

Received: 12 June 2024 ; Accepted: 27 October 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47059/rr.vx9i2.17>

## Nigeria in TikTok: An Approach to Imagining Nigeria (A Case Study of TikTok Users in Nigeria who speaks Chinese language)

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### Abstract

*This study examines the representation of Nigeria by Chinese TikTok users, focusing on how the platform, as a cross-cultural communication tool, shapes perceptions of Nigerian culture, people, and national identity. Nigerian-themed content on TikTok highlights positive aspects such as music, fashion, cuisine, and social values, projecting an image of ambition and vibrancy. However, the platform also reinforces negative stereotypes, perpetuating biases through portrayals of crime and other clichés. By employing the theoretical framework of intercultural communication and Chinese international communication, this research utilizes case studies and user-generated content analysis to explore TikTok role in shaping global perceptions of Nigeria. Through an analysis of Chinese content creators engaging with Nigerian culture—via food reviews, song covers, and language learning materials—this study reveals a complex interplay of cultural appreciation and integration. As social media platforms increasingly influence the construction of national identities across borders, this research underscores the broader implications of media-driven narratives for international relations and cross-cultural exchange.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, China, TikTok, Social Media Representation, Cultural Diplomacy, Cross-cultural Exchange.

## **1. Background of the study**

The dynamic nature in technological advancement particularly in the current era has influenced different human activities include their social media awareness, presence and usage on a daily base (Ausat, 2023). This has presented people all over the globe with access to other people across several nationalities, different cultures, religions, languages, ideas, food and skill set. In addition, social media has also provided people with the opportunity to freely express their views, have their personal opinions on a particular subject matter while sharing those of other people. It is more fascinating because all these are occurring in the absence of physical restrictions of having to be in any particular place in person. In other words, social media space places individuals at an advantage of experiencing places without being in those places at that specific time or even having to ever be in those places in their life time altogether. Several platforms that make up the social media scene, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok Pinterest (Kapoor et al. 2018), are responsible for the fundamental changes in the way and manner people interact, access and sharing information, and the way their viewpoints are expressed (Tarigan et al., 2023). Due in large part to the fact that these platforms are powered by user-generated content, social media influence is significant in a variety of contexts, including politics, venture capital, entrepreneurship, academia, and buying and selling behaviors. Hence social dynamics have produced a new arena, which has led to a major change in the way public opinion is formed and a reconfiguration of the ways in which these influences can affect different facets of life (Ausat 2023).

### **Cultural relations between China and Nigeria**

China is one emerging nation that has successfully benefited from the tidal wave of globalization to achieve structural transformation. China's economy, with its vast industrial complex and manufacturing base, has made it the world's second largest in just forty years (Oqubay and Lin 2019). During the initial phase of the reform period, China implemented policies aimed at attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and enhancing international trade to leverage the positive spillovers of technology and expertise. This approach aligns with the 'catch-up' phase of economic development, wherein a nation, distant from the technology frontier, engages in learning and imitation rather than original invention or innovation. The rise of China into a more

economically stable country drew them to venture into Africa collaborating with majorly North African countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Algeria and then moving to other African regions including West Africa including Nigeria (Oqubay and Lin 2019). The relationship with Nigeria was centered majorly around trying studying the Chinese growth model and adopting some of it to drive her own development and economic relations including bringing Chinese company to replicate some of their technology such as the railway system in Nigeria like in other African countries such as Kenya (Oqubay and Lin 2019). In addition, there also was the financial relation including loan facilities to Nigeria to better strengthen the international relations.

In recent news, anticipations are high for a strengthening of Sino-African relations with the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) 2024 Summit. This crucial meeting, which took place in Beijing from, is expected to give the strategic alliance between China and Africa more impetus.

The African Development Bank estimates that the infrastructure funding deficit on the continent is between \$130 billion and \$170 billion yearly. As such, observers from all over the continent view this summit as a critical opportunity to solve important issues. China, which is currently Africa's biggest trading partner, sees this collaboration as essential for both the two parties' mutual gain and the larger objective of sustainable development. The FOCAC summit is expected to place a strong emphasis on collaboration in important areas including technology, infrastructure, health care, and education—areas where both parties can work together to promote innovation and growth.

### **TikTok's influence on cultural representation**

It is believed that positive interpersonal relationships can "deepen understanding and friendships between Chinese and African people and avoid misunderstandings" (Zeng and Zhan 2018, 1995) and hence foster interstate partnerships. The promotion of cultural and social events like festivals and travel, as well as volunteer work and the exchange of scientists, journalists, and researchers, are all motivated by this goal.

### **Introduction to the focus of the article: Nigeria's image among Chinese TikTok users**

The paper, "Nigeria's Image Among Chinese TikTok Users," focuses on how Nigeria is viewed and portrayed on Chinese social media, especially TikTok. It seeks to comprehend how Chinese users, through content creation and consumption, interact with Nigerian culture, people, and societal challenges. The platform TikTok provides a lively environment for cross-cultural exchanges, and this essay explores the stories, stereotypes, or favorable portrayals that influence Chinese users' perceptions of Nigeria. It will also look at the perceptions' wider effects on media discourse worldwide and cultural diplomacy.

Nigeria's representation on TikTok can take many forms, from love for its culture and fascination with its music and fashion to misconceptions, prejudices, or even subpar storytelling. With the help of a growing generation of Chinese social media users, the article seeks to analyze these various portrayals and examine how they affect how Nigeria is perceived.

The study also aims to highlight the role that Chinese and Nigerian virtual influencers have played in crafting such narratives through analyzing user comments, content categories, and characteristic reading. It will also examine how those perspectives might be influenced by the sociopolitical environment, China's expanding financial influence in Africa, and the changing dynamics of Sino-African families.

Ultimately, the item will evaluate the wider ramifications of these virtual representations, questioning how social media platforms like as TikTok can affect real-life ties between nations and peoples. Does this computer-generated image promote cultural awareness, or does it reinforce false information and stereotypes? What role do nation-states and non-state actors have in creating these online narratives? This study provides a look into the power of social media in constructing national identities across national boundaries.

### **Background information on Tiktok (history, spread, influence, etc.)**

TikTok, also known in China as Douyin was launched in 2016, as a platform for creating, discovering, and sharing short videos. As at August 2020 the application had more than 600 million users and had become a global phenomenological social network application. By November of the same year, monthly subscribers had grown to 800 million globally making the platform the most successful application of Chinese origin (Montag, Yang, and Elhai 2021). In

addition, because the TikTok application is compatible on android devices and iphones providing access to a wide range of user and operate in two major markets. TikTok has been able to segment their market by having different content for their local consumers on Douyin while also having contents on TikTok for their International market. Their presence in the international stage has not gone without challenges. For instance, TikTok at some time was banned in the United State by President Donald Trump for security reasons and in India and Pakistan for allowing contents the authority found to be immoral (Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer 2021).

Although TikTok has several features the technological and algorithmic features of the platform has contributed immensely to its success (Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer 2021). TikTok has a strong focus on virality and possess innovative features such as special effects and filters which has made it a hub for creative expression and playful sociality (Abidin, 2021; Zulli & Zulli, 2020). In addition, TikTok's proprietary recommendation system has turned its For You Page (FYP) into one of the most addictive scrolling experiences on the Internet (Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer 2021). According to Montag, Yang, and Elhai (2021) FYP uses artificial intelligence to study user preferences and as a such keeps suggesting such videos to them resulting in them staying on the platform longer than might have been earlier intended. In essence, TikTok algorithm provide additive scrolling experience to users and as a result has solidified its reputation on a global stage and brought its windfall through content personalization technology. TikTok as a video-sharing social media platform is a more spontaneous platform where people mostly publish on the move within 60 seconds (Taha & Abudullah. 2021).

TikTok has a great range of users across ages, it however is most popular among the youths. According to Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer (2021) when the TikTok decided to go global they bought over an already existing social media platform called Musical.ly which had a lot of teenagers on board using it from the US and the UK. This could possibly explain the high number of users in the US and UK. TikTok users as of today are spread across the different continent on the globe including Australia, North America (US), South America, Asia (India), Europe (UK) and Africa (Nigeria) (Zeng, Abidin, and Schäfer 2021). One major reason attributed to the success of TikTok is the fact that they focused on the Generation Z or` simply Gen Z. During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, TikTok's enjoyed a massive expansion and

diversification of user groups by attracting the older population including parents and grandparents and adults and across all occupations to the platform during the pandemic. The figure below highlight the top five largest user of TikTok in Africa

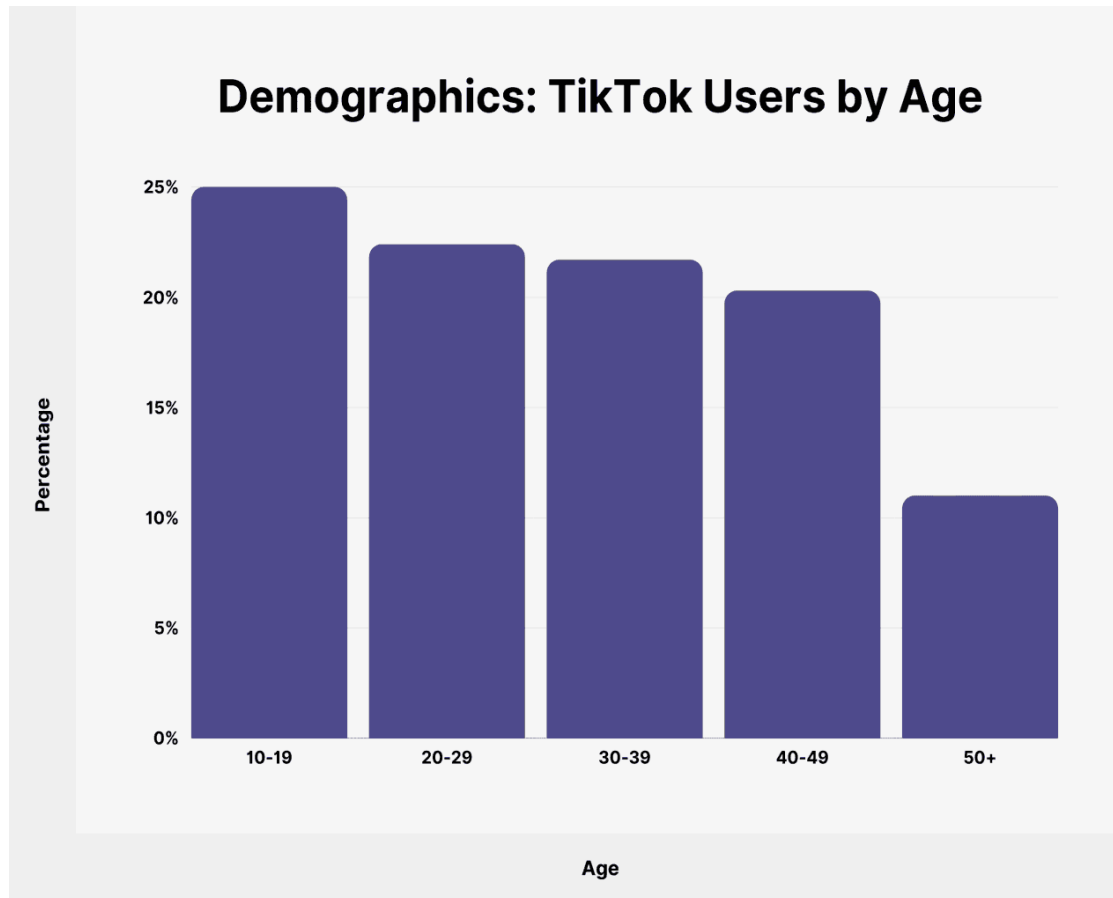


Fig.2: Global Statistics of TikTok users by age (Source: Google image)

The chart above shows the global statistics of TikTok users by age. According to the chart:

- Users aged 10-19 have the highest percentage of users, at nearly 25%.
- The percentage of users aged 20-29 and 30-39 is similar and slightly lower than those aged 10-19, ranging from about 22% to 23%.
- The proportion of users aged 40-49 is slightly lower, at around 20%.
- The lowest percentage of users are over 50 years old, at slightly over 10%.

This suggests that TikTok's user base is concentrated in the younger age groups, especially between 10 and 39 years old. The percentage of users gradually decreases with age.

### **TikTok popularity in China**

Regulations imposed on the internet in China render many popular websites and applications available in the United States inaccessible to individuals in China, unless accessed through a virtual private network (VPN) (Highhouse 2023). As a result, China has created its own substitutes for numerous widely used social media platforms. Internet censorship regulations make it difficult to communicate with some nations as the world grows more and more linked online. TikTok, also known in China as Douyin was launched in 2016, as a platform for creating, discovering, and sharing short videos. The Chinese internet company ByteDance has been able to segment their market by having different content for their local consumers on Douyin while also having contents on TikTok for their International market (Highhouse 2023).

### **The platform's role in influencing public opinion**

TikTok has being utilized to promote travel destinations globally with the primary objective to present different cultures, sites, and views to the outside world such as their natural surroundings, their food, their language, and historical places that include relics and cultural history. According to a study by Wengel et al. (2022), TikTok was crucial in helping two spots in the Tropical Rainforest National Park on Hainan Island become extremely well-known after a number of company films went viral. In addition to these users of the platform constantly communicate their experiences of exotic locations or nature with friends and online family. These activities help mold public opinions of such locations, the people and lifestyles of individuals. As much as there are positive public opinions on the use of TikTok as a social media platform. Sometime it is perceived as having negative influence on users. Heavens (2024) identified two of the most prominent negative impacts of TikTok particular directed to academic performance. The researcher argued that users spend a lot of time on TikTok which made the get scores resulting in poor academic performance. In addition, to this the study users gets easily distracted by the platform. As much as TikTok has help build networks, it can however expose,

teenagers to cyber bullying, harassment and sexual assault (Heavens 2024). There are people who would not want to be associated with social media in general as a result because the rate they have an opinion that the demerits outweigh the merits.

### **Overview of Chinese social media culture**

Due to its unique virtual environment and legislative framework, China's social media scene is vast, dynamic, and amazing compared to the rest of the field. Chinese social media is heavily influenced by local systems and represents a blend of pleasure, commerce, social interaction, and political control. This influences the way people interact with companies and influencers, communicate, and consume content.

China has its own unique set of popular systems, unlike many other nations where international platforms like Facebook and Twitter are dominant. With over a billion users, WeChat is undoubtedly the most popular social media software in China. It combines messaging, social networking, cellular pricing, and e-trade functions into one fantastic program (Chen, 2018). Customers can upload photos, videos, and articles with its "Moments" feature, which makes it the best place for intimate social connections.

Weibo, sometimes referred to as China's Twitter equivalent, is another significant competitor. Weibo facilitates more public communication, which makes it a hub for the sharing of information, public discussions, and viral trends. It has developed into a crucial forum for public engagement between influencers and other sorts, often leading to very visible discussions on social and political issues (Sun, 2020).

In the meantime, the short-video platform Douyin (known outside of China as TikTok) has quickly gained popularity, particularly with younger users. Because of its algorithm-driven content feeds and quick viral trend creation capabilities, it has become an essential component of social media culture, mostly for entertainment and lifestyle content (Zhang & Huang, 2021).

One unique aspect of Chinese social media is the smooth incorporation of e-commerce, which turns sites like Douyin and Wechat into productive marketplaces. A recent trend in e-commerce is live-streaming, where influencers or regular consumers demonstrate products to viewers and



encourage instant purchases. China's stay-streaming e-commerce business had exponential growth in 2020, reaching a valuation of over 900 billion yuan, or \$140 billion USD (Xu et al., 2021). This phenomena combines commerce and entertainment, creating an interactive, real-time social purchase experience.

Micro-influencers and Key Opinion Leaders are important in the sales of goods and services. These individuals possess a strong online presence, and brands collaborate with them to launch their products and cultivate interest from prospective clients. These influencers, who frequently blend personal narratives with promotional information, are a major component of China's believe-based advertising and marketing culture (Jiang & Ngai, 2022).

