers.

1.5 Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 explains the concepts of emotional and aesthetic labour in the clothing retail sector, specifically in Mr Price and Edgars. It kicks off by giving a short outline of the South African economy and society. The government has implemented some neo-liberal policies that have resulted in the rise of the retail sector and ultimately have an adverse impact on the clothing retail sector in terms of the adoption of non-standard forms of employment, poor working conditions and gender inequality in the clothing retail service sector to be precise and the working conditions of women who are working as retail assistants in Mr Price and Edgars. There is an outline of the aims of the study and the questions that I seek to answer by the use of this research and the methodology used in conducting and collecting data for the research. The three main concepts of this study; store aesthetics, emotional and aesthetic labour on clothing retail assistants are further explained.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical analysis of the rise of retail sector and its relationship with store aesthetics, emotional and aesthetic labour. The chapter gives a broad description of the retail sector to give a greater image of retail and then narrows down to focus on the clothing retail sector specifically. The concept of store aesthetics is intensively explored in this chapter which paves way for the explanation of the rise of the clothing retail. With the theoretical analysis of women's participation in clothing retail sector I analyse the working conditions that women are facing and this marks the entry point of exploring the concepts of emotional and emotional labour in the clothing retail sector.

Chapter 3 is literature review in which the South African clothing retail is exhaustively explored. It starts with explaining the challenges being faced by the South African clothing retail sector; where non-standard forms of employment affecting the clothing retail and the proliferation of female employment in this sector is further explored. The working conditions of women are analysed which is where emotional and aesthetic job requirements of clothing retail assistants is explained to depth. In this chapter South African literature is explored to understand the distribution of Mr Price and Edgars stores in the two different locations to make a comparative analysis between the two stores on their emotional and aesthetic job requirements and investment in their store and retail assistants.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the interviews and the store observations conducted in two Mr Price and Edgars store from two different locations in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape Province.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion and basic synopsis of the findings on the perceptions on aesthetics and emotional labour experienced by women working in two different retail clothing shops in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. I will share my reflections on the thesis objectives and offer suggestions for areas of further study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RISE OF THE RETAIL SECTOR AND ITS TRANSFORMATION RELATED TO AESTHETICS AND EMOTIONS

2.1 Introduction

Chapter II will attempt to give an outline of the rise of the clothing retail sector and its transformation based on aesthetics and emotions. It is divided in five parts: The rise of retail; The shift towards non-standard forms of employment; women and labour flexibility; aesthetics and imaginary in clothing retail and finally working conditions in clothing retail. The conclusion will sum up the clothing retail sector and its relation with emotional and aesthetic labour on the sales assistants.

The retail sector has gained momentum in the past few decades where it has significantly transformed from being over the counter sales to the creation of space where a customer can walk in and choose the goods they would like to buy. It should be noted that globalization has paved way for the rise of the retail sector and the clothing retail sector to be specific. As trans-national corporations (TNCs) increase in numbers and influence, they have highly influenced the proliferation of clothing retail shops globally.

Globalization has been a blessing and a curse to the clothing retail sector. As many TNC's spread, this has led to the increase of employment and with the introduction of different models of accumulation such as Taylorism in the beginning of the 20th century; women became an active part of the labour process. Over the last decades, the improvements in marketing, science and technology have brought together different job practices and conditions like flexible and non-standard forms of employment that have adverse effects on the working conditions of the workers and women in particular. In this global village the job requirements are constantly being modified to match an international standard and consequently the sales assistants are the people who have to bear the costs.

The sales assistants in the clothing retail shops are expected to display particular requirements related to emotional and aesthetic labour. Emotions are part of who we are as humans, it cannot be removed from our labour process which is well understood, but the argument in this chapter serves to explain how the display of emotional and aesthetic labour has been modified and commodified. From this chapter it will be explained that work has ceased to be a place of artistic creation, but it has become a place of selling humanity in all its

aspects; from the mind, the body to the soul in exchange of a wage, the manager satisfaction and a customer's loyalty.

2.2 Rise of retail

Retail is a complex global network which affects peoples' everyday life. Williams (2006: 3) explain that the concept of buying and selling is shaped by a complex of social, cultural and psychological factors. Kent and Omar have defined retail as "processes in selling goods and services to the ultimate consumer, including direct – consumer sales activities made through store outlets, door to door selling, home shopping, mail orders and the internet" (2003: 8). As a result, retail stores are businesses that sell goods and services to the customers for their own personal use.

Corstjens and Corstjens state that "for many years retailers took a back seat in the Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry and manufacturers were able to dictate what retailers should stock and the terms they could expect" (1995: 97). However, it is important to note that the retail sector has gained momentum with the growing global networks as Wileman and Jary agree that retail has become large scale, concentrated, centralized and sophisticated (1997: 11). Retail has become very popular in the past decade as it has created employment in the post-industrial society where the service sector is taking far more magnitude than any other sector in the economy and it is inclusive of everyone with all their varying skills.

Retail industry has expanded because of the exploitation of available resources that help to fuel the capitalist cause in increasing profits and influence all over. Moghadam explains that "through institutions such as the transnational corporation (TNC) and the state, the global economy generates capital largely through the exploitation of labour" (1999: 371), as a result the retail sector is blossoming because of the extraordinary surplus extraction from the retail workforce that is helping to expand and advance the TNCs profits. The TNCs are building a small global society that seeks to maintain and defend the advancement of a small global bourgeoisie which have until some extent the power of a new global ruling class that is becoming 'condensed' to use Poulantzas imagery (Robinson, 2001: 165).

Globalization has paved way for the rise and influence of clothing retail in our society. TNCs have facilitated the globalization of capital and production because among other, they own and control mass media which facilitates the spread of particular patterns of consumption and a culture and ideology of consumerism at the global level (Sklair, 1999: 146). Today we have

TNCs opening clothing shops where ever there is a market to profit from. TNCs are described as companies with the majority shares from developed countries who own businesses in other countries and regularly earn a third or more of their revenues (Sklair, 1999: 147). As a result many investors are willing to invest in clothing retail because people are already exposed to fashion and they have adopted the consumption culture which continues to develop and strengthen clothing retail through global and national marketing campaigns.

Fashion retail stores offer loyalty cards to customers as a way of persuading them to come back and purchase more as noted by Zureik, Harling Stalker, Smith, Lyon and Chan (2010: 291) explain that loyalty cards can trace a customer's consumption behaviour, as a result customers keep coming back because the more they purchase the more discounts they get. In registering for a store loyalty card, the customers give their details to the store and with these details, the store is able to have access to their personal details that they can use to build and bring to store the necessary commodities to favour customer's tastes and needs as Zureik *et al* explain this "this exchange results in consumer data becoming a commodity that the corporation can use to increase profitability while also improving the services offered to customer segments via targeting segments of the market that are likely to purchase the stores products and services" (2010: 291). As a result the clothing retail sector has encountered a boom in the economy because shops are able to actively target their customer base and provide exactly what they would like to buy.

Technology has played a pivotal role in transforming the retail sector. The use of credit and loyalty cards have enabled customers to purchase more but it can be argued that the nature of retail work has attributed to its development Chattel and Hunt explain that "transformation is not simply a case of technological revolution, of moving towards the digital; it is also a social one" (2003: 16). More jobs in the clothing retail sector are now interpersonal and as a result the workers are expected to perform and have interpersonal skills as part of their job. Thus, commodification of these workers as they are acquiring other dimensions with feeling and appearance sold to the customer as a package. This social revolution has changed a natural state of affairs, our social obligations and how we see the world. The pervasiveness of commodities seems predestined and the workers are even reluctant to fight it as the workforce has become so fragmented and are fighting each other instead of fighting the ruthless system (Lukács, 1974; May, 2006).

2.3 The shift towards non-standard forms of employment in retail

Greenway, Upward and Wright claim that “increased exposure to international trade has profound implications for the rates of job creation and job destruction within an economy” (2008: 6). The expansion of international trade in the clothing retail sector has caused a quake in the employment structure. The jobs being created are a cancer eating the jobs that are being created because they are flexible and non-standard jobs. Theron and Godfrey (2000) pose a concern that as peripheral or atypical employment is on the rise, there is the danger that formal, stable employment will become the exception rather than the norm.

The rise of the clothing retail sector has left to the implementation of non-standard forms of employment. Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson and Williams (2000: 52) describe a standard form of employment as that in which an employer provides a long term work contract to the employee, with regular hours and pay, sick pay, pension and an opportunity to join a trade union, but this standard form of employment has become scarce in today’s society where we find these corporations opting for non-standard forms of employment which derails them from all the commitments to cater for their employees. Bradley et al. (2005: 53) alludes that non-standard employment is a clever corporate strategy that allows the businesses to generate more profit at a low cost.

There is an employment conflict between employees and employers where employees are advocating for job security; and employers ruling for non-standard forms of employment which increases competition amongst workers to enter the market. The workers compete against each other as a way of surviving and this in return gives an advantage to management as Lebowitz (2003: 82) describes Marx’s laws of competition as ‘the blind rule of the supply and demand laws’ in which individuals compete against each other to push their personal agenda which consequently expand the inner tendencies of capital to grow. This shows that as the core and non-core workers compete, they are working harder, thus labour intensification which leads to higher profit yields.

Flexible forms of work deviate from ‘standard’ employment contracts where employment is more secure. Eichhorst and Max (2015: 15) explain that with non-standard forms of employment low skills are required and the employees are offered lower pay as compared to flexible forms of labour where the salary is not as low. Labour flexibility has become very common in the 21st century labour market and open economies because with globalization, companies are supposed to quickly innovate and adapt to the new requirements of the market.

Employment flexibility means, that a worker has the freedom to individually choose time to complete the task and is independent and responsible for the work (Shockley and Allen, 2007). Labour flexibility has been noted to be very common in service work and this implies a growth in the number employed in the sector as workers continually rotate and are expected to accept different shifts.

2.4 Women and labour flexibility

The increase in the participation of women in paid work has resulted in an increase in flexible forms of employment. Scholars like Catherine Hakim have seen flexible forms of employment as a great option for career women because it allows them to maintain their primary commitment to domestic work and child care (Hakim, 1995). However, it is a myth that flexible and non-standard forms of employment like casual labour offers the working woman positive choices and an opportunity to live a double life and enjoy the best of two worlds; as working class and a family woman. Bradley et al explains that it is a myth that non-standard forms of employment open an opportunity for life-enhancing choices because real choices are only made where there are real alternatives and when the people making decisions have all the information and power to make such decisions (2000: 69), but in reality the women working in the clothing retail sector have limited choices and lack of information.

There has been feminization of labour as it is observed more women entering the labour force (Jenson, Hagen and Reddy: 1988). In the service sector, particularly the clothing sector, the job requirements best suit women as they have the matching nurturing and aesthetic qualities for the job to provide emotional labour as stated by Bradley et al (2000: 72) and Hochschild (1983). It can be claimed that it is a myth that women are entering the workplace because of their abilities and the triumph of women revolution to enter all the spaces before occupied by men but in reality women are being exploited as they are employed because of their skills that are considered valuable in this service culture as one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy. Women would help more in ensuring that there is a flourishing retail sector because of their sexuality and bodily appearance (Bradley et al, 2000; McDowell, 1997 and Adkins, 1995).

The increase in women's labour force participation is an unprecedented global phenomenon (Trask, 2014: 4; Barker, 1999: 47). In previous centuries women have been tied down to unpaid house work where they take care of the family and the household, but all this is gradually changing as we see more and more women participating and contributing to the

economy. As women are contributing to the economy, they are directly contributing themselves to the system too. The flexible forms of employment available to women make them easily disposable. Newman, Pape and Jansen have mentioned that the retail sector is faced with intensive labour flexibility (2001: 100). In this context, women are more likely to accept any working conditions in order to access to the labour market.

Women's increased participation in paid labour force is a multifaceted phenomenon (Trask, 2014: 4). It can be argued that women were not exactly freed from the societal bonds tied to their traditional roles, rather they now have a double occupation; being a housewife/house worker and working outside the household. Meer explains that "the bourgeoisie revolution dichotomised society into the non-productive private sector, to which women were confined, and the public sector to which men entered" (1991: 43).

Neoliberal policies like trade liberalization and greater integration of the global marketplace have had unintended effects for women (Trask, 2014: 43) because women are still the shock absorbers of all the uncertainties of the labour market. Bradley et al (2000: 73) explains that by entering the workforce, women were entering into a new realm of problems. The new women's chased after by women are non-standard. Gottfried explains that there is an uneven tempo of mobility by gender, including sticky floors holding women back at lower levels, glass ceilings keeping women from shattering through to high levels, escalators accelerating men's ascent to executive suites (2006: 129).

Retail work is quite diverse, it employs people of differing work capabilities, backgrounds, and qualifications as Grugulis and Bozkurt explain that "the labour market spans a range from attractive, middle class dominated style labour markets where workers enjoy heavy discounts on the latest fashion to the poorly paid shift work offered by mass retailers" (2011: 5). As mentioned before retail corporations are employer of innumerable amount of workers, the majority of them are working in the poorly paid conditions. In most cases this is where we see women pervading the retail sector labour market. The jobs that are usually set aside for women come with little to non-compensation as Trask states that "these jobs for which employers typically prefer women, usually do not come with health or retirement benefits and leave workers vulnerable and open to exploitation" (2014: 43).

Grugulis and Bozkurt tries to explain diversity in retail work employment in terms of demography but it is difficult to run away from the fact that we have more women working in retail as they state that "retail employment is demographically diverse as well, despite being

justifiably associated with women, youth, ethnic minority workers in most contexts” (2011: 7). Retail work looks at particular employees for their posts because they want employees who can be an ambassador of the store to the world. Grugulis and Bozkurt explain that retail work is broad and it needs different type of workers in different age groups and different stages of participation in the labour market (2011: 6).

2.5 Aesthetics imaginary in clothing shops

The rise of the retail sector due to increase competition has now become stiff; in this regard shop aesthetics has become a significant feature of a twenty-first century store. Buildings are built to give a particular aesthetic impression. De Chatel and Hunt agree that “while interior design was aimed at keeping the customer inside the store and encouraging further expenditure, the building’s exterior was designed to attract passers-by and lure them inside” (2003: 46). To appreciate the essence of store aesthetics, one ought to understand store image because the aesthetic effort put in a store complements the brand that the store is trying to sell to the world because clothing retail is complex because it includes the tangible and intangible factors that all contribute to a customer’s perception of the retail shop.

The aesthetics ways of new buildings representation imply symbolic human intentions, meanings and values, either positive or negative (Light and Smith, 2005: 74); in this context, retail stores are designed and styled in a way that conveys the message to the people as Bourdieu adds that symbolic structures are instruments of knowledge and communication (1991: 166). A store is a place where goods and services are exchanged, in this context. Humans shape space into a place where people can express a sense of the place and a sense of belonging. Light and Smith have defined *place* as “culturally formed and defined by reference to the human body” (2005: 41). Every store in this case ought to have its own distinct feature that develops its sense from all the other stores and invite people who are familiar with that *particular spirit* (Light and Smith, 2005: 42). The spirit of the retail stores in this context are shaped by the employees who work there and the services that they provide which gives them an identity. Wileman and Jary (1997: 57) articulate that quality positioning, including style is a primary factor in fashion segmentation, which shows that stores ought to have a particular style.

Artistic symbols have the power to give meaning to the space they occupy as Bourdieu notes that “symbolic power is a power of constructing reality, and one which tends to establish a gnoseological order: the immediate meaning of the world and in particular of the social

world” (1991: 166). Pictures are of paramount importance in stores because they hold the capacity to give the customers and employers a sense of belonging and change their perspective of looking at the world. The workers are most likely to engage in false consciousness because of the fantasy world that they work in. Marcuse (1978: 7) agrees that art can alienates individuals from their functional existence and performance in society, which explains that artistic expressions and decorations in a shop can make customers escape from their daily reality and get lost in the fantasy fixed in the art and decorations that are in the store.

According to Du Preez, Visser and Van Noordwyk (2008: 50) store image is important in apparel stores as it indicates the interaction between the uncontrollable and controllable consumer needs and the marketing strategy incorporated, the controllable needs being perfect customer service from employees, direct relationship between company brand and its workers and the uncontrollable being the prices that are shaped by the invisible economic hand. The aesthetics of a shop is marked by the economic status and the aesthetics of the employees as everything should be able to paint one picture and convey the same message from all angles. Passer-bys judge a shop by its aesthetic appearance; therefor business owners invest in the presentation of their clothing shops because the store image would have given enough information on what is to be expected inside.

Bourdieu (1991: 221) explains that creating an identity is an object of mental representation. In this framework, mental representation needs to be fed by strong visual images as a way of symbolic manipulation. Schmitt and Simonson have concluded that “the most prevalent primary elements of styles in the marketing aesthetics arena are visual” (1997: 85), which explains that all perceptions start with the eye. Psychology research has shown that most people remember pictures more than writings and as a result retail stores try to give an impressive show to the customer as people are visual beings (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997: 86). In applying marketing strategies, management invests in visual stimuli’s that depict their corporate values and match what the customers are looking for.

Marcuse agrees to the importance of artistic expressions in clothing retail shops as he states that “the inner logic of the work of art terminates in the emergence of another reason, another sensibility, which defy the rationality and sensibility incorporated in the dominant social institutions” (1978: 7). The artistic expressions help to shape the consumers purchasing decision. In this light, a stores atmosphere which entails size; store décor, colours, neatness,

smell, and sound (Du Preez, Visser and Van Noordwyk, 2008: 54) has a huge role to play in giving people information about the store. Schmitt and Simonson claim that background sound and music can enhance a corporate or brand identity in retail and other spaces because sound is a powerful emotional and behavioural cue (1997: 98). De Chatel and Hunt have stated that “sophisticated layout and display techniques, and theatrics lighting and colouring effects all combined to coax the tentative customer gently into a dream state” (2003: 45).

2.6 Working conditions in clothing retail shops

The working conditions in the clothing retail shops are to a greater extent determined by the shop aesthetics. The layout of a store is the deciding factor now how sales assistants will be distributed throughout the store. With the proliferation of MNC/TNCs it has ultimately led to the proliferation of similar working conditions, therefore there are some standard job requirements in the clothing retail sector. Klein (2000: 132) states that MNCs operate in different countries, and adjusts their products and practices to match the particular environment though they operate with resolute constancy as if the entire world is a single entity because it sells the same things in the same way everywhere.

The clothing retail sector is diverse; it has various people working at different posts within the clothing retail shops. Like many other sectors in the economy, in clothing retail most people work at the bottom and as mentioned earlier these are usually the low paid shift workers, to which Jones and Murphy claim that “most tables of organisation are shaped like a pyramid, there are few people at the top and lots at the bottom” (2003: 99). The people working at the bottom of the labour pyramid are the ones who run the risk of attaining unfavourable working conditions which also vary from being a health hazards to emotional abuse.

Working as a sale assistant in a clothing retail shop is not an easy job because the retail shops depend on the sales assistant’s attitude towards the customers for them to succeed as Jones and Murphy explain that “in truth, it’s much more difficult to acquire all the relevant people skills – the ability to influence, to motivate, to inspire confidence (2003: 99). The sales assistants are expected to separate their personal life from their professional life. When they are at work they are obliged to be work oriented and focus on being courteous and warm to the customers to which Thompson and Warhurst have described as having a state of mind or feeling within another person who is usually a customer (1998: 85).

Exercising discipline and control over the worker is not easy because it is not realistic that everyone can master the art of ‘the right attitude’ and to talk themselves through setbacks and disappointment (Jones and Murphy, 2003: 99) especially when the success of the business is bound up with the attitude of its employees. The diverse nature of the clothing retail sector entails its diverse problems. The workers are expected to manage their feelings because there is more to emotion management than a smile. Elias (1987) argues that emotion is socially constructed, therefore it has physiological and behavioural components in addition to a feeling component and as a result in managing our feeling we are controlling biological and emotional impulses that are running in accordance to the demands of social life.

Buchanan, Evesson and Dawson (2003: 86) explain that women and young workers are the two sources of employment in the retail sector and women dominate the clothing retail sector to be more specific. Gender in the retail sector is subjected to debate as explained above that retail work employs more women and one may look at it as a good thing as it allows women to enter the labour force and contribute to the economy, yet on the other hand it can be seen as a sector that demeans women as Scott clearly points out that “women are being seen by employers as a source of cheap, flexible and high quality labour as their inherent ‘feminine’ skills are seen as being synonymous with the required soft skills” (1994: 374).

The ills of the clothing retail labour process are inevitable in the capitalist society. As the clothing retail sector continue to suck on human resources like emotions and aesthetic figures society is left with no option but to accept the new reality. It is said that emotions cannot be removed from the labour process especially in this delicate sector. Human and personal resources are becoming an asset in this clothing retail as they fuel the expansion of the sector and influence higher sales a thing that machines cannot do as Grugulis and Bozkurt (2011: 53) and (Levy and Murnane, 2005) agree that retail jobs cannot be outsourced as they require service work, emotional labour and caring labour that the workers need to perform personally and technology cannot replace these humane skills.

Clothing retail work is closely linked with fetishism where reality is seen through a guise and reality becomes an illusion. Grugulis and Bozkurt (2011: 54) explains that in clothing retail stores, a sales assistant is seen as a commercial mask with a stereotyped greeting That advances the corporate culture not their personal values as Grugulis and Bozkurt (2011: 55) and Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton (2004: 10) agree that employers believed that having a staff that look good and sound right helps to create an image for the store and gives it a

competitive advantage over their competitors which resulted in a store personifying the employers to look a certain way.

Personalized services in retail shops are not a new concept. Wright Mills (1956: 175) consent that sales people are taken as charmers because they attract the customers with their modulated voices, artful attire and a stance. The working conditions slightly vary today, Williams explains that before, a retail worker was a man who was well knowledgeable about the clothes and merchandise he was selling, earning a significant salary and a commission, but today's retail worker is a woman, earning a low wage and on casual, contract basis with little to no experience at all about the industry or the merchandise being sold (2006: 34). Moreover it is important to understand that the success of the retail sector is accredited to its forms of employment which are precarious.

2.6.1 Worker's aesthetics in clothing retail

In today's society Howson explains that the body is seen as an object that needs to be controlled and maintain discipline (2013: 16), which implies that the body is seen as nothing beyond a commodity that should be controlled to work in a particular way that benefits the people controlling it. A key characteristic of this late capitalist society is the emphasis in which consumer culture shapes the embodiment of the people working in clothing retail shops (Howson, 2013: 115). As owners of retail clothing shops seek to maximize their profits, they focus on how to increase consumption in their stores, consequently they maximise on the embodiment of the retail assistants so that they look appealing to their target population.

Aesthetic appearance in fashion retail sector is essential because the shop assistants represent the store that they work for. Jackson goes on to explain that "physical appearance is more important for females than for males because appearance is more strongly related to reproductive potential for females than for males" (1996: 8) which explains that the value attached to physical appearance depends on gender and the job. According to McNeil and Wallenberg "it has been repeatedly established that in retail space, women are much more present as bodies than men in the ways clothing is presented" (2012: 319).

Appearance is everything in retail clothing shops as Bourdieu states that "beauty is a gift of nature and a conquest of merit" (1984: 207). Jackson (1996: 1) explains that the face has taken a centre stage in our society because it helps to put across the messages that the perceiver is trying to deliver. The employees have to look like the job they are doing.

Nickson, Warhurst, Witz and Cullen explain that aesthetic labour is used in recruitment and selection by most companies to filter out the inappropriate people (2001: 179), in which the inappropriate people are those candidates that do not embody the cultural requirements for the shop.

Jackson states that “the face is the most salient and stable source of information during social interaction, and the most important body aspect for communicating a large and varied amount of information” (1996: 3). The changes that have taken place in our society in the past decades have made it inevitable for retail store owners to view appearance as a profitable good. Therefore a sales assistant’s appearance gives aesthetic value to the consumer and encourages them to desire what is being sold in the shop. Jackson (1996: 70) alludes that attractive people, particularly females, are perceived as possessing more valued personal characteristics than the less attractive people.

The recruitment and selection process for people who work in fashion retail stores is slightly different to other corporate jobs where prospective employees must have substantial working experience, but as noted by Mary: she went for an interview as Betsy’s dress boutique and the manager told her she was hired already and would make a great ‘Betsy’s girl’ despite her age being seventeen and a very thin working experience (Grugulis and Bozkurt, 2011: 49). Research has shown that facially attractive job applicants are evaluated more favourably than less attractive applicants even if they have identical qualifications (Jackson, 1996: 89).

There has been an increase in the demand of aesthetic skills. In fashion retail workers constantly need to change and embrace a ‘self’ that they get from the workplace. Goffman has explained that “this presentation of self involves workers manipulating their clothes, hair and demeanour to present the specific kind of self that customer were expecting to encounter” (1959), in this context it helps to explain that workers in the retail sector manipulate their true personality to fit that of the organization. Grugulis and Bozkurt comment that there is more to retail work than the technical and social skills, but instead aesthetic skills are of significant importance as they force the retail workers to look and sound ‘right’ (2011: 56).

Pettinger (2004) has noted from her study that fashion assistants are a critical part of the branding of the retail store as a result the assistants need to represent the store well. As Wright was drawing very closely from Bourdieu that the bodies of workers in the retail sector are used as an important commercial success (2005: 296) which clearly explain why appearance is of great value in the retail sector and the shop assistants need to have an

appearance that is commercially appealing to the world at large. Appearance and soft skills keep the retail sector booming and employers have mastered the art of increasing profit for their stores through employing employees who inhibit these qualities, and Grugulis and Bozkurt state that “for employers these soft skills centre on the right personality, attitude and appearance and are deemed to be important in delivering good customer service” (2011: 70).

The sales assistants are dressed in a way that brings profit to the store to an extent where they have clothing and appearance policies. In this case it is not surprising to see retail assistants wearing similar clothes or even a work uniform as it is used to standardize the appearance of the staff. Grugulis and Bozkurt explained that employers have clothing and appearance policies because they have standard rules and expectations relating to the clothes worn at work for employees to fit the image or brand of the company (2011: 79). The appearance policies cover all aspects of appearance that an employer has to portray. It dictates what an employee wears and when, their hairstyles and make-up.

Emotional and aesthetic labour is deeply connected to the concept of alienation. The sales assistants are alienated from each other and from themselves as they have to display an outward appearance that does not necessarily depict their personal values and attributes. Physical appearance gives a competitive advantage in a market in which beauty and deportment strongly contribute to occupational value (Bourdieu, 1984: 202). In retail sector, Kerfoot and Korczynski explained that “aesthetic labour skills are themselves reflections of particular forms of social and cultural capital and are structured via gender, age, class and ethnicity” (2005: 397).

2.6.2 Emotional labour in clothing retail

Hochschild defines emotional work as an internal process of handling our feelings and emotions, while emotional labour is an external process of managing feelings with the intention of creating a publicly observable facial and bodily display (1983: 7). The display of emotional labour is quite evident in clothing retail work where we have the fashion assistants make an effort to closet their inner feelings and reactions in their conversations with customers. The 21st century nature of work has incorporated a person’s hands, mind, body and feelings as well. Taylor has defined emotional labour as the management of feelings performed as a part of paid work, serving the interests of an employer in maximizing profit (1998: 85). Most frontline jobs like clothing retail work are pervaded by emotional labour for

example the sales assistants are expected to conceal their true feelings about their workplace situations with the goal of pleasing the customer.

Grayson (1998: 128) and Hochschild (1983/2003: 7) have described emotional labour as the management, manipulation or suppression of one's feelings to portray a specific outward appearance to others. In the retail sector, the workers are expected to give a positive outward appearance to the customer which is described by Hochschild as he explains that "to feign a feeling is to offer another person behavioural evidence of what we want him to believe we are thinking and feeling" (1983/2003: 83). In the words of Nunan and Knox "employees should be trained to give a certain 'emotional' response or impression to customers" (2005: 71).

Brook (2013: 33) explains that emotion is an inseparable dimension of labour power. In other words, emotional labour is rendered inevitable but what makes it relevant is the extent to which emotional labour is being demanded from the workers as Nunan and Knox express that "much criticism of emotional labour has focussed not on the labour itself, but the extent to which organisations have sought to exploit emotional labour through display rules" (2005: 73). Hochschild states that "of all women working, roughly one-half have jobs that call for emotional labour" (2012: 11), in the name of independency, women view working outside the household as a way of escaping interdependence on their husbands or male figures but it is a myth because even in their jobs they are still being oppressed and under paid.

With the adoption of emotional labour in the clothing retail sector, gender plays a major role in how these jobs are distributed. Jobs like sales assistants in clothing retail shops is female dominated and this spells gender segregation to an extent that even though the service sector appears to be gender neutral; in reality there are some gendered elements written into it (Kerfoot and Korczynski, 2005: 390) even though Leidner (1993: 206) argues that men and women hold different sorts of jobs because of the differences in their physical capacities, psychological orientations and family responsibilities. More women are employed in clothing retail sector to be more specific and. Kerfoot and Korczynski have concluded that service work is gendered (2005: 389), because it is women who are mostly employed in these emotionally taxing jobs because of their ability to be stoic and handle situations in a publicly desirable way

Hochschild (2012: 20) explains that for women, emotional labour is not something new, it is just an extension of their practising ground from the private spheres of the household to the public sphere of the workplace to which emotional management has always been better

understood by women. Service work involves constantly engaging with the public and the fact that women can do more interactive work as compared to men so as to sustain dialogues, and this makes women are more suitable to be agents (Leidner, 1993: 201).

