The Afrobeats Digital Diaspora: TikTok, Algorithmic Curation, and the Remaking of Nigerian Cultural Identity in the Global Mainstream

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Abstract— The global ascent of Afrobeats is often narrated as an organic cultural movement, yet this paper argues that its recent, accelerated proliferation is fundamentally co-constituted by the symbiotic relationship between the Nigerian digital diaspora and the algorithmic architectures of social media platforms, with TikTok as a primary agent. Moving beyond narratives of simple cultural export, this study examines how TikTok's algorithmic curation—particularly its recommendation engine and format of viral challenges—amplifies, simplifies, and repackages specific sonic and visual tropes of "Naija" identity for global consumption. Employing a conceptual framework rooted in platform studies and diaspora media theory, this paper analyzes how diaspora users act as cultural intermediaries, using Afrobeats to perform and negotiate identity, while simultaneously being guided by the platform's logic of virality. Through case studies of tracks like "Calm Down" by Rema and "Love Nwantiti" by CKay, and analysis of viral dance challenges, the research demonstrates a feedback loop where algorithmic preference shapes artistic output and diaspora engagement. The findings reveal a tension between authentic cultural expression and a "platformized" Nigerian identity—one that is often flattened, meme-ified, and decontextualized to fit the logics of algorithmic discovery. This research contributes a critical new framework for understanding 21st-century cultural globalization, positioning platform algorithms and user-generated content not as neutral conduits, but as active agents in the construction and circulation of national identity from the Global South.

Keywords: Afrobeats; TikTok; Algorithmic Curation; Digital Diaspora; Nigerian Cultural Identity; Globalization.

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INTRODUCTION

The transnational flow of popular music has long been a subject of academic inquiry, with scholars tracing the pathways of genres from reggae to hip-hop as they cross borders and are absorbed into new cultural contexts. The explosive global rise of Afrobeats—a catch-all term for contemporary popular music from Nigeria and Ghana, distinct from Fela Kuti's Afrobeat—presents a compelling 21st-century case study in this enduring phenomenon. For decades, the international success of African music was often constrained by the gatekeeping of major global record labels and Western media outlets. However, the digital age, particularly the advent of social media platforms, has radically reconfigured this landscape. This paper posits that the current global moment of Afrobeats cannot be fully understood through traditional lens of industry promotion or artistic migration alone; instead, it necessitates an examination of the tripartite relationship between a digitally-empowered diaspora, the artists at home, and the algorithmic logic of digital platforms.

The platform of TikTok has emerged as a particularly potent force in this new cultural economy. Its architecture, centered on a powerful, opaque recommendation algorithm (the "For You" page), short-form video, and participatory challenges, has created a new paradigm for music discovery and viral fame. This paradigm has proven exceptionally conducive to the spread of Afrobeats, with its characteristic rhythms and danceable grooves. Tracks like CKay's "Love Nwantiti" and Rema's "Calm Down" achieved global chart dominance not solely through radio play or traditional marketing, but through billions of user-generated videos on TikTok. This represents a significant shift in how cultural products from the Global South enter the global mainstream, bypassing some traditional gatekeepers but introducing new, algorithmic ones.

This research is situated at the intersection of platform studies, diaspora media studies, and popular music scholarship. It draws on the work of scholars like José van Dijck (2013) who explore the culture of connectivity, and Aswin Punathambekar (2020) whose work on digital diasporas and media circuits provides a framework for understanding the agency of networked communities. The concept of "platformization"— the penetration of platforms into the web and app ecosystems—is central to understanding how TikTok shapes cultural production (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). Furthermore, we engage with Stuart Hall's (1990) theories of cultural identity as a production, constantly in process, and how it is negotiated within spaces of diaspora.