Chinese social media is vibrant, yet it still functions under the censorship of the president. Many foreign platforms, like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, are blocked from access by the Great Firewall, and sensitive political content is constantly monitored on domestic systems. According to King et al. (2017), the Chinese government has mandated that digital companies conceal statistics that pose a threat to political balance or deviate from societal standards. As a result, consumers are increasingly engaging in a certain type of self-censorship in which they avoid having difficult or delicate conversations and frequently employ euphemisms when talking about political issues.

Customers' innovative expression is also impacted by censorship. Despite the abundance of memes, slang, and viral content on Chinese social media, these types of verbal interchange are occasionally banned or restricted if they are thought to be excessively subversive or critical of the government (Qiu & Gao, 2019). In spite of this, Chinese users have developed strategies for gently criticizing and navigating these limitations through irony and cryptic language, resulting in the creation of a dynamic environment for online conversation.

China's social media culture combines trade, pleasure, and regulated political speech in a very appealing way. Wechat, Weibo, Douyin, and other dominant platforms provide a highly regulated, individually interactive virtual environment. Chinese social media will continue to be a complex and significant component of the global virtual tradition as long as e-trade and social media continue to converge and the government maintains its authority over online speech.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **Social constructivism Theory**

Social constructivism is a concept within the subject of epistemology and sociology that indicates expertise and reality are built through social approaches and interactions in rather than as independent, objective entities. The idea emerged as a critique of conventional, positivist processes to knowledge, which posited that reality is fixed and may be objectively understood.

Social constructivism has been improved across several disciplines, which include sociology, psychology, and education. It has roots in philosophical traditions inclusive of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, which consciousness on subjective motives and the meanings people attach to their actions.

One of the prominent figures related to social constructivism is Lev Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist. His work between 1920 and 1930 laid the inspiration for the theory, particularly in the context of learning of and development. Vygotsky believed that cognitive improvement is heavily prompted by social interplay, and that individuals attain knowledge by means of interaction with their cultural and social environment. Though Vygotsky is the primary person associated with the early development of social constructivism, different thinkers inclusive of John Dewey Jerome Bruner and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann also contributed to the growth in different contexts.

In sociology, Berger and Luckmann's work expanded the concept of social production beyond individual learning to stating that societies collectively construct knowledge, norms, and meanings via language, communication, and social establishments.

### **Proposition of the Social Constructivism Theory**

1. Knowledge is constructed through Social Interaction: People do not gather expertise in isolation but rather through dialogues, shared experiences, and cultural norms.
2. Reality is Not Objective, But Subjective: According to social constructivism, reality is not a set objective entity impartial of human perception. Instead, formed and maintained by using

social interactions and agreements. For instance, social institutions, values, and norms are understood as being built through societies over the years as opposed to occurring naturally.

3. Language and Symbols Play a Crucial Role: Language is visible as an essential device in social creation. It is through language that human beings express, negotiate, and assign meanings, which in the end shape their perceptions of reality. Symbols, signs, and social narratives function as vehicles for building shared realities.

4. Knowledge is Contextual: What is taken into consideration "true" can vary based on the cultural, historical or social context. There are not any absolute truths in social constructivism, rather, what we regard as knowledge is subject to different social settings and interactions.

In relation to Imaging Nigeria through perception on the TikTok platform, social constructivism can assist us understand how Nigerian TikTok users construct and present their national and cultural identities through social interactions on the platform. The content material they create be it song, comedy, cultural practices, or social remark serves as a medium through which the Nigerian identity is constantly fashioned and reshaped.

TikTok fosters a participatory culture in which individuals can collaborate, remix, and reinterpret content. Nigerian creators are not merely consumers of global culture; they are actively involved in building how they are perceived by their audience. For instance, a viral TikTok project based on Nigerian tune or cultural practices creates a shared area where the belief of "Nigerianness" is collectively built.

Social constructivism also permits us to explore how Nigerian translators navigate the anxiety between Chinese culture and her traditional cultures. On TikTok, Nigerian TikTok content creators have found a way to blend incorporate foreign culture while maintaining their national and cultural identity. For instance in some of the videos analyzed you will find the contents always has something indicative of Nigeria in it such as a flag and in their introduction of themselves. This system reflects the continued production of Nigerian identification in the context of globalization.

Nigerian TikTok creators can also use the platform to challenge negative narratives about the country. Social constructivism suggests that truth is shaped by using those who have the strength to define it. By developing content that counters stereotypes or highlights alternative perspectives, Nigerian creators take part in reshaping international perceptions of Nigeria.

Social constructivism provides a useful lens for studying how Nigerian creators on TikTok construct and negotiate their cultural identity and imbibe other culture like the Chinese culture. This helps project perception of Nigeria, and how these representations contribute to the broader social imaging of the country. It permits us to review TikTok as a dynamic space wherein information and which means approximately Nigeria are continuously being created, shared, and transformed through social and cultural interplay.

### **3. Literature Reviews and Content Analysis**

#### **Nigeria's Representation on TikTok**

TikTok contains loads of user generated contents that portrays Nigerians in different ways both positively and negatively. There are contents on TikTok that portrays the religious side of Nigeria. To buttress on this point, Ibrahim and Nguru (2020) claimed that religion plays a critical role in Nigerian society and has expressed itself as a potent force in the geopolitical development of the country acting as a force that has both united Nigerians and at the same time led numerous conflicts in the country. Certain TikTok users propagate their religious believe via the TikTok platform be it the Christian or Islamic religion being the major religion practiced in the country. There are content producers whose content is majorly centered around comparison from the scriptures of both religion. Some content creators also show the traditional religion believed to be the original religion of Nigerian before the introduction of Islam and Christianity

Another side of Nigeria portrayed on social media platform is the social relations of Nigerians. A browse through TikTok short videos will bring contents along this line including fashion shows and elaborate parties. There is also the portrayal of Nigerians as some of the most industrious people on earth considered to be found excelling in different industry (music, movies, technology, medicine and education). On April 18, 2024, a TikTok user going by the handle Delvene posted a video in which she questioned Nigerians about how they manage to be so

successful and driven no matter where they live. In an interview with Nigerian artist Burna Boy, television personality Trevor Noah expressed his admiration for Nigerians' self-assurance and said that they should be modeled after them. According to Professor Patrick Lumumba, Nigeria is responsible for the emancipation of Africa. These are just few instances of the positive portrayal of Nigerian. Nigerians have unquestionable work ethics, and content from opinion polls, podcasts, and conversations with individuals of different nationalities attests to this fact.

Just like there are positive review about Nigeria and Nigerian, there are contents on TikTok platform where Nigerian are portrayed negatively. One of such you would not fail to find are talks about Nigerians being scammers and drug dealers and all the sort. In some extreme cases seen on social media platforms Nigerians and Nigerian business got attacked unprovoked, not because they were found committing crimes but because they are Nigerians and are automatically perceived as criminals and the cause of the most negative things happening in their society and to their people. One such instance is the recent demand that a woman competing in a beauty pageant in South Africa be disqualified because her father is from Nigeria and she is therefore regarded as Nigerian even though she was born in South Africa and has spent the majority of her life there. Figure 2 below shows Nigeria as the major TikTok User in Africa.

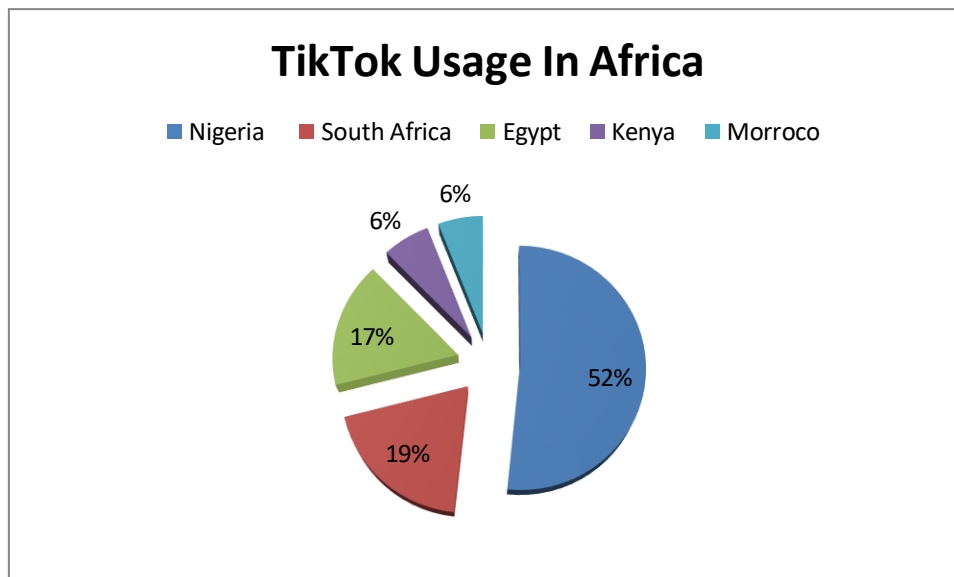


Fig.2 Top 5 African country with the most TikTok Users (Source: TikTok)

This pie chart suggests that Nigeria has the highest number of TikTok users among the African countries listed, followed by South Africa and Morocco, with Egypt close behind and Kenya having the fewest users. This information may have been derived from official TikTok data.

### **Common themes and narratives about Nigeria**

Nigeria is popularly known as Africa's largest country largely dependent on crude oil as a major source of her foreign exchange. Several people globally may have an idea of her political history and the change in power between military and civilian rule post-independence.

You cannot talk about Nigeria and ignore her prowess in the music scene. This a major theme about Nigeria. According to the research on Nigerian music and its development done by Adedeji (2023). The study began by mentioning the popular cultural music in Nigeria, which includes juju and Afrobeat performed in the country's native tongues. The Nigerian beat and music were blended with European hip-hop by younger musicians, resulting in a new musical phenomenon that gained international recognition while retaining Nigerian cultural elements that made it appealing to the country's citizens and the diaspora. The result today is actively portrayed in the song of popular Nigerian artists such as Burna boy, Olamide and Asake. Foreign influencers like Chrissy Spratt (@chrissyonair), a content creator with over four million followers on TikTok, and @sillymusic, whose content is about creating covers for Nigerian music and does it brilliantly, have become fans of this art.

There is a narrative that Nigerians migrate a lot and are found in almost every country of the world. As a matter of fact, they even exist as the most populous non-indigenes in some of the country they visit. There are however contrasting views of this. A chapter on youth migration as a survival tactic by Lanre Ikuteyijo demonstrates how appealing emigration may be, particularly for young Africans wishing to travel to Europe or North America. In contrast to the university students Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima interviewed for his chapter on youth ambitions, the reactions of the young men and women in Ikuteyijo's study are strikingly different Mac-Ikemenjima discovered that university students, regardless of gender, showed little interest in leaving Nigeria (Ikuteyijo 2020).

All of this information may not have been available to the vast majority globally until the introduction of the internet era and then social media. However much this information about the

country may be put out it may not still give a wholistic picture of what the country stands for and how to relate the country to its people.