Hochschild explains that the commodification of emotions in the workplace alienates workers through what he calls a 'transmutation of feelings' (1983: 19). In the 'public sphere' of emotional labour, sales assistant's feelings are commercialized into a package of emotions consumed by customers as a commodified interaction. Thompson and Smith acknowledge that emotion is no longer seen as a by-product of organizational life, but as a resource to be harnessed by the organization (2010: 206), it has become more of an asset and Nickson, Warhurst, Witz and Cullen have mentioned that the person to person skills have become more important and that is what employers are mostly looking for (2003: 187).

Hochschild states that "if we can become alienated from goods in a goods-producing society, we can become alienated from service in a service-producing society" (2012: 7). In the industrial era, workers were alienated from the goods they were producing as they cannot afford to even buy them. Today in the neo-Fordist society we find workers who offer emotional services to the customer. The emotional services are part of their job and as a result they are alienated from their true emotions. The women working in retail clothing stores are given feeling rules by management that is to help them give an impression of effortless work enjoyment and as a result the emotional labour that they act out produces a 'smile on them, but not of them' (Hochschild, 2012: 8).

Central to Hochschild's thesis is her condemnation of the human cost of emotional labour through her pivotal application of Marx's alienation theory (Brook, 2009; Yuill, 2005). This explicitly explains how the clothing retail assistants are being denied the freedom of true expression of their feelings and emotions in the workplace. Emotional labour brings about the alienation of a person from themselves, this process has the effect of alienating clothing retail assistants from their emotional product as a consequence of management wresting formal ownership and control from workers of the form, timing, giving and withdrawal of emotional feelings, moods and their display so that they come 'more to belong to the organization and less to the self' (Hochschild, 1983: 198).

The rule of the thumb in retail work is that of 'customer is king' and in trying to maintain this, clothing retail managers are now depending on emotional labour to give that satisfaction to the customers. This kind of labour calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it

sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality (Hochschild, 2012: 7). As workers are acting out to please the customer they are losing themselves in their work and alienating their smiles from themselves, emotional labour becomes part of them to an extent that the reality of their emotional labour abuse is tainted as Marx and Engels state that “all men and their circumstance appear upside-down as in a camera obscure” (1970/ 1845: 47).

In today’s society, strikes, demonstrations and debates are part of workers’ rights. Several movements against abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace took place lately in South Africa, making the work of Hochschild a valuable piece of academic work. Many scholars acknowledge the very famous sentence which says: “today’s anti-capitalistic movement with its slogan of ‘our world is not for sale’, underpinned by its damning analyses of neoliberalism, corporate power and consumerism” (2009: 7). The sales assistants are prone to abuse in the workplace, both sexually and emotionally and they have been made objects of emotional and aesthetic labour.

Hochschild is blamed for being an absolutist in her study of emotional labour in the service sector, as she is seen to have focused on one aspect of the alienation of workers from their true feelings as an absolutely bad thing for the worker (Bolton, 2005). It is however argued that emotional labourers are not crippled workers; they have a degree of emotional free choice to determine the extent to which their emotions can be commodified (Bolton, 2005, Wouters, 1989). In defence of Hochschild, it is clear that there is an unequal power relationship between the clothing retail assistant and the customer, the retail assistant and management; it is these unequal power dynamics that cripple the worker’s ability to exercise free choice in a job that demand emotional labour because management imposes codified feeling rules on the workers that ensure that there is quality customer service where the customer is the king (Brook, 2009: 11).

The employee feeling rules that are imposed on workers by the management are meant to internalize the feelings that they are expected to display, and this is not limited to enhancing quality and more natural emotional display to customers, but it is also meant to diminish the likelihood of emotive dissonance (Jansz and Timmers 2002). With time, the internalized feelings will start to feel like the workers individual personality and this will pave way for false class consciousness because workers will cease to make a distinction between their actual and false emotions, it appears inevitable and work without emotional exploitation

becomes unimaginable because the extensive demand for emotional labour display dominate their everyday consciousness (Brook, 2009: 20).

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to describe the clothing retail sector to be specific. The rise of retail in general is due to globalization and the movement of MNC/TNCs to Africa. The TNCs have allowed for the trading of international clothing brands globally. Technology has also influenced the rise of retail as most clothing retail shops are now using shop loyalty cards and credit cards that allow consumers to buy clothes and pay later. This technological advancement in clothing retail shops has encouraged a change in infrastructure as we find more clothing retail shops acquiring more space with the use of two storey shops with several floors with the use of escalators.

The clothing retail sector is highly uncertain and managers need to always be on the guard and be flexible enough to accommodate the changes that come with the sector. The clothing retail sector has been noted to be characterized in general of non-standard forms of employment as a response of management in trying to cope with the rise of the retail sector and embracing globalization. The rise of the clothing retail sector has to a greater extent led to the pervasiveness of non-standard and flexible forms of employment as core and non-core workers have become the norm in the labour markets. Core workers being those who perform essential function that are the most critical to revenue and non-core being those who are hired during peak season and fired after the peak season.

The practice of non-standard and flexible forms of employment in the clothing retail sector has led to modest working conditions. More women are being employed in the clothing retail sector and this had led to the feminization of labour and the above chapter has concluded that there are more women working as sales assistants in clothing retail shops and it is these women who take up the demeaning jobs that have poor working conditions. Women are displaying emotional and aesthetic labour as part of their job requirements in clothing retail shops.

The extensive emotional and aesthetic job requirements expected from the sales assistants in clothing retail shops is made to blend in with the shop's aesthetic appearance. The sales assistants are expected to have the 'right' body and the 'right' voice to communicate and convince the customers to buy from the shops they work. Hochschild the woman behind

emotional labour has described it as the suppression of inner feelings to give an appealing facial and bodily display. Thus, women working in clothing retail as sales assistants are always displaying emotional and aesthetic labour as part of their job requirement.

CHAPTER THREE

CLOTHING RETAIL IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

The retail sector is expanding and contributing billions to the global economy (Luce, 2013: 3). As the global retail expands; the South African clothing retail is expanding as well. The clothing retail industry is very competitive in nature and we find more and more multinational corporations (MNC) and transnational corporations (TNC) approaching the South African clothing retail to establish their businesses and brands (Radder, 2000). The growing monopolization by the MNC/TNCs like Mr Price and Edgars in the clothing retail sector has led to the creation of jobs with harsh working conditions for the sales assistants. This section explores the South African clothing retail sector with substantial focus on Mr Price (MRP) and Edgars.

A TNC is an enterprise that controls businesses in another country that is not theirs and these corporations usually have more shares and voting power in that business (Pilkington, 2010: 254). A multinational corporation has been described as a business organization whose activities are located in more than two countries (Goldstein, 2009). MNC and TNCs locate production in countries with the lowest production costs to yield more profit, in a nutshell foreign direct investments (FDI) flows from countries abundant with capital to countries where capital is scarce, which is why there are several MNC/TNCs in the South African clothing retail.

The introduction of MNC/TNCs in the South African clothing retail sector has led to the creation of employment, but the jobs that are coming with clothing retails have poor working conditions. Sales assistants in clothing shops are exposed to flexible forms of employment and modified emotional and aesthetic extortion. Sales assistants are expected to look 'right' and sound 'right' (Pettinger, 2004) therefore their appearance and professional conduct is closely monitored.

3.2 The rise of retail in South Africa

FDIs have been a driving force behind globalization in developing countries. Aykut and Goldstein (2007: 85) state that MNC have provided capital, trade connections and technology that have played a significant role in transforming developing country's economies. With the proliferation of these MNC/TNCs the South African clothing retail sector is flourishing as we

see clothing retail shops being opened in the South African malls and on the streets of urban areas, which sell not only national but international brands too.

Most FDIs are traced to be more concentrated in the service and extractive sectors of the economy (Von Holdt and Webster, 2005). The restructuring of assets in South Africa has allowed MNC/TNCs to acquire assets in the country. According to the Mr Price (MRP) annual report, there are 369 stores in South Africa, 10 in Botswana, 16 in Namibia, 4 in Nigeria, 2 in Lesotho, 2 in Swaziland and 1 in Ghana. There are also MRP franchises in Kenya, Rwanda, Mozambique, Mauritius, Tanzania and Uganda (2014: 16). The Edcon website shows that Edgars have spread throughout Southern Africa with stores in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Ghana, and on its footprints their vision states that ‘we are investing in growing retail space both in south Africa and beyond’.

The rise of retail in South Africa is also due to the increase in space left available for clothing retail. SA statistics (stats) add that retail in textiles, clothing, footwear and leather goods is R134 802m which constitutes 21% of the whole retail industry (2012: 3). Mr Price and Edgars being two of the major clothing retailers in South Africa contribute a significant amount to the Gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. The clothing retail giants are expanding their shops into various locations and provinces, malls are being built all over the country and the Edcon annual report claims that Edgars has an increase in average space of 5.2% (2014: 5) and the MRP annual report (2014: 11) claims that Mr Price has 68 new stores opened and an increase of 4.8% over the previous year.

South Africa is shifting towards a services and consumption based economy due to the exposure that people are facing as a result of media and travelling circulation. Radder alludes that clothing retail is under immense pressure to meet the demands of its population that seeks to be trendy with the pop culture and western fashion trends, and this burden falls on the shoulders of the clothing retail sector to deliver. The National Clothing Retail Federation of South Africa (NCRF) is an association that supports the local textile and clothing manufacturing industry, especially clothing retail shops like Edgars, Woolworths, Truworths, Foschini, Queenspark and Mr Price; it helps to maintain a good consumer-retailer relationship in this competitive market. As the Rand keeps fluctuating most retail giants are resorting to having their clothes manufactures locally as a way of keeping up with the trends and meeting the customers’ expectations which is where the NCRF plays a pivotal role in

ensuring poised business transactions between the manufacturing and delivering of clothes to the retail shops and ultimately to the valued customer.

The ability of clothing retail shops in South Africa to keep up with international trends gives them a competitive advantage as they can now compete with international brands. The development of consumer culture in the clothing retail sector has caught the eye of foreign investors which has resulted in several international companies establishing businesses in the country as Spinks of the Guardian states that “the reasons these global retailers are setting their sights on South Africa seems clear: it's a nation that likes to shop and they seemingly like to do so in the style of American mega-malls rather than European high streets” (2014: 2). Post-apartheid South Africa is characterized by a people who use their economic buying power as an instrument to show their status in the economy; in such a scenario they have boosted the South African clothing retail to greater heights (Orr, 2001).

Styne of Mail & Guardian (2014: 1) alludes that South Africa has high import duty on fabric and clothing. MNC/TNCs are after high profits and most are resorting to local suppliers for restocking their shelves. Edcon said 32% of Edgars and discount merchandise was sourced from local and regional suppliers” (2014: 1). Edcon’s flexible response to the clothing sector’s uncertainties has allowed Edgars to be the largest non-food retailer in South Africa. NCRF (2015) explains that the quick response of local suppliers in restocking popular styles during a season provides an advantage over imported merchandise which can take up to six weeks to be shipped. When clothing retailers are able to ride such waves of uncertainty it helps to keep the clothing retail sector stable in terms the human capital employed, working conditions and meeting the customer’s expectations.

The rise of retail can be pinned on the basic laws of demand and supply; where the supply of clothing retail is dependent on the retail demand. The emergence of the black middle class that are known as the ‘black diamond’ has aided much to the development of clothing retail sector (Orr, 2001). This new economic class can be noted to be flamboyant based on the conspicuous name brands that they wear, the posh cars they drive and an exclusive lifestyle that they portray. This nature of events, urges them to spend as a way of putting themselves in a higher social status as the Quarterly Bulletin claims that a “key to retail growth is also the availability of consumers with disposable income to boost the industry” (2012: 26). Post-apartheid South Africa has allowed some growing economic sectors of the population to enjoy lavish lifestyles. As much as South Africa is in deep economic crises with regards to

poverty and unemployment; the clothing retail sector is tirelessly trying to meet the demands of their sector as the Edcon annual report (2014: 23) states that “our success depends, in part, on our ability to effectively predict and respond to quickly changing consumer demands and preferences and to translate market trends into attractive product offerings”, by selling globally trending clothes and accessories.

The Quarterly Bulletin states that “South Africans are characterised to have high household debt, meaning that the majority of the people finance most of their purchases through credit” (2012: 28), living in debt might have adverse effects on the country’s economy if not managed well and this is the key reason I have chosen Mr Price and Edgars for the purpose of this research because Mr Price is cash driven and Edgars is credit based. According to the MRP annual report Mr Price has a cash sale contribution of 80% of total sales and they argue that they are “not dependent on releasing more credit into the market to drive turnover, particularly during poor economic times” (2014: 15). Edgars on the other hand has been facing challenges with regards to credit. The Edcon annual report highlights that “credit sales contributed 47.3% of total sales, down from 51.9% in the previous year” (2014: 5).

3.3 Challenges in SA clothing retail

The South African clothing retail is facing both structural and external challenges in trying to sustain the clothing retail sector. Eskom has posed a serious threat to the clothing retail sector due to power cuts and weekend load shedding system as it disrupts the manufacturing processes and the shops operating hours as they are forced to close shops due to power outages to which Ensor of Business Day explains that “power outages over consecutive weekends have had a severe impact on the retail sector as a whole, which contributes some R650 billion a year to the economy and is a major collector of the more than R220 billion paid annually in value added tax to Government” (2014: 1). As a result, the power cuts are having undesirable effect on the operation of the clothing shops and leave them to suffer the losses.

The sustainability of clothing retail stores in an uncertain clothing retail industry is a challenge that is faced by every clothing retailer (Radder, 2000: 76). Most retail stores have various active shareholders that may all have conflicting visions for the company which can in the end lead to chaos in the internal organization as the Edcon’s annual report supports that “we are indirectly owned and controlled by investment funds advised by Bain Capital. The interests of our equity holders may not in all cases be aligned with your interests” (2014: 24).

The conflict of interests between equity holders and customers might end up affecting the limited customers that the retail shops are targeting and eventually the running of the clothing retail shops.

Customer's taste keep changing and it is the responsibility of clothing retail shops to predict trends and pay attention to the slightest of changes in their customer base and be willing to accommodate the change and sail in the waves of uncertainty. The Quarterly Bulletin highlights that "South African consumers are becoming more health conscious and brand conscious" (2012: 34), therefore clothing retail shops need to restructure accordingly. Edgars is known as the home of international brands and the Edcon annual report (2014: 3) states that they have secured exclusive rights to several international brands including Topshop, TM Lewin, Lucky Brand, Tom Tailor, Lipsy, Dune and Gosh. The clothing retail shops are now forced to represent their company brands in a way that attracts the customer; their approaches towards their valued customers need to keep up with their changing tastes and preferences.

Externally, skill attainment is a challenge that South Africa has been facing ever since the attainment of democracy in 1994 (Ginsberg, 1998: 225). Clothing retail stores need people with the necessary skills who can adapt to the uncertainties of the clothing retail sector. Edcon annual report (2014: 23) illuminate that they face the challenge of recruiting, training and retaining skilled managers and employees who later on leave their shops when they get a better job offer elsewhere once they have gained extensive experience and knowledge of the industry. To counter this setback the clothing retail sector now employs an unskilled and semi-skilled workforce in whom they do not have to invest much or suffer extensive expenses when they recruit new workforce.

Unemployment is a major crisis in the country and the retail sector is playing a significant role in employment creation even though the jobs being created are non-standard and flexible forms of employment. Retail is the 5th largest employer in South Africa with clothing retail employing 24% of the labour force (SA Stats, 2012: 6). The clothing retail sector is left to employ the non-core and peripheral workers of the labour market who are not substantially trained for the jobs that they do and as a result they are left to the harsh working conditions. Statistics show that retailers in textile, clothing, footwear and leather goods constitute the second largest share of 21% in the retail sector (Quarterly Bulletin, 2012: 10), and the sad reality is that a significant number of the 21% non-core and peripheral workers are exposed to non-standard and flexible forms of employment.

The socioeconomic instability in South Africa like high unemployment rate tempers with the market exchange especially considering the volatility of the South African rand. For clothing retail shops the depreciation of the Rand negatively affects import costs and the costs of basic goods and services. This might however pose a threat to the sustainability of MRP because it is a cash based shop as the MRP annual report illustrates that MRP is “a cash-driven retailer with a cash sale contribution of 80% of total” (2014: 15); whilst there is scarcity of money in the economy. In this context the clothing retail shops encounter the dilemma of high garment import tariffs and might be forced to increase prices or counter the high tariffs with lower labour cost.

3.4 Non-standard and flexible labour practices in clothing retail

The economic transformations in South Africa help to shape the business strategies being used by the TNCs and with the introduction of FDIs there has been a development of sophistication and new forms of employment. Jain, Lawyer and Morishima assert that “South African-owned companies use flexible practices to a lesser extent than foreign-owned ones” (1998: 559). MRP and Edgars are not exclusively South African companies and as a result they are flexible to implement non-standard forms of employment as the Edcon website claims that Edgars employs over 20 000 permanent employees and a further 25 000 temporary staff. MRP annual report evidently clarifies that it is not a South African company as it states that “50% of shares are held by international investors: USA 23%, UK 13%...” (2014: 4). As a result this explains the flexible nature of their employment practices.

In our globalized society, international capital markets have more power to affect our economy and any policies that we may need to adopt in the future (Ginsberg, 1998: 138), which is why FDIs are passionately embraced by most developing countries because they need their capital investment and global influence to help they grow and sustain their developing economies. But the investments and jobs created by the TNCs are precarious as Madeley states that where there are FDIs involved “host government’s hope that they can create jobs and that more jobs will result indirectly from linkages to the rest of the economy, but jobs in TNCs are vulnerable” (2008: 10). This has resulted in poor working conditions in the clothing shops for the women working in them whilst the companies are making a lot of profit as Planting explains “attracted by the excitement and glamour, consumers return to Edgars and the retailer is able to restore top line growth and bottom line profitability” (2013), but in the long run work being done becomes monotonous and effectively turn workers into little more than the arm of a machine (Madeley, 2008: 11).

Post-apartheid South Africa is characterized by labour flexibility as a way of trying to sustain the economy and the scars that have been marked by the apartheid government. The South African labour market is under immense pressure to deregulate labour and offer flexible forms of employment (Usami, 2010: 74). Part-time and contract work has become the norm in South Africa's non-standard forms of employment, but globalization brought with it other different forms of non-standard work like outsourcing employment where labour brokers have become the channel for job placement and the direct employment relationship between the employer and employee has been abridged (Bezuidenhout et al, 2004; Kenny and Webster, 1999).

The restructuring of the South African labour market has left employees susceptible to all the shocks of the global market. Kenny states that "by the late 1990s, retail sector workers faced deepening job insecurity, loss of career development and training" (2004: 486) which shows that the opening of South African economic market had significant impact on employment in the retail sector. Bodibe (2006: 10) explains that the restructuring of work has increased casual and subcontracted work which fractures a difference between the working conditions amongst permanent, casual and subcontracted workers. It becomes safe to say that labour flexibility has deskilled the labour force as Kenny explains that "casualization and subcontracting have allowed retail capital to fragment an already deskilled labour process further" (2004: 487).

Von Holdt and Webster (2005) explain that the South African market is divided into three sections: the core, non-core and periphery, the core includes the full-time workers; non-core is for the outsourced, temporary, part-time and domestic workers, whilst the periphery is for the workers in the informal sector and those that are unemployed. In these sections we find that most clothing retail assistants are found in the core and non-core zones of the labour market. With the expansion of non-standard forms of employment, the non-core zone is increasing and there is marginalization of employment from core to non-core and the deskilling of skills from skilled to semi-skilled (Usami, 2010: 82). When considered closely one can notice that the increase in non-core workers poses a threat to the core workers (Von Holdt and Webster, 2005: 29), which will result in workplace conflict because the non-core workers have job insecurities and the core workers feel the pressure of being impressive in their work as they see the non-core workers as waiting to dethrone them from their permanent work.

Kgosana, Waldner, Dhlamini, Mokoena, Ncaca, Zulu, Maluleke, Gabede and Qoza of City press have explained that “artificial types of work in the form of subcontracting were mushrooming in the retail sector and only served to score higher profits for the employer” (2005: 2). This clearly shows that subcontracting of workers has gained momentum in South Africa, employers prefer subcontracted workers because they have no benefits. Quarterly Labour Force Survey alludes that “in the 3rd quarter of 2014 increases were observed in the number of employees with contracts of an unspecified duration and among those with contracts of a permanent nature 150 000 and 103 000 respectively” (2014: xi), which helps to explain the increase in flexible forms of employment.

3.5 Women working in the clothing retail

In South Africa, statistics have shown that women constituted 23% of the economically active population in 1960 and this increased to 45% in 1996 (Barker, 1999: 47). The ability of women to work outside the home has given them great confidence and exposure and Sen suggests that “working outside the home and earning an independent income tend to have a clear impact on enhancing the social standing of the woman in the household and the society” (1999: 192). The clothing retail sector is the second highest employer of women in the South African economy. The Quarterly Bulletin (2012: 25) highlights that 81,599 women are employed in the clothing retail sector.

In South Africa, the introduction of a democratic government in 1994 led to the implementation of legislation which strives to redress the inequities created by the apartheid regime. The Employment Equity Act (EEA) and the Labour Relations Act tries to provide equal access to opportunities for previously marginalised groups in South Africa (Department of Labour, 2011) which include women. The result of the implementation of the EEA has been an increase in the number of women participating in the labour force between the period of 1995 and 2005 (Statistics South Africa, 2011). More and more women are seen working and with the expansion of the retail sector it has become female dominated.

Women are internationally regarded as the main driving force for household survival, economic growth and the alleviation of poverty (Kabeer 2003:118), as we see that in South Africa and other developing countries; women are making a significant contribution to the survival of the household and the economy indirectly by reproducing children and primary socializing them to be economically active and directly by working themselves. Economists and the government agree that women’s access to economic opportunities plays a critical role

in alleviating poverty and compensating for their efforts (Barker 2007:187–188). As Barker mentioned above, one can presume that when women work they gain economic independence and can take care of their families especially in a society where the HIV/AIDS has taken the centre stage; if they are left as single mothers they can take care of their families.

The rise of women participating in the economy is not just something happening in the Western societies but this is something happening globally, National Economic Development and Labour Advisory Council (NEDLAC) (1998: 45) makes the point that the participation of women in the labour force is relatively high in South Africa compared to its peer countries. Which explains how women in South Africa are actively working and contributing directly to the economy because gone are the days when women were tied to their traditional roles of being a housewife and a caregiver in the household as Barker states that “social conventions about a woman’s role in society have changed, preferences and attitudes among women have also changed...women have also gained greater access to education and training, which has probably made them more career oriented” (1999: 61).

Education, skills and training in South Africa are under facilitated sectors of our society especially for women. Dias (2006) noticed a 24% leap in secondary education attainment amongst the labour force between 1995 and 2009, and this is celebrated; however this is not to cast a blind eye on the lack of skills and education in South Africa. Roux (2011: 63) acclaims that a large proportion of South Africa’s working-age population is not employable because among other characteristics, they lack the necessary skills for other careers. This is one of the reasons why more women have no alternative option but to work in the clothing retail sector where minimal technical skills are required except for human skills that they already possess as Makgetla argues that the women entering the labour force are being exploited by the nature of their jobs as she states that “the jobs open to women were generally worse paid, less secure, and more exploitative” (2006: 1).

Women have entered the workforce but it can be noted that they have carried with them the household roles to the stores as National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI) has explained that “...there is a distinct overlap between gender roles as perceived in the domestic sphere and their roles in stores” (2002: 35). In this context, as much as women are working, they have just changed the environment they are working from; they now work in big retail clothing shops and perform the same duties they do when they are at

home. It can be argued that women still occupy jobs at the bottom as Orr and van Meelis purport that “women are drawn into jobs where pay and status are low” (2014: 32).

Orr has explained that “the South African post-apartheid economy is in transition and vulnerable to adjustments in international commodity and financial markets” (2001: 33) as a result international economic instability has an impact on South Africa’s economy and with the rise of retail sector management seeks to maximize profits by regulating labour standards that will leave workers vulnerable to the competitive pressures in the external market (Klerck, 2009: 92). As a result we have a relatively high number of women being employed as skilled and semi-skilled workers to support the MRP annual report states that Mr Price has 6204 semi-skilled workers and 60 unskilled workers (2014: 25), of which clothing retail assistants are classified as unskilled workers.

Women have been overlooked and marginalized in our economy in four significant areas, namely access to education and training, working lives, legal rights and political rights (Orr, 2001: 34). With such deprivation woman cannot be said to have economic freedom because going to work alone is not enough. Working is pushing women into an iron cage as we see that the retail sector in which they are being employed in their masses demeans them by offering poor working conditions. Kenny illustrates that “by the late 1990s, retail sector workers faced deepening job insecurity, loss of career development and training and, more significantly, eroded potential to use collective action to change their working lives” (2004: 486). In the clothing retail sector especially as a shop assistant social mobility becomes problematic as most of them are semi-skilled.

The Edcon website highlights that it is part of their responsibility to uplift the community, and by uplifting the community one of their enterprise development strategy aims at facilitating economic participation of the historically disadvantaged communities like the black people, women and persons with disabilities. Women are a disadvantaged minority group in South Africa, as mentioned before (Orr, 2001; Radder, 2000; Kenny, 2004) they are entering the workplace on a different playing ground and they suffer the labour market inequalities, when the eventually get the jobs they face the risk of exploitation. Women are mostly affected by the market turmoil’s as Orr states that “the effects of macro-level economic imbalances are felt most intensely by women who are described as 'shock absorbers' of the system” (2001: 33).

3.6 Retail working conditions in South Africa

The COSATU-affiliated Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union (Sactwu) that advocates for the rights of workers in the clothing and textile industry has according to Fin24 proposed “improvements in hours of work, overtime payments, night work payments, annual leave provisions, sick leave entitlements, family responsibility leave, meal and rest intervals” (2015: 1). The provision of such considerations to the clothing retail sales assistants will allow them to spend time with their families, time to rest and relax themselves so that when they go to work they are not exhausted or feel the fatigue of working in the display of emotions and aesthetic appearances as will be discussed in this section.

The clothing retail sector is vast and the employees are supposed to represent the shop they are working for perfectly. The Department of Labour (2015: 15) stipulates that in the wholesale and retail sector, the employer must provide work clothing for their employees free of charge, but where they are supposed to pay, the price paid by the employee must not exceed the cost and they have to pay for the outfit in four instalments and it is also the employer's right to choose a specified colour, design and style for the outfits to be worn by the employees. In this context, the clothing retail shop is responsible for the work uniform worn by their sales assistants because the uniform plays an important role of advertising the brand as Pettinger argues that “sales assistants are components of how store brands are performed for consumers, along with the inanimate store design, layout and marketing and advertising practices” (2010: 167).

There is more to retail work than taking orders and operating the tills. In the clothing retail sector the shop assistants are there at the service of the customer to cater for their needs in the store (Taylor, 1998). Regardless of the new practices in clothing retail where there is self-service and the customers can help themselves to what they wish to buy, the shop assistants would have laid the foundation for such services. Pettinger highlights that “self-service by customers relies on work having already been carried out by sales assistants, who unpack, arrange and tidy the rails of clothing and the work that facilitates self-service cleaning, tidying, preparing and setting out stock took up a large proportion of sales assistants' time” (2010: 173). It is part of the clothing retail assistant's job to keep the shop clean.

In clothing retail stores there are routine services that are done to aid to the overall functioning of the shop. Pettinger (2010: 174) explains that routine services in clothing retail vary from processing transactions on the till, monitoring fitting rooms to some personal

conversations as the transaction is being processed. When you get into Mr Price or Edgars, there is an assistant who is there to say ‘Good morning ma’am/ sir are you looking for something?’ at the tills the operator will advise you ‘are you sure you want this item because you will not be able to return it?’, ‘may I please have your loyalty card?’, ‘have a good day’ amongst other routine conversation.

In the clothing retail sector, it can be noted that the shop assistants engage with their working conditions and make them an extension of themselves. Rothmann and Rothmann Jr (2010: 2) claim that people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively and emotionally in the work they perform. The job description of clothing retail sales assistants is not just handing over clothes to the customer, it is also about engaging with the customer and knowing what they want till you figure out how best you can help them. With South Africa being a multi-cultural country, there are people from different religions and cultures and a clothing shop assistant is supposed to enhance and extend her ordinary self to embrace their diversity and help them out in their differing taste in fashion and other preferences.

Despite its growth and contribution to economic development, the retail industry is a demanding work environment in which employees are expected to work long hours (Statistics SA, 2011). Clothing retail being female dominated, it means women will be spending more hours at work performing their emotionally taxing duties and in the long run these can have adverse effects on the livelihoods of the shop assistants. Koekemoer and Mostert (2010) have found that long working hours are particularly damaging to work life-balance, health and wellbeing. In Mr Price and Edgars shops that operate from 9am- 6pm as per their websites, the shop assistants will need to endure the long hours of work and standing on their feet.

3.6.1 Emotional labour

Morris and Feldman (19997: 258) argue that the regulation of employee behaviour and emotional expression in the workplace is a clear indication of emotional labour. The customers and shareholders in clothing stores are likely to comply with the shop if the shop is consistent and follow their organizational goals. MRP annual report highlights that “our success has been, and will continue to be built on our ability to add value to our customer’s lives...” (2014: 5). In adding value to the lives of customers the retail shops have to continuously regulate the emotional display to ensure compliance with the goals and values of the shop (Kerfoot and Korczynski, 2005) as a result emotional labour on sales assistants

becomes inevitable in clothing retail shops because they are the ones who are in contact with the customers at all times.

The inclusion of the physical, emotional and cognitive self of an employee is expected to result in greater availability of engagement with other co-workers and the customer, but the continuous demands of these emotional and physical and cognitive resources can lead to the disengagement of the worker from their job (Rothmann and Rothmann Jr, 2010: 3). This can be closely related to the clothing assistants in retail shops. They are expected to manage their emotions in the workplace, have a stable and positive cognitive response to the environment and be physically appealing to market the brand. Shop assistants in Mr Price and Edgars are always smiling and they always approach customers with a positive energy. These personal resources will be depleted over time, they will suffer burnout, fatigue and the continuous display of a smile on their faces might lead to their personal destruction as this may lead to the failure of true expression of emotions.

Working in clothing retail involves personal services where the shop assistant offers themselves to the organization and to the customer (McKinlay, 2002). The personal services that shop assistants offer vary in display and intensity. Pettinger asserts that “personal services sales assistants may offer include: looking in the stockroom, taking orders, reserving goods, exchanging and refunding, as well as more intimate services such as giving advice” (2010: 175). Giving advice in this context is not part of a shop assistant’s job description, but they still do it because it comes as an indirect extension of their job requirements as they are encouraged to form relations with their customers. In being friendly to a customer, a shop assistant cannot respond with; ‘it’s not my job’ to a customer who comes to them and ask for a shoe that will complement an outfit they wish to buy.

Emotional labour is crucial in the service sector where services are being exchanged, and because it is difficult to measure and assess the quality of a service, emotional labour has become an instrument to ensure there is quality service in the clothing retail shops from the shop assistants (Hochschild, 1983/2003). Emotional labour is used to influence the customers’ emotions, thereby, influencing their cognitions and behaviours as well. According to MRP annual report their passions is “positive attitude and enthusiasm of all our associates who approach each day bright-eyed, smiling and projecting a positive image – believing that work is fun” (2014: 5). It is this positive attitude, bright-eyed and smiling faces that the shop

assistants have that project a positive image to the customers and encourage them to spend and support the 'fun work' of the shop assistants.

In the service sector like the clothing retail sector displaying appropriate emotion is a job requirement. Du Toit (2012: 135) explains that employees must display desirable emotions like friendliness, confidence, great sense of humour and enthusiasm when they are having conversations with customers, with this they must aim to impress the customer. The clothing sales assistants are expected to be confident as a way of convincing the customer to buy the products being sold in the shop, even when they are not sure of what they are being asked their confidence as they interact with the customer will eventually give confidence to the customer about the product that they wish to buy and the sense of humour is used to keep the customer captivated as McIntyre highlights that "sales workers not only promote rational consumption in terms of the exchange of information but also promote enchantment" (2013: 80).

Retail assistants are experiencing and facing various social challenges in their everyday life. However, they have to work every day, detaching themselves from their realities and project a positive image to the world. They develop what is called 'emotional dissonance', which is when employees display positive emotions but feel quite differently within themselves (Rothmann and Rothmann, 2010). The women working in this sector experience very different feelings than those expressed by the owners of the biggest retails in the country. It is difficult to separate personal life from professional life because they both involve your feelings and emotions, but the sales assistants are encouraged to personify a professional character with no problems or worries when they are in the workplace

Sales assistants take up the character of a particular professional person who is in line with their company brand and values to fully represent the company; this is a clear process of objectification of humans, workers, products and imaginary which, is expressed in the Edcon annual report highlighting that "our brand names represent an important asset of our business, maintaining the reputation of, and value associated with, our brand names are essential to the success of our business" (2014: 21). As illustrated in Edgars, Forever New is an international brand which represents a young and fun girl, Guess that represents an edgy and adventurous character, Lipsy that represents a classy lady...amongst other clothing brands that they have. In maintaining the marketing reputation of their brands, the companies recruit employees that

are enough docile to commodify and objectify in order to match the personalities that can display the wanted characteristics.

In clothing retail shop like any other organization, they have shared values and principles that govern and drive the behaviour of their employees (O' Neil and Horne, 2012: 1). In this case, emotional regulation plays a crucial role in surface and deep acting (Hochschild, 1983/2003), since it potentially enables an employee to shift his/her attitude and move from expressing surface acting to deep acting or vice versa in a way that pleases the customer and uphold the clothing shop's values and principles. One can argue that emotion is a part of the organization's shared values because having shared values result in more effective organisational operations, superior financial results, strong brand culture and overall organisational success(O' Neil and Horne, 2012: 2). All sales assistants in clothing shops are expected to harness emotional display as part of their job requirements and this emotional display implies emotional regulation. Emotion regulation is typical of clothing sales assistant's job requirements because there are many customers coming into the shop and they all come in different moods, which the shop assistant has to assess and understand in order to assist them.

Employees often put effort in displaying certain emotions and hiding other emotions when interacting with others, emotional labour possesses the following characteristics: emotional labour occurs in face-to face or voice-to-voice interactions with clients; emotions are displayed to influence other people's emotions, attitudes and behaviours; and the display of emotions has to follow certain rules (Morris & Feldman, 1996). In clothing retail shops, there are guidelines on how a sales assistant is to act and perform her daily duties; these rules are used as the standard of behaviour that is appropriate in conducting business with the customers and co-workers; As a way reinforcing these rules O' Neil and Horne (2012: 12) explain that it is the duty of the managers to change the behaviour of their employees and in changing the behaviour of sales assistants in a clothing shop, managers may resort to publicly criticising disruptive and divisive behaviour and reinforcing correct behaviour through recognition and appraisals, which in the end every sales assistant becomes aware of and try to act accordingly.

There is an intimate relationship between capitalism and emotion. McIntyre (2013: 81) argues that the development of capitalism collaborated with an intensely specialized emotional culture. People get into a job with higher expectations and fantasies of job security,

equality, mutual respect and economic freedom only to get disappointed when they realize that it is a different playing field. McIntyre states that “these are emotional attachments that will no longer be realized due to the contemporary predicament of the neo-liberal age” (2013: 81).

3.6.2 Aesthetic labour

Clothing retail is a fast growing industry and with the economic instability in South Africa and high unemployment rate getting a job in the first place is a dream of many and in the face of workplace restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa job security becomes a wild fantasy. As a result, the display of intensive aesthetic labour has ceased to be a cause of concern for the sales assistants because they are happy to be at least working. When South Africa attained its democracy much focus was placed on increasing technical skills and educating the formerly disadvantaged groups (Radder, 2000: 80), however 21 years of democracy have not brought the necessary social transformation. Beside this, it can be said that South Africa’s clothing retail in particular has faced a serious skill upgrade in the service sector for them to merge and compete in the global economy (Kenny, 2004). South Africa has been under intense pressure to put on the floor sales assistants that match the western standard of a sales assistant.

The South African labour guide (2015) asserts that the appearance of a company’s employees greatly contributes to the company's success with the public, and a reasonable dress or grooming code is therefore a proper management prerogative. In this context it is very important for the employers of clothing retail shops to have an appearance policy for their employees. If employees are to come to work dressed differently they will not be in a position to pass on a harmonious message to the customers whom they aim to attract and keep (Nickson, Warhurst, Witz and Cullen, 2001). The dressing and grooming codes are supposed to be uniform throughout the store and as a result there are no acts of unfairness or discrimination because they all work under one company and they ought to represent in together in the way that they dress.

The South African labour guide (2015) stipulates that employers are entitled or rather certainly not prohibited from introducing company policy in respect of clothing and grooming that the employer requires of his employees in his workplace, this can be for many reasons that vary from identification of the company in public places, projecting a certain corporate image both on and off the workplace, uniformity of appearance, and so on.

Eventually the dressing becomes part of a sales assistant's act in the retail shop and in conveys important messages that can influence the customers. Makina and Bosch explain that the grooming and dressing codes in the workplace is essential "because within the first four to ten seconds of interacting with another person, decisions are made about the message sender's economic level, education level, trustworthiness, social position, level of sophistication and moral character" (2013: 3).

Makina and Bosch (2013: 2) explain that the appearance of a person in a work environment is the most powerful medium of communication and expression as it serves as a reflection of the individual's inner consciousness. Sales assistants as the ambassadors of the shop and the brands in the shop therefore, their appearance is everything because they express the shop's goals and values by their looks to the customer who is coming in. A customer is a person looking for a clothing item to buy and the sales assistant is the person who is going to give her a reason to buy in that particular shop, so her dressing and appearance is supposed to be desirable enough to retain a customer. Makina and Bosch state that "the dressing affects the wearers and the observers by sending visual messages, or symbols to every person interacted with" (2013: 2).

The physical appearance of a person serves a dual purpose in the workplace; enabling people to advertise themselves and the shop they are working for, and as a means of gaining approval and respect from co-workers. Makina and Bosch highlight that "individuals are judged on their appearance and behaviour, rather than exclusively on their performance, the significance of a professional image cannot be overlooked" (2013: 3). In this context the sales assistants and clothing shops need to have a particular figure to give confidence to the customer in the brands that they are selling. They should be a walking billboard in the shop to attract a customer because the customer is not going to purchase in shop just because the sales assistant can pack clothes on the shelves. The customer does not see the sales assistant's performance, but rather, they see their appearance and judge their performance based on how they look. And when they look good, their performance might not be securitized at all because a smart, well-polished and sweet smelling sales assistant has a calming effect and is enchanting on the customer.

Makina and Bosch argue that "nothing exceeds success in the business world like the appearance of success; therefore one needs to look the part in order to get an opportunity to fulfil the part" (2013: 3). With the high unemployment rate in South Africa, everyone is on

the hunt for any kind of job that can earn them a living, and once one gets that job, especially for women, they have to be extra cautious with it because there is a reserved army of the unemployed that is ready to take their job (Ginsberg, 1998: 221). So when an employer gives a dress code policy they adhere to it, not because they enjoy it but because they have to; it's a win-win situation for the employer and the employee; the employer gets the appearance of success they want and the employee looks the part and get the job that they so want.

Head (2003) explains that we are facing a ruthless economy in which our minds have ceased to function, and by working in the clothing retail sector one has to surrender of the body, soul and mind. Sales assistants often neglect their authenticity to embrace their work requirements. Employees can either overrule their own values and character and adhere to organisational display rules, thereby threatening their sense of authenticity, or they can hold on to their personal aspirations, disregarding their professional duties and run the risk of dissatisfying customers and supervisors (Hulsheger and Schewe, 2011), and eventually losing their job. In clothing retail the customer is sovereign they should be treated with respect and the sales assistant must alter her conduct towards the customer appropriately and this starts with her appearance followed by the tone of her voice.

Makina and Bosch highlight that “corporate dress code can be viewed as a form of organisational uniform, which can be described as a means by which boundaries are determined and other complex organizational dilemmas are resolved” (2013: 2). The uniforms that sales assistants wear in clothing retail shops help to ensure that there are no cleavages of social inequalities being exposed to the public eye. This ensures that members of the organisation align to its goals and understand the status sets of their counterparts.

The effort put an appearance by sales assistants is what makes aesthetic labour a huge topic of discussion in clothing retail because the sales assistants are expected to embody and personify a particular character. It is debatable that employees have a choice on how to regulate their emotions or adhere to the aesthetic expectation of a company, especially in the clothing retail industry because the sales assistants are the face of the shop and they are marketing the brand. However, (Bakker, 2011) claims that management must make sure it provides the employees with the necessary job resources that help the conduct their daily duties effectively and as expected; if the employer wants the sales assistants to dress in a particular way the employer should provide the clothes for them to meet their aesthetics challenges they also explain that management should offer supportive supervision, autonomy

and learning opportunities to counter the negative outcomes that are of hindrance to the job demands of sales assistants.

Aesthetic labour specifically addresses the embodied aspects of service interactions and has been defined as the employment of workers with desired corporeal dispositions (Nickson & Korczynski 2009; Pettinger 2004, 2005; Warhurst and Nickson 2007, 2009). To cut the costs and increase sales in the clothing stores, McIntyre argues that “employers find workers with the right looks and manners and then mobilize, commodify and develop these dispositions further to fit the corporate brand in order to communicate it to customers” (2013: 82). The sales assistants you find in the Edgars cosmetics section have the ‘right looks’ for that section. They have flawless skin, their make-up is perfect and they smell good, in a nut shell they are angelic, thus one can argue that, in this context Edgars employs someone who naturally has a beautiful skin and they offer them their make-up products and the perfumes for them to have the ‘right look’ for the job.

Aesthetic labour thus stresses the body, rather than the emotions because the shop assistant is under the pressure to maintaining the ‘right’ posture and the ‘right’ manners. McIntyre states that “workers embody the marketing and branding strategies through the clothing they wear at work and through their own consumption behaviour” (2013: 84). In this context, the cosmetics assistant in Edgars projects a certain self that blends in with her job and the products she sells. If she is to come to work with no make-up she will not be identifies as a cosmetics assistant, the customers will mistake her for a fellow customer. McIntyre argues that “aesthetic work on the body goes beyond the production of an attractive surface and becomes the projection and production of a particular self” (2013: 84).

3.7 Location of clothing retail shops

It is important to strategically establish a business where it is accessible to nearly everyone. MNC/TNCs seek to maximise on profits and as a result they invest in geographic locations that are economically fruitful. South African FDIs are increasingly diversified, both in sectors and geographically (Simon, 2001). The companies investing are positioned at the centre of the town and city where it is easy for people to see them and distinguish them from the multitude because of their aesthetic appearance. Clothing retail shops invest in their aesthetic appearance to the passer-by’s and customers, therefore the sales assistants in these shops need to be prepared to welcome and assist customers who enter their shops with no idea of what they want exactly.

The rise of clothing retail in South Africa is not limited to availability of MNC/TNCs, neither is it limited to the increasing buying power of our rising black middle class. It can also be accredited to the accessibility of the clothing retail shops from which people buy. Basic economics indicate that without the shops to buy from, people cannot spend their money and clothing retail in South Africa would be non-existent. Statistics South Africa (2011) highlight that the South African retail industry has grown significantly. The retail sector is booming due to the increasing spending power of South Africans. Clothing retail shops in South Africa are easily accessible and can be found in all cities and towns, in fact, they are directly in people's faces and the clothing shops are acquiring more space. MRP annual report states that Mr Price apparel has a total trading area of 255 380 metre squares (2014: 15) and Edcon annual report reports that "Edgars' average space increased 6.1%, including meaningful expansions in existing stores in the premium malls as part of the refurbishment project of top doors" (2014: 5).

Tomlinson, Bremner and Mangcu explained that South African apartheid was built in a way that separated the black people from the white people and these spatial divisions reinforced structures of privilege for others and made it difficult to create a democratic society (2003: 1). The design of towns was set up in a way that black people were excluded from white areas and even the shops were structured in a way in which some were white shops, they were found in town and only white people had access to them and the other black shops were found in the townships. But as South Africa attained democracy the new urban development was meant to produce a compact city that was inclusive of everyone instead of de-racialization of space (Tomlinson *et al.*, 2003: 14).

As South Africa is under pressure to reconstruct the town that somehow still resemble apartheid, most companies are strategically positioning their shops in a way that makes them inclusive of the whole population as focus has shifted to market competition. De Bruyn and Freathy add that "the South African retail sector was no exception and for many companies the immediate post-apartheid period was characterised as a time of fundamental strategic and operational change" (2011: 538). The Quarterly Bulletin claims that "the development of local retail centres has positively impacted consumers since it has substantially reduced the travel and time costs that consumers have to pay to get to distant retail centres" (2012: 26).

The clothing retail sector in South Africa is still far from just, though some significant changes have been made to make it better. Klemz, Boshoff and Mazibuko (2006) claim that

South Africa has a dual economy and still maintains a polarity between the business centres, the suburbs and the townships. There are still clothing retail shops in suburbs that have a different aesthetic construction as those in the central business district (CBD) and the townships. For the purpose of this research two shops will be explored, and I have chosen shops that are in the city centre of Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown, with Grahamstown as an urban/rural town and Port Elizabeth as an urban city. Most clothing shops in the towns of South Africa face the streets.

As a global market strategy, clothing retail shops place themselves in a position where they are easily accessible to the customer as De Bruyn and Freathy comment that “companies with a favourable market position in some way meet the needs of actual and prospective customers” (2011: 539). The clothing shops in town face the street to make themselves more accessible to the people and to attract customers. As a result this type of marketing is very efficient because customers flock into stores quite regularly because they see things through the window and get encouraged to enter the shop and end up buying, unlike a shopping mall where a customer needs to plan.

The ills of apartheid have left their scars on the clothing retail sector where we still see some resemblance of it in post-apartheid South Africa. As South Africa is under transition to be a globally competitive economy there are still some apartheid features persisting in the work environment and the allocation of space in post-apartheid South Africa (von Holdt, 2002). Most South African city centres be it Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth or Grahamstown; they have stalls alongside the roads and under canvas sheds, the clothing shops are also alongside the roads facing the main streets as we see in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth.

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explained the rise and expansion of the clothing retail sector in South Africa. It is well acknowledged that the opening of trade markets in South Africa has helped grow the economy and boost the clothing retail sector as MNC/TNCs can now operate businesses in South Africa and some international brands as well have landed on our clothing market, making the South African clothing retail the fastest growing economy in Southern Africa.

Women employment in clothing retail is very high in South Africa which probably due to lack of intensive training and education qualifications for sales assistants. Since most women

are not highly educated, for them to attain economic freedom they will have to take up semi-skilled to unskilled job offers that come with exploitative working conditions. Based on the little literature regarding women working in the clothing retail sector and their performance of emotional and aesthetic labour, the extraction of emotional and aesthetic labour is a sad reality because it is these personal services that keep clothing retail ahead of other services. The extent to which emotional and aesthetic labour is extracted and expected from clothing shop assistance is intense to an extent that it can choke the life of them. The sales assistants take the jobs because they need the money and in the end there is nothing that they can do except to accept their fate.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS ON PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS EMOTIONAL AND AESTHETIC LABOUR IN MR PRICE AND EDGARS

4.1 Introduction

Besides that there is lots of social research done on aesthetics and emotional labour worldwide, South African scholars have investigated quite little about this topic. Moreover, in the Eastern Cape Province data about aesthetic and emotional labour is nearly inexistent. Thus, this research seeks to bring some insights about the topic conducting in-depth interviews in Mr Price and Edgars. Therefore, the obtained data analysis chapter seeks to highlight perceptions on aesthetics and emotional labour experienced by women working in two different retail clothing shops in the post-apartheid central business districts (CBD) of Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown.

Data collection was conducted in Mr Price and Edgars clothing retail shops in Port Elizabeth (PE) and Grahamstown. Sixteen women were involved in the data collection. The interviewee's responses are being used for the purpose of data analysis to find a connection and the gaps between the information and the new data that has been uncovered. For the purpose of this social research four women were interviewed from MR Price Grahamstown, four from MR Price Port Elizabeth, four from Edgars Grahamstown and the last four from Edgars Port Elizabeth. For the demographics of this research my interviewees where between the ages of 25 and 35 years. One of the filters was to interview women who have worked in these clothing stores for a minimum of one year as they should be the ones who had extensive knowledge on the shop and their job requirements. Of the sixteen ladies, six are still young and unmarried whilst the remaining ten are either single mothers or married family women. The ladies perspectives differed mainly due to their work experience and family responsibilities.

4.2 Chapter outline

This chapter will give a systematic report on the data findings and seek to compare the various attitudes and perceptions that women working in the same clothing retail shops, but different locations have with regards to their work requirements. Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown have been strategically chosen for this research as the workers provided extensive information on job requirements of a sales assistant in cities of different economic, population size and development capacities. Also, this comparative analysis between the two different shops in PE and in Grahamstown, will allow for the establishing of attitudes and perceptions of shop assistant who work in different clothing shops, which are part of transnational corporations in Africa and elsewhere.

This chapter is divided into sections where I link the main theoretical approach to literature available and the findings of the research. I will include store observations, interviewee observations and interviews that were conducted in doing this comparative analysis. This chapter elicits a discussion of the research findings of the study based on the themes and sub-themes that I unravelled from the study.

4.3 Reasons for working in the clothing retail shops

A woman working in the 21st century has long ceased to be alarming. More and more women are part of the working class, this clearly shows that they have a motivation; they have reasons that are driving them from their private workspaces in the homes towards the public workspaces. Hooks (2000: 50) emphasize that no matter her class the woman who stayed at home working as a housewife was often isolated, lonely, and depressed which is why women have flocked to the public workspace where they socialize with other people. Priscilla who works at MRP PE explains that: *I love working with people and that's what I say motivates me, because every day it's a new face and a new customer.* It is only fair to claim that the workplace has become a place for women to bond with each other and get a new perspective on life as they embark on life's journeys with their co-workers.

The workplace is not just a place of exploitation or shouting managers. It is slowly becoming a place for relaxation, a haven with like-minded people. As the job is demanding, the sales assistants are always there to help each and comfort each other as Jaq who works in MRP Ght claims that: *MRP is a family, we sometime help each other, because sometimes you notice when someone is down and you can go to them and talk to them and give them advice, that's how we do things here.* In trying to help each other work becomes a coping mechanism in the lives. For some it has allowed them to reach the self-actualization stage where they learn more about themselves, how to deal with life's pressures and above all how to appreciate yourself as Sineziye alludes that: *I've learnt more about myself as a resource and I'm quite confident about my aptitude in any given task even under pressure, I now know some of my strengths and weaknesses.*

Most importantly social responsibilities are pushing women into the workplaces. Most women working in MRP and Edgar are either single mothers or they are taking care of someone. Very few women responded to be working for fun, but most of them highlighted that they need to take care of their children or parents. Pindeka who works in Edgars PE

claims that: *I have a daughter that I have to take care of and she needs food, clothes and to go to school.* Whilst Yolen who works in MRP Ght answers that her children motivate her to come to work as she states that: *my children, I have 2 children and they are the ones I wake every morning to come and work for.* On the other hand MRP and Edgars also employs ladies in their mid to late 20s, most of these young ladies are not looking for a career in clothing retail, they are rather taking it as a stepping stone towards a better life where they can afford to work and save their money for college as Dintle who works in MRP PE claims that: *the job is good and I want to save money to go to school next year.*

4.4 Employment practices

Theron and Godfrey (2000) pose a concern that as peripheral or atypical employment is on the rise, and it is becoming a threat to formal, stable employment that is fast becoming an exception rather than the norm. The clothing retail sector is left prone to these atypical forms of employment to an extent where being a flexi-permanent worker has become the norm for the sales assistants in MRP and Edgars. Vuyo who works in Edgars PE explains that: *We are all coming from different organizations [or agencies], they get us the jobs anywhere and then we can come and work, after working here I might go work in Greenacres or Walmer and the other can stay here, it all depends but we are all different even though we do the same job.*

Mr Price and Edgars in Port Elizabeth as part of transnational corporation chains follow similar patterns in relation to the introduction of flexible labour and flexibility within the workplace. They practice outsourcing of employment where they have labour brokers providing employees for their shops; however, this practice is non-existent in Grahamstown branches. Sales assistants in both Mr Price and Edgars in Port Elizabeth have been employed by agencies, which play the role of labour brokers who has facilitated the employment relationship as Scout also explained that: *The reason I'm employed by MRP is that my CV was brought by some organization (Mazibuko Youth with a mission), they are the ones who make sure that we get a job because we have done training with them, I did not apply here at MRP, these organizations works with many shops so they just tell you that you are going to be working there and there.*

Benner has explained that employment relationships contribute to the flexible work practices in existence. He goes on to define that “labour market intermediary traditionally refers to job brokering or matching activities in which individual employers and job seekers turn to a third

party that helps them find the best match of skills, attitudes, interests, and needs” (2003: 84). From the available data, I have been enlightened that JumpStart, V&A and Mazibuko Youth ‘With A Mission’ are popular labour brokers who ‘help’ people find employment in Port Elizabeth, especially the women working in Edgars and Mr Price. However, it should be noted that this labour broking is not happening in Grahamstown.

The sales assistants in MRP and Edgars in PE also seek employment via Gumtree which is an online classifieds and community website where people advertise jobs, properties and furniture. The labour brokers are responsible for the employees that they position in different shops as Dintle explains that: *If we have problems with MRP for me I can go back to V&A and they can take it up with MRP because the MRP are not my bosses I have my own bosses.* Vuyo who works in Edgars PE got employed via Gumtree as she clarifies that: *I responded to an Advert I saw on Gumtree, I sent my CV and they called me for an interview to come and work here. That’s how I got my job.* However in Edgars and MRP Grahamstown the employment relationship is between the manager and the employee only, the sales assistants just leave their CVs with the manager and wait to hear from the manager as Yolen who works in MRP Ght explains that: *I just gave my CV to the manager and she called me back that how I got to come here, I started as a casual during December times and I got permanent.*

Jain, Lawyer and Morishima (1998: 559) have noted that foreign owned companies use more flexible forms of employment as compared to South African owned companies. It is important to note that MRP and Edgars are transnational corporations, and this helps to explain how Edgars and MRP are employing sales assistants on a flexi-permanent basis. Nosi who works for Mr Price Ght claims that: *I am a flexi-permanent; you first work as a casual for like 3 months where you have shift days but after that you are now permanent because you come to work every day, and you can quite the job any time as well.* Based on her response it is easy to pick that she is not knowledgeable of her employment status, because she lacks the main provisions of a permanent employee like pension, healthcare or join a trade union as will be discussed later.

4.5 Lack of solid education and skills

As much as this is not a gender discussion, it can be noted as Gottfried explains that there is an uneven tempo of mobility by gender, including sticky floors holding women back at lower levels, glass ceilings keeping women from shattering through to high levels, escalators

accelerating men ascent to executive suites (2006: 129). Women are still taking those jobs with low status, where their exploitation cuts so deep that it leaves them vulnerable to an extent where they no longer realize their worth. Roux (2011: 63) acclaims that a large proportion of South Africa's working-age population is not employable because they lack a solid educational background. From all the participants of this study, it is clear that both Mr Price and Edgars select people with minimum education and skills, probably because their line of work does not require intensive skills. Yolen who work for Mr Price Ght claims that: *No I don't know, all I do is pack the boxes that I see, I don't even check where the things come from, I'm being honest, I just pack them.*

Working as a sales assistant in Mr Price does not require a lot of post work training. Kerfoot and Korczynski assert that "the clothing retail workers enact a different sort of feminine performance in line with the brand strategy of the organization in which they are employed" (2005: 397), showing that there is no intense training needed, they just perform the skills that they already have. From the study, it seems as if most sales assistants train and learn their duties on the job as noted by Jaq who explained that: *No I can't say it was job training, I developed my own skills by dissolving...like absorbing, you see, by seeing how other people do things, that time when I started it, it was this time of the year (festive season) you, it was very heavy and I had to put myself out there, and show that I could do this job, that's the only way I could have learnt, and after that I would just ask minor things like how to fold a t-shirt, like minor things.*

Women are left with no option but to take the jobs that are left available for them because of some socio-economic factors that can take a lifetime to be readdressed. The lack of educational opportunities and employment alternatives coupled with influx control of the legislation has kept women trapped and living the infinites of daily frustrations (Cock, 1980: 7). We find more women working as sales assistants in Mr Price and Edgars not always because they 'love working with people' as mentioned above, but at times because that is the only job on the market for them; a job with minimal requirements and the companies can groom the employees into their ideal employees. Based on this study it has come to my attention that Edgars is contributing to the society by offering training programs for its employees as Lolo from Edgars Ght claims that: *here at Edgars we have on-going training at all times and we are assessed by a written numeracy and literacy test, if a person fails they will have to reapply after six months.*

Thompson and Smith have defined skill as a “socially constructed concept that is influenced by gendered relations in and outside the labour process” (2010: 188). Women have been socialized to be care givers, advisers and nurturers, and when they get to the clothing retail shops these skills become of significant importance. This explains why most women opt for working as sales assistants in clothing retail shops because the labour process is something they are familiar with. They do not need to be trained to give advice to customers, the least they can do is to be guided only as Vuyo who works for Edgars PE explains that: *The requirements for this job are ok, they are not hectic, they make sense, I get paid for doing simple stuff like talking to the customers politely and helping them where they need my help.*

Social mobility in Mr Price can be noted to be quite sticky, built on the data from Mr Price employees, most of them have worked in the shop for the company of a minimum of three years, but they are still sales assistants. Where as in Edgars, the employees have worked for the company for a maximum of 2 years and they are quite aspiring to raise the ranks as Sineziye started working as a canvasser and now she is a sales assistant. Lebo who work for Edgars Ght proclaims that Edgars is an employer of choice that allows its employees the opportunity to advance in their career as she states that: *Edgars provides great opportunities for training, development and learnership programs are available for entry level employees, but it all depends on your knowledge, experience and most importantly attitude.* This shows that social mobility is accessible to everyone in Edgars, even a sales assistant can rise above ranks, provided they are well informed and take their training seriously.

