Football Fandom, *Glocalisation* and the 'Man United in Pidgin' Twitter Community: A study of the *glocal* village created through the social media practices of a Twitter account dedicated to West African Manchester United Football Club's Fans

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Jenny Harding and Dr. Luke Tredinnick who gave me feedback on all sections of this thesis and helped me throughout my PhD journey.

I am also grateful to other London Metropolitan University's staff for their support over this 3-year journey and their role in my development as a researcher, especially Prof. Diana Stirbu, Prof. Anne Karpf, Prof. Peter Lewis, Prof. Klaus Fischer, Prof. Don MacRaild, Prof. Karim Ouazzane, Dr. Karyofyllis Zervoulis, Dr. Gonzalo Perez Andrade, Anne Markey, Maeva Khachfe, Oliver Brooks, and Konstantinos Gogos.

I would also like to thank London Metropolitan University's Postgraduate Research Society members, especially Mayra Gallardo, Maryam Saberi, Cinar Aydogan, Anthony Phipps, Christine Jefferys, and Ama Agyeman.

Many thanks to my family, my cheerleading squad. I thank my brother and lifetime support, Dave Carey MBASSI, and my parents for their advice, trust, and financial assistance.

I am immensely grateful to my UK's surrogate father, Alan King, whose unconditional help, and support is invaluable.

A huge thank you to my friends, including but not limited to: Karim FOTSO, Honorine BALIEMEK, Erna-Karine LEA MOUELLE, Fabrice Adrien EWANE, Cedric OBOUNOU, Dominique YEMY, Anderson BIWOLE, Israel TANKAM, Donald BAKONG, Dorian TIAGUE, Vanessa MBENOUN, Felix TCHOMBE, Kevin NZOKE, Jean-Yves MENDOUA, Pierre-Martin EKOMO, Antony AMBASSA, Patrick LIBAM, Philippe Landry ENGOLO, James Paul, Alexandra TCHUILEU, Lydia TCHOUEN, Aaron Patel, Lucien BODO, Thierry TAGNE, Lionel Stone, Jessica NDJIKI, Laurent LOTIN, Frederic ABA'A, Ivan YOPAH, Rolly MVOGO, Paul Emmanuel NDJENG, Alex KAMGA, Adam Harvey, Matthew Babb, Georges Michael NKAMSI, Sandra KANA, Delano KANA, Steve CHENDJOU, Henry Christian TJENGELLE, Arthur NGATOU, Patience Belange FOMETE, FOTSO FONKAM, Toussaint Louverture SINDJOUN, Freddy MBENGUE, Ines NTSAMA, and Fabien BOPDA.

Finally, I would like to remember my departed friends, Wilfried KWYN MANGA and Marie Florence ANYAMA ELOMO.

ABSTRACT

This thesis on 'Man United In Pidgin's (MUIP's) Twitter account discusses how the *glocalisation* of Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) made possible via that account assists the construction of a postcolonial West African masculine online identity or fandom. MUIP is an unofficial MUFC's social media fan account created by a Nigerian fan of MUFC that provides readers with the team's news updates in Pidgin English, a lingua franca spoken in many West African countries. In this thesis, the concept of West Africa mainly refers to West African countries where West African Pidgin English is spoken (Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea). Thus, this study addresses two questions: which discursive features do MUIP's tweets employ? In what ways do these features help create a West African online identity among MUIP's followers? A discourse analysis of 107 MUIP's tweets and readers' replies to these tweets is used as the principal method to investigate these questions. An interview with the founder of MUIP and an online survey assessing MUIP's followers on Twitter also provide some preliminary production and consumption contexts to this discourse analysis. This research predominantly addresses the relation between media or cultural texts and identity construction, looking at how West African MUFC's consumers, through the MUIP community, resist to and rework Western media coverage of MUFC and Premier League Football to produce new forms of meanings. It examines what is produced by the MUIP community, how it is produced, what it means, which groups of people it represents, and how MUIP's audience interpret MUIP's texts. Through a discourse analysis of the MUIP community's tweets, this thesis engages with some West African systems of knowledge and unpacks their meanings' construction. The discourse analysis indicates that MUIP's content creator, and to an extent MUIP's audience, mainly give meanings to their utterances via personal pronouns ('we/us' or 'una') and figures of speech (humour, metaphors, and rhetorical questions). MUIP's followers build twenty-seven semantic networks in response to the main MUIP's tweets analysed. The reality constructed by MUIP's tweets for the readers are mainly those of information and entertainment. This thesis concludes that this account enables its founder to create a sense of belonging to a Nigerian and West African imagined cyber community within his online community and an environment similar to Football Viewing Centres, thereby creating virtual stadiums that entertain, inform, and foster socialisation. This thesis' findings contribute to discovering how football is covered and followed on social networking sites in Nigeria and West Africa. New insights are provided by investigating how the participatory culture enabled by this account via the involvement of its readers in content creation is producing, shaping, and exposing a West African masculine online identity. The account's author and readers perform identities which are decentred, multiple, and sometimes fragmented between numerous shades of local cultural characteristics and

various global cultural ones. This thesis builds on McLuhan's (1962, 1964) concept of 'global village' and argues that while the global media reach of the English Premier League and MUFC has created a global village, that village consists of a series of '*glocal* villages' with unique and specific (cultural) characteristics – MUIP is an example of such villages. This thesis also builds on Igwe et al. (2021) idea that the *glocalisation* of European Football Leagues in Nigeria creates a sense of communal belonging for those watching these leagues' matches at Football Viewing Centres by highlighting the discursive practices creating that sense of belonging to a common cultural identity. Besides, while Igwe et al. conducted an offline investigation of such *glocalisation*, this thesis investigates the *glocalisation* of MUFC fandom within a West African online community thereby addressing the concern raised by Onyebueke (2018) that the study of online football fandom in West Africa is significantly overlooked. Ultimately, this thesis builds on postcolonial theorists' contentions that there is a profound global inequity in how frameworks of knowledge and understanding are defined (Young, 2020). Academic research often prioritises the experiences of Western Europeans and North Americans, and their views of the rest of the world. This research is an investigation by a West African of an online community that matters to West Africans. It investigates this global football industry transformed within a West African context and invested with new meanings that re-assert a distinctive West African identity.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

This thesis constitutes a study of how the *glocalisation* of Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) made possible through 'Man United in Pidgin' (MUIP) enables the construction of a postcolonial West African online identity. It investigates the imagined cyber community or fandom that MUIP has created and fostered since 2015. Fandom designates "dedicated followers of any cultural phenomenon" (Chandler and Munday, 2016, p.157). *Glocalisation* is a concept introduced by Robertson (1992) to refer to the blend of globalisation and localisation. It designates specific adaptations of products/services/brands to local/cultural needs.

MUFC is an English Premier League football club. The club was founded in 1878, and it operates at Old Trafford Stadium in Greater Manchester. A 2021 Goal.com article titled "which football teams have the most fans" indicated that MUFC is among the most followed football teams across the globe. Another article from the same website and titled "which are the world's richest football clubs in 2021" (Goal, 2021) also highlighted that MUFC is the fourth European club that generates the most income. According to that second article, with an estimated revenue of £497.2 million in February 2021, MUFC is behind Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Bayern Munich, making it one of the most potent football institutions. MUFC is also one of the founders of the European Association of Clubs. MUFC has the longest track record in English football, winning the English Championships (Premier League) 20 times. The club also won 12 FA Cups, 5 English Cups, 21 Community Shields, 3 Champions Leagues, a Cup of Cups, a UEFA Europa League, a UEFA Super Cup, an Intercontinental Cup, and a Clubs' World Cup. An article published by Nyasa Times in November 2020 and titled "Which European League is the biggest in Africa" considered the English Premier League to be Africans' favourite European football League. An article by Daily Trust titled "Which Premier League Teams Are Popular In Africa" (2021) also presented which English Premier League teams are Africans' favourite across the continent. The article highlighted that Chelsea is the

favourite in West Africa mainly because some West African football players from Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Ghana played for the club. In East Africa, people are mainly Arsenal's fans. Arsenal is also very popular in Nigeria, while the most famous club in South Africa is MUFC. When it comes to the overall popularity of English Premier League teams on Twitter in 2022, the most followed clubs are MUFC with 31 million followers; Chelsea FC with 19.8 million followers; Liverpool FC with 19.7 million followers; Arsenal with 18.8 million followers; and Manchester City FC with 11.7 million followers.

MUIP is an unofficial MUFC's social media fan account created by a Nigerian fan of MUFC that provides readers with the team's news updates in Pidgin English, a lingua franca spoken in many West African countries. Its first declination was a Twitter account, but MUIP has now invaded Facebook, Instagram, the blogosphere, and the mobile apps market. This account has more than 100,000 followers on Twitter (in July 2022).

Football fandom, social media, globalisation, and cultural identity constitute the four primary contexts of this research on MUIP. It addresses two research questions: which discursive features do MUIP's tweets employ? In what ways do these features help setting up a West African online identity among MUIP's followers? Broadly, the Western African region includes countries of the Economic Community of West African States (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, The Gambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo), Mauritania, as well as three central Africa's countries (Cameroon, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea). In this thesis, the concept of West Africa mainly comprises of West African countries where West African Pidgin English is spoken. These countries are Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea.

It is worth mentioning that, as highlighted by Gashaw (2017), Africa's colonial partition was formalised with the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference. Although, European colonial powers were

already relatively present in and influencing some parts of the continent long before that conference, there was little to no collaboration between them. Therefore, The Berlin Conference marked Europeans' collaboration to divide the African continent. It implemented the partition of Africa between the European colonial powers. These colonial powers did this from their continent with limited knowledge of African communities and of their differences. One result of this is that many African countries are now made of communities that were linguistically and culturally separated prior to the colonial period. This reality verifies itself in West Africa. Campbell and Page (2018) took the example of Nigeria and highlighted that prior to the colonial era, its inhabitants did not form one homogeneous group but were nonetheless put together by the British colonial power to form one country. This amalgamation was gradual as it first involved the creation of two Protectorates (Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria) in 1900 which were then merged to create the Nigerian colony in 1914. Britain released Nigeria from its colonial yoke on October 1, 1960. Independent Nigeria is therefore this heterogeneous entity both linguistically (over 480 languages are spoken in the country) and religion wise (with Judeo-Christian faiths and Islam as the most prominent ones). English is Nigeria's official language and Pidgin English is used in the country as the main lingua franca. Nigeria is bordered by Niger to the north, Benin to the west, as well as Cameroon and Chad to the east.

Cameroon was first a German protectorate from 1884 to after the World War I. As Germany was defeated, Cameroon became, in 1919, a League of Nations Mandate administered both by France and Britain. On the 1st of January 1960, The French Cameroon became independent. The British Cameroon which bordered Nigeria, became independent 21 months later (on the 1st of October 1961) and reunited with the independent French Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. 11 years later (on the 20th of May 1972), a referendum was passed abolishing federalism within the country and Cameroon became the United Republic of Cameroon with a centralised system of government emanating from its capital city, Yaoundé.

Since 1984, Cameroon is not known as the United Republic of Cameroon anymore but as the Republic of Cameroon. Like Nigeria, it is culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse. Over 280 indigenous languages constitute its linguistic landscape along with French and English which are the country's official languages. Mongo Ewondo, Arab Choa, Fulfulde, and Pidgin English are used as lingua francas across the country (Epoge, 2012). *Camfranglais* is also a prominent lingua franca traversing the whole country and spoken by the Cameroonian Youth in urban centres. Christianity and Islam constitute the country's main religions. Cameroon is bordered by 6 countries: Chad to the northeast, Nigeria to the northwest, the Central African Republic to the east, the Republic of Congo to the southeast, as well as Equatorial Guinea and Gabon to the south.

In 1821, Britain established a colony in the West African Guinea Gulf and labelled it as Gold Coast (Miller et al., 2009). The latter acquired its independence on the 6th of March 1957 under the name of 'Ghana'. English is Ghana's official language and like in Cameroon and Nigeria, many languages co-exist, Pidgin English constitutes Ghana's main lingua franca, and Christianity and Islam are the two main religious affiliations. It is bordered by Burkina Faso to the north, Cote d'Ivoire to the west, and Togo to the east.

Sierra Leone and Liberia are constituted of descendants of freed slaves who were repatriated to the southwestern coast of West Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as of various indigenous communities. Liberia remained a private colony of the American Colonisation Society until the 26th of July 1847, when it became independent (History.com Editors, 2021). Sierra Leone on the other hand remained a British colony until the 27th of April 1961, which marked its independence. Both countries have English as their official language. Sierra Leoneans and Liberians have English Creoles (known as Krio in Sierra Leone and as Liberian Kreyol in Liberia) as lingua francas that are mutually intelligible and similar to Pidgin English spoken in Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea. Sierra Leone is bordered by

Guinea to the east and the north and by Liberia to the south, whereas Liberia shares borders with Guinea to the north, Sierra Leone to the northwest, and Cote d'Ivoire to the East. In both countries, Christianity and Islam constitute the two main religions: most people are Muslim in Sierra Leone whereas in Liberia, it is the other way around.

Equatorial Guinea is a former Spanish colony which gained its independence on the 12th of October 1968. When it became independent, the official language was Spanish, but it added French and Portuguese as official languages (in 1998 and 2011 respectively) even though their use is still quite limited. According to the WorldAtlas website (2018), less than 10% of the country's population speak French and Portuguese was adopted as an official language only to gain access to the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLC). While Portuguese is used in educational settings, its use is not compulsory. Spanish on the other hand is spoken by most people in Equatorial Guinea and used in most settings (personal, educational, and professional). Around 15 indigenous languages are spoken in the country, and it is bordered by Gabon to the east and the south, as well as Cameroon to the north. Equatorial Guinea is the only one of these countries that does not have English as official language but the fact that it shares a border with Cameroon and a portion of a maritime boundary with Nigeria could explain why some Equatorial Guineans also speak Pidgin English. Equatorial Guineans are mostly Roman Catholics.

The partition of West African territories by European colonial powers also meant that communities were separated. Same or similar communities can now be found in different West African countries. Pygmies, Fang, Batanga, and Yasa people are found in Cameroon and in Equatorial Guinea. Fulani and Hausa people are found in Nigeria as well as in Cameroon. Cameroon's Banso people are very similar in their traditions as well as in their language to Nigeria's Akwa Ibom people. The Yoruba tribe, which is one of Nigeria's main tribes, is

present in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The Bassa people are also found in Cameroon, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

Overall, these countries not only have discursive features in common but also ways of living which include but are not limited to the food they eat, the way they dress, the way they dance, and their values. Nigerian's Afrobeat and Afrobeats music is much appreciated as well as implemented by local artists across these countries. Furthermore, 64% of West Africans migrate within Western African countries (Migration Data Portal, 2021) and many of these countries' nationals consider football as their favourite sport – like many people in Africa (NEOPRIMESPORT, 2022). Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria are among the most successful teams at the African Cup of Nations with 5, 4, and 3 titles, respectively. Nigeria and Cameroon have both won the Olympics' football tournament in 1996 and 2000, respectively. They have also performed well in the World Cup - Ghana and Cameroon went as far as the quarterfinals, and Nigeria went as far as the round of 16. Cameroon made it to the 2003 Confederation Cup's Final.

Kemp (2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e, 2022f) provided key data on these specific West African countries on the Data Reportal website. Nigeria has the biggest population (214.1 million), followed by Ghana (32.06 million), Cameroon (27.57 million), Sierra Leone (8.22 million), Liberia (5.24 million), and Equatorial Guinea (1.47 million). In these countries, the number of men and women are broadly equal, and an overwhelming majority of people are aged between 0 and 34 years old. Apart from Sierra Leoneans, these countries' inhabitants mostly live in urban settings. Key figures on these countries' demographic characteristics are found in Appendix 1 (Table 8).

Considering these countries' online presence, Kemp also provided data about their internet and social media use. Among these countries, Ghana and Nigeria are the ones with an internet penetration rate above 50% (53% in Ghana and 51% in Nigeria). Nigeria has the highest

number of social media users (32.9 million) while Equatorial Guinea has the lowest one (126.1 thousand people). Except in Liberia, most social media users in these countries are male individuals. Furthermore, almost all social media users within these 6 countries are aged 13 and above. Details on each of these countries online presence can be found in Appendix 1 (Table 9).

This thesis interest in the MUIP Twitter community is not by any means random. My subject-position as a researcher is that of a young Cameroonian man and, as highlighted above, Cameroon is one of the Western African countries in which Pidgin English is spoken. That and the fact that I have always been fascinated with languages motivated and inspired me to embark on a PhD and to study this account. I remember that when I discovered MUIP in 2015, I felt not only captivated but also culturally related to it. Something was also born in me, a subversive feeling. I wanted to focus on this language many Cameroonians are familiar with but that was always forbidden to me as I was growing up. My own level of Pidgin English is far from being superior. It is just about advanced and has not always been that high. For a very long period of my relatively young life, my Pidgin English was intermediate, if not basic. When I was growing up in Cameroon, Pidgin English (along with *Camfranglais*) was one of these languages I was not allowed to speak in my parents' house. The secondary education catholic institution I attended did not encourage Pidgin English. You were to use Cameroon's two official languages, Spanish/German/Greek/Arabic/Latin (during those classes), and nothing else. I would most likely be punished if any adult in my family or school caught me speaking Pidgin English. According to them, it was a language that was nothing but vulgar and that would negatively impact my ability to speak French, English, and any other mainstream language. Furthermore, Pidgin English is usually frowned upon by upper classes in Cameroon (which my family belongs to). Thus, this Twitter community and my study of it helped me claim that

cultural space as a Cameroonian who was not encouraged to speak Pidgin English while Pidgin English has always been part of Cameroon's cultural landscape.

The fact that this account was created by a Nigerian also drove me greatly as Nigeria is like a second cultural home to me. I have always been interested in and exposed to Nigerian cultural products/texts and had many Nigeria's literature, history, and geography classes throughout my secondary education. I was, from a very young age, exposed to Nigerian cultural products – especially Nigerian movies, Afrobeat and Afrobeats songs. As indicated by Campbell and Page (2018), Afrobeat, which was popularised by the late Nigerian musician and singer Fela Kuti in the 1970s, is a hybrid music genre influenced by pop and jazz music as well as by indigenous musical forms. Afrobeats on the other hand stemmed from Afrobeat in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a music genre drawing on hip-hop and dancehall as well as on African traditional rhythms. Pidgin English is the main language in Afrobeat and Afrobeats songs' lyrics. All these elements have fostered my huge interest for the Nigerian cultural landscapes to the point that you can often hear me using Nigerian slangs I have heard in and learned to use from movies or Afrobeat/Afrobeats songs. Nigeria also has by far the largest population and the biggest popular culture influence in West Africa. Therefore, Nigeria's dominance in the region and the fact that it is often singled out throughout this thesis are legitimate and fair. Furthermore, Nigerians overwhelmingly outnumbering other Western African countries in a study of an online community created by a Nigerian who lives in Nigeria (and whose primary network of contacts is overwhelmingly Nigerian) is only logical.

Through the investigation of how MUIP's tweets convey football discussions and news, I assess how the *glocalisation* of MUFC matches the needs and expectations of its Nigerian and West African audience on Twitter. I seek to determine how/if MUIP represents an instrument of effective fandom, allowing Nigerians and West Africans to counterbalance English or Western coverage of Premier League Football. This thesis explores how West Africans'

discursive features in leisure activities, such as football and football discussions, penetrate social media via accounts like MUIP and unite West Africans, thereby building a West African online identity. This research mainly addresses the relation between media or cultural texts and identity construction, looking at how West African MUFC's fans, through the MUIP Twitter community, appropriate and rework MUFC's texts and produce new forms of meanings. It also addresses MUIP's production, content and consumption by looking at what is being produced by the MUIP community, how it is being produced, what are its meanings, which groups of people it represents, and how MUIP's audience interpret MUIP's texts. This thesis is a study of the active and critical abilities of West African MUFC's fans in their interpretations of MUFC's texts. It also engages with some West African systems of knowledge and unpacks their meanings' construction. Building on McLuhan's (1962, 1964) 'global village', this thesis insists that while the English Premier League and MUFC global phenomena established a global village, the latter comprises of a set of '*glocal* villages' with distinctive (cultural) features and argues that MUIP constitutes an example of such villages. This thesis also builds on Igwe et al. (2021) thought that European Football Leagues' *glocalisation* in Nigeria constructs a sense of belonging within those watching these leagues' matches at Football Viewing Centres thereby indicating the discursive practices establishing and enhancing that communal attachment. In addition, while Igwe et al. carried out an offline investigation of such *glocalisation*, this thesis studies the *glocalisation* of MUFC fandom within a West African online community. In consequence, it tackles the concern raised by Onyebueke (2018) that the study of online football fandom in West Africa is remarkably glossed over. Furthermore, this thesis builds on postcolonial theorists' argument that academic research often prioritises the experiences of Western Europeans and North Americans, and their views of the rest of the world (Young, 2020). It proposes an investigation by a West African of an online community that matters to West Africans.

This investigation is covered and presented in this thesis that has eight chapters: (1) introduction; (2) literature review; (3) methodological design and research methods; (4) interview analysis; (5) survey analysis; (6) discourse analysis; (7) discussion; and (8) conclusion. This current introductory chapter briefly outlines the research's aims and objectives. It also specifies the research questions I intend to answer and briefly stipulates the methods to answer these questions. Furthermore, this chapter provides an overview of this thesis.

From the four significant areas of analysis that this research covers (football fandom, social media, globalisation, and cultural identity), emerge the three sections of my literature review: (1) social media and identity construction; (2) football fandom, social media and identity construction; and (3) language, postcolonial theory and identity construction. Therefore, this second chapter analyses all these aspects by presenting fundamental concepts and debates related to them and outlining the gaps in which my research aims to fit. The first section investigates how social media are involved in constructing cultural identity in general and in Africa in particular. The second section is about the influence that online football fandom has on constructing identity or identities. The third one reviews language's role in postcolonial identities' formation.

In Chapter Three (methodological design and research methods), I map out the research paradigm, strategy, methodology and techniques used for this research. I adopt a social constructionist paradigm and a qualitative methodology. Abduction is the primary research strategy, and it is associated with induction (through an interview and a discourse analysis) and deduction (through an online survey). The methods used are an interview of MUIP's founder, a followers' study (online survey), and a discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets and users' comments. This chapter also presents the paradigm's, strategy's, methodology's, and methods' weaknesses and strengths. I also give the ethical concerns raised by my research.

In Chapter Four, I present a report on the interview I had with MUIP's founder and highlight the points of connection with my research contexts. I explore MUIP founder's subject-position, the overall MUIP's concept and vision as well as the reasons of its creation. I discuss MUIP's production processes, history, and future aspirations. I also report on MUIP founder's views on the cultural identity of the account's target audience.

In Chapter Five, I present the results of the online survey I conducted on 100 MUIP's followers on Twitter. I discuss their socio-demographic characteristics as well as their link to football, MUFC, and Pidgin English. I also assess how the survey results fit into my research contexts.

In Chapter Six, I present the findings of my discursive analysis of 107 MUIP's main tweets generated between the 24th of January 2020 and the 12th of March 2020 mentioning the keyword 'Ighalo'. Odion Ighalo is a Nigerian international footballer who plays as a centre-forward. He was also the first Nigerian national ever to be part of the MUFC's team (from January 2020 to January 2021). I also discursively analyse the 505 replies or users' comments generated by these main tweets. Throughout this chapter, I highlight how the findings of this discourse analysis help answer my research questions.

In Chapter Seven, I reflect on and discuss the findings of the three analytical chapters through four main sections: (1) interpretations, (2) implications, (3) limitations, and (4) recommendations of my research project. The interpretations spell out the research's significance for readers and show how they answer my research questions. After giving my interpretations of the findings, I relate them to some of the scholarly work assessed in the literature review thereby highlighting their implications and contributions. In this discussion, I also acknowledge the research's limitations related to data gathering, my proficiency in Pidgin English, some technical matters, long term health conditions, and personal challenges. I finish this discussion chapter by making recommendations for further research.

The final chapter (Chapter Eight) is a concluding one. In this chapter, I sum up the whole thesis, thereby re-stating my research aims, objectives, and questions; the work undertaken; the changes to my research (as initially proposed and approved); and my original contribution to knowledge. This chapter also allows me to open a few debates on my research topics for further research and studies.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

My research project has two main questions: which discursive features do MUIP's tweets employ? In what ways do these features help setting up a West African online identity among MUIP's followers? As mentioned in the introductory chapter, MUIP is an unofficial MUFC's social media fan account that provides MUFC's news updates in Pidgin English – a lingua franca spoken in many West African countries.

The two research questions on the MUIP Twitter community open the way to four significant areas of analysis: (1) social media, (2) football fandom, (3) globalisation and (4) cultural identity. From these areas of analysis emerges the three sections this literature review covers: (1) social media and identity construction; (2) football fandom, social media and identity construction; (3) language, postcolonial theory, and identity construction. This literature review analyses all these three aspects by presenting fundamental concepts and debates related to them and outlining the gaps which my research aims to fill.

I begin the first part of this literature review by defining identity and presenting the evolution of this notion in modern societies, highlighting essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches of identity. I highlight the definitions given to the concept of 'social media' by scholars such as Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Fuchs (2014), Meikle (2016), and McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017). I then investigate the idea expressed by some scholars (Nyobe and Drotner, 2008; Castells, 2009; Miller, 2012; Page, 2012; Ruddock, 2013; Foncha, 2014; Fuchs, 2014; Westera, 2015; McCulloch, 2019; Timms and Heimans, 2019) that social media changed people's perception of the world by allowing them to associate and build virtual communities relying on more or less strong bonds and by empowering them. Following that discussion, I indicate that many scholars, when investigating social media in Africa, focused their enquiries on

political issues, democracy, violence, and conflict management (Daniels, 2018; Stremlau, 2018; Chitty et al., 2017; Iosifidis and Wheeler, 2016; Savelsberg, 2015; de Waal, 2015; Gordon et al., 2014; Downey et al., 2014; Mawindi Mabweazara et al., 2014). I propose to follow a different perspective – that of Barber (2018) who emphasised the cultural and creative influence that the internet and social media have on Africans – by concentrating on the MUIP Twitter community's cultural and creative values.

I begin the second part of this literature review by presenting the complex concept of 'football' and briefly highlighting its impact and global outreach. I discuss the two key approaches to football adopted by critics and scholars. On the one hand, I present that of Carlos Monsivais (see Goldblatt, 2020), Brohm (1976), and Brohm and Perelman (2006) who conceived this sport as a distraction and as an instrument fostering social regression and violence. On the other hand, I discuss the idea expressed by some scholars (Goldblatt, 2020; Turner, 2003; Carrington, 2002; Miller et al., 2001; Elias and Dunning, 1994) that football and sports represent sites of expression of human struggle as well as creative and artistic channels. I then go beyond these two perspectives by relating football to specific contexts (masculinity, globalisation, media, and fandom) thereby looking at how it has been conceived in relation to them. I explore the argument highlighted by scholars such as Goldblatt (2020), Robinson and Clegg (2019), Williams (2013), and Scraton and Flintoff (2013) that football can be a site of misogyny and gender inequalities. I discuss the idea that football practices and coverage constitute sites of universalism as well as of particularism which are materialised through *glocalisation* processes explained by theorists such as Giulianotti and Robertson (2013; 2004), Tomlinson (2013), and Boniface (2010). I highlight the crucial role played by television in establishing football as a global sport and as the most popular one in the world. I explore the opportunities given to global football teams and top footballers by social media to communicate with their audience, construct communities, build up personal brands, and stretch their impact beyond football. I

then consider football audiences or fandom by mapping out the role football fans play in the development and impact of modern football. I end this part with a discussion of the fairly limited literature addressing football fandom in West Africa.