The primary argument of this paper is that the Nigerian digital diaspora, through its creative practices on TikTok, functions as a crucial intermediary in the global circulation of Afrobeats. However, this intermediation is not free-floating; it is fundamentally structured and constrained by TikTok's algorithmic curation. This dynamic results in a "remaking" of Nigerian cultural identity—a process where certain

elements are amplified and others are muted to fit a platform-friendly, globally legible format. This process is not merely one of dissemination but of active transformation.

The significance of this study lies in its critical intervention into the celebratory narratives of Afrobeats' "global takeover." By foregrounding the role of algorithms and platform politics, it reveals the underlying power dynamics and potential compromises involved in this new form of cultural globalization. It asks: who, or what, ultimately decides what version of "Naija" culture the world sees? The paper will proceed by first establishing a theoretical framework connecting platforms, algorithms, and diaspora. It will then analyze the specific practices of the Afrobeats digital diaspora on TikTok, followed by a detailed examination of how algorithmic curation operates. Case studies of specific viral hits will ground this analysis, before the paper concludes by discussing the implications of this "platformized" identity for artists, the culture, and our understanding of global pop.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PLATFORMS, ALGORITHMS, AND DIGITAL DIASPORAS

To fully grasp the dynamics at play in the Afrobeats-TikTok nexus, it is essential to build a robust theoretical framework that bridges the logic of digital platforms with the agency of diasporic communities. This framework positions platforms not as neutral stages but as active, structuring agents in cultural production, and diasporas not as passive audiences but as networked publics with significant cultural influence. The convergence of these forces creates a new and powerful engine for cultural globalization.

The first pillar of this framework is the concept of the platform itself. According to van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018), platforms are "programmable digital infrastructures that facilitate and shape personalized interactions between end-users and complements, organized through the systematic collection, algorithmic processing, monetization, and circulation of data" (p. 4). This definition moves beyond seeing TikTok as merely a social network; it is an economic and cultural system whose core logic is data extraction and user engagement. Its design choices—the short-video format, the seamless integration of music, the endless scroll of the "For You" page—are not arbitrary. They are engineered to maximize time spent on the platform, which in turn maximizes data collection and advertising revenue. This economic imperative fundamentally shapes the types of cultural content that thrive there.

Central to the platform's operation is the algorithm, specifically TikTok's recommendation algorithm. Gillespie (2014) reminds us that algorithms are not impartial technical formulae but are "encoded procedures for transforming input data into a desired output, based on specified calculations" that inevitably embed human choices and values (p. 167). TikTok's algorithm is famously opaque, but it is known to

prioritize content based on a complex mix of user interactions (likes, shares, comments, completion rates), video information (captions, sounds, hashtags), and device/account settings (TikTok, 2021). This creates what Bucher (2018) calls an "algorithmic imaginary," where users develop folk theories and practices to try and game the system, internalizing the platform's logic. For Afrobeats, this means that a song's potential for virality is tied to its ability to inspire the specific types of engagement the algorithm rewards.

This leads to the process of "platformization," which Nieborg and Poell (2018) define as the penetration of platform infrastructures, economic processes, and governmental frameworks into the web and app ecosystems. In the context of culture, this means that the production, distribution, and valuation of music are increasingly shaped by the norms, rules, and affordances of platforms like TikTok. The music industry has had to adapt, with A&R teams now scouting TikTok for viral hits and artists deliberately crafting "TikTok-ready" songs, often with a short, catchy, and easily loopable hook in the first 15 seconds. This represents a significant shift in cultural power towards the platform and its algorithmic governance.

The second critical pillar of our framework is the role of the digital diaspora. The classic conception of diaspora involves a population dispersed from its homeland, maintaining a connection to it. The digital age has transformed this, giving rise to what Brinkerhoff (2009) calls "digital diasporas," which are "groups of people who have migrated from their homeland but who use digital media to stay connected with each other and with their home country" (p. 6). These communities are not monolithic; they are sites of what Punathambekar (2020) describes as "networked publics," where identity is constantly performed, contested, and negotiated.

For the Nigerian diaspora, platforms like TikTok become a key space for what Hall (1990) would call the "production of identity." It is a space to perform "Naija" identity—through language (Pidgin English, Nigerian slang), fashion, humor, and, most prominently, music and dance. In doing so, they act as what Bourdieu would term "cultural intermediaries," translating and brokering their culture for a global, often non-Nigerian, audience. Their shared cultural competence allows them to be the first and most authentic adopters of new Afrobeats tracks, seeding them into the platform's ecosystem and providing the initial engagement that the algorithm then amplifies.

The critical synthesis of these two pillars—platforms/algorithms and digital diasporas—forms the core of our analysis. The agency of the diaspora is real, but it is exercised within the "walled garden" of the platform. Their creative expressions, while authentic, are incentivized and channeled by the algorithmic pursuit of virality. A dance challenge, for instance, is a potent form of diasporic cultural practice, but it is also a perfect vehicle for the algorithm because it is participatory, replicable, and generates massive volumes of content using the same sound. Thus, the "remaking" of Nigerian

cultural identity in the global mainstream is a co-production: a negotiation between the bottom-up, identity-driven practices of the diaspora and the top-down, engagement-driven logic of the TikTok algorithm. The following sections will unpack the specific manifestations of this co-production.

THE AFROBEATS DIGITAL DIASPORA AS CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES

The Nigerian diaspora, estimated to be over 15 million people globally, represents a vast, educated, and digitally literate network. On TikTok, this community has become an indispensable force in the Afrobeats ecosystem, moving beyond the role of a passive audience to become active architects of the genre's global narrative. Their position as bilingual and bicultural actors, straddling their Nigerian heritage and their lived experiences in the West, grants them a unique form of cultural capital that they deploy with significant effect on the platform. This section explores the specific practices through which this digital diaspora functions as cultural intermediaries, translating and promoting Afrobeats for a global audience.

The most visible practice is the creation and popularization of dance challenges. Dance is an integral part of African musical expression, and the diaspora has leveraged this to spectacular effect on TikTok. Users like @official_janelle and @bofagirl, based in the UK and US respectively, have garnered massive followings by creating catchy, accessible dances to the latest Afrobeats hits. These dances are not merely performances; they are participatory rituals. By creating a structured routine, they lower the barrier to entry, allowing anyone, regardless of dance skill or cultural background, to take part. This participatory culture is key to virality, as it generates thousands of "duet" and "stitch" videos, all contributing to the play count of the original sound.

This practice of dance creation is a clear example of what Henry Jenkins (2006) theorized as "participatory culture." However, in the context of diaspora, it takes on an additional layer of meaning. For the creators, it is an act of cultural preservation and pride, a way to stay connected to the rhythmic sensibilities of "home." In their videos, they often wear Nigerian fashion brands, use Nigerian slang in their captions, and embody a specific "Naija" confidence and swagger. They are, in effect, performing a specific, curated version of Nigerian identity for a global viewership. This performance is an act of what Stuart Hall (1990) describes as "positioning," where identity is constituted through, not outside, difference.

Beyond dance, the diaspora acts as interpreters and contextualizers. Many diaspora creators produce comedic skits, "get ready with me" (GRWM) videos, and Pidgin English tutorials set to Afrobeats soundtracks. In these videos, the music serves as an authenticating backdrop for narratives about Nigerian family life, relationship dynamics, and social customs. For a non-Nigerian audience, this provides a entry point

into the culture that extends beyond the music itself. It creates a parasocial relationship where global viewers feel they are learning something authentic, making the cultural product more sticky and meaningful than a mere viral sound clip. This aligns with Punathambekar's (2020) observation that digital diasporas create "circuits of media and culture" that are deeply embedded in everyday life and identity formation.

The role of the diaspora as early adopters and amplifiers cannot be overstated. Before a song is picked up by the mainstream Western media or playlist editors, it is often already circulating vigorously within diaspora networks on TikTok and other platforms like Instagram. The diaspora's cultural competence means they can quickly identify a potential hit, recognizing sonic patterns, lyrical wit, and artistic potential that might be lost on an outsider. This initial, concentrated burst of engagement—likes, shares, saves—sends a powerful signal to TikTok's algorithm that this sound is "engaging," prompting the platform to begin testing it with broader, non-diaspora user groups.

This process exemplifies the concept of "connective action" as described by Bennett and Segerberg (2012). The viral spread of an Afrobeats track is not the result of a centralized campaign but of many individual, personalized actions (creating a dance video, lip-syncing) that are easily shared and replicated across the network. The shared content—the song—acts as a mobilizing agent, and the platform provides the infrastructure for this personalized sharing. The diaspora, with its high motivation to engage with this content, provides the initial critical mass that kicks off this chain reaction.

However, this intermediary role is not without its internal tensions. The diaspora's relationship with the homeland is often complex, marked by both nostalgia and critique. Furthermore, the version of "Naija" culture that performs well on the global stage is often a celebratory, upbeat, and consumable one. There is less algorithmic incentive for videos that explore the complexities of modern Nigeria, such as political issues or social challenges. Consequently, the diaspora's role as an intermediary is inevitably shaped by an implicit understanding of what is "palatable" for a global, and largely Western, algorithm. Their agency is profound, but it is channeled and, to some extent, constrained by the very platform they seek to leverage, a dynamic that becomes even clearer when we examine the mechanics of the algorithm itself.

ALGORITHMIC CURATION: THE LOGIC OF TIKTOK'S "FOR YOU" PAGE

While the diaspora provides the cultural fuel, TikTok's algorithm is the engine that propels Afrobeats into the global stratosphere. The "For You" page (FYP) is the core of the TikTok experience—a seemingly endless, personalized stream of content curated by a proprietary recommendation system. Understanding the logic of this algorithmic

curation is crucial to explaining why certain Afrobeats songs go viral while others, potentially of equal artistic merit, do not. The algorithm operates as a powerful, albeit hidden, gatekeeper, applying a set of engagement-driven criteria that actively reshape the cultural content it promotes.

As noted by TikTok (2021), the algorithm's recommendations are based on a combination of factors: user interactions (what you like, share, watch fully, and comment on), video information (details like captions, sounds, and hashtags), and device/account settings (language preference, country setting). The most powerful of these is user engagement. The algorithm is designed to identify patterns and predict what will keep a user scrolling. A sound that is used in a video that gets high completion rates, sparks a flood of duets, or generates a high number of shares is flagged as "valuable" and is then injected into more users' FYPs. This creates a positive feedback loop, or a "rich-get-richer" effect, where viral sounds become exponentially more viral.

This has direct implications for the musical structure of Afrobeats hits. The algorithm favors immediacy. A song that has a catchy, distinctive, and easily recognizable hook within the first five seconds has a significant advantage. This is because TikTok is a fast-paced, attention-scarce environment; if a sound doesn't grab a user instantly, they will swipe to the next video. This has led to what some producers call the "TikTok-ification" of music production. Songs are increasingly structured with the platform in mind, often featuring a killer intro or a repetitive, chant-like chorus that can be looped perfectly in a 15 to 30-second video. The "Amapiano" log drum, prevalent in current Afrobeats, is a prime example of a distinctive sonic element that the algorithm can quickly latch onto and identify.

The algorithm also thrives on participatory affordances. Features like "duet" and "stitch" are not just tools; they are directives. They encourage users not just to consume content, but to directly interact with and build upon it. This is the engine behind dance challenges. When a diaspora creator like @bofagirl posts a new dance, the algorithm doesn't just recommend her original video; it recommends the *sound*, and thus promotes all the subsequent videos of users attempting the dance. This transforms a song from a listening experience into a participatory event. The success of CKay's "Love Nwantiti" is a textbook case. Its simple, melancholic melody and slow tempo made it a perfect backdrop for a wide range of video themes—from romantic scenes and break-up stories to comedic skits and GRWM videos. The algorithm detected this high level of versatile engagement and pushed the sound to unprecedented levels.

This process exemplifies what Bucher (2018) describes as the "algorithmic imaginary," where users' beliefs about how the algorithm works shape their creative practices. Diaspora creators and artists alike operate with a tacit understanding of these algorithmic preferences. They make conscious choices—selecting songs with immediate

hooks, creating simple and replicable dances, using trending hashtags like #Afrobeats and #Naija—in an attempt to "hack" the FYP. In this way, the algorithm doesn't just distribute culture; it actively shapes its production. It disciplines creators into conforming to a format that it deems successful.

However, this algorithmic gatekeeping has homogenizing effects. The logic of virality favors content that is easily digestible, emotionally resonant in a universal way, and conducive to replication. This can lead to a flattening of cultural complexity. A song with intricate Yoruba proverbs or a complex socio-political message may struggle to gain the same algorithmic traction as a song with a simple, infectious hook about love and partying. The algorithm, in its quest for maximum engagement, inevitably amplifies a narrow, often stereotypical, version of Nigerian culture—one that is joyful, rhythmic, and focused on dance and romance. It creates a "platformized" Nigerian identity that is optimized for clicks and shares, potentially at the expense of its nuanced and multifaceted reality. The following case studies will illustrate this dynamic in action, showing how specific songs were molded by and for this algorithmic environment.

CASE STUDIES: VIRALITY, CROSSOVER, AND THE PLATFORMIZED HIT

To ground the theoretical discussion in concrete examples, this section analyzes two seminal case studies that demonstrate the intricate interplay between diaspora agency and algorithmic curation: CKay's "Love Nwantiti" and Rema's "Calm Down." These tracks followed distinct paths to global success, but both underscore how the TikTok ecosystem can launch a song from regional hit to global phenomenon, while simultaneously reshaping its cultural meaning and context.

Case Study 1: CKay's "Love Nwantiti" - The Algorithmic Sleeper Hit

CKay's "Love Nwantiti" is perhaps the quintessential example of a TikTok-driven global hit. Originally released in 2019, the song was a moderate success in Nigeria. However, in 2021, it exploded globally, eventually becoming one of the most Shazamed songs in the world and charting in over 50 countries. This second life was almost entirely engineered on TikTok. The song's sonic qualities made it perfectly suited for the platform: a simple, looping guitar riff, a melancholy yet catchy melody, and a slow, steady tempo that could soundtrack a wide range of emotional and narrative content.

The diaspora was instrumental in its rediscovery. Users began using the track as a backdrop for videos that depicted a specific aesthetic: a mix of nostalgia, romance, and a slightly melancholic cool. The #LoveNwantiti hashtag became a repository for videos of couples, fashion showcases, and atmospheric "aesthetic" clips. Crucially, the song's versatility was its strength. Unlike a track tied to a specific dance, "Love Nwantiti" could be used for almost any mood, from heartbreak to luxury. This versatility

generated massive, sustained engagement across diverse user groups, a signal the algorithm heavily rewards. As one music analyst noted, the song became a "mood" rather than just a track (Dredge, 2021).

The platformization of the song was evident in its remix strategy. As the track gained momentum, CKay and his label released multiple official remixes, including versions with DJ Yo & AX'EL, and later, a global remix featuring Joeboy and Kuami Eugene. This was a strategic move to capitalize on the song's viral moment and cater to the different markets where it was gaining traction. The song's success was not a linear push from the artist but a pull from the platform, to which the industry then responded. "Love Nwantiti" demonstrates how a song can be re-contextualized by user-generated content and algorithmic amplification, becoming a global hit based on its utility as a versatile audio-meme rather than its initial artistic intent.