### **Analysis of TikTok videos portraying Nigerian culture, people, and stereotypes**

A run through TikTok, A video came up where a Chinese lady sang a Nigerian song and ran through the lyrics of the song so perfectly. This must have been made possible due to her long time exposure to Nigerian musical contents on social media or and other electronic media. This post was shown to have been posted in Kano city northern Nigeria by a Chinese TikTok user under the name @giachan24. Most of her contents are centered on music and dance.

In another video on TikTok a content creator under the name ShoPhoCho was reviewing Nigerian food from a restaurant in Nigeria. In one of his contents he had the popular Nigeria jollof with a mix of plantain, vegetables and beef. In the video you will see that he was intentional about trying the food and gave a honest review of the food talking about the cost of the food and the taste. He gave a positive review on the food. This will make other Chinese nationals be willing to try Nigerian food when they find themselves in the country in the future

In the TikTok content by @learnchinesewithweiwei she created a content where she adorned Nigerian fabrics and used that video to educate her audience on colour in Chinese. All of these contents portrays the different cultural content of Nigeria including her food, language and fashion.

### **Major influencers contributing to these narratives**

Nigerians have a lot of content on TikTok, especially in the categories of humor (such as Rodney, Samskid, Agent of Laughter, Abdullahi), dance (such as Purple Speedy, Berby Picxy, and Crispdal), and music (such as Burnna Boy, Rema, and Davido). The most popular Nigerian TikTok creators, despite the fact that there are many of them, are listed in the chat below. This information was provided by TikTok creator Jacob Hoff in an April 2024 post, and it though with a little difference was corroborated by another Nigerian user going by the handle unofficial\_olas001, who had over 340 thousand followers in a June 2024 post.

### **Taaoma (Apaokagi Maryam)**

Taaoma, whose actual name is Apaokagi Maryam, is one in all Nigeria's most popular and beloved content material creators on TikTok. She rose to reputation with her specific comedic skits, in which she portrays a couple of characters in a single video, regularly depicting numerous family dynamics, especially the stern African mom parent. Her content material resonates deeply with Nigerian audiences due to its relatable humor, drawing on ordinary experiences, cultural nuances, and the everyday determine-child relationships located in African homes.

Taaoma's content is widely shared now not only on TikTok but additionally across different social media systems, contributing to her sizeable reputation. She has a large following on TikTok, with millions of followers who eagerly expect her next skit. Her humor, blended along with her capability to seamlessly transfer between distinctive characters, has made her a trendsetter inside the Nigerian comedy scene on TikTok.

### **Layi Wasabi**

Layi Wasabi is another distinguished Nigerian content writer on TikTok, regarded for his witty, regularly sarcastic humor. His content material commonly revolves around regular conditions, which he exaggerates to convey out the humor in them. Layi Wasabi's skits frequently discover issues like relationships, societal norms, and the demanding situations of modern-day life in Nigeria, provided in a manner this is both funny and concept-upsetting.

His sarcastic fashion, paired with a dry delivery, has earned him a committed fan base. Layi Wasabi's content material is not pretty much making human beings snicker; it regularly subtly critiques societal issues, making his humor each unique and insightful. He has additionally participated in various TikTok traits, regularly putting his unique spin on them, which similarly endears him to his audience.



Both Taaoma and Layi Wasabi have efficiently applied TikTok to build tremendous followings, with their content material regularly trending and going viral, cementing their reputations as top Nigerian influencers on the platform.

### **Purple Speedy**

Purple Speedy is a Nigerian TikTok content creator celebrated for her progressive dance moves and creative skits. Her content material often capabilities elaborate choreography, energetic performances, and visually putting outfits. Purple Speedy's videos are marked with the aid of a mix of dance, song, and humor, showcasing her skills and capacity to entertain her target audience. Most often than not she always includes a touch of purple to her outlook either in one of her pieces of clothing or her hair colour hence the purple in her name. Purple Speedy has amassed a sturdy following on TikTok that currently stand at about 12.5 million, thanks to her spectacular dance competencies and captivating moves. Her capacity to supply visually appealing and lively content has earned her a committed fan base. Purple Speedy is adept at incorporating famous dance traits and viral demanding situations into her content material. Her dedication to her craft not only stays relevant but additionally influences the developments within the TikTok community.

### **Perceptions of Nigeria by Chinese TikTok Users**

A Chinese Influencer with the username @learnchinesewithweiwei is married and resident in Nigeria. In her contents where she attempts to teach the Chinese language to students and the and her global audience shows her level of commitment to teaching the Chinese language and alongside upholding local Nigerian culture. This perception stems from her willingness to interpret her teaching in local Nigerian dialects in addition to giving an English interpretation. She shows that she has been greatly integrated into the Nigerian culture and she derives pleasure in cultural exchanges.

In another video, showing Chinese tutor interacting with her students in Lagos, she was showing a high level of professionalism and positive vibes further showing her willingness to teach her class and making it interactive. The activity in that class among students and the interaction between student and tutor showed positive vibes and pleasant learning environment indicative of positive perception

## **Positive and negative perceptions**

### **Positive Perception**

**Cultural Exposure:** Nigerian music, dancing, fashion, and other aspects of Nigerian culture are available to Chinese TikTok users, potentially enhancing the positive perception of Nigeria as a multifaceted and culturally affluent country. For instance, Nollywood films and Nigerian Afrobeats are widely viewed and have the potential to foster a feeling of a common global subculture.

**Entrepreneurial Spirit:** A large number of Nigerian influencers and content creators on TikTok portray themselves as inventive, enterprising, and creative, which surely shapes the country's reputation as a center of talent and innovation. Chinese users who value independence and business might also relate to this.

**Economic Partnerships:** It is evident that TikTok has played a significant role in shaping China's growing economic ties with Nigeria, particularly in the areas of trade, infrastructure, and technology. Users can also perceive Nigeria as a developing nation with significant economic potential, opening up opportunities for cooperation.

**Negative Perception: Stereotypes & Negative Media:** Regrettably, negative perceptions of Nigeria frequently find their way onto platforms such as TikTok. These may also include depictions of destitution, corruption, or net fraud (often referred to as "419 scams"), any of which could contribute to a negative image. Chinese users' impressions of Nigeria may become more prejudiced or distorted as a result of consuming such content.

**Misinformation:** The dissemination of false information isn't always stopped by TikTok. Videos that present inaccurate or misleading narratives about Nigeria may worsen the negative

preconceptions that exist already. Chinese consumers can absorb those lies if they don't have a proper understanding of Nigerian culture.

**Cultural Misunderstandings:** It is occasionally possible to oversimplify or distort the complexity of Nigerian culture. Sometimes Chinese TikTok users may not fully understand the subtleties of Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, faiths, or customs, which can result in inaccurate perceptions or misinterpretations.

**Competition and Resentment:** As China expands its economic presence in Africa, including Nigeria, some Chinese consumers may begin to believe that Nigeria is vying with China for business, or that China's investments are being jeopardized by local problems in Nigeria. This could exacerbate negative attitudes linked to economic frustration or misinterpretation.

### **Factors influencing these perceptions (media framing, cultural biases, etc.)**

People's perceptions of others are shaped by a variety of things, along with media framing, cultural biases, social norms, and personal experiences. These factors have an impact on the manner people interpret the behaviors, movements, and characteristics of these around them.

The way that individuals or social corporations are framed within media narratives can either project or reinforce preexisting biases, depending on the method used in language, imagery, and emphasis. By emphasizing certain parts of a narrative while downplaying others, the media greatly influences public opinion. The media framing principles postulates that the way records are presented can result in listeners' own interpretations (Entman, 1993). For instance, biased viewpoints among visitors may be reinforced by information stores that feature negative stereotypes while covering specific businesses. The way that individuals or social corporations are framed within media narratives can either project or reinforce preexisting biases, depending on the method used in language, imagery, and emphasis. The power of social media in constructing national identities across national boundaries.

Perceptions of people are also influenced by cultural norms and values. Individuals frequently have a tendency to see other people through the prism of their own cultural background, which can lead to ethnocentrism or the belief that one's own culture is superior to others (Triandis,

1995). Stereotyping and inaccurate assessments of individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds may arise from this. For instance, a behavior or gesture that is viewed as polite in one culture could be disrespectful in another, which could have an impact on family relationships.

People group others into in-organizations and out-agencies based on perceived similarities and differences, as explained by the social identity idea (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This classification may influence sentiments toward other people, leading to bias against contributors from outside the institution and partiality for members of the same group. Humans tend to desire those who belong to the same group as themselves, hence the employment of those social categories frequently impacts how people perceive other people.

How people interpret new information about others might be influenced by their preexisting expectations and values. Affirmation bias is the tendency for people to ignore contradicting facts while simultaneously noticing and remembering information that supports their preexisting opinions (Nickerson, 1998). Due to incomplete or distorted records, this bias may reinforce preconceptions and lead to inaccurate judgments of certain people.

Perceptions can also be shaped by face-to-face contact. Research demonstrates that people's interpretation of the intentions and feelings of others is greatly influenced by nonverbal clues such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and frame language (Mehrabian, 1972). Human understanding can be impacted by misinterpreting certain signals, which can lead to misconceptions.

Implicit biases are unintentional attitudes or preconceptions that influence decisions, behaviors, and perceptions without the subject's knowledge (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). These prejudices frequently result from cultural conventions and communications that associate particular trends with particular social companies. Implicit racial or gender prejudices, for instance, might affect social interactions, educational outcomes, and hiring decisions without people being completely aware of their impact. complex interaction between media representation, cultural norms, social categories, personal prejudices, and interpersonal verbal communication shapes how people perceive other people. Depending on the situation, these elements frequently work in concert to either strengthen preexisting stereotypes or create new ones.

## **Case Studies of Chinese Translators Contents on TikTok**

The Chinese-Nigerian relation dates back many decades ago and include political, economics, technology, social and cultural ties. The social and cultural relation is the most pertinent to this study hence the review of some TikTok contents as case studies of social and cultural ties that exist between the two countries.

The first video that we will be reviewing is that of a Chinese content creator with the username, @learnchinesewithweiwei. The page has a decent number of following with above fifty-one thousand and her page is centered on teaching Chinese to Nigerians. She is living in Nigeria and married to a Nigerian. One of her TikTok videos dated October-05, she was seen teaching primary school pupils different tones in Chinese. Another content dated May-20 she was seen interpreting some Chinese greeting in one of local dialect (Hausa) and in another one dated May-21 she was seen interpreting some Chinese greetings in another Nigerian dialect (Yoruba). It is obvious she is not just trying to teach Chinese she is also learning the local dialects since it help her to integrate properly in Nigeria.

Beyond Chinese content creator it is interesting to know that so many Nigerians putting in effort to learn Chinese to proficiency level of being able to translate to non-Chinese speakers. This shows that Nigerians are tolerant to foreign cultures.

In a TikTok video posted in April 24 2024 on a TikTok platform under the name University of Lagos, several Nigerians were seen in a Chinese class interacting with their Chinese Tutor in Nigeria. A keen observation of the TikTok video showed that the class was an interactive one whereby students were asked to converse with themselves in Chinese and their tutor corrected them each time they made mistakes. We could deduce from the video that the class was an interactive class and the tutor related freely with the student. Another observation from the video is that the Tutor encourages the student to try at all times to speak Chinese as it improves their learning ability. This form of tutor-student relationship will go a long way in further deepen the interest of students to learn better and faster.

This study reviewed another TikTok page under the name HaoxinChinese.with.Labake handled by a lady. She is a Nigerian translator whose contents is centered around encouraging student of

Chinese the best ways to improve their learning of the language in one of her contents posted in September 19 she emphasized learning to speak Chinese through listening to audio material and try mimicking to pay attention to the tone and natural flow of language while shadowing to help listening, comprehension, improving speaking speed and fluency. It could be deduced that interaction with native materials of languages you want to learn helps a lot in another content she was shadowing a news broadcast further strengthening her argument. In addition interacting with native speakers also gives great result this claim was substantiated in her TikTok video with a native Chinese speaker who advised speaking to natives and no minding mistakes.

Treasure a TikTok user and a Chinese translator made a very short TikTok clip where she was on tour with her Chinese boss. Beyond having a nice time a very important factor learning the Chinese language has secured her employment with the said boss at least as a translator amongst numerous other roles she can function. Another TikTok user KashRox in post on TikTok titled Nigerians can Speak Chinese too spoke in that video fluently and with flare. In addition the captions to the video read #mandarin #chinese #mandarinspeaker #chinesedrama #chinesefood. All of these are indicative of the different aspects of the chinese culture she has adopted over time in addition to the Chinese language. A browse through her page shows that she does contents across different aspects of life including economy, food and beauty but that single video shows some level of work was put into adding Chinese to the number of languages she can speak.

#### **4. Discussion**

Social media, particularly TikTok, serves as a powerful tool in reshaping how different cultures perceive each other. The document highlights several content creators, such as @learnchinesewithweiwei, who use TikTok to teach Chinese to Nigerians. This not only helps to disseminate Chinese culture and language but also creates a two-way exchange where the creator learns local Nigerian dialects. Such interactions demonstrate how social media can encourage cultural integration, build tolerance, and enhance mutual understanding between nations like China and Nigeria.

TikTok is portrayed as a platform where nations can engage and communicate their cultural values. Chinese language classes featured on the platform, like those shared by Nigerian students learning Chinese at the University of Lagos, show a collaborative and interactive learning environment. This emphasizes TikTok role in promoting international cultural exchange. By allowing learners to converse directly with Chinese tutors, TikTok helps break cultural barriers and create a shared space for learning and interaction, shaping a positive understanding between the nations involved.

TikTok offers significant potential for improving cross-cultural communication. For example, content creators like HaoxinChinese.with.Labake provide practical language-learning tips and emphasize the importance of interacting with native speakers. By engaging in such exchanges and posting relatable content, creators encourage their audiences to embrace new cultures. The consistent use of hashtags like #Mandarin and #ChineseDrama in videos signals the integration of cultural symbols, which fosters a sense of global connectivity and reduces cultural misunderstandings.

TikTok creators play a crucial role in shaping the narratives that surround their cultural backgrounds. Creators such as @learnchinesewithweiwei and Nigerian translators like Treasure and KashRox act as cultural ambassadors, using their content to challenge stereotypes, bridge cultural gaps, and represent a more nuanced view of Chinese and Nigerian relations. Their content reflects different aspects of Chinese culture, such as language, food, and lifestyle, making them influential in shaping how their audiences perceive China and, reciprocally, how Chinese audiences may view Nigeria.

## **5. Conclusion**

The results highlight how platforms such as TikTok can promote greater cross-cultural verbal communication while also serving as a warning against the spread of negative stereotypes. Social media can be used in Nigeria as a battlefield for narrative control as well as a platform for cross-cultural interactions. TikTok and other such platforms are likely to play a bigger role in shaping the contacts between China and Nigeria as they continue to strengthen their bilateral ties, particularly in the areas of technology and cultural exchange

### **Implications for Nigeria’s Global Image:**

Positive Impact: Nigerian music, fashion, and entrepreneurial spirit are gaining international recognition, enhancing its cultural image.

Negative Impact: Persistent stereotypes of crime and corruption can tarnish Nigeria’s reputation, especially among uninformed global audiences.

### **Final thoughts on the future of media-driven perceptions**

Content makers has the power to shape media-driven impressions of Nigeria. The continued influence of social media on global assessments necessitates the expansion of impactful narratives and the debunking of harmful preconceptions. International narratives can be effectively shaped by platforms such as TikTok, and active involvement from both state and non-state players could be crucial to guaranteeing fair representations of Nigeria.

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## Appendix

### Links to Reviewed TikTok Videos

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhyRuGWv/>

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhyRHpGW>

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhyRK1GC>

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhy8ePo9/>

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhyRKF6Y/>

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhy88BEn/>

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhyRvVGE/>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@learnchinesewithweiwei? t=8qW2ZDr50FR& r=1>

### Images from some of the Analyzed TikTok Videos

#### Appendix

#### Nigerian TikTok Content Creator and Translators