Women’s skills are not well recognized and remunerated simply because they are viewed as innate and as an extension of a person’s personality. Thompson and Smith allude that “skills involved in emotional labour are not recognized as such because it is often women taking up those jobs that emotional labour is embedded in (2010: 190). There are more women working as sales assistants because they have no other skills and those personal skills that they have are needed for the success of the organizations. In Mr Price and Edgars these are essential skills required for the post of a sales assistant. Noma who works for Mr Price PE explains that: *You just need to be very nice to customers, you should treat them nicely so that they don’t feel like you are being rude to them or else they won’t come back to buy.*

4.6 Job requirements

4.6.1 Prescribed requirements

The sales assistants are responsible for the basic display of products in the shop even though there are visual implementers that may be sent from PE to assist in achieving the layout that has been designed by the headquarters. Thembi who works at Edgars Ght highlights that: *this section is my home, I display it exactly how I want, I'm the one who organizes the beauty products from one range to the next and it's the way I organize the things that has to bring me a lot of customers.* Amongst other basic duties, the sales assistants stock the shelves with clothes of similar shades or categories. The cosmetics sales assistant has different duties as compared to the other assistants. Thembi who is in the cosmetics section has to deal with are her beauty products and her customers only as she explains that: *as for me, I wear my make-up every day, I put make-up on some clients, I help customers choose the perfumes that they want so I create bonds with customer so that I understand them, plus with the other assistants we share the same basics.*

Sales assistants have particular job requirements, that vary from section to section for example the duties of a cosmetics sales assistant are different from those of a floor sales assistant. Vuyo (a floor assistant) who works in Edgars PE sounded very happy and seemed to understand her job requirements fairly well as she answered that: *I do what's expected of me like being at work on time, take out stock, price stock, and deal with customer efficiently and effectively.* However there are some basic requirements like language. South Africa has eleven official languages and the sales assistants are encouraged to be bilingual, but they are expected to speak in English at all times unless a customer initiates a different language. It would be an added advantage if one speaks many languages as Lebo highlights that: *we speak English at all times because of the different people that come here, the university have students from different countries and if you speak many languages it's even better for you because some customers really like it when you can help them using their own language.* Thompson and Smith highlight that “emotion is no longer seen as a by-product of organizational life, but as a resource to be harnessed by the organization” (2010: 206), which is why shops like Edgars and Mr Price sales assistants are expected to display various elements of emotional and aesthetic labour in their daily conduct, be it with each other or with their superiors, but mostly to their customers. A customer is very important to Edgars and they are always trying to leave their customers satisfied which will encourage them to

come back as Lolo praise Edgars saying: *Edgars is a one stop shop, we offer everything that our customer may need, we have fashion clothes, designers clothes, beautiful shoes, handbags, jewellery, perfumes, make-up, cell-phones, school uniforms for children and bedding if you want any, we are prepared for all the seasons, we have blankets, beach costumes, winter coats...we have everything that a customer might want to have.*

The duty of sales assistant ranges from making sales for the shop and representing the brand. In making sales for the shop, the sales assistants are expected unpack and display stock, advertise persuade the customers to buy the clothes. Lolo who works in Edgars Ght explained that: *my duty include customer service, merchandising, displaying stock, selling and handling customer queries and departmental housekeeping.* These are the basic requirements for a sales assistant and from there come some other requirements than are not on blue print like always smiling, keeping composure, selective honesty and working to impress the customer at every chance, to which Leidner comments that “the job of a salesman is degrading because the sales man is always ingratiating with customers which is an essential part of the job because they need to swallow insults and keep smiling” (1993: 200).

Thompson and Smith state that “skills like bolstering a customer’s ego, displaying interest in their interests and monitoring their behaviour so as not to offend them has been noted to be womanly arts” (2010: 201). The sales assistants are expected to make the customers feel good about themselves and confident with the choices that they make. Priscilla who works in Mr Price PE was able to clearly explain the job of a sales assistant as she illuminates that: *My job is to serve the community out there and it takes some courage every day, it’s not the job for everyone, or for any person but at least you must have that courage because each and every day you don’t get the same customer. Customers always differ and you must help the customer. You must fit yourself into that situation to help the customer, even if the customer comes up to you just as...just as you know...and as they normally come in demanding and they are not even saying ‘hie’ or ‘hello’...fit yourself into the situation in there to help the customer and make the customer feel at ease.*

Leidner claims that “qualities in which women excel include sensitivity to nuance and verbal dexterity which are very important for success” (1993: 201), these skills that women possess are used to give an advantage to the shops over the customers because the sales assistants are aware of how to deal with them. Being a sales assistant is a demanding job, it is not a job for everyone. Sales assistants ought to be patient so that they can help everyone who comes to

them wanting to buy something and at times with no idea of what they really want. The way in which MRP is located in PE is in such a way that most customers do not plan on buying there, but because it is overlooking the streets people who are walking to their different destinations end up getting into the shop and purchasing something so the sales assistants have to take that into account. Dintle states that: *I am supposed to be friendly to everyone here and it doesn't mean they are all my friends you see, I am a calm person when I am here because that's what they want me to do, I can't even shout even when I want to shout I cannot do that.*

The sales assistants are expected to know all the products available in the shop even if it is not from their section. They are trained when they get new stock so that they know everything and they can pitch and sell the product to the customer so confidently. Lebo who works in Edgars Ght explains that: *all staff working in the shop knows everything that is in the store that is because customers ask information from everyone who is staff so everyone has to know the product to avoid dissatisfactions.* Based on an informal conversations with a sales assistant from Edgars in PE she explained that: *when customers see you walking around in the shop they expect you to know everything, so even if I'm from a different section or company, if a customer ask me something about Edgars I am supposed to offer them some form of help just because I am working in Edgars, you can't say 'I don't know' that's why they tell us to familiarize with every corner, plus I can also ask one of the girls to look after my section if I'm not there doing something.*

Working in Edgars and MRP means that one is required to exhibit particular emotions so as to please the customers. This usually entails that the sales assistants suppress the emotions that they are actually feeling so as to express emotions they are not feeling. The sales assistants are forced to display emotions and feelings that are appropriate for the situation they are in as Warhurst and Nickson state that “employees feelings are organizationally appropriated and transmuted for commercial benefit” (2009: 386). The sales assistants have reported their dissatisfaction with regards to separating their personal life from professional life as Vuyo who works in Edgars PE alludes that: *you can't separate it honestly it even gets worse because when you are here you are all alone that's when you start thinking about a lot of things, but still when you are at work you need to be yourself and forget about all the problems and focus on your work.* In this case ‘being yourself’ can be likened to pretending to be a person you are not by fulfilling the ideal picture of a sales assistant which is someone

who is smiling, jovial and friendly as marketing strategies reinforce all the time worldwide. Thembi who works in Edgars Grahamstown explains that: *you always have to go an extra mile to satisfy your customer even if it means trying to be someone you are not and pretend to be happy even when you know that deep inside you are not, you just have to try so that the customer leaves the shop happy or else I would have failed my job.*

Marx is very consistent with his unified concept of labour power which is an aggregate of physical and mental capabilities that are in the living personality of a human being (Brook, 2013: 7). The process of merging a person's mental and physical capabilities to suit a particular situation from time to time makes working as a sales assistant a very demanding job for the ladies working at Mr Price and Edgars. The sales assistants have to display emotional labour tasks as they perform their sales assistant duties. They are required to be polite, friendly and respectful towards their customers. It is the duty of the sales assistant to make sure that the customer leaves the shop feeling comfortable and fully satisfied as Priscilla who works in Mr Price Port Elizabeth explains that: *before you even start working, they tell you the rules of the job, they make it clear that you need to smile for the customers at all times, you need to be happy under whatever condition, and if you have problems you leave them at the door and get into the shop a happy, fresh and free person ready to serve the customer.* In trying to leave your problems at the door and walk in a happy person the sales assistants usually lose themselves in their duties. From the interviews seems possible to assert that sales assistants in MRP and Edgars shops are susceptible to emotional labour.

4.6.2 Implied requirements

Sales assistants are expected to fully commit to their job requirements of serving the customer relentlessly. A customer's satisfaction is their ultimate goal and in the process they sacrifice a lot of their time and personality to fit the job requirements. Management does not have to explain what they are supposed to do to keep the customer satisfied, they are just supposed to know that's their duty and they should make it happen. Thembi explains that: *you always have to go an extra mile to satisfy your customer even if it means trying to be someone you are not and pretend to be happy even when you know that deep inside you are not, you just have to try so that the customer leaves the shop happy or else I would have failed my job.*

Kerfoot and Korczynski has explained that “aesthetic labour is gendered and that women’s labouring clothing in retail demands feminized skills of makeup, hair and self-presentation, which is both constraining and liberating for the women workers” (2005: 397). This entails that as a woman working in the clothing retail shops, you are required to have mastered the skill of applying make-up on yourself, having good hairstyles and looking good at all times. These are not requirements that they tell you, rather these are implied maybe through informal conversation as Vuyo who works in Edgars PE explained that: *you are supposed to look good; you don’t need the managers telling you to change your hairstyle. You will just know that hairstyle is bad and you have to change because you can’t come to work looking scruffy.*

Hochschild explains that “the actor’s body evokes passion in the *audience’s* soul, but the actor is only *acting* as if he had feeling” (1983: 37). The sales assistants are expected to make the customer feel at ease, comfortable and important when they get into Mr Price and Edgars to shop, but the sales assistants are only evoking those emotions in them because they are expected to as part of their job description. It is very significant amongst sales assistants because emotion work is their precise duty and it is a blueprint on their rules and regulations as the sales assistants I interviewed agreed that emotional work is the most important part of their job. Hochschild highlights that “the actor must believe that an imagined happening really is happening now, to do this, the actor makes up an ‘as if’ a supposition” (1983: 42). This explains that the sales assistants have to picture a scene and imagine they are in a certain situation for them to accommodate all their customers that come with different problems and they are supposed to switch their emotions as well from this person’s situation to the next.

Employees do not only sell their skills, but they put on the market an image, which could be their image or the one created by the company (Mitchell, 1995). Edgars sells luxury to its customers and likewise their sales assistance need to ooze luxury, in a conversation with one of the Edgars sales assistants she mentioned that: *we have to own the brand, e.g. if it’s Guess you need to have that edge, you know with Guess you need to be wild and spontaneous, and with Forever New you have to be young and with a flower girl kind of look have a subtle and softer look.* It is important that the sales assistants embrace their work requirements as Thompson and Smith argue that “the rise of the service sector has brought with it the introduction of using productive bodies unlike simply the productive labour” (2010: 228),

this is to show us that the women's bodies have become a part of their job requirement, and an important one for that matter as they have to be aesthetically appealing to the customers.

In our daily lives we encounter different situations and as a result we subconsciously develop feelings for the parts that we play in our life that embrace our roles and locations. There is stiff competition in the clothing retail industry, as a result a customer is important to clothing retail shops therefore they should be treated like wise. A sales assistant is therefore not in a position to be harsh to a customer under any circumstance, even if the customer is rude, the sales assistant cannot be rude which is why there is no sign of 'Right of Admission Reserved' in Edgars and Mr Price. During a conversation with one sales assistant from Edgars in Port Elizabeth, she highlighted that: *I get rude customers most of the time, usually I keep calm and I try to keep my cool with them, a customer is always right, and whether they are wrong I always make sure I make them feel like they are always right.* To this Hochschild explains that "sometimes we try to stir up a feeling we wish we had, and at other times we try to block or weaken a feeling we wish we did not have" (1983: 43), the sales assistants need to weaken the feeling and urge to respond harshly to a rude customer.

Sales assistants have more contact with the customers the most and they are able to give the true picture of the company to the customers. When customers think of Edgars or Mr Price they instantly have the picture of a sales assistant not the manager or cleaner because they engage with the sales assistant. Therefore as the management recruit and select employees for the post of working as a sales assistant they look for an image that is most likely to appeal to their large customer base as Hochschild alludes that they should embody "the supposed epitome of gracious manners and warm personal service" (1983: 93). Asked why she was hired at MRP Grahamstown Yolen responded that: *I think it's because I'm a friendly person, I love working with people, it doesn't matter their age colour or what, I just love working with people and being happy.* This implies that management has a picture of the person they want for the job and they look for that exact person to complement the position.

Marcuse explains that "the world formed by art is recognized as a reality which is suppressed and distorted in the given reality" (1978: 6), in this context, the aesthetic appearance of Mr Price and Edgars is set up to give and sell a certain lifestyle to the customers that defeats all reality. The images of women wearing make-up makes the customer get lost in a fantasy and it encourages them to buy the make-up they see advertised with the hope of looking as beautiful as the women in the pictures where as in reality women have skin problems, they

have pimples, spots and various skin problems but the women put in the images have perfect skin and even the cosmetics sales assistants have flawless beautiful skin. Fundiswa who works in the cosmetics department at Edgars PE highlights that: *I can honestly say I was hired for this job because my skin looks good.* This helps to give an implied reality to the customer, because the sales assistant is blending well with the store aesthetics of pictures and artistic expressions of women wearing make-up and who have a perfect skin.

The uniforms worn by sales assistants represent something and they say a lot about the company. Hochschild commented that “different companies favour different variations of the ideal type of sociability, veteran employees talk about differences in company personality as matter-of-factly as they talk about differences in uniform or shoe style” (1983: 97). MRP is about casual fun and relaxed fashion for the whole family which can be explained by a single glance at their sales assistants who wear dark blue denim jeans, (grey, black and red) t-shirts with an MRP logo, a cap and takkies. This kind of uniform makes one look casual and feel very relaxed and comfortable. On the other hand Edgars is about luxury clothing, accessories and fragrances, this is best explained by the sales assistants perception of their uniform to be professional wear as Sineziphe who works in Edgars PE highlights that: *I don't really know why we wear black and white, all I know is that it's because it makes us look very professional.* The sales assistants in Edgars wear black slacks, white shirts, black flat shoes, simple jewellery and they have simple hairstyles. They have an elegant look that attracts certain people.

4.7 The influence of appearance and space on job requirements

Aesthetic appearance on the sales assistant does not seem to be much of a concern in Edgars and Mr Price for both Grahamstown and PE in terms of their body mass. The sales assistants vary from short and stout, tall and giant, tall and slender. They employ anyone who can do the job and increase their sales as Scout who works in MRP PE highlights that: *MRP did not even know me, Mazibuko applied for me so it's not like they employed me because I look a certain way, whilst Jaq who work in MRP Ght alludes that: they see how I work and I work hard so that how things work in this career. When you come to train in the shop, if you work well with other people and customers like you then they will hire you.* The uniforms are used as the aesthetics benchmark on the sales assistants, and the sales assistants are recommended to look smart at all times.

The sales assistants who work in the cosmetics section are encouraged to be aesthetically appealing to the customers as Thembi who works in the Edgars Ght cosmetics section claims that: *as part of my uniform I wear make-up, that's one thing I should have at all times, then I can wear black and white. My manager wanted me to wear heels because I work in the beauty section* and Fundiswa who works in the Edgars cosmetics section in PE has a flawless skin and she had to say that: *since I'm selling these beauty products when customers see me they should not doubt the products I am recommending for them because of my skin, so I can honestly say I was hired for this job because my skin looks good. So, seems to me that beside that the forms of the body is not very important, it is the aesthetic appearance of the skins [soft, healthy, etc] and also the hair style and the clean uniforms are quite important as Wellington and Bryson (2001: 934) have commended that the workplace has been conceptualized as a stage on which female employees in particular must execute aesthetically pleasing performances.*

Edgars and Mr Price in PE are positioned exactly next to each other in Govan Mbeki which is the busiest road in the CBD of Port Elizabeth; it is also the hub of clothing retail shops. The road houses all the major clothing shops like Legit, Truworths, Woolworths, Identity, Jet, Pep and also a China mall. This is the same set up that is in Grahamstown as well; the shops are not exactly next to each other but they are a stone throw away from each other. They are all located in Grahamstown's busiest road; High Street, which is also the hub of all retails, ranging from clothing, furniture, groceries and restaurants. However, Edgars has a different store structure and layout as compared to Mr Price. The Edgars shops have two floors but the Mr Price shops have one floor. The Edgars in Port Elizabeth has an elevator case that leads to the second floor but the elevator case has been closed and they are now operating on the first floor only. In Grahamstown, Edgars has a ground floor which is more of a kids department and it also hosts the manager's offices. The cosmetics section in Edgars PE is secluded from the rest of the shop, it is in a cubicle and this entails that the beauty sales assistant is alienated from the other co-workers; she works alone in her cubicle and has no one to chat with because the other counters are further apart.

De Chatel and Hunt argue that the shop interior helps to keep the customer inside the shop till they buy something, whilst the shop's exterior is designed to attract people into the shop (2003: 46). Anyone passing by Mr Price is attracted into the shop by discount boards that are painted in bright colours so that no one misses them. These bright cards are posted on the

windows of Mr Price facing the street to attract even those driving past. As the people walk into the shop they are confronted by a lot of fashionable clothes folded in shelves and others hanging on rails, all at affordable prices, this is why Mr Price is always full with people buying clothes. Symbolic structures in Mr Price and Edgars are used as instruments of knowledge and communication (Bourdieu, 1991: 166). The manikins that one finds in Edgars dressed in the clothes and accessories being sold to help share knowledge and communicate with the customer on how to dress up the outfit and which accessories to use along with it. The artistic expressions on the walls also help to impart knowledge on the customer to advise them on the clothing items on discount, a section to find particular products and the 'wet floors' sign help to communicate that the floors have just been cleaned so the customers should be careful not to use that path in case they get hurt.

Edgars is more aesthetically appealing as compared to Mr Price. Edgars put much effort in creating an environment that lures the customers as explained above; it has a calming effect which lacks in Mr Price. As you get into Mr Price you are greeted by a cloud of warm air, the fact that there are always many customers in Mr Price makes it stuffy as compared to Edgars where there are fragrant smells all over the store. There are manikins on the windows overlooking the main street whilst in Mr Price Grahamstown next door there are discount boards on the windows in bright colours. The two shops are both marketing their stock; they are just marketing to a different customer base and in a different style. As one will note, Edgars has international brands in their shop like Levis, Sissy Boy, Polo, Guess and Nine West, therefore they are targeting a customer who is brand conscious and they expose these brands and make them distinguished so that their targeted customer can clearly see what they are looking for or in most cases the aesthetic appeal of the shop can help to convince a customer to purchase something they had no plans on buying.

Schmitt and Simonson (1997: 98) claim that background sound and music is used by most retail shops to increase sales because sound is a powerful emotional and behavioural cue. Mr Price and Edgars use their respective radio stations that advertise the goods that they are offering in the shop, this quickly registers in the mind of customers because it is something being forced into their ears and they cannot avoid the advert coming from the radio. Priscilla who works in Mr Price Port Elizabeth claims that: *we only play Mr Price radio, they play it because it helps to advertise the things that we have in the shop and the stuff that's on special*. The radio complements the job of the sales assistant that is verbally and physically

advertising and pitching ideas encouraging the customers to purchase products from their shop.

Edgars is designed in a way that allows air to circulate in the shop. In Edgars most of the clothes are arranged on rails throughout the shop, whilst in Mr Price most of the clothes are folded and packed into ceiling high shelves which over-shadows the sales assistants and other artistic expressions that could be in the shop because the grey-caged shelves take-up all the space and draw much attention on themselves. The two shops in comparison; Edgars and Mr Price have white walls, but the walls in Mr Price are not very visible because they are covered in grey-caged shelves where as in Edgars there are clothing rails. this allows for a customer to be lost in the architecture and this might encourage them to purchase things spontaneously as Marcuse explains that “art is committed to that perception of the world which alienates individuals from their functional existents and performance in society; it is committed to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason in all spheres of subjectivity and objectivity” (1978: 9).

The general layout of Mr Price and Edgars tells a story; the visibility of the sales assistant in these two shops is compatible with the store aesthetics. From this we learn that it is the art of the architecture that determines communication skills and the duties of a sales assistant. The Edgars shops are more spacious and have very good lighting that illuminates the whole shop, therefor it becomes economic for the management to have fewer sales assistants working in the vast shop as they are able to attend to all the customers whom they can see from every section of the shop as they walk in. Pindeka who works in Edgars Port Elizabeth explains that: *when anyone comes into the shop they see me and I like that, I like it when people see me*. In Mr Price the sales assistants are always preoccupied packing clothes that have been displaced to an extent that they do not have the time to see customers or go to them to offer their services. Sales assistants in Mr Price do not approach the customer to ask if they need help, they rather wait for customers to come to them for them to offer to help.

4.8 Employee supervision

4.8.1 Management relationship

Depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed (Collins, 2004: 57). This can be used to describe the position of female managers in Mr Price and Edgars. From the data collected, it

was noted that all the managers in Mr Price and Edgars are women, but still there is a man who oversees the running of the shops as Priscilla who works in Mr Price PE claims that: *Our managers are all female but there is man who is our senior manager who always drops by, they are good to work with but they can just be very mean at times as if they do not already know how hard we work.*

Orr and van Meelis purport that “women are drawn into jobs where pay and status are low” (2014: 32). Though we have women as the managers at Mr Price and Edgars, it can be established that there are female managers because the clothing retail sector is female dominated, especially in the shops under this study. A female manager is ideal for the job and a male assisting manager is there to just oversee. The female managers from the two shops have been noted to be all very understanding of the ladies both in the workplace and outside the workplace, Nosi who work in MRP Ght explains that: *The managers are very understanding, they always keep us close like one family, so when you have a problem, you are free to discuss it with the manager and they can help you with anything that you want,* whilst Fundiswa who works in Edgars PE claims that: *I like that our women managers are more caring, which makes it difficult to cross their path and upset them because they are friendly and polite to us, you see most of the managers are women, we have 2 female managers and 1 man, the ladies laugh with us and when you are doing something wrong they tell you in a good manner but at times they can just be rude and threaten to fire you.*

Mr Price employees treat the shop as a family business, the employees are encouraged to see each other as family and they see each other as family, Jaq who works at Mr Price Grahamstown explained that: *we are a family, Mr Price is a family, we sometime help each other, because sometimes you notice when someone is down and you can go to them and talk to them and give them advice, that's how we do things here.* The idea of a workplace that is similar to your family elicits actions of loyalty and gratitude. Hochschild (1983: 101) implies that the imagery of family is used by most businesses to obscure the fact that the employees are here for business not sitting in their family lounge. The sales assistants are meant to believe they are working as a family and they are very close with their managers with whom they can discuss anything with as Scout who works in Mr Price Port Elizabeth explains that: *the manager is very free and friendly, I go to her with any problem she is always cool, she does not take it for granted, If I have a problem with one of the staff members, she can talk to me, them talk to the other one and we can solve the problem* as Hochschild has explained that

employees are encouraged to confide in their superiors as she claims that “your supervisor is your friend. You can go to her and talk about anything, and I mean anything” (1983: 100).

Taylor and Bain claim that “to describe the workplace as a ‘carceral regime’ characterized by all-encompassing surveillance is to erect a model of complete control which understates both the voluntary dimension of labour and the managerial need to elicit commitment from workers” (1999: 104). It can be illustrated as if managers create a bond with their sales assistants as a way of buying their loyalty to the company and for the employees to be meek and stoic. Managers in Mr Price and Edgars are quite visible in the shop where you see them walking around and at time helping the sales assistants; this in other words can be a way of surveillance to make sure that the employees are all doing their work as Thandiswa from Mr Price Ght explains that: Thandiswa explains that: *No, we don't have camera's but we have the managers working with us on the floor making it very difficult for us to be lazy.*

4.8.2 Management expectations

When rules about how an employee feel and how to express feeling are set by management and the employee has weaker rights to courtesy than customers do; deep and surface acting become forms of labour to be sold and the employees are there to meet this demand for emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983: 89). The sales assistants working in MRP and Edgars have pre-determined guidelines for expressing their feelings to the customer, and as a mere sales assistant they seek to meet every need of the customer at every cost where purchasing in the shop is concerned. Whether the sales assistant is going to feign a feeling or display her actual emotions as Noma from Mr Price PE explains that: *when I am at work, I should be nice and happy to customers; I should always show that I am happy even when I know I am not happy because my child is sick. If I take my home problem to work I can be angry and managers don't want us to be like that.*

Hochschild (1983: 56) has defined feeling rules as a pre-action that guides emotion work by establishing the sense of entitlement or obligation that governs emotional exchanges. There are feeling rules imposed on sales assistants in MRP and Edgars. When asked about feeling guidelines Jaq who works in MRP in Grahamstown admits that they have some guidelines as he comments that: *yes that is the most important thing of our company, that we consider for the company, it's important that we approach a customer on a very good manner, in that case so that we get an assurance that the customer will return again and we accomplish the*

customer's needs. The sales assistants are expected to be friendly and accommodative of customers of all ages, gender, economic condition and races. Hochschild agrees that there are feeling rules as she claims that “there are rules or norms according to which feelings may be judged appropriate to accompanying events” (1983: 59).

The extraction of emotional labour on sales assistants in Mr Price and Edgars is severe, however, Brook advocates that “the emotional aspect of labour power needs to be understood as an inseparable dimension of labour power rather than as a discrete and exceptional variant” (2013: 3). Feelings of emotions are integral part of any action and thoughts that a person does, but within clothing retail it is a requirement to follow the guidelines on how to express emotions in the workplace, how to manage and chose carefully which emotions to use for this situation and which one for the next situation. The sales assistants have guidelines that teach them how to reaction to emotional situations as Priscilla who works in Mr Price PE explains that: *... even if the customer comes up to you just as...just as you know...and as they normally come in demanding and they are not even saying 'hie' or 'hello'...fit yourself into the situation in there to help the customer and make the customer feel at ease.*

The sales assistants can be noted to be ignorant towards the responsibilities of their employers and the employers take full advantage of it. Bakker (2011) claims that management must make sure it provides the employees with the necessary job resources that help them to conduct their daily duties effectively and as expected. This is why the Basic conditions of employment Act (BCEA) upholds that employees should provide uniforms for their employees, but Edgars shops on the other hand do not provide uniform for its sales assistants as Vuyo who works in Edgars PE explains that: *we wear black slacks, white shirts and flat shoes that we buy for ourselves. Edgars only give us t-shirts or any other product that is on promotion but we basically buy our own uniform.* Mr Price however, provides the first set of uniforms for its employees and when one wishes to get a second set, they can now buy it for themselves as Thandiswa who works at Mr Price Ght highlights that: *We get the t-shirt, caps, jackets and takkies from MRP but the jeans we buy them ourselves, plus if you lose your uniform you will have buy yourself another one especially for some of us who work as permanent I come to work every day so I need to be changing my uniform.*

Control over a worker's physical appearance is related to maintaining professionalism in the workplace and Hochschild has argued that the work ‘professional’ is being misused in the service sector, rather she expresses that a professional is a person who has completely

accepted the rules of standardization (1983: 104). The sales assistants are expected to have a standard look with the physical appearance of the shop to bring harmony in the shop unlike having each aspect of the shop symbolising a different thing. Sales assistants are strategically positioned in a way that the complement the layout and design of the shop in helping to meet the demands of all the customers that come into the shop.

All the sales assistants wear a uniform to work. The management has been said to be very particular when it comes to dressing and appearance in the workplace. Particularly those who work in the cosmetics section have different expectations as compared to those working on the floor with regards to aesthetic appearance. Wellington and Bryson (2001: 934) explain that when the ladies are at work they are expected to be body conscious, image conscious and be able to acquire body techniques as it is part of their job. The two ladies who work in the Edgars cosmetics section have agreed that make-up is part of their job as they are expected to wear it all the time. Fundiswa who works in the cosmetics section at Edgars PE enlightens that: *make-up is part of the job, since I'm selling these beauty products when customers see me they should not doubt the products I am recommending for them.* Thembi who works at the cosmetics section in Edgars Grahamstown highlights that: *because of where I work, wearing make-up is a must, I need to use the products I am selling and the customers need to see them on me, appreciate it and buy it because if I am not wearing make-up people will confuse me for an ordinary customer.*

Employers emphasize on image and hybrid identity where they control women's appearance for it to match the stereotype of a heterosexual image and package the female employees into an accepted image like goods (Wolf, 1990: 40; McDowell, 1997; van Mannen, 1991). The ordinary sales assistants wear uniforms that are aligned with their company's colours and goals. They all wear the same uniform with a badge that has their name on it to ensure that they are not confused by any customers and a customer can easily know them. In Edgars they wear black slacks and white shirts as Sinezipe explains that: *I don't really know why we wear black and white, all I know is that it's because it makes us look very professional.* In MRP they all wear dark blue jeans, MRP t-shirts and takkies as Jaq from MRP Ght highlights that: *our colours are black and red so we keep on changing, we don't want customers to get bored of us because of our colours so we keep changing...These colours make us visible to the customer and MRP is red, black and white, I don't know but those are our colours.*

4.9 The implications of the work requirements

To strike a balance between keeping feelings above consciousness and some below, and to counter inner resistances on a daily basis can instigate an emotional breakdown in the employee (Hochschild, 1983: 46). Sales assistants are faced by this dilemma each and every day because when they come to work they are supposed to suppress feeling of sadness, worry or boredom and trying to keep that state of mind when you have conflicting issues at the back of your head like a sick mother at home or a landlord who wants his rent money can derange someone and they can lose their mind as Yolen who works in Mr Price Grahamstown explained that: *at times you just don't feel like being happy because you have problems and in forcing yourself to be happy you can just end up shouting at someone for a small thing.*

The sales assistants are advertising clothes to customers but they cannot even afford the clothes for themselves. Yolen works in Mr Price Grahamstown at the kids section but she mentioned that she buys clothes for her young son at Jet and Pep, yet she is the one who decorates the kids section matching the clothes and encouraging the parents to buy those clothes for their children, which explains Hochschild's surface acting as she states that "the actor does not really experience the world from an imperial viewpoint, but he works at seeming to" (1983: 38). As the workers are not in a position to afford what they are required to advertise, they tend to stick on the job if they are able to get a few incentives. Some women enjoy the benefits they get from their jobs and for this reason they are willing to stay and suffer what many may view as exploitation. Fundiswa who works for Edgars PE explains that: *I love looking good and working here allows me to buy some products at a lower price and I get some of the products as my subsidy and I don't have to pay a lot of money for the expensive make-up that I put on.*

The sales assistants from Edgars and Mr Price have all the information about the clothes they are selling, how to wear them and care for them, but they are in the majority cases alienated from those very clothes they are advertising because they are expensive and they cannot afford them, yet when they are speaking to customers they give the impression that they are familiar with the clothes and the lifestyle they are selling. I think you are wrong, people of MRP told you that they can buy their clothing with discount, which is quite cheap and accessible to them. Pindeka who works for Edgars Port Elizabeth explained that: *I don't buy my clothes from here; I can only buy maybe one thing if I have been saving but I usually buy from Mr Price and Fashion World.* Whilst Yolen who works at MRP Grahamstown claims

that: *MRP is very expensive. I get a 20% discount and I love Mr Price, but I wouldn't get out of my way to buy in Mr Price, for my son, my small child I go buy for him at PEP stores or Jet, but for my older girl is expensive it has to be Mr Price because she is in Matric.*

In general, the ladies interviewed are not fully satisfied with the hours of work. The assistants have various duties to perform. They have customers from different walks of life to appease, managers to satisfy, a brand to represent and above all they have themselves to take care of. In this dilemma family and social responsibilities are affected greatly and in most cases it is the family that suffers. The ladies leave very early in the morning for work and when they come back home they are tired to do anything. The work shifts of the sales assistants in PE run from 8:30am to 6pm from Monday to Saturday and 9am to 5pm on Sunday which is inclusive of a 1 hour lunch break and opening duties and in Ght they work from 8:30am to 5:30pm from Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm during the weekend. Their shift includes a 1 hour lunch break that they take as scheduled and all they do is stand, walk and smile all day. In the face of flexible capitalism as Thompson (2010: 11) explains, are moving towards lean services and systemic rationalization to an extent where there is limited autonomy in their workplace and evidently the women working in the service sector like sales assistants from Edgars and Mr Price are not satisfied with the hours they spend at work.

The sales assistants complained that the hours of work are very restricting and they deny them of a social life as Lebo who works in Edgars Grahamstown highlights that: *we work very hard at Edgars, we are always walking from one section to the next and there is very few of us on the floor, so by the time we finish work you are so tired and the thing about working during the weekends, I don't like that because I miss a lot of things, I miss church and other functions that happen during the day because I will be tired, it's so bad for me because I work full time here whilst Yolen who works in Mr Price Grahamstown did not hide her disapproval of her job as she openly states that: I think it's the same as I am, because we talk about these things you know, I can safely say they feel the same way because we are tired, it's a very demanding job. You have to be on your feet 8 hours, and you only have one hour break and a 15 minutes tea, you so tired and by the time you get home you just want to sleep, it's so difficult for me as a mother because my children need me but I can't do much because I'm always at work and I'm tired. You can see that from 4 o'clock no one speaks because we are so tired and just want to go home, it's not so fun anymore;* these findings defeat the expectations of (Korczynski 2002) who claimed that emotional labour can enhance a workers

satisfaction especially where the relationship between the worker and customer is socially embedded.

The sales assistant ladies working in Edgars and Mr Price have worked in the shop for some years and they have different feelings and perceptions towards their job requirement in relation to emotional and aesthetic labour. However, the sales assistants who have worked for less than 2 year are very happy with their job especially the young ladies. Vuyo who is in her late 20s explains that her job is easy as she states that: *I love my job, it's easy to do, I just have to come here, look good and be happy then get my money end of the month.* Whilst those who have worked for a bit longer and are older as well do not find the job as fun as Pindeka explains that: *this is not an easy job, I work here because I need the money but if I could get another job where I don't have to stand all day like this I will be very happy.*

The women working in Mr Price and Edgars are flexi-permanent workers, but surprisingly the ladies do not see it as part of non-standard jobs since they are not members of any trade union; they do not have healthcare insurance or pension funds; Thandiswa who works at Mr Price Grahamstown states that: *No, I don't have medical aid or trade union here but I get my 20% discount on the things that I buy, these are the only benefits I get as a permanent worker, plus as a permanent worker I just know I come to work every day, I don't have to be on standby.* As a result non-standard form of work have become the norm and the women in the clothing retail shops are made disposable whilst in their ignorance they find being flexi-permanent as an advantage. Since there are no long term contracts, they do not have anything tying them to the company or any costs that the company can incurred after firing them as Pindeka who works in Edgars PE explains that: *you are permanent till you want to leave, because that way you can apply for some other better jobs and you can always leave when you find something better unlike signing a contract for years and you have to keep a sucking job for that long.*

4.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, the women working in Edgars and Mr Price are all subjected to emotional labour. These sales assistants have guidelines on how to manage their emotional and feelings when they are communicating with the customers at all times. The sales assistants are encouraged by management to approach a customer in a way that their return to purchase in

the shop is a guarantee because when customers do not purchase from the shop, the shop is at the losing end because of the steep competition.

In trying to appease the customers, the sales assistants are supposed to blend with the store aesthetics, such that when a customer looks at the sales assistant and the walls, there should be a correlation because they are both under one roof. In this context, sales assistants represent the style of the shop they are working for. MRP employees dress casually because MRP is a casual wear shop whilst the sales assistants from Edgars dress elegantly so that they blend with the luxury that they are selling to the customers.

Young sales assistants are happy with their job, they find it as a place to make new friends and bond with core workers. As a result they are proud of their duties and they take this job as a way of advancing to the next stage of their lives, but the harsh reality is that escaping from this stage to the next is a challenge and most aspiring young ladies find themselves stuck as fashion retail sales assistants because with the expansion of non-standard forms of employment, the non-core zone is increasing and there is marginalization of employment from core to non-core and the deskilling of skills from skilled to semi-skilled, (Usami, 2010: 82; Braverman: 1971).

One can conclude that in trying to understand the feelings and perceptions that women have towards their job requirements in clothing retail shops have opened new interesting avenues that inform their job requirements like private investors, non-standard forms of employment, screwed and strategic management relationships, the cost of working in clothing retail shops and the various job requirements for employees in Mr Price and Edgars shops in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to exploring perceptions on aesthetics and emotional labour experienced by women working in transnational corporation companies, namely Mr Price and Edgars clothing retail shops. A secondary goal of this study was to establish a comparative analysis between the two shops mentioned above in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown central business districts.

This concluding chapter is organized into one main section which highlights how the objectives of the thesis were fulfilled by the study in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. The focus is on the main objective of the thesis and the way in which the theoretical framework of the thesis links to the empirical evidence from the study of women's perceptions on emotional and aesthetic labour in Mr Price and Edgars shops based in Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. The concluding section to the chapter provides brief outline of how the thesis has contributed to the existing literature on emotional and aesthetic labour in the clothing retail shops.

5.2 Reflections on the Thesis Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to understand and explain the perceptions on aesthetics and emotional labour experienced by women working in clothing retail shops based in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth.

The secondary objectives include the following:

- What job requirements do women working in Mr Price and Edgars have to display in relation to emotional and aesthetical labour and how do they perceive their jobs?
- What are the different feelings and attitudes that women working in Mr. Price and Edgars have toward work requirements?
- What are the challenges that women working in Mr Price and Edgars have in relation to the management supervision on their appearances and professional behaviour?
- How does the space distribution within the shops affect the aesthetic and emotional requirements of the workers?

Chapter four empirically address the above objectives and the themes that were developed in the objectives aid the understanding of the perceptions that women working in Mr Price and Edgars based in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth have regarding emotional and aesthetic labour in their work place and the effects it has on themselves.

Workers are the true ambassadors of the clothing shops that they work for and for that reason the sales assistants from Mr Price and Edgars are supposed to act in a manner that upholds and values of their shops as MRP annual report highlights that “our success has been, and will continue to be built on our ability to add value to our customers lives” (2014: 5), in this context, the employees are expected to work towards this goal. To attain this goal, sales assistants have to extend their services from the physical (taking the orders, showing a customer around the shop, etc.) to emotional where they convince the customer to purchase something, advise them on what they are buying, creating a relationship with them and pretending to be a certain character as a way of convincing the customer and it further goes on to the physical appearance of the sales assistant where she is to have a particular hairstyle, for a particular period, wear a certain amount of make-up, have a particular body type with a certain voice tone.

The women take their sales assistant jobs very seriously because those are the jobs available to most of them, especially considering they do not have the required educational skills for some other jobs they might want. From this study a significant number of women are committed but not satisfied by their job requirements, but they take up the jobs anyway because they are desperate to earn a living and sustain their families, especially considering that most women working in the shops are single mothers. Whilst it is clear that they younger sales assistant feel secure and happy with their job requirements as they see it as a way to advance in their lives and earn quick money with minimal requirements. The job requirements of a sales assistant are demanding, they spend the greater part of the day at work, where they are on their feet and only have an hour break for the 10 or more hours that they spend at work.

It is however sad that the women’s families and their social life suffer the atrocities of the commitment they have towards their job requirements. Considering their working hours, the women have limited time with their families, they have children that need a mother who is always present to make sure that they are eating well, they are doing their school work and managing well with life, but they cannot be available as often as they would want because

they have to be at work, and when they come home in the evening they are tired and need to prepare for the following working day. Some sales assistants have sick family members that they have to look after, and because of their work schedule the health of their family members becomes a second priority to their work requirements.

Every workplace has a chain of command that is put in place to make sure the smooth operation of business. In Mr Price and Edgars, the managers treat their employees like family members; as a result they have a close relationship, which they use as a strategy to harness loyalty from their sales assistants. For example Grahamstown is a small town and most people are familiar with each other because they are likely to attend the same social events and that way, the managers get to understand them out of their work space and they can create a relationship and bond which might in the end influence their flexible behaviour towards the sales assistants. To instil professionalism in the workplace the managers are always on the floor to see if the sales assistants are doing their job, this can be a way of surveillance and forcing workers to work extra hard and look good for their job as they are being watched. Managers take their role as supervisors earnestly because there is always that antagonistic employment relationship between the employer and the employee, in this case they need to constantly monitor the sales assistants to make sure they are doing their job, and doing it well so that they maintain and increase sales for the shop.

It is clear to notice that, the layout of the shop determines the job requirements of the sales assistants. Sales assistants ought to be strategically positioned where they are accessible to all the customers coming into the shop so that they can assist them where they need help. They need to have all the information for particular sections of the shop for them to help the customers. In the cosmetics section in Edgars, the sales assistant must be able to look like a beauty specialist for the customers to trust her enough to buy the products from her and she must be well informed about the products on offer; same applies to the till operators, they are supposed to know all the discounted products and should be able to offer any promotions or loyalty cards to the customers where needed.

5.3 Suggestions

It is a challenge to consolidate a highly fragmented labour force like the sales assistants through unionising them because they work as flexi-permanent employees, however it is not impossible. Sales assistants need more information about their rights if they want to attempt to

slowly transform their work environment. The sales assistants do not work as permanent workers; they do not sign long-term contracts because they keep shifting from one shop to the next and one sector to the next. The feeling of job insecurity drives them into nomads. But, if sales assistants could be given long-term contracts it would benefit them and the company because they would not have to be training new people every now and again, and additionally workers who have worked longer for a company are loyal and this will facilitate the growth and success of the retail clothing shops.

As much as we are advocating for standard forms of employment; 8 hour jobs they are destroying the social relations that women working in clothing retail shops have. I would strongly recommend that weekend shifts be alternated to allow the women who are working tirelessly during the week to have time to rest and socialize with their families during the weekend and resume work on Monday. All the ladies interviewed complained about the long working hours that they do. They are on their feet for 8 or more hours a day for the 7 days of the week which is a health hazard. Having off days during the weekend would be physically and emotionally nourishing.

As with all social science research, this study had its own limitations. My primary limitations revolve around the sampling issues. For my sample, I interviewed women who work in Mr Price and Edgars which are completely different shops. With Mr Price focusing on casual clothes at an affordable price, Edgars specializes in luxury goods at a relatively high price. Emotional and aesthetic labour is therefore perceived quite differently amongst the women who were interviewed because their target market, policies and marketing strategies are different. This sampling limitation may contribute to a small part of the assumptions not being supported in this study because the women are on a different playground.

5.4 Areas for further study

Future research should extend efforts to map out the constructs that determine the types of emotional labour found in different kinds of service jobs. Service jobs do not all require the same amount of emotional and aesthetic labour investment, some need slightly more than the others. Which leads to questions regarding the future of work in the face of intense labour flexibility where people are now incorporating their body, soul and mind to the workplace, what else is left to bring?

The study of emotional and aesthetic labour on the women working the clothing retail sector alone is not enough. The families of the women working in the service sector feel the impact of the job and the work requirements that their mothers, daughters, wives and sisters are taking each day. The sales assistants are a part of this system to an extent where they have false consciousness with regards to their work requirements, but their family members on the other hand truly understand their work requirements and the effects they have on them. Further studies can concentrate on the attitudes and perceptions of the sale assistants not only at work, but also on their interaction at home which will only enrich the current information. In addition, if we include their family members and the possible implication that the women working as shop assistants have in relation to the family, will add new avenues and further topics of investigation Therefor it would bring to the surface balanced information when the families of women working in the clothing retail sector are incorporated into the study.

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Appendix A

Store observation guide for Grahamstown Edgars

Edgars in Grahamstown is situated along High Street the busiest road in Grahamstown. It is not very big considering that Grahamstown is a small town. The shop is in a rectangle shape. It has a functional basement department that specializes in children's clothes and school wear. The manager's offices are located in the basement as well, allowing ample space for the products to be sold and advertised.

As you pass by Edgars the amazing lighting in the room draws your attention into the shop. There are manikins by the windows that are dressed in beautiful clothes, mostly the designer clothes that they are selling. These aesthetic features that someone sees as they pass by the shop or as they are walking across the road will certainly encourage them to walk into the store. The clothes are nicely arranged on the rails and the shop as a whole gives an atmosphere of unity from both the clothes and the employees. And as you walk into the shop a cheerful security guard welcomes you with a very warm smile.

Edgars has white walls and white lighting, the shop is well lit and everything is seen clearly, it has an air conditioning and there is so much space. The centres of attraction are the international brands that are positioned the 1st half of the store. One is confronted by the Sissy Boy heels that are on display as you walk into the shop and this helps improve their marketing strategy because people are lured by the international brands and they walk past the shop and as they walk in there is so much space in the shop.

The exit is the same entrance and they have a security guard and the security towers to avoid theft. Edgars has more rails than shelves. Some rails are hanging from the walls as this gives space to stalk more clothes and less labour to the sales assistants with regards to folding and shelving. There are very few clothes folded, you only find some of men's formal shirts packed in their sections. Manikins are mostly in the front where they will be advertising the ladies Levis jeans and Guess tops. Men's formal wear and some jeans are distributed throughout the shop but they are not a lot. There are some artistic pictures around the shop advertising the brands that they have. There are pictures of women wearing make-up, women holding the designer handbags and some other women wearing the clothes that are being sold in the shop, which is used as a way of advertising the clothes and expressing a way of life. There are also some decorations that will be hanging from the ceiling, especially during the festive season there is a huge Christmas tree in the front that is well decorated.

There are sales assistants throughout the shop and there are always some walking arounds, this makes it easy to locate one, especially because they are always in black and white with an Edgar's badge that has their name printed on it. The assistants are easily accessible, the beauty therapist is always in her section, and the cell-phone sales assistants are always at the back in their department. There are more women employed in Edgars. Most of them are the sales assistants, if not all. There are eleven women working on the floor with three other men. Two of the men are working at the tills and the other one is an assistant manager. There are two women working at the cell-phones department and there is a man and a woman who work as security guards. The manager of Edgars Grahamstown is a white lady she is in her late 40s to 50s. The sales assistants are all black including the other male managers

There is one sales assistant at the cosmetics section. The cosmetics section is in the middle of the shop and it is overlooking the tills section. There is a cosmetics till which is operated by the beauty specialists. There are several brands of perfumes for both men and women; both international and celebrity perfumes are available like Polo, Tom Ford, Poco Rabbane, Bvlgari, Red Door Elizabeth Aiden, Beyoncé, Kim Kardashian, J.Lo, Justine Bieber fragrances and many other perfumes. They have all ranges of perfumes from expensive and exclusive ones to cheaper ones as well. They also have a wide variety of make up for people of all complexions and shades. They have make-up for black and for white people together with other make-up accessories. Also expensive creams for face, eyes, etc., are available in that section, such as Estee Laden, Clinique, etc. The section is brightly lit and it has different shades of light, at times its yellow and others its velvet.

The women's clothing section take up the left hand side of the shop, starting with the international brands from the beginning, accessories and formal wear in the middle part, intimate wear and swim wear at the back, whilst you find shoes towards the end of the right hand side of the shop. The accessories section is a small cubicle section with handbags, sun glasses, scarfs, beanies, sun hats, jewellery and head accessories. There are manikins in this section that show how the accessories can be worn with. The shoes section is just a small wall that has all types of shoes from sandals, loafers, boots, flip flops, heels, pumps and flat shoes, sneakers. In the shoes department they have Sissy boy, Pierre Cardin, Free2bU and Kelso. The ladies section is divided into formal wear, casual wear and intimate wear. They have pants and slacks hanging on a lower rail whilst blouses and shirts are matching the pants from an upper rail. The other section has a wide range of dresses, jackets and cardigans on rails.

The intimate wear section sells women's underwear, petticoats, night dresses and morning gowns.

The whole store has white walls, white shelves and silver rails because they help to complement the white walls. There is an air conditioning system in Edgars so it feels cool when it is hot outside and its warmer when it is cold outside. There is a fresh smell from Edgars and as you get to the cosmetics section there are beautiful fragrances from the perfumes being sold there but in overall the shop smells fresh at all times. It's one shop you can never get bored in. There is good lighting in Edgars that illuminates every inch of the shop. The illumination and the white walls make the shop looker bigger than it really is. Edgars plays a wide variety of music. They play hip-hop, soul, jazz, R'n'B and old school R'n'B except for gospel as they comment that they want to be inclusive of everyone including every religion without being blamed for supporting one particular religion.

There are several pictures in the store, especially the cosmetics section. With women of different shades and races wearing particular make-up brands which I believe is a guide for the customer to know where to start searching for a make-up brand, for example Revlon, Black Opal, Charlie, Rimmel, NY and Sissily. There are some manikins in the shop that are accessorised to show how a scarf can be worn and what to wear with. There are discount boards in the shop to notify the customers of the things that are on discount.

The assistants are always wearing black and white. Black slacks to be specific with white shirts and black flat shoes. When it is cold they wear Edgars sweat shirts that have badges with their names on them. The manager wears black and white as well and she is always wearing heels at all times. On some Fridays, they are free to wear dark blue jeans with white t-shirt, black Edgars tops or white shirts. The ladies work well together, they are very diligent when they are doing their job. The ladies enjoy doing their work, they are friendly to customers when they approach them and they hardly approach the customers themselves. The cosmetics lady is very friendly. It is only in the cosmetics section where you find the beauty specialist approaching you unlike the other departments where the customer has to approach the sales assistant.

The sales assistants mostly advertise new products like a new range of fragrances or items that are on sale, like 'Buy 1 and Get 1 pair of Guess jeans'. When there is a sale they inform all the customers as they see them coming in. The sales assistants are respectful to everyone who walks into the shop, be it the young girls for Victoria Girls High school, Rhodes

University students or Grahamstown residents. They just treat them the same and value them as customers, but above all the employees are very respectful of their manager. They run around and they are much quick when the manager is on the floor.

Store observation guide for Edgars Port Elizabeth

Edgars PE is situated in the CBD Govan Mbeki main road. Govan Mbeki is the hub of all activities in the CBD of Port Elizabeth. This kind of marketing makes the shop accessible to all the people passing by as the shop is directly overlooking the street. The shop is not very big, it is approximately 800 m². It has an elevator that leads to the second floor of the shop but it has been closed down and they only have one floor functional. The store has separate inbuilt cosmetics cubicle that is separated from the store's other departments and the beauty assistant is the one who operates the tills and help customers in her cubicle.

As you enter Edgars, there is large space in the middle that gives an illusion of space. There are several manikins on the windows and others artistic expressions hanging from the ceiling and the walls to advertise the clothes in the shop and market the stock to invite the passer by people into the shop. There are designer brands that cover the first half of the shop that range from Levis, Guess, polo, Nine West, Sissy Boy and local in-house brands that cover the last half which include Canterbury, D66, Kelso and Free2Bu, whilst the shoe section is at the back with a line that includes Pierre Cardin.

The cosmetics cubicle is positioned to the right hand-side of the shop. This is where all the make-up, jewellery and perfumes are being sold. They sell several brands of perfumes for both men and women. The perfumes available range from Polo, Tom Ford, Poco Rabbane, Bvlgari, Red Door Elizabeth Aiden, Beyoncé, Kim Kardashian, J.Lo, Justine Bieber fragrances and many other perfumes. The make-up brands include Revlon, Maybelline, Charlie, Black Opal, Rimmel, NY etc. Edgars has been names the house of brands because of the many brands that they have in their shops.

There are more clothing rails than shelves and there is space in the shop that allows customers to see everything in the shop and it also helps to make the sales assistant visible to the customers. Most of the clothes are arranged on the silver rails and there are very few shelves in the shops as this allows the customer to see everything. There are several artistic expressions in the shop that help to advertise what is being sold. Some are billboards hanging from the ceiling, portraits of women hanging on the walls, pictures of lifestyle ideas that help

the customer to make an informed decision. There are 'Thank U cards' brochures hanging from the ceiling to encourage people to sign-up for the loyalty cards.

Edgars has white walls and silver rails. The shop has an air conditioning system that keeps the shop warmer when it is cold outside and cooler when it is hot outside. The shop is full of lighting and they play soft soothing music that helps the sales assistants as they advertise the products in the shop. There is a fresh and calm atmosphere in the shop that is all in tranquillity with the sales assistants who are very welcoming and always smiling. There are more four coloured sales assistants of the six sales assistants in total.

The employees wear their black and white uniforms, usually black slacks or skirts and a white shirt. Their uniform makes them distinct from the customers and they help them to look more professional. The ladies employed in Edgars are quite mature, these are ladies of various age groups, with the youngest being 19, there is however a significant number of ladies in the 26 -38 year age group. Most of the ladies working in Edgars are coloured who speak Afrikaans, but the few Xhosa women in the shop speak Afrikaans as well. There is a female coloured manager and two female security guards that also come into the shop to help the sales assistants.

The ladies are very friendly and welcoming. They are cheerful with everyone who comes into the shop. They value customers very much. If a customer walks into the shop, there is a sales assistant walking after them to assist them where they need help, and this also helps to minimize theft. The sales assistants are friendly with each other as well as with their manager. The beauty specialist who works in her own cubicle is secluded from a lot of conversations being made in the shop. However the employees work diligently and they do their duties with so much pleasure that it is difficult to note that someone is having a bad day at work.

Store observation guide for Mr Price Grahamstown

MRP Ght is located in the town's very popular road High street, which is the hub of all retail shops. It covers an area of approximately 500m². MRP has one functional floor which houses the retailing space, the manager's office and the stock warehouse. The shop takes a rectangular shape where there is more space as you move towards the back.

There are billboards of current stock that are on the glass walls that cover the front and a quarter of the left hand-side as you walk into the shop to help show the customers what is

being sold in the store. This kind of advertising works as a marketing strategy to lure people into getting into the shop. There is no specific centre of attraction as one gets into MRP because it is a small shop and they try to maximize the space to an extent where the shelves are literally two steps from the entrance which is also the exit.

There are no manikins in MRP Ght or any other artistic expressions in the shop except for the cards that are pasted to the shelves that show the products that are on special. However outfit ideas are designed and hanged onto the shelves to give customers an idea on how to wear particular clothing. There are grey caged shelves in MRP in which clothes are folded and packed into. You find more clothes folded into the shelves than the ones welded on the iron cages.

The store layout hides the sales assistants. The ceiling high caged shelves over-shadow the sales assistants and this will result in customers having to look for the sales assistants. There are more women employed in MRP. There is a female manager and a male assistant manager, of all the women in the shop ten women work as sales assistants, whilst three work at the tills, the other men in MRP work at the Men's department and shoe section. Of all the sales assistants there are a significant number of coloured people, but there are more Xhosa women working there. The ladies are in the 25 to 35 years age group, however there are more young ladies in the 25- 28 age group and fewer in the 29- 35 age group.

MRP offers various in-house brands ranging from RT for ladies and men, Red for ladies and Men, Insync, Oakridge, Flexx, BM intimates and BM extras for accessories. Women's clothing covers a greater part of the shop with the men's section only covering the back corner of the shop. As you enter MRP, there is an accessories section with various jewellery which helps to attract customers that are passing by the shop and encourage them to come in and shop. The kids section is towards the back of the shop covering two rows of shelves. The shoes section covers the back wall whilst the BM for women's intimate wear covers the right hand-side of the shop.

The shop has white walls that cover the front part of the shop, but the whole back is stone brick. The white walls are not very visible because of clothes that are arranged to hang on the walls. As MRP is always packed with customers, the shop is a bit stuffy. There is a stifling warm air as you get into MRP. The lighting is just fine, it is enough to continue with business and still allow the customer to see exactly what they want. However MRP radio is played in

the shop and they have a personal Dj (Disk jokey) who plays the music they request and the music being played makes the place feel very comfortable.

All the sales assistants wear dark blue jeans, a t-shirt with an MRP logo, a badge and flat shoes. The ladies wear flat shoes as they do their work because they are comfortable to walk in and they can allow you to do everything to help the customer. The ladies enjoy their work so much, especially during the late mornings and mid-afternoon where they are still feeling fresh, they are very diligent as they conduct their work, but as the day ends, the sales assistants are all focusing on their task and are not as talkative or lively as they were before.

The sales assistants do not approach the customer, they rather wait for the customer to come and ask for help before they could assist them. The clothes that are on special are arranged on a wall where there are discount cards to show a price. The sales assistants are very friendly, but they are usually friendly to each other and to customers who wish to speak to them in Xhosa. I have noted that the Xhosa ladies prefer speaking Xhosa to their clients. The sales assistants get along very well with each other and with their managers like one big happy family.

Store observation guide for Mr Price Port Elizabeth

The Mr Price in the Port Elizabeth CBD is located next to Edgars and directly opposite Identity store. It is in a square shape and it has everything done in that 1st floor, it does not have a functional basement if there is any. The store is quite small. It is set at a strategic position as it is in Govern Mbeki the main road in Port Elizabeth CBD which is the hub of all retail shops.

MRP PE does not have a main centre of attraction; it has some discount boards on the windows that are written in bright colours to attract the people passing by. Most people are expected to be drawn into the shop by the posters that are indicating a mark down on clothes. The entrance is the exit as well, this way the shop is meant to be less crowded because if one gets in and is not interested they can easily walk out without walking around the store and increasing commission. Using one exit/entrance also helps to minimize theft in the shop. There is an MRP radio station that is always playing in the shop to help entertain the customers, the employees and to advertise the clothes.

MRP has white walls, but they are not very visible because of the grey cage shelves in the shop. There are very few rails, and if there are any, the rails are welded in the grey wire

shelves. You find more clothes folded in shelves than hanging on rails. This allows for more stock to be packed in the shelves. The shelves rise to the ceiling level and there are ladders all over the shop so that the sales assistants can help customers by reaching out for clothes that are on higher shelves. There are no manikins or artistic expressions in MRP PE. The lighting in the shop is just enough to light up the place, but the grey caged shelves in the shop make the already small shop a little gloomy because you can hardly see the walls as they are covered by the shelves.

MRP specializes in casual fun and relaxed fashion for the whole family. They cater for young children from the age of 2 to 14, they have fashion for young adults, professional formal wear and for older people, all at affordable prices. Their fashion lines range from casual wear, intimate wear, sportswear, formal wear and accessories. MRP however, does not offer designer or international fashion brands, they have their own in-house brands namely RT for ladies and men, Red for ladies and Men, Insync, Oakridge, Kumaro, BM intimates and BM extras for accessories. For this reason MRP is always packed with customers buying clothes.

The sales assistants are not easily accessible. The shop is every busy and it is always packed with people buying. That way the sales assistants are always packing clothes, folding clothes that have been misplaced and picking after clothes that are falling. So MRP is a very busy shop, it's probably the busiest clothing retail shop in Govan Mbeki. The shop is very stuff because there are a lot of people who are there. There is no sales assistant who comes to approach you unless as a customer you go to approach them yourself. There are three managers in MRP, two of them are female and one is a male. The sixteen sales assistants are all women and there are two male security guards at all times.

All the sales assistants are female and there are four till operators in MRP who work on touchscreen tills to make their work much easier. There is an abstract difference one notices when they walk around MRP. The sale assistants are mostly coloured people, from the 25- 35 age group approximately. They look happy and always laughing with each other. The sales assistants seem to get along very well with someone who speaks their language. They look busy and drag their feet more often. At the same time they are very diligent, they are always running around in the shop after their clients' orders. The sales assistants are always wearing their dark blue jeans, MRP t-shirts with a badge and either takkies, pumps or Tommies. They all come to work in their uniforms. The managers wear a different colour t-shirt like a white t-shirt.

As you walk into MRP PE you are confronted by the jewellery section and rows of clothes that are folded in the shelves. The jewellery and accessories section is one part of a wall and a few rails to advertise some of the jewellery and accessories. The women's clothing section is the biggest section. It has all the shelves stocked in the shelves where the customers are able to see anything and decide in what they really would like to purchase or try on in the fitting rooms. The women's section is positioned at the left hand-side of the shop whilst the small men's section is at the right. The women's shoe section covers the back wall and half of the right hand-side wall, where there are high heels, flat shoes, pumps, sandals, flip flops and sneakers. MRP does not have a cosmetics section it sells strictly clothes.

The clothes that are on discount are positioned towards the back of the shop and they have their red tags. There are no sales assistants to come help the customers. A customer can just pick the item they want and go pay or try on in the fitting rooms, and if they want to inquire something they will have to go look for a sales assistant to inquire something for them like if they still have a particular size in stock or it is finished.

When a customer picks an outfit they go to the fitting room where they find an assistant in that position counting the clothes that they have and give them a number tag. The fitting rooms are small and have enough space for one person. There are hooks for the customer to hang their clothes as they change into new ones, and there is a full length mirror for them to look at themselves and see if they want to buy the outfit.

The sales assistants work in a very respectful way. When they are alone they speak in other languages other than English, but rather Xhosa and Afrikaans. They seem to conduct themselves professionally in front of managers in a friendly, yet respectful manner with each other as well as their managers. The sales assistants where not very friendly when I approached them for the first time, they seem to be more helpful and friendly to older customers unlike the young people, but they got accommodative as I continuously visited the stores. The younger sales assistants where much friendly than the older ones. White people are given more respect than black people. One can tell with the way they are efficient when serving a white person.

Appendix B

Interviewee observation: Edgars Grahamstown

Thembi

Thembi is a young lady who works in the beauty section at Edgars Grahamstown. She is a dark Xhosa lady with wavy Brazilian hair extensions tied back. She is always wearing make-up at work, but when I had an interview with her she was not on duty, she was not wearing any make up at all, she was wearing flip flops, but when she is at work she is always wearing black slacks, a white shirt and black flat shoes.

Thembi has a flawless skin and was very interested in responding to the interview. As I conducted the interview she was very comfortable and confident. She spoke openly about her dissatisfactions. I could tell from the way she was moving her hands that she does not like wearing make up all the time. She had a very stern look on her face when she was talking, but she seems to enjoy the incentives she gets because she gets a lot of make-up and get to try on all the new things same as perfumes because her face would lighten up and she would have a big smile.

Matula

Matula is a tall dark Xhosa lady; she was wearing a blue denim skirt with black pumps and a white t-shirt. She has short hair with a dark black colour. She has a well-built body structure and a smooth skin. Her English is fluent and she speaks good English in confidence because she is well informed with regards to the daily running of Edgars because she was giving me very relevant information as we conducted the interview.

Matula is a young lady who is very talkative. She loves her job and I could tell from the way she was just excited. She is an ever smiling lady who is passionate about her job and she tries to sell it well to other people who are willing to listen to her as she expresses her delights and frustrations about her job. She likes the managers and her co-workers as she was all smiles talking about her working environment.

Lebo

Lebo is a young lady, probably in her mid to late 20s, she was wearing dark blue skinny jeans and a white t-shirt with black pumps. She is a very light and tall Xhosa woman with a curvy body structure. Lebo's English is fluent and she is very confident when she is speaking and

even when she is on the floor doing her work she is very diligent and is committed to her duty as a sales assistant

Lebo is a young lady who is very intimidating at first sight. She does not have a very welcoming face but as you talk to her she begins to loosen up, probably because she believes in building trust before opening up to someone. Scheduling an interview took me a full week till we had built trust. She values honesty and she had a serious face when we were having the interview. She does not laugh at a lot of things she is a very rough person in the edges but I enjoyed the interview with her because she gave me some good information.

Lolo

Lolo is a young Xhosa lady who enjoys her work. She was wearing an Edgars discount t-shirt and dark blue skinny jeans with black pumps probably because it was on a Friday and they are allowed to wear casual clothing. She had black box braids and manicured nails. Lolo is always walking around the shop and wears a smile at all times.

Lolo is very funny and confident; she enjoys working at Edgars and had nothing but good thing to say about Edgars. She was very happy talking about Edgars as noted by the way she would reach out for my hand to give me a high five, she was smiling throughout the interview, she had a very satisfied face and she sounded happy too. She has a perfect English accent and her English was very good. She enjoys her work as noted by the way she was working in her department. She has a very welcoming smile and is happy with all her customers and because of that many people go to her for any inquiries about anything because she knows a lot of things that are in the shop.

Interviewee observation: Edgars Port Elizabeth

Fundiswa

Fundiswa is a beauty specialist who has been in the beauty industry for a relatively long time. She is a Xhosa middle aged woman with black long natural hair tied into a bun. She was wearing black slacks, a white shirt with a black cardigan on top and black flat shoes. She has a pear shaped figure with a flawless skin and smells very good, her perfumes smell expensive.

Fundiswa has a very good English accent; she is a comfortable and confident woman. She was very open about her work as a beauty specialist in Edgars. She would always maintain

eye contact as we conducted the interview. She was sitting in a very comfortable chair and felt very relaxed as I conducted the interview. She loves her job but there are aspects of the job that she doesn't enjoy as I could tell from the change in her tone, especially her working conditions, regarding leave days and taking a day off.

Sinezipe

Sinezipe is a young Xhosa lady who works at the women's department. She is one of the youngest employees who are very ambitious and she sees working as a sales assistant as her passport to one day become a manager at Edgars. She was wearing black slacks and a white t-shirt with black Tommies. She is short and stout but very light in complexion. She had straight back cornrows.

Sinezipe's English is fluent but it comes with a Xhosa accent. She is very confident about herself as a person and about her work. She talks very fast and is very informative. She was fun to have an interview with because she was always throwing jokes now and again. , she works at the ladies section and she is always smiling. When answering a question she is not fond of she would drag her words and scratch hair a bit

Pindeka

Pindeka is a middle aged single mother; she has medium height and a slender body. She had medium length natural black hair that is relaxed. She was wearing her Edgars default uniform: black and white with black flat shoes. Pindeka is Xhosa and she values her work so much and is passionate about her job.

Pindeka was very emotional talking about her job, she did not look very happy talking about her job but she is working so that she can provide for her daughter. Her English is fluent and she is soft spoken, however when she gets emotional about a certain topic she should lower her voice and you could see the sadness in her eyes but she was very open to questioned and was opening up about her job and answered the other follow up questions non-hesitantly.

Vuyo

Vuyo is a young lady who works in the shoes section. She has sleek long black hair that was tied at the back. She was wearing her black slacks, a white shirt and a pair of black pumps. Vuyo is a tall Xhosa lady who is light in complexion. She has a voluptuous figure and is very

friendly once you talk to her, but when she is in the store she does not look as friendly as she really is.

Vuyo's English is fluent, she is very confident when she is merchandising the shoes in her department. Her job is an easy task for her so she is happy with her work but she did not sound very enthusiastic about the incentives that she gets because she is unable to afford the products she is merchandising, one I could tell her broken heart from her tone when she was discussing it. Vuyo is a hard working lady and she is very watchful of her department, she knows her products and looks very happy, comfortable and smart when she is advertising them to the customer.

Interviewee observation: Mr Price Grahamstown

Jaq

Jaq is a young sale assistant in MRP Grahamstown in her mid to late 20s. She has long sleek burgundy natural hair. She is a Cape Coloured lady. She has a very captivating personality that is warm and very welcoming. She was wearing blue denim jeans, a grey MRP t-shirt with red prints, black pumps and an MRP cap. The ladies wear uniform at all times during their office hours. She is tall and light in complexion.

Jaq is a very enthusiastic young lady who enjoys working in MRP. She works at the ladies department where she arranges and assists customers who want to buy. She is very confident and friendly, she was cheerful the whole time we conducted our interview and she was selectively thinking about the things she was saying because at times she looked like she was searching for some information that is too far-fetched. She is well informed about MRP shop and was very comfortable and willing to share the information that she has.

Nosi

Nosi is a middle aged woman; she was wearing an MRP cap so I could not see her hairstyle. She is always wearing her MRP uniform that consists on blue jeans, a grey MRP t-shirt printed in red with white takkies. Nosi is a pear shaped Xhosa lady, dark in complexion. She works in the shoes department and is always packing her shoes and is friendly to the customers.

She was not very receptive when I was conducting the interview. She was holding back a lot of information but managed to answer all the questioned and other follow up questions. She

is very concerned about keeping her job and was constantly trying to give safe answers. However she lacked detailed information about the operation at MRP like where they have their clothes manufactured. As she was answering the questions she would scratch her head or not give direct eye contact which I am not sure if it's her personality (shy) or culture.

Yolen

Yolen is a young mother of two; she is a sales assistant in MRP and works in the kids section. She has caramel blonde medium length hair. She is very light in complexion. On the day of the interview she was wearing a denim skirt and an MRP grey t-shirt, with black pumps but was not wearing a cap. She is a stout Cape Coloured lady and you can easily pick it from her English; which is a combination of English and Afrikaans.

Yolen is a very frank person; she was very honest about her work and dissatisfactions about the work shift and some of her job requirements. You could tell her discomfort from her facial expressions as she would roll her eyes and niche on her lips. She is very confident but when asked on topics about people's feeling and attitude towards the job requirements she was very passionate about how the shift days need to change. She sounded very enlightened about MRP and her contribution made a difference.

Thandiswa

Thandiswa is a young sales assistant working in MRP; she is in her mid to late 20s. She has a long black synthetic weave. She was wearing dark blue jeans, a grey MRP t-shirt and blue and white takkies. Thandiswa is a medium height lady with a very smooth light skin. She is very diligent with her work and works efficiently.

In my interview with Thandiswa I noted that she had severe grievances about working during the weekends, she looked very upset responding about her working condition in MRP. She is a reserved young lady but she is very open to having a conversation with a person willing to. Her English is very fluent and she is very confident about herself. She looked and sounded very calm and collected as we conducted the interview.

Interviewee observation: Mr Price Port Elizabeth

Priscilla

Priscilla is an Afrikaans young lady in her late 20s. She has medium length straight black hair and she is very light in complexion. She was wearing her MRP uniform (blue jeans and a black MRP t-shirt) with blue takkies. She has a slender body and she looks pretty. Priscilla was very confident and excited to respond to the interview, she was very calm and collected during the interview and she was very open to questions. Her English is very fluent but it still has an Afrikaans accent to it.

Priscilla knows much about her job because she has been working there for a long time and she is well enlightened about customer service and her duty as a sales assistant. She was very eager to help and she always looked delighted as she was working in her section. She would always put back clothes on the hanger and fold them whenever she saw them falling.

Dintle

Dintle is the youngest of the group of women I interviewed. She is in her mid to late 20s. Dintle is very future oriented; she wants to raise money to go to college that's why she is working at MRP. She had burgundy synthetic braids and was wearing her MRP uniform (blue jeans and a black t-shirt) with black Tommies. She is of medium height and has a pear body shape. She is Zulu and was very talkative during the interview, she was fun to interview and her English was fluent.

Dintle is a fun girl, but she did not look or sound very enthusiastic about her job, she had a lot to complain about, but in her section she was working well, she was folding t-shirts and was fast pacing. She knows the basics about MRP and she does not go out of her way to find information, she just knows what she is told only.

Noma

Noma is a Zulu young lady in her late 30s, she had a black synthetic weave. She is a very polite young lady who is soft spoken and takes some time to think before answering a question. She was wearing her MRP uniform (blue jeans and a black t-shirt) with black Tommies. She is tall and dark in complexion with a very curvy body structure. Her English was fair but I enjoyed interviewing her because she sounded calm and collected at times she kept on repeating things that she had said before.

Noma is friendly, she has mastered the art of customer service, the customers like her too, she is helpful to her customers. She is an intelligent sales assistant who is always trying to please

her customers; she looks happy all the time and gets along with most of the ladies in the shop. In the kids section where she works, she entertains the kids who come there and laughs with everyone.

Scout

Scout is a light Xhosa young lady who is in her late 20s, she was very eager about the interview, she really wanted to help me and she is the one who linked me with the other ladies in MRP. She had a bob styled synthetic weave in her hair and she was wearing her MRP uniform (blue jeans and a black t-shirt) with blue and white takkies and she looked very comfortable. She is of medium height and has a petite body. As we conducted the interview she was very open and sounded truthful. She looked and sounded passionate about her job. She is a very relaxed and easy going person. She was confident about the interview and it kept me at ease when I was interviewing her. Her English is fair; she would mix English and Xhosa during the interview.

Scout works at the fitting room and jewellery section. She sounded vulnerable as if she was scared of something, I could tell from her tone but she was very open about her job and her life. She knows the basics about MRP and loves her job. The customers like her and prefer working with her because she has a very welcoming delighted face.

Appendix C

In-depth interview questions for Mr Price and Edgars

- **What job requirements do women working in Mr Price and Edgars have to display in relation to emotional and aesthetical labour and how do they perceive their jobs?**
 1. How long have you been working here? How do you feel about working here?
 2. What would you say motivates you to keep working here?
 3. Do you work on a permanent or temporary basis?
 4. Did you go through employment training for this job, if yes, what did you do during your employment training? If no, how did you learn your job responsibilities in the shop?
 5. Are you expected to know all products in the store and do you get training?
 6. Which products do you offer in your store?
 7. How do you advertise products that are on promotion?
 8. Is it you or management that inform customers on credit card and loyalty card facilities? Why?
 9. Do you get rewarded for selling more products to customers and how?
 10. How does your wage system work? Do you get basic salary plus commission?
 11. Does the store offer group or individual commission and what do you think about the commission system being offered?
 12. Are there company guidelines on how to manage your feelings and reactions towards customers?
 13. If customers ask how clothes look on them, do you actually tell them the truth?
 14. Do you get loyalty benefits for managing your emotions and reactions in the store?
 15. Do you think you can separate your professional and personal life? Please explain how
 16. What criteria do you think the company uses to employ its retail assistants?
 17. What is your highest level of education?
 18. How many languages do you speak and which ones? Do you speak with the clients in English or are you allow to speak in your own tongue?
 19. Do you think the company employed you because of your appearance and accent? Is this an advantage? Why?
 20. Why do you think they hired you to work in this store?

21. As a sales assistant do you think you can be identified with the products you sell?
Why?

- **What are the different feelings and attitudes that women working in Mr. Price and Edgars have toward work requirements?**

1. How can you describe your job to someone who works in a different job?
2. What is your daily attitude in your work environment? Is it part of your job description or part of your personality? How is your attitude toward other co-workers and management in general?
3. Would you say your job description is different from the other shop assistants on your floor?
4. Are there any opening and closing duties in the store and how do you feel about them?
5. Does working in this shop give benefits in terms of discount for clothing, perfume etc.?
6. Are you able to buy the products that you promote or try to sell or they are inaccessible for you? How do you feel about it?
7. Can you please explain what kind of conduct is expected from you?
8. Can you describe your work environment?
9. How do you relate with your co-workers?
10. How do you think respect is perceived between retail assistant and customer?
11. Would you say customers respect you as much as you respect them and why?
12. Explain how language can affect your conduct with a person of a certain race (Black, White, Coloured and Indian)
13. Do you experience rude customers in your job? What do you do in this case?
14. Have you experienced some problems with customers that reported you to management?
15. How did management respond to you? Explain in depth
16. How do you think the other women, colleagues feel about their job?
17. What do you perceive about their attitude toward the job and the responsibilities they have?

- **What are the challenges that women working in Mr Price and Edgars have in relation to the management supervision on their appearances and professional behaviour?**

1. Do you have to use particular type of clothing in your work place such as a uniform or particular clothing/colours, etc. or you can wear anything you want?
2. Do you know if this represents a particular meaning to the company? Why?
3. Does the store provide you with the clothing items you wear or you buy them?
Explain
4. Do you get a discount from management when you buy work clothing from the store?
5. Do you have a dress and appearance policy that you follow?
6. Is your manager strict with regards to how you present yourself? Explain [clothing, hair style, make up, nails, etc.
7. Is it common for your company to send workers to hearings? What are the main reasons for management to send a shop assistant to hearing? Please, explain.
8. Have you experienced a hearing before?
9. What is the role of management and the trade unions representative in this case?
10. How does management handle complains if you or any of your colleagues go to them with any problem?
11. Is you management very particular in terms of the language that you should use in the working place?
12. What is the gender distribution of management? If they are male – how do they respond to your needs? If they are females, do you think they can or understand you better? Explain.
13. Do you have leave days and how are they structured?
14. What is the policy on calling out of work?
15. How is your shift working hours scheduled? Do you feel they need to stay like that or should be changed a bit and why?
16. Are you allowed to use a cellular phone when you are not serving a customer?
Explain
17. What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned from working in retail?
18. What's the most positive part about working in retail? And the negative one?
- **How does the space distribution within the shops affect the aesthetic and emotional requirements of the workers?**
 1. How many people work on your floor?
 2. Can you work on any section in the store?

3. Do you have a specific section you are supposed to work? Do you think that the specific section/area of the shop in which you work affect your job description? Explain how?
4. Are you responsible for the way products are displayed? What do you think about the way products are displayed in your store?
5. How are products distributed in the store?
6. Are international and local brands sold in the same section? Why
7. Can managers see you working from their offices? Are there cameras or other devices in order to surveillance your work and the others?
8. What's expected of you especially from where you are stationed?
9. Do you have a particular dress code based on the section you work?
10. If you work at the cosmetics section are you expected to use the make-up and perfumes being sold in the store? Why
11. Do you do something different from other workers because of where you work?
12. Does the store layout determine your communication skills with the customers and other workers?
13. Can you explain if illumination, area distribution, mannequins, etc. do they make you more visible in the shop? How does it make you feel?
14. Do you feel more exposed to the customer because of the store layout and clothing distribution or you are comfortable with this? Explain
15. What kind of music is played in the store? Do you know why you play such music?
16. Would you like to add something else about the shop distribution?
17. Any other comment you believe it relevant?

Four ladies were interviewed from Edgars in the Grahamstown town who work as sales assistants. I interviewed Thembi who works in the cosmetics section, Matula who works downstairs in the kids section, Lebo and Lolo who work upstairs as floor assistants. These women helped me to get a full insight of their work experiences in Edgars. Matula explained that: *we don't have a guideline on managing our emotions but we know that managing them gives us better customer service to our customers.* The Edgars employees enjoy working for Edgars because it feels like they are making a difference and they are part of a big organization as Lebo explained that: *we have to be honest at all times, remember we are representing our brand.* The employees are very friendly to the customers, they always welcome you with a beautiful smile Lolo highlighted that: *the best thing about this job is meeting customers, sharing experiences and trust with them.* Working in the retail sector is difficult but if there is teamwork it makes the burden less painful for those carrying it and where employees get incentives they will enjoy their work giving good customer service to their customers as Thembi highlighted that: *I get my incentives from different companies so I get to have a lot of make-up things and when I am putting on make-up, I'm putting on different brands with different effects.*

The employees have all worked in Edgars for a significant number of years [which implies permanence in the work-place] which would show their commitment to representing their Edgars brand, but not all of them are working to represent the brand, neither are they all satisfied by their job. Thembi who works at the make-up section complained that: *this job my friend is very tiring, you stand on your feet all day and you have some other people who just come to ask you somethings, others steal and mess up your day.* However some sales assistants really love their job as Matula explained that: *I really love my job, I'm so happy when I come to work, I have been working here for 2 years and these 2 years were good because I have met good customers who have become good friends, our manager is so understanding so that's good enough for me.*

The Edgars sales assistants are expected to display various elements of emotional and aesthetic labour in their daily conduct, be it with each other or with their superiors, but mostly to their customers. A customer is very important to Edgars and they are always trying to leave their customers satisfied which will encourage them to come back as Lolo praised Edgars saying: *Edgars is a one stop shop, we offer everything that our customer may need, we have fashion clothes, designers clothes, beautiful shoes, handbags, jewellery, perfumes, make-up, cell-phones, school uniforms for children and bedding if you want any, we are*

prepared for all the seasons, we have blankets, beach costumes, winter coats...we have everything that a customer might want to have.

The sales assistants are expected to know all the products available in the shop even if it is not from their section. They are trained when they get new stock so that they know everything and they can pitch and sell the product to the customer so confidently. Lebo explains that: *all the staffs working in the store knows everything that is in the store that is because customers ask information from everyone who is staff so everyone has to know the product to avoid dissatisfactions.* They do not get rewarded for selling more products individually, neither are they paid individual salaries. They all work as a team so that they make the highest sales. It is from these high sales that they get a slight increment on their basic salary. The increment on their basic salary depends on their ability to reach a stipulated monthly target set by the headquarters, but in cases where they do not meet their target, they just get a basic salary

The sales assistants all claim to work as permanent employees because they come to work every day and get a discount on the clothes that they buy because casual workers do not get a staff discount on clothes but they have no other benefits that they get. The employees are not affiliated to any trade union; neither do they have a medical aid nor pension scheme from Edgars. If they want to quit the job they just tell the manager in advance so that they can get someone else to replace them because. Getting employed at Edgars does not seem to be a problem because the employees just send their CV to the Edgars manager and when a vacancy opens up the manager can choose who to call to fill in the vacancy available as Matula explained that: *towards end of 2013 I sent an application form to the HR for a post and they called me to work around January where I was a casual for 2 months before they gave me a job as a permanent.* There is no broker facilitation in getting employed at Edgars in Grahamstown. The employment relationship is between two people; the employer and the employee.

To be a sales assistant at Edgars you need to have Matric so that you are able to do the basics, communicate proficient English with customer, do basic mathematics when you are calculating the products that are on sale so that you balance the stock well. However Lolo sees no point for employing people with Matric only as she explains that: *there is no need to have Matric really because a person is judged by their CV and working experience but here at Edgars we have on-going training at all times and we are assessed by a written numeracy*

and literacy test, if a person fails they will have to reapply after six months. Some of the job requirements are learnt on the job, the sales assistants learn some of the things they do like folding clothes and arranging hangers. The management is very particular in terms of language, all the sales assistants are expected to speak in English at all times unless a customer initiates a different language, it would be an added advantage if one speaks many languages as Lebo highlights that: *we speak English at all times because of the different people that come here, the university have students from different countries and if you speak many languages it's even better for you because some customers really like it when you can help them using their own language.* Working experience is good because a person with a good looking CV is likely to get a job unlike someone who has a poor CV.

A sales assistant is expected to fully commit to their job requirements of serving the customer relentlessly. A customer's satisfaction is their ultimate goal and in the process they sacrifice a lot of their time and personality to fit the job requirements. They constantly have to separate their professional life from their private life so that they give maximum attention to the customer and they have to put more effort in pushing away any problems that they may have as Thembi explains that: *you always have to go an extra mile to satisfy your customer even if it means trying to be someone you are not and pretend to be happy even when you know that deep inside you are not, you just have to try so that the customer leaves the shop happy or else I would have failed my job.* Cellular phones are not allowed on the floor. The assistants can only use their phones during their lunch break not all the time because they noted that it would shift their attention and they will lack concentration on their work.

In working as a sales assistant one is easily identified with the products that they are selling. The visual people are easily noted by their t-shirts that are printed and written 'visuals' for cleaners it's the same and for the security guards it's the same because you can identify them with the clothes that they are selling. In the cosmetics section the beauty specialist is always wearing make-up and from her make-up a customer can easily tell the shade of lipstick or foundation so that it makes a customer interested in buying. In other words the sales assistants walk around the shop as walking billboards as Thembi highlight that: *because of where I work, wearing makeup is a must, I need to use the products I am selling and the customers need to see them on me, appreciate it and buy it because if I am not wearing make-up people will confuse me for an ordinary customer and I will not be able to do my job properly.*

The ladies working in Edgars have varying feelings and attitudes towards their work requirements but one thing in common is that they are not happy with their hours of work. The women complain that their working shift is very long. They work from 8:30am to 5:30pm from Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm during the weekend. Their shift includes a 1 hour lunch break that they take as scheduled. However they have to be at work 30 minutes before the official opening of the shop so that they prepare and plan for the day ahead and they leave 30 minutes to an hour after the shop has been closed depending on the day to clean up the shop and balance their books. Lebo explained that: *we work very hard at Edgars, we are always walking from one section to the next and there is very few of us on the floor, so by the time we finish work you are so tired and the thing about working during the weekends, I don't like that because I miss a lot of things, I miss church and other functions that happen during the day because I will be tired, it's so bad for me because I work full time here.*

The duty of a sales assistant ranges from making sales for the shop and representing the brand. In making sales for the shop, the sales assistants are expected unpack and display stock, advertise persuade the customers to buy the clothes. Lolo explained that: *my duty include customer service, merchandising, displaying stock, selling and handling customer queries and departmental housekeeping.* These are the basic requirements for a sales assistant and from there come some other requirements than are not on blue print like always smiling, keeping composure, selective honesty and working to impress the customer at every chance. When a person is honestly performing their duties it is easier for them to rise through the ranks of Edcon as Lebo asserts that: *Edgars provides great opportunities for training, development and learnership programs are available for entry level employees, but it all depends on your knowledge, experience and most importantly attitude.* As a result to rise the ranks in Edgars the sales assistant need to have a positive attitude.

Asked to describe their jobs, the women described themselves as floor assistants who are there to ensure the smooth running of the shop by unpacking the boxes with stock, sorting the clothes accordingly and giving good customer service such that the customers do not complain. Matula described it as: *to strive to meet our daily sales and to just meet my customers which is a part of my personality and job at the same time.* The employees are loyal to serving the customers with the best service they can ever give because satisfying the customer and having a good personality like smiling and being polite to customer is part of the job as Lolo highlights that: *we are supposed to be friendly to all our customers it does not*

matter their age, any person who is bringing money into the shop is our customer and it is my duty to make them feel special because they are special to us, so I'm always smiling and laughing at their joke even when I don't understand what they are saying I'm supposed to just look interested.

Disciplinary hearings are not very common in Edgars Grahamstown, They have one female manager and another male assisting manager. The female manager is a polite white lady. She is very approachable and encourages team work amongst the sales assistants and all the employees because Edgars is like a family, but Thembi proclaims that when things are not done the right way she will put her point across that way all the employees are scared of getting on her wrong side as she explains that: *Our manager is very strict about the job that has to be done and you don't want to get her angry. When she is angry she shouts at everyone even in Xhosa and you just have to say 'I'm sorry mama', you cannot be late for work or have an untidy place or just decide not to unpack the number of boxes you have to.* The workers are not affiliated to any trade union, for any of their complaints, they discuss with their manager, and the manager is responsible for dispute resolution within the store either amongst the employees or between the employee and the customer. The ladies responded that if there is a problem with a customer they are supposed to apologize to the customer even where they are not at fault and if it's a misunderstanding between the employees, they are both called for a hearing with the manager where they both explain their case and the manager will give a verdict which they will both observe and go back to work, however they are given 3 warnings before they can be fired.

The ladies in Edgars have varying off days. They work 40-45 hours a week and they have a stipulated number of leave days that they can apply for to get them as Thembi explained that: *we get 18 days for leave per 12 months of working and we are not allowed to take leave during the festive season because it's the busiest time the Edgars calendar, we have 4 sick leave days and when we can't make it to work, we need to tell our manager an hour before because we have a one hour policy and everyone observes that policy.* With the one hour policy the ladies are not impressed, at times one is just way too busy to get to the phone and make a phone call to notify the manager as they could be rushing their child to the hospital or they are the ones being rushed to the hospital since no one is in a position to foretell a sickness.

Retail work has several pros as well as cons. The ladies are not satisfied by the amount of pressure that they are forced to work under. There are very few people working in the shop

but there is a lot of work that needs to be done and they have daily targets that they should beat. Matula explained that: *at times you have 20 boxes of stock to unpack and sort, when you have such work you can't even go for lunch because if you don't finish your boxes that day it means you have a lot of work piling up, you'll have work for that day and for the previous day, that's the part I don't like about my job, but I have learnt to work under pressure and to do many things at once.* The ladies commented that they have learnt to be polite, to manage their feelings and not to show anger as Lebo explained that: with this job you have to be extra, extra nice, I used to get easily irritated, but I have learnt to even withdraw my anger, I can't show the customers that I am angry. I just have to smile and I learnt it all here.