Case Study 2: Rema's "Calm Down" and the Strategic Dance Challenge

Rema's "Calm Down," released in 2022, represents a more hybrid model, where an already-popular song was supercharged by a targeted, strategic engagement with TikTok's mechanics. The song was a major hit across Africa before it gained global attention. Its crossover was significantly accelerated by a viral dance challenge, but one that showcased a more complex interplay of cultural codes.

The original track, with its laid-back vibe and melodic flow, was already popular on the platform. However, its global explosion was catalyzed by the release of an official remix with American pop star Selena Gomez. This move was a classic industry tactic, but its success was dependent on the TikTok ecosystem. The remix was accompanied by a targeted campaign encouraging a dance challenge. Diaspora creators were central to this, creating routines that blended Afrobeats dance moves with more mainstream, accessible steps. The involvement of Selena Gomez, a massive global star with her own huge platform, brought a new, non-Afrobeats audience to the challenge.

The algorithm played a key role in bridging these worlds. It detected that users who engaged with Selena Gomez content were also engaging with the #CalmDownChallenge videos, and vice-versa. This created a cross-pollination effect, pushing the sound into the FYPs of pop fans who may not have been actively searching for Afrobeats. The challenge format provided the structured participation the algorithm craves, while the star power of Gomez provided an additional layer of credibility and reach for the mainstream Western audience. In this case, the "platformized" identity of the song became a hybrid one—it was simultaneously an authentic "Naija" jam and a polished global pop product. The success of "Calm Down" shows a maturation of the model, where the industry has learned to proactively collaborate with the platform's logic, using diaspora trends and algorithmic patterns as a blueprint for global crossover campaigns.

Both case studies reveal a common outcome: the song's meaning becomes intrinsically linked to its TikTok context. "Love Nwantiti" is forever tied to a specific "aesthetic" mood, and "Calm Down" is inseparable from its dance challenge. This platform-driven re-contextualization is a powerful form of remaking cultural identity, one that prioritizes the song's function within the platform's economy over its original artistic or cultural narrative.

THE REMAKING OF "NAIJA" IDENTITY: BETWEEN AUTHENTICITY AND ALGORITHMIC PALATABILITY

The pervasive influence of TikTok's algorithmic logic, mediated through the creative practices of the diaspora, is actively remaking the global perception of "Naija" identity. This process is characterized by a fundamental tension: the drive for authentic cultural expression exists in a constant push-and-pull with the demand for algorithmic palatability. The version of Nigerian culture that achieves global virality is not necessarily false, but it is a strategically simplified and amplified subset of a much more complex whole. This section explores the dimensions of this "remaking" and its potential consequences.

One of the most significant effects is the **amplification of a consumable aesthetic.** The algorithm favors content that is visually appealing, emotionally positive, and easily understood. This has led to the global circulation of a "Naija" identity heavily centered on dance, fashion, romance, and celebratory vibes. The vibrant Ankara prints, the slick dance moves, the displays of affluence and "soft life"—these elements are highly "sticky" on visual media like TikTok. They present a dynamic, prosperous, and joyful image of Nigerian youth culture. While this is a valid and powerful aspect of the culture, it risks becoming the *only* aspect known to the global mainstream, overshadowing other facets of the Nigerian experience.

This leads to a **flattening of cultural and linguistic nuance.** As previously noted, songs with complex lyrical content, particularly those deeply rooted in local languages, Pidgin idioms, or socio-political commentary, face a steeper climb to algorithmic virality. The global audience, and thus the algorithm, gravitates towards universal themes of love, partying, and aspiration. Consequently, artists might feel pressured to simplify their lyrics or increase the ratio of English to Nigerian languages to enhance their crossover potential. This is a modern-day manifestation of the cultural imperialism debates, where the need to cater to a global (often Western) market shapes local cultural production (Tomlinson, 1991).

Furthermore, there is a **commodification of cultural practices.** Dance, a profound form of cultural expression, is transformed into a commodifiable unit—a "challenge." While this drives participation, it can also strip the dance of its original context and social meaning. A dance that might have specific cultural significance in a Nigerian

social setting becomes a decontextualized trend, performed by users around the world with little understanding of its origins. The dance becomes a meme, valued more for its utility in gaining likes and followers than for its cultural resonance. This process aligns with Terranova's (2004) concept of "free labor" in the digital economy, where user-generated content creates immense value for the platform, while the cultural producers (the dancers) are primarily compensated in visibility.

The diaspora finds itself at the heart of this tension. Their role as cultural ambassadors is fraught with a double consciousness. On one hand, they are rightly proud to see their culture celebrated on a global stage. Their successful intermediation is a source of personal and collective pride. On the other hand, they may feel a sense of unease as they witness the simplification and stereotyping of their heritage. They must navigate the pressure to perform a version of "Naija" that is legible and appealing to the algorithm and its global user base, which may not always align with the more complex, gritty, or critical realities of life in Nigeria or their own diasporic experiences.

This remaking is not a simple story of cultural degradation. It is also a story of empowerment and agency. The platform has given Nigerian artists and the diaspora a direct line to a global audience, bypassing traditional Western gatekeepers. It has created a space for a confident, modern African identity to claim its place in global pop culture. However, this newfound power comes with a new set of constraints—the invisible, automated gatekeeping of the algorithm. The "Naija" identity that emerges is thus a hybrid: a resilient, dynamic culture adapting to and leveraging a powerful new global media system, even as it is subtly reshaped by that system's inherent logic and commercial imperatives.

CONCLUSION

The journey of Afrobeats from the streets of Lagos to the "For You" pages of millions worldwide is a paradigm shift in cultural globalization. This paper has argued that this transition is not a simple story of organic spread but a complex co-production involving the Nigerian digital diaspora and the algorithmic curation of TikTok. The diaspora, acting as networked cultural intermediaries, provides the authentic energy and creative practices that seed the platform. TikTok's algorithm, in turn, with its insatiable drive for engagement, acts as an accelerant and a filter, amplifying content that fits its logic of virality—immediacy, participativity, and emotional resonance.

Through this symbiotic relationship, a "platformized" version of Nigerian cultural identity is being forged and circulated globally. This identity, as seen in the case studies of "Love Nwantiti" and "Calm Down," is often vibrant, joyful, and dance-oriented—a potent and valid representation of modern Nigerian youth culture. However, the algorithmic imperative inevitably flattens complexity, privileging a consumable aesthetic over nuanced narratives and simplifying linguistic richness for universal

palatability. The result is a remaking of "Naija" identity in the global mainstream, one that is both empowering in its reach and potentially reductive in its dimensions.

This research contributes to broader debates in media and cultural studies by demonstrating that in the 21st century, platforms and their algorithms are not mere conduits for culture but are active, structuring agents. The case of Afrobeats on TikTok shows that the path for Global South cultures to enter the mainstream is no longer solely controlled by human gatekeepers in boardrooms but is also governed by the coded preferences of automated systems. This introduces a new form of power that demands critical scrutiny.

Future research could build on this foundation in several ways. A quantitative analysis of the specific audio features of viral vs. non-viral Afrobeats tracks could provide empirical evidence for the "TikTok-ification" of its sound. Comparative studies with other platformized genres from the Global South, such as K-pop on YouTube or Amapiano on Instagram Reels, would help refine our understanding of platform-specific cultural dynamics. Furthermore, ethnographic work focusing directly on the experiences of Nigerian artists navigating this new landscape would provide invaluable insight into the pressures and opportunities they face.

The story of Afrobeats and TikTok is a quintessential story of our digital age. It is a story of agency and constraint, of celebration and simplification. It reminds us that as culture goes digital, its circulation and its very meaning become entangled with the logics of the platforms that host it. Understanding this dynamic is crucial not only for scholars of music and popular culture but for anyone seeking to comprehend how identity is made, remade, and circulated in a platform-dominated world.

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