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The rise of Nigerian Afrobeats: A qualitative study on the cultural impact for Nigerian diaspora in The Netherlands.

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Abstract

The success of Nigerian artists and the Afrobeats music genre hold consistent momentum in dominating the international stage. A spotlight is shining on Nigeria's artistry, culture, local languages, and the proud showcasing of Nigerian heritage. The meteoric rise of Afrobeats has turned up the volume on the familiar up-tempo beats associated with West Africa, and now the world is listening. With a global lens firmly directed at the Nigerian music industry, this thesis explores how this phenomenon has impacted the Nigerian diaspora based in The Netherlands from a cultural perspective. The research seeks to understand how this impact, if any, has presented itself and potentially changed views and outlooks of the Dutch-based diaspora on their Nigerian roots. The main themes explored centre around the diasporic sense of belonging, cultural identity, and connection with their homeland. The research design incorporated qualitative methods through interviews with sixteen participants living in the Netherlands. All were either born in The Netherlands to a Nigerian parent or are Nigerian-born, having immigrated over ten-plus years ago. All participants are Afrobeats fans and of an age range of eighteen and above. The findings show, through a thematic analysis approach, there is a perceived shift in the image of Nigeria abroad among the diaspora and their peers. There is a strong sentiment that African music is finally having a long, overdue moment in the global music industry, where it existed for decades. The development of social media has played a pivotal role in this genre's international reach. A notable shift has occurred within the diasporic community born outside of Africa, but with African roots, toward their African heritage. This link was not always celebrated historically in The Netherlands. Overall, a sense of pride and belonging among the diaspora has grown, and they are witnessing first-hand a positive shift in how the world sees their Nigerian homeland.

Keywords: Afrobeats, Nigerian Diaspora, Belonging, Cultural Identity, The Netherlands

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1. Introduction

“You got American people singing Nigerian music”, was a quote by DJ Envy to the Nigerian Afrobeats artist Davido in 2019 on one of the most popular U.S. radio programs called The Breakfast Club (Osakwe, 2019, para.1). Today, worldwide, people are listening to Afrobeats music, and in some cases, singing along to Nigerian languages they don’t understand. I fall into this category. I was introduced to various African music from visiting the African continent approximately nine years ago. Afrobeats was the recurring sound on the radio throughout all the countries visited during that time. Friends in the West African diaspora community were the motivation for my continued love of this genre, and ultimately as a part of a diasporic community myself in The Netherlands, the enthusiasm for this thesis on diaspora studies began.

This is a world of increased cultural exchange and music falls heavily into this phenomenon. Afrobeats as a music genre, and the Nigerian pop artists who perform it, have gained respect and recognition in Africa for many years. Now, on the international stage, their star has risen, and risen fast (Shaw, 2021; Conteh, 2021; Vozick-Levinson, 2021; Okwuego, 2023). Nigerian pop artists had already conquered their continental market over the last decade, and up till now seven out of ten pop artists on the Top 10 Best Musicians in Africa in 2021 were Nigerian (Sunday, 2021; Ugo, 2022). Some of these top artists such as Wizkid and Davido paved the way for others. They played a pivotal role in popularizing Afrobeats to a wide audience with their hit songs and energetic performances resulting in the success of Afrobeats music on an international scale happening across the late 2010s (Damir, 2023).

International, and more specifically non-African acts progressively began collaborating with Nigerian artists and thus too fuelled the exposure of the Afrobeats genre. This exposure introduced new audiences and showcased this style, beat, and unique but unmistakable sound worldwide. Social media, digital platforms, and streaming services have had a very big influence on the rapid spread of music, and artist’s success. These artists need to effectively harness these avenues to grow their fanbase (Hesmondhalgh, 2020). This accessibility allowed the music to be immediately shared worldwide going beyond the traditional distribution channels of old. Nigerian Afrobeats artists are headlining global festivals now outside of the African continent like Coachella and Afro Nation in America. Tiwa Savage, known as the Afrobeats Queen made history this year as the first Nigerian to be

invited to King Charles's coronation party in the UK. Burna Boy was the first African artist to make history headlining at Madison Square Gardens, earning the highest revenues with ticket sales to date (Owego, 2023). The world-renowned music publication platform Rolling Stone at the end of 2022 announced *The Inaugural Afropop List* with Afrobeats artists covering 50% of those coveted spots (Wangeci et al., 2022). Nigerian artists continue to break barriers and cross borders in the Afrobeats genre that is impacting the music industry globally. The pivotal cultural moment for Nigeria in terms of world audiences listening to Afrobeats is very much here.

Shifting the focus to Nigerians abroad, specifically the diaspora in The Netherlands has established itself here with steady immigration since the 1980s. During that time, they experienced an economic decline and a corresponding 'reverse migration' with immigrants needing to exit Nigeria and Nigerians themselves following in pursuit of more stability (De Haas, 2006). As part of a larger African community, Nigerians have contributed to the multicultural fabric of Europe as they are the largest single-nation group living on this continent (Ammassari et al., 2004, p.17). Within this community, lies a diversity in itself with Nigerians identifying closely to their *tribes*, a term they use themselves. They contribute to the rich tapestry of Dutch culture while maintaining strong ties with their home country. In society here, Nigerians have contributed in various ways such as academic pursuits, entrepreneurial aspects, and cross-cultural contributions which have strengthened ties between both countries (Amagoh & Rahman, 2014; Connecting Diaspora, 2019). However, in many cases of immigration and integration, Nigerians too face challenges as a diaspora as they navigate Dutch society in building a home away from home, especially undocumented immigrants.

In the case of Nigerians settled in the Netherlands, in 2000, the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation was launched. By 2004, there were 22 cultural and social organizations set up here, and in doing so, these types of activities are understood to fuel a sense of community in a diaspora (Van Heelsum, 2007). By 2017, this number rose to 35 registered organisations according to the Nigerian National Association – The Netherlands, (African Union Commission, 2019). According to CBS (2019) around this time there were 13,216 Nigerians in The Netherlands officially. In research on West African diaspora, it was found that Nigerians settled in the Netherlands, had co-located in similar neighbourhoods, as have other black African communities, with Nigerians predominantly grouped into certain pockets of bigger cities across North Holland or South Holland (Blakely, 2005). From these findings,

one could recognise signs of a diaspora that was building a foundation of togetherness in the Netherlands.

The International Organization for Migration in the Netherlands work with Nigerians as an important target country for their Connecting Diaspora project (Connecting Diaspora, 2019). According to their studies, they see “most migrants and their descendants have a shared sense of identity and belonging” in such communities established. In the same diaspora project, it was found that remittances from The Netherlands to Nigeria in 2015 amounted to US\$ 149 million. As Nigeria is a country that relies heavily on remittances from overseas, this shows from another economic angle the ties and obligations that exist between both countries and these monetary transactions that occur.

With the rise in Afrobeats and in particular the spotlight on Nigeria, today the Nigerian diaspora is exposed to the music from their homeland more than ever before due to the aforementioned reasons. Davido as a leading Nigerian Afrobeats artist has publicly attributed his success to the love that the diaspora has for his music and ultimately this paved his way to success (Stephen, 2023). Adofo in his book “A Quick Ting on: Afrobeats”, has backed up this statement by acknowledging diaspora involvement also (2022).

With Nigerian Afrobeats artists commonly incorporating a mixture of their local languages and English into their songs, this music is resonating with the diaspora, regardless of location, enabling the listener to connect with the music on a deeper level. Understanding the fusion of the Nigerian culture and music where it continues to shape and redefine the global music landscape makes it a force to be reckoned with. It can be seen to unite Nigerians at home and abroad, and thus foster a sense of belonging and kinship. There is an abundance of articles and music publications online about Afrobeats, and its history, that explore the roots and timeline of its rise in popularity (C.J. & Conteh, 2022; Desmond, 2022; Conteh, 2021; McQuaid, 2017). However, academic research on the Nigerian diaspora in Europe and specifically their connection with the rise of Afrobeats music is still relatively limited. Garrido et al., (2019) explore Afrobeats and the African diaspora in Amsterdam specifically around new diasporic identities and the impact of this genre of music. Alakija (2021) examines second-generation Nigerians in London around their diasporic identities linked with the popularity and inclusion of Afrobeats music, Nollywood, and clothing styles in London and from a global setting. Cultural commentator Christian Adofo has published a book, “*A Quick Ting on: Afrobeats*”, which delves into the social and cultural impact of the Afrobeats

genre (Adofo, 2022). He incorporates the African diaspora aspect in terms of identity and pride in correlation to this music genre.

Despite the significant impact of Nigerian diaspora communities on the global popularity of Afrobeats, this scarcity of comprehensive academic studies leaves a gap in understanding the interconnectivity. By exploring these aspects of culture, identity, and belonging in connection with Afrobeats, researchers can provide valuable insights into the transformative power of music, diaspora engagement with this genre of music, and the complexities of the context of Nigerian Afrobeats and its global recognition. This research also aims to add to theoretical relevance by complimenting academic literature, while in addition being a topic of social relevance.

From an academic perspective, this thesis aims to contribute to research on the Nigerian diaspora in the Netherlands, specifically on the Afrobeats genre and on the cultural impact its global rise has had on them, if any. It can be said, that empirical research in this specific context is rather rare for this diasporic group. While it is easy to see empirical evidence of the rise of Nigerian music globally in the form of chart success, online streaming numbers, and the growing number of awards won, there is a valid question here concerning the measurement of this global Nigerian music phenomenon on people, and specifically the diasporic community. For those who have traveled outside their country of Nigeria, it could be questioned as to what extent their connection to this global spotlight on Nigerian music has been for them, and on their cultural appreciation of their ancestral homeland. It could be found in further research that exposure and representation of a culture promote understanding and a more meaningful association with a diaspora's cultural identity and belonging. An inferred link may be found between the increased popularity of Nigerian artists and race identity. But the diaspora, may or may feel they are represented by Nigerian pop music.

It is important to understand if the Nigerian diaspora's cultural identification process and feeling of belonging improve with the recognition from others of the music from their cultural homeland. With the cultural movement of Afrobeats continuing in an upwards trajectory, and the diaspora's contribution to their home country in terms of knowledge, social development, and economic aspects, there is value in understanding how Afrobeats enhances lives and cultivates an alternative narrative for the diaspora. If Afrobeats is indeed a powerful platform abroad, understanding the why or why not is valuable knowledge.

In answering the questions around diaspora and Afrobeats, this research study has used a qualitative approach through semi-structured interview methods to capture the findings answering this research question;

“In what ways has the global rise of Nigerian Afrobeats impacted the Nigerian diaspora’s connection with their cultural identity in The Netherlands?”

In building this thesis, previous literature related to diaspora, culture, and belonging forms a foundation that is relevant to the theoretical concepts of this subject matter. The methodology will explain in depth the approach to conducting the actual research. Similar studies will set the groundwork for interview data analysis and add to the discussion. With the interview question being answered, some final implications and conclusions will be outlined in closing.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Home and Belonging: Bridging and Bonding Social Ties

2.1.1 *The Connection between Migration and Belonging*

The concept of belonging is a primary aspect of our existence, shaping individuals' identities, and feeling our sense of place within society. For the Nigerian diaspora in the Netherlands, navigating the complexities of belonging is a central theme in their lives while dealing with integration and holding a sense of identity. Research has examined the experiences, challenges, and evolving notions of belonging among diaspora who have migrated abroad. Three academic views from Clifford (1994), Hall (1989), and Brah (2005) on this concept emphasize the importance of understanding belonging from a social and cultural stance as it fosters better understanding in diverse societies within diasporic communities. All three see belonging in different forms, however, a common understanding of belonging prevails overall.

Clifford (1994) in his work on cultural anthropology, emphasizes the fluid nature of belonging. He argues that belonging is not fixed or bounded but is constructed through cultural negotiation and interaction. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing individuals' multiple identities, highlighting an interconnectedness between cultures and a constant negotiation of belonging within and across different communities.

Hall (1989) associates the concept of belonging through the lens of cultural identity. He suggests that belonging is not solely determined by categories of nationality or ethnicity but is rather a result of complex social and historical processes. Hall suggests that identities can be constructed and negotiated around social and cultural contexts. He emphasizes the focus should be on power structures, representations, and discourses shaping the discussion around belonging and exclusion.

A third academic, Brah (2005) offers a somewhat alternative perspective on belonging about issues of gender, race, and migration. Brah argues that belonging is not an innate or universal experience but is contingent on social, political, and economic factors. They highlight the intersectionality of identities, emphasizing that individuals may simultaneously belong to multiple communities while also experiencing exclusion or marginalization. Brah's definition associates with notions of belonging, particularly for marginalized groups.

In referring to belonging, it is often in the same context as migration. Migration often entails a complex negotiation of identity and belonging. On one hand, immigrants maintain strong ties to their cultural heritage, traditions, and values. In conjunction with this, the notion of acculturation is at play also. Aponte and Johnson (2000) describe acculturation as the process by which one cultural or ethnic group comes into contact with a different cultural or ethnic group through immigration, and the psychosocial and emotional changes resulting from the experiences in the second (host) culture. This cultural exchange between immigrants or immigrant families and their new host country, has an impact on society, the host country, and the immigrants themselves (Berry, 2003; Castro, 2003). Berry (2003) maintains that acculturation involves two key aspects. The maintenance of one's own culture (referred to as heritage culture maintenance) and the adoption of the new culture (referred to as contact culture adoption) maintains that individuals and groups can experience acculturation in different ways, with different levels of emphasis on heritage culture and contact culture. He supports the idea of diaspora keeping healthy ties with one's own ethnic culture. Similarly, the host country should ideally embrace and welcome different cultures. Castro (2003) puts focus on contextual factors that shape the acculturation process. This research adds depth to the idea that acculturation is multi-dimensional and context-dependent. Gibson (2001), argues that acculturation is impacted to an extent not just in which country a person settles in, but within that country the ethnic and social environment the diaspora settles in, along with the factor of that environment including those of similar ethnic culture. It is thus found that there are lesser attempts to integrate into the larger society if the diaspora is more surrounded by co-ethnics. On another side, those who immigrated for economic gain and success, are incentivised to integrate more deeply into the host country. Boneva and Frieze (2001) look at the acculturation process beginning at the point of departure. They suggest that the personality of the individual who wants to migrate possesses different characteristics. From their research, some have a stronger tendency to leave their country of origin due to the motivations and work ethic they possess. Once they reach the host country, their approach to adapting and integrating is also different due to those same motivations. This is not an argument for all migrants but it is a consideration in the study of how adaptation and integration can be a success or failure.