Edgars Grahamstown is a religious store. In the morning the employees together with their manager have a service where they sing, read a scripture and pray. This religious principle helps to keep the employees united and fortunately all the employees in the shop are Christians. Lolo explained that: *I was shocked to hear the people singing and praying the first time I got here, and now I see that its very helpful because at least it gets me ready for the job and if there is a rude customer or if anyone comes up with a negative vibe I will just say 'Lord help me' because I'm spirit filled already.* Religion seems to be used as a marketing strategy, which help the workers to be amicable with one another, in harmony and it creates a safe, good and happy working environment, Thembi comments that: *we have a good working environment where everyone loves everyone and cares about each other, we are a family that works and prays together. Whenever someone has a problem we pray together for each other and we help each other, whenever I need help with my section I can ask someone to come help me because we are united.*

There are always 14 people working on the floor, these 14 people are both men and women. They are divided into different sections so that they avoid gossiping, some work on the floor and others work at the tills. Lolo highlights that: *we have about 9 people working on the floor at all times and there are 4 people working at the till, Thembi works in her section so we can't count her, so we are always rotating sections so that with time everyone knows about each and every section of the store because you would have worked there.* The sales assistants do not just work anywhere in the shop, but they have sections allocated to them by the managers, and they need to be at their stations at all times because customers are constantly coming in and it's the sales person's duty to help the customer.

The sales assistants are responsible for the basic display of products in the shop even though there are visual implementers that may be sent from PE to assist in achieving the layout that has been designed by the headquarters. Thembi highlights that: *this section is my home, I display it exactly how I want, I'm the one organizes the beauty products from one range to the next and it's the way I organize the things that has to bring me a lot of customers.* As a basic duty, the sales assistants stock the shelves with alike clothes and shades. The sales assistants who work on floor have a different job requirement as compared to Thembi who is in the cosmetics section and all she has to deal with are her beauty products and her customers, their uniform differs because they are doing different things as Thembi explains that: *as for me, I wear my make-up every day, I put make-up on some clients, I help customers choose the perfumes that they want so I create bonds with customer so that I understand them, plus with the other assistants we share the same basics.*

Edgars has been named the house of brands because it has several international brands that they sell in their shop. The products that are found in Edgars Grahamstown are distributed from the Headquarters, they get to decide what goes where and how much goes where as Matula alluded that: *we get our stock according to the centralised distribution department warehouse, they decide which brands we get and how much, and if our stock finishes we have to call them so that they send us more stock to restock our shelves.* As you enter Edgars, you are welcomed by international brands that cover the first half of the shop, you find Guess products, Levis, Sissy boy, Nine West and Pierre Cardin and when it comes to perfumes they have all the top brand perfumes and celebrity perfumes. As you move towards the back that's when you find the Edgars house brands like Kelso and Free2bU. Lebo clearly explained that the brands are positioned separately for merchandising purposes as she states that: *we have those labels in front so that's what people see when they are passing by the window, and when they see something they like they come in, even if they find what they want expensive that's when they explore the shop and see other things, that way the international brands have made them come into the shop and our customer service becomes important as we make the customers feel comfortable and buy something they had not planned on buying.*

The ladies working in Edgars claimed that their stock is manufactured both abroad and locally to save costs and time as Matula explained that: *we get our clothes from China and others are manufactured here. The China stock may come late at times because of some duty things we always hear or the container might be missing so we end up not restocking, but we are now having problems with our local manufactures, the prices are getting high because*

they may be forced to use generators because of the Eskom crisis, its badly affecting our business and its Grahamstown that suffers the most when all other big towns have new stuff we are the last ones to be considered and some of our customers end up going to Mr Price or Truworths and other shops because seriously no one wants to wait.

The ladies working in Edgars work hard on their own, the pressure they have always keeps them busy and the manager is always up and about. Her office is downstairs but you see her quite often walking around the shop, especially the tills area to supervise the stuff and when the shop is busy she comes to join them on the floor and her assistant manager is always on the floor to see how people are working, that way they avoid loafing. There are no surveillance cameras in the shop to monitor workers or thieves who pretend to be customers because they have sensormatic security towers (security system at the door) that can alert employees when merchandise is leaving the store without the appropriate processing as Lolo highlights that: *we don't have security camera's at this branch but the others have, we look out for ourselves and our goods because some people come here to steal, that's why we have the security ladies coming into the shop and walking around, just to check that but otherwise no, our management trusts us and we work very well together.*

Edgars employees have a uniform that they are all expected to wear when they are coming to work. They wear strictly black and white, they buy their uniform and they are allowed to wear anything as long as it is black and white and as long as it is formal. They need to look professional to the customer for the customer to take them seriously, and for this reason they use black and white. However at times their uniform changes when they are promoting something, for example they are given t-shirts and caps during campaign time if they are campaigning for something. The shop does not provide the uniform for them, they buy their own uniform, the shop might only provide t-shirts, but the ladies all claimed that it's not every time. Thembi who is a beauty specialist in the cosmetics section indicates that: *as part of my uniform I wear make-up, that's one thing I should have at all times, then I can wear black and white. My manager wanted me to wear heels because I work in the beauty section and I told her I can't do that because I am always walking around, I can fall plus heels are tiring, she can wear heels because she doesn't do a lot of moving up and down. I get t-shirts from Ponds, Revlon, Clinique and black opal to wear when I am advertising their products, so I wear them on Friday because it's a Jeans day, we wear jeans unlike slacks and other things, but the other floor assistants wear just black and white.*

Edgars is designed in a way that all the products are at the disposal of the customer and there are sales assistants everywhere so that they can assist a customer with anything that they might need. Even the lighting in Edgars is adjusted in a way that all the clothes are visible to the customer as Thembi explains that: *in my section, the lighting is different, it changes colours, and it can be purple, white or any other colour so that it makes the beauty products in my section look very attractive to the customer and that exactly what you need at a make-up section.* When asked about exposure to the customer Lebo explains that: *there is no such thing as exposure in retail industry, a sales assistant should see her customers and the customers should also see her.*

Edgars has its private radio that help advertise their products and play music to keep the sales assistants entertained, that way they will not be bored and the monotonous work will not be tiring. Lolo expresses that: *we play all kind of music that is not religious, we don't play religious songs to avoid being identified as supporting certain religion you know how people are sensitive about religion.* As Edgars is a shop that embraces diversity it also encourages diversity in their music of choice so that everyone feels comfortable in their place of work. The radio is used for advertisement and they have manikins and artworks with people dressed up in their clothes as a way of advertising and complementing the music as well so that Edgars becomes that shop of choice, the shop that greets everyone who walks in with harmony.

Edgars Port Elizabeth data analysis report

Four women who work in Edgars PE where interviewed for the purpose of this research. There was Fundiswa, Sinezipe, Vuyo and Pindeka. Fundiswa and Pindeka are older than Sinezipe and Vuyo. They work in different sections of Edgars and their combined information regarding their feelings towards working as a sales assistant gives a more rounded knowledge on the clothing retail sector and its impact on the women working there as sales assistants.

Fundiswa works in the cosmetics section where she has been trained to specialize in skincare, however she is not an employee of Edgars she states that she is a supplier: *I am a supplier at Edgars, I work for a company that supplies Edgars with beauty and skincare products.* Fundiswa has been working in the beauty industry for 4 years but she has just moved to Port Elizabeth from Johannesburg where she was working at Nelson Mandela Square mall at the heart of Sandton.

Sinezipe works at the women's section. She has been working in Edgars for 1 year 4 months. She started working as a 'canvasser' (people who assist a shop in convincing people to sign up for Edgars credit and loyalty cards). She is young and has recently completed Matric. She is a very driven girl who is very ambitious about her career working in Edgars as she explained that: *I started working here as a canvasser, I was working very well and I had a lot of people signing up for the cards, so when my contract ended I came and spoke to the manager to help me with a job and it was not very difficult because she knew me already.*

Vuyo is a young lady in her mid to late 20s. She works at the shoes and kids section towards the back of Edgars. She is very friendly and enjoys her work as she explains that: *The requirements for this job are ok, they are not hectic, they make sense, I get paid for doing simple stuff like talking to the customers politely and helping them where they need my help.* Vuyo has recently moved to Edgars CBD from Edgars in GreenAcres shopping mall in PE which is the 3rd largest shopping mall in Port Elizabeth.

Pindeka is a single mother who is working so that she can take care of her child as she states that: *I have a daughter that I have to take care of and she needs food, clothes and to go to school, being a single parent is difficult.* For her working as a sales assistant is quite a challenge but she continues to push so that she is able to take care of her family. She is working at the men's section which is to your right hand sight as you get into Edgars CBD.

The terms of employment in Edgars show that the employees have little information with regards to their employment status and the benefits associated with their terms of employment. All the sales assistants working in Edgars work on a flexi-permanent contract. As a flexi-permanent they do not have medical aid, they do not belong to a trade union or have health insurance. Being a flexi-permanent means the terms of employment are flexible enough to be changed at any time, in so doing, one can get fired from the job any time and they can as well quite as they wish, it signifies huge job insecurity but the sales assistants take it as a good thing where they can leave the job and hop to another one any time as as Pindeka explained that: *you are permanent till you want to leave, because that way you can apply for some other better jobs and you can always leave when you find something better unlike signing a contract for years and you have to keep a sucking job for that long.*

As mentioned above, the sales assistants do not get benefits like health insurance and trade union affiliation, but Edgars offers them a clothing discount when they buy from any Edgars shop. The sales assistants get a 30% staff discount benefit. The discount on clothes is the only

benefit that they get from Edgars. One would assume that this allows them to buy the clothes that they are advertising and selling to customers, but the harsh reality is that most of them are not able to purchase the clothes being sold in Edgars, they are not satisfied with this discount because it is too low considering that things are very expensive in Edgars as Vuyo explains that: *I can't afford the clothes because the money is too little and I cannot afford them, those clothes are expensive and I need money to pay for a lot of other things too*, whilst Pindeka explains that: *I don't buy I'm clothes from here, I can only buy maybe one thing if I have been saving but I usually buy from Mr Price and Fashion World*.

The leave days at Edgars are structured in a way that the shop is left with enough people to help keep business going, during busy days the shop assistants are not allowed to go on leave, they come to work every other day because there is a lot of business that needs to be done and that is the only time they can maximize on their sales. They normally get two days off work every week and the managers can structure who is taking an off day when, so the sales assistants work five days a week. Pindeka explained that: *I have two days off, and my off days are Tuesday and Wednesday but they change every month it just depends with the manager, but luck people get off days during the weekends that way you can rest and do everything you want to do unlike during the week*.

A sales assistant is given two warnings by management before they can be fired. If one is not coming to work on time or not taking their duties seriously; like being friendly to customers and being efficient they can be fired. Plus if someone misses work for a significant number of days without proof they can be fired to. The sales assistants commented that there is a one hour policy for calling out of work. The sales assistants are encouraged to call the manager an hour before they start work to notify them on why they will not be coming to work and when they come to work they should come with documents that prove why they were not coming to work as Vuyo mentioned that: *we have a one hour policy, the moment you know you are not going to make it to work, or you will be late, you should call and explain to the manager so that they can either look for someone to cover for you, or they can just plan the day, but when you return to work you need to bring proof like a doctor's report....* However they also get 5 days sick leave and 3 days leave for the loss of a close relative.

Working as a sales assistant does not come with huge benefits except the staff discount as mentioned above, but still the sales assistant ladies are scared of losing their jobs and as a result they follow the regulations of their job as Vuyo eluded that: *I do what's expected of me*

like being at work on time, take out stock, price stock, and deal with customer efficiently and effectively. Just those basic things because if you don't you will be the one losing the job that a lot of people are waiting for. The women working in Edgars are motivated by their different struggles to come to work and they will not let the pressures of the job get the best of them as Sineziye explains that: *I need this job, so I do my work, when I want something I do anything that has to be done, if you have been unemployed you will understand life better, I'm not saying this job is easy, it is tough I go home with swollen feet everyday but at least it's a job and I get paid.*

The sales assistant ladies working in Edgars PE have worked in the shop for different years and they have different working experience with regards to Edgars clothing retail. The number of years they have worked in the shop help to understand their feelings and perceptions towards their job requirement in relation to emotional and aesthetic labour. The sales assistants who have worked for less than 2 year are very happy with their job especially the young ladies. Vuyo who is in her late 20s explains that her job is easy as she states that: *I love my job, it's easy to do, I just have to come here, look good and be happy then get my money end of the month.* Whilst those who have worked for a bit longer and are older as well do not find the job as fun as Pindeka explains that: *this is not an easy job, I work here because I need the money but if I could get another job where I don't have to stand all day like this I will be very happy.*

There are varying perspectives with regards to the ladies feelings and attitudes towards their job requirements. As women feel that the job requirements are simple and less hectic the others find them almost impossible. As gathered from the interviews the women are required to be professional in the workplace, they are expected to help the customer and leave them satisfied even though some customers are rude, it is the duty of the sales assistant to help the customer at ease and for many sale assistants this is a challenge because even when the customer is at fault they are still supposed to make the customer feel special. Sineziye states that: *I'm a friendly person, I love working and serving people and that's my personality, I respect other people that's why I work well with my colleagues and managers because they see that that's the real me even if someone is jealous of me here at work I just don't care I smile at them.* Fundiswa passed an interesting comment as she explained that: *these guidelines are for our own good, they help us be better people, I'm required to be friendly and not frown at customers just like in real life you have to embrace every challenge and that's just what I follow because o know it's making me better.*

The work shifts of the Edgars employees run from 8:30am to 6pm from Monday to Saturday and 9am to 5pm on Sunday which is inclusive of a 1 hour lunch break and opening duties. Depending on the season the sales assistants leave work at varying times, when it is very busy the employees leave work late around 7pm or 8pm especially during the festive season. Vuyo explains that: *the difficult thing about working in retail is the long hours we are standing, on busy days we work under so much pressure in order to meet the target of the day and after such a long day you get grumpy customers who always leave the shop unsatisfied and don't appreciate that you are trying your hardest to meet their expectations 100%.* The ladies appreciate and enjoy their jobs, but they are not fully satisfied with the working hours. They wish the working hours could be shorter because they have some family commitments that they need to be taking care of as Fundiswa explains that: *it's unfortunate that no one wants to take my job because they all say it's difficult, but I really wish we could even have shifts like they do in some other shops where there are people working maybe from 8am – 1pm and others from 1pm to 6pm it would be better and we would be happier because for me my mother is sick and I need to take care of her, but I can't do that at 8pm or 9pm when I get home.*

Edgars PE is in the CBD which is the hub of all activities. As PE is home to many different nationalities speaking in English helps to break the language barrier problem because the sales assistants will be able to communicate with Nigerians, Zimbabweans, Congolese, Europeans and Chinese. The ladies are required by their management to speak in English at all time when they are communicating with the customers. From the interviews conducted I noted that Matric is a requirement for every Edgars employee which helps them to communicate well with others, to make basic calculations and evaluations as Vuyo explained that: *I have matric and it's a requirement to work here because if you are not educated you end up putting wrong price tags just because you have failed to calculate a discount. Edgars is a big company and they have a strong base of customers and shareholders that want their business to be moving forward with educated people not just the basic ordinary people.*

Amongst their requirements, the ladies are expected to be knowledgeable with regards to the products being offered by the shop. They have workshops very often to keep the employees aware of their vision and mission so that they know what they are doing when they come to work. This does not make working as sales assistant an easy job as Pindeka explains that: *being a floor assistant is not an easy job, you are supposed to know everything that the customer comes to you asking about. You cannot at all say that you don't know, so we have*

workshops and meeting every now and then where we discuss new stock and tell managers our problems so that we work well with each other. The sales assistants 'floor assistants as they call themselves are expected to advertise any new stock to the customers to increase the sales, they can tell the customers about it or put the clothes on sale under a huge post so that people can come and buy. Sinezipe explains that: *during the rugby world cup, we were given the rugby jerseys to wear and if you want more we had an option to buy at a discounted price so that when people see us wearing them they would want to buy them for themselves, their families and their children. In this case, wearing the rugby jersey is a way of advertising their product to the customer.*

A person's attitude is very important in Edgars. The sales assistants are ambassadors of Edgars to the world, and their respect for their loyal customers is emphasized without fail, it is a significant part of a sales assistant's job requirements to respect customers and allow them to feel special. Sales assistants are expected to be at their best behaviour in the workplace regardless of them changing from one section to the next, rotating positions within the shop as Sinezipe explains that: *we are expected to behave formally and courteously towards our customers, superiors and co-workers to create an enjoyable working environment, I have learnt how to behave and interpret behaviours from superiors and what was acceptable in terms of manners in the work.* In this context, the sales assistants need to adjust their attitude to fit their work requirements.

It is difficult to separate your personal life from your professional life because they both affect your mood in the same way. This is the dilemma a lot of sales assistants are suffering because they are battling to keep a balance between two conflicting situations and one of their two priorities will suffer the most and in this case personal life is lost as someone tries to keep a job that's financially supporting them as Fundiswa explains that: *separating your personal life from your professional life is difficult I tell you but with this kind of job where you should be smiling at all times its difficult, I'm the only one working as a beauty consultant and my mother is diabetic, so I leave home and she is very sick, I now need to leave her with a neighbor to check on her just because I cannot miss work and when I come to work I just pretend like everything is ok and I'm happy and smiling like every day, I will only cry about it when I go back home.*

There is a lot of business going on in Edgars, the sales assistants just advertise the clothes and other tangible products to the customer, but their advertising is very limited because they are

not responsible for advertising the Edgars loyalty cards or inform people on opening Edgar's accounts. But there are some people employed by Edgars to inform people of the Edgar's loyalty cards and opening accounts. Sinezipe who has worked as a canvasser in Edgars before explains that her duty was to open accounts only as she openly explained that: *my duty was to opens accounts only at Edgars. I worked for PDM and Edgars hires us to open accounts. When I saw customers I would just pitch my product to open accounts for them, and it's from opening more accounts and working well with others that Edgars hired me.* As a result the responsibility of a sales assistant becomes solely focused on the clothes they are selling and the customer whom they wish to impress.

Appearance is everything in clothing retail. Edgars as a clothing retail giant has some standards to maintain. The employees of Edgars are always very smart. You see them wearing their black and white uniform; they are always smiling and looking very smart. Their uniform is a defining feature; it is what they use to define Edgars and to represent their Edgars brand. Vuyo explains that: *wear black slacks, white shirts and flat shoes that we buy for ourselves. Edgars only give us t-shirts or any other product that is on promotion but we basically buy our own uniform.* Wearing the uniform makes them all look similar in the eyes of the customer, but the sales assistants have complained that it is an extra expense as Sinezipe explains that: *we are supposed to wear black and white, since we come from different areas and different backgrounds, the manager should understand that we don't have lots of clothes, yah! But we are supposed to wear a black and white uniform.*

Little attention is paid on the body structures of the sales assistants. They all have different postures as most of them claimed to have applied for the job via Gumtree which is an online website where various people advertise jobs, expertise, sell gadgets, cars and houses as Vuyo explained that: *I applied via gumtree when I saw an advert and they called me in so it can't be because of the way I look, they did not know me.* Nevertheless they put more emphasis on the cosmetics section. The beauty consultant has a flawless skin and is always wearing make-up, Fundiswa enlightens that: *make-up is part of the job, since I'm selling these beauty products when customers see me they should not doubt the products I am recommending for them because of my skin, so I can honestly say I was hired for this job because my skin looks good.*

Elements of emotional labour are noted in clothing retail because the sales assistants are expected to make high sales for the store and as a result they try to convince the customers to

buy from the shop. Sinezipe alluded that: *from working as a canvasser I learnt to be very persuasive, I would approach and make sure that I close a customer so that he or she can open an account, so now it's easier for me to convince customers to buy the clothes because I know exactly what they want to heard and I get to listen to them and find a way of making them see and want I am trying to sell to them.* Sales assistants do not have direct guidelines on how to manage their emotions, but what they have are umbrella terms on how to handle their temper and attitudes when communicating with customers as Pindeka highlights that: *you cannot be angry with customers, even if you don't agree with what they are saying don't be rude, plus if they shout at you just smile and not shout back at them because they will stop coming to the shop and worse still report you to the manager.*

Disciplinary hearings are not very common in Edgars, the employees work very closely with their employers and they are constantly going for training to help them understand and be very watchful of their duties and their service to the company. The workers do not have a trade union that represents them at any bargaining board; the managers are responsible for any measure implemented to discipline workers if there is to be any. The managers are responsible for conflict resolutions in their shops to ensure the smooth running of the business and the women who are a majority shareholder in managerial positions and we women like Fundiswa explanation that: *I like that our women managers are more caring, which makes it difficult to cross their path and upset them because they are friendly and polite to us, you see most of the managers are women, we have 2 female managers and 1 man, the ladies laugh with us and when you are doing something wrong they tell you in a good manner but at times they can just be rude and threaten to fire you.*

The Edgars in PE CBD is very big and spacious. There are lots of open spaces to enable fresh and soothing air to fill the space and the Edgars radio station helps create a well-rounded atmosphere in Edgars that attracts customers who are just walking in the streets. There are white walls in Edgars and an open space as you enter which an illusion of large space and the illumination in the shop makes the clothes look brighter and beautiful. The ladies commented that there is plenty of lighting in Edgars which makes them very visible to the customers who are walking in and it also helps them to see what every person who enter is doing as Vuyo explained that: *I'm stationed at the kids section, and you find that not everyone who comes into the shop wants to buy, but some of them come to steal, so the lighting helps to prevent that because a thief cannot hide anywhere or put anything in the pocket without being caught.* The camera's in the shop are not enough help to capture thieves because it won't help to go

through the tape when the person is gone, but it is better to capture the thief whilst they are still in the shop and you deal with them accordingly.

Store aesthetics define the job requirements of a sales assistant. The cosmetics cubicle has various pictures of celebrities wearing make-up and other posters of make-up and beauty products as a result the beauty specialist works in a cubicle and her job requirements are different from everyone else. She is expected to wear make-up at all times and she is expected to use beauty products that she is selling and at least for her she get her make-up allowance to buy the products that she wants which is one of the things that she mentioned as inspiring, Fundiswa explains that: *I love looking good and working here allows me to buy some products at a lower price and I get some of the products as my subsidy and I don't have to pay a lot of money for the expensive make-up that I put on.* As a beauty specialist she is expected to look the part, she has to look better than everyone else and as a result her make-up skills need to be perfect.

The general layout of the shop helps to shape the way in which sales assistants discuss and communicate with each other there by feeding on their emotional and aesthetic requirements. Fundiswa who works in the cosmetics cubicle is secluded from the other employees because she is confined to her own cubicle where she is supposed to be present at all times. Whilst the other sales assistants are laughing and having fun with each other, Fundiswa highlights that: *I feel lonely at times, because the other ladies are doing their job there and they can talk to each other but I'm here alone, I end up using my phone and just sit on the chair, it's so boring when there are no customers coming to buy things here because atleast I will have someone to talk to.* The sales assistants claimed that the shop is quite busy during month-end and during the festive season when people get paid bonus they come and spend money here buying themselves clothes, shoes, make-up and jewellery.

Amongst their several tasks in the store, the sales assistants are not expected to display and design the store, there is a visual implementation crew and floor layout crew that are trained to do the designing and the ladies are left to make sales, unpack stock and serve customers. Pindeka comments on the distribution of products in the shop and explains that: *we have the sissy boy, Guess, Levis, Nine west in front where the customers will see them first as they walk in, then we have our home brands, the Kelso, Free2beU at the back, we have those manikins put in front, most of them are in front so that when people see the clothes looking*

good on the doll they come in and want to try them on as well, that's how people buy these clothes.

There are very few women working in Edgars in the PE CBD. There are 6 people on the floor including the beauty specialist who works in a private cubicle where she has all her make-up and other beauty products and 2 people working at the tills. The amount of space in the shop means that the sales assistants are supposed to be walking all over the shop helping out customers because they are very few sales assistants in Edgars. Pindeka explains that: *we are few here; the security guards even join us on the floor to help customers because one person cannot be walking around this big shop.* The fact that few sales assistants are employed at Edgars means that there is more pressure left on the few ones available to cover up for the missing human labour. This process can be strenuous to the sales assistants who need to go an extra mile on everything to compensate for staff shortage for example they are supposed to display massive emotional labour with customers to convince them and the shop's layout has to be designed in a way that accommodates the few sales assistants.

Working in retail comes with a lot of responsibilities and lessons as Fundiswa highlights that: *I've learnt that listening is a powerful tool for establishing good relationships with customers. As a beauty specialist you are supposed to be attentive to your customers because if you are not you can give them the wrong shade of make up or sell to them a facial cream that will make them react.* It seems as if working as a sales assistant gives one an opportunity to reach self-actualization stage and this will help them personally as Sineziye alludes that: *I've learnt more about myself as a resource and I'm quite confident about my aptitude in any given task even under pressure, I now know some of my strengths and weaknesses.* Retail work is a challenge because it pushes you to display an ideal character which can either make you a better person in the society or it can destroy the person you really are and create a new being as Pindeka explains that: *in terms of interpersonal skills I have developed empathy and tolerance along with humility and even humour.* Vuyo is a very polite young lady who is ever smiling; she expands on the virtue of honesty as she explains that: *honesty is always a good policy whether with customers or management or fellow colleagues. That way they will respect you and you build a good working relationship and coming to work will not be boring.*

MRP Grahamstown data analysis report

The women working in MRP Grahamstown differ in terms of how long they have worked for the company. The younger ladies from the 24 – 28 age groups have worked longer in the shop, for approximately 2 to 5 years as compared to those in the 29+ age group who have worked for 9 months to 2 years at most. The younger age group is happy with their job, they find it satisfying as noted by Jaq who explains that: *I feel good that I work at Mr Price, and it is 5 years since I have been working at MRP, and so far I have managed to accomplish a lot of things, so the 5 years have been so great. This could be because they have less family responsibilities or children to take care of, so they have no grievances towards the hours spent at work or the salary they get as they can afford to take care of themselves as an individual.* Whilst for the older age group I noted huge dissatisfaction. They do not seem to enjoy their work as Yolen stated that: *I don't like it, I'm being honest. I just have to do it but I don't like it. It's busy and you work very hard, very very hard, for everyday of your life, especially this time of the year, its festive season. When you go home you are so tired, your feet are sore and you are very tired. If I could get something else better than this I will take it.*

Sales assistants are motivated by various things that keep them working in their various departments within the store. The older age group is more focused on their family which looks like a higher motivation for them to keep working and take care of their children, as Nosi and Yolen respectively state that states that: *I enjoy this job and I get money for my children, I buy them clothes and I buy my food at home whilst Yolen highlights that: my children, I have 2 children and they are the ones I wake every morning to come and work for.* The younger age group they are more concerned about building relations with other people both in the workplace and those who come in as customers as Thandiswa states that:

This job is fun, I love working with everyone here, they are so fun, and it helps me make a lot of new friends than before because someone will never forget that you once helped them when they meet you in the streets.

The employment patterns for people working in MRP Grahamstown are quite precarious. Their answers in the interviews showed lack or limited information on what is permanent and flexy permanent. When asked about their employment status they all answered that they are permanent and from Jaq she stated that: *I am a permanent, 45 hour permanent hours a week, so that's 28 days a month 2 days off, and you don't count the Sunday's.* In this context, being a permanent worker is working every day and having a specified working time table. With regular hours of work.

Most workers in MRP are flexi-permanent workers as Nosi stated that: *firstly you work as a casual then after some time like say 3 months you sign as a permanent.* However, it should be noted that as a 'permanent' employee there is no permanent contract that binds you to the company for a specified period of time, one can just issue a letter of resignation a month before and they can terminate their 'permanent work contract' as Thandiswa claimed that: *If you don't want to work at MRP you only have to send a letter to the manager at least a month before.* The sales assistants in MRP claim to be permanent workers even though there is no contract that binds them or benefits that come with the job as Thandiswa states that: *No, I don't have medical aid or trade union here but I get my 20% discount on the things that I buy, these are the only benefits I get as a permanent worker, plus as a permanent worker I just know I come to work every day, I don't have to be on standby.*

Sales assistants in MRP work daily shifts and their shift start from 9am to 5:30pm which is inclusive of a 1 hour lunch break that the employees take turns to break and they close the shop at 5pm as Jaq explains that: *We open at 9 o'clock until 5: 30, but as the employees we come in at 8am so that we prepare the shop and the tools that you will be working with and then we can carry on and have some fun like talks, meetings and what we are supposed to do for the day.* They work 5 days a week and get 2 days off and these days are scheduled in a way that only permanent workers take their off days during the weekend as Thandiswa highlights that: *I work from 8am to 6pm and have 1 hour lunch, and during festive season we close late because we are very busy and when I was working as a casual I would not have leave days during the weekend and I used to hate it about this job, I don't mind working even 10 hours because I have worked difficult jobs before, but working during weekends is just not cool.*

Applying to work in MRP in Grahamstown proves to be a less stressful procedure where one just drops in an application letter to the shop and wait to be contacted by the shop manager when a vacancy opens up as Yolen states that: *I just gave my CV to the manager and she called me back that's how I got to come here, I started as a casual during December times and I got permanent.* Very little seems to be expected from sales assistants in MRP because their contracts are flexible, as mentioned before that they do not have a signed contract, however they have structured leave days that they take and when there is an emergency they are allowed to skip work, provided they have followed the protocol as Yolen explains that: *If you work for a year, then you can get your leave days. You get your sick leave, you can get*

like 2 days off or one day off depending on the timetable...and Jaq adds that: but we have a 1 hour policy. If you are not able to come to work, you have to call in an hour before so that everyone knows you won't be able to make it and we look for someone to come and cover for you and it depends with your reason for not coming. You need to phone call to explain yourself, not WhatsApp, SMS or Facebook because you are not too sick to call.

Minimal education is sought from the sales assistants; MRP is not very particular on skill attainment amongst their employees who are on the floor. From the data collection I managed to gather that a pre-requisite for working in MRP is Matric. All the sales assistants have Matric. Working as a sales assistant in Mr Price does not require a lot of post work training. It seems as if most sales assistants train and learn their duties on the job as noted by Jaq who explained that: *No I can't say it was job training, I developed my own skills by dissolving...like absorbing, you see, by seeing how other people do things, that time when I started it, it was this time of the year (festive season) you, it was very heavy and I had to put myself out there, and show that I could do this job, that's the only way I could have learnt, and after that I would just ask minor things like how to fold a t-shirt, like minor things.* However there is some training that they also get to help them settle in the shop and conduct their daily business as Yolen explains that: *No you don't get training for packing boxes and hanging clothes, but yeah when you are now working in your department they can now train you for merchandising my department, like making it nice and stuff like that, we get layouts from the head office on how our departments should look like.*

Sales assistants are expected to know all the products being sold in the shop so that they give their customers accurate information. A sales assistant is an ambassador of the store, she is the brains behind the shelves in Mr Price and their knowledge of the stock available helps them to be more efficient as Nosi explains that: *Nosi: Yes we are supposed to know everything, when we get new stock we are told of and we are given some notes to go read at home so that we don't forget what in the shop, that way we can help customers with all that they want*

It is the responsibility of the sales assistants and the MRP radio that is constantly playing in Mr Price that helps to advertise goods and the MRP card facilities to the customers that walk into the shop. Jaq explains that in MRP they advertise their goods that are on marked in the store as she states that: *Jaq: We have adverts on TV but most of the time we highlight what's on promotion and sale right here in our stores,* On this account Yolen farther explains that:

The clothes on promotion have red stickers, I usually put them in front to encourage people to see them and want to buy them. From this information I gathered that sales assistants in MRP are divided into several departments throughout the floor and they manage their assigned spaces as Thandiswa explains that: *I work at the Oakridge section, so I need to know everything that comes and leaves my section, I put the red stickers and I display it how I like.* MRP treats its employees like family, there is no individualism in terms of sales commission or wages, they all get the same amount with the people they work with which encourages them to work hard together so that they all get a higher salary as Nosi states that *If we sell more things we get a raise on our salary and this is for everyone which is why we should work together very nicely and have high sales.* There is a deep relationship amongst the employees in MRP as Thandiswa explains that: *We are a family here, we help each other with any problem, if someone needs something we are always helping them so that they are happy and we create a good environment for everyone and our customers will enjoy coming to buy here.* Yolen who has openly admitted to have a huge dislike for her job finds her working environment friendly and bearable as she comments that: *we have a good working environment, no one has a problem, I treat everyone with respect me and they respect me too, in fact when I'm having a bad day they will pick it up so quickly because I'm always friendly, and even if I'm having problems I am friendly and when they notice that I am down they will ask me, it's a very good environment we work here.*

Emotional labour is very common amongst sales assistants in MRP; one can easily conclude that the assistants have particular guidelines that intel their conduct with customers and each other for the purposes of working together and increasing sales. As Jaq responds that: *Yes that is the most important thing of our company, that we consider for the company, it's important that we approach a customer on a very good manner, in that case so that we get an assurance that the customer will return again and we accomplish the customer's needs.* It is safe to suppose that there are cleavages on the aspect of respect in retail clothing shops like MRP as Yolen who works at the kids section highlights that customers from her section are very respectful: *they are very respectful, especially for my section, they are always very friendly and respectful,* whilst on the other hand, Thandiswa complains that: *The customers are very rude at times, they don't respect us as people who are here to help they wear the fashion and get the look they want, they just look at us like losers especially the university girls.* This shows a huge discrepancy on the feelings towards respect in MRP in Grahamstown.

The type of work done by sales assistants in MRP detaches the women from themselves and their families. When they are at work, they are forced to work following particular guideline. The women have to separate their professional life from their personal life so that they can give a show to the customers as Jaq explains that: *Yes, that is what's expected of me, and my team, because when you are here, you are a professional, you do what's expected of you and you leave your problems.* Whilst Thandiswa alludes that this job steals her time with her family as she states that: *By the time I get home I'm so tired and all I want to really do is just sleep, I can't even play with my little brothers and sisters, I only have time for them when I am off so that sucks about my job.* The sales assistants are not allowed to be on their cellphones so that they are not in touch with the outside world because their jobs should be their number one priority as Nosi explains that: *we don't use cellphones, we have to concentrate on our work, and if we use cellphones we won't be able to help the customers so we need to help the customers and we can't do that with our phones.* When the women are at work they are forced to concentrate on their job without failure, as much as all the interviewees commented that there are no camera's, however, the managers are there to surveillance them in person as Thandiswa explains that: *No, we don't have camera's but we have the managers working with us on the floor making it very difficult for us to be lazy.*

There are less aesthetic considerations posed on sales assistants in MRP Grahamstown. The sales assistants just wear their dark blue jeans, an MRP t-shirt, a badge and a cap as their uniform, It seems as if they employ anyone they see fit for the job who can deliver the services they want delivered to their customers. As Jaq explains that: *I have been through a lot of channels, they see how I work and I work hard so that how things work in this career. When you come to train in the shop, if you work well with other people and customers like you then they will hire you.* Clothing shops like MRP appear to be more concerned about the workers who blend in with the clothes that they are selling, workers that complement the vision of the shop. Well, the emotional considerations seems to be more important than the aesthetic ones.

The perceptions that women working in MRP Grahamstown differs according to their age groups once again. It is easy to note that the younger ladies are happy with their job, they are satisfied and see it as an accomplishment as Thandiswa explains that: *I am happy with this job and I know most workers here are happy, we get good money, we have our discounts on clothes and you can buy a lot of things so I love my job very much, I can buy things for my*

family and I now have my own money. Whilst on the other hand Yolen begs to differ with Thandiswa's perspective as she states that: *I think it's the same as I am, because we talk about these things you know, I can safely say they feel the same way because we are tired, it's a very demanding job. You have to be on your feet 8 hours, and you only have one hour break and a 15 minutes tea, you so tired and by the time you get home you just want to sleep, it's so difficult for me as a mother because my children need me but I can't do much because I'm always at work and I'm tired. You can see that from 4 o'clock no one speaks because we are so tired and just want to go home, it's not so fun anymore.*

In the retail industry dressing well and looking good is the ultimate price. As you enter in MRP you notice that the women are all wearing a similar uniform, they all wear jeans and t-shirts with the MRP logo, which seems to be their dress code and represent their pride in working at MRP as Jaq: *Our colours are black and red so we keep on changing, we don't want customers to get bored of us because of our colours so we keep changing, so after every 8 – 10 months we change our uniform, with your cap, t-shirt, blue jeans, black or blue takkies, no problem and a name badge that's our dressing policy...These colours make us visible to the customer and MRP is red, black and white.* However, MRP provides the uniform for their workers, they provide them with their 1st set and they can purchase other pairs at a very low price as Thandiswa highlights that: *We get the t-shirt, caps, jackets and takkies from MRP but the jeans we buy them ourselves, plus if you lose your uniform you will have buy yourself another one especially for some of us who work as permanent I come to work every day so I need to be changing my uniform.* The appearance policy in MRP states that the workers should always look presentable and smart at all times as Yolen explains that: *They just want us to look smart and neat, no one buys to a dirty person, so my hair is always nice, I don't wear so much make up and my nails are not very long, it makes them dirty and some people don't like it.*

The clothing retail sector appears to be much disciplined because the workers hardly go on hearings. If there is any problem, it is solved in house with the managers who from the data collected are socially understanding as Nosi comments that: *The managers are very understanding, they always keep us close like one family, so when you have a problem, you are free to discuss it with the manager and they can help you with anything that you want, We are always trying to be happy all the time so if I don't like something, I can tell them and it can change.* The gender distribution on managers in MRP make it much easier for the sales assistants to carry on with their job as Jaq explains that: *Most managers are the ladies here and I love our managers they are good people, they are very soft and they make work easy*

because they don't shout, they always encourage us. From the data collected, it strikes me as if most managers in MRP are women and the ladies who work as sales assistants are content with their management because they face the same challenges.

The data collected showed that there are always 12 – 18 people working on the floor in MRP, and from these they are all divided into various sections that they work and specialize in and also circulate after a period of time as Nosi highlights that: *There are many departments, but the thing is the manager changes us, for 3 months you work in this department and after 3 months you work in another department. It helps you so that you can learn a lot of things and know everything.* From these sections they are responsible for the overall layout of clothes and display of the clothes being sold as Yolen explains that: *Yes I display my own clothes and match what I think would look nice and encourage people to buy, I can also get ideas from people in other sections*

According to the assistants, MRP does not sell international designer labels, Jaq proudly informs that they have their own in-house brands as she explained that: *No, we have our own brands, we have OR, Rt, Red, Reflex for men and ladies together with the kiddies, We don't do like Edgars; Levis, Guess...we have our own.* Sales assistants in MRP appear to have limited information on the products that they have, they just sell clothes and they are unaware of where they are being manufactured especially considering that there has been a rise in global trade. When asked of where their clothes are manufactured the assistants did not have accurate information, however Jaq managed to share the little information that they have as she states that: *I'm not 100% sure on that because I haven't looked into that yet. We receive our stock weekly, but what I have noticed is that most of the boxes that come from China, so I think that's where our clothes come from.*

MRP is designed in a way that there are a lot of clothes folded for the customers to easily see what they will buy and it's always fully stocked as explained that they restock weekly. As you enter MRP there are rack shelves with packed clothes and the assistants are constantly folding and repacking the clothes that have fallen or have been misplaced. The assistants are however not impressed by the size of the shop as Jaq explains that: *This is a very small shop so a customer can only see you if they come to your section and are specifically looking for you, I'm ok with it because I am making my money, but maybe if it was a little bit bigger I*

would have been happy, the customers have to find the sale assistant to be helped with their shopping dilemma.

The lighting in MRP is just fine, it is essential lighting that helps to illuminate the shop and one will notice that it focuses on specific sections like shoes, jewellery, lingerie and underwear. Nosi comments that: *there is lighting everywhere in the shop so that the customer can see what they really want and I can help the customer to buy the clothes that they have seen and they know they want.* As noted above, the lighting and overall space distribution in MRP does not leave the sale assistant feeling exposed because the shop is small and fully stocked; it is always packed with people to an extent that a customer has to go to a particular section to find an assistant who can assist them in what they wish to be helped with.

To help keep the mood and environment alive in MRP they have an MRP radio live station always playing and one can easily notice that they embrace pop culture in their music selection. Yolen comments that: *We are always playing MRP radio, I really don't mind it, at least the music is fun I won't be so bored.* Whilst Jaq explains that: *On the music section we have our own DJ, we have our own radio station, mostly young, but they make it fun. You can even request a song if you are going to be in the shop for an hour or 2, via tweeter, Facebook and mrp.com.*

The grievances of MRP workers vary greatly and surprisingly enough they are not financial salary related which might be a sign that they are getting sufficient monthly salaries. Their complaints range from working hours to shop design and the need for bigger space. Yolen explained that: *If I could change something about MRP, I would like to change the hours. I hate to work on a Sunday, if they could close on a Sunday ohh my word I would come to work every day, I have worked longer hours in my previous jobs so this is like a walk in the park, Sunday is my only problem,* on the other hand Jaq comments that: *If I could change anything about the store I would change a lot of things. For example, the height of the stalls, for example you won't be able to reach for some other things because they are not in your reach, everything lower and that way customers are free to shop.* Meanwhile Nosi commented that: *If I could change something I would shift my lunch hour from 10:30am to maybe 2pm because there is little I can do at 10, I'm still fresh from home and I can't rest.*

Mr Price Port Elizabeth data analysis report

Four women were interviewed from MRP PE (Mr Price Port Elizabeth) namely Scout (late 20s), Noma (mid to late 30s), Priscilla (late 20s) and Dintle (mid to late 20s). These women work in MRP PE central as sales assistants; they were interviewed to gain an in-depth understanding of their jobs as sales assistants in MRP in which their response becomes a source of knowledge to the clothing retail sector at large. PE was used for the purpose of this research because it is one of the big and vibrant towns in the Eastern Cape and the labour pattern, clothing retail construction and the day to day running of clothing retail shops in such a major town become a point of interest in order to compare with a semi-urban rural town such as Grahamstown.

From the interviews gathered it looks like the majority of women working in MRP have either worked for 2 years and above or 8 months and below. Those who have worked longer at MRP enjoy their job and love working there, whilst those who have worked for less than a year are not very happy with their job, they still want a lot of things to change. Priscilla explained that: *I have worked here for 3 years now and I love working with people and that's what I say motivates me, because every day it's a new face and a new customer.* Whilst Dintle stated that: *I have worked for 8 months now and I enjoy my job but if I could work somewhere or if the hours could be reduced I would be very happy because I don't like standing all day.*

Women of all ages seem to be motivated by different things in life, some are motivated by money, others by their families and others by creating social ties. The interviews with the women have enlightened me that social ties with other people are very important and they can be a drive in corporate organizations. Noma alluded that what motivates her to keep working at MRP is that: *I enjoy working with people and the people I work with are nice friends.* Most of the women in the clothing retail shop have created social bonds with one another as Scout explained that: *I come to work and I spend my whole day here with people who love and care about me, these women I work here will understand me so much because they know how hard we work here and we are always talking to each other because we spend most of our time here working.* As working creates a platform for building and maintaining social relations with other people it also creates a platform for others to advance themselves and grow as a person as Dintle explains that: *Working here is tough, I stand all day but I am constantly reminding myself that I need this job so that I save some money to go to college because I have Matric only, I want to drive a big car and I can't do that with this job.*

The women working in MRP are flexy permanent workers which is what you get from having further conversations with them because they regard themselves as permanent workers, yet they do not have a long-term contract, they have a short contract that they keep renewing as Priscilla explained that: *Yes I am a permanent worker here, I come to work every day and I have been working here for 3 years, I have signed a contract with Mazibuko so I go and renew it after every 6 months if I want to keep working here, but if I want to leave I can tell them to find me another job*, from the given information I learnt that the sales assistants in MRP are not permanent but rather flexy permanent. A flexi permanent job is not a traditional secure job that has a contract and a known employee, but the employees are allowed to work in a flexible environment where they do not have a contract that binds them for a certain number of months or years, but they are free to quite the job if they wish to and when they wish to.

A permanent worker is supposed to have benefits from the shop she works for but the women in MRP do not have social or medical benefits from the shop as Dintle explained that: *No I am not on medical aid or trade union here, I have never heard of anyone with those kind of benefits, If we have problems with MRP for me I can go back to V&A Labour Brokers and they can take it up with MRP because the MRP are not my bosses I have my own bosses*. V&A Labour Brokers is a company that facilitates the outsourcing of workers to various employers, they offer ways of obtaining skilled and specific task-oriented people when and as required. The labour broker company becomes the sole employer of the employee and they are responsible for contracting them out to any company either on labour hire, permanent, temporary or professional placements. Scout also explained that: *The reason I'm employed by MRP is that my CV was brought by some organization, they are the ones who make sure that we get a job because we have done training with them, I did not apply here at MRP, these organizations works with many shops so they just tell you that you are going to be working there and there*. Mazibuko Youth with a mission (YWAM) is an international volunteer movement for Christians, where people are trained to do various skills that will help them to become employed and take care of themselves and their families. This organization seeks to help youths to become skilled and employable.

From PE I managed to realize that the employees of MRP are not their personal employees, they have contracts with training organizations such as V&A and YWAM where they train for takes up to two months and they are responsible for their own up keep and they pay a small fee for the training, and when they eventually get a placement place, they go and work

there as well as part of unpaid training for two weeks. Scout explained that: *When I got a job here I was having some training at Youth with a mission, it's is conducted here by Mazibuko, its where they train you and teach you a lot of different things and then you get a certificate which will help you to get a job because they have contacts with a lot of people so they can send your CV to anyone who wants to employ and if you are lucky you get chosen.* Noma highlighted that: *There is a company called Jump Start, they say it's for Jump starters, you get training then you go to train at MRP for 3 weeks just to get training it's not a job and you don't get paid, it's just for the experience only. After that if you are working well MRP can hire you through the Jump start and Jumpstart will be the one paying you and everything and even when you want another job they will still help you to get another one.*

When the women come to work in MRP they go through some training which will help them get to know MRP as a shop, its mission and values so that they can uphold those values and they can now help them to know all the products offered in the shop, they will now know what is expected of them as sales assistants and this shapes their conduct with others as well as Dintle noted that: *I was trained at V&A... when I started working at MRP I went through the in-house training which is to help you know everything and Noma adds that: Yes you should know all the new stock to tell to customers when they come in, and you also have to know the old stock because customers come and they ask you about old stock so you should know its old stock.* MRP offers a range of clothes from the kids section, working class section, boys and girls fashionable things to jewellery, shoes, accessories and intimate wear so the sales assistants are distributed in a way that they are in different sections.

There are different departments in MRP and because of this the sales assistants are divided into different departments in which they specialize in particular items. Scout explains that: *...you work at specific sections and It just depends, you see today I was working in the fitting room because the person who was working there is off, but my section is East-West and the jewellery, I work anywhere there.* It becomes easier for people to work together and know more about the products that they are selling if they are in fixed positions because they are given more training based on their departments, they get catalogues with the stock that is in their sections to help them know exactly what they are selling as Priscilla extends that: *You get a catalogue with all the information for your section and this helps you know everything ad it becomes easier to advertise the things that you already know to the customers.*

Advertising is important in clothing retail shops in a town like PE because it is a hub of clothing shops and malls so the clothing shops that are in the CBD are under immense pressure to advertise their products and win more customers for themselves. As you pass by MRP you are lured by the discount cards that are on the windows in big bright letters and as you enter shimmering jewellery confronts you right in front of the door as you step in. This type of advertising attracts passer-by's to come in and force people to buy who did not even have the intention to buy anything. The atmosphere in MRP as well encourages people to consume. The radio will be advertising their clothes and shoes that are on discount and the sales assistants are there to also complement the advertising of products done by the radio as Noma explains that: *We always tell a customer when they come in that there are clothes on promotion and there is always a sign to show that there are clothes that have been reduced* and Priscilla adds that: *We only play MRP radio, they play it because it helps to advertise the things that we have in the shop and the stuff that's on special, that way people know what's on special before they even come to ask us.*

The sales assistants in MRP are very united with each other, they help each other with the work that they do because their extra money depends on them working together. For their salary, they get a basic salary and their commission only depends on whether they meet the target or not. If they meet the target they are able to get extra money and because of this this motivates and encourages them to work together very well and to make sure that MRP is a clothing retail shop of choice. As Noma explains that: *we get all our money it's the same, but we get more if we beat the target, it's not just for one person, it's for everyone, that's why we work so nice together*

Being a sales assistant is a demanding job, it is not a job for everyone. Sales assistants ought to be patient so that they can help everyone who comes to them wanting to buy something and at times with no idea of what they really want. The way in which MRP is located in PE is in such a way that most customers do not plan on buying there, but because it is overlooking the streets people who are walking to their different destinations end up getting into the shop and purchasing something so the sales assistants have to take that into account. Dintle states that: *I am supposed to be friendly to everyone here and it doesn't mean they are all my friends you see, I am a calm person when I am here because that's what they want me to do, I can't even shout even when I want to shout I cannot do that.* Priscilla is able to clearly explain the job of a sales assistant as she illuminates that: *My job is to serve the community*

out there and it takes some courage every day, it's not the job for everyone, or for any person but at least you must have that courage because each and every day you don't get the same customer. Some customer always (defer) and you must help the customer. You must fit yourself into that situation to help the customer, even if the customer comes up to you just as...just as you know...and as they normally come in demanding and they are not even saying 'hie' or 'hello'...fit yourself into the situation in there to help the customer and make the customer feel at ease.

The women working in MRP are supposed to manage their feelings for them to fulfil their job requirements. As explained above, it is their duty to serve the community and as a result they end up suppressing their own feelings so that they can give a desirable outward appearance as Noma explains that: *You just need to be very nice to customers, you should treat them nicely so that they don't feel like you are being rude to them or else they won't come back to buy.* All the four women stated that there is a basic rule in the store; that helps shape respect and conduct between the customer and the sales assistants; they are all expected to be polite to the customer. When they are in the workplace they are expected to shut out their personal life and focus on their professional life. Most of the ladies commented that it is difficult to separate your personal life from your professional life but because of their various goals that they seek to achieve, they now have to pretend and be happy when they get to work as Noma explained that: *It's difficult you know, I will have to try, because me I have a daughter at home, at times she is not feeling well and I have to come to work I cannot just stop coming to work, but when I am at work, I should be nice and happy to customers, I should always show that I am happy even when I know I am not happy because my child is sick. If I take my home problem to work they I can be angry and managers don't want us to be like that,* but Dintle had a different perspective, she believes that as long as you are willing to do something, it is all possible as she states that: *Yes you can, if you put your mind to it you can, I need this job and I will be professional here and I don't care about my problems at home, it took me time to get this job so I will not just come here and waste the chance.*

From the data collected, it is easy for one to note that there is less aesthetic value put on sales assistants in MRP. The sales assistants are encouraged to wear their uniform and this is used as a way to differentiate between them and the customers only, in-terms of figure, accent and social position, it seems as if they are not very particular, the women working in MRP are of various postures as Priscilla highlights that: *they hired me because I was trained to do a job,*

here they do not care about how you look like you just get hired. MRP management seems as if it is more concerned with work being done and less about who is doing the job. As long as someone can fold boxes, fold clothes, communicate with customers because some customers can be very rude and as a sales assistant, their mood does not have to affect you as Noma explains that: Noma: some customers are rude, they come to you speaking Afrikaans and my Afrikaans is not very good so I can't speak in Afrikaans with them and they become rude they even start shouting in the whole shop, but I will just leave them to shout and when they finish I apologize and tell them I am sorry and I can ask someone who speaks Afrikaans like Lucy to come and help them.

Respect is not limited to managers only, but one can easily pick that the sales assistants in MRP are family oriented, they respect each other and they respect their customer as well. Noma explains that: *Everyone here is like family and we are one big happy family, we are always having fun together, we have our WhatsApp group where we just discuss about the things happening in our life and at work.* The ladies at MRP enjoy their work so much, they enjoy being in each other's company as Dintle explained that: *We all love working here, but at times it's just too much work, we end up just working because there are times when you just don't want to work, some of the ladies I know are lazy and they just pack things wrongly especially the new ones.* But Scout highlights that: *I love my job, I just don't like how we are always busy all the time because this shop is always full, people are always coming to buy and our managers want us to keep the shop smart and tidy but it is impossible because there are always clothes falling off the shelves and we have to be packing so we get tired of packing things every time and I know the other ladies don't like it too.*

MRP managers are friendly and they work well with the shop assistants which helps them understand each other better and wish to reach their targets as one team. As the MRP team they have a dress code that they follow which helps them to stand out from the crowd, they wear their MRP T-shirts, jeans and takkies but some wear pumps as well, of which MRP provides them with their 1st set of MRP provides them with their 1st set of a t-shirt and takkies whilst they buy their own jeans and get a 20% discount on the jeans they buy for themselves or any other clothes that they wish to buy in MRP. Scout explained that: *We are given takkies and I think takkies are better than pumps because for someone who is running around the whole day pumps are very painful to work in all day, they hurt your feet so much that when you get home your feet are even swollen thats why they give us takkies i think*

As one of the giant retailers in clothing retail, MRP management encourages its employees to look smart at all times, they should wear their uniform every time they are at work, they should have neat and modest hairstyles and they should have minimal make up if any at all as Dintle states that: *they say we should always look smart and simple, we should not wear a lot of make-up or have weird hairstyles, they just want smart things.* The data collected explains that the MRP management is very particular in terms of the language being used. The sales assistants are expected to speak in English at all times so that they communicate well with the diverse population of Port Elizabeth, but they are also free to speak other languages to enhance easy communication with the customer if it is the customer's initiative.

There are very few cases of employees being taken up for hearings at MRP. If a customer complains about a certain service it is first dealt with at MRP with the manager, but if it keeps happening the employee can lose their job. Cases of theft have not been heard of according to the interviews conducted, but if such incidences happen MRP is not liable for any disciplinary responsibilities, an employee who is facing certain charges is sent to her labour broker or employment agent to deal with them as Scout explains that: *If MRP has a problem with you, you are sent back to Mazibuko and at Mazibuko that is when they can take back their certificate or have you arrested because those are my employers not MRP, if they are to replace anything, they pay for me at MRP and they deduct from my salary.*

It is important to note the ladies working at MRP are not part of a trade union, they have no idea what a trade union is from the interview conducted because the only benefit they get from their job as sales assistants is a 20% discount on all clothing items that they buy for themselves and their family. It is safe to say that the sales assistants are ignorant with regards to trade unions and their benefits as Scout explained: *I don't have a trade union and I don't think anyone has it here, we were never told about it, if I have problems i go to Mazibuko and talk to them or I can just talk to the managers here if it's a small thing...the only benefit i get is my 20% discount and I am happy because I buy a lot of clothes cheaper.*

There are more female managers at MRP and they have been noted to be very polite and friendly with their employees. The ladies working as sales assistants at MRP gave positive feedback regarding their employment relationship with their management. Priscilla explained that: *Our managers are mostly women who are working here, there are some men that visit sometimes and they are bosses but they don't work here with us. Our managers are good to us they help and know that we have problems, for example if you get period pain the woman*

managers know that at times you cannot come to work because it causes you so much pain. For calling out on work, the female managers are said to be more understanding of the ladies problems and they are allowed to miss work only if they give a notice, you have to tell them a day before or an hour before that you will not be able to make it and you should provide a proof of absence.

The ladies have a 10 hour shift, they come to work at 8am and close at 6pm. Their shift is inclusive of an hour lunch break that they take on turns, two 15 minute tea breaks and sometime set aside for opening and closing duties that include cleaning their spaces, folding clothes, taking stock of the goods in their different sections. However the ladies are not very happy with their shifts because they leave their homes late and come back late again, which becomes unsafe for them considering that most of them live in the township as Scout explains that: *We finish work late and have to go all the way to Motherwell, it will be dark when we get home and there are a lot of tsotsis, we have organized transport with a person whom we pay monthly to go drop us at our gates because we live in the same section with the other women here.*

There are 10 people who are always working on the floor with 4 others working at the tills. The shop is divided by clothing shelves into different sections that sell different things. As you walk into MRP there is a jewellery section to your left, there are accessories, they sell women's formal and casual clothing, men's formal and casual clothing, some as clothes for youths and children. Each sales floor assistant does the same job as the other despite their differ sections, they all fold clothes, pack them and unpacking. Unless one is working at the tills where they do a different job and they are always at the front as Dintle explained that: *When you work well they can even ask you to go and work at the tills and that's when people get jealous of you because you are doing your good job they start to gossip about you.*

It is the sales assistant's duty to merchandise the goods that they are selling but they are not responsible for the way the shop is designed, there are people who are employed to decorate and design the shop according to a catalogue from the head office as Dintle explains that: *There are some visuals who come to do the displays.* The visuals display things in a way that they have been assigned to by the headquarters, this way the sales assistants are left to just advertise the clothes and make sales for the company which is why they are expected to be friendly and approachable to the customers which show emotional labour as Noma describes her job as: *To help people buy the clothes that they want to buy and I always make sure that I*

make the customers happy when they come in our shop. The ladies all commented that they are expected to be very polite and friendly to all their customers despite of their race or gender, even if they have problems bothering them, they are expected to put the work as their first priority.

MRP does not sell designer brands, they sell their in-house brands which comprise of Oakridge, Rt, Insync, Red, Kumaro and Bm. As much as these are in-house brands, the employees do not have extensive information on the products that they sell because they do not know where the clothes are manufactured, they just unpack the stock, fold the clothes into the various shelves and they are not told the other information as Scout explains that: *I don't know where they get these boxes, i don't even bother to ask because it's not my job, when I see the boxes all i think about is the amount of work I am about to start doing not where or who makes clothes for MRP...maybe management might know.*

Where the ladies are stationed determines their approach to customers. When one is working at the tills they have to be smiling and be polite at all times. As one enters MRP CBD in Port Elizabeth, they are confronted by white walls and there is more space at both sides that enhances the lighting in the store. There is clear lighting that helps to give life to the grey wire racks on which clothes are mostly packed and hanged on. The illumination in MRP makes the sales assistants visible to the customers, especially in their back, grey and red uniforms. Noma explained that: *The light makes all the customers see me and they are always coming to ask me questions about the things they want to buy, and I like it at time but not all the time because when you see a rude customer you can't run away.* However most ladies complained that the shop is always full which makes it difficult to attend to customers because they always have to pack and refold the clothes and put back the clothes that have been misplaced. MRP PE is a very busy shop and for this the employees are not allowed to use their cellphones whilst on the floor.