In the last part of this chapter, I review the literature on the involvement of language in the construction of postcolonial identities, particularly in (West) Africa. I also discuss Bhabha's (1994) theory of hybridity before presenting the linguistic and cultural hybridity of Africa brought by globalisation. I end this part by presenting West African Pidgin English and highlighting its scope.

Social media and identity construction

In this part, I investigate how social media are involved in constructing identity in general and in Africa in particular. However, before getting into that, I shall first define identity and social media. Explaining those two concepts allows me to present social media's contribution to identity construction and expression. Identity is a quite complex notion, and its conceptualisation has evolved over the centuries. In 'The Question of Cultural Identity', Hall's (1992) perspective regarding the concept of identity was an anti-essentialist one. He indicated that the fully centred and integrated enlightenment subject with a stable and identical core throughout their life, as well as the sociological subject with their identity constructed through the interactions between their inner core and their socio-cultural world, were being fragmented to create the postmodern subject. Essentialism assumed that enlightenment subjects were self-sufficient and autonomous and that their identities were ex nihilo (out of nowhere) creations. While sociological subjects were not created out of nowhere but influenced by the world in which they live, it was assumed that this influence was a stable one (Hall, 1992; Barker, 2012).

Giddens (1991) investigated whether human identities are formed by individual or social forces and came up with the structuration theory. The latter argued that social structures and social interactions with skilful and knowledgeable actors influence identities. Nevertheless, Giddens

went further by acknowledging that, while the self is not free from the social order, they can be an active agent able to reproduce social structures in different ways related to the knowledge and resources available to them. Self-identity, according to Gidden, is reflexive. This approach nurtured the shift from structuralism to poststructuralism, postmodernism and the Postmodern Subject.

Barker (2012) argued that poststructuralism and postmodernism both have a common perspective on meanings and identities, that of their instability. Poststructuralism is a philosophical current developed in the 1960s and 1970s (Harrison, 2006; Kritzman et al., 2006; Merquior, 1987). A central theme of poststructuralism is instability in the humanities due to the complexity of humans themselves and the impossibility of studying phenomena or events without dissociating them from their structure. Poststructuralism is a response to structuralism. The latter was developed in Europe around the 1950s and, as Sim and Van Loon (2009) noted, saw "the world as a series of interlocking sign-systems to which human beings respond in largely predictable ways" (p.65). This conception meant that anything that was not fitting the system was either rejected as not pertinent or rearranged to compel it to fit the system. To poststructuralism, structuralism was authoritarian. Thus, poststructuralism aimed at offering liberation from structuralism's authoritarianism and oppression.

Poststructuralism is part of the postmodern theory or philosophy. As Sim and Van Loon (2009) noted, postmodernism reacts to modernity, refuting its core idea which stipulates that reason, sciences, and technologies are the only tools enabling humans to grasp the truth and allowing them to evolve. Postmodernism therefore sees reason, sciences, and technologies as possible means allowing people to reach 'a' truth, not 'the' truth. The article 'a' is used here because, according to the postmodern theory, there are various truths and the one grasped by reason, sciences, and technologies is one of many. Human experiences and social contexts are important elements of truths when it comes to postmodernism. Similarly, in 'The Postmodern

Condition', Lyotard's (1984) hypothesis was based on the idea that knowledge changes status as societies enter the age of postmodernism. Knowledge underwent significant upheavals in the twentieth century, which, for Lyotard, marked the end of the hegemonic power of modernity's metanarratives. Metanarratives were global narrative schemes aiming to explain the entirety of human history, experience, and knowledge. Lyotard noted that narrative constitutes a fundamental human construction. However, he argued that narrative becomes problematic when the adjective 'grand' or 'meta' is attached to it, suggesting supremacy of one dominant narrative on others (little ones). Postmodernism is, therefore, a mode of regulation of social practice in which everyone determines their truth. As knowledge is not certain, objective, and sound, everyone is left on their own to decide on what is true. Postmodernism presents itself both as a rejection and as an overtaking of modernity (Sim and Van Loon, 2009; Lyotard, 1984). As Hall (1992) noted, the postmodern era contributes to the fragmentation of the individual and the creation of the Postmodern Subject. Hall stressed that human identities cannot be fixed, essential, or permanent. Identities are positionings or subject-positions that evolve constantly. They are mostly about what people can become in relation to history, culture, and power, rather than about what they are (Hall, 1990). Identities are stories people tell about themselves. In fact, Hall indicated that the idea of an essential and coherent self is fictitious. It is a story we constantly tell or produce about ourselves until it looks as if it was natural. Butler (1990, 1993) held similar views. They argued that people repeatedly perform (gender) identities so that they look as if they were natural and pure whereas they are fictions that have been constructed both culturally and historically as a result of power dynamics and discursive practices (I discuss Butler's ideas in the following section). Thus, the postmodern perspective considers one's identity as being decentred, fragmented, multiple and sometimes contradictory. This fragmentation of individuals' identities is itself deeply grounded in discursive practices.

Identity construction and discursive practices

In ‘The Order of Things’, Foucault (2005) developed the idea that there are some truth conditions in all periods of history that affect what is possible and acceptable to say. Foucault defended the thesis that the conditions of discourse change gradually over time. He also focused on the role played by hegemonic power structures in generating and sustaining social systems. Foucault’s core idea in ‘The Order of Things’ revolved around knowledge, power, and order. According to him, knowledge implied a classification of meanings in different sets or categories. For Foucault, such categorisations were rooted in power systems which themselves generated exclusion and stigmatisation. He noted that this exclusion and marginalisation established an order which materialised through systemised control of vulnerable social groups. In fact, in both ‘Madness and Civilization’ (2003) and ‘Discipline and Punish’ (1975), Foucault shed light on specific practices and techniques of society through its institutions with regard to individuals. He noted the significant similarity in the modes of treatment inflicted on large groups of individuals constituting the boundaries of society: the mad, the condemned, certain groups of foreigners, soldiers, and children. He considered that what they had in common was that they were viewed with suspicion and excluded by being locked up in closed and specialised structures; built and organised on similar models (asylums, prisons, barracks, and schools).

Foucault (1978, 1985, 1986) also investigated homosexuality and the procedures by which it was gradually turned into a criminal offence, while it was unremarkable in classical Greece. He highlighted that a classification of human behaviours was established, and heterosexuality became the normative order of things. Homosexuality, he noted, constituted (and still does in some communities) the deviations which were to be excluded, subverted, and systematically controlled.

All these studies constituted an attempt by Foucault to unpack hidden and suppressed discourses in the West. Therefore, Foucault unveiled that human cultures are not based on truth

and justice but rather on legitimised power. Thus, the study of any instances of knowledge, power and order is the study of particular discourses fundamentally constructed on power relations. Foucault saw discourse as a tool that modulates not only things that can be expressed under specific socio-cultural circumstances but also who can express themselves, when and where they can do so.

Although Foucault considered the self as constructed via power, he argued that such power does not constrain them but rather generates multiple social formations, social relations and social identities. Thus, Foucault's investigations discussed above challenged the essentialist idea of a comprehensive human essence. He argued that human doings, meanings and cultures evolve and change from one period of time to another. Furthermore, his perception of humanity gave greater importance to differences rather than commonalities.

Similarly, in 'Gender Trouble', Judith Butler (1990) introduced the concept of gender performativity which conceives gender as a social performance learned, repeated, and performed. Judith Butler argued that establishing a mandatory performance of femininity and masculinity produces the fiction of natural gender identities. Therefore, they approached gender identities as being performative, hence not essential (as in natural) but continuously learned and enacted (performed). This process, Butler noted, is culturally specific.

Building on that idea, Butler (1997) later argued - with regards to their hostility to mandatory heterosexuality - that self-identity is fluid with no core or essence. They argued throughout their investigations that identities are created via discourses which are then performed repeatedly. As they put it in 'Burning Acts' (1995): "The pronouncement is the act of speech while it is the speaking of an act" (p.198). Those coreless performed identities created through human discursive practices can nonetheless be temporary and tactically fixed by less powerful groups in an attempt to counterbalance hegemonic global postmodern identities.

Identity construction: from Global postmodernism to strategic essentialism

Globalisation intensifies the compression of the world while increasing people's consciousness of it (Barker, 2012). Although this phenomenon builds on hybrid identities due to global economic and cultural flows, it also seems to construct homogeneous global identities aiming at eschewing national and ethnic identities. As Jameson (1991) indicated, postmodernism aids the tenet of global capitalism. Jameson saw postmodernism as an effect of late capitalism, which dramatically developed new information and communication technologies, creating a novel postmodern society. The latter raised the issue of similarities and differences with regards to global culture. Building on that idea, Seabrook (2004) argued that globalisation favours the emergence of a kind of shared culture that not only endangers cultural diversity but also contributes to the expansion of cultural imperialism. The latter supposedly establishes the socio-cultural hegemony of the Western world (especially the American world).

Similarly, in 'The McDonaldization of Society', George Ritzer (1993) used the word 'McDonaldization' to designate the replacement of traditional restaurants by McDonald's fast-food restaurants across the globe. According to Ritzer, this process raises a couple of issues. First of all, the global expansion of such a lifestyle has been associated with increased health-related problems such as juvenile obesity, heart conditions, diabetes, and cancer. Secondly, Ritzer claimed that when McDonald's moves to a new country, consumer habits are standardised, and local cultures are Americanised.

Dorfman and Mattelart (1975) were part of the scholars who adopted this cultural imperialism thesis as an analytical framework in the 1970s. They claimed that American Disney Comics could transmit images of the industrialised world to underdeveloped countries. It seemed to Dorfman and Mattelart that these media texts were passively consumed by people in pre-industrialised countries, leading to an Americanisation/Westernisation of their identities. It was this last idea that led to cultural imperialism being subsequently rejected. In fact, Tomlinson

(1991) explained that globalisation does not wipe out pre-existing cultural practices in those under-developed countries. Besides, as he noted, people in those parts of the world can actively decode cultural or media texts from the West without being constrained by potentially encoded (cultural imperialist) meanings. Therefore, globalisation is seen by some scholars not as a new form of imperialism but as a tool enabling cultural adaptation and change across the globe (Tomlinson, 1991; Thussu, 2006; Shim, 2006). However, Morley (2005) highlighted that while such cultural changes and adaptations occur, they are far from being equally distributed across the said globe. As he noted, people in underdeveloped countries can decode western cultural or media texts as they wish but their capacity to generate global cultural agenda can appear to be quite limited. Young (2020) also indicated that academic research often prioritises the experiences of Western European and North American communities and their views of the world.

With regards to that, Hall (1992) argued that strategic essentialism is the right tactic to counter such an unequal share of cultural power. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak used the concept of strategic essentialism to indicate that while people's identities are coreless, these people refer to such essences in everyday life and social struggles, so much so that they seem difficult to eradicate (Spivak and Harasym, 1990). According to Spivak and Hall, the temporary fixation of an essence known to be artificial can, in some cases, be strategically valuable.

Similarly, Miller (2000) argued that nations must preserve their respective national identities to counter globalisation. He claimed that national identities are guarantors of social justice, which is national in the first place. Miller described social justice as the distribution of positive and negative outcomes created by social cooperation between community members. According to him, it is thus necessary to be able to distribute wisely not only wealth, professions, access to education or health care, honours and prices, leisure activities and housing, but also problems and issues. Therefore, Miller favoured liberal and moderate nationalism and saw the Nation-

State as an adequate instrument that would enable social solidarity. He argued that British people must have a greater sense of duty to their compatriots than to other (trans) national identities. By expressing such an idea, Miller assumed that all Nations-States were equal and had the same political, economic, and, most importantly, socio-cultural influence. He also assumed that a clear-cut Nation-State model was suitable for every part of the world. Young (2020) opposed the assumption expressed in the previous sentence and indicated that a transnational model would probably have been a more suitable model for former colonies during and after their independence.

The political, economic, and socio-cultural inequalities between Nations-States across the globe have been a recurrent theme in postcolonial theory. The latter not only constitutes an investigation of colonialism – as a historical process during which the Western world tried to root out the social organisation and systems of the rest of the world – but also an analysis of the type of marks the colonialism mentioned above has left after its official abolition (Gandhi, 1998). This theory raises the debate between "the competing claims of nationalism and internationalism" (Gandhi, 1998, p.ix). That clash constitutes the primary issue around the extent to which globalisation (internationalisation) can constitute another imperialism/colonialism (a cultural one). I present Postcolonial Theory in more detail in the third central part of this chapter (Language, Postcolonial theory and Identity construction).

The intensification of interconnectedness is achieved using digital technologies and media such as social media, resulting in new individual and social identity construction patterns. Sherry Turkle (1995) initiated the debate about identity constructions in digital contexts. She claimed that the use of computers changed throughout the years. Turkle argued then that computers were fundamental parts of our personal and social lives. They presumably were new means of socialisation as they could enable one person to relate to millions of people worldwide. Twenty-four years after Turkle's pioneering work, Timms and Heimans (2019) went further. They

argued that digital technologies create new forms of empowerment due to increase access to knowledge and information – what they referred to as 'new power'. This argument suggests that digital/social media's role in constructing identities is linked to the concepts of power and knowledge presented above, among other ideas. In the next section (Social media role in identity construction), I detail how social media have been conceptualised and how they are involved in constructing identities. In that section, I highlight key definitions of the concept (social media) and discuss how it has been debated and conceived across the globe and in (West) Africa.

Social media role in identity construction

Many scholars defined and analysed social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Fuchs, 2014; Meikle, 2016). Fuchs (2014) saw the concept as an umbrella notion to designate "blogs, microblogs like Twitter, social networking sites, or video/image/file sharing platforms or wikis" (p.32). Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) said they represent "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p.61).

These definitions are limited and do not seem precise enough given the complexity of this concept. Meikle (2016) gave one of the most accurate and synthetic explanation of this concept: "networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication" (p.6). Meikle argued that technologies do not determine how people organise themselves personally and socially, rather they embody and express ideas about how people should do it: via networks. "Database" and "platform" refer to business models and ways in which companies exploit networked digital media. When using social media, Meikle noted, people create and nourish databases of valuable commercial resources. According to Meikle, "public" and "personal" highlight the cultural shift they enabled. In fact, social media enable individuals to make their own personal communications and meanings public. They blur the line between the

public and the personal thereby enabling people to occupy media's public space with their personal meanings and lives, which they hardly could with traditional media. With social media, individuals find themselves in a dual space where they can share personal information, opinion, and stories to a wider audience that stretches beyond the borders of their local, regional, national, and continental community (-ies). The audience they reach is far bigger than the one that traditional media would have enabled them to reach (when they were allowed to produce their personal voices on those) – a local, regional, national, or continental audience.

McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017) also defined social media as web-based services which provide people, groups, and enterprises with the opportunities to cooperate, link up, exchange, and establish communities in which they can construct, co-construct, refashion, distribute, and engage with user-generated content that can effortlessly be accessed. Therefore, social media constitute important elements of our socio-economic and cultural lives. They not only give new marketing and business opportunities to companies, but also allow individuals to associate and create various virtual communities with more or less strong bonds. This definition appears to link social media with identity. Many researchers investigated that link (Nyboe and Drotner, 2008; Castells, 2009; Miller, 2012; Page, 2012; Ruddock, 2013; Fuchs, 2014; Foncha, 2014; Westera, 2015), arguing that social media changed people's perception of the world in one way or another. Fuchs (2014) presented two prominent social media roles in shaping people's experiences, behaviours, attitudes and actions. He saw social media as participatory culture and as a powerful communication tool. Fuchs noted that this participatory culture highlights "the involvement of users, audiences, consumers and fans in creating culture and content" (p.52). These new media are therefore seen as making culture and society more democratic. They enable people to stop their passive consumption of media texts – consumption brought to them by newspapers, radio, and television – and enhance their production and use of texts as they become "pro-sumers" (Westera, 2015, p.80). In a book entitled '#newpower', Timms and

Heimans (2019) presented this shift from old power structures to new power structures enabled by the digital revolution. Describing the former, Timms and Heimans indicated that it is like a currency which only a few have access to, and those ones are not willing to share it. This old power is an elitist one where those who own it want to hold on to their privileges. It is not very open to ordinary people's participation and belongs to 'professionals' who believe for example that 'amateurs' have no unauthorised place in (traditional) media. Describing '#newpower', Timms and Heimans noted that it is like a limitless current that flows and is shared by as many people as possible. It is centred on people's ability to share any power they might have and to collaborate. Amateurs can do whatever they feel like doing and find themselves shaping and producing (social) media content. Participation is a fundamental feature of new power settings, and the said power is radically transparent in the ways in which it is collectively handled. Timms and Heimans argued that the current world's hyper-connectedness enhances ideas and movements spreading and flourishment. The change from old to new power enables more people to participate. It has been argued that this change in the nature of power is now moulding who governs communities, how people function, and how they think and feel (Timms and Heimans, 2019; Fuchs, 2014). In fact, Castells (2009) conceived social media as mass self-communication where communication power and counter-power are deployed. "Mass" suggests that it can reach global scales and audiences. "Self-communication" indicates that content production is self-generated, receivers are self-directed, and the consumption self-selected. Mass self-communication enabled by social media allows people to share their personal ideas publicly which can potentially generate alternative political, socio-economic and cultural power structures.

Ruddock (2013) also investigated the question of how social media are changing the world. He argued that digital technologies in general and social media in particular are tools that "keep the beat by constituting communities around common goals and interests" (p.50). Similarly,

Miller (2012) argued that people constantly want to form or be part of communities. These communities continuously change and evolve due to various factors like the Internet, for example. Miller noted that the Internet constitutes "another tool to be sociable" (p.196) by creating networks. These networks are free of any geographical boundary, based on choice, serving a purpose and open-ended. As Foncha (2014) argued, social networking sites are an open window to the world. They enable people to communicate with their friends, people they lost touch with, and many other categories of people. Those acquaintances, friends, and family members can often be in many parts of the world. Thus, social networking sites allow their users to knock geographical distances down by establishing this common virtual space where their various social intercourses can be maintained, and new ones can be established. Miller added that being part of a specific network is a matter of merit. People who want to join a network have to be relevant and useful to the said network. Furthermore, they must make sure to support network connections by maintaining frequent contacts with others in the network. Therefore, social media are important tools enabling the establishment of virtual networks but those should not just be established, they must be maintained and constantly nurtured. Social networking sites provide their users with means allowing them to maintain and nurture these connections.

Networks are created and maintained using language in general and storytelling. As Page (2012) highlighted, human beings have always constructed their identities through discourse and storytelling, whether in online or offline settings. When online, they use forums, blogs, and social network sites to tell their stories and interact with others and the world they live in. Page added that stories constitute essential tools in understanding human lives and that social media's development gave individuals the opportunity to log their daily lives' stories onto public and semi-public online spaces with a wide reach never seen before. People use the virtual space created by social media to tell the various stories of their daily lives and activities which

then, as highlighted before, get to be seen by a worldwide audience. Westera (2015) even argued that human expression is exceptional in the realm of living creatures. Human beings can express what they think, feel, and intend to do accurately using a wide range of written, spoken, and non-verbal communicative tools. Furthermore, as noted by Westera, all achievements in humans' lives have been the consequence of their ability to express themselves. Therefore, language constitutes the key aspect to consider when it comes to any kind of communications (whether offline or online). Language, discourse, and storytelling have always provided us with the ability to describe our environments and to produce meanings in evolving ways.

In her book entitled 'Because Internet', McCulloch (2019) presented an analysis of what can be understood about the English language from the Internet and of how the English language changed (because of the Internet). She came up with a new metaphor of 'language like the Internet' arguing that language is a participatory project and a network just like internet-based projects and networks such as Wikipedia and Firefox. According to her, they (Wikipedia, Firefox, and language) are all democratic and open-source participatory initiatives. McCulloch's metaphor highlighted that both the internet and language constantly evolve. Language and the internet also constitute constant sites of (re) negotiation where meanings and practices are never permanent and always open to public reworkings.

Nyboe and Drotner (2008) presented the main theoretical discourses regarding digital storytelling: the cultural identity discourse and the creativity discourse. The former focuses on its capacity to build and display socio-cultural networked identity. The creativity discourse foregrounds the creative process within arts, sciences, popular culture, and individual abilities. However, while recognising and citing the various aspects of social media content creation, Nyboe and Drotner, like many scholars, prioritised the capacity that social media have in people's engagement in democracy and citizenship. The focus is usually also on how social

media allow and encourage people to be heard on digital platforms. Therefore, many scholarships have failed to concentrate on aspects other than social media's economic and political aspects, whether in the Western World or Africa. Furthermore, considering the African continent economic and infrastructural poverty and as Sloan and Anabel (2017) explained, there are communities that are not included in the social media debate.

As highlighted in Appendix 1 (see table 9), the internet penetration rates in West Africa range from 22% (in Liberia) to 53% (in Ghana); and social media users' rates in the region range from 8.6% of the population – in Equatorial Guinea – to 27.4% of the population – in Ghana (Kemp, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e, 2022f). In an article titled 'Why is Africa a "have-not" in the digital divide' (2015), the African Language Solutions blog explained that many Africans usually cannot afford PCs or smart devices. Even when they manage to build on savings to buy such devices, they must be able to afford internet and data plans on a regular basis. Those living in rural areas usually do not have phone lines which often means that they cannot access internet. Even those living in African cities with access to internet experience regular power shortages which limit their use of internet. The article also highlighted that although contemporary young Africans are IT literate, many of those who came before them did not have ICT modules/classes as part of their education. The African Language Solutions blog also pointed that ICTs mostly use non-African languages which can prevent many Africans from using and adopting them. Furthermore, in countries like Ethiopia, people's use of the internet is heavily monitored which can discourage their use of it (Stremlau, 2018). I shall now discuss social media role in identity construction in Africa.

Social media role in identity construction in Africa

Many scholars, when investigating the matter of social media in Africa, concentrated their studies on political issues, democracy, violence and conflict management (Daniels, 2018; Stremlau, 2018; Chitty et al., 2017; Iosifidis and Wheeler, 2016; Savelsberg, 2015; de Waal,

2015; Gordon et al., 2014; Downey et al., 2014; Mawindi Mabweazara et al., 2014). One common trend abundantly analysed regarding social media influence in Africa is the 2011 Arab Spring and how such media played an essential role in this revolution. Rizk (2014) argued that social media allowed people to voice what was really happening in the Arab world and that was not necessarily being reported on news channels. Social media gave a voice to the voiceless within the Arab world. As Iosifidis and Wheeler (2016) indicated, the internet, through social media, provided an environment to people from the Arab world, enabling them to "exchange ideas, bypass authority, challenge autocracies and effect greater means of expression against state power" (p.123). Social media allowed people to access a broader range of means of expression and diminished Arab States and governmental institutions control over mediated communication. As a result, Iosifidis and Wheeler noted that the former Tunisian president's (Ben Ali) and the former Egyptian president's (Mubarak) political regimes collapsed.

Therefore, it is not surprising that some African countries like Ethiopia monitor their citizens' use of such media. It seems like Ethiopia wants to avoid what occurred in Tunisia and Egypt. Stremlau (2018) investigated this country's situation and highlighted that online surveillance in Ethiopia is very important and thorough. The country's telecommunication is fully managed by the State. The latter can therefore track and oversee Ethiopians' online lives both within the country and in the diaspora, and sometimes have people arrested.

When investigating the use and role of the internet in countries of the West-African sub-region, many scholars also tend to focus their attention on online journalism. The latter is an outcome of ICT development, facilitated by the deregulation of the media industry in the 1990s (Yusha'u, 2014). This deregulation enabled private organisations and individuals to engage themselves in online journalism, leaving behind government media struggling to develop skills in online journalism. Therefore, many governments across the sub-region are undermining online means of information, criticising their content. Yosha'u also argued that "Africans in

the diaspora play a key role in developing online journalism despite the absence of professional journalism training" (p.219). Nevertheless, as Yosha'u put it, online journalism is still an elitist practice. Relatively educated members of society access it, but it also requires access to regular electricity and internet connection.

Barber (2018) was one of the few scholars who emphasised the cultural and creative influence that the Internet and social media have on Africans. She argued that social media participates in creating new forms of African popular culture, revealing everyday creativity across Africa. She explained that (social) media nourish everyday lives by fostering new ways of telling everyday stories and jokes. Conversely, she noted that (social) media content emerge from "street talk, stories, jokes and adaptations of oral traditions" (p.132).

Building on Barber's emphasis on the cultural and creative values of social media in African settings, my research proposes to focus on a specific social media account (MUIP) thereby looking at how it reveals the online creativity of Nigerian and West African fans of MUFC and sets up Nigerian and West African online forms of meanings. MUIP was created on the 6th of August 2015 in Nigeria. Its first declination was a Twitter account, but now MUIP has invaded Facebook, Instagram and the blogosphere, providing readers and adherents with Manchester United news and commentaries in Pidgin English. MUIP has more than 100,000 followers on Twitter (in July 2022). This research investigates how discursive features West Africans use when engaging in leisure occupations, such as football and football discussions, penetrate social networking sites through social media handles like MUIP, uniting them and producing a West African online identity. Using Butler's concepts of performativity and discourse, I critically examine which identities are performed via MUIP discourse and how this discourse is turning into an online societal norm among West Africans, thereby creating and repeatedly performing a West African online identity.

My approach to identity and social media is an anti-essentialist one. I present the West African reality created, institutionalised and subsequently transformed into traditions by MUIP's authors and audiences. My work is inspired by Hall's (1992) thoughts regarding the question of cultural identity. In fact, my aim through this research is not to suggest that West African followers of MUIP on Twitter are born with the West African online identities they produce and perform via that Twitter community, but rather to explore how their West African online identities are formed and transformed within and in relation to West African systems of cultural representations or meanings production – which I unpack. I investigate how relationships of differences between West African nations are renegotiated and translated into West African transcultural identities in cyberspace when people from these nations use MUIP's platform.

My work is also grounded in Spivak's (1990) and Hall's (1992) concept of strategic essentialism, looking at how MUIP constitutes a platform where transnational essentialist identities seem to be strategically at play. This is because there are no equal-to-equal relationships between western cultures and (West) African ones. Therefore, my research looks at how the kind of transnational identity build by MUIP can constitute a fine counterpoint to socio-cultural inequalities between the developed and the developing worlds engendered by globalisation. Those socio-cultural inequalities between the developed and the developing worlds are a major concern of postcolonial theory. As Barker (2012) explained, postcolonial theorists assess "postcolonial discourses and their subject positions in relation to the themes of race, nation, subjectivity, power, subalterns, hybridity and creolization" (p.284). See section on language, postcolonial theory, and identity construction for a detailed discussion of that theory.

Building on Fuchs's (2014) roles of social media, I demonstrate how the participatory culture enabled by MUIP via the involvement of its audience in the creation of content is shaping and exposing a West African online identity. I also analyse MUIP's communication power. This

analysis enables me to describe the cultural foundations on which this social media account is built.

Football Fandom, social media, and identity construction

My research project's second central sub-area of interest deals with football fandom, social media, and identity construction. In other words, this part is about the influence that online football fandom has on the construction of identity/identities. Before discussing that influence, I first present the complex concept of 'football' and briefly highlight its impact and global outreach.