There is a two-folded consideration for diaspora around the notion of belonging. The connection to their home country and their host country is at play. Also, factors that are pointed out by Igjede (2013) refer to cultural estrangement that the diaspora feels due to

ethnic clashes within particular groups in Nigeria. These may be caused by religion, ethnicity, and social dynamics at play in the home country but spill over to those in the host country. Andrikopoulos, (2013), interviewed Nigerians in the Netherlands and Greece. Not alone did he examine the migration elements but touches on symbolic status. He explores how cultural, social, and historical factors impact their sense of belonging, both the two-fold view of their Nigerian home and their adopted Dutch host country. Some had reached The Netherlands expecting a ‘better future’ and despite their skillset, they found work in low-skilled employment thus impacting their sense of integration and belonging. Similar to what De Witte (2014) shared about Dutch-born Afro-Caribbeans engaging positively with African immigrants, Andrikopoulos who had interviewed Nigerians in Amsterdam did mention the connections that Nigerians had with other black migrants from the Dutch Antilles, even forming a level of solidarity with these communities. In contrast, Igiede (2013) discusses how evidence of estrangement and cultural division amongst Nigerians in the diaspora themselves was apparent in the US. He claims that this disunity has gone back decades stemming from conflicts within the home country. According to Robinsons (2002), in diasporic circles in a host country, evidence of disunity can add further to an inability to feel at home in a host country, and the notion of belonging is more negatively impacted.

A very important factor regarding a sense of belonging relates to issues of race and racial challenges in a host country as referenced earlier. The Netherlands is known as liberal and tolerant in terms of the many cultures and ethnicities that reside here (Kešić & Duyvendak, 2019, p.442). From the total population of over 17 million, approximately 4 million people here are first and second-generation migrants (CBS, 2019). However, in this liberal-labeled country, it does not mean that racism does not exist here. De Witte (2014) discusses the tensions that exist among various groups of African origin or Afro-Caribbean in the form of racism in The Netherlands. This co-exists along with the racism from the Dutch white community also where a common insult to “go back to your own country” is referenced. The Afro-Dutch that immigrated to The Netherlands experienced their *Dutchness* questioned upon settling here. There exists a common experience for both Nigerians and Afro-Dutch irrespective of migrating during different decades for some and irrespective of their country of origin.

2.1.2 Transnational Going Beyond Boundaries

From various academic sources, an overall definition of transnationalism refers to the fluid and interconnected nature of social, economic, and cultural processes that transcend national boundaries. It recognizes the ongoing connections and interactions between individuals that have migrated from their homes to host countries, creating networks that span multiple locations. These networks do not only include family and friends but also extend to cultural and economic links. Transnationalism challenges the idea of fixed and bounded national identities and emphasizes the dynamic relationships that individuals maintain across these borders. In examining this concept, there is the consideration of how people navigate between both cultures to meet their needs!

Hopper (2007) describes transnationalism in respect of diasporic communities that can exist in multiple territories at once. These migrant communities stay in regular contact with people from the places they left. They are groups sharing common cultural traits, but also personal bonds and connections to family and friends over great distances. Hopper suggests that in some instances, due to the importance of transnationalism, national governments promote transnational communities as a way to spread their influence around parts of the world.

Ghorashi (2004) asks us to consider the experience of diaspora outside of the construct of 'home' and 'host' countries. Ghorashi focuses on the space in between both. If the home is viewed as the past, and the host country is viewed as the future, the space created where both are combined is referred to as the 'now'. In accepting a detachment from home and host, how diaspora exists in this 'now' scenario is a more non-traditional take on transnationalism. Not all diaspora feel a strong sense of rootedness in their place of origin. Commonly transnationalism is looked at from the perspective of duality or in-betweenness as there is always a push and pull between both. Ghorashi takes the example of the diaspora creating a society themselves in the host country, this being a new space referred to as a nation within a nation. This new space is dynamic, and not falling into either of the traditional two categories. Diasporic organisations are playing a major role in how this new space looks and is shaped according to the needs of the diaspora then. This society upholds certain standards as a group and thus the image of the diaspora is shaped in a position way to other communities in the vicinity whom they interact with. This in effect is a diaspora designing the narrative of how they want to be seen, instead of a host country painting a picture for themselves.

Some scholars discuss the duality between a place of origin and a place of residence representing the dynamic relationship between the past and the present, heritage, and adaptation, and the complexities of personal identity and belonging in an increasingly interconnected world. There is a sense of in-betweenness in how transnationalism is viewed. Carling et al. (2021) ask us to disregard the categories of migrant and non-migrant and to consider diaspora following transnational lives. Instead of the choice people take to migrate, they offer that there is a choice to live between two countries. Traditionally transnationalism was with specific lenses, however, there are alternative ways of approaching this concept. As people change, globalization comes into play, and so too do the confines of their situations and life choices. In the past, migration was seen as a choice made 'for a better life'. To an extent, this can still be true, but in other ways, some choose a certain lifestyle that includes life outside of their home country. Carling et al., suggest that a more traditional way of looking at transnationalism can create friction, with a one versus-the-other approach, as opposed to an alternative, the more harmonious lens to use. They consider the four categories of people who live between two countries namely; lifestyle migrants, ex-pats, temporary labour migrants, and international students. Yeoh and Collins (2022) refer to these subdivisions as dimensions. All are examples of a diverse range of people venturing outside their country for different reasons, for different durations, and therefore not all fitting into one box in how we study their transnational experience.

Introducing the concept of lifestyle mobilities, Cohen et al., (2013) circle us back to discuss the connection between contemporary travel, leisure, and migration. It is suggested that mobility is influenced by changing economic, environmental, and techno-social contexts. The research in question examines and highlights the complexities and contradictions inherent in processes of mobility. The examination of how entire households or family units engage in various forms of mobility, such as labour migration or transnational movements, and how this mobility shapes their social dynamics, economic practices, and notions of home and belonging is examined. The research also encompasses the factors of social networks and social capital in facilitating and shaping mobilities. How individuals and communities utilize their social connections to navigate and adapt to new environments, maintain transnational ties and access resources and opportunities are important. Cresswell (2010) agrees that mobility depends on access to economic conditions, power, technology, and networks that facilitate movement across borders and cultures.

2.2 Cultural Identity

2.2.1 *Identity in Flux*

Belonging to a diaspora is intricately connected to identity and the negotiation of multiple cultural influences. Diaspora may face the challenge of maintaining their home identity while adapting to the host context. This dynamic gives rise to a sense of hybridity, while the formation and construction of *identity* develop through cultural encounters with a new society.

In considering identity, the concept of duality is a debate often covered about migrants' experience of life between their place of origin and home. A feeling of in-betweenness is caused by this duality in many cases. Song (2009) refers to the ambiguity of moving between two cultures for an individual, where there is a notion of both merging and diverging bringing challenges with that. A single culture alone can have complexity, however introducing what is referred to as a pluralistic persona means a balancing of mixed perspectives and a duality in how someone thinks, behaves, and sees the world. Song highlights the fact that people may have an identity shaped by the country they grew up in, however, they may live in an environment where identity is imposed on them by others because of their features or the colour of their skin. Song explores this concept through the means of art workshops. From this study, the understanding of culture was closely related to accepting the duality of a person's upbringing, self-expression, and approach to a way of living. Song (2009) discusses the balance between stereotypes and a person's desire to express individuality through art. This can happen not just in society but also in the family environment as they are in some cases born of parents who have one cultural identity and did not experience similar feelings being pulled between two cultures, as they do. Understanding duality in the confines of diaspora life is an important way to understand the intricacies of diaspora life, and the world they experience from their perspective.

Another lens to look at identity, Straubhaar (2014) argues that "while one may refer to identity for many people as increasingly hybrid, it is perhaps more clearly seen as multileveled" (p.22). These layers of identity are presented such as gender, education, upbringing, language, and social class. Language and traditions being part of our identity are examples of shared commonalities between diaspora irrespective of what host country they settle in. These layers of identity can be transnational in many respects. One example is the consumption of media in a particular common language, thus reinforcing transnational

connections between linguistic groups. It is suggested that even when groups do not share a singular common language, media from abroad can speak to their cultural commonalities, in what Straubhaar refers to as “cultural proximity” (p.18). This cultural proximity is the driver behind those of the same cultural background choosing media products such as music or movies, that feel familiar and resonate with their home.

Kolade (1975) makes recommendations for the preservation of cultural identity in Nigeria through analysis, study, and definition. In referring to the multiple components of identity, similar to Straubhaar (2014), he notes the importance of the role of musicians and artists in maintaining and shaping this Nigerian identity. However, it is pointed out that Nigeria has a diversity of identities and cultures within the country itself. From that range of cultural examples in dance, song, and so forth, it is argued which of these are deemed genuine representations of Nigerian culture. Kolade (1975) suggests that a universal agreement on such matters is found, but how this may not be feasible in reality. Kolade believes mass media is one aspect that will play a role in moving toward a clearer definition of identity, with artistic expression being an element of that. He points to the government to show a particular level of leadership and control over the classification of culture and identity.

From the research of Song (2009), Kolade (1975), and Straubhaar (2014), we can conclude that identity is far from a fixed notion, but often in flux. More specifically for Nigerians, the country of Nigeria has a very diverse range of cultural aspects that represent identity. Nigerian diaspora is often seen as Nigerians, West Africans, or Africans, all of whom are different but have a thread of commonality representing the continent of Africa. As Nigerians born outside Nigeria, there exists another layer of identity. Or for those who immigrate, there is a shift in identity after immigration and integration in the host country (De Witte, 2019).

The concept of liminality is a process of transition from one boundary to the next. It is associated with the feeling of “in-betweenness,” and has been a term often associated with the topic of diaspora and immigration. Brunsma et al, (2013) consider multiracial identities as a viewpoint from which to see liminality as a concept and suggest focusing on racial identity and racial self-understanding with ideas around liminality as a socially structured identity. De Witte, (2017) takes the Afro-Dutch self-styling as an example of a community shifting. She examines the Caribbean diaspora and the renegotiating of a connection and a clear change for some diaspora about their heritage and identity with stronger ties towards their African

identity. A dialogue is emerging about their African identity in recent times. De Witte illustrates music as a means that breaks through stereotypes and does not discriminate against those who are fans of particular genres.

2.2.2 Culture Portrayed Through Music

Members of the Inter-governmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa, describe culture as ingrained in a nation's destiny. "The African artist should open his eyes to the fact that African culture, like all other cultures, has never stopped evolving, that: art is not ossified, and that he must study its sources, forms, and technique to find his roots in his own tradition" (UNESCO, 1975, p.60, para.2). This definition of culture touches on many aspects. The same applies to the topic of Afrobeats whereby when it is examined through different lenses, there are alternative academic views and reflections on whether Afrobeats is an accurate representation of Nigerian culture. We can examine the use of languages, the subject matter in the music whether positive or negative, the political messages in the music, the artists, and how they portray Nigerian culture through media and music videos. The emergence and success of Afrobeats have marked a pivotal moment through which to view Nigeria's culture in yet another form. Ugor (2021) suggests that Afrobeats today is no doubt the fastest-growing component of African youth culture and this aspect is crucial to pay attention to, and harness for Nigerians. The music industry has become a source of employment, revenue generation, and tourism, contributing to Nigeria's cultural and economic development.

According to Connell and Gibson (2006) music and culture cannot escape international influences. They suggest that music is increasingly moving away from a sense of fixed identity where local and global are relational rather than oppositional. In 2006, they suggested even then that the rise of the internet and streaming was accelerating the pace of engagement thus new hybrid music would develop at a faster pace. They recognised a gateway for non-western musicians to become recognised in the West and that a diversity of sounds would result from this. They saw opportunities for commercial success and commodification of different music genres as a result. Their concept of strategic inauthenticity is discussed where this commodification could compromise the authenticity of the music to make it onto the global markets. From another lens, Schippers (2006) discusses strategic inauthenticity as a way in which musicians can avoid being pigeonholed within a genre, and balance the culture of their music along with creativity and new influences.

Adedeji (2013) describes Nigerian pop music being a conduit for new perspectives on “a disgruntled generation, as a conscious tool and a weapon of resistance.” He describes a period in Nigeria where music was full of activism and messages of disdain for the political system, the military, or the state of Nigerian society. In contrast, he acknowledges that it can also be described as the popular music of the current times that “has nothing to talk about except parties, booty-shaking and popping of champagne.” Where Ugor (2021) calls for Afrobeats to be paid attention to, Adedeji (2017) argues that in Nigeria there remains a belief in using this genre to shine a light on the ills of corruption and abuse of power, and in this way, consciousness wins over commercialisation. He also argues that the concept of Africanity is evident in popular music in Nigeria where artists still maintain and celebrate the African culture and identity even within the Western music space. They accomplish this through the use of language, the messaging in their music, the beat that is attributed to their genre of music, and also in visual ways (Adedeji, 2017). Concerning language use, Adediji also draws a comparison of how language was a tool of colonization where the language of the oppressor was forced upon Africans. Now today we see Nigerian languages throughout Afrobeats hits used as a ‘weapon of assertion’ of Africanity. These languages are in mainstream music worldwide and are a vehicle of Nigerian culture, of which so many are proud. Yoruba language being incorporated into Afrobeats’ music and exposed to a global audience has a significant impact, according to Adewumi (2018). He explains how Yoruba music is traditionally an important aspect of Yoruba culture and represents over 20% of the Nigerian population. He references the language’s importance in human values and a historical snapshot into the times it is performed in.

Saucier (2011) argues that this genre offers an avenue for youth to voice opinions and engage in supporting a platform that represents their beliefs on certain matters of sociocultural discourse. Youth see this popular music as an addition to their culture and a medium that signifies meaningful modes of expression. Similarly, through the expression of music, Pégram, (2021) explores how rappers in France through hip-hop music can explore their thoughts about their African French dual identity. It is suggested by Pegram that in recent years this genre of music has increasingly become an outlet to focus attention on the bicultural identity of rappers of African identity through their music content and videos. From music sound and lyrics that were in the past more rooted in trends from the United States, the shift to more African-centric themes is unfolding. In this way, it is a vehicle for consumers to

learn more about the race, culture, and issues relating to their diversity in French society and confront in some ways the racism and suspicion that has existed.

Adeniyi (2020) supports an alternative school of thought suggesting that this popular music in Nigeria has been described to contain a corrupt and immoral influence in the themes and content of what is produced. Others agree that the messages and images of this music celebrate violence, immorality, and promiscuity, and are not a good representation of Nigerian culture (Onanuga 2017; Shonekan 2013). Rens (2021) analysed Afrobeats music videos studying how women were depicted, and the male and female interaction from the standpoint of empowerment. The conclusion was that superiority and dominance by the men in the videos over women were prevalent. Also relevant was how the image of men exuded a dominance over women in the display of wealth, and social status as the money-makers. The hyper-sexualisation of women is another element of the aforementioned idea of female promiscuity and an aspect that can be argued to demonstrate a negative to the image of Nigerian culture and Nigerian women.

Thus there remain contrasting views aligning both negative and positive aspects of the Afrobeats genre in how it demonstrates Nigerian culture in varying forms. It infers an association to many aspects of life, whether accurate or inaccurate, representing Nigeria.

Drawing on Hall's cultural iceberg concept it is a metaphorical representation of culture, highlighting that what is visible on the surface is only a small fraction of the broader cultural system (Hall, 1989). These visible aspects, above the surface, represent explicit and easily observable elements such as behaviours, language, clothing, food, and art. They can be described as more readily accessible and can be noticed and interpreted by individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Alternatively, beneath the surface lies the invisible or hidden aspects of culture, or deep culture, which are the foundational and less noticeable components. This includes values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, worldviews, communication styles, concepts of time, and social customs. These elements are deeply ingrained and often taken for granted within a particular culture. They significantly shape people's behaviours, interactions, and perceptions, but may not be immediately apparent to those outside.

The cultural iceberg suggests that when interacting with individuals from different cultures, it is crucial to recognize that what is visible is just a fraction of the entire cultural system. Understanding and appreciating the hidden layers of culture is vital for effective cross-cultural communication and avoiding misunderstandings. Taking this analogy, how

culture is portrayed through music demonstrates that the outside world easily sees artists and what behaviours they display on social media or in public. The lyrics of music, how they use language, and the fashion they wear are all surface cultures. Whereas who they are on a deeper level in terms of philanthropic activities, family values, beliefs in God and the church, and respect for customs are all indicative of their deeper connection to culture. These attributes of a person are not as easily recognised at face value.

Overall, the cultural iceberg emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and empathy in navigating intercultural interactions. By recognizing the underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions that influence behavior, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of different cultures and develop strategies for effective communication and collaboration.

2.3 Diasporic Connection to Homeland

2.3.1 Reclaiming the Homeland Through Music

Ogide (2013, p.350) describes a conventional view of culture as “the social glue that binds people with a common past through its transmission from one generation to the next.” Music is a central part of the culture in Africa. From family events, and church to engaging in rituals, and recounting histories, music is incorporated into daily life. Ojukwu et al. (2016) focus on Nigerians and the diaspora regarding their relationship with music as a part of society, especially the current popular music. Their research showed that the music connection could be an important bridge for the diaspora in terms of understanding their heritage. This sentiment also includes Nigerian youth living in Nigeria. The writers also add that cultural relativism comes into play, where it relates to the individual in his or her context. This suggests that music may be received by one listener as relative, to another it may be described as noise. It can vary widely in terms of how people make interpretations.

Popular music can be a positive tool for showcasing African culture and encouraging good morals in African youth. As witnessed with the Igbo language, it was on the decline, however with popular artists singing in the local language it has revived it among the youth Ojukwu et al. (2016). To revive culture, this is an opportunity for the Nigerian government to harness this relationship between the diaspora and those who are in the music spotlight, to fuel cultural sustainability overseas. Pop artists have a loyal following and an in-built

fanbase. Afrobeats could well be that bridge to use for good by way of keeping the Nigerian culture alive.

In a similar thinking to Ojukwu et al, Gansinger and Kole (2016) discuss the role of Nigerian music as a representation of Nigerian culture and African culture for the black diaspora abroad. This is tied into the Black Power movement on the African continent. They argue that music puts a spotlight on the enablement of cultural expression in an impactful way and also from a social, and artistic voice. There is an element of transnationalism in music. Similar to the message of Gansinger and Kole, Afrobeats can be seen as a medium of transnationalism as it influences cultural bonding through music. With this music having such an international reach as per Gansinger and Kole's study, it is a powerful asset to harness for Nigerians in the diaspora and the spotlight on this genre (Shaw, 2021; Conteh, 2021; Vozick-Levinson, 2021; Okwuego, 2023). It is also a reconnection for them to their 'home' country in this respect. The popularity of Afrobeats also extends to the diaspora communities, where Nigerians and other Africans have embraced music as a way to connect with their roots and maintain a sense of belonging. Afrobeats concerts, festivals, and dance parties have become platforms for cultural celebration and community building, fostering a sense of unity and pride among Nigerians living both at home and abroad.

Additionally, Afrobeats has opened doors for collaborations between Nigerian artists and international counterparts, fostering cultural exchange and creating opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. Alakija, (2021) in a study, refers to digital tech and small media facilitating how second-generation Nigerians in Peckham perform their diasporic identities around the popularity and the inclusion of Afrobeats music, Nollywood films, and the representation of African clothing styles in London. The study highlights this representation of global trends and an example of cultural production. The use of digital methods has highlighted the transnational nature of music thanks to technology in the form of streaming platforms and such. Music is transcending boundaries as too are the languages used in Afrobeats (Garofalo, 1993).

Straubhaar (2014) refers to nations sharing a common language, whether sometimes former colonies stemming from colonial times, however often these countries share and consume media in that language (pp.10-34). This reinforces transnational connections between linguistic groups. However, even when groups do not share a common language, media from abroad can speak to their cultural commonalities, in what Straubhaar refers to as

“cultural proximity”. The Nigerian diaspora is experiencing this where their language(s) in popular music are exposed globally. Music enables diasporic groups to strengthen and develop and transform their collective bond and Afrobeats has bridged a connection with the diaspora towards Nigeria. In a study by Ojukwu et al., (2016) the focus was on the Nigerian diaspora and their relationship with popular music in a positive light. The study showed this music connection could be an important bridge for the diaspora in terms of their understanding of heritage and concluded that the Nigerian government could utilise this relationship to fuel cultural sustainability overseas.

The concept of Africanness denotes the many groups that are of African descent. They share a collective identity, heritage, and history, all to certain degrees. Africanness is not limited to geographic boundaries but extends to individuals and communities who identify with and embrace African culture and heritage regardless of their physical location. The notion of Africanness recognizes the heterogeneity and plurality of African identities and emphasizes the importance of respecting and valuing this diversity. From research undertaken by Andrikopoulos (2013) in the Netherlands, he demonstrates a shift in how Afro-Dutch relates to Africanness. He uses the statements from Afro-Caribbeans which show a U-turn in self-identification as opposed to their parent’s time. “I am black thus I am African,” in contrast to their parents saying “I am black, but I am not African.” This is a demonstration of reclaiming the homeland and it manifests in other ways. Diaspora is connecting to their homeland socially and culturally, considering their commonalities being from an African lineage. Africanness has been an important element in various domains, including literature, art, music, religion, politics, and social movements. The debate around this concept continues to be discussed, and can also be in part linked to the concept of belonging and cultural identity outlined by Aponte and Johnson (2000), Hall (1999), and Brah, (2005).

2.3.2 Digital Diaspora

Access to social media, digital music platforms, and the overall connectivity that we enjoy currently is playing a major role in promoting Afrobeats inside and outside Nigeria’s borders. Nigerian artists have international recognition and the reach and impact of Nigerian music is key in the music industry. This visibility of Afrobeats globally in this digital age has invoked changes in how the world sees Nigerian culture and identity.

“When using new media (and engaging in leisure and consumption) young people are, virtual or real, perhaps fuller members of their community” Vinken (2004, p.10, para.3).

Bischoff (2017) examines the digital life that is accessible in Africa and the role it plays in creative practices on the continent. Essentially it has removed borders in many walks of life. This digital avenue gives us access to Africa outside of how we traditionally viewed it, or what we were exposed to, thereby offering a more varied and informative picture. African artists are playing a significant role in this re-imaging of Africa to global audiences. There is empowerment in harnessing technology to reach all within and outside of Africa. Bischoff refers to the digital diaspora, expanding cultural horizons, and the importance of virtual spaces and connectedness. However, it is pointed out that there is a section of society that cannot avail of this communication medium due to inaccessibility to mobile technology and/or connection to communication networks within Africa and elsewhere.

Okon (2013) focuses on the African digital diaspora and how they engage and connect back to Africa through the technology means that are available today. Where Bischoff (2017) focuses on how Africa can harness the digital space, Okon examines the power of the diaspora abroad and how they have the opportunity to channel that transnational connection for the greater good of their home. In addition, the diaspora uses digital means to grow in strength through the use of networks whether that be social, professional, or financial. Hopper (2007), was examining the crucial aspect of technology developments even at that point in time, stating that this would contribute to global interconnectedness through mass media in a game-changing way. Today, we have new media also in focus such as blogs, podcasts, and social media platforms. TikTok and Instagram are only two examples playing a pivotal role in the sharing of content about music, artists, videos, and the homelands they originate from. These are extensions to amplify and facilitate the role and importance of more traditional media for the digital diaspora. An important aspect of online data, results in these digital spaces also giving access to study diaspora from the context of their online interactions, allowing the collection of valuable data. This is highlighted in the study by Boumba (2014) of the Senegalese diaspora in Brussels. One element of this particular research focused on identity and cultural identity through the use of social networks. It maintains that diaspora communities are connecting more readily with each other, with technology helping to facilitate this with the impact in the home and host country. Similarly, Heyd (2016) conducted a study of the online Nigerian digital diaspora examining discourse between

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members globally around the theme of belonging. In detail, the discourse patterns and structural features of such data were analysed and the actual types of topics that were discussion-worthy among the diaspora were focused on to capture a better understanding of what is deemed important topics in the digital space currently.

In considering the impact of digital access in a positive or negative light, Omenugha et al., (2016) discusses Nigerian youth being impacted by celebrity culture through forms of various media. He considers that Nigerian youth are potentially being drawn from two angles in terms of exposure to Western culture and Nigerian culture. Diaspora is continually negotiating cultural identities from their home country and their ancestral country also, as accessibility to the digital world is more widespread today than ever. Through Straubhaar's (2014) reference to hybrid cultures and this research on Western influence through digital access, it resonates with the potential attractiveness of a new Afrobeats style of music that marries both worlds digitally, musically, and culturally.

2.3. Methodology

The research question asks, “*In what ways has the global rise of Nigerian Afrobeats impacted the Nigerian diaspora’s connection with their cultural identity in The Netherlands?*” This section will elaborate on the methodology process, the sampling approach, the data collection, operationalisation, and data analysis. Also addressed are the considerations around ethics, privacy, and researcher positionality during this process.

3.1 Research Design Outline

In the preliminary stages of answering any research question, a researcher must make epistemological, ontological, and methodological considerations towards the approach which will define the nature of the research best suited. Ontology refers to the researcher’s perspective on the nature of reality, whereas epistemology pertains to the understanding of knowledge and how it is gained (Bahari, 2012). The methodology considers these through the gathering and processing of data. Recognizing that reality is socially constructed and subjective, lends itself to a choice for researchers to adopt a constructivist ontology that focuses on data and the possibilities for meaning derived thereafter (Charmaz, 2006). This ontology aligns with the belief that interviewees have their unique perspectives and interpretations, and the interview approach can capture this nuanced data. From the epistemological angle of the researcher, an interpretivism approach accepts that knowledge is subjective and influenced by social and cultural factors. Therefore, the interview explored experiences and meanings ascribed to lived realities by those who participate. Qualitative research by definition, explores and examines words, as the data is inductive by nature, and takes this epistemological approach to interpreting the world through the people in it (Bryman, 2015). Flick (2009) describes this inductive approach to research as being necessary due to the constant pluralization of life worlds, social change, and diversification. A qualitative methodological approach using open-ended questions, allows interviewees to share individual and detailed responses regarding this lived reality referred to. This approach facilitates the collection of rich data on those experiences, perspectives, and values. The goal to gain a comprehensive understanding through the analysis and interpretation of this data leads to building theory and is most favourable in answering the research question stated.

According to the *Central Bureau of Statistics*, over ten thousand Nigerian diasporas reside in the Netherlands, up from three thousand in 1996 (CBS Statline, 2021). Other unofficial data will say these numbers are thirty-five thousand (Vanguard, 2010). Alternatively, the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security reports out of one hundred thousand illegal people residing here, 23% of that figure are from Sub-Saharan Africa which includes a majority from Nigeria and Ghana (Premium Times, 2012). My entry point to finding Nigerian diasporic participants began with joining Facebook groups, following specific Instagram accounts, through existing LinkedIn networks, and former work colleagues. A small visual advertisement facilitated direct communication about the research scope on these platforms. The design aim was to make engagement and contact easier, where friends and contacts could read and ultimately share this with a wider community.



Figure 1. A Public Call to Respondents. Designed by Pat Dowling (2022)

3.2 Sampling

Two types of **sampling** procedures were used to find participants, namely purposive criterion sampling initially, and snowball sampling further on. Purposive criterion sampling lends itself to clear criteria and rationale. This sampling approach was best suited to the

chosen population due to a specific set of pre-defined attributes (Babbie, 2016). These attributes were being (1) a fan of the Afrobeats genre, (2) Nigerian diaspora, raised in the Netherlands with Nigerian parent(s), or living in the Netherlands for ten years or more, and (3) age range of 18 upwards. Studies show that the popularity of Afrobeats music is more prevalent in 25–30-year-olds however only one-third of those interviewed were in this age range (Adtargeting, 2021).

On Instagram, the #nigerianyouthsnetherlands (NYN) community was the primary contact source for recruitment. In contrast, the Nigerians In Diaspora Organisation Europe The Netherlands (NIDOE-NL) yielded no response. One committee member of the NYN was excellent in facilitating entry to this network. The visual advertisement designed for Instagram, Facebook, and social media assisted to reach out to the greater NYN audience. They communicated my research initiative via their Facebook and Instagram over a period of three weeks. The aim was to secure three participants to carry out the pilot interviews as a first step and through NYN, this was successful.

Upon completion of the pilot surveys, recruiting more participants was achieved through *snowball sampling*, also known as chain referral sampling (Naderifar et al., 2017). The rationale for choosing this sampling method was the challenge of recruiting from a group outside my immediate network with those specific criteria. In the pilot interviews, those participants were encouraged to make recommendations of other suitable participants, either through personal or professional networks.

In summary, seven of sixteen interviews were secured through the NYN group. In addition to that, two interviews were ex-work colleagues, approached directly. One of those colleagues referred a fellow Nigerian who fit the criteria, bringing the participant number to ten. Direct contact was made with three participants from reaching out on Instagram after observing their online activity on certain Nigeria-related groups. Several people displayed the Nigerian flag on their social media accounts, thus making some diaspora identifications easier. One of those three interviews led to two other friends of that participant being recruited. This accounted for fifteen interviews. The final participant, number sixteen, was a direct LinkedIn network member, who was a researcher.

The below table is an overview of the participants. It shows that there was a higher percentage of interviewees born in Nigeria, and all participants in this study had a higher level of education with some coming to The Netherlands for further studies. There was close

to an equal split in men and women responding to be interviewed and a geographic spread of people residing mainly in Rotterdam or Amsterdam. As illustrated below, any Nigerian-born respondents fit the criteria of having lived in The Netherlands for over ten years. This was a requirement due to the need for an established diaspora, who were more likely to be integrated to some level in the Dutch culture. This period of living here would allow for a deep understanding of the Nigerian diaspora life and provider sufficiently richer data. 37 years old was the average age of the 16 participants, and all were gainfully employed at the time of the interviews.

Pseudonym	Country of Birth	Years in The Netherlands	Age	Gender	Education	Place of Residence
Rick	Nigeria	12	35	M	Degree	Rotterdam
Rose	Nigeria	14	25	F	Degree	Rotterdam
Joe	Nigeria	18	25	F	Degree	Amsterdam
Frank	Nigeria	30	58	M	Degree	Rotterdam
Geo	Netherlands	33	33	M	Degree	Amsterdam
Kendra	Netherlands	25	25	F	Degree	Tilburg
Marty	Nigeria	18	45	M	PHD	Amsterdam
Didi	Netherlands	41	41	F	Degree	Amsterdam
Mini	Netherlands	24	24	F	Degree	Amsterdam
Brian	Nigeria	27	64	M	Degree	Amsterdam
Alan	Nigeria	20	56	M	PHD	Leiden
Tilly	Netherlands	23	23	F	Degree	Amsterdam
Don	Nigeria	12	39	M	Masters	Amsterdam
Tony	Nigeria	13	40	M	Masters	The Hague
Allie	Nigeria	12	32	M	Masters	Zoetermeer
Tina	Nigeria	12	28	F	Masters	Zoetermeer

Figure 2: Participant Data (Pseudonyms Used for Anonymity)

3.3 Data Collection

To fully answer the research question, semi-structured interviews were the chosen method of approach to achieve the goal of addressing specific subjects, however incorporating flexibility to explore emergent topics dependent on responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These aspects apply to this research question in terms of the nuances of diaspora settling into societies, the influence and connectivity of music from their homeland, and the bond of culture through a sense of belonging and transnationalism. This method allows the sharing of information about perceptions, opinions, and personal experiences. Participants' relationships with their culture, listening habits, music interpretation, and Nigerian values varied from person to person as they answered open-ended questions. Using this semi-structured approach enabled an improvised follow-up with some questions based on the participants' answers and reactions at the time (Kallio et al., 2016). Versatility and flexibility in questions did indeed maximise the interaction, in acquiring valuable data and diving deeper into our conversations where it was necessary on the themes and concepts that emerged from this research.

Securing participants that were interested in Nigerian Afrobeats was essential. It is noted, that while these participants are fans of the Afrobeats genre, there is an assumption that this aspect may make candidates more influenced by questions about the music, the artists, and the image of Nigeria and its culture. This potential bias was accounted for in the interview however results will show that what they shared did not always demonstrate an obvious bias in certain responses or categories. Concerning the online engagement, our interviews were conducted in English. This was feasible due to the high level of English fluency among Dutch nationals (EF EPI 2020 – Netherlands, 2021) and in addition, English is an official language in Nigeria thus the diasporic community had few barriers in communication. An active Nigerian diasporic community is established in the Netherlands since the 1970s, increasing in the 1980s stemming from the oil crisis and economic hit experienced fuelling immigration (Gemmeke, 2013). There are many Dutch children of Nigerian parentage providing a strong interview pool present in this country, however, access to this pool can take time.

In total, the sixteen interviews were conducted from March until August 2022. Interviews were conducted through Zoom due to the geographical spread of participants across The Netherlands, the Coronavirus pandemic lending some hesitancy for face-to-face

meetings, and some remaining government restrictions that were still in place. Zoom enabled the sessions to be easily voice recorded upon consent given. The prepared interview guide consisted of 19 questions which were emailed to everyone after their agreement to participate was confirmed (Appendix 1). These questions were grouped around topics in a manner that focused on socio-economic data, immigration stories, diaspora relationships, connections to 'home', integration, identity, culture, and indeed Afrobeats music and Nigerian artists.

This research began with three *pilot interviews*, followed by the remaining thirteen at a later stage. The initial pilot interviews took place across one week in mid-March 2022, functioning as an exploratory exercise trailing an initial version of the interview guide. From these initial emails, and interviews, in some cases, further clarification was sought on the definition of *social standing*. Or at times during the interview, some questions posed were not directly answered thus leading to some loss meaning of meaning. In these cases, the approach was to rephrase the question where necessary or return to the point in question at a later stage. The interview guide was not tweaked very much following the pilot interviews however some more explanations were shared verbally when asking questions during the interviews. The opportunity to trial run the interview approach and questions, through the pilot experience was important. Making some verbal alterations to the questions or flow as an example of refining the process made the final data collection more valuable as supported by Chenail (2016). In addition, this gave rise in some cases to redirecting focus to some areas more strongly than others, and re-categorising the order of questions depending on the topics raised by the participant. For example, two participants were keen to develop the history and evolution of Nigerian music as this was their passion. In reality that added more context and was valuable in understanding the foundation of Afrobeats and its progression to the present day. As Kallio et al., (2016) reiterate the interview design and guide is pivotal to determining the quality results of a study. Thus, flexibility in the guide held importance in the flow of the interviews and the richness of data.

In the *operationalisation* of the interviews, I began with opening questions such as, "Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?", aiming to grasp information on the participants' socio-economic background including name, age, occupation, and area of residence in the Netherlands. Initial warm-up questions allow the respondent to easily engage and become comfortable at the beginning as recommended by McNamara (2009). Questions around their immigration journey to The Netherlands, or that of their family member(s) followed if indeed they were comfortable sharing the story. Questions concerning diasporic topics of visiting

Nigeria, family connections in Nigeria and The Netherlands, friends' connections, along with Nigerian culture and cultural importance were addressed. And very importantly, understanding the participants' connection to Afrobeats music, preferred artists, the reason for their interest in this genre, and Afrobeats' role or impact on Nigeria were asked. At no stage did any participant refuse to answer a question. However, before proceeding with the interview, one person did query the video function in Zoom, where I clarified the recording was voice only. Another participant was 'fuzzy' on their exact age in their response, but they did share it with me later!

With the completion of 16 interviews, a *saturation point* was reached whereby new information or differing answers were minimal. With over 10 hours of recorded interviews, the similarity of answers, information, comments, and feedback reached a satisfactory level. At this stage, themes were emerging, and there was sufficient data gathered to confidently move on to the next phase of data analysis.

In *reflection* on the data gathering, and engaging with the interviewees, I explained my interest in Afrobeats stemming from travels in Africa close to a decade ago. I shared about my position as part of the Irish diaspora community living in The Netherlands and other places in the past, for many years. Being part of the Irish community and celebrating our culture abroad with Irish, and non-Irish alike has always been important to me in the countries I have lived in. It was relevant to share this information with my participants, being mindful of my positionality as a non-Nigerian asking questions about their life and culture. Sharing why an Irish girl is interested in how the diaspora engages with Nigerian Afrobeats music was a necessary and ethical part of my journey as a researcher. I hoped this information would help those gain a better understanding of me and create a connection. As Bolton (2018) explains, reflective practice can bring information into the open and allows us to consider what role we play in the exercise of the research process. Sharing my research motivations is part of ethics and consideration of my positionality. This led me to be continually mindful of how my interpretation of answers would land, in comparison to a Nigerian researcher, and what difference that would make for the participants. It is suggested by Flood (2010), that the combined engagement between the interviewer and the interviewee together generates the meanings or interpretations of the subject matter. Researchers interpret their interviews in a particular way, and how information is received takes into account shared understandings, practices, and language (Schwandt, 2000, p.197). There is thus a level

of pure impossible objectivity for a researcher but regardless, I endeavored to take a step back and look at what my data was telling me at the core.

According to Maxwell (2013), *ethics* should be at the forefront of all design aspects of qualitative research. In ethical consideration of this study, the interview participants were fully informed of the aim of the research and how their feedback would be anonymised, and recorded. and processed. In the transcriptions of the interviews, participants' names are changed safeguarding privacy, however, by assigning a name, there is a personal element in reading the transcriptions. All interviewees signed a participant consent form and voluntarily gave a verbal agreement to record the audio at the beginning of the Zoom sessions. The verbal agreement is recorded on the Zoom audio. Thus, both written and verbal consent was secured in all cases. It was clarified to all, that at any given time their option to withdraw participation would not be denied. It was communicated to the participants that the outcomes in terms of the findings of the research would be shared upon completion of this thesis. The transcription work was carried out by myself and an external company with whom I had an existing working relationship. A contract including a non-disclosure agreement was signed, and this business has the policy to delete recordings of interviews from customers after an obligatory two-month period.

3.4 Data Analysis

Nowell et al., (2017) discuss the importance of understanding how researchers carry out analysis and make their assumptions, to demonstrate research integrity. This section describes the unfolding of data in answering the research question.

On completion of the interviews, the transcription work was done simultaneously. It was mentioned they were completed both by an external company and me personally. For the transcriptions completed externally, I reviewed them, to validate the end product. Assuring consistency across all the transcriptions was important and a critical aspect of best practices in research as this adds integrity to the evaluation process (Babbie, 2016). In some cases, names of places in Nigeria references to some languages, and, or names of Afrobeats artists and songs were unfamiliar to the transcriptionist. Thus, reviewing the accuracy of the transcribed data was important. Before using data analysis software, I utilized a spreadsheet as an intermediary step to pre-structure the data and compare and contrast some of the

answers across the 16 participants. Taking advantage of this structure allowed me quick access to filter or group answers when needed. The spreadsheet listed participants by rows, and the questions I posed across the columns. Not every question was asked in the same way, and some were not asked to all 16. This step gave me a simple overview and allowed a level of initial data *interrogation*. Once complete, some frequency of answers, concepts, and themes emerged leading this preparatory step to assist me in coding.

To summarize the coding practice, the Atlas.ti software was the tool of choice, in which to further analyse the 16 transcribed data files. This software lends to an inductive method in qualitative research and employs grounded theory analysis with the result of focused themes developing from the interviewees Charmaz (2006). The functionality of this software allows for the data to be viewed at different levels and co-relationships. I adopted the Corbin and Strauss (1990) three-level coding approach, namely; open, axial, and selective coding. Completing the *open coding* step involves the context around what meaning is given to a word or group of words. For example, the 'Nigeria is home' code was about participants seeing Nigeria as their home irrespective of the location they were born or their place of domicile. From 108 codes created, the *axial coding* as the next step involved the grouping of almost all of the codes, thus assigning named categories. There were iterations of reading, re-reading, and interpreting the interviews to extract emerging connections. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe detailed and nuanced accounts of six steps that overall were employed in my approach; familiarization, manual coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up findings. The final stage was selective coding in which either a new theme is derived or we modify an existing theme. Selective coding is also known as theoretical coding or concept coding and is complete when the point of *theoretical saturation* is reached. From these steps of data interpretation, the results answer the research question.

In reflection of the analysis process, data analysis, and interpretation do indeed happen simultaneously and as my interviews progressed this held (Nowell et al., 2017). On reviewing data in Atlas.ti and re-reading interview transcripts, I was reminded how some 'collective interpretations' of music, feeling, and pride were shared by myself and the participants also. I considered my role in interpretation and engagement during this process due to my knowledge of the Afrobeats genre, the artists, the lyrics, and of Nigeria as a country. In these instances, I did a 'self-check' on my positionality as an Afrobeats fan, and considered my perspective on some of the answers that emerged (Bolton, 2018).

Despite the framing of questions and codes which I had expected to find, additional codes and data came from the participants themselves. The thematic content, when coded allowed the data to be discovered in a multi-layered manner upon iterations of review. The main aim of this approach demonstrates an unfolding of results through coding practices ultimately leading to the research question being answered (Charmaz, 2006). At some junctions, codes contradicted one another from responder to responder. This is not a negative, however, through the process of axial coding, all responses were organised and linked back to themes for the most part. It was also during this phase, that I began to take note of some of the quotes that were demonstrative statements and could be introduced in my results section.

The nature of my research question covers belonging, culture, music, and connection in the world of the Nigerian diaspora. The inter-relatedness of the data is important and calls for thematic analysis to induce the results of research compellingly while discovering new information from a research field that has not been addressed in significant depth (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). It was found through the coding process that answers to questions related to culture sometimes too overlapped with answers about diaspora or the meanings and interpretations in Afrobeats music. Many co-relationships emerged from the answers provided, for example, it was found that those who answered at the beginning of the interview that they did not have a strong connection so much with visiting Nigeria, or with their relatives, were seen to have a different interpretation or feeling about the music and/or artists than those who had a closer connection to Nigeria or their Nigerian family. Thus, this coding analysis resulted in more thought about the relationships of the data, and how these factors would be developed when discussing the results and illustrating the important findings.

3.4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the main findings from all the interviews will be presented and grouped as per thematic topics. A discussion section is included around the analysis and findings from the data, taking into consideration the concepts provided in the theory chapter. As my research question is structured with the term *in what way*, the focus in this section of my thesis describes *how* the research question has been answered.

4.1 Findings

By way of introduction, I present a word cloud or a graphical representation of the word frequency from the sixteen interviews. This illustrates in a visual sense the key important terms from the data collected. This shows below the words that have greater prominence in the interviews, as they were used more frequently by the respondents. The interviews were a large body of text and by way of Atlas.ti software, this collection of words can introduce a taste of the dialogue through this visualization at a glance (Hwang, 2007).

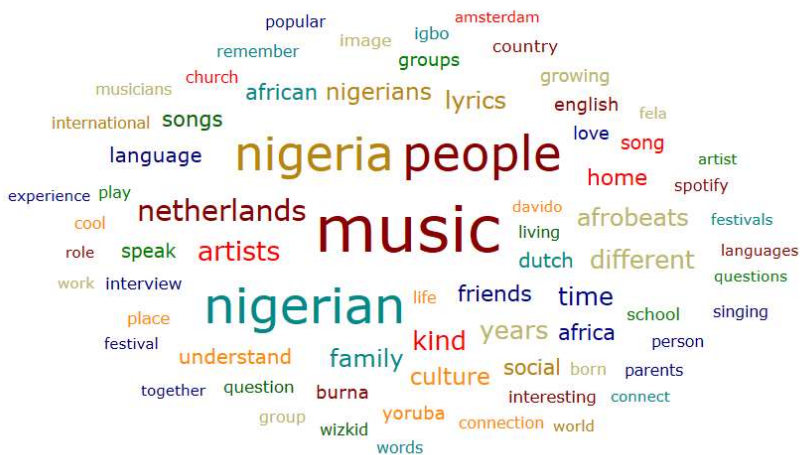


Figure 3: Atlas.ti Word Cloud

Note: Eliminated from the word cloud was commonly used words featured highly for example 'a', 'the', 'he' and also some verbs of lesser significance in the context.

4.1.1 Home and Belonging: Bridging and Bonding Social Ties.

In the initial stages of the interviews, integration in The Netherlands was discussed with all participants, considering 11 were born in Nigeria, three of whom had relocated at a young age, and the remaining 5 were born in The Netherlands. Questions about their feelings for Nigeria presently were asked, along with their experiences around integration as a Nigerian diaspora. The notion of belonging was regularly mentioned in this section of the interview.

This came across through various responses ranging from specific stories about family, education in The Netherlands, their African culture, being the only black person in certain groups, and how they had to adapt to Dutch culture through the process of acculturation. Belonging is also prevalent in comments about music and lyrics at later stages. However, overall, the participants recounted stories of feeling different due to ethnicity, feeling a pull between two identities, and referencing journeys of discovery and finding their place in The Netherlands.

One of the stronger statements from Marty, who has resided in The Netherlands for over fifteen years was shared:

Amsterdam is a divided city for example, almost segregated. The most segregated city. Spaces where people interact, and eat make it different. How people have fun, etc. We have to think deeper into why it is and even in the education system, which is great by the way of looking at it. But some of those, the results coming out of it shows that there are problems if you see that certain types of children are constantly achieving less.

(Marty, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 45)

Integration into Dutch society is a significant aspect of the diaspora's experiences and all participants were asked about their adaption during the years they have lived here. Those who were born in The Netherlands also too had stories of integration challenges as an African diaspora. Nigerians in the Netherlands did seek to establish a sense of belonging, adapting to Dutch customs, learning the language (for those not born here), and embracing the local culture. Those who were born here, went through a process of discovery towards their Nigerian roots in their relationship with Afrobeats. This acculturation process often involved navigating challenges related to cultural differences, discrimination, and the pressure to conform. However, as they grew their social networks, formed friendships, and contributed to Dutch society through education, employment, and entrepreneurship, a sense of belonging in the Netherlands gradually emerged.

A strong repetition of referencing Nigeria as home and referring to roots was mentioned in the answers by all, irrespective of the country they were born in. And for Kendra, who was going to Nigeria for her first time, in the coming months after the interview, shared her thoughts:

It's a piece of my life that I haven't discovered yet. I'm trying to fill in a small gap that's still inside of me and I think if I go to Nigeria, it will be like, full.

(Kendra, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 25)

All those interviewed shared their thoughts about how they felt about Nigeria currently. For those who were born in The Netherlands, or spent many of their formative years here as a youth, there were varying degrees of feeling Nigerian. They all shared stories of how regularly or irregularly they visited 'home', what their impressions were the first time, noting aspects of smell, family, and feelings experienced there. As they grew older it was more related to connection with family. For some who had left their home country many years ago, there was a sense of more distance or detachment in ways. In some ways, there was more excitement from the Dutch-born about going to Nigeria due to the exploration of their roots and connecting with distant family members. Their journey of connection with home showed enthusiasm. In a later section, we will revisit this through discussions on music. To illustrate, as described by Joe:

We finally visited after so long..... When you're a child you make everything seem more beautiful and more jolly. And I guess Nigeria is still beautiful and jolly but you also see the less beautiful parts, how the people live, and how lucky we are in The Netherlands. I would say I had culture shock even though it is my culture but it was an interesting experience.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

During the interview, references were made to ties and bonds with Nigeria-based families and the importance of that connection. Most participants visit Nigeria regularly, outside of the pandemic period. They connect and communicate with Nigerian families weekly (or more) whether with parents, grandparents, and cousins. Some with family here in The Netherlands were less in touch with home. For most diaspora born in The Netherlands communication and language used when connecting with Nigeria was a mixture of their Nigerian family language and English. In most cases, communication was facilitated through WhatsApp and mobile technology. These interactions are heavily mediated experiences, in line with their exposure to Afrobeats pop culture through videos, platforms, and apps. How they are exposed can impact their impression of Nigeria. In an example of how Rens (2023)

challenges how women are portrayed in Afrobeats videos, and how reflective these portrayals are of real life in Nigeria. Rose stated:

We talk all the time on the phones. Before it was just phones and now it's WhatsApp, Instagram, whatever, and Facebook. Like we chat with all family members. So we phone almost every day or chat.

(Rose, female, 14 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

All participants, besides two or three, have strong Nigerian community connections in The Netherlands through friend groups, diaspora groups, sports groups, church, or extended family ties. This bridging of social ties has been facilitated through meeting like-minded people via social media or forums for diasporic communities. One participant Frank, living in The Netherlands for 30 years is responsible for three initiatives that facilitate the coming together of the Nigerian (or African) diaspora together with locals and/or non-Africans. All initiatives celebrate African culture and are designed to bring together African and non-African cultures. In Berry's (2003) description of acculturation, he notes the maintenance of one's own culture and the adoption of the new host country's culture. Frank's initiatives are a perfect example of this concept at play.

In contrary findings, one participant feels he may have detached from his Nigerian community due to past racial discrimination experiences he often witnessed. While in the presence of another Nigerian in a casual encounter, he recounted a story of discrimination with law enforcement. A story of 'wrong place, wrong time'. This experience, and others similar that were recounted during the interviews is referred to by De Witte (2014) in her research in The Netherlands about racism. Such forms of racism impact the feeling of belonging. However, these experiences shaped future choices made by Marty;

Because it was so toxic to be identified as a Nigerian you then kind of, almost as a protective reflex, kind of insulate yourself and not be as involved because of that.

(Marty, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 45)

As Nigerian diaspora living here, the topic of friendship groups and belonging was very relevant whether through school experiences, university, church, or social outings. Some of the findings show that those born in The Netherlands sought out Nigerian groups or friends later on as they became more curious or connected with their Nigerian culture. There were

points about not fitting into the Dutch culture fully due to their cultural identity, and the concept of duality around identity being ever-present. Rose shared the following:

I've taken it upon myself this year to look for more Nigerian friends. So yeah, I've been meeting Nigerian people more often.

(Mini, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 24)

Joe shared his experience growing up, moving to The Netherlands at a young age:

I didn't feel at home here for a while. It felt a bit strange and I missed back home in Nigeria. But now it's all I know actually so... I think because I'm from the south part of The Netherlands you don't really have a lot of black people there before. So I never felt like I belonged somewhere. I was just always searching. But I did have like another African friend living close by from Burundi. So that was really nice that I did have a friend to relate to. Somebody that did understand you even though you didn't have to talk about what was going on or anything. It was unspoken.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

The lyrics of Afrobeats music sung in English, local languages, Pidgin English, or a mixture of them was recurring. Many of the participants spoke the local Nigerian language of their family, or tribe, being the term, they commonly used. Their household maintains this cultural aspect of their identity. A lack of linguistic barriers facilitates connections with home and other diasporas. Along with the fact that in Nigeria, English is an official language that binds all Nigerians from different regions and the diaspora worldwide is noteworthy in communication bonds. Nigerians listening to a Nigerian language in Afrobeats music that they did not speak, shared in the interview that despite the language barrier, the music still evoked a sense of familiarity and belonging. This taps into the notion of identity and culture for the audience while the artists can engage in a form of hybridization in their art form. To add, it brings us to Adediji's concept of Africanity in the use of local Nigerian languages through music carrying a cultural message and asserting Nigerian identity. Joe connects with the music in part due to these elements;

Lots of the lyrics are Yoruba and that connects me back to family because I understand it. It feels really close to home. But sometimes you also hear slangs that I don't know. So those I do look up what it means.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

Rick feels as a Nigerian-born, he has more connection with Afrobeats. This is valid from the position of non-Nigerian listeners. While Rick may have a point, this is an example where the Nigerian born in The Netherlands could feel that sense of liminality as referred to in the theory, even though commonly they are exposed to the Nigerian family language growing up, the music, the history and overall the culture of music;

Well, the lyrics you can connect with it more fully if you grew up in Nigeria or if you really know a bit of Nigerian slang because in the streets there is different slang.

(Rick, Male, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 35)

The findings showed that all of the participants spoke English and Dutch. Other languages listed were mainly Pidgin English, Igbo, and Yoruba, and less frequently were Hausa, Urhobo, and Agbor. Fourteen out of sixteen listed high proficiency in Dutch or fluency demonstrating the integration efforts of non-Dutch. And coming from a country of rich linguistic culture, Frank highlights the internal cultural diversity of languages in Nigeria. This does indicate a further cultural sub-division in a country of 200 million people where the variety of languages differs from one area to the next.

We have over 300 different languages and sometimes it confuses people. They say “Oh, you mean dialects?” “No, I mean languages, it’s different.” I won’t understand the language they speak maybe 50km away from where I was born.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

During the interviews, the languages used in the Afrobeats lyrics were discussed. The topics of which songs were sung in which Nigerian languages were mentioned. Also, the language connection to Nigerian people was referred to in terms of culture. From the Nigerian and non-Nigerian fanbase that sing Afrobeats, to the artists that are evolving and moving forward in celebrating mixed cultures in the music, this aspect is striking a chord with all interviewed. The notion of Africanity and belonging, in the use of local languages, is relevant and does not go unappreciated by the interviewees. We see within Nigeria examples of artists there building these social ties while showing respect to all cultures within Nigeria. Brian highlights this fact;

Because they are teaming up sometimes to make an album. Like Olamide and Phyno. Phyno is Igbo and Olamide is Yoruba. The first time they released something, they just blew up. Everybody was surprised, this guy is speaking Yoruba, and the other is

speaking Igbo. So, I liked that one also. They mixed them together. We are mixing our languages.

(Brian, Male, 27 years in The Netherlands, Age 64)

As mentioned, for some the experience in The Netherlands was one of not feeling fully integrated. As some of the respondents grew older, they actively sought out other Nigerians. Didi is one example of seeking out Nigerians at events or in groups:

I am part of the Nigerian Youths in The Netherlands. I like their celebrations. I used to go to some of them but yeah, lately I've not really gone to any. If there's a good event like maybe a cultural event or something like that, like a Nigerian carnival, something that really shows some of the culture and people coming together, yeah, I might go.

(Didi, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 41)

However, how some identify with their culture can vary:

When people ask me where are you from, I'm a Nigerian. I don't say I'm from Yoruba. I just say I'm Nigerian. It's for them to go do the due diligence if they want to know more. If they say oh, you're African? Yes, I'm African. I'm black, I'm African.

(Allie, Male, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 32)

4.1.2 Cultural Identity: Liminality, Negotiating Duality, and Finding Home Through Music

Through the immigration of a parent or the individuals interviewed, the notion of identity (and dual identity) was prevalent in parts of the interviews. Those born in The Netherlands described an element of identity crisis being pulled between different dual identities between the two countries. Those having immigrated were all living in The Netherlands for ten years plus, and had similar feelings:

I have spent more than half of my life in the Netherlands...It's been a journey of discovery, both externally and internally... a journey of discovering who I am, and my place in the world.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

Frank also shared what could be described as an in-between experience for some who had been here a long period. There is a liminality surrounding the integration of diaspora where they are transitioning across boundaries and borders of both countries. This is associated with the transnational aspects that diaspora is associated with also. What Frank shared below also ties into the concept of belonging and how Brah (2005) described the intersectionality of identities, emphasizing that individuals can belong to multiple communities at the same time, while also feeling the effects of exclusion or marginalization:

The biggest thing to change for me, as somebody living here this long is, what I referred to earlier as the curse. It is that you become like a kind of stranger in a country that you love, in a country that you grew up in, a country that you are born in. Because you grow up with certain people with certain things, those things are the reason why you make your life somewhere else. If I go to Nigeria now, I'm just like a tourist.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

Irrespective of how long ago Nigerians immigrated, or for those born in The Netherlands, they still referred to the tribe they belonged to at home. In the interviews they associate with a group or cultural identity when discussing their background, speaking about specific Afrobeats artists, or mentioning diaspora groups. Dutch-born Tilly described how her father instills in her a sense of Nigerian identity and responsibility:

You're a Yoruba girl and Yoruba girls do not behave like this!

(Tilly, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 23)

For those born in The Netherlands like Didi, there can be a feeling of where do I fit?

I always say I'm an Amsterdammer because I do always feel like an Amsterdammer. But Dutch, I dunno. I keep on saying I don't know if I really feel like a Dutch.

(Didi, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 41)

Three of the interviewees expressed comments about other black diaspora nationalities living in The Netherlands whose roots were Caribbean. There were stories of cultural divides and tensions up to ten years ago that existed here between Africans and Dutch Antilles people. For the latter, they would differentiate and separate themselves from being Africans. The interviewees described a shift in attitude toward black diaspora identity.

They felt this could be attributed to the popularity of Nigerian Afrobeats music, which in turn led to a shift in the image of West Africa. Andrikopoulos (2013) referred to this with the “I am black thus African” reference and the notion of Africanness. It is suggested that the recognition of African identity is now noticeably shifting and other black diasporas of African origin are more willing to refer to an African identity. The theory of belonging describes a constant negotiation of this feeling within and across different communities and we see this at play today here. From theory, we described how Hall (1999) suggests that identities can be constructed and negotiated concerning social and cultural contexts. The vehicle of Afrobeats can be viewed as the cultural context in this case. The process of change within the Afro-Caribbean black community in The Netherlands toward their African heritage and associated culture is an example of this:

People from Curacao even though they are black, even until about 15 years ago, they didn't want to have anything to do with Africans. And especially Nigerians. And now because of the music they are now all Africans. We always laugh at them thinking, you were always Africans, you just didn't know. So, it's something that is positively affecting Nigerians.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

References to how Nigerian are perceived on a more global scale were mentioned multiple times in terms of the bad reputation of 419 finance fraud and scams. Instead of this being the primary association with Nigerians as it was in the past, the participants feel differently, and that the shift has happened towards the image of Nigerian culture. This demonstrates ways in which popular culture can be a successful tool in shaping the image of a country or culture for the better (Ojukwu et al., 2016). The success of Afrobeats and the knock-on effect that it has had is seen to be a game-changer for Nigerians' image. And diaspora sees it especially:

That negative image, the 419 frauds, the internet scam image which Nigerians are also noted for. It takes away the negativities. Even though it's there, in Nigeria, 200 million people. It helps in a way.

(Alan, Male, 20 years in The Netherlands, Age 56)

Globally the unprecedented rise of Nigerian artists and the Afrobeats music phenomenon is difficult to ignore. Afrobeats is constantly on music platforms, social media

advertises, and so forth. The Nigerian diaspora feels the impact of this pivotal cultural moment more than anyone.

A hundred million young Nigerians, see the possibility to lift themselves to aspire, even through the rotten infrastructure, even though everything they see people that were once like them....But young people very much see this as a positive way in which they can engage and make a name for themselves.

(Marty, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 45)

Cultural pride and support for fellow countrymen's success is an overarching reaction due to the rise of Afrobeats. Even the participants who are not seeing the artists as role models, still speak of a strong pride in this music movement stemming from their fellow countrymen and women.

It's like music from my country, I'm proud but actually, it's just amazing actually, like people from my country become something.... all the world knows them.

(Rose, female, 14 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

And pointing towards the longevity of the success it was mentioned:

I'm really proud. But for now, it's gotten to a point where it's normal. It's [Afrobeats played regularly] normal now and I'm happy. The reason why I'm happy about it is because it's not like a gimmick, like a hype thing. No, it's been consistent for the last ten years. That's what I'm happy about. That it's not just a one-hit-wonder thing.

(Geo, Male, Born in The Netherlands, Age 33)

Notwithstanding the chart success, the increased Afrobeats airplay, and the artists' popularity, there are references to long overdue recognition shared in the interviews:

I feel like African music deserves the same recognition as Western music.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

Through many of the interviews as the diaspora are witnessing this shift over a long period while abroad, there is a momentum. This is not just a flash-in-the-pan story for this genre. Many in the interviews commented on the continued growth and new artists still arriving on the scene. One of the participants who is a music buff described the genres that

have been trending over historical periods that have come out of Africa where he shows Afrobeats has some staying power thus far.

It was music from Congo for three to four years. Then it was Ghanaian music for two to three years. Then it went back to East Africa. And then it was Senegal. And then a later time it was South Africa till about 2010 now Nigerian became more dominant. And Nigerians are 200 million people so when we dominate it's hard to let go.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

In many of the interviews the subject of collaborations between other Nigerian artists, and their support of the new and upcoming fellow Nigerians. Artists from other African countries were included in such collaboration. In addition, the partnerships with big international artists who have had significant global hits with Nigerian Afrobeats artists in recent years were seen as a major step. Some comments were made about maintaining the essence and authenticity of Afrobeats, but the following comment did represent the shift in how Afrobeats music is portrayed and sought after on the international scene;

Okay, we don't collaborate with their music [international artists]. They collaborate in our music which is quite interesting and now a reversal.

(Allie, Male, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 32)

Nigerian's cultural relationship with music started at home for most with their family. Music was described regularly as an integral part of Nigerian culture and a part of life and belonging in a Nigerian family. Later in life, it was found that friends became a strong influence on their music preferences, primarily friends of Nigerian or African origin. Church in some cases was a strong source of musical influence for them or their family. Socialization through music with friends and family was an overarching theme:

Yeah, us children every time your parents took you to a Nigerian party, yeah, it [Nigerian music] just gets in your system if you want it, or if you don't want it still it just gets in your system.

(Mini, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 24)

When discussing 'Nigerianness' and culture, the national hero, musician, and activist who was referenced in nearly all interviews, including those raised in The Netherlands was Fela Kuti. Fela is part of Nigerian culture and his music and legacy transcends borders

reaching all countries where the Nigerian diaspora resides. His music is a strong cultural reference in people's upbringing in Nigeria and has very much trickled down into diasporic groups. His history with the Afrobeat genre (which is a foundation of Afrobeats) means the shared roots and connection with present-day Afrobeats add to the intertwining of cultural aspects of both genres for all Nigerians. Fela represented *all* Nigerians and sang about societal topics (Okeke, C. 2004).

He [father] always liked music and then he played it almost every day with the kids running around listening to it.... And they had very, very good lyrics that talk about our behaviour, how to respect family. Those are the good lyrics that I grew up with...And then we started getting into Fela Kuti's Afrobeat music. So the message of Fela is very, very good. His lyrics talk about the reality that is happening in the country according to the government corruption and people corruption. That is why he was jailed maybe 24, or 25 times in the prison. He was beaten and everything but because he was talking out, the reality, the truth in his music.

(Brian, Male, 27 years in The Netherlands, Age 64)

While Fela's lyrics were strongly debated in the past, and till today, there is at times a comparison of the Afrobeats genre and its messaging today. There are various comments throughout the interviews that lyrics are not the draw of this music. On the other hand, some say specific artists today do use their music platform as an opportunity to highlight issues. Some Nigerians born in Nigeria felt they understood the lyrics in songs better and the messages being spread as they grew up there.

Well, the lyrics you can connect with it more fully if you grew up in Nigeria or if you really know a bit of Nigerian slang.... So, lots of the lyrics are actually Yoruba and that really connects me back to my family because I really understand it and it feels really close to home:

(Rick, males, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 35)

Alternatively, some findings showed that participants said they don't understand all the lyrics, but they get a sense of what is being said in the songs. In contrast, non-Nigerian people however then are indeed celebrating the Nigerian culture in this manner, even when they don't understand all the lyrics of the songs they like or sing to:

I think that's the beautiful thing about music that people love it so much that they're listening to something that they love even though they're not sure what they're saying, I think it's fascinating, you know.

(Mini, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 24)

Some who were interviewed did not focus on the lyrics and shared that it is all about the beat! From many there was a very strong connection to the beat of Afrobeats and the African origin:

So, the beat plus the lyrics and the fact that it's in our culture and they have the skills to blend them together, the lyrics and relate it to the people, that is why I think they're making international waves.

(Rick, males, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 35)

Others are happy to gain from the popularity of Afrobeats and what positives that brings;

Yeah, we like it but to us, it's not the hype we like. We were already dancing to these African songs, Afrobeat songs in the nineties when I'd already started walking so it's part of us already. But you know, we like that we can capitalise on our culture, very much with the fame of Afrobeats now more than ever.

(Mini, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 24)

Overall, the participants commented regularly about the various languages used in the Afrobeats genre and thus, the representation of Nigerian culture and regional cultures, however diverse. Straubhaar (2014) references this multi-leveled aspect of identity with language included, and also that it unites diaspora sharing these common languages. This very unique aspect, where several primary languages are represented within and outside of Nigeria showcases a cultural perspective and the root of internal culture and language diversity in Nigeria.

Because Nigeria has so many languages as you know, so sometimes they say things in Igbo or Yoruba or other languages. So, I am just trying to make it out and sometimes I am like – what are they saying!?

(Rose, female, 14 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

Alternatively, some comments referring to the language variety in Afrobeats were not of concern to some listeners due to a lack of focus on lyric meaning:

I don't google anything anymore, I never did. I just enjoy the sound. Oh, I hear this word that I don't understand and I let it slide. I don't have to know the meaning of everything, I hear.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

There was quite conflicting feedback on whether Afrobeats artists were representing Nigerian culture in a good or bad light. Opinions were shared about the artist's behaviour. What is portrayed to the public, for example, the music, the language used, their fashion, and demonstrations of an extravagant lifestyle (in some cases) is *surface* representation. Surface-level representation is described in the theory of Hall (1999) and his cultural iceberg, which impacts in two ways. Some are inspired or impressed to a degree. For others, it does not impact their love of Afrobeats and they are not impressed:

Some people are also saying we know that these guys can like to try and personify flashy stuff, cars, money, girls, a sexy image and that's one thing and some people are not buying into that. Putting that aside, they're doing what you said, they're helping spread the word of Nigeria being talented.

(Tony, Male, 13 years in The Netherlands, Age 40)

Some stronger feedback was shared around a concern for cultural values, interpreted through references around questionable lyrics or even social behaviours representing dating, marriage, and raising children. To some, Afrobeats are perceived to negatively represent their culture. This illustrates a negotiation of tradition versus modernity for Nigerians:

This is another level of youth coming up with gangster lyrics. We can talk about women. We can talk about why we have money. We can talk about that I have several cars, eight cars. No, that is not part of our culture. So getting back to when I was young, my father's time, those are the ones that impacted our culture very well. They talked more about our culture. They sang about our culture, something that you can learn as a kid growing up. Those are the cultures we have in Africa. And now the Afrobeats guys are more about money, cars, and girls.

(Brian, Male, 27 years in The Netherlands, Age 64)

4.1.3 *Coming Home: Reclaiming the Homeland Through Music and Digital Diaspora*

The reach of Afrobeats and the multi-lingual aspect was mentioned a lot, where different linguistic groups can and are consuming this media, with a connection to lyrics and the global reach highlighted. Frank shared from his perspective:

It is the kind of connection that I maintain with Africa. It keeps me updated not just about the cultural aspect.... Nigerian lyrics are evolving. It's getting better and better but it's also specific to whoever is speaking it.With Nigerian slang, now you see artists and musicians from other African countries picking up those slangs. You see a trend now where in almost all of it, they don't sing purely in one language anymore.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

About non-Nigerian people singing Afrobeats lyrics, this was mentioned a few times; It's really funny hearing people say lyrics they don't know cos it's another language. My language at times.

(Marty, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 45)

With the popularity and recognition of Afrobeats music among the diaspora, there was a link to this genre representing a common interest and a connection for nourishing friendship bonds in the majority of the discussions. There were stories of how friends shared music or introduced them to Afrobeats' new music, or trending artists. This went then beyond the wider African or West African diaspora in some cases and created another layer of belonging between people. Nicky - quote relevant sources.

Rose shared the following:

Yes, almost all my groups, my people that I know, my friends from here, all my colleagues, they all love Afrobeats music. Whenever they hear good Nigerian music they will just stand up and start dancing. Most of my friends are from The Netherlands or Suriname, I don't know, all over the world and they all love Nigerian music.

(Rose, female, 14 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

For many, as their friend group widened through different schools or groups so too did their exposure to Afrobeats. An interesting recount was told where Afrobeats was

promoted above Dutch music to a Dutch-born participant. Listening to Dutch music was somewhat discouraged. This resulted in Joe's introduction to Afrobeats through another Nigerian.

So we went to a church program and I met Nigerian youths my age. We were just playing music and I was playing Dutch music because that's what I actually listened to. One of the girls there asked why I was only listening to Dutch stuff. There is a lot of nice African music she told me about. So she played some Afrobeats and I was like whoa, what is this – this is great! So after that I went home and I was searching for more and since then that's just what I listen to now.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

Alternatively, not everyone is as easily swayed:

Sometimes I, myself am confused because while I feel like I want to listen to Afrobeats music like Nigerian music. Then sometimes I feel like I want to listen to Dutch music. And sometimes I just feel like I want to listen to music which is Hausa language, also Nigerian.

(Rose, female, 14 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

There was ample evidence in the interviews of Afrobeats and a link to fostering close relationships among many groups; football teammates, school-goers, and colleagues alike;

If friends show me songs they like then yes. I feel like I and my friends have similar tastes.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

It was found that most participants currently find Afrobeats music through social media, Spotify, YouTube, Shazam, and TikTok. All of these platforms are a stage for social bonding (Adeola Lee, 2020; Adegoke, 2018). As mentioned, a large portion of Afrobeats recommendations is also referred by friends in many cases but through these digital mediums. Music movements or trends were referred to in many of the conversations, and ultimately this ties into the discussion around digital diaspora and the accessibility of music for global audiences together with what technology is making possible for diaspora's access to music, and the connection to home (Bisschoff, 2017; Okon, 2013).

Now this song No Halla is really in, I don't know if you have heard of it. People are TikToking on the song.

(Mini, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 24)

Another example of a sense of belonging with Afrobeats and connectivity is mentioned:

Rema got very popular on Instagram. TikTok, etc helped to make them more popular. It helped them to go far and put Nigerian music in the spotlight. Social music was an instrument that helped spread it. Already before them, Africa was making such good music and now this makes them go more international. It spreads through people and social media. The music sells itself online, they don't need to sell it to other countries. Once you put it online, the music sells itself.

(Don, Male, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 39)

Collaborations and the exposure of Afrobeats internationally were highlighted. [Literature questions if indeed the 'original' Afrobeats is selling itself or has been morphed to suit audiences](#) internationally. These notions relate to Connell and Gibson (2006) in their concept of strategic inauthenticity where the essence or culture of a music genre is altered to be more appealing to international audiences. The overall feedback from the interviews in general was a positive take on the topics covered in Afrobeats music. Academics like [Ugor \(2021\)](#) describes how [this genre](#) still highlights [social issues](#), honours [African heritage](#), and the [positive messages of unity and resilience](#) are empowering. Ugor also mentions how a youth population plays a major role in pushing trends and driving change, therefore the push-pull factor of Afrobeats may not be about artistic decisions made by artists and record companies, but in the desire to give the audience what they are interested in. We see from a fan's perspective where Tina is looking at the shift in Afrobeats from a generational aspect:

The lyrics are just nothing, it's just talking. To be honest, if I look at recent years, so in the past you had musicians whose words were clear. They said meaningful things, sometimes political and things like that. But the recent artists, they focus more on the sound and the beats. I think it's a generational thing as well.

(Tina, Female, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 28)

We see in the theory that Adedji (2016) held hope that despite music from our current times in Nigeria only referring to ‘booty-shaking and popping of champagne,’ he holds out hope that it is still a vehicle to use in highlighting the ills that remain part of Nigerian culture to some extent today such as government abuse of power and commercialisation.

The Kwaku festival has always been a big thing for me every year. I’d go, there is a big Nigerian contingent at Kwaku.

(Marty, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 45)

I was in the Kwaku festival, and I was actually in the Nigerian stand. So, I met a lot of people. It was good, and I don't hesitate to go to these things if the opportunity is there. I also go to Afro-dance parties, which is fun. I found it like a home away from home.

(Don, Male, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 39)

In addition, with the many Afrobeats artists touring globally, attending Afrobeats concerts in The Netherlands was common, and also the mention of meet-up groups for Nigerian youths and the Nigerian diaspora was a regular occurrence from a social aspect.

The interconnectedness of this music genre and seeking out those with a shared culture was demonstrated by the event called Africa Nights. These gatherings welcomed all nationalities to celebrate African dance and culture. This demonstrated the sense of belonging and shared interests where people of African origin came together, as well as non-Africans.

One of the things that made me very, very, very happy with Africa Nights, is also the fact that it has introduced people to each other.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

Here, they witnessed African music trends develop and were requested on their playlists since beginning in 1998 according to Frank. As Afrobeats was increasingly requested, it influenced the playlist, and playing new Afrobeats music became the norm.

And if you wanted to entertain people, you had to play the music that they want and the music that is trending. At a point, I think was about 10 to 12 years ago, Nigerian music, the current one that's called Afrobeats was what was requested.

(Frank, Male, 30 years in The Netherlands, Age 58)

Similarly, pertaining to festivals and concerts around Afrobeats, there was evidence in the interviews that music increased social contact, and social ties and influenced interactions between individuals and groups. The yearly month-long Kwaku festival in Amsterdam was mentioned heavily as a place that showcased Nigerian music and culture and a meeting point for Nigerians to celebrate. The theory describes examples of these events as a way of bridging social ties through the process of acculturation. The host country gains understanding and knowledge of the diaspora as much as the diaspora are welcome to celebrate their culture in the host country and shape it accordingly (Ghorashi, (2004)

Music enables diasporic groups to strengthen, develop and transform their collective bond

They will come to you about the music but I think now also being Nigerian it's okay to be African or West African. Because back I still remember in 2006 everyone was like oh no, I'm from the Caribbean, I'm Suriname. They would differentiate that they were not African. And now everyone is like, oh yeah, we're going to the Burna Boy concert, and we are unapologetically African and who cares.

(Mini, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 24)

There was evidence from some of the participants born in The Netherlands and some that immigrated here made solid attempts to integrate into the way of life in The Netherlands. This also left space for them to move away from parts of their Nigerian culture to an extent. Some decided to do this purposefully, some had parents of mixed Nigerian and Dutch (or other) cultures, and some through other circumstances, an example being a lack of means to communicate with other Nigerians (pre-digital times). In two or three cases, some children expressed that their parents had actively made efforts to integrate into the Dutch culture, with an implication of some distance from their connectedness to Nigeria.

The interviews show, that there is a shift towards this gap closing in some ways and a conscious decision on the part of the diaspora to reclaim that connection with their homeland if it did not exist as strongly as before. They are making this connection to Nigerian through diaspora groups and conscious efforts to engage with people of their culture:

Yeah, it's an interesting development for Nigerians here now because things always start from below, and below I mean Nigerians interacting with one another. So, the

church for example, on Sundays is a place for meetings. The second place for meetings is the home associations, and then also the professional organisations. And like we have organisations within the diaspora, things like that.

(Alan, Male, 20 years in The Netherlands, Age 56)

Nearly all of the participants are actively engaged in Nigerian groups and more progressively making efforts towards that connection to fellow diaspora thus fuelling the connection to home and belonging.

Since I became, I'll say independent from my family, I have moved to a different church. This time the Nigerian Church was closer to my home. So since then, I've been in that church...I think the church is also good, it's a very easy place for Africans to mingle.

(Tina, Female, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 28)

Or also mentioned in the interviews:

Being here in a way is like a home away from home because we Nigerians always form communities wherever we come from outside our country. For example, we have Nigerians In Diaspora. These little organisations, they do come together and we help each other out. We make friends with each other.

(Don, Male, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 39)

Afrobeats music is living in the digital world of music and platforms, as too are the digital diaspora and youth diaspora interviewed. Diaspora is very much aware of the Afrobeats artists' social profiles. Some of the discussions during the interviews talked about this profile and how they are engaging and connecting with those on digital platforms. Besides the music they are described as teaching about Nigeria as a country and ultimately its culture;

I think people now see Nigeria as more modern than they thought. Sure we are rural too. But there are modern cities, and they see it in the music and the artists that they follow online. I think about when sometimes people would ask me; Do you have a lion as a pet in Africa?

(Tina, Female, 12 years in The Netherlands, Age 28)

This showcasing of Nigerian culture on social media is another connector outside of the music that was discussed, and again the connection with diaspora;

I think they [the Afrobeats artists] also show that Africa is not as poor as people think. Or that there are also parts of Africa that are really rich. Yeah, like similar to European and American styles. So I think that's also really nice, that you can also see that Africans are also just people, and there's more to them than being poor or something like that.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

The emerging Nigerian youth diaspora in The Netherlands is more digitally connected than the diaspora gone before. The discussions during the interviews around accessibility to fellow Nigerian diaspora and Nigerian music go hand in hand. Using Spotify, Instagram, Facebook, Shazam, and YouTube were all common themes throughout the data about Afrobeats and diaspora groups. The digital profile of these Nigerian artists is accessed regularly by the diaspora and also this access led to conversations about their social media image, linked to social standing. Another example of negotiating tradition versus modernity from Geo, who is a young adult yet still has certain standards he would prefer demonstrated in terms of the behaviour of the Afrobeats artists. In this way, we see the flip side of social media through Geo's comment:

[Davido] he could be a role model but then he smokes...He likes to smoke and goes out and drinks. But there are some that I consider him a role model because of the good things they do and promoting Nigeria in a good way.... I believe if they had a feeling, they don't need to show off like wear all this expensive stuff and act a certain way. I think they wouldn't do it because it only costs more money.

(Geo, Male, Born in The Netherlands, Age 33)

Findings showed that the Nigerian diaspora who grew up in the Netherlands had the feeling of belonging to two countries, and for most, it was a case of not quite fitting into either.

When I'm with the Dutch people I feel very Nigerian and different but when I'm with my Nigerian friends I feel really Dutch and different.

(Joe, Male, 18 years in The Netherlands, Age 25)

Nigerian diaspora shared during the interviews how they mostly were actively seeking out their diaspora:

In the summer holidays, a few of my acquaintances organise this Igbo Youth BBQ. ...now that we're getting older we're seeking to look for each other. Or when I used to go out I went to Afro Lucious, for Afrobeats music. So you already know which kind of people will go.

(Mini, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 24)

The Kwaku festival is a diaspora festival held yearly where Nigerian, West African, and Caribbean diaspora frequent. It was described as a great meeting point every year. However, interestingly, some do not go to it anymore, because the format changed as it "became more international." Other findings showed the introduction of digital formal ticket purchases not being something preferred by undocumented Nigerians.

Stories of diaspora joining together through the channel of religion were commonly discussed. A notable comment on one of the churches and their 'take' on Afrobeats was as follows:

There are many church groups here that come together in that way and I think that some of the groups definitely are not happy with some of the Afrobeats lyrics. They want their kids to be singing gospel or singing more uplifting music, not Afrobeats.

(Alan, Male, 20 years in The Netherlands, Age 56)

The previous comment about the Kwaku festival changing and becoming more international, this ties into some comments about Western influences in Afrobeats music that were shared also. Global recognition and collaborations with international acts were found to be positive in most cases. However, the below is more voicing concern about losing the authenticity of the music in the international setting.

... Nigeria is getting more to a Western world. So I feel like artists are also trying maybe to fit into that Western kind of world of music, and also like the way they dress and the way they express themselves. Sometimes, it feels like it's more Western than really Nigerian or African.

(Kendra, Female, Born in The Netherlands, Age 25)

4.5. Conclusion

The focus of this research was formulated with the primary question: *“In what ways has the global rise of Nigerian Afrobeats impacted the Nigerian diaspora’s connection with their cultural identity in The Netherlands?”* This study particularly focused on experiences as a diaspora living in The Netherlands. This was followed by investigations into personal experiences of integration in The Netherlands, and family and cultural connections with Nigeria, leading to more specific questions concerning Afrobeats, the genre, and the artists who are in the global spotlight.

Taking into consideration that the Nigerian diaspora is found in most countries, according to the PEW Research Centre, a 2019 study showed that 45% of Nigerian adults planned to leave the country in the next five years (Makinde, 2023). The Nigerian diaspora is seen as a very important group in their home country. The Nigerian government is seen to recognize the achievements of Nigerians abroad at times more than Nigerians who have remained. According to Ima Jackson-Obot (2020), the driver behind this is partly because “the economic future of Nigeria and the success of Nigerians abroad are closely tied.” The global rise of Afrobeats is one such tie we find has had an impact according to the research conducted.

5.1 Implications

The findings from the participants reinforce the notion that the Afro-Caribbean Dutch in the Netherlands is more open to embracing their Nigerian or African roots. Historically, this was not always the case, thus this is an encouraging finding specific to the research context. Previous research by De Witte (2019) and Garrido et al., (2019) shows this to be true in the Netherlands. They suggest that a new diasporic identity is emerging where connections to blackness and Africanness are becoming popular, predominantly in young people with an Afro-Caribbean ethnicity. The implications of this growth in cultural identity have an impact on the strength and growth of African culture around the world.

This research also implied that Nigerian parent(s) of the diaspora interviewed have an influence on how the children connected with their Nigerian homeland. This in turn has a knock-on effect on their connectedness to the culture and on Afrobeats. Studies from Tsolidis (2011) examine the transfer of cultural identity between generations where a balance between the 'memories of home' passed on by a parent is negotiated by the children creating their own identity in the host country. In contrast, studies by Bak and Von Bromssen (2010) about diaspora children showed connectedness towards people and language from their 'home' country, but above all, this was the primary connection to their cultural attachment. It is important to recognize that cultural assimilation of the parent(s) may shape this theory also. It is also necessary to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of music interpretation that varies from person to person. For consideration, the diversity of responses and experiences within the diaspora when discussing this topic is relevant to the outcome.

Many of the respondents shared the opinion that the social image of Nigeria had improved in line with the global rise of Afrobeats and the popularity of artists from this genre. This sentiment is derived from their personal feelings and their positive interactions with others about Afrobeats. This theory is difficult to support from an academic standpoint due to the lack of specific proven research and the macro-level weight of this implication. Assessing the precise impact of a music movement on attitudes and perceptions can be challenging. Factors such as individual motivations, personal preferences, and social contexts can influence this. The image of a country and its people is a complex construct impacted by various factors such as media, experiences, and cultural biases.

5.2 Limitations

In the practice of research, there exist potential weaknesses and aspects not within the researcher's control. This is true for all research whether quantitative or qualitative. The points discussed herein are not exhaustive of this research project, however, they are considered the more prominent limitation.

As a student of Irish nationality, the positionality of any researcher who is not African but conducts interviews with the African diaspora is a crucial aspect to consider. The researcher's positionality encompasses their social, cultural, and personal background, as well as their own biases, perspectives, and potential power dynamics within the research process. Through the interview process, my positionality and interest in the Afrobeats topic were

highlighted to those interviewed. This must be considered as a point for self-reflection in the interpretations and interview data analysis. While understanding the Afrobeats topic quite well as a researcher, there may be nuanced understandings missed out on due to my nationality. The depth of understanding Afrobeats overall is hindered by the lack of knowledge of the multiple languages used throughout Afrobeats music. Ultimately this fact limits an in-depth understanding of this genre, which validates points made by Nigerians about the real meaning and messages in lyrics lost on an international non-Nigerian audience.

This research may or may not represent similar sentiments and findings for the Nigerian diaspora outside of The Netherlands. There is likely a degree of universality around how the rise of Afrobeats has impacted the diaspora. However, integration, acculturation, connections with the Nigerian homeland, and the notion of belonging or liminality may vary in ways, depending on the host country of the diasporic group. This particular research cannot generalize and assume that all Nigerian diaspora would respond to a similar interview in the same way. Thus it cannot be stated that the Nigerian diaspora and the impact Afrobeats' fame has had on them would be the same for all. To add to this, my interviewees were from a socio-economic group where all were university graduates, all were living in The Netherlands legally and all were open and agreeable to the interview process. The recruitment of these participants in this socio-economic category was not by design. It can be suggested that snowball sampling gave rise to recommendations from those who socialise in the same groups of like-minded diaspora. Having said this, other socio-economic diaspora groups may have offered other viewpoints due to their life experience and lived experiences in The Netherlands.

The criteria for this research called for participants to be fans of the Afrobeats genre. Being mindful of this fact has been discussed in the ethical considerations of this research. It was considered that the responses may somewhat have been more likely to lean towards favourable opinions and outlooks on how Afrobeats have impacted the interviewees from a cultural perspective. The findings do show, however, that not all responses and reactions to Afrobeats artists, their lifestyles, and seeing them as role models were the same. In reality, it is impossible to measure in this study how their interest in this genre yielded varying responses, and thus impacted the outcome.

Some of the interpretations of the questions during the interview, despite attempts to extract more detail, were at times not directly answered. My experience as an academic

interviewer has been gained only in recent years. As a reflection of the process and in reviewing the interview transcripts, there were examples of interactions and topics that could have yielded more in-depth findings had further probing been engaged. This limitation is worth mentioning due to personal beliefs that this area of research on diaspora communities is so rich.

5.3 Recommendations

In an article written about Afrobeats and the current landscape, Zainab Kuku stated:

‘Afrobeats has evolved commercially, sonically, and collaboratively over the years. We need to strike a balance between commending Afrobeats for its global success and protecting the genre, so its authenticity is not diluted for global markets’ (Kuku, 2022).

With Afrobeats artists collaborating regularly with Western artists, there is a school of thought in regards to the danger of diluting the authenticity of Afrobeats, and fear of ‘whitewashing’ this music, thus impacting the genre’s trajectory. It is to some extent already happening in the eyes of some. This is an area of research that is warranted due to how we see the global reach it has thanks in part to such collaborations. The term cultural appropriation has been used in the field of music in the past, with the hip-hop genre as an example. In line with cultural appropriation, the safeguarding of cultural heritage without limiting creativity and pausing a genre’s evolution is an area worth further focus. This research area ties into how commercial Afrobeats has become open to all through the channels of social media and online streaming. Should consideration be given to Western audiences and how they engage with this genre in an unavoidable detached way as opposed to those of Nigerian culture?

Finally, to conclude, this research has added insights to the Nigerian diasporic group that is limited in the context of recent Afrobeats global exposure. In contribution to this field of research, it was demonstrated that a tradition versus modernity element holds for some Nigerian diaspora in how they view the world of Afrobeats. This was incorporated in viewpoints on lyrics, artists’ lifestyles, what music videos portrayed, and opinions that Afrobeats music did not truly represent authentic Nigerian culture. This was demonstrated in responses from those of various ages ranging from thirty to mid-fifty years of age.

The findings also reaffirmed that from a country of over 200 million people, the sub-culture representation of this music genre will always hold important in Nigeria and ultimately is tied to the diaspora group sentiments in The Netherlands. This was evident when tribe identification and the language of Afrobeats' music were shared in how it impacted the listener. These mentioned, demonstrate many sub-divisions and nuances that combine in making this a rich research topic. The subjects addressed in this thesis give rise to particular conclusions and yet also open up paths to continue a deeper research journey.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guide

The research question for my Master's thesis concerns the rise of Nigerian Afrobeats internationally, and the impact, if any, on the Nigerian diaspora from a cultural identity standpoint. The respondents include diaspora either born in The Netherlands of a Nigerian parent, or Nigerians settled in The Netherlands at least ten years. All participants are listeners of Afrobeats music. The interview begins by informing the respondents of the approximate interview duration, explaining the background to the area of research interest, seeking consent to record the interview, and enquiring if there are any questions before starting.

Introduction

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (Age, City, Occupation)
2. If not too personal, please tell me about you, or your family's journey from Nigerian until you started living in the Netherlands.
3. Have you visited Nigeria and if so, what was your impression? (Not applicable to those living in Nigeria already)

Culture

1. Tell me about what Nigeria means to you personally today?
2. With English being the official language in Nigeria, do you speak other regional languages or dialects for example Hausa, Yoruba, or Igbo?
3. Do you have ties with other Nigerian friends or families in the Netherlands?
4. Growing up in the Netherlands (if you did) or currently living in The Netherlands, with Nigerian roots tell me a little about that experience.

Integration

1. Are you or your family part of any Nigerian-related groups in the Netherlands
2. Do you participate in any Nigerian festivals, or public celebrations held in or around the Netherlands?
3. How regularly do you connect with friends and family in Nigeria?

Music

1. How were you introduced to Nigerian Afrobeats pop music?
2. What or who has influenced your musical preferences?
3. In what context do you listen to Afrobeats music? At home, concert-goer, Spotify, or other platforms?
4. Where do you find or get exposed to new Afrobeats artists?
5. Tell me about your favourite artists or Afrobeats songs?
6. Are there any lyrics in the Afrobeats music you listen to that connect with you in any way specifically, and why?
7. What do you think about the social image of the Nigerian pop musicians you listen to as role models?
8. With the rise of Nigerian artists in international countries do you see that impacting or increasing Nigerian social standing?
9. What do you feel you have learned if anything about your culture from the Nigerian artists you listen to?

Appendix 2

Calling **Afrobeats** fans?

Are you **Nigerian** living in NL over 10 years or born in NL to a Nigerian parent?

If so.....

Can you please join my thesis research about Afrobeats popularity worldwide and Nigerian **diaspora** cultural connection

I send questions in advance, and your participation is anonymous ☺







Pat Dowling
Masters Student
Music & Culture Lover

Instagram:
patricialouisedowling
Phone: 0684680034

Please make contact!!

Figure 1. A Public Call to Respondents

Appendix 3

Code Book

Code	Comment	Code Grp 1	Code Grp 2	Code Grp 3	Code Grp 4	Code Grp 5
AB - disrespectful/negative lyrics	Comments regarding Afrobeats lyrics deemed inappropriate, disrespectful to any people, talking about sex, drugs, violence per example	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
AB Activism in lyrics	Afrobeats lyrics that include messages or stories of activism whether political or other.	Afrobeats				
AB and Relating to it	How the interviewee relates or connects to Afrobeats	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
AB Artists as Role Models No	Any reference to not seeing Nigerian Afrobeats as role models.		Belonging	Cultural Identity		
AB Artists as Role Models Yes	Any reference to seeing Nigerian Afrobeats as role models.		Belonging	Cultural Identity		
AB artists No connection or inspired	Despite listening to their music (or not) people are not inspired by them or don't feel like they can relate to them		Belonging			

AB artists promote each other	Afrobeats artists regularly promote each other or collaborate musically	Afrobeats				
AB artists Repetition in music	Some Afrobeats artists are sounding similar, same type of music and lyrics, and are just seemingly repetitive in nature	Afrobeats				
AB Artists Admiration	Comments of admiration, fandom, enthusiasm about that Afrobeats artist, or their work ethic or reputation	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
AB Collaborations	Afrobeats artists collaborate a lot, whether within Nigeria, in Africa with artists from other countries, or with international artists	Afrobeats				
AB creating wealth for NG	Afrobeats artists are making Nigeria richer due to their popularity and the knock-on effect of that.	Afrobeats				
AB fan - shared connection	Being an Afrobeats fan, you can connect with others that are similar AB fans		Belonging			

AB Going International	Afrobeat has gotten popular and outside of the African continent, it is now mainstream music internationally. - References to this	Afrobeat				
AB helps with music culture	Afrobeat has brought a spotlight on Nigerian music culture where there is a diversity of music and languages the music is performed in.			Cultural Identity		
AB Highlighting Social Topics	Afrobeat has through lyrics and popularity put a spotlight on social topics in Nigeria and/or Africa			Cultural Identity		
AB influenced by Afrobeat	Afrobeat is a genre from the history books. Very key in Nigerian culture. Many references to connect to the new Afrobeat genre are made. Connections like the beat, and the message in lyrics.	Afrobeat		Cultural Identity		
AB joy association	A reference to Afrobeat bringing happiness or joy.	Afrobeat				

AB Lyrics & local languages	Afrobeats commonly uses Nigerian languages, and a mix whether Yoruba, Igbo, Pidgin English, English, and so forth	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
AB Music Introduction to	References to being introduced to the Afrobeats genre	Afrobeats				
AB not representing real NG	Comments were made that Afrobeats does not relate to the real Nigeria and what is going on there socially and in other ways.			Cultural Identity		
AB nourishing friends bond	Comments that Afrobeats helps connections between friends due to shared interest in the music		Belonging			
AB Popularity	Reference to the popularity of Afrobeats or artists	Afrobeats				
AB raising the country's status	Some feel Afrobeats and its popularity at home and abroad has raised the country's status in a more positive way				Diaspora	
AB songs bi-lingual	Afrobeats use a mix of languages whether English, mixed Nigerian languages, or two different Nigerian languages, Igbo, Pidgin English,			Cultural Identity		

	Yoruba, etc					
AB surpassed Nollywood	The popularity of Afrobeats and the spotlight on this as entertainment has surpassed that of the Nollywood film industry (some opinions)	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
AB teaching culture	Afrobeats and its popularity, are teaching listeners and audiences about Nigerian culture through language, beat, lyrics, and in some cases music videos.			Cultural Identity		
AB Use of Pidgin English	Afrobeats uses Pidgin English in lyrics sometimes. This is representative of Nigerian culture and youth culture to an extent.	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
AB Use of Slang language	Many Afrobeats' music contains slang language in the lyrics. The slang can be from different languages or regions, and also at times is mixed in with other languages in the lyrics.	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		

AB video showcase Africa/NG	Afrobeats artists create music videos that can depict Nigeria (or Africa) whether in a good way or a bad way,		Belonging	Cultural Identity		
African festival - change over time	African festivals in the Netherlands have morphed into something bigger than what they used to be in the past. This can be seen as good or bad. E.g. Kwaku Festival in Amsterdam each summer.				Diaspora	
Artists inspiring others	Artists inspiring people and/or other Afrobeats artists				Diaspora	
Artists trying to be more Western	Comments about Nigerian artists becoming more Western and drifting away from the more Nigerian part of their songs, performance, etc				Diaspora	
Born in the Netherlands	The country they were born in being the Netherlands			Cultural Identity		
Born in Nigeria	The country they were born in being Nigeria			Cultural Identity		
Church community	References to church as a group and the community around that. (especially in The				Diaspora	

	Netherlands)					
Concert goer	Those diasporas who go to Afrobeats and music concerts	Afrobeats				
Connection Relate with Lyrics	Diaspora connection with the lyrics whether strongly or not so much	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
Connection with beat/music	Diaspora connecting strongly with the beat of Afrobeats		Belonging			
Connection with other Africans	Diaspora making a connection with other Africans in The Netherlands (or elsewhere)		Belonging			
Consistency in AB Success	Afrobeats' success is now building for over 10 years and currently, there is consistency in the popularity of the music	Afrobeats				
Contact with NG 'home'	Comments on how regularly the diaspora are in touch with home and family, cousins and friends based in Nigeria		Belonging		Diaspora	
Cultural Differences	Feelings or observations where there is an example of cultures differing from one another.			Cultural Identity		

Culture Dutch	References to Dutch culture in different types of ways - music, people, traditions, etc			Cultural Identity		
Culture Hausa	References to Hausa culture in different types of ways - music, people, traditions, etc			Cultural Identity		
Culture Igbo	References to Igbo culture in different types of ways - music, people, traditions, etc			Cultural Identity		
Culture Nigerian	References to Nigerian culture in different types of ways - music, people, traditions, etc			Cultural Identity		
Culture Shock in NG	Some diaspora have had culture shock visiting Nigeria initially or some on their return home after a longer period			Cultural Identity		
Culture Urhobo	References to Urhobo culture in different types of ways - music, people, traditions, etc			Cultural Identity		
Culture Yoruba	References to Yoruba culture in different types of ways - music, people, traditions, etc			Cultural Identity		
Diaspora Seeing AB transformation more	The Afrobeats genre can evolve and grow e.g. collaborations. Comments were made by the				Diaspora	

	diaspora about this transformation					
Diaspora Festival	References to some festivals in The Netherlands for African diaspora, or Antilles groups.				Diaspora	
Diff between NG born in NL and NG	Comments were made about the difference between diaspora born in The Netherlands and those born in Nigeria				Diaspora	
Feeling both Dutch and Nigerian	Many diasporas can feel pulls from both countries in terms of identity and culture		Belonging	Cultural Identity	Diaspora	
Feeling of Belonging	When there is a reference to the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group, nationality, or family link.		Belonging			
Feeling of Nostalgia	Certain lyrics, representations, and memories of Nigeria brought nostalgic feelings				Diaspora	
Feeling Pride for Artists/Success	Comments about a feeling of pride for the Afrobeats artists and their success				Diaspora	

Finding new music	Comments about finding new Afrobeats music	Afrobeats				
Identity	Any references made to a person's sense of identity and that or how that is represented		Belonging	Cultural Identity		
Inspired to dance	Comments that Afrobeats has inspired people to dance	Afrobeats				
Integration as a Nigerian living in NL	Comments were made about how a Nigerian may do certain things to integrate or find challenges in integrating in The Netherlands		Belonging		Diaspora	
Invest in NG	Afrobeats is having a knock-on effect on investment in the music industry and a spotlight on the success and talent of artists there			Cultural Identity		
Lack of awareness about NG	Some comment on how people are not knowledgeable about Nigeria and the culture			Cultural Identity		
Lack of understanding of Africa/NG	Some comments about people not understanding or knowledgeable about Africa			Cultural Identity		
Languages spoken	Any references to languages spoken in Nigeria			Cultural Identity		

Lifestyle Attracting People to them	Afrobeats artists can portray a certain lifestyle (money, cars, women) and that can make some feel they want to be around that life.	Afrobeats				
Lifestyle Not Real	Comments about the Afrobeats artists' lifestyle of richness and fame, not being real or authentic	Afrobeats				
Music and Influences	Who or what influences the music you listen to	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption Cassettes	Using cassettes to play, listen to or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption CD	Reference to consuming music via CDs	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption Instagram	Using Instagram to play, search, find, listen to, or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption Platforms & Media	Using Social Media to play, search, find, listen to, or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption Radio	Using radio to play, search, find, listen to, or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption Shazam	Using Shazam to play, search, find, listen to, or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				

Music Consumption Spotify	Using Spotify to play, search, find, listen to, or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption TikTok	Using TikTok to play, search, find, listen to, or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				
Music Consumption YouTube	Using YouTube to play, search, find, listen to, or consume music in some way.	Afrobeats				
NG artists popular in other African countries	Nigerian artists are popular in other African countries. These artists are gaining momentum within the continent.	Afrobeats				
NG Celebrations in NL	Nigerian celebrations in the Netherlands like Nigerian Independence Day, etc				Diaspora	
NG Changing	Nigeria is progressing, socially changing, or culturally changing			Cultural Identity		
NG connecting with Afrobeats language	In Afrobeats due to the use of local languages, it has made some Nigerians feel a better connection to the genre.		Belonging	Cultural Identity		
NG Connection Technology facilitates	Technology has improved and facilitated more connection to Nigerians through mobiles				Diaspora	

	phones, WhatsApp, etc					
NG Feelings for country	Descriptions of how the diaspora feel about their home country of Nigeria		Belonging			
NG friendships in the Netherlands	References to friendship groups amount Nigerian diaspora created in The Netherlands through different means or avenues				Diaspora	
NG Groups in NL	In The Netherlands, there are many groups for diaspora (Facebook, more official setups), including some official or some non-official more local meetings.				Diaspora	
NG is Home	References to Nigerian as 'home' irrespective if you were born there or not.		Belonging	Cultural Identity		
NG Location Influence Music	Within certain parts of Nigeria, the location can influence the sound or type of music produced and listen to			Cultural Identity		
NG Music Industry & GDP	The Nigerian music industry contributes to the country's GDP, and the more popular it	Afrobeats				

	gets the better.					
NG not understanding AB lyrics	Nigerian listeners of Afrobeats do not understand the lyrics of the songs	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity	Diaspora	
NG represented positively	Nigeria as a country and its people are represented in a positive light.			Cultural Identity		
NG Social Standing Changed	Diaspora shared feelings on the topic of Nigeria's social standing changing due to the Afrobeats spotlight			Cultural Identity		
NG Visits	Reference to Nigerian diaspora visiting Nigeria (some seldom, some regularly)				Diaspora	
NL teachings about Africa	How in the Netherlands students are taught about Africa			Cultural Identity		
The non-NG audience does not understand AB lyrics	Non-Nigerian listeners of Afrobeats do not understand the lyrics of the songs	Afrobeats	Belonging			
Non-African black diaspora - associated with African roots	The black diaspora in The Netherlands is now associating with or celebrating their African roots and culture.			Cultural Identity		

Other family in NL	Diaspora mention of other family in the Netherlands (cousins, aunts, uncles, etc)		Belonging		Diaspora	
Reaction to NonNG Liking AB	Diaspora made comments on how they reacted to non-Nigerians liking the Afrobeats genre	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
Reason for Immigration to NL	The diaspora or their families immigrated to The Netherlands and the reasons were described				Diaspora	
Reference less black African representation	Whether in school, at work, or socially there were references that some of the diasporas lacked seeing African or Nigerian representation or living around them.		Belonging		Diaspora	
Reference to Fela Kuti	Diaspora references Fela Kuti often when speaking about the history of music in Nigeria			Cultural Identity		
SED Age	Age of interviewee					SocioEconomicData
SED City Town of Residence	City or Town of residence					SocioEconomicData
SED Education	Level of Education					SocioEconomicData
SED Job	Job, Role Working at					SocioEconomicData
SED Years in NL	Years spent in The Netherlands (if not born in NL)					SocioEconomicData

Showcasing NG or Africa	Afrobeats has put a spotlight on Nigeria and showcases either Africa or Nigeria through music.	Afrobeats		Cultural Identity		
Social Image of NG	References to the social image of Nigeria and mostly positive comments on how Afrobeats helped this image.			Cultural Identity		
Stories of racism	Diaspora recounted stories of racism in the Netherlands and Europe, either in school or as adults.		Belonging	Cultural Identity		
Tribe Association	Diaspora reference which tribe they come from. This term is used in Nigeria often and in interviews.		Belonging	Cultural Identity		