Defining Football

Weil et al. (2021) presented football (or association football) as a team sport played with a spherical ball between two teams of eleven players each. The teams oppose each other on a rectangular field equipped with a goal at each end. Each side's aim is to put the ball in the opposing goal more times than the other without using their arms or their hands. This sport's origins contest across many scholarly works (Russell, 2013). One body of works considers football to have developed within English public school's playgrounds while another locates its origin within Britain's industrial working class. Regardless of each position, Weil et al. highlighted that modern football was codified in Britain during the second half of the 19th century by the Football Association or FA (created in 1863). However, the FA had initially codified an amateur game and was not, at the time, open to the idea of the professionalisation of football. According to Weil et al., the Football Association, which was created in the South of England, was opposed to Northern England, which was in favour of football's professionalisation. Southern England was dominated by a spirit of sports' clubs reserved for a social elite while the industrial North saw football as a sport that should be run by big bosses who would not hesitate to pay their players to strengthen their teams (Tischler, 1981). The first five editions of the League – which is Premier League's foundational basis – from 1888 to

1893 were limited to Northern English teams. Arsenal would become professional in 1891 and join the league in 1893 (Soar and Tyler, 2000). Other teams across England gradually joined and by the year 1920, the league had three divisions; this would be extended to a fourth one 38 years later (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022). At this stage, the League would operate as a "four-up, four-down promotion and relegation system" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022) across divisions. That model was followed by other football leagues on the European continent (Weil et al, 2021).

While the League still exists and has 72 teams engaged in it, it is not the same league that once included all the English professional football clubs. In 1992, the League's first division teams broke away from it and created the English Premier League (Robinson and Clegg, 2019). The latter still has ties with the League. In fact, they both agreed to the promotion of the League's top three teams onto Premier League and to the relegation of the Premier League's bottom three teams onto the League (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica , 2020). The break came because the League's top division clubs wanted to increase their income and have a better access to revenues from television coverage (Robinson and Clegg, 2019).

Thus, the development of the English Premier League is closely linked to the establishment of football as a powerful money-making sport. Stadiums' safety and comfort were upgraded, lucrative television coverage contracts and deals with sponsors were signed which gradually transformed football into a series of entertaining mega-events, a world spectacle (Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Berlin, 2013). Premier League is now considered the richest sport business across the globe and football is seen as the most popular sport (Weil et al., 2021; Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Berlin, 2013). Goldblatt took the examples of the 2014 Football World Cup's final watched by 1 billion individuals throughout the world, and that of the entire competition watched by 3.2 billion people. He added that more than 3 billion posts were released by 350 million individuals during the whole of the 2014 Football World Cup. All these

people were potential marketing and advertising targets of multibillionaires' markets such as the sportwear's market, the video games' market, and the sport betting's market, to name a few. This shows the global outreach football has.

Football has taken on such importance that it has not only become part of the national culture in many countries but has established a universal culture (Tomlinson, 2013). Football has established a cosmopolitan culture and a common language while establishing cultural barriers at the same time. Almost all African, South American, and European nations have football as their most popular sport (Goldblatt, 2020). The best football players are popular icons throughout continents and there is an estimated 250 million people practising football across the world (Weil et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the football culture and impact on societies have been a site of tensions and have fostered different perspectives or approaches to the sport. I shall now discuss these.

Football's approaches and concerns

Approaches to football are similar to that of sports highlighted by Carrington and Andrews (2013): an anti-sport approach and a pro-sport one. On one hand, many critics and essayists conceived football as a distraction and as a regressive social force. Goldblatt (2020) presented the Mexican essayist Carlos Monsivais as one of the anti-football ambassadors. According to Goldblatt, Monsivais saw football as Mexicans' favourite distraction that would take them away from the things that should have mattered most to them. Montavais was referring to the social, political, and economic challenges of his country. He argued that football would often provoke violence, hysterical and toxic behaviours among its supporters. His thoughts were probably rooted in hooliganism sometimes observed in football culture. The passion existing around football clubs has sometimes led to problems and violence known as hooliganism. The latter was very popular in English football in the 1970s and the 1980s and can still be observed

in Central Europe and South America (Goldblatt, 2020). The consequences of hooliganism include anti-social behaviours that range from bare-knuckle fights in the street to murders.

Similarly, Brohm (1976) argued that sport, football particularly, is based on three main axes: political, economic and ideological. According to Brohm, sports and football are not just sports and football; they are means of government and means of pressure *vis-à-vis* the public opinion. Also, they constitute a way to ideologically frame populations, especially young people. And this, Brohm argued, can be observed in all countries of the world, whether totalitarian or democratic. He noted that they have turned into a key industry at the service of global economies. They are a political body, a place of ideological investment in gestures, movements. Football and sports are ideological valorisations of efforts through asceticism, training, renunciation, as athletes represent ideological models.

Moreover, Brohm argued that they consecrate a physical order based on the management of sexual impulses and aggressive impulses. Furthermore, they are considered social appeasers and social integrators, reducing violence and allowing fraternity. According to Brohm, all these characteristics are an incredible assortment of illusions and mystifications. Therefore, he explained that the sporting spectacle appears as an uninterrupted propaganda for brutality, brutishness, vulgarity, intellectual regression, and crowds' infantilization. This idea was also articulated by Brohm and Perelman (2006) who argued that the football spectacle is an emotional plague serving as a policy of instinctual supervision of crowds. According to them, this spectacle is a means of social control allowing the absorption of the individual into the anonymous mass. From this perspective, football is seen as fostering identity hatreds, xenophobic nationalism, poverty, unemployment, exclusion, precariousness, and the cultural alienation of people.

Unlike those opposed to football that see it as a childish escape from real life, those in favour of it instead see it as a means of expression of human struggle and a creative and artistic channel. Many social theorists claimed that pop culture should be conceived as a site of struggle worth investigating (Miller et al., 2001; Carrington, 2002; Turner, 2003). Sports in general, and football particularly, as elements of pop culture are also sites where power, ideology, politics, agency, resistance, constraints, and domination play (Hargreaves, 1982; Whannel, 1983; Hargreaves, 1986; Jones, 1989; Miller and McHoul, 1998). Sporting cultures form a vast social field crossed by lines of tension that proceed from a logic of symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1978). Goldblatt (2020) argued that football is indeed a distraction, but that social, political, and economic matters are not absent from it. Football is part of our current social lives and is very intersectional. It has political, financial, and socio-cultural implications. Football is an arena where lines of class, racial, gender, and sexuality tensions and struggles intersect and play. Thus, as Goldblatt argued, even if football is a distraction, it does not take people away from such matters. Even if/when it does, it should not be alarming as distractions and leisure are parts of people's lives. Goldblatt even noted that "there is actually no greater or more transparent public theatre for exposing these forces at work" (p.3) than football. The latter has often served, and still does, as a subversive site rather than a site of alienation. Goldblatt also indicated that football is a game from which people derive joy and pleasure without necessarily thinking about the power dynamics attached to it and highlighted by Brohm and Perelman (2006). Football enhances imagination and creates a space where a new world can be conceived and expressed.

According to those in favour of sports in general and of football particularly, the craziness and violence observed in games are only the manifestation of the ongoing tensions in each society or community (Goldblatt, 2020; Knell, 2012; Amar, 2012). In the 1970s and 1980s, hooliganism was thought to reflect a purely English phenomenon, but it never was (Dunning

and Elias, 1988). The phenomenon has been associated with football since this sport became professional. The English people were only the pioneers in exporting hooliganism. Dunning and Elias also demonstrated that hooliganism was not exclusively linked to football. Hooliganism always only expressed the lines of fracture of society: in Italy, North-South rivalry; in Ireland or Scotland, religious sectarianism; and in France, the city against the suburbs.

Elias and Dunning (1994) conceived sport as a privileged laboratory for reflecting on social relationships and their evolution. Putting sport in the theory of civilisation showed that modern sport has little to do with fierce clashes and rituals of antiquity or the medieval era. They argued that the equality of chances between players is supposed to cancel their social differences. In addition, the behavioural code and sensitivity have changed, imposing a reduction of the authorised violence. The pleasure of practice, the sporting spectacle, and the excitement provided by bodily clashes are only a sham that hardly put lives at risk. These features, they claimed, allow each individual to release control of their emotions. They also emphasised that in a football match, it is not just the team's victory that gives pleasure but also the competition itself.

While belonging to the pro-sport movement, Ingham and Donnelly (1997) nonetheless acknowledged that football and sports are masculinist and phallocentric as they are metaphorically perceived as penetrative sex. Typically, football teams try exploiting their opponents' weaknesses and penetrating their opponents' goals. Football works as a game where players must penetrate their opponents' goal while at the same time prevent them from penetrating their own goal.

They argued that gender inequalities and apparent misogyny in football and sports reproduce the sexual/gender relations observed in everyday life. Furthermore, they claimed that neither

social constructionism nor sociology could adequately address such inequalities. As they put it, “poststructuralism and postmodernism may help us find the signs, but they will not help us find the predictions nor produce an optimism of the will” (p.393). They argued in favour of a dialogue on bodies and physical characteristics before addressing equality/difference.

Goldblatt (2020) nevertheless argued that beyond these perspectives, what matters is to conceive football as an important practice that can be critically examined in relation to wider socio-cultural contexts or topics. Therefore, it is crucial to relate football to specific social contexts, structures, or concerns to critically analyse it. Numerous contexts or themes can be associated with football, but for the purpose of this research, I mainly focus on four of them: gender (masculinity), globalisation, media, and fandom.

Masculinity and Football

Masculinity refers to the sets of characteristics (attributes and behaviours) that are associated with boys and men (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2020). Masculinities’ studies scholars tend to use this word in its plural – masculinities – to highlight that models of masculinities are culturally specific and vary over time (Connell, 1995). As Marini (1990) indicated, it is perhaps worth mentioning that masculinities are not to be confused with male biological sex.

Masculinities’ studies and theories

Masculinities studies assess the correlations between masculinity and other social struggles and concepts, such as the social construction of the difference between the sexes (Flood et al., 2007). As mentioned earlier, masculinity varies historically and culturally. Reeser (2011) took the example of the Dandy (extremely elegant and refined man), who was considered an ideal of masculinity back in the nineteenth century but is now deemed unmasculine by contemporary standards. Therefore, this section covers the different ways of understanding masculinities and how they have been historically and culturally constructed.

Along with the American feminist movements of the 1970s, men's movements in favour of feminist demands came into view (Brod and Kaufman, 1994). These pro-feminist groups of men sprang up across the USA, and one of the most famous ones was the National Organisation for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS). Such movements gave birth to a new field of activist assessment in American universities known as men studies. The latter's central claim is that masculinities result from social learning (Connell, 1995; Kimmel and Messner, 1992), based on gender performativity (Butler, 2006).

Connell (1995) developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity and explained that in the collective imagination, masculinity is uniform and fixed. Yet, according to her, this belief is a mere illusion. Masculinities are not fixed and do not exist before our social actions, but they start existing as we act. Hegemonic masculinity constitutes the model of masculinity perceived, at a given moment in history and in a specific context, as the supreme archetype of masculinity. Such a concept makes it possible to consider the relations between men and the hierarchies between masculinities. Connell stressed that individuals belonging to subordinate or marginal or accomplice masculinities contribute to reinforcing the dominant position of the hegemonic masculinity model.

However, Demetriou's (2001) critical analysis of hegemonic masculinity specified that such masculinity is a hybrid one that involves borrowing from subordinate, marginal and accomplice masculinities. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990) emphasised that masculinity and femininity cannot be thought of separately. In fact, according to him, it is primarily in opposition to the feminine that the masculine is constructed and expressed. Body discipline and socialisation are at the centre of virilisation/feminisation processes (Bourdieu, 1990; Butler, 1993). Bourdieu indicated that it is through these processes that the phenomena of domination obtain an apparent biological legitimacy. However, it is worth mentioning that the thought that traditionally opposes the feminine to the masculine is criticised by the movement favouring

trans-identities and queer theories, which claim the fluidity of identities and self-definition (Butler, 2006; Halberstam, 1998).

Misogyny and homophobia are often used to adhere to the hegemonic masculinity model (Kimmel, 2004; Wilz, 2016). Homophobia is contempt, rejection, or hatred towards homosexual people, homosexual practices/representations or alleged ones (Welzer-Lang, 1994). Homophobia, therefore, encompasses prejudice and discrimination against people who are or are perceived as lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Homophobia can manifest in fear, hatred, aversion, harassment, violence or even intolerant intellectual disapproval of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Misogyny refers to a feeling of contempt or hostility by men towards women. Misogyny and homophobia are said to serve as means enabling virilisation/feminisation processes to take place; thereby putting back into the proper order gender roles through the punishment and the prevention of deviant gender behaviours, and reinforcing borders between masculine and feminine characteristics (Bourdieu, 1990; Welzer-Lang, 1994). Another way often used to adhere to the hegemonic masculinity model is to adopt masculinist behaviours (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012). Masculinism constitutes "an attempt to protect masculine traits and qualities against the assault of militant feminism" (Ologies and -Isms, 2008). It, therefore, designates a movement concerned with the male condition and a movement for the defence of men's rights and their socio-political roles. Dupuis-Déri (2012) saw masculinism as a myth and a reactionary discourse emanating from a supposed masculinity crisis. The latter constitutes a supposed set of doubts and questionings that western men have had to undergo for several decades, in particular since, as they believe, the frequently contested sexual liberation and the liberation of women that seem to have occurred through the generalisation of contraceptive methods and the legalisation of abortion in some countries (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Castells, 2009). According to Michel Bozon (2002), the word 'liberation' applied strictly to women as they mainly engaged in unprotected sex in the 1960s (and so were men, but they

would not bear children), then discovered a liberation from fear or uncertainty with access to contraceptive pill a decade later. Similarly, Vigarello (2013) argued that this crisis is more of a discursive construction than an objective crisis as its historical construction date back to antiquity.

These alleged social movements (sexual liberation and liberation of women) supposedly led to a redefinition of the social role of males at the origin of an evolution of the norms attached to virility and fatherhood (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Castells, 2009). Masculinism and its so-called masculinity crisis, through toxic masculinity, is associated with negative impacts on both these male individuals and their communities (Haider, 2016). Blais and Dupuis-Déri (2012) highlighted that masculinists believe men are in crisis because of the alleged feminisation of society. Masculinists claim that feminism has gone too far and that men are now under the control of feminists and women in general. They want to find a way out of this alleged and, quite honestly, ridiculous crisis and sometimes use toxic means to achieve that.

Having presented a general picture of how masculinities have been theorised and studied, I now critically examine masculinities in relation to my research specific area of investigation: football. In evaluating the link between football and masculinities, I consider not only football but also athletes and sports' fans.

Masculinities' studies and football

Goldblatt (2020) highlighted that football can be a potent symbol of gender inequalities and misogyny. He noted that the game is overwhelmingly dominated by men, with women's football being underrepresented in media coverage of the sport and female footballers' bodies being overly sexualised. With regards to the sexualisation of female footballers, Williams (2013) took the example of the former FIFA president (Sepp Blatter) who claimed that female football players must make an effort to look more feminine, arguing that it would bring more lucrative opportunities to them. There is also an insufficient number of female football coaches

and executives (Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Williams, 2013; Scraton and Flintoff, 2013). As Ingham and Donnelly (1997) noted, those inequalities reproduce sexual and gender relations observed in everyday life. Therefore, when positioned within football settings, I would argue that the human body often reproduces most, if not all, modern hierarchies. Those hierarchies include gender hierarchies and patriarchalism.

Football seems to enable male individuals to perform their (orthodox/hegemonic) masculinity (Goldblatt, 2020). Football practices is often perceived as a men's temple and the physicality involved is seen as tangible proof of the superiority of men over women (Goldblatt, 2020; Williams, 2013). Williams (2013) reported that football is usually seen as "the game as played by men and boys" (p.181) while female football is something different and somehow unnatural. Even female supporters of male football teams are sometimes excluded and stigmatised at stadiums. Goldblatt (2020) highlighted that these female fans are usually asked if they should not be at home or if they know rules such as the offside rule – stereotyping them by implying that women have no clue when it comes to football.

However, I shall discuss the ways in which (orthodox/hegemonic) masculinity is predominantly contextual and performed. As Montez de Orca (2013) put it: "the images, meanings, and the performances of gender are thus in flux along with society, which have profound consequences for the production of gendered identities" (p.157). Orthodox/hegemonic masculinities are therefore evolving and perhaps shifting.

In an article entitled 'Gay Male Athletes and Shifting Masculine Identities', Anderson (2013) highlighted that there has been a decrease of homophobia and homo-hysteria in sports. Sports are now perceived as more inclusive of both gays and 'unorthodox' straight men. Many football clubs are currently challenging homophobia across Europe and even South Africa now has its first openly gay footballer (Goldblatt, 2020). His name is Phuti Lekoloane and he was playing

in the South African second-division as a goalkeeper when he came out in 2016. While these changes are perhaps true of football's teams and players (at least in the Western world), it may not also be the case for football fans and the language they use or, to put it simply, the way they express themselves when consuming football, especially in Africa.

It has been argued that football fandom is intertwined with orthodox masculinity (Collinson, 2009; Ncube and Chawana, 2018). One example is the use of songs by football fans, which lyrics are described as misogynistic and homophobic. Even if this may be fans claiming to have fun and not truly meaning what they say or rather sing, it suggests that although football's institutions, teams and players may supposedly be more inclusive of other masculinities and femininities, everyday football language (used by football fans) portrays a quite different picture.

Through my research on MUIP, I investigate whether and how the discourse used by MUIP and its followers contribute to such an under-representation of female individuals among this online fandom platform. I should highlight that a decrease of misogyny and homophobia in football may be evident in western societies, but this is not the case in West Africa. Homosexuality is still 'unlawful' in most West African countries. Therefore, even if I want to explore homosexuality/homophobia in West African football fandom settings, I cannot. Such exploration is too sensitive, and people are unlikely to be honest about those matters in West African football fandom contexts. However, I still investigate if and how misogyny is discursively constructed through and by MUIP.

Globalisation and Football

Delaney and Madigan (2015) presented globalisation as "the process of linking nations together" (p.297). Steger (2020) noted that it is "a spatial concept signifying a matrix of social processes that are transforming our present social condition of conventional nationality into

one of globality" (p.2). Similarly, Robertson (1992) described this concept as "the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole" (p.8). Axford (2013) explained this concept in a book titled 'Theories of globalization'. He presented globalisation as being a complex and multi-dimensional process, a social process, and a technical change. It is a complex and multi-dimensional process because it involves an interconnection between society, cultures, institutions and the web. It is a social process as it consists of the compression of space and time both in reality and symbolically.

The technical change brought by globalisation is linked to communications. They must be appropriate for the current world economy, considering digitalisation and computerisation. Regarding this third process, McLuhan (1962) studied the cultural transformations brought about by media evolution – from printing to radio and television. He foresaw the upheavals that the latter would bring and anticipated the impact of miniaturised portable computers. In 'Understanding Media', McLuhan (1964) argued that with electrical technology, the world was approaching a phase of human extensions where consciousness could be technologically stimulated and where the creative process of knowledge would extend collectively to the whole humanity. Thus, McLuhan (1962, 1964) anticipated a world where we would all be interconnected in a global consciousness – a global village. His concept of a global village suggests that we are all neighbours within the framework of an ever-closer world. This concept is part of the globalisation theory as it suggests that communities are getting closer across the world as an effect of media and information and communication technologies. According to McLuhan, the information conveyed by the mass media merge all the micro-societies in a single village or community experiencing life at the same time, at the same rhythm and in the same (virtual) space.

The world's compression and intensified consciousness are done through the globalisation of the economy, the multiplication of international exchanges, and the development of

interdependence between countries (Balaresque and Oster, 2013). According to Balaresque and Oster, three factors explain contemporary globalisation: transport revolution (1750s), global deregulation (1970s – 1980s), information and communication technologies (1980s). The transport revolution was characterised by the introduction of containerisation in maritime transport, the development of air traffic, and the explosion of the number of roads and terrestrial ways. Global deregulation enabled a smoother flow of capital and facilitated the establishment of liberal economies. The technical conditions enabled by information and communication technologies played a determining impact on goods' and funds' circulation, as well as on people's representations regarding the world and its exchanges.

This phenomenon that became popular in the 1990s is by no means a recent one. As Steger (2020) highlighted, people's and communities' dependence on one another can be traced back to antiquity or even prehistory. When it comes to football, and as highlighted earlier in this chapter, modern football was created in Britain during the second half of the 19th century. It started spreading to continental Europe then wherever the British and Europeans had their formal and informal colonial ties (Boniface, 2010). It has been argued that it took roughly 100 years for modern football to become the global phenomenon we know it to be nowadays (Boniface, 2010; Goldblatt, 2007; Chisari, 2006). First pressured by states, then by economic actors such as television channels, organisers, and agents, football progressively became globalised, and competitions multiplied or changed format to adapt and turn into profitable activities (Robinson and Clegg, 2019). In an article titled "When Football Went Global: Televising the 1966 World Cup", Chisari (2006) connected football's globalisation to the TV coverage of this event. Chisari stressed that this was not the first time television had covered a football World Cup (Switzerland 1954 was the first one) but that the 1966 World Cup in England was marked by important technological upgrades such as the slow motion which from then allowed viewers to rewatch games' actions at a slower pace/speed. The interview room

was also introduced during that edition of the World Cup and the competition was tele-viewed by 400 million people – which was a record at the time. Throughout the years, television has contributed to this globalisation of football by giving visibility to major football events, by broadcasting an increasing number of football events; and by engaging in fierce competition to broadcast major football events (Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Berlin, 2013).

With television playing a pioneering role in the globalisation of football, it also created globalised football players. The television coverage of football events turned footballers into superstars that earn more money with their global image and notoriety than with their football performances (Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019). Furthermore, football players are nowadays geographically mobile and easily move from one country/continent to another (Boniface, 2010). They change clubs at will, relying particularly on the freedom of movement of workers which prevails within the European Union.

With globalisation, football became a universal sport, but Boniface (2010) stressed that globalisation does not dissolve specific cultural identities. The globalisation of football does, according to Boniface, strengthen them. Similarly, Giulianotti and Robertson (2013) argued that globalisation is marked not only by universalism but also by particularism. Thus, globalisation is both a carrier of homogenisation and distinction of societies/communities (Robertson, 1992). Globalisation is accompanied by a mass culture that is the object of a global market that imposes universal references built around the notion of sport-spectacle, the international variety, and the star system's mediatised figures (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2013). The universal diffusion of a global mass culture remains equivocal. It is based on the tremendous growth in the flow of information but also on a historical break in mobility. However, as highlighted by Robertson (1992), it would be illusory to visualise such societies governed by identical globalised concerns, carrying a global public opinion. On the contrary, the more globalisation is perceived as a negation of particularism, the more it reactivates

identity affirmations and awakens civilisational markers (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2013; Robertson, 1992). It is a multifaceted process where uniformity and differentiation are at play. These traits are materialised through *'glocalisation'* processes.

Glocalisation and Football

Glocalisation is an English neologism formed through the coinage of 'globalisation' and 'localisation'. Steger (2020) indicated that globalisation not only has a global aspect but also a local one. In other words, a global phenomenon does occur in local spaces. Those local spaces usually make this global phenomenon their own. Therefore, globalisation constitutes a dialogue between the universal and the particular.

Glocalisation refers to specific adaptations of products/services/brands to local/cultural needs (Robertson, 1992). *Glocalisation* also represents an alternative culture movement that consists of customisation and adaptation of goods/brands/services/commodities by the users themselves (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007). *Glocalisation* is self-limited globalisation that adapts or even organises itself around local solutions. Thus, this resistance to solutions from elsewhere allows highlighting those traditionally used while improving more effective and locally relevant factors. Sport constitutes a sphere within which *'glocal'* features can be played out. In fact, Tomlinson (2013) described football not only as being cosmopolitan but also as being particularistic. He highlighted that each or most countries bring their own particularistic ingredients to football while practising the same sport. French footballers are perceived as extremely proud, Latin Americans as having a stylish game, English as stubborn, Italians as ruthless, Dutch as self-centred, Germans as pragmatic, or Cameroonians as undisciplined. Sharing the same game of football can bring specific senses of belonging to specific communities or rejections of others. Boniface (2010) took the example of the four nations constituting the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (England, Wales,

Scotland, and Northern Ireland) which are categorically against the very idea of creating a single British national football team.

Sports, including football, also enable the empowerment of individuals and social groups, especially the marginalised ones or the ones whose voices are not heard enough (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2013). Boniface highlighted the fact that the FIFA accepts Stateless entities within its ranks such as Palestine. Therefore, football can allow small nations or forgotten nations to assert themselves internationally. Furthermore, with the organisation of the 2010 FIFA World Cup that was given to South Africa, Boniface argued that this initiative honoured not only South Africa, but also the entire African continent. An honour that demonstrated the transnational value of football in Africa. As indicated by Giulianotti and Armstrong (2004), when Nigeria won the 1996 Olympics' football tournament (in Atlanta, United States of America), defeating Argentina in the final, Africans across the continent were proud as if the whole continent had won it. I was too young to remember the 1996 Olympics but 4 years later, when Cameroon won the 2000 Olympics' tournament (in Sydney, Australia), defeating Spain in the final, my primary school pupil self acknowledged similar emotions among not only Cameroonians but also Africans. Our neighbourhood back in Cameroon (Bastos – described as the diplomatic and posh neighbourhood of the capital city, Yaoundé) and our neighbours (coming from all over the continent) were roaring out joy and dancing in the streets at 5am in the morning because Cameroon or dare I say, Africa, had won the Olympics' football tournament again.

Particularistic features are also reflected in the ways football is played across the world and how media cover them (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004). Homogenisation can be perceived through coaching practices and coaching instructions that tend to be universal in terms of technical skills and tactical knowledge. Nevertheless, there is also a significant element of differentiation in how football is played worldwide in technical and aesthetic developments.

Giulianotti and Robertson (2013) noted that, on one hand sports and football reporters from specific countries usually cover sport and football events for their compatriots in country-specific ways. On the other hand, top sports, and football athletes as well as teams are covered by global media and are universally famous regardless of the countries they come from. It is therefore essential that I present the relation linking media to football.

Media and Football

Relations between the world of sports in general and that of the media have always been essential and both are not only related to each other but also to capitalism and modernity (Rowe, 2013; McChesney, 1989). When it comes to football, it is worth mentioning that the *Federation Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) was created on the initiative of a French journalist from the newspaper *Le Matin* whose name was Robert Guerin (Tomlinson, 2014). Thus, print media played a major role in the media coverage of football and in the organisation of football competitions. The European Champion Clubs' Cup (known nowadays as the UEFA Champions League) was created in 1955 by the French newspaper *L'Equipe* (Hennaux and Descamps, 2005). Even the *Ballon d'Or* which is an award given to the best football player of the year since 1956 was created by the French magazine France Football (Molinaro, 2011). These print media were probably seeking to sell to more readers by focusing on leisure activities such as football (Rodriguez, 2018).

While football has been covered on the wireless since the 1920s (Lawrence, 2018), it is, as highlighted in the previous section, television that is the most important media partner to the sport (Boniface, 2010; Goldblatt, 2007; Chisari, 2006). In fact, ever since the 1966 World Cup happened in England, television became one of the game's most important pilar. Television channels pay huge sums of money to have TV coverage rights over football competitions which then hugely boost football institutions (Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019). One example of a football organisation that has been tremendously boosted by money from TV

coverage rights is that of the English Premier League. Robinson and Clegg (2019) highlighted that the development of television has played a major role in the history of the Premier League. The money generated by TV coverage rights was one of the reasons of its creation and is still quite important for its operation and development. As noted by Robinson and Clegg, the Premier League's decision to hand over all its domestic television rights to BskyB (known nowadays as Sky) in 1992 rather than to the BBC or ITV was seen as ground-breaking. The purchase of the TV coverage rights for the English Premier League ensured the success of Sky and enabled the enrichment of English Premier League's clubs and players. In fact, Sky was spiralling into debt before this, and this move was the making of Sky. The first rights paid by BskyB in 1992 to cover the Premier League amounted to £304 million over a period of five years (1992-1997). 30 years later, the TV coverage rights paid by Sky, BT Sport, Amazon Prime Video, and the BBC for live and non-live domestic coverage of Premier League amount £5.4 million (Bassam, 2021). This is only within the UK. In fact, the cost of Premier League's international TV rights over the 2019-2022 cycle is £4.2 billion (Carp, 2019).

Premier League and football in general can no longer do without television because it has become its main source of income (Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Berlin, 2013). Football also needs television. In fact, Drut (2016) argued that by influencing the notoriety of various actors in the football world, television plays an essential role in increasing their economic value. Furthermore, the massive audience gathered by television coverage of football events are targeted by firms via advertisements inserted before, between, and after games.

The sport/football and media relationship keeps expanding and evolving, only temporarily stabilising when one media form dominates due to no better alternative (Rowe, 2019). Although television is still very much the most important media to football, the current digital era has brought social media which have an impact on football. It is worth discussing that influence and I do so in the next section.

Social media and Football

It has been argued that social media fuels people's thirst for instantaneous information (Clavio, 2020; Delaney and Madigan, 2015; Witkemper et al., 2012). As Rowe (2013) argued, social media's introduction means that it is nearly impossible nowadays to investigate the correlation between media and sport without analysing a networked digital media sports environment. Social media make the border between real-life and virtual life, between sports and media, less easy to identify (Clavio, 2020; Delaney and Madigan, 2015; Rowe, 2013; Witkemper et al., 2012). Many individuals now spend a lot of time communicating online via social media platforms rather than in real-life settings (Delaney and Madigan, 2015). Thus, they are forming virtual communities around shared interests or common identities (Clavio, 2020; Delaney and Madigan, 2015; Witkemper et al., 2012). They rely on their virtual communities to have access to entertainment, news and sports information.

Furthermore, social media help in the identification of sports trends (Delaney and Madigan, 2015). This identification occurs when something massive happens in the sports sphere, and people immediately use social media to talk about it. In fact, universally renowned sports' events such as the FIFA World Cup or the UEFA Champions League are usually among the most discussed social media events. Therefore, with social media, the connection between sports and popular culture is therefore much more readily available.

Athletes and teams can use social media to mark their presence online (Clavio, 2020; Delaney and Madigan, 2015). Football clubs now have a voice through social media as they can engage in discussions with general members of the public, fans and media organisations/professionals (Clavio et al., 2012; Abreza et al., 2013; Gibbs and Haynes, 2013; Frederick et al., 2014; Clavio, 2020). Clubs can express themselves on subjects of their choice and potentially release official statements online when they are faced with a crisis (Delaney and Madigan, 2015). With the creation and use of social media content, these clubs can establish positive impressions

among their online communities. Social media enable clubs to create within their fans a real sense of belonging to their clubs, which can establish cyber-communities and cyber-identities. Those fans want to be informed on their favourite players, teams, and to be updated on the latest statistics available.

Clavio (2020) also noted that with social media, athletes can now position themselves at the same level as journalists and media organisations. In fact, social media have given opportunities for top footballers to communicate with their audiences and to build up personal brands (Price et al., 2013). Social media are not only means enabling players to inform their supporters on their lives, but also tools enabling them to generate affection or sympathy. Social media have created a global fanbase that follows top players on them from every part of the world without necessarily following all matches. Top football players now have online followers that stretch far beyond their number of supporters in the clubs in which they play. Products and services' brands have understood this and are taking advantage of the notoriety of top football players and turning them into their ambassadors online (Borges-Tiago et al., 2019). It is quite common to see footballers highlight the products or services they use through social media posts. As noted by Borges-Tiago et al., Cristiano Ronaldo constitutes an example of top footballers using social media to generate lucrative partnerships with firms. In a video titled "Top 10: les footballeurs les plus suivis sur les reseaux sociaux" (La Rédaction du Onze Mondial, 2021), it was highlighted that Cristiano Ronaldo is indeed the most followed footballer on social media with 503 million followers, leading firms and brands to attempt to capitalise on his popularity.

With social media, football players are also given the opportunity to stretch their impact beyond football. They can impact society on wider issues. One example is that of Marcus Rashford who is more known and praised for his social media campaigns against children's food poverty in Britain than he is for his game. Shah (2021) described him as a "social media hero". He has

about 5 million followers on Twitter and more than 11.5 million followers on Instagram. Like most top players, he could stick to promoting his sponsors on his social media handles, which he does, but he also uses social media to force the hand of politicians on social challenges such as that of children who do not have enough to eat in Britain. In 2020, when Rashford started campaigning for school meal vouchers for poor families, the British government initially said no, but the footballer's tweets went viral, and he won popular support. Many MPs and the then Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) eventually changed their minds. As a result of this successful social media campaign, Rashford was made MBE by the late queen and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Manchester.

There is also Josh Cavallo, the 22 years old Australian footballer who came out as gay in October 2021 using social media (BBC News, 2021). In a video titled 'Josh's Truth' and released on Twitter, he decided to let the world know that he is gay, becoming the first active top football player to ever do so. Josh Cavallo used social media as a means to actively promote diverse and inclusive sexuality in football and to let football audiences and players know that the football community is open to welcome the LGBTQIA+ community (Kemp, 2021).

Audiences and supporters appear to be an essential part of the media/social media and football relationship. They represent the main target of the football spectacle enabled by media and social media. Therefore, football fandom appears as a crucial theme that is worth discussing for the sake of my research.

Football Fandom

There is no singular way to define a fan in general, and such a general definition is even unimportant (Hills, 2002; Barton, 2014). As Hills (2002) noted, what matters is their doings. Hill highlighted that fans have a special thing about specific celebrities or cultural products. They are very knowledgeable about those and can rework the object of their fandom both individually and as part of a community made of like-minded people. Therefore, a fan is a main

actor in consuming cultural products: songs, singers, bands, TV programmes, films, political parties/figures, books, sports or sports teams/athletes (Jenkins, 2006). Contemporary fan practices are rooted in participatory culture. The latter is a culture in which members are active and creative participants, unlike passive consumers and receptive audiences. Jenkins argued that participatory culture – and thus fandom - evolved considerably due to communication capacities – with the world wide web and digital technologies. Similarly, Duffett (2013) highlighted that home computing and internet networks foster shifts in fandom practices by facilitating them further and by expanding their scope. Thus, internet and digital media provide fans with opportunity to reinvent their fandom activities by conveying them online and establishing transnational virtual fandom communities.

Jenkins highlighted that the lines between artistic expression and civic engagement are thin in participatory culture. In such a culture, people are supported and encouraged to create and share their creations with others, as they are helped, and their contributions are seen as essential and valuable. Furthermore, Jenkins argued that members feel a social attachment with other members in participatory culture. Thus, Harris (1998) highlighted that some people would want to convey identities they might otherwise have kept to themselves via a collective passion for a popular culture product and attempt to rectify their alienation via collective fandom practices. These practices seem to be a tool of resistance which fans use to rework the objects of their fandom. In so doing, they attempt to prove that they are not constrained by their fandom objects and can reshape those objects to meet their specific needs.

This perspective on fandom implies that fan practices constitute strategic sites where hegemonic powers are at play and are resisted and challenged (Classen, 1998; Dell, 1998; Harris, 1998b). Harris (1998b) highlighted that an example of this resistance element can be observed in television shows' fans attempt (successful or not) to influence and control the object of their fandom. If fans feel like they are influencing the object of their fandom, they

feel empowered and enjoy it even more. It then consolidates further their fan social identities. This empowerment gives fans the opportunity, through their fandom, to express their creativity and their sense of appropriation of their fandom objects (Green et al., 1998; Tankel and Murphy, 1998). Green et al. (1998) presented fan writings (songs, fanzines, newsletters, etc.) as critical tools enabling fans to create cultural products that gravitate around the object of their fandom. Tankel and Murphy (1998) presented comic books collection as another form of fan appropriation regarding the object of their fandom. Such practice is again another form of resistance to capitalism and hegemonic powers. As Tankel and Murphy noted, these popular culture products' collections resist the impersonal existence (brought in by capitalism). In doing so, fans are building personally meaningful collections.

Considering football fandom especially – as this is the primary type of fandom this thesis focuses on – it has been argued that football events and activities constitute spectacles produced by football teams and players via media and addressed to consumers or fans (Goldblatt, 2020; Williams, 2013). Football fans constitute one of the pillars of the development of modern football. Therefore, it appears important to know what a football fan is.

Williams (2013) highlighted that prior to television, a football fan of a specific club or team had to be a local supporter of that club/team and attend their matches at stadiums. Similarly, Davis (2015) noted that football fans would support their favourite teams at home stadiums' grounds where they would create and communicate collective identities. They would also develop strong connections with the clubs they were fans of. However, with television, things changed, and football fans were no longer constrained by the fact that they were not necessarily living near their favourite teams' stadiums or that they were not watching them play at stadiums' grounds. Football fans became individuals who follow football on a regular basis and emotionally connect to specific footballers and teams wherever they are (Williams, 2013).

In an article titled 'The Football Supporter in a Cosmopolitan Epoch', Peterson-Wagner (2017) associated fandom with an attachment or love to a group or an entity and acknowledged that "it is possible to see how those 'nonplaces' (i.e. Internet forums as Facebook groups) became places where hot solidarities can develop" (p.138). Anderson (1983) explored 'imagined communities' wondering why large proportion of individuals across nations believe in the idea of fixed national identities with which they fully align. This investigation led him to define nations as 'imagined political communities' of individuals believing they all fully align with and are proud of their (fixed) national identities. Football fans believe in a similar idea when it comes to their fandom. In fact, they believe they all align with a fixed common identity and level of attachment to the object of their fandom even if they have not met most members of their fandom community (-ies). Furthermore, what usually matters for sports fans is competition (Amenta and Miric, 2013). Sports fans distinguish themselves from other types of fans because they put an emphasis on winning and losing. Therefore, football rivalries exist not only between football teams but also between their supporters. Such rivalries can sometimes make some fans adopt anti-social behaviours such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and hooliganism (Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Williams, 2013). It is also worth mentioning that just like the majority of professional and amateur sportspersons, most sports fandom communities tend to be overwhelmingly male communities (Amenta and Miric, 2013; Ingham and Donnelly, 1997). There is however an increased popularity of women's football in Europe nowadays. In fact, ESPN (2022) highlighted that 3 women football's matches topped stadium attendance in 2022: the 2022 Women's Euro Final between England and Germany (87,192 people attended), the quarterfinals of the Women's Champions League between Barcelona and Real Madrid (91,553 stadium spectators), and the Women's Champions League first leg semi-final between Barcelona and Wolfsburg (91,648 fans attended). While ESPN was

not clear on the male/female distribution of those who attended these games, it is nonetheless clear that in 2022, a positive shift regarding fans' perception of women's football was observed.

Sports fandom is situated in the consumption realm and associated with lifestyles and maintenance of status (Crawford, 2004; Bourdieu, 1978). Class constitutes one of the sociological keys in understanding sporting tastes. The same principle applies to sports fandom. The latter reflects people's position in social space and is determined by fandom habits through stylising fandom life and distinctive practices that confirm social inclusion or exclusion. Being a fan also implies particular participation in fan cultures. Sports' audiences are highly performative (Crawford, 2004). Sports fans rely on mass media and globalised consumerism as an instrument to nurture their performances. Social power in fan cultures, therefore, operates through individuals themselves. This suggests that the participation in fan cultures is open-ended. Sports and football fandom practices and careers also vary from one fan to another within the same fandom group. This suggests that the binary opposition usually observed between active and passive fandoms should not, according to Crawford, matter as every fan is unique and expresses their fandom in varying ways. Every sport and football fandom (be it active or passive) should therefore matter.

Thus, sports fandom and football fandom constitute attractive areas to investigate. This investigation should be done referring to specific spatial-temporal frameworks and cultures. This suggests that allegiance to sports/football teams and athletes depends on time, space, class, gender, race, or culture (Amenta and Miric, 2013). Historically, and across western cultures, team sports such as football have mostly been followed by the working class, while individualistic sports have been followed by the middle and upper classes (Bourdieu, 1978). Quite often, football has been seen as belonging to popular (low) culture and as dominating sporting scenes on local, regional and national scales while upper classes' sports are considered elitist (Amenta and Miric, 2013). Football is considered by many as the most popular sport

(Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Tomlinson, 2013). This is also true within West Africa. I shall now discuss football fandom in West Africa.

Football Fandom in West Africa

There is not an enormous literature addressing the question of football fandom in West Africa. Goldblatt (2020) assessed Sub-Saharan Africa football and argued that it is undergoing a slow death due to globalisation. Goldblatt highlighted that African top football talents mostly play in European and other non-African leagues. He stressed that the African continent is in a unique position as no other continent lost as many top players to other leagues as Africa did. Goldblatt argued that this situation is often due to the poor management of football by football associations in Africa.

Onyebueke (2018) is one of the few social scientists who investigated football fandom in a West African country, namely Nigeria. He indicated that football is the sport most Nigerians follow. Nigerians are not only fans of the Nigerian national team, that has won the African Cup of Nations on three occasions (1980, 1994, 2013) and has played World Cup's round of 16 on three occasions (1994, 1998, 2014), but they are also fans of major European football leagues. Many such leagues are followed in Nigeria using what Onyebueke presented as 'Football Viewing Centres' (FVCs). Those FVCs are bars where European leagues football matches are telemediated, creating virtual stadiums that provide entertainment and socialising platforms to local fans of these European leagues/teams. These football bars constitute an open window to the outside world and a physical space where local fandom can be formed and reinforced.

This interest in European football leagues created in Nigeria (particularly in Enugu City) what Onyebueke called 'electronic fans'. These fans follow those leagues through audio-visual media. Nigerians are electronically devoted to European clubs and only partly interested in the Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL). The NPFL is seen as a low-quality league (regarding both the way it is played, the way it is managed, and the quality of stadiums and

infrastructures) and as lacking potent sponsorship – mostly because, as indicated by Onyebueke, the potent local sponsors invest in European football clubs. Furthermore, with the expansion of cable television in Nigeria, those who have access to it prefer watching European football leagues that are, according to them, far classier and more polished. For those Nigerians who do not have access to domestic cable television, FVCs' proliferations have represented a crucial opportunity for them to enjoy live coverage of European football leagues. Even those having access to such services at home like the community FVCs have enabled them to build. Those fans are 'electronic' or 'virtual' fans because they are on a different continent and experiencing European football events/games at an electronic/virtual stadium (a football viewing centre) while deserting physical local stadiums and leagues. Thus, as Onyebueke noted, new fandom communities are being created and popularised by people at those viewing centres which foster marketing and business opportunities for football entities, advertisers, media, and local as well as global firms.

Cameroon and Ghana also have football as their most popular sport. Like Nigeria, they won several AFCoNs (5 titles for the Cameroonian team: 1984, 1988, 2000, 2002, 2017; 4 trophies for the Ghanaian team: 1963, 1965, 1978, 1982) and achieved some satisfactory results at FIFA World Cups (a quarter-final for Cameroon in 1990 and a quarter-final for Ghana in 2010). The problems faced by the NPFL are somehow the same problems faced by the professional leagues in these countries. European Football is also very popular there, with FVCs' numbers increasing in the urban areas of these countries.

Igwe et al. (2021) assessed the *glocalisation* of English, Italian, Spanish, German, and French football leagues in Nigeria. They offered to look at the characteristics of Nigerian football fans, the influence the aforementioned leagues have on them as well as on their culture and society, and the impact (both positive and negative impact) football's globalisation has on local Nigerian communities. Through the ethnographic study (via in-depth observations, post-

observation discussions, and semi-structured interviews) of 50 participants (12 community football club managers, 8 FVC's managers, and 30 fans randomly chosen from FVCs, they highlighted that Nigerian football fans are more loyal to European clubs (mostly MUFC, Chelsea FC, Arsenal, Barcelona, and Real Madrid) than they are to local ones. They noted that those fans are teenaged girls and boys as well as adults of any age. They highlighted that such *glocalisation* can generate not only massive incomes for local hospitality businesses, but also emphasised that it could have adverse effects on Nigerians, especially young Nigerians. They explained that football is replacing Nigerians' traditional religious practices which can potentially affect young Nigerians' moral values and lead to an over westernisation of future generations. They also noted that with global football penetrating the Nigerian society, global cultural products such as gambling is being imposed on the said society which is leading to addiction, indebtedness, suicides, domestic violence, and evictions.

As Onyebueke acknowledged, local (Nigerian/West African) allegiance to European leagues is not only reflected through audio-visual media but also reflected through print media and the internet. About the latter, Onyebueke noted that research on Nigerian and West African football fandom on the internet and social media is overlooked. Therefore, my research fills that gap. Through investigating how football discussions and news are conveyed in MUIP, I study how the *glocalised* MUFC meets the needs and expectations of their Nigerian and West African audiences on Twitter. In that sense, my research goes further than that by Igwe et al. (2021) who yet again focused on offline football globalisation and fandom in Nigeria through an ethnographic study of community football managers, FVCs' managers, and fans present at FVCs. My work differs by focusing on the *glocalisation* of a specific football team within a specific football league (MUFC and English Premier League) and on how it operates within a specific online fandom community. While Igwe et al. highlighted that the *glocalisation* of European Football Leagues in Nigeria creates a sense of communal loyalty or belonging for

those watching these leagues in FVCs, they did not inform us on what constitutes that sense of belonging and on what it is building upon – as my research does. Besides, they conducted an offline investigation whereas my research constitutes an online one. My work discursively analyses Twitter content generated by the MUIP Twitter community and investigates that specific community's production and consumption processes. I examine if/how MUIP constitutes an acute tool of active fandom, enabling Nigerians and West Africans to counter mainstream coverage of the Premier League. Not that there is something particularly wrong with mainstream coverage of the Premier League. It is just that whether West Africans watch the Premier League on the French TV channel Canal+ (or its MyCanal digital version) in Cameroon or on South Africa's TV channel SuperSport in anglophone West Africa or follow it on clubs' official digital platforms, they do not necessarily have a strong cultural connection with those media outlets. The coverage is done in English and French. Thus, MUIP appears to fill a gap by offering to West Africans a coverage of MUFC and of the Premier League they are culturally connected to via Pidgin English.

While McLuhan's (1962, 1964) concept of a global village was principally about radio and television at the time, his concept is nonetheless relevant to the internet and social media and their ability to create a global village. My perspective on this is that although there is, to a great extent, a global village created by the global media reach of English Premier League and MUFC, it is not unified. In fact, with this research, I argue that the sort of global village described by McLuhan seems to be a series of '*glocal* villages' with specific and unique (cultural) characteristics. MUIP is an example of such villages, and my investigation explores its specificity and uniqueness within the Premier League and MUFC global village.

My research also allows me to profile the fans of MUIP and understand what their group or sociological classifications reveal. Furthermore, it seems like MUIP's creator and audience

have their own description of the world, football and fandom that goes along with the language they use. This language is grounded in postcolonial theory.

Language, postcolonial theory and identity construction

In the previous section, I reviewed the influence that online football fandom has in the construction of identities, particularly in Africa. This review enabled me to discover that the study of Nigerian and West African football fandom on the internet and social media is overlooked. My study fills this gap in research. Through the investigation of the ways in which football discussions and news are conveyed via MUIP, I explore if/how this account's version of a *glocalised* MUFC constitutes an acute tool of active fandom enabling Nigerians and West Africans to create a counterpoint to Western coverage of Premier League Football. It has been argued that language is the key means enabling individuals to establish knowledge about themselves and their living environment (Barker and Jane, 2016; Alleyne, 2015; Page, 2012; Barker, 2012; Hall, 2002). Therefore, it appears crucial to review how language is involved in the construction of postcolonial identities.

Postcolonial theory analyses the scope and effects of colonialism on former colonies – which mainly include African, Asian, Caribbean and Latin American nations – that used to belong to the former French, British, Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires (Gandhi, 1998). Decolonisation (in general but particularly in Africa) is my starting point of such analysis. In fact, in 'The Wretched of The Earth', Fanon (1963) manifested for the anti-colonial struggle, including through violence, and for the emancipation of the Third World. Similarly, Said's (1978) analysis of the colonial discourse adopted a binary scheme based on the opposition between the coloniser and the colonised, the centre and the periphery, the West and the East.

However, this analysis model was criticised by Bhabha (1994) who argued that it was an analysis of colonialism that did not sufficiently consider the complexity of colonial relations.

Bhabha developed his theory of hybridity which challenged the aforementioned model that tended to reduce colonial discourses to simple binary oppositions. Therefore, Bhabha drew attention to the heterogeneity and ambivalence of colonial representations and pointed out that hybridity is more likely to depict the discursive reality of colonialism. He defined hybridity as a place where purities, polarities and essentialism are abolished.

Similarly, Gilroy (1993) examined black identities' cultural construction through the Atlantic Slave Trade. He conceived what he called 'The Black Atlantic' (to be understood as 'diasporic peoples') as a site where hybrid and transnational cultural formations operate. These hybrid and transnational formations of diasporic peoples' identities are the foundations of what Gilroy referred to as 'Double Consciousness'. In fact, the latter suggests that diasporic peoples – or more broadly former colonised peoples – build their identities in between European cultural constructions and South/East ones. This theory of hybridity brought new dimensions to identity formations in postcolonial settings, and it appears crucial that I highlight those dimensions.

Identity and postcolonial theory

As Goerg et al. (2013) highlighted, in formerly colonised countries, identity occupies an important place, and some of these countries are still struggling today to cleanse identity cleavages inherited from colonisation or exacerbated by colonisation. In fact, they noted that during the colonial era, colonisers not only dominated colonised populations politically and economically but also depreciated their cultural foundations or values. Thus, as indicated by Goerg et al., in the 1950s and 1960s, anti-colonial struggles broke out throughout the colonised world and aimed at the complete liberation from the colonial yoke. Drawing from their formerly despised cultural heritage, (colonised) nationalists started a process of strategic rehabilitation of the said cultural heritage which allowed them to mobilise the masses against colonisers.

However, it has been highlighted that the struggle of the former colonies for the reconstruction of identity continued after independence (Goerg et al., 2013; Lewis et al., 2016). In fact, one central element of that struggle was the place of the colonisers' languages in the new postcolonial societies. Therefore, replacing these colonial languages with local languages was seen as the apparently evident first step in cultural decolonisation, but things became much more complicated. As Lewis et al. (2016) indicated, in countries such as Nigeria, 478 languages are spoken and none of these languages is understood by all inhabitants as a national language. Thus, many formerly colonised nations still use colonial languages as their official languages and the use of indigenous languages or other lingua francas is often not encouraged (and even repressed). A few examples of official (colonial) languages in formerly colonised African nations include English in Nigeria and Ghana, French and English in Cameroon, Spanish in Equatorial Guinea, or Portuguese in Guinea Bissau.

Campbell and Page (2018) profiled the country we now know as Nigeria. They indicated that the British Empire gradually took hold of many lands in the area and that the indigenous people across these lands had little in common with one another. The British Empire nonetheless decided to manage these heterogeneous lands as a single territory from 1914 to October 1960 (when Nigeria became independent) because it "simplified His Majesty's government's budgetary and tax processes" (Campbell and Page, 2018, p.26). Before, during and after the independence of Nigeria, people – including political leaders belonging to the main Nigerian tribes (Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani/Hausa) – tended to put their tribal identities before their national ones. Thus, many ethnic tensions were accumulated throughout the years after independence which led to a couple of coups in 1966. Campbell and Page highlighted that in January 1966, a coup orchestrated by military groups led to the killings of two Fulani's political leaders – Ahmadu Bello and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – and put General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi (an Igbo man) in power. Resentment grew against Igbo as others (especially Fulani/Hausa) thought

the former wanted to dominate them. In July 1966, a few months after this first coup, military groups of Fulani/Hausa origin decided to retaliate with another coup and mass killings of Igbo people living in the Fulani/Hausa region – the north of Nigeria. As a result, some Igbo people went back to their region of origin (southeast Nigeria) and decided to create their own independent republic – the Republic of Biafra. The latter was a secessionist State which entered a violent civil war against the Nigerian regime. This war lasted until 1970, when the Nigerian regime forced the Biafran State to capitulate and proceeded to reintegrate it into the Nigerian nation. This Nigerian example shows the type of identities' tensions that occurred post-independence in West Africa.

Nevertheless, as indicated by Campbell and Page, Nigeria seems to have grown past these tensions, at least when it comes to armed battles of the calibre of a national civil war. In fact, as they noted, Nigerians now appear to have a massive cultural influence in Nigeria and beyond. The Nigerian Film Industry (also known as Nollywood) is lucrative and very famous within the African continent and in African diasporas. Furthermore, Nigerian's Afrobeat music and contemporary Afrobeats are global phenomena with worldwide figures that are acclaimed in both developing and developed countries.

Hybridity

Introduced by Bhabha (1994), the theory of hybridity refers to the ambivalence of colonial cultural identity (of both colonised and colonisers), destabilising the very idea of essence and purity. In the colonial context, Bhabha argued that cultural forms were thus driven by ambivalence, imitation and constant translation. For Bhabha, hybridity opened a space where a new colonial object was constructed: neither the colonised nor the coloniser but something intermediate, a third space. He considered this third space as a privileged place of enunciation where binary and essentialist colonial constructions were abolished.

Parker and Rathbone (2007) held similar views and argued that Africans are tremendously diverse and that their diversity is rooted in physical attributes, languages, cultures, religions, political regimes, and economic situations. While Parker and Rathbone noted that "most, if not all, generalizations about Africans past and present are doomed to fail" (p.32), they also emphasised that history scholars are more and more interested in exploring marks of transnational cultural connections within the continent. The hybridity described by Bhabha is made possible and experienced within former colonies, mainly former African colonies, through the globalisation phenomenon.

Globalisation: linguistic and cultural hybridity of Africa

Mufwene and Vigouroux (2008) argued that the cultural implications of globalisation and the colonising processes/discourses go hand in hand. They indicated that new languages emerged as a result of cultural and linguistic mixing. This mixing not only involved colonisers and specific indigenous people, but also linguistically unrelated groups of indigenous people. In this new linguistic environment, divisions and hierarchies were established and the language of the coloniser was placed at the top.

For Mufwene and Vigouroux, linguistic practices in Africa result from "colonial traditions, one of which is the imposition of the European colonial languages as emblems of socioeconomic status and political power" (p.22). Reflecting on the power inequalities between Africans who are fluent in colonial languages of instruction (such as English) and those who are not, Brocke-Utne (2003) indicated that about 5% of Africans are able to speak those. Therefore, as Brocke-Utne noted, it potentially limits schoolgirls and schoolboys' access to knowledge. Brocke-Utne stressed that it would be essential to use languages that children are most comfortable and familiar with in education settings. It would be crucial in rectifying the linguistic power imbalance brought by colonisation.

The globalisation of colonial empires (and colonial languages) endangered indigenous languages and led to the creation and introduction of new languages or lingua francas referred to as pidgins and creoles (Todd, 1984, 1974). The British Empire was the most successful colonial empire in implanting its language worldwide (Holm, 2000). There are not only numerous speakers across the globe but also many varieties of English. As Holm noted, the British Empire not only succeeded in spreading Britain's English across the globe, but also led to the proliferation of regional variants of English as well as to the development of Pidgins and creoles. According to Holm, Pidgins and English-based creoles can be divided into two main groups: the Atlantic group of Pidgins/creoles used by West Africans and West Indians, and the Pacific group of Pidgins/creoles used in the Pacific Ocean area.

I mainly focus on the Atlantic group spoken in West Africa as I am interested in how MUIP constructs a West African identity in cyberspace. Pidgin refers to "a communication system that develops among people who do not share a common language" (Todd, 1984, p.3). Todd argued that Pidgins, at their early stage, consisted of a few simple structures that would enable British sailors and Coastal West Africans to communicate. Those pidgins were mainly English-based and accompanied by mime and gesture, and their communicative features were limited. These pidgins were therefore unstable and would die as soon as the contact ceased between these groups resulting in one learning the language of the other - generally, the dominated group would learn the language of the dominant group.

Nevertheless, as Todd noted, the use of pidgins grew, and they soon became linguistically rich/extensive lingua francas enabling inter-group communications. They became more flexible and capable of fulfilling an extensive range of the linguistic needs of their users. These languages followed processes of pidginization and creolisation. Todd explained that pidginization was the process during which people who did not share a common mother tongue, or first language came into contact and merged English and indigenous languages into one

language (Pidgin English) that would serve for simple communications. It has been argued that creolisation happens when a Pidgin becomes a creole – the mother tongue of a given population (Hymes, 2020; Knorr, 2018; Todd, 1984). While Pidgin English was only used in communications between individuals who each kept their mother tongues, creole succeeded in eliminating the use of the original languages of its speakers, complexified its structure, and extended its lexical field. However, the mutually intelligible Pidgins spoken in Nigeria, Ghana Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea also complexified their structures and extended their lexical fields. They are still referred to as Pidgins because their users still have distinct mother tongues, whereas the Pidgins spoken in Sierra Leone and Liberia are referred to as creoles. It is because they are mother tongues in those countries. This is perhaps because Liberians and Sierra Leoneans are descendants of freed slaves who resettled in West Africa. West African Pidgins and creoles are nonetheless mutually intelligible. Furthermore, it has been noted that decreolisation can potentially occur if creoles lose their influence, and the source languages reabsorb them (Aitchison, 2001; Trudgill, 2000; Todd, 1984). This phenomenon has not yet occurred in the West African countries where they are spoken.

The West African pidgins and creoles

A chain of mutually intelligible pidgins and creoles is present in the West African coastal region (Todd, 1984). Pidgins are used principally by West African indigenous communities, while creoles are used by descendants of former slaves repatriated and resettled in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These languages are spoken and understood in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

As I highlighted earlier in this part (see the ‘Identity and postcolonial theory’ section) the use of Pidgins in former West African colonies was discouraged and repressed. In fact, Balogun (2013) reported that Nigerian Pidgin was seen as an inferior language by British colonisers in Nigeria and subsequently rejected by them. Nigerian Pidgin was seen by British colonisers as

improper and was not to be heard at places of work and in education settings. English was the only language to be used. This attitude towards Nigerian Pidgin persists presently in Nigeria where, as reported in an article titled 'Pidgin – West African lingua franca' (BBC, 2016), children are punished in schools when they are caught using Pidgin. Pidgin is still seen by some Nigerians as vulgar and as a language threatening young Nigerians' ability to speak proper English. However, as Spencer (1971) highlighted, even though colonisers pushed Pidgin English to the margin, it still was used to rebel against the British and their language. Thus, while Pidgin English is not encouraged in education settings and at places of work, people have always used it in most other settings and even where they are not supposed to. 75 million people speak it in Nigeria alone (BBC, 2016). In a New York Times' online article titled 'The BBC in Pidgin? People like it well-well', Freytas-Tamura (2017) highlighted that Pidgin English serves as a symbol of nationalism opposing the colonial linguistic culture. In fact, Goglia (2010) highlighted that in multilingual Nigeria, Nigerian Pidgin English acts as a means of expression of a national identity, whereas English (a colonial language) does not. Mark (2012) reported that the late Nigerian musician and singer Fela Kuti once argued that Nigerian Pidgin English was the only language capable of unifying all Nigerians. Even nowadays, Pidgin English serves as an activist language used to criticise West African postcolonial leaders in cultural texts such as songs. An example of such songs is that of the Nigerian singer Yemi Alade titled 'CIA (Criminal In Agbada)' released in 2019. Agbada is a formal attire men wear in West Africa, also known as 'boubou'. In this song, Yemi Alade criticises African leaders and calls them 'criminals in agbadas' (or well-dressed criminals) that suffocate African countries and people (especially the African youth) with their poor governance and corruption. The whole song is in Pidgin English and shows the subversive and resistance character the language can have.

Focusing on the use of Cameroonian Pidgin English, Epoge (2012) highlighted that Pidgin English is often used by young individuals in Cameroon when having sex related discussions

to make them less awkward and lighter (as in playful and fun). Therefore, there also seems to be a strong element of informality associated with the use of Pidgin English in Cameroon and in West African settings.

Through the investigation I carry out on MUIP, I try to determine whether its followers are from these countries or if they live in these countries. I investigate how the discursive features used by West Africans from these countries when engaging in football discussions penetrate social networking sites via accounts like MUIP, thereby uniting them and establishing a West African online identity.

The scope of pidgins and creoles

Todd (1974) argued that "pidgins and creoles are capable, or can easily become capable of expressing the needs, opinions and desires of their speakers" (p.70). In West Africa, pidgins have been used for government propaganda, speech-making and broadcast social advertisement. The scope of pidgins and creoles is therefore undeniable when it comes to spoken media. However, as Todd noted, "in an increasingly literate world, it is arguable that if they are to survive, they must also show their value as written media" (p.70). In fact, the use of pidgins and creoles in literature and education has mainly been an oral one. MUIP and its written tweets constitute one of the critical attempts to materialise West African Pidgin English into the written world. My investigation of this account analyses how this occurs within social media contexts, football fandom, globalisation, and cultural identity construction.

Conclusion

This literature review discussed the four significant areas of analysis of my research: (1) social media, (2) football fandom, (3) globalisation, and (4) cultural identity. I did this via three main parts: (1) social media and identity construction; (2) football fandom, social media, and identity construction; (3) language, postcolonial theory, and identity construction. In the first part, I investigated how social media are involved in the construction of identity in the world and in

Africa. I defined identity and presented the evolution of this concept in modern societies, highlighting essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches of it. I also presented the definitions of social media and highlighted how they have been discussed across the globe and in Africa.

In the second part, I detailed how fandom has been discussed and what influence online fandom has on the construction of identities across the globe and in (West) Africa. I defined football and highlighted its impact, outreach, approaches, and concerns. Then I related football to specific contexts, looking at how it has been discussed in relation to them. I also discussed the fairly limited literature addressing football fandom in West Africa.

In the final part, I reviewed the literature covering the involvement of language in the construction of postcolonial identities, particularly in (West) Africa. I discussed Bhabha's (1994) theory of hybridity before presenting the linguistic and cultural hybridity of Africa brought by globalisation. I also presented West African Pidgin English and English-based creoles, then highlighted their scope.

All these parts ended with an identification of the gaps my research is filling in and of scholarly ideas my research builds on. Butler's (1990) concept of performativity is used to examine identities performed via MUIP discourse and emerging social media practices among West Africans. My research draws on Hall's (1992) perspective on cultural identity to unpack narratives the MUIP Twitter community produces about itself via its tweets in order to establish itself within and in relation to West African systems of cultural representations. This research also adopts Spivak's (1990) and Hall's (1992) concept of strategic essentialism by examining how MUIP constitutes a platform where a West African identity is being strategically produced. Fuch's (2014) roles of social media is drawn-on to demonstrate how the participatory culture enabled by MUIP via its audience's involvement in content creation is shaping and exposing a West African online identity, to analyse MUIP's communication power, and to describe its cultural foundations.

I address Onyebueke's (2018) concern that the study of Nigerian and West African football fandom on the internet and social media is overlooked by investigating the MUIP online fandom community, adding to Igwe et al.'s (2021) study of the *glocalisation* of European football leagues in Nigeria. While they have highlighted that such *glocalisation* produces a sense of belonging among Nigerians watching these leagues in FVCs, it is not clear what elements constitutes this sense of belonging. It was also an offline investigation. My research offers to provide an account of what that sense of belonging is building upon and does so within online settings. I am developing McLuhan's (1962, 1964) concept of global village thereby showing that the Premier League and MUFC global village is constituted of specific and unique '*glocal* villages' such as MUIP. Finally, this research builds on Todd's (1974) idea that Pidgin English remains mostly an oral language and examines the role of MUIP in establishing Pidgin within the written sphere. Therefore, I analyse how it occurs within the contexts of social media, football fandom, globalisation, and cultural identity construction. To do so, I use one main research technique (a discourse analysis of some of MUIP's tweets and followers' replies to these tweets) along with two other research techniques (an interview with MUIP's founder and an online survey of 100 MUIP's followers on Twitter). In the chapter to follow (Chapter Three – Methodological Design and Research Methods), I give a detailed account of these methods and present my research paradigm, strategies, and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This research project aimed to answer these two questions: which discursive features do MUIP's tweets employ? In what ways do these features help setting up a West African online identity among MUIP's followers? To do so, I mainly adopted a social constructionist paradigm and a qualitative methodology. Abduction was my primary strategy and was associated with induction and deduction. The primary method or instrument used to address these questions was a discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets and user comments on Twitter. An interview of MUIP's founder and a followers' study (online survey) were also used to provide some production and consumption contexts to this discourse analysis. Each paradigm, strategy, methodology, and method used are presented in the following sections, along with their weaknesses and strengths. In this chapter, I also give the ethical concerns raised by my research.

Research paradigm

Duff (2002) highlighted that research approaches or paradigms reflect some key research components: epistemology, ontology and methodology. Epistemology is a philosophical basis that refers to the nature of truth and knowledge. In fact, Alleyne (2015) explained that epistemology focuses on the ways in which people produce knowledge about the world. It also evaluates the clashing assumptions that arise from the different approaches people take to produce knowledge about the world.

Positivism and constructivism (social constructionism) constitute some of the critical epistemological approaches to research in social sciences and humanities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017; Duff, 2002). From a positivist perspective, researchers strive for objectivity and truth through scientific means. Positivism is usually adopted by researchers who strive for

impartiality and believe that this is possible. Hypotheses are tested, and findings are based on quantitative data and analysis.

Relativism or constructivism (social constructionism) recognises multiple and socially constructed realities that researchers explore and describe (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017; Duff, 2002). This paradigm is aware of and open to the potential influence of a researcher's subjectivity. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation may be affected by researchers' and participants' subjectivities. Research within the social constructionist framework usually uses a qualitative methodology.

Relativism overlaps with ontology as it considers the concept of 'reality' (Alleyne, 2015). Ontology is an ideological basis concerned with the nature of reality (Duff, 2002). Ontology seeks to answer this question: is there an objective reality, or is it socially built (Alleyne, 2015; Duff, 2002)? Materialism and idealism are the two main ontological perspectives. Alleyne (2015) highlighted that on one hand, adopting a materialist perspective in the social sciences see the world as emanating from an objective reality that precedes and is independent from human knowledge. On the other hand, those adopting idealism as an ontological perspective see the world as emanating from a reality that is socially constructed by people's thoughts and by what they perceive as being real.

It is evident that idealism and constructivism are strongly related and overlap with one another. According to the constructivist approach, which partially opposes materialism, reality would be an experience inevitably relative to the one who apprehends it (Alleyne, 2015). Therefore, knowledge does not allow access to a more accurate perception of things but rather constitutes some data, a reality itself, that of the experience of what is. Constructivism thus positions reality as a construction of the mind that would always be relative to the one who perceives it as a reality.

Constructivism was the central research paradigm adopted in this research on MUIP as it allowed for the examination of meanings and perspectives which could not be explored through a positivist approach. I investigated the social world constructed by MUIP and the human thoughts and reflections that constitute that account's texts and interactions. I studied what MUIP's producer and audience think MUIP's account is or represents. I, therefore, recognised that there might be multiple, socially built realities at each stage of MUIP's activities (production and consumption). I sought to describe and explore these realities. My data collection, analysis and interpretation were most certainly affected by my subjectivity and that of the participants. My principal methodology was qualitative. The latter is presented in-depth later in this chapter.

Paradigm's weaknesses and strengths

The paradigm I used to conduct my study is not without limits. Many materialists and positivists claim that constructivist research lacks critical elements such as validity and reliability that, according to positivists, inform the quality of research (Weber, 2004). Validity seeks to assess if the piece of research effectively investigates what it claims to examine. Validity refers to the value generated by research. As highlighted by Weber, one of the positivists claims on validity is that the more extensive and more robust the evidence, the more valid the conclusions will be. Validity is said to be bidimensional, with internal and external layers. The former layer refers to how data and instruments for collection sustain the results. The latter sees if those results are generalisable.

Another positivists' claim highlighted by Weber is that reliable research should be internally consistent and replicable. From a positivist standpoint, reliability implies that repeating the same process under similar circumstances would provide the same or similar results. The consistency element of reliable research is seen through the lenses of the rigour with which that research is conducted at all stages.

Despite not meeting standards of validity, a constructivist approach best suited my study. My study may not be generalisable, but I argue that it is at least internally valid as I think my data and instruments for collection were sustaining my results. This research may not be iterative, but I was nonetheless rigorous with the way it was conducted at all stages. Furthermore, there are other criteria used by constructivist studies that render their quality and strengths. In fact, Lincoln and Guba (2013) presented four criteria that render such strengths and quality from a constructivist standpoint: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability and (4) confirmability.

Lincoln and Guba highlighted that credible research should indicate "confidence in the findings and interpretations of the research study" (p.104). They argued that some techniques can be used before, during and after collection, including building rapport with participants, using triangulation of methods, keeping an audit trail and copies of data. I made sure to establish confidence in the results and analysis of the research project. I built a bond with MUIP's founder and the participants in the survey by emailing and texting MUIP's founder and sending private messages on Twitter to the participants in the online survey. I also used a triangulation of research techniques (interview – online survey – discourse analysis) and kept copies of all the data gathered.

According to Lincoln and Guba, transferability is not concerned with providing generalisable findings but rather in providing sufficient contextual, methodological and analytical descriptions of a given study for fellow researchers to potentially implement in similar settings. My research is also transferable as I provided enough descriptions of contexts, research techniques, data, and analytical instruments for other researchers to employ in similar studies. Lincoln and Guba also saw a dependable study as one where "the findings and interpretations could be determined to be an outcome of a consistent and dependable process" (p.105). Thus, as they argued, these two quality features can be achieved by creating audit trails and analytical

memos of all the steps leading to the presented findings and interpretations. They also argued that the more detailed the reasoning background behind an investigation is, the more it will ensure that its results are dependable. My results and analysis were the consequences of a dependable process. Through my research, I created analytical annotations and kept records of all the steps to achieve the presented results and analysis. The detailed description in all three research methods' reports also illustrates the dependability of my research findings.

Lincoln and Guba indicated that confirmable studies are like what positivist researchers refer to as reliable studies. Similarly, Shenton (2004) argued that they both imply undertaking rigorous and detailed steps to guarantee that studies' outcomes reflect the actual findings rather than the researcher's own predispositions. It has been argued that triangulating research techniques, stating one's position with regards to one's research, and having detailed reports of the steps followed, can indicate this confirmable aspect (Lincoln and Guba, 2013; Shenton, 2004). I always ensured that the results, findings, and conclusions corresponded to the survey and interview respondents' actual responses, experiences, and ideas even if they did not necessarily align with my position regarding my research's topic and question. My position regarding my research topic is that MUIP constitutes a platform designed for West Africans where a West African identity is constructed and at play. Again, a triangulation of the research methods helped in achieving that. All steps taken were recorded.

Research Strategy

Alleyne (2015) highlighted that a research strategy constitutes a way of addressing research questions, which can be inductive, deductive, retroductive, or abductive. He emphasised that the starting point of an inductive research is to accumulate observations or data to produce generalisations. Alleyne also explained that that at the end of a research that used induction as a strategy, the findings should be used as patterns to explain further observations or data.

With regards to the deductive strategy, Alleyne indicated that the starting point is to highlight observed regularities from which hypotheses are developed as potential explanations for the said regularities. These hypotheses are then tested against suitable data. Therefore, with a deductive strategy, the aim is to predict events that can occur when some pre-established conditions are in place.

Alleyne highlighted that retroduction's basis is similar to that of deduction – observed regularities. However, the aim here is to find out the intrinsic patterns and procedures explaining those regularities. The aim is to speculate on what might have occurred for these regularities to prevail and to produce patterns and procedures that might have generated an observed phenomenon.

Furthermore, when considering abduction, Alleyne noted that it differs from induction, deduction, and retroduction in the ways in which it is used in social sciences because the starting point is the lived experiences and realities of a socio-cultural environment and of its actors. They are assessed and the researcher adopts an interpretive approach using the meaning networks generated by people within this environment as data. The researcher's aim is to familiarise themselves with these people's etiquette and conventions.

Abduction was my primary strategy of inquiry regarding my research project on MUIP. My research starting point was the lived reality of MUIP and the actors at play on that platform. I used an interpretive perspective to investigate the networks of meanings that MUIP's founder and followers convey through this specific virtual community or world. My investigation was done from within that platform since I have been following that account on Twitter since August 2015. I sought to describe and understand the identities of the actors related to MUIP, thereby discovering the 'what' and 'why' of the production and consumption of its content. I

produced a report of my description and discovery; and built a theory on the motivations and meanings behind MUIP.

To this strategy, I added induction and deduction. My strategy was also inductive because I proceeded to an accumulation of observed data on MUIP's Twitter account that enabled me to produce generalisations and laws on the motivations and meanings behind MUIP. It was also slightly deductive (through the online survey) as I observed a regularity regarding MUIP's Twitter account followers. I observed that they mainly came from West Africa, and I tested if this observation was correct. Through my survey, I tested that hypothesis and matched it with the data gathered from it.

Strategy's weaknesses and strengths

The primary strategy and the complementary strategies used for my research project are not without weaknesses. One of the main problems with abduction, as highlighted by Alleyne (2015), is that "there is little agreement on specific procedures beyond basing data on language and categories of social actors" (p.38). Alleyne noted that it is difficult to determine the right way to provide results in a social scientific language and establish translation rules from one discipline to another.

It has been argued that induction has "no logical basis – no matter how many observations you make – for believing that what you have so far found as a pattern in these observations will be repeated in the future" (Alleyne, 2015, p.37). On the other hand, Alleyne also acknowledged that the deductive strategy does not efficiently address the problems of finding adequate data to test a theory and does not consider the impact of culture on science. Furthermore, Alleyne added that the deductive model has been criticised for its capacity to arrive at a universal consensus on what counts as evidence and appropriate experimental design.

Nevertheless, Alleyne also stressed that abduction remains the most effective research strategy within humanities and social sciences. In fact, He indicated that when it is used with one or two other research strategies, it encompasses a solid asset. As I mentioned earlier in this section, in addition to abduction (which was my main research strategy), I also had induction and deduction as other strategies of investigation. Thus, I can go as far as to say that the combination of these three strategies mitigated many (if not most) of the potential weaknesses any of these strategies entail. In fact, my inductive inquiry allowed me to accumulate observed data on MUIP's production and consumption processes on Twitter that enabled me to design a preliminary generalisation or law on why and how MUIP's Twitter account is produced and followed. Through my deductive inquiry, I tested that preliminary observation, turning it into a hypothesis (MUIP's followers mainly come from West Africa). These two strategies both constituted assets providing my abductive strategy with production and consumption contexts so that I could authoritatively investigate the West African networks of meanings conveyed by both MUIP's author and audience in their tweets.

Research methodology

Duff (2002) highlighted that after considering any research project's ontological and epistemological concerns, it is crucial to outline the methodological position adopted as it constitutes the third component of a research's design. As noted by Alleyne (2015), a "methodology is concerned with higher-level approaches to studying research topics" (p.33). This concept indicates the general guidelines of a given research and, therefore, should not be reduced to methods which "are about specific research techniques, e.g. social survey, participant observation, biographical interview" (Alleyne, 2015, p.33). That is why I decided to address these two notions separately. I give an exhaustive account of my specific research techniques/methods in the next section.

There are two prominent methodological positions, and each of them is associated with one of the two research paradigms presented earlier (Alleyne, 2015; Duff, 2002; Hansen and Machin, 2013). These are quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative methodological position is traditionally associated with positivism (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This methodology is a scientific one that seeks to identify a phenomenon/problem, generate hypotheses, and test them by collecting and analysing empirical data. The questions and hypotheses are explored objectively. According to Creswell and Creswell, quantitative research is usually associated with numbers and focuses on measuring constructs.

As noted by Rasinger (2010), this methodological position is deductive as it relies on proving or disproving hypotheses by carrying out empirical investigations. The research design of a quantitative methodology is either cross-sectional or longitudinal (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). While the former looks at large samples of data at a particular time, the latter collects data repeatedly and at different periods to observe changes that may occur.

It has been argued that the qualitative methodological position is usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Richards et al., 2012). Richards et al. (2012) argued that: "'[q]ualitative' isn't an accidental term because what researchers in this approach are interested in is the quality of social life" (p.31). Croker (2009) highlighted that qualitative research does not necessarily adopt an etic perspective where the researcher claims an outsider or neutral position and aims to generalise their findings. Rather, an emic perspective is often preferred as this allows the researcher to take on an insider approach thereby positioning themselves within a particular cultural setting and providing a culture-specific account of it. Similarly, Dörnyei (2007) argued that qualitative studies give a voice to participants thereby allowing them to describe their experiences using their insiders' words and perspectives. Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicated that qualitative studies focus on smaller samples, does not seek to generate generalisations but to unravel key particularities of given

socio-cultural contexts, and their interpretations are open-ended. Thus, as highlighted by Richards et al., qualitative research aims to identify the features of a given social or cultural context from the perspective of the people who are part of the said world, and to inform us on the meanings these people make of or derive from that social or cultural context. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell argued that the researcher must choose among various possible interpretations for their findings while acknowledging the influences of their subjectivities.

My research on MUIP's Twitter account adopted a mixed methodology approach, and I gave a greater emphasis to the qualitative methodological perspective. A discourse analysis of some of MUIP's tweets and its followers' interactions generated between January and March 2020 was used as a principal qualitative method directly addressing the research questions. It looked at how the discursive features employed within that social media account help setting up a West African online identity. Through an interview with MUIP's creator, I explored his experiences with and his views on MUIP. An online survey allowed me to quantitatively describe trends, attitudes, and opinions of MUIP's followers on this Twitter account and the reality that it represents to them. This last instrument was quantitative and used as a triangulation tool to combine with the discourse analysis and the interview. The interview and the online survey also constituted preliminary work illuminating my research contexts and the primary research method (the discourse analysis). Each of these instruments is presented in-depth in the next part of this chapter but before that, let me give the weaknesses and strengths of the methodology adopted.

Methodology's weaknesses and strengths

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies both have limitations. In fact, it has been argued that the former tends to ignore the particularities of individuals as it is mainly concerned with averages (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Dörnyei, 2007; Rasinger, 2010). It does not provide much evidence that explains why certain phenomena happen or the reasons for the relationships

between variables. On the other hand, it has also been argued that qualitative research fails to offer generalisations and its interpretations are influenced by subjectivities (Dörnyei, 2007). This methodology is also time-consuming and labour-intensive (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Croker, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007; Richards et al., 2012).

However, these methodologies also have strengths. On the one hand, Dörnyei (2007) argued that quantitative research's main asset is that the enquiry is systematic, rigorous, focused and tightly controlled. Validity and reliability are observable constructs. Data analysis is relatively quick as it can be done using software. Quantitative research enables researchers to work with large quantities of data. On the other hand, qualitative research has an exploratory nature and deals adequately with "why" questions (Alleyne, 2015; Dörnyei, 2007). This methodology focuses on the particularities of human experience and is flexible (Dörnyei, 2007). Furthermore, if there is a convergence between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the weaknesses of each are considerably minimised (Hansen and Machin, 2013).

My research explored the particularities of the creator and followers of MUIP. This exploration enabled me to find out why it was created, why it is followed, and how the language used on this platform assists the establishment of a specific cultural identity within that platform. The quantitative methodology was used as a triangulation tool and was assessed and evaluated in association with my qualitative research. Each of these methodologies was used to illuminate the same phenomenon that is: how MUIP helps constructing a West African online identity on Twitter.

Research methods/techniques/instruments

Having presented the paradigms, strategies and methodologies used, it appears essential to explain the specific research techniques or instruments used for this research project. The primary research method directly addressing the research questions was a discourse analysis. I

used an in-depth interview and an online survey to examine how they illuminate the research contexts. They were also used to offer some preliminary contexts to the discourse analysis. Each of these instruments is presented in the following sections, along with their weaknesses and strengths.

Discourse analysis

I analysed 107 'Man United in Pidgin' main tweets generated since Ighalo (a Nigerian football player) signed with MUFC in late January 2020 and the 505 replies these tweets generated. I did an advanced search on Twitter, looking at all the tweets released by 'Man United in Pidgin' that included the keyword 'Ighalo'. This advanced search covered the period going from late January to the 12th of March 2020. This event (Ighalo joining MUFC) was suggested to me by my lead supervisor, who considered it a significant event to explore as Ighalo was the first Nigerian footballer to play for MUFC. Furthermore, it was interesting to see how interactions around that event went on 'Man United In Pidgin', which is, as the next couple of chapters reveal, an account created by a Nigerian which mainly attracts Nigerians. Ighalo signed his loan deal with MUFC in late January 2020. The time frame of my analysis ended in March 2020 because this was around that period that English and European football competitions were put on hold for three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

With regards to this specific analysis, discourse refers to what Gee (2014) presented as "language-in-use" (p.20). In fact, as noted by Alleyne (2015), a discourse constitutes "an instance of language used in a social context" (p.77). My discourse analysis was inspired by three aspects of Gee's model highlighted in Alleyne's 'Narrative Networks' (2015). The analysis revolved around (1) significance, (2) activities, and (3) identities. Alleyne explained that language is used to give meaning to the world. He also stressed that our use of language draws attention to us engaging in certain activities or being recognised as engaging in certain activities. Furthermore, Alleyne noted that language is employed by individuals to convey their

identities. When investigating those three aspects, I looked at speech acts, interactions, and rhetorical features.

According to Jensen (2002), speech acts are categories of language units used to "represent and interact with a social reality" (p.250). Jensen suggested that to investigate the significance of discursive features, three types of speech acts' may be assessed. These types include personal pronouns, impersonal grammar and metaphors. In order to study speech acts within MUIP's main tweets and the users' comments attached to them, I used these elements.

Jensen explained that personal pronouns are utterances used by human beings to refer to themselves, to other human beings, and to non-human entities and concepts. Jensen also indicated that impersonal grammar (or impersonal language) is seen as the use of passive voice or any other grammatical structures such as impersonal verbs. Rather than focusing on metaphors only, I studied figures of speech more generally. They designate written and spoken forms of a given language which deviate from the ordinary use of these language's forms and give a particular meaning or expressiveness to the subject matter (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021).

An analysis of the MUIP account's activities allowed me to highlight how MUIP's followers on Twitter interacted with the selected and analysed MUIP's tweets via their replies to the said tweets. It was done by determining the key semantic networks that MUIP's followers built in response to MUIP's main tweets. I proceeded to a rhetorical analysis of the selected MUIP's tweets. This analysis sought to unpack the identities expressed in/by these tweets. The aim was to answer three main questions: (1) what are the relationships between MUIP's main tweets and their contexts? (2) What realities do these tweets construct for MUIP's audience? (3) What do these tweets suggest about MUIP's author/content creator? Ultimately, I also studied the social media languages (emojis and netspeak) and the multimedia content (pictures or memes;

and videos) used by MUIP's author/content creator and audience. All aspects of this analysis are detailed in Chapter Six (Discourse Analysis).

Weaknesses

As highlighted by McKee (2003) natural sciences' scholars claim that textual analyses are considered 'unscientific'. In fact, McKee noted that these scholars see these types of investigations as unreliable and not valid. The rationale behind these claims is that two textual analyses performed by two researchers on the same topic may probably lead to different outputs and interpretations.

Another limit resided in the analysis itself. Most of the tweets analysed are written in Pidgin English. Therefore, in many instances, I had to provide a translation that potentially changed the intended meanings or made them unclear. My merely advanced Pidgin English proficiency sometimes made that task quite challenging. Furthermore, this was fastidious.

I encountered problems when gathering data for the discourse analysis of MUIP's main tweets and readers' replies to these main tweets. I used Twitter as a data-gathering instrument for my project. I used NCapture to capture Twitter web pages; NVivo served as a tool to store, manage and code the tweets and replies that I gathered from Twitter. However, the web browser instrument that enables web content capturing and importation to NVivo software (NCapture) can often be quite limited when gathering web pages data from Twitter. The latter determines the number of tweets that can be captured, which can change from time to time due to the numbers of tweets available, the privacy settings attached to these tweets by the people who published them, and the age of these tweets (NVivo, 2021). In the case of this discourse analysis, when capturing as datasets tweets posted by MUIP's content creator from the 24th of January 2020 to the 12th of March 2020 mentioning 'Ighalo', it would sometimes cover a few days of that period only. Still, most significantly, it would only gather the main MUIP's tweets without the readers' potential replies to them. Gathering these tweets as a web page PDF

produced partly similar outcomes – especially when gathering MUIP readers' potential replies to MUIP's main tweets. Saving each selected main tweet individually as a web page PDF, one tweet after the other, would partly achieve the desired outcome - capturing MUIP's main tweets and some of the users' replies to them. Often, not all of them were captured, unfortunately. Therefore, this implied that I could not go through all of the 3000+ MUIP's tweets that were published by MUIP's content creator from the 24th of January 2020 to the 12th of March 2020, saving each of these tweets, one after the other, as web page PDFs to gather some of each of these main tweets' replies. That is why I selected 107 of these 3000+ tweets to capture as web page PDFs. 17 of these tweets covered the period prior to Ighalo's first match with MUFC (from the 24th of January 2020 and the 17th of February 2020). 90 of them (18 per game) covered Ighalo's first five games within MUFC played between the 17th of February 2020 and the 12th of March 2020 – which was the last time MUFC played before the first English lockdown.

With my discourse analysis, I also faced a couple of technical challenges. The first one was my ability to use NVivo and NCapture. Before embarking on this research project, I had not used NVivo or NCapture before. When I started using them, my command of these two tools (especially my command of NVivo) was quite limited. The second technical challenge I faced was my laptop's ability to cope with the high use of NVivo. Before the Covid-19 pandemic hit us all, I was doing most analytical work (both quantitative and qualitative) on my research room's computer at London Metropolitan University. That computer could cope with large data and highly demanding research computer programmes. When the Covid-19 pandemic forced everyone to study remotely because the university buildings were closed (from March 2020 to October 2020), I had to rely on my laptop, which could not cope with large data and highly demanding research computer programmes. During several months, I would be using

my laptop to analyse data on NVivo, and it would suddenly stop working and reboot itself. It could happen several times during a day and led to numerous delays in my research plan.

Strengths

Fortunately, I could use the London Metropolitan University's cloud app centre that enabled me to use computer programmes remotely without having those programmes on my laptop. This helped me mitigate these difficulties. When London Metropolitan University's library reopened in October 2020 (before closing again in January 2021), I was able to use the library's computer to continue and finish that discourse analysis. My laptop started serving solely as a tool to write my thesis.

I also spent some weeks learning how to use NVivo for my research project. My level gradually improved, and I now have a sufficiently good command of NVivo to analyse my research data. I was able to scrutinise and discursively analyse those 107 main tweets released during the period mentioned above (and mentioning the keyword above), as well as the 505 readers' replies they generated. 107 tweets constitute about a 3.5% sample of the 3000+ tweets retrieved between the 24th of January 2020 and the 12th of March 2020. According to Ahmed (2019), this constitutes a good sample of data for the discourse analysis. He estimated that a good sample for the discourse analysis of tweets should range between 1% and 10% of the retrieved tweets.

My discourse analysis was the best way to collect information about MUIP's cultures. In fact, McKee (2003) noted that natural sciences' research methods might appear questionable as they claim the existence of an external reality that is independent of the human mind. McKee's argument suggests that human beings cannot access a world completely independent of the particular conditions of its representation. Therefore, it would have been immaterial and inadequate to use such research methods to investigate social and cultural conditions expressed in MUIP creator's and audience's discursive practices. The discourse analysis was, therefore,

the most appropriate method to address the research questions. The subjective character of my research constitutes an originality asset.

In-depth Interview

In-depth interview refers to interviewing an individual or individuals in order "to gain their own perspective on and insights into a particular issue" (Hansen and Machin, 2013, p.44). I used this instrument to explore the MUIP creator's experiences and views on MUIP and what meaning and representations he brings to the account's followers on Twitter and Twitter in general.

This interview was semi-structured. It means that it was a flexible interview in which I led the conversation while probing some topics in depth. I pre-stated key topics or questions that were written on my interview guide. This interview guide revolved around six main questions: who, what, why, how, when and to whom? The 'who' question was about the identity of the founder of MUIP. The 'what' question dealt with the overall MUIP's concept and vision. The 'why' question explored the reasons of its creation. The 'how' question assessed MUIP's production processes. The 'when' question was about MUIP's history and future aspirations. 'To whom' dealt with the principal and secondary target audience of the account. This in-depth interview was conducted using Skype, as MUIP's founder does not live in the United Kingdom. He lives in Lagos, Nigeria.

I had already established contact with MUIP's creator via emails and WhatsApp chats. He knew that my research project was about the account he created. He was also aware that I wanted to interview him, and he was looking forward to it. This interview was being recorded, and I also took some notes. All of these were done with his consent. I discuss informed consent in later section (Research Ethics).

Weaknesses

Hansen and Machin (2013) argued that an in-depth interview can be time-consuming when planning it, contacting the interviewee and sometimes meeting them. They also argued that it takes some time to conduct such an interview, and it is even more time-consuming to transcribe what has been recorded. I, indeed, found it quite time-consuming transcribing that interview. Furthermore, as noted by Hansen and Machin, such interviews may sometimes be biased as they can appear to rely on the investigator's intended research aim.

Strengths

However, Hansen and Machin (2013) also argued that an in-depth interview gives greater freedom to the researcher to explore issues. It provides more critical details and the capacity to study further things that arise. In fact, the data gathered from this interview constituted a foundation to my discourse analysis. It provided me with preliminary production contexts on MUIP such as the identity of its founder, the reasons why it was founded, its production process, its target audience, and its cultural meanings and representation. I then investigated them further via that discourse analysis (see Chapter Four and Chapter Six).

Survey

The survey I conducted sought to identify and quantitatively describe the trends, attitudes, and opinions of MUIP's followers and the reality that it represents to them. I aimed to find out that MUIP's followers on Twitter have a West African background/origin. The survey also explored why this account is followed by those followers and investigated the connection between MUIP and a West African identity. The sample was constituted exclusively of MUIP's followers on Twitter. I proceeded to a non-probability sampling. Concretely, I used snowball sampling and identified a few followers on Twitter to participate in the survey and asked them to identify further participants and so on. I also requested MUIP's creator to help me in the snowballing process by tweeting the Google Form link to my survey directly on MUIP's account. A

questionnaire constituted the main instrument of that survey and was designed using Google Form. It was accessible electronically using the link to that Google Form. Google Sheets and Excel served as data analysis tools. Participants were asked about their age group, gender identity, country of origin, country of nationality, and country of residence. They were asked about the type of area they live in (urban/rural) and their highest level of education. Respondents were also asked to point out whether they were football and Manchester United fans. Ultimately, they were asked to self-rate their level of Pidgin English and to indicate why they follow 'Man United in Pidgin' on Twitter. The last question on why they follow 'Man United in Pidgin' was an open question. The participants were free to orientate their answers whichever way they wanted to with this last question. The other questions were closed ones with a list of choices for each of them. See the list of questions asked in Appendix 2 (along with the choices of answers).

Weaknesses

Dörnyei (2003) identified some of the disadvantages of questionnaires. He argued that questionnaires offer little or no interactivity with the researcher and their format is usually rigid. He also argued that there are several dangers with this technique: risk of low return – lack of motivation; and the threat of non-completion. Participants may also misunderstand questions.

100 MUIP's followers on Twitter participated (by responding to the survey), which is by no means a representative sample (Qualtrics, 2020). In fact, at the time I conducted that online survey, MUIP had 57,203 followers on Twitter. I opted to have a non-representative sample of 100 participants. It was for two reasons: (1) the sizes of the ideal sample at the time and (2) the type of research I conducted.

Based on QUALTRICS.COM sample size calculator, the ideal samples for this population would have been as presented in table 1 below:

Population size	Confidence level	Margin of error	Ideal sample size
57,203	95%	5%	382
57,203	95%	4%	594
57,203	95%	3%	1,048
57,203	95%	2%	2,305
57,203	95%	1%	8,223
57,203	99%	5%	656
57,203	99%	4%	1,018
57,203	99%	3%	1,785
57,203	99%	2%	3,865
57,203	99%	1%	12,853

Table 1: MUIP's representative samples in January-February 2020

This table shows that ideal sample sizes were quite big. Surveying such large numbers was not easily feasible within the time frame I had allocated myself to collect data through this online survey (one month). My online survey's sample size was small. Therefore, this limited the generalisability of the survey's results.

Strengths

However, this online survey did not constitute my main research method. A greater emphasis was put on the qualitative methodological perspective (the discourse analysis of MUIP's main tweets and users' replies to these tweets; and the interview with MUIP's founder). This survey was only used as a triangulation tool to add a degree of reliability and validity to my qualitative research findings.

Questionnaires are nonetheless familiar to many (Dörnyei, 2003). While Choi and Pak (2005) argued that surveys can be affected by researchers' biases when they design questions – their questions may be ambiguous, vague, complex, too long, or (mis)leading - Dörnyei (2003) nonetheless stressed that surveys are capable of reducing these biases if well designed. In the questions I designed for the online survey, I tried to make sure that those were comprehensible and that they were worded in a manner that would favour, as much as possible, honest answers from the participants. I also did not use technical terms and I tried not to be vague. The questions were not lengthy and, to the best of my knowledge, not (mis)leading. Besides, 10 out of 11 questions were gathering basic data on the participants such as their age group; their gender identity; their countries of origin, of nationality, and of residence; the type of areas they live in; whether they are football fans and MUFC fans; their highest level of education; and their level of Pidgin English.

Dörnyei added that survey questions constitute an effective and quick way of gathering data. Data can be easily analysed, and this technique is replicable. Furthermore, a survey constitutes a valuable tool when it is used in combination with qualitative data. This online survey was indeed a tool that enabled me to gather preliminary data on MUIP's consumers/followers on Twitter. Such data included their socio-demographic characteristics; their link to football, to Manchester United Football Club, and to the language MUIP's content creator employ (Pidgin English). I then assessed those preliminary elements further via an analysis of 505 replies to the 107 MUIP's tweets I selected and analysed (See Chapter Five and Chapter Six).

Research ethics

Three main ethical concerns arose from my research project. They were all related to the research methods I used (discourse analysis, in-depth interview and online survey). My research sometimes required disclosing information that participants would rather keep private such as their age group, gender, country of origin, nationality, country of residence and level

of education. It also involved the direct and indirect collection of new data from humans. Although the replies analysed are in the public domain and freely available, there were some ethical concerns associated with the discourse analysis of these replies. As McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017) noted, even though internet content are freely available and in the public domain (unless restricted by particular internet users themselves), people may feel uncomfortable with and be unaware of the use of their online publications for research. While it was impossible to get consent to analyse replies to MUIP's Tweets, I nonetheless anonymised them by eliminating accounts' names and profile pictures.

The participation of MUIP's Creator in the in-depth interview was discretionary and without any obligation. I asked this specific participant the most appropriate and private time for him to be interviewed. I also made arrangements on my side not to be disturbed and assured privacy to this specific participant. While this interview was digitally audio-recorded and transcribed (with his permission), it was strictly confidential and securely digitally stored by me. The interview's recording was labelled with a study ID generated by me, not with the creator's name. The interview transcription was tagged with a study ID. The file that links to MUIP's creator with his study ID is securely stored on my Google Drive (wsm0016@my.londonmet.ac.uk). I am the only one to have access to it. He was free to withdraw at any time up to 4 weeks after the interview date. The files mentioned will be destroyed on completion of the research and after the submission and defence of the thesis. Before this interview, I contacted him and sent him a participation information leaflet and a consent form. Each stated a brief description of my proposed project. Selected data from this interview will be used for published doctoral research.

Participation in the survey was discretionary and without obligation. Respondents could exit if they wished to, without me even knowing they had clicked on the link in the first place. Each participant could decide the most convenient and private time to participate. While the data

obtained from this survey were stored on my Google account, they were strictly confidential and securely stored. I am the only one having access to all answers. However, no one (including myself) can identify a participant's name, email address or IP Address. No one can know whether or not a participant participated in the study. Data will be destroyed on completion of the research project and after the submission and defence of the thesis. A brief description of my project was available at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants' consent was obtained before they participated in the survey. Selected data from this survey will be used for published doctoral research.

This project did not have any benefit for my participants. My research posed no risk to me. My research project's possible risks or discomforts on the participants (to the Skype interview and online survey) were minimal. Participants may have felt a little uncomfortable answering some of the personal interview or survey questions or any other questions which answers they would rather keep to themselves. They were free to decline answering those or any other ones.

All my research files were stored on my university's Google Account (Google Drive). These files are private unless one decides to share them (Google, 2019). Furthermore, Google does not share any of these files with companies, organisations, or individuals outside of Google without the consent of the owner of the file. I installed the "Secure File Encryption" app on my Google Drive. This app provides bank-grade AES256 encryption to protect my files stored on Google Drive. No unencrypted data can ever leave my computer. It enabled me to protect all the research files and data uploaded to my Google Drive while they were being uploaded and stored them securely as a password is needed to access them and download them. A password that I am the only one to know.

Conclusion

In this third chapter, I highlighted the research's paradigm, strategy, methodology, and methods used to address my research questions. All these aspects were presented with their respective limits and strengths. Social constructionism was the research paradigm I adopted for my research on MUIP as I investigated the social world build by this social media community which could not be done using positivism. While positivists have claimed that social constructionist studies lack validity and reliability, social constructionism was nonetheless the adequate research paradigm for my study of MUIP. My research is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable – which are the key strengths of a social constructionist study.

Abduction was the main research strategy used as my starting point was the lived reality of the MUIP Twitter community and of its actors. I combined it with induction (through an accumulation of observed data on the MUIP Twitter community that allowed me to generate generalisations and patterns on the motivations and meanings behind that community) and deduction (through the hypothesis that MUIP's followers mostly come from West Africa which I tested using an online survey). Alleyne (2015) noted that abduction is a not so well-defined strategy as there is not a consensus on what its key procedures are apart from the analysis of discourse generated by socio-cultural actors. He also indicated that induction lack logic and deduction does not take into account the impact of culture on scientific inquiry. However, if these strategies are combined, their respective weaknesses are minimised – and so I combined them for this research.

I adopted a mixed methodology and gave a greater emphasis to the qualitative aspect of this mixed methodology. While quantitative and qualitative methodologies both have weaknesses – the former fails to consider individual experiences and the latter fails to offer generalisations – if combined, those weaknesses are minimised. Therefore, the qualitative methodology allowed me to determine why the MUIP Twitter community was created, why it is followed,

and how the language used by this community helps setting up a West African identity. The quantitative methodology helped as a triangulation tool to be associated with my qualitative methodology. They both informed my study of how the MUIP Twitter community helps setting up a West African online identity on Twitter.

I used 3 research techniques for my study of the MUIP Twitter community. The principal method was a discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets and of its followers' replies to these tweets, looking at speech acts, interactions, and rhetorical features. While positivists would claim that a discourse analysis lacks generalisability and replicability, it was nonetheless the most appropriate technique to address my research questions as it would have been inappropriate to use a positivist method to assess social and cultural conditions expressed in the MUIP Twitter community's discursive practices.

I also interviewed MUIP's creator. This interview happened to be time-consuming with regards to planning and transcribing it. However, the data gathered from this interview provided a basis for my discourse analysis by giving me preliminary information on the account's production contexts. Thirdly, I surveyed 100 MUIP followers on Twitter. While it offered limited interactivity between myself and the participants, it nonetheless gave me preliminary data on MUIP's consumption contexts and practices.

The final section of this chapter covered the ethical concerns raised by my research. The latter sometimes required the disclosure of information which participants would rather keep private. It also involved the direct and indirect collection of new data from humans. Furthermore, people may feel uncomfortable with and unaware of the use of their online publications for research. While I could not get consent to analyse replies to MUIP's tweets, I nonetheless anonymised them. The participations in the interview and in the online survey were

discretionary and without any obligation. Participants could decline answering any question. Data obtained from them were also safely and securely stored.

Having presented this research's paradigm, strategy, methodology, methods, and ethical concerns, I shall, in the next 3 chapters, present the findings of my investigation. In the next chapter (Chapter Four – DDS Interview Analysis), I report on the interview I had with MUIP's creator and highlight how the preliminary data on MUIP's production patterns he provided me with illuminate my research areas. In chapter five (Survey Analysis), I present the data gathered from the online survey on 100 MUIP followers on Twitter which provided me with preliminary data on MUIP's consumption contexts and practices. In this chapter, I also highlight how these data relate to my research areas. Finally, in chapter six (Discourse Analysis), I answer my research questions by presenting the discursive features used in MUIP tweets and by assessing how these features help setting up a West African online identity.

CHAPTER FOUR – DDS INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Introduction

I interviewed via Skype, the creator of MUIP on November 16, 2019, for half an hour (09:30 AM to 10:00 AM). This interview aimed to explore the MUIP creator's experiences and views on MUIP and what meanings and representations he brings to the account's followers on Twitter and to Twitter in general. This interview was semi-structured and had six pre-stated topics or questions: (1) who? (2) what? (3) why? (4) how? (5) to whom? (6) when? The 'who' question was about the identity of the founder of MUIP. The 'what' question dealt with the overall MUIP's concept and vision. The 'why' question explored the reasons behind MUIP's creation. The 'how' question assessed MUIP's production processes. 'To whom' dealt with the principal and secondary target audience of the account. The 'when' question was about MUIP's history and future aspirations. This chapter discusses that interview and explores how it clarifies the research contexts. Its core contribution is to inform readers regarding the subject-position of MUIP's founder. This subject-position constitutes an important element in understanding the MUIP Twitter community as it offers some preliminary ideas on MUIP tweets' production that are subsequently thoroughly assessed via a discourse analysis. This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part highlights the subject-position or identity of the founder of MUIP. The second part covers the reasons behind MUIP's creation, its production processes, its target audience, and its cultural meanings or representations. Thirdly, I present MUIP's history, achievements, partnerships, relationships with MUFC, and projections. In each of these main sections, I highlight how the findings of this interview connect to the areas of football fandom, globalisation, social media, and cultural identity.

MUIP's founder subject-position

During the interview with MUIP's founder, we discussed aspects of his identity. These included his state and country of origin, nationality, city, and country of residence. They also included the university he attended, the degree/course he studied, his professions, his native language, the number of languages he speaks, and the ones he uses the most daily. He gave me his name which I anonymised when transcribing our conversation. I used the initials of his pseudonym (DDS) instead (see the interview's full transcript in Appendix 2).

DDS is from Anambra State in Nigeria. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2013) highlighted that Anambra State is a State in south-eastern Nigeria. This State was created in 1976 from a subdivision of east central State with Enugu as its capital. In 1991, that former State was divided into two parts: Enugu in the east, Anambra in the West. Anambra State is bordered to the south by Imo State and Rivers State, to the west by Delta State and Edo State, to the north by Kogi State, and to the east by the State of Enugu and the State of Abria. The State's economy is greatly influenced by agricultural activities. Anambra State produces crops such as yams, cassava, rice, corn, palm fruits (which are then used to produce palm oil), oranges, limes, lemons, and grapefruits. Other economic activities include commerce, various industries (textile, soft and alcoholic drinks, furniture, metal, etc.), and minerals and gas extraction. In an article titled "Top 10 Most Populated States in Nigeria" (2021), the Nigerian Info blog has reported that Anambra State is the 10th most populated State in Nigeria (Nigeria has 36 federal States) with an estimated population of more than 4.1 million individuals. Those individuals are mostly Igbo and Christians.

MUIP creator is a Nigerian (origin and nationality) and lives in Lagos, Nigeria. Dokua Sasu (2022) pointed that Lagos is the largest city (population wise) in Africa with about 15.4 million people living there. Lagos was Nigeria's capital until 1976, when Abuja became the country's capital. Lagos has one of the largest ports in Africa and constitutes the main Nigerian industrial

and trade centre. Originally occupied by Yoruba people (Actunews, 2021), Lagos is now multi-ethnic and includes about as many Christian inhabitants as Muslims. The city is also a major cultural centre, having given birth to artistic movements such as Nollywood – its film industry (Haynes, 2007).

DDS mentioned that he completed a degree in Computer Technology at Babcock University (Ilishan, Ogun State, 80 kilometres away from Lagos) although he seemed slightly uncomfortable stating his highest level of education. Babcok University is a Seventh-day Adventist university that hosts 10 schools: Benjamin Carson College of Medicine, Computing and Engineering Sciences, Education and Humanities, Law and Security Studies, Management Sciences, School of Nursing Sciences, Public and Allied Health, Science and Technology, Veronica Adeleke School of Social Sciences, and the College of Postgraduate Studies.

DDS is also a banker, a blogger, and a vlogger. With this rich profile, DDS's type of football fandom is revealed. It has been claimed by some scholars as well as essayists – such as Monsivais (see Goldlatt, 2020) - that football is a mere distraction fostering violence, identity hatreds, xenophobic attitudes, ultra-nationalism, poverty, unemployment, exclusion, precariousness, the infantilisation of people and their cultural alienation (Brohm, 1976; Brohm and Perelman, 2006). These claims seem not so accurate when it comes to DDS. While being a MUFC fan, DDS has a university degree in Computer Technology and has what many would describe as a fulfilling professional career. With this multifaceted career, DDS challenges the idea that football leads its fans to unemployment. In fact, football seems to have given DDS the opportunity to create new professional activities. With his MUIP account, DDS has added at least 03 professional activities to his profile. He can be seen as a social media manager, a community manager, and as a content creator. Furthermore, MUIP's founder has a team of content creators as well which shows that his fandom community leads to employment.

DDS's fandom identity seems to align itself with pro-football ambassadors such as Goldblatt (2020) who conceived football as a medium of human tussle building up an area where a new world can be designed and conveyed. Thus, football is seen as reinforcing creative imagination. Through DDS's fandom identity embodied by the MUIP account, it appears that DDS expresses his creative writing abilities by conveying MUFC's news and stories in Pidgin English.

When asked about his native language, the creator of 'Man United in Pidgin' said that his native language is Igbo. However, when interrogated about the number of languages he speaks, DDS noted that he only speaks English fluently (he is not fluent in Igbo). He is fluent in Pidgin English but does not consider it a language. I found this thread of thoughts quite intriguing as these thoughts expressed by DDS connect to cultural and linguistic identity construction in postcolonial contexts. First, DDS identified Igbo (1 of the 478 languages spoken in Nigeria) as his native language yet he said he was not fluent in it. The Igbo language is spoken by Nigeria's Igbo people who are found in south-eastern Nigeria and parts of far south-eastern Nigeria, mainly in the regions of the Niger River delta, including Agbor and Port Harcourt (Widjaja, 2000). It can be observed that the fact that DDS is a highly educated Nigerian might have contributed to his inability to speak Igbo fluently, given that English is the official language for educational and administrative purposes in Nigeria, and the use of local languages has often been discouraged. This answer and the fact that he said that he was fluent in Pidgin English but would not call it a language raised a few self-interrogations: what is a native language? Why is Pidgin English not classified as a type of language by DDS? Why is it not classified as a type of language by many West Africans?

Also called first language or mother tongue, a native language is considered on the one hand as the first language a child learns (Bloomfield, 1994), and on the other hand, as the language of one's ethnic group (Davies, 2003). In some countries, the second definition is the most

common one used (especially in Africa). Therefore, it appears that DDS is an Igbo descendant and identifies this language as his native language. However, one can also argue that English is also one of his first languages based on Bloomfield's definition and on the fact that it is his most used language. I can go as far as to think that English was the first language he learned (at least in educational settings). Since he is also competent in Pidgin English and uses it quite often, had he been classifying it as a type of language, I would have argued that Pidgin English is just as well one of his main languages.

In an article titled 'Pidgin – West African lingua franca', BBC (2016) quoted the Oxford English Dictionary definition of Pidgin:

> "a language containing lexical and other features from two or more languages, characteristically with simplified grammar and a smaller vocabulary than the languages from which it is derived, used for communication between people not having a common language; a lingua franca"

The beginning of the above definition says it all: Pidgin English is a language. It is spoken by millions of people, mostly young, in every day West African lives (BBC, 2016). However, Pidgin English use is officious and quite often discouraged in those countries. As that BBC article highlighted, "children are disciplined if they are caught speaking Pidgin, rather than English". Perhaps this explains why DDS is reluctant in classifying it as a type of language. It perhaps also gives a clue on the internal linguistic/discursive tensions that postcolonial individuals in Nigeria and West Africa still navigate even when those were born long after the independence of their countries of origin. It should be highlighted that there are still certain levels of cultural inequalities between those colonial poles during this current postcolonial era. In fact, as Goerg et al. (2013) and Lewis et al. (2016) highlighted, former colonisers' languages still occupy a prominent place in former colonies. Many formerly colonised nations use colonial languages as their official languages and the use of indigenous languages or other lingua francas is often not encouraged (and even repressed). Nigeria for example uses English

as its unique official language. While Pidgin English users like DDS, wants to promote this lingua franca via accounts like MUIP, it seems as though many like him have not yet fully come to terms with the idea that Pidgin English can be seen as an important and valuable means of expression of their cultural identity.

Through his establishment of and his engagement with MUIP's virtual community, DDS seems to reconstruct and convey aspects of his identity on Twitter. He is a Nigerian graduate who lives in Nigeria, where he has a busy professional career. He is a MUFC fan who is fluent in English and Pidgin English. However, this process seems far from being fixed. It is somewhat performed, hybrid and contradictory at times (Hall, 1992; Butler, 1990). On the contradictory aspect, DDS views Pidgin English as being part of the linguistic wealth of Nigeria and (West) Africa which he wants to exhibit to the world, yet he does not classify Pidgin English as a type of language. He seems to downgrade Pidgin English and suggest that it is not as important as any other (Western) languages. The hybrid aspect appears to be twofold. On the one hand, MUIP's hybridity is reflected through the fact that it seems to be an adaptation of the coverage of an English Premier League Football team (MUFC) to a Nigerian and West African audience. On the other hand, it is reflected through DDS's choice to tweet about MUFC in Pidgin English which is itself a hybrid language.

Reasons behind MUIP's creation, its production processes, target audience, and cultural meanings/representations

DDS is a Nigerian MUFC fan who had the idea of creating a Pidgin English social media account because many West Africans speak Pidgin English. He did not think about it and just went ahead. The reception was satisfactory, which motivated him to take MUIP seriously. He claimed that when he started MUIP, there was no social media account in Pidgin English in Africa. It was mostly (football) news in English and any other official languages. After he

started with MUIP, many followed his path and started creating digital platforms in Pidgin. People started accepting Pidgin English (in football).

He decided to start on Twitter because it was his leading social networking site, and he already had a voluminous number of followers on this platform. He did not have many followers on Instagram and did not know how to publish there (he did not know how to handle just pictures over there). He then decided to expand on other platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Blog, mobile app) because he started documenting himself on digital marketing. Most readings would suggest spreading from one platform to another to avoid putting all his eggs in one basket and keeping his followers with him on every platform they use. It was also to promote MUIP on the leading digital media.

He is the principal content creator (it comes naturally since he is already used to it), but contributors help him manage the handle. Some of them cannot handle it on Twitter and usually choose to focus on Facebook only. There are a few contributors who can handle it on Twitter. He acknowledged that it does not look as easy as it seems. It must be funny to catch people's attention and generate traffic. He indicated that it takes some training to reach a point where it is easy for one contributor to tweet content. DDS's rules are to get the news and find how to spread them uniquely (for example, using humour).

Humour seems to be an element of DDS's code of conduct that is continuously learned and enacted (performed) to create MUIP's production process. Humour is said to be jokes or actions generating laughter and merriment, as well as allowing human beings to try and laugh even in adverse circumstances (Sen, 2012). DDS claimed that MUIP's tweets generate laughter and merriment among its followers; and allow them to laugh about the misfortune their favourite club may face. He claimed that the MUFC's news and stories conveyed in Pidgin English on

the MUIP platform are funny and unique. The discourse analysis reveals more about this claimed sense of humour.

According to DDS, there is no set number of tweets to produce per day/week/month. There are more tweets on match days, fewer tweets on non-match days. There are lesser tweets than usual during international breaks unless there are transfers (and the stories that go with them). On the issue of frequency, he added that if there is no actual football content, the account publishes on players' lifestyles. One claimed fundamental rule of MUIP's tweets and discussions is not to insult. However, the discourse analysis offers a slightly different picture with regards to that 'no insult' claim.

DDS claimed that the leading followers of his account on Twitter mostly come from Nigeria and Ghana. He mentioned that some people come from South Africa and that it is also spread across all the other African countries. He noted that some foreigners (non-Africans) follow MUIP because Pidgin English is a language they are not used to. DDS's description of MUIP's target audience relates to social media involvement in identity construction. With his account on Twitter, DDS uses the new power brought by digital technologies (Timms and Heinmans, 2019) and can relate to more than 100,000 Twitter users (number of MUIP's followers in July 2022). He added that because the Pidgin English used is not *"the row Nigerian Pidgin so there are tweets that some foreigners that if they have followed us for a while like they would be able to understand some of the language"*. He also highlighted the fact that some foreigners understand Pidgin.

According to him, these followers follow his account on Twitter because they love Pidgin English, and they like MUFC. He reckoned that his social media handle has a well-established authority justified because the news is up to date, making some followers set reminders on the account's tweets so that once a tweet is released, they get it. He then added:

> *"Why would they follow the news in English when they can follow it in Pidgin, and they would laugh about it?! And it's, I think, for some people, they believe it helps to cure them from the usual depression (...) when the club is not winning (...) Those that you do, like, it tends to make some people laugh and forget about the fact that, okay, they are depressed".*

DDS claimed that people who support other clubs and those who want to study 'Man United in Pidgin' are also likely to follow his account. He argued that his account is unique and that *"if you stick to something even if it's odd and not what everybody is doing and you start getting love and reception for it, obviously it leads more people into doing it"*. His goal is to expose Africa to the world. More foreigners, he said, are discovering Pidgin English, a lingua franca they did not know about before. He closed this interview saying:

> *"Some of them, when they know, they actually say that they're going to google it or there are some people that they have, like, come across it before, but they did not pay too much attention to it until this happened and they are like 'oh', that they've actually been in classes where they talked about Pidgin, but they did not really pay attention to it because they didn't really think that people speak it".*

With regards to the involvement of social media in the construction of cultural identities, Meikle (2016) noted that with social networking sites, people can now produce and distribute their meanings and systems of representations. Similarly, Castells (2009) stressed that the mass self-communication enabled by social media allows people to share their personal ideas publicly which can potentially generate alternative political, socio-economic and cultural power structures. With MUIP, DDS aims to make and circulate his meanings and systems of representations to the digital public sphere. He wants the world to acknowledge that he is a MUFC fan from Nigeria who designed and handles a Twitter account in Pidgin English capable of representing his fandom and many African people like him (MUFC fans who can speak Pidgin English). MUIP's communication can reach multi-audiences that are, according to him, spread across various countries. In July 2022, MUIP's had 100,000+ followers on Twitter. The tweets are generated by DDS himself (or his contributing team), and the account's followers seem to be self-directed by unique humour, and their love for Pidgin English and MUFC. Their

tweets consumption seems self-selected. Through this mass-self communication, DDS wants to share his ideas on MUFC and Premier League Football; and change the cultural foundations of civilisation, thereby exposing an under-exposed Africa to the world and foreigners (non-Africans).

As Page (2012) highlighted, human beings have always constructed their identities through discourse and stories, whether in online or offline settings. Stories constitute essential tools in understanding human lives. To get his followers' attention and generate traffic, DDS tells stories about MUFC's matches, transfers, and lifestyles. It seems to be done using humour. Those stories usually generate many interactions (likes, retweets and replies) from the account's audience. Furthermore, the stories conveyed by MUIP's tweets can allow DDS to construct his university educated, Nigerian, MUFC fan and Pidgin English speaker identities on online settings. Therefore, he seems to interact with like-minded people (who follow his account) and the world he lives in (a globalised and interconnected world where universalism and particularism are at play).

When it comes to globalisation's link to cultural identity construction, some scholars even claimed that globalisation favours the emergence of a kind of shared culture that not only endangers cultural diversity but also contributes to the expansion of cultural imperialism (Seabrook, 2004; Ritzer, 1993; Dorfman and Mattelart, 1975). Building on that idea, one could easily be tempted to argue that Premier League Football, broadcast worldwide, has imposed their mediatised teams, players, and football variety globally, creating a worldwide market channelling universal references to Premier League Football players and clubs. However, Tomlinson (1991) stressed that people in under-developed countries can actively decode cultural or media texts from the West without being constrained by potential encoded (cultural imperialist) meanings. Thussu (2006) and Shim (2006) held similar views and argued that

globalisation is not a new form of imperialism but a tool enabling cultural adaptation and change across the globe.

Therefore, while it may be true that the English Premier League Football along with their teams, players and football variety are broadcast worldwide, they can be actively decoded and adapted from one local space to another. In fact, with MUIP, DDS seems to have activated his particular identity and highlighted the civilizational markers that go with it. His account seems to proceed to a specific adaptation of Premier League Football and MUFC to his own cultures and the cultures of those like him (Nigerian/West African MUFC's fans and Pidgin English speakers). MUIP seems to be an example of hybridity – as conceptualised by Bhabha (1994) - in the postcolonial era. In fact, it appears that this account is not only a handle dealing with information and activities from MUFC (a football team of a former coloniser) but also a handle that has incorporated, through language (Pidgin English), elements of Nigerian and West African identities (former colonised entities). Furthermore, as DDS himself argued, while he believes that most MUIP's followers are from Nigeria and (West) African countries, he also thinks some of the account's followers are also non-Africans. It suggests, unlike what the cultural imperialist thesis would argue, that MUIP enable change across the globe, however small that change may be. Thus, globalisation seems to have enabled DDS to render his cultural adaptation of MUFC's social media coverage visible to non-Africans. Therefore, what could have been easily perceived as a top-down diffusion from a developed country (England) to underdeveloped countries (Nigeria and West African countries) of a Premier League Football team, appears to be a – slightly – lateral diffusion. The interest non-Africans seem to have for MUIP can corroborate the idea that cultural hybridity can emerge from and happen everywhere (in formerly colonised countries as well as in former colonising empires), even if it might not equally occur everywhere.

As highlighted by Morley (2005), although such cultural changes and adaptations occur, they are far from being equally distributed across the said globe. Thus, DDS (who lives in Nigeria, an underdeveloped country) appears to be actively decoding and adapting the coverage of an English Premier League Football club (MUFC) as he wishes but one may wonder how far his capacity to actively decode and adapt this cultural/media text can go in order to enable him to generate a global cultural agenda spreading across the globe. I think DDS's current agenda is to grow his brand principally in Africa as he believes that is where his market is. From what he expressed during this interview; it appears that he is establishing a *glocal* cultural agenda on the continent. He mentioned that stations, websites and social media accounts often study his account to look at how they can increase their Pidgin English fanbase on the continent. MUIP seems to be an example of good practice for these entities. It may be too early to say that MUIP is a global online phenomenon, but it seems to be a well-established regional or *glocal* online phenomenon. In fact, referring to McLuhan's (1962, 1964) idea of a global village which implied that with media and information and communication technologies, people from all parts of the world would form a single global consciousness, I would note that it seems as though DDS is establishing a *glocal* village within that global one. While it is true that the English Premier League and MUFC are global phenomena popular across the world, it is also accurate to say that with MUIP, DDS has created a *glocal* village within the Premier League and MUFC's global one. That *glocal* village has been built by a Nigerian MUFC fan to visibly cater to Nigerian and other West African MUFC fans. Thus, I would argue that the global village in which we are currently living in is in reality a series of interconnected *glocal* ones.

MUIP's history, achievements, partnerships, relationships with MUFC, and projections

MUIP was launched on Twitter in August 2015. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, DDS's aim at first was just to build it on Twitter, then later, to expand it on other social networking platforms. Then he decided to create a mobile app. The account's audience became bigger on

Facebook and Instagram than on Twitter, so he started emphasising a bit more on Facebook and Instagram. He also mentioned that advertising on these two platforms was a lot cheaper than on Twitter. It is important to note that since July 2022, MUIP has more followers on Twitter than it has on Instagram (100,000+ and 95,500+ respectively). MUIP's Facebook account is still the community's top account in terms of followers (214,000+ in July 2022). When I interviewed DDS, MUIP had 57,000+ followers on Twitter, 80,000+ followers on Instagram, and 100,000+ followers on Facebook.

MUIP's achievements made its creator happy at the time. He argued that: *"if I would compare it to the initial plan of it, I didn't think it would reach this stage (...) where almost everybody would be trying to imitate"*. He was pleased that a station studied his handle to create its platform and that an official club studied his account to look at how it can grow its Pidgin-speaking fanbase. He was happy to see other platforms going into Pidgin English.

MUIP's creator produced and released a few music tracks and videos about Manchester United Football Club. He also created a 'Man United in Pidgin Fantasy Premier League' (MUIPFPL). While he did not mention whether he had external sponsors for the music and videos he created, he said that for the MUIPFPL, there are no external sponsors (there were no external sponsors when I interviewed him). He argued that: *"hopefully in the future, there might be more sponsors like it might increase the prize money from where it is at but (...) for how much we actually stake, we don't need a sponsor for that"*. When I interviewed DDS in November 2019, the MUIPFPL was in its third year of existence. DDS was then open to external sponsors as he believed they could increase the cash prize.

MUIP's creator highlighted having a few interactions with some of MUFC players (whose names he did not mention) but those were unofficial or personal interactions. When we spoke,

he was not sure if MUFC knew his social media account existed. When asked if he was seeing himself collaborating with the football club in the future, he said:

> *"If the opportunity presents itself, that will be an amazing opportunity, and I will grasp it, but it hasn't happened yet so, I will keep on doing what I can do, that is, trying to build the brand in Africa because that's where the largest market is. If eventually the brand becomes extremely big in Africa, and that were to be put on the table, I would gladly accept (…), but it's not like one of the main goals right now (…) I mostly consider the factors I have power over but not the factors I do not have power over."*

When asked how and where he would like to see his account in the next few years, DDS said he would like to have half a million followers on Facebook. He also argued that if its account could reach 100,000 on Twitter, *"it would lead to more business partnerships with people that want to promote their stuff on our platform"*. He also expected to have 100,000 followers on Instagram. He was looking to grow everything (MUIP and MUIPFPL) on all the platforms he uses and possibly do some stuff in real-time. He was not explicit about what he meant by doing some things in real-time. He was also planning on having a mainstream outlet (TV programme, I suppose) that season 2019/2020, but he thought at the time that he would push it till the season after or till next couple of seasons after.

It has been argued that social media are amplifiers and propagators allowing clubs to tell their stories and interact with their fans as well as fuelling the latter's thirst for instantaneous information (Clavio, 2020; Delaney and Madigan, 2015; Witkemper et al, 2012). With their use of social media, these clubs can establish positive impressions among their online communities – or the other way around - and create within their fans a real sense of belonging which can participate in the construction of cyber-communities and cyber-identities. Although MUIP is not an official account endorsed by MUFC, it looks as if it serves as an amplifier and a propagator. MUIP seems to allow DDS to tell his story (the story of a Nigerian MUFC fan who speaks Pidgin English and conveys an up-to-date diary of MUFC activities with humour) and interact with his followers. With more than 100,000 followers (in July 2022) on Twitter, it

can be suggested that these are potential followers of the MUFC official club's social media account. It implies that MUIP can improve MUFC's image and reputation (or the other way around), at least among its Nigerian and West African fans. MUIP seems to have enabled DDS to create within his followers a real sense of identity or belonging to a cyber-community constituted of Nigerians/West Africans MUFC fans that can speak Pidgin English.

Onyebueke (2018) indicated that football is the sport most Nigerians follow. According to him, Nigerians are not only fans of the Nigerian national team, but they are also fans of major European football leagues which they follow in 'Football Viewing Centres' (FVCs). The latter are bars where European leagues matches are televised, creating virtual stadiums that provide entertainment and socialising platforms to local fans of these European leagues/teams. An article titled 'A typical football viewing centre experience in Nigeria' written by Keyser Soze (2021) for nairametrics.com gives a thorough explanation of the FVC concept. FVCs form part of some people's evening and weekends rituals in Nigerian urban areas. They are considered a lucrative industry in Nigeria. They are used to watch European football leagues (especially the English Premier League), the European Champions League, the Europa League, the FIFA World Cup (occurring every 4 years), the African Cup of Nations (occurring every 2 years), and other popular nation-based football competitions (the Confederation Cup, Euro, or the Copa America). FVCs emerged from Nigerians' huge attraction to football and from the popularisation of satellite television services in Nigeria (in the late nineties and early noughties). They are usually successful because Nigerians see football viewing as an activity to be experienced with other people rather than on their own. Over the years FVCs became adjuncts to stadiums' fan zones that stretch across the country. In fact, people, as in stadiums and stadiums' fan zones, pay to gain access to FVCs. Entry would cost 100 Naira (around £0.19) for a game, 200 Naira (around £0.38) for simultaneous games or 3 matches that would follow one another. FVCs are often equipped with many TV screens showing the various games

on a given day. Uninterruptible power supplies and power inverters are usually used to keep things uninterrupted in case power cuts occur. Fifty to one-hundred people tend to attend a typical FVC per match. They are mostly youngsters. Those centres have become multi-purpose spaces offering various entertaining activities. People can play pool, video games, bet, eat, and drink. Most importantly, FVCs enable young Nigerian football lovers (usually male individuals living in urban areas) to find like-minded people to socialise, chat/gossip about games and players, and have a good time.

DDS is a Nigerian, and it can be observed, as highlighted by Onyebueke, that football is the sport he follows the most. Furthermore, his allegiance is given to a European Football Club (MUFC), which is not uncommon in Nigeria. With MUIP, DDS seems to have created an environment similar to a Football Viewing Centre where matches and activities are covered online, thereby creating virtual stadiums that provide entertainment and socialising platforms to Nigerian/West African fans of MUFC and Pidgin English speakers. Humour seems to be the key characteristic contributing to the generation of a sense of belonging within this entertainment and socialising platform. MUIP seems to constitute an open window to worldwide Premier League Football and a space where local MUFC fandom can be formed, reinforced, and, as DDS wishes, exposed to the world. Furthermore, with the creation of the Man United in Pidgin Fantasy Premier League (MUIPFPL), DDS seems to be offering the sort of multi-purpose environment provided by a typical FVC. The only fundamental difference between MUIP's FVC and a typical FVC resides in the nature of that multi-purpose environment. In the latter, people interact in a shared physical space whereas in the former, they interact within a shared online one. The MUIP community can socialise, chat/gossip about games and players, have a good time, as well as enter a fantasy football league from which they can win money. The MUIPFPL also implies that with the account he created, DDS generates

money. A part of this money is presumably used to build up the cash prize of the account's fantasy league.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the Skype interview I conducted with the founder of MUIP on the 16th of November 2019. This chapter's core contribution to the thesis is to outline aspects of MUIP's founder's background and ideas that are crucial to the production contexts behind the MUIP's Twitter community. I presented MUIP's founder perspectives on (1) his own subject-position; (2) the reasons behind MUIP's creation, its production processes, target audience, and cultural meanings; as well as (3) the account's history, achievements, partnerships, relationships with MUFC, and projections.

This chapter indicates that the MUIP Twitter community constitutes an online FVC created by a Nigerian fan of MUFC and Pidgin English speaker, mainly for Nigerian/(West) Africans fans of MUFC and Pidgin English speakers. MUIP's founder suggested that MUIP allows culturally specific online socialisation and discussions gravitating around MUFC news, games, and players. Thus, by establishing this culturally specific online FVC, DDS wants to exhibit Pidgin English to the world as part of the cultural and linguistic wealth of Nigeria and (West) Africa. Therefore, DDS has created a *glocal* village within the Premier League and MUFC's global one.

DDS identified humour as being a fundamental of MUIP tweets' production. He claimed that the account's tweets are funny and unique. He justified the uniqueness of his fandom account by the fact that he was a pioneer of social media (football) content creation in Pidgin English which encouraged him to launch the account. Humour seems to be the key characteristic enabling to generate a sense of belonging within this entertainment and socialising platform. I assess this in Chapter Six (Discourse Analysis).

Now that I have presented a preliminary report on MUIP tweets' production contexts and general background, I shall, in the next chapter (Chapter Five – Survey Analysis), present preliminary data on MUIP's consumption context (s). I conducted an online survey which sought to identify and describe the trends, attitudes, and opinions of 100 MUIP's followers on Twitter and the reality that MUIP represents to them. This online survey also explored why is followed by those followers. The next chapter presents the findings of this survey and relate them to my investigation of football fandom, globalisation, social media, and cultural identity.

CHAPTER FIVE – SURVEY ANALYSIS

Introduction

I conducted a survey titled "Football Fandom, *Glocalisation* and 'Man United in Pidgin'" from January 11, 2020, to February 11, 2020. This survey aimed to identify and describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the followers of MUIP on Twitter; and their link to football, Manchester United Football Club, and Pidgin English. MUIP's creator posted the link to my online survey on his Twitter account, asking followers of that account to fill that in and ask fellow followers to do so. This tweet generated 18 responses, 18 retweets and 41 likes. Therefore, at least 41 people were contacted through this channel. I also reached 400 MUIP's followers (those listed on the account's followers' list) individually (via private message on Twitter), asking them to fill the survey and share the link to the online survey with fellow 'Man United in Pidgin' followers. 441 individuals were contacted, and 100 followers responded to the survey, representing a response rate of nearly 23%. The fifth chapter presents the results of that online survey in 3 main parts. In the first part, I present the demographic characteristics of the 100 participants thereby highlighting their age groups, gender identities, countries of origin, countries of nationality, and countries of residence, as well as the types of area in which they live. In the second part, I indicate their educational and Pidgin English levels and whether they are football and MUFC fans. Finally, I highlight the reasons they gave as to why they follow MUIP on Twitter. In each of these parts, I analyse the findings in relation to ideas and theories on language and cultural identity, football fandom, globalisation, and social media. The core contribution of this chapter is twofold. First, I test and prove my main hypothesis that MUIP's followers on Twitter are mostly West Africans. Secondly, through this survey, I also highlight the type of West African online identity that is being constructed within the MUIP Twitter community: a West African masculine online identity.

Demographic characteristics

This survey showed that participants constitute a homogenous group in terms of demographic characteristics. Most respondents had quite a lot in common. 86 participants identified as male, 13 as female, and 1 chose not to share their gender identity. 5 participants only were aged between 36 and 45 years old. 42 of them were part of the 18 – 25 age group and 53 participants were aged between 26 and 35 years old. Table 10 in Appendix 3 provides details on the age and gender repartition of the survey's participants. Respondents were also mostly Nigerian. 89% of them lived in urban areas while 11% of them lived in rural ones. What was quite heterogeneous was the number of countries in which they resided (13 countries).

Table 2: Country of Origin, Country of Nationality and Country of Residence

Countries	**Origin**	**Nationality**	**Residence**
Austria	1	1	1
Cameroon	9	10	6
France	1	1	1
Gabon			1
Germany			1
Ghana	8	8	9
Lebanon			1
Nigeria	79	78	71
South Africa			3
Ukraine			2
United Arab Emirates			1
United Kingdom			1

USA			2
Nigeria/Ghana	1	1	
Lebanon/Sierra Leone	1	1	
Grand Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

The repartition of genders among the MUIP Twitter followers who participated in the online survey corroborates the idea that football remains a site where gender inequalities are at play, with its athletes and supporters being mostly men (Goldblatt, 2020; Robinson and Clegg, 2019; Delaney and Madigan, 2015; Williams, 2013; Scraton and Flintoff, 2013; Ingham and Donnelly, 1997). This idea verifies itself within the MUIP Twitter community. While the participants in this survey were indeed overwhelmingly West Africans (98% of them were from Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, and Sierra Leone) – which was the key hypothesis I sought to test with this survey - those participants were mostly men. Thus, I would argue that the MUIP Twitter community is a football fandom online community where a West African masculine online identity is constructed and at play. Female individuals seem to be at the margins of that community.

Football/MUFC Fandom, Educational and Pidgin English levels

90% of participants in this survey had at least an undergraduate university degree. They were mostly fluent in Pidgin English. Almost half reported advanced levels of Pidgin English and nearly a quarter said that their Pidgin English level was intermediate. They self-assessed their level of Pidgin English based on the options given to them in the survey (Zero, Novice/Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior). 99% said they were football fans, and 95% reported that they were MUFC fans.

Table 3: Highest Level of Education

Level of Education	**Number**
Graduate B.Eng	1
MB;BS	1
Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil/PhD, etc.)	2
Postgraduate Taught (MA, MSc, etc.)	22
Secondary education	10
Undergraduate (BA, BSc, etc.)	64
Grand Total	**100**

Table 4: Self-assessed Level of Pidgin English

Level of Pidgin English	**Number**
Advanced	48
Intermediate	23
Novice/Basic	8
Superior	19
Zero	2
Grand Total	**100**

The levels of education of the MUIP followers who participated in the survey do not align with the idea expressed by some anti-football critics such as Carlos Monsivais (see Goldblatt, 2020), Brohm and Perelman (2006) that football is a perpetual propaganda for intellectual regression, brutishness, and vulgarity. An argument which, as in DDS's case, was not reasonably demonstrated through the results of this survey. 90% of those who answered the survey's

questions, while being football and MUFC fans, had at least an undergraduate degree. However, in the Sixth chapter, I highlight that MUIP's followers can often interact in a manner that many would qualify as rude and aggressive.

Goldblatt (2020) stressed that football constantly gives opportunities to its supporters to showcase and express the various challenges and struggles they navigate. MUIP's tweets as well as their audience's interactions seem to constitute means of expression of their struggle. This struggle is visible through the domination of western football spectacles in the overall football scene. Therefore, these tweets and the audience's reaction to them are perceived as a creative and artistic channel to make this Premier League Football spectacle their own (as some respondents said). They seem to be establishing a counterpoint to mainstream discussions of this specific football spectacle (the English Premier League and MUFC). 90% of the participants rated their level of Pidgin English as at least 'intermediate'. Therefore, Pidgin English's fluency on both sides - MUIP's content creator (s) and audience – is the key element used to establish a counterpoint to mainstream discussions of the English Premier League and MUFC among Nigerians and West Africans.

Why do they follow 'Man United in Pidgin' (MUIP)?

This survey also explored the reason why they follow MUIP on Twitter. The question was formulated as follows: "Why do you follow 'Man United in Pidgin' on Twitter"? Using an inductive approach, I read through all the responses that were given carefully and identified four main themes that emerged from them: Humour; Love or Fandom (for MUFC, Pidgin English, MUIP, all three); Identity or Belonging; and Content (news/information, updates, and angle). There were also two or three uncategorised answers – those which simply said 'Yes' to the question that was asked (see appendix 4 for an exhaustive list of what was said by respondents regarding this question).

Sen (2012) described humour as "jokes (spoken or written words) and actions (describable through words) which elicit laughter or generate merriment" (p.1). Indeed, many respondents said they follow MUIP because the account (and its tweets) makes them laugh and triggers a sense of merriment. 'Funny' and 'hilarious' were among the main adjectives used to describe the account and its tweets. Furthermore, humour allows human beings to step back from what they are experiencing by wishing to laugh instead of crying about their misfortune (Klatzmann, 1998). Therefore, in all situations (good or bad), humour always endeavours to underline the funny side. In fact, some participants reported that they follow MUIP because the content produced by the account helps them relax even when MUFC's performances are disappointing or frustrating to them. They like MUIP as its content sometimes constitutes a little 'entertaining/funny' light in a 'dark tunnel' (which represents MUFC's occasional poor performances). MUIP allows them to find the funny side of any MUFC's underperformance by conveying tweets they describe as amusing and humorous. As one survey respondent put it: *"The pidgin interpretation is quite funny even when the team plays badly..the acct interpretation of the match is Always funny. So I like it"*.

Some of the answers to this question explicitly said that MUIP followers followed MUIP because they love (they are fans of) either MUFC, Pidgin English, or MUIP. Some said they loved all three like this participant who said:

> *"I love Man United, the pidgin adds a bit more fun and excitement to the news about my favorite club. It takes away a bit of formality from the message though, it however provide the information needed to be conveyed. I love the language (dialect) as well. The page is also an active one with intermittent updates. It's no fluke that I've its notification ON"*.

In the literature review, I highlighted that Petersen-Wagner (2017) associated fandom with an attachment or love to a group or an entity. This attachment was expressed in many answers given by the participants to this survey. In fact, many participants argued that, in general, they love MUFC but the use of Pidgin English by MUIP is what makes them follow the account.

They stressed that MUIP's use of Pidgin English provides some informality or down-to-earth touch to the account. According to them, MUIP gives its readers accurate and up-to-date news about MUFC (which most participants are fans of) in a language (Pidgin English) they love and use daily. It brings them satisfaction to be able to read news and commentaries exclusively related to their favourite football club in Pidgin English – a language most participants feel close to.

This fandom also seems to develop "hot solidarities" (Petersen-Wagner, 2017, p.138) within that social media handle due to one or more shared elements. Some of them said that they liked that someone thought of creating a social media account that would represent Pidgin English speakers and would do it so well. They stressed that other countries have similar account tweeting (about football news or clubs), but that MUIP belongs to the Pidgin English speakers' community. Others went as far as to say that Pidgin English (at least that used by MUIP) belongs to Nigerians. In fact, they claimed that MUIP is a social media account the Nigerian community can relate to as it uses Pidgin English – which they claim is the second language in Nigeria (English is Nigeria's official language). Overall, these participants highlighted that they felt like MUIP was 'their own'. It is an important statement that serves as an expression of their belonging to the overall MUFC fandom community and as an expression of their belonging to a Nigerian/West African community and to a community of Pidgin English speakers. Furthermore, one participant argued that MUIP enables them to *"identify with Manchester United in a Nigerian?/African way"*.

A few responses also mentioned words like 'content', 'news', 'information' and 'updates' like this respondent who said that MUIP is *"Current [up to date] Informed and funny"*. They added: *"As a Nigerian, pidgin is attractive.. i have follow because I'm a hard core United fan"*. Thus, many follow MUIP on Twitter because of the quality or attractiveness of the content, news/information and updates it publishes. They also find their angle interesting. They claimed

that MUIP offers football and MUFC's information and latest news in a funny and entertaining way. They highlighted that the account's content is accurate, informative, as well as hilarious. They said that the hilarity is brought by the account's use of Pidgin English which makes MUIP attractive to Nigerian fans of MUFC.

I saw all these elements of responses to the survey's last question as quite rich. In fact, they relate to key ideas on social media, globalisation, football fandom, language, and their involvement in the construction of cultural identities. When it comes to ideas on social media's involvement in the construction of cultural identity, Fuchs (2014) saw social media as a participatory culture and as a powerful communication tool. This survey's results suggest that the followers of MUIP are involved in creating an online culture on Twitter around the content delivered by the said account. This performed culture (Butler, 1990) is mainly male, Nigerian, university educated, urban, fluent in Pidgin English, football and MUFC connoisseur, and with a Nigerian (West African) sense of humour. Again, as highlighted in the previous chapter, humour appears to be one key element in Nigerian and West African identity performance. The humour that is being continuously enacted in MUIP's tweets seems to be one of the key reasons why many of its Nigerian and West African followers follow MUIP's account. Another element of that performed culture that is worth mentioning is that MUIP's followers also seem to be attracted by the quality of the content and the up-to-date news shared. In Chapter Six, I present how these elements are continuously performed through discursive features used in MUIP's tweets as well as in its audience's replies, thereby establishing a MUIP's cultural identity for both its audience and its content creator (s).

Epoge (2012) indicated that Pidgin English is a language used by people when engaging in informal conversations and in popular music. He also noted that it is a language used when discussing taboos such as sex publicly. Similarly, Ofulue (2012) acknowledged that Pidgin English is mainly employed when discussing secret and intimate matters in order to give them

a humorous angle. However, as Csajbok-Twerefou (2011) highlighted, humour is far from being a universal and unique concept. What people find funny can often vary from one culture to another due to each's inability to understand the other's humour or due to the differences as in what each sees as funny or offensive. Most participants in this survey said that there is a good sense of humour in MUIP's tweets. Those participants were from Nigeria and West Africa. There is a pattern in what they find funny or not, and that pattern is culturally based. The discourse analysis of the tweets unpacks that cultural humour and reveal what constitutes it.

This online culture they participate in establishing can, as Castells (2009) would argue, allow MUIP's followers to change the cultural foundations of football civilisation. In fact, it appears that they too (like MUIP's founder and team) are involved in creating a Premier League Football culture and content and doing it in a West African way (using a West African lingua franca), moving away from an English-centred coverage of Premier League Football. They seem less passive and far more active in reproducing and recreating the Premier League Football texts they consume (from mainstream media or MUIP) and as Westera (2015) would argue, MUIP's followers seem to be 'pro-sumers' of MUIP's and mainstream media's texts. It suggests, as argued by Tomlinson (1991), that MUIP's audience can actively decode Premier League Football media texts without being constrained by potential cultural imperialist meanings. The discursive analysis of their replies indicates how they reproduce and recreate the Premier League Football texts they consume.

Digital technologies in general and social media are tools enabling the constitution of communities of like-minded people with shared interests and goals (Ruddock, 2013). Similarly, Miller (2012) argued that social media constitute "another tool to be sociable" (p.196) by creating networks that are free of any geographical boundary, based on choice, serving a purpose and open-ended. Social networking accounts serve as communities' 'rhythm section'

thereby creating a system of interconnected people that organises discussions around raised concerns or interests (Ruddock, 2013). In fact, 'Man United in Pidgin' seems to be keeping the beat by constituting a community around Nigerian/West African humour; love or fandom for Manchester United Football Club, Pidgin English, 'Man United in Pidgin' itself, or all three; and cultural identity/belonging. It was illustrated by the answers the participants gave to the last question of the survey. Followers of 'Man United in Pidgin seem to be organised via a networked community free of geographical boundaries (those who participated in this survey resided in 13 different countries), based on choice, serving a purpose (humour, fandom and belonging) and open-ended.

Barber (2018) is among the few scholars who emphasised the cultural and creative influence that the internet and social media have on Africans and argued that social media are stimulating adaptations of offline oral, satiric, and informal African cultural texts to online settings thereby fostering new ways of conveying those texts. MUIP interactions (between MUIP's audience and content creator-s-) seem to have taken Pidgin English and Premier League Football discussions circulating in everyday Nigerian and West African oral life and shaped them into a more elaborated form, using written words and social networking sites such as Twitter. The discourse analysis assesses how this has attracted the audience and interpret this new popular culture form.

MUIP seems to have made new forms of African popular culture, introducing an oral and funny/satiric language (Pidgin English) in cyberspace, thereby keeping it informal. The tweets published by MUIP seem to play with language and words. They seem to popularise new words and expressions and use humour and sarcasm to talk about MUFC and other Premier League Football clubs' results and misfortunes. The discourse analysis of the tweets presents what the audience find funny about these tweets in detail.

Barber also mentioned the importance of street talk in African settings, which was also illustrated in some of the answers given to the survey's last question. Some participants went ahead and gave their answers in Pidgin English like this respondent who said: *"omo na david beckam free kick be the first ball wey I first watch na since then I don dey glue to man utd. I don dey follow man utd before I even sabi say na man utd be the name"* (mate, the first football match I watched was during that famous David Beckham's free-kick, and since then, I have been glued to MUFC. I have been following MUFC before even knowing the name of the team was MUFC). By doing so, they established Pidgin English further in the realm of written languages and as a formal language one could use to respond to a research survey.

Giddens (1991) argued that the reflexive ordering of narratives constitutes identities. It appears that MUIP is a reflexive project that constructs narratives around MUFC fandom/news, Pidgin English and Nigerian/West African communities. As Giddens would argue, 'Man United in Pidgin' narratives seem to build and sustain an explicit identity with which its followers and their identities can identify, relate, and which they can modify and shape. In fact, most respondents (regardless of their backgrounds and socio-demographic characteristics) emphasised that they can relate to what is being conveyed by and through the 'Man United in Pidgin' narrative. They described MUIP as 'their own', emphasising that this account is part of their Nigerian or West African cultural characteristics or identity. They felt happy that a fellow Pidgin English speaker had the idea of creating MUIP which represents and belongs to football and MUFC fans who speak Pidgin English. They claimed that MUIP has succeeded in offering a fresh take on football and MUFC fandom by tweeting in Pidgin English only, thereby creating a Pidgin English community around MUFC and football.

It has been argued that various individuals are now more inclined to communicate in cyberspace than in real-life situations, thereby forming virtual communities around shared interests or identities and relying on their virtual communities to have access to entertainment,

news, and sports and football information (Clavio, 2020; Delaney and Madigan, 2015; Witkemper, 2012). The survey results revealed that people adhere to the MUIP virtual community because they find it entertaining (funny) and access MUFC's news and updates. They also made a strong case for having common interests (love for MUFC, Pidgin English and MUIP) and common identities (MUFC fans, Nigerians, West Africans, and Pidgin English speakers).

It also appears that MUIP's followers belong to transnational identities (although the vast majority is Nigerian). As Spivak (1990) and Hall (1992) would argue, while MUIP followers' identities are most likely coreless, they can still refer to such essences (shared Nigerian/West African and MUFC fandom identities; Pidgin English speakers) and merge them when navigating a cyberspace that is predominantly Western. Those relationships of differences seem to be renegotiated in order to achieve a temporary and tactical fixation of aspects of their identities they have in common. The kind of transnational identity built by 'Man United in pidgin' can be seen by cultural imperialism's theorists (Seabrook, 2004; Ritzer, 1993; Dorfman and Mattelart, 1975) as constituting a counterpoint to Africa's global cultural dependence, but others (Tomlinson, 1991; Thussu, 2006; Shim; 2006) would see it as enabling cultural adaptation and change across the globe. In any case, as Morley (2005) emphasised, while such cultural changes and adaptation occur, they are far from being equally distributed across the said globe. Therefore, the transnational identity of MUIP's followers seems to be a response to that unequal distribution.

Considering globalisation, many scholars have highlighted that it is both a carrier of homogenisation and distinction of societies/communities (Delaney and Madigan, 2015; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2013; Boniface, 2010; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004; Robertson, 1992). Globalisation and capitalism have enabled Premier League Football to establish its corporate and business interests worldwide, including in Nigeria and West African

societies/communities. However, the emergence of this global Premier League Football is not governed by the same globalised concerns and does not carry a worldwide public opinion. By engaging with MUIP's tweets, MUIP's followers reactivate Nigerian and West African identity affirmations through the discursive resources and codes used. MUIP seems to constitute an accurate materialisation of the *glocalisation* of MUFC and Premier League Football, which its followers see as part of 'their own' civilisation. As some participants highlighted, the creation of MUIP has enabled the Pidgin English speakers' community to be represented with tweets on global football that reflect their specific linguistic culture, thereby creating MUIP's *glocal* village within the MUFC and Premier League global one. Again, this corroborates Tomlinson's (1991) argument that globalisation does not wipe out pre-existing cultural practices in underdeveloped countries. MUIP's followers seems to be able to actively renegotiate and reinterpret Premier League Football texts and make them theirs (Nigerian and/or West African).

Considering football fandom, Amenta and Miric (2013) argued that all sports events and activities constitute spectacles produced by athletes and teams and addressed to consumers - followers or fans. People who follow sports often believe they align with a fixed common identity and level of attachment to the object of their fandom. Anderson (1983) also explored 'imagined communities' wondering why large proportion of individuals across nations believed in the idea of fixed national identities to which they fully align with, which led him to define nations as 'imagined political communities' of individuals believing they all fully align with and are proud of their (fixed) national identities. Football fandom communities are imagined communities as conceptualised by Anderson. The answers given to the last question of this survey suggest that MUIP's followers have developed a significant emotional attachment to and appreciation for the MUFC team and players. MUIP's followers created an imagined community driven by a sense of belonging to a clean community made up of MUFC

fans, Nigerians, West Africans and Pidgin English speakers who, as Anderson would argue, do not know and will probably never meet one another.

When it comes to languages and their involvement in the construction of cultural identities, many scholars highlighted that language is the key means enabling individuals to establish knowledge about themselves and their living environment (Barker and Jane, 2016; Alleyne, 2015; Page, 2012; Barker, 2012; Hall, 2002). MUIP uses Pidgin English to communicate specific cultural meanings to its followers, which enable those followers to form knowledge about themselves and the world in which they live. These cultural meanings are grounded in critical interests and identities: an attachment to MUFC, Pidgin English and MUIP; and an attachment to a community comprised of Nigerian/West African MUFC's fans and Pidgin English speakers. Pidgin English seems to provide significance to online Premier League Football discussions in Nigeria and West Africa.

Furthermore, through Pidgin English and as Barker and Jane (2016) would argue, MUIP's followers bring their Nigerian and West African worlds into existence, maintain them, and shape them for their purpose - as some participants to this survey put it, to make those Premier League Football discussions 'their own'. The MUIP's community has its description of the world, football and fandom that goes along with the language they use. The discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets unpacks the cultural meanings brought into life by 'Man United in Pidgin'.

Bhabha's (1994) hybridity theory conceived (post) colonial object as something intermediate where binary oppositions between colonisers and colonised are blurred. This hybridity is made possible within former African colonies through globalisation, which constructed Africa's cultural and linguistic hybridity (Mufwene and Vigouroux, 2008). It has also been argued that the globalisation of colonial empires (and colonial languages) has endangered indigenous languages and led to the creation and introduction of new languages or lingua francas referred

to as pidgins and creoles (Todd, 1974, 1984). As revealed in the discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets, Pidgin English is a hybrid language that blends English with various West African indigenous languages. Pidgin English speakers from West Africa can mutually understand one another. One purpose of this online survey was to determine whether MUIP's followers are from West African countries. This online survey's results indicated that 98% of the respondents were originally from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone. Some of these followers seem to have come to terms with the idea that Pidgin English is not a second-class language. Those followers used it in their answers to signify that it is an important and valuable means of expression for Nigerians and/or West Africans which they may as well use to answer survey questions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results of the online survey I conducted on 100 MUIP Twitter followers. With this survey, I sought to determine their demographics as well as their link to football, MUFC, and Pidgin English. I also wanted to find out the reasons why they follow MUIP on Twitter. I presented these results in 3 main sections: (1) Demographic characteristics (2) Football/MUFC Fandom, Educational and Pidgin English levels; (3) why they follow MUIP.

What is important to take from this study of MUIP's followers on Twitter is that they are mainly young, male, Nigerian, university educated, and urban individuals. They are mostly fluent in Pidgin English as well as fans of football and MUFC. Like MUIP's founder, MUIP followers also highlighted that humour is a key element of attractiveness of the MUIP Twitter community. This humour seems to be Nigerian/West African specific. MUIP's followers also seem to be attracted by the quality of the content and the up-to-date news shared. Other reasons why they follow MUIP on Twitter included their love or fandom for MUFC, Pidgin English, MUIP, and the sense of Nigerian/West African belonging or identity generated by the account.

I unpack these aspects in the next chapter. Thus, MUIP's followers seem to be establishing a Nigerian or West African counterpoint to western coverage of the English Premier League and MUFC, using Pidgin English. They seem to be able to actively renegotiate and reinterpret Premier League Football texts and make them theirs (Nigerian and/or West African), thereby creating MUIP's *glocal* village within the MUFC and English Premier League global one.

These survey results and interpretation, along with the DDS's interview report and analysis, offered production and consumption contexts to the discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets and users' replies to these tweets. This discourse analysis is the only research instrument that addresses my research questions directly. The sixth chapter therefore presents the findings of that discourse analysis and answer the research questions effectively.

CHAPTER SIX – DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Introduction

In order to tackle my investigation of MUIP's Twitter account, my plan was to use a discursive analysis of MUIP's tweets and of the readers' replies to these tweets as a principal method. An online interview with the creator of MUIP and an online survey aimed at the followers of MUIP's account on Twitter helped illuminate my research contexts by providing some preliminary investigations of MUIP's production and consumption processes. The aim of the online interview with MUIP's founder was to explore his experiences and views on MUIP and to find out what meanings and representations he seeks to bring to his Twitter's followers and to Twitter in general. The interview revealed that MUIP founder's aim is to expose an under-exposed Africa to the world and to cater to those who, like him, are MUFC's fans from Nigeria/West Africa and are fluent in Pidgin English.

The followers' study aimed at identifying and describing the characteristics of MUIP's followers on Twitter; and their link to football, MUFC, and Pidgin English. The online survey revealed that most respondents were young, male, and Nigerian individuals mainly living in urban areas. 90% of them had at least an undergraduate degree and they were almost all fluent in Pidgin English. In this survey, MUIP's followers also highlighted that they follow MUIP on Twitter because of its humour, its content, a sense of belonging/identity, and love/fandom for MUFC and Pidgin English.

Therefore, after a preliminary study of MUIP's content production and content consumption, it was important to study MUIP's content itself. This was done via a discursive analysis of some MUIP's tweets and of the replies to these tweets. Thus, this chapter presents the findings of that discourse analysis and answers my research questions effectively. This chapter's core contribution is to present the discursive features employed in MUIP's tweets and determine

how these discursive resources help the establishment of a West African identity among Twitter and among MUIP's followers.

I proceeded to a discourse analysis of some of MUIP's tweets that were posted/released from the moment Odion Ighalo was rumoured to be joining MUFC to the day MUFC played their last game before the first English national lockdown; and that included the key word 'Ighalo'. These tweets were generated by MUIP between the 24th of January 2020 and the 12th of March 2020. I also discursively analysed replies or users' comments to these main MUIP's tweets. I was able to select and scrutinise 107 main tweets during that period of time, which generated no less than 505 replies or users' comments. 13 out of these 107 main tweets had no captured users' replies. Twitter served as a data collection tool for my research, and I used NVivo to store, manage and code the tweet and replies that I retrieved from it.

The aim of this discourse analysis was to study MUIP's instances of language within the social and cultural contexts it created not only for itself but for its followers. It also enabled me to gather information about MUIP's discursive culture and systems of meanings. I assessed three main discursive aspects: significance, activities, and identities. An analysis of MUIP's significance enabled me to put under scrutiny MUIP's speech acts through the analysis of personal pronouns, impersonal grammar and figures of speech used both in MUIP's tweets and in the comments associated to these tweets. Each of these elements are presented in the first part of this chapter.

An assessment of the activities enabled by and/or through MUIP allowed me to report specifically on the interactions generated by the selected MUIP's main tweets. This enabled me to investigate people's replies to these tweets thereby determining the semantic networks (key terms and/or concepts) animating MUIP's followers' interactions with MUIP's main tweets. This assessment constitutes the second part of this current chapter.

An investigation of the identities conveyed by and/or through MUIP enabled me to conduct a rhetorical analysis of the selected MUIP's tweets. This analysis explored three main questions: what is/are the relationship (s) between MUIP's tweets and their context (s)? What reality or realities do these MUIP's tweets construct for MUIP's audience? What do these MUIP's tweets suggest about the author/content creator? Each of these elements are presented in the third section of this chapter. I also report on the multimedia content used (Pictures or memes; and videos) and on the netspeak used in MUIP's main tweets and the comments attached to them in the fourth and fifth parts.

MUIP's speech acts and the construction of a West African online identity

An instance of language (also referred to as discourse) can be used to give meaning to any given world (Alleyne, 2015). In fact, spoken or written instances of language are uttered by individuals who bring into existence specific social contexts. Thus, the significance of a discourse takes into account the context of the uttered instances of language, the characteristics of the speakers as well as the figurative characteristics of those uttered instances of language. This meaning giving process is achieved using speech acts which serve as instruments to represent and interact with socio-cultural realities (Jensen, 2002). In order to study speech acts within MUIP's main tweets and the users' comments attached to them, I used three main tools: personal pronouns, impersonal grammar and figures of speech. These elements which indicates how MUIP's content creator (or author), and repliers (readers or followers) interact within the MUIP community are highlighted in the following sub-sections.

Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are utterances used by human beings to refer to themselves, to other human beings; and to non-human entities or concepts (Jensen, 2002). They are used in sentences to substitute for individuals, things, or concepts that are being evoked in the said sentences. They are often indicative of some other characteristics such as gender and/or number. Personal

pronouns indicate how close or distant individuals are from topics, opinions, and fellow individuals. 9 main personal pronouns were used by MUIP's content creator (or author) in the MUIP's tweets I selected and analysed and analysed: e (x 27); you (x 22); dem/them (x 15); I (x 12); we (x 8); hin (x 8); him (x 4); una (x 2); and us (x 2). See table 5 below:

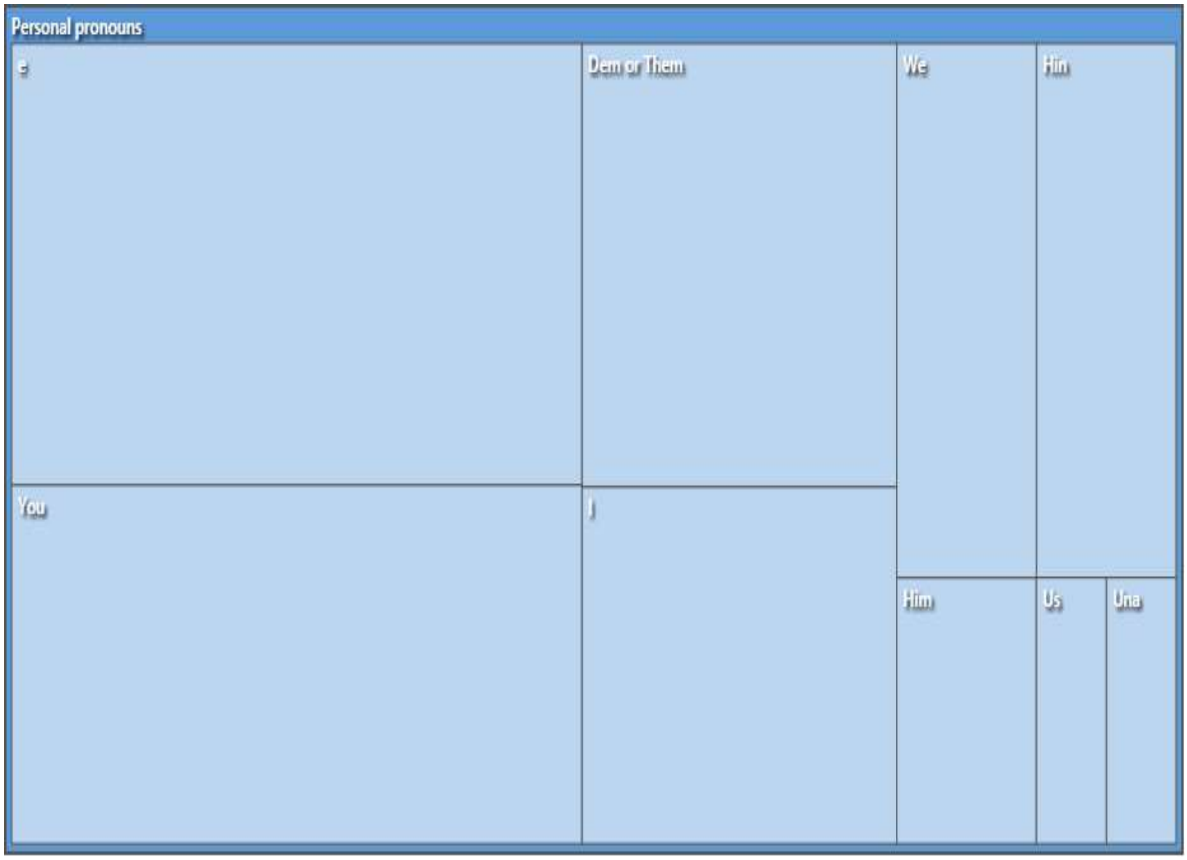

Table 5: Hierarchy table of personal pronouns used by MUIP's content creator

'E' is the sound reproduction of the third singular personal pronoun 'he'. When using it in the selected and analysed tweets, MUIP's content creator was mostly referring to Odion Ighalo like in this tweet by MUIP content creator on the 5th of March 2020: *"Odion Ighalo since e join Man Utd: 2 starts 2 goals. IGWE IGHALO FC"* [Odion Ighalo since he joined Man United: 2 starts, 2 goals. KING IGHALO FC]. This was during a FA Cup's 5th round against Derby County after Ighalo scored a goal during the 41st minute. It was the second time Ighalo was starting a game on the pitch with MUFC, and he had scored for his first start during a round of 32 Europa League match against Club Brugge on the 27th of February 2020. On that 5th of

March, during the 70th minute, Ighalo would score a second goal. MUFC won that match 3 - 0 and Ighalo had scored 3 goals after starting a game twice. Sometimes, MUIP's author used 'e' to refer to other MUFC's players such as Mata, Fernandes, or Shaw as well as to refer to the pronoun 'it'. 'Hin' and 'him' were used interchangeably by MUIP's author as a Pidgin English version of 'him' or 'he'. In the selected main tweets, 'hin/him' always referred to Ighalo like in this tweet on the 12th of March 2020: *"Odion Ighalo don score inside all three of hin starts inside all competitions for Manchester United, him don net four goals in total. GOAT"*. This tweet was released by MUIP content creator during a round of 16 first leg match against LASK. This was MUFC's last match before the first lockdown due to the covid-19 pandemic. MUFC won that match 5 – 0 and Ighalo scored the first goal during the 28th minute. MUIP's content creator proudly reported that Odion Ighalo scored in all three of the matches when he started inside all competitions for Manchester United. He scored four goals in total and MUIP's content creator declared him the 'GOAT' (Greatest of All Times).

'You' was often used in the selected MUIP's tweets to refer to MUIP's readers (or followers) like in this tweet: "*Retweet if you dey proud of Odion Ighalo"*. This tweet was on the 27th of February 2020 and Ighalo had just scored his first goal with MUFC. MUIP's content creator asked MUIP followers to retweet if they were proud of Ighalo. It implied that the content creator expected MUIP's followers – who are mostly Nigerians – to be proud of Ighalo as he was the first Nigeria's national to ever play and score for MUFC. 'You' was also used by MUIP's content creator to designate MUFC's team and players such as Ighalo, Martial, Mata, or Chong.

'Dem' is the sound reproduction of 'them' (meaning 'them' as well as 'they' in Pidgin English). When used in the MUIP's selected tweets, it usually referred to MUFC's team and players as well as their family members like in this tweet addressed to Mata on the 27th of February 2020 before MUFC were to play their second leg of the round of 32 Europa League match against

Club Brugge: *"If dem born you well, no pass to Ighalo tonight"*. 'Dem' here referred to Juan Mata's parent and *'if dem born you well'* is often used in Nigerian contexts to signify that if by giving birth to you, your parents made you invincible, you can go ahead and not do what is required/expected of you at a given time. If on the contrary, you were not born invincible, you better be ready to face the consequences should you not do what is required/expected of you. This tweet was referring to the first leg match played against the same team on the 20th of February where MUIP content creator complained that Mata did not pass the ball to Ighalo who could have scored during that encounter. 'Dem' sometimes referred to other teams and their players.

'I' was mostly used when reporting someone's direct speech or fictional conversations elaborated by MUIP's content creator like this one between Ighalo and a Babalawo (Yoruba's oracle priest). In that fictional conversation, Ighalo said to a Babalawo that he wanted to play for MUFC and that he was ready to do anything. The Babalawo asked him to bring: 5 lion's heads; urine sample of a virgin from Amaku forest as well as fresh fish from Ndi River. Ighalo then said that he could not have these things, but that he had £25,000 to offer (which is more than 12 million Naira – the Nigerian currency). The Babalawo replied that normally, he would not agree but because it was Ighalo, he would.

On one occasion, MUIP's content creator used 'I' to refer to himself. MUIP's author often used the personal pronoun 'we' to refer to MUIP's producer (s) (content creator (s)) and MUFC's team (when reporting the then MUFC Coach's - Ole Solksjaer - direct speech). 'Us' was used to by MUIP's author to refer to MUIP's producer (s) (content creator (s)) or to African people like in this tweet: *"Ighalo, Bailly. When Africans dey rep our continent well, e dey make us proud"*. This tweet was released after MUFC announced their line-up for their round of 32 second leg match against Club Brugge on the 27th of February 2020. As an African, MUIP's content creator was pleased and proud that two African footballers - Eric Bailly (from Cote

d'Ivoire) and Ighalo (from Nigeria) - would be part of MUFC's starting squad for that match. Thus, it can be noticed that MUIP's content creator very rarely uses 'I' to refer to himself or to the account he produces content for. He often uses 'we' or 'us' to refer to MUIP's account, hence himself. This not only implies that the account has several contributors but also that whoever individual person may be producing some content for MUIP, whenever tweeting he does so as a collective self. The latter is Nigerian/African, a well-informed MUFC fan and Pidgin English speaker, speaking principally to and for a community made of Nigerians/Africans, well-informed MUFC's fans and Pidgin English speakers.

'Una' is the Pidgin English version of the second plural personal pronoun 'You'. It means 'you people' or 'you all'. When considering the use of this specific personal pronoun by MUIP's content creator, I noticed that this personal pronoun was mainly used to refer to teams opposing MUFC (as well as their players and fans), considered as *'mad'* or *'agberos'* (hooligans). There was clearly a limit drawn by MUIP's content creator between 'we/us' (Nigerians/Africans; MUFC's team; MUFC's fans) and 'una' (mad and hooligans other teams' players and fans).

13 main personal pronouns were used in MUIP's audience's responses to the selected MUIP's main tweets. See table 6 (personal pronouns used in MUIP's audience's responses) below:

Personal pronouns used	*Number of times used*
he/e	53
I	43
you/yu/u	40
we	29
dem/them/den	22
him	19
me	14
they/dey	6
us	5
una	5
imself/himself/him sef	2
it	2
y'all	1

Table 6: Personal pronouns used in MUIP's audience's responses

'He/e' was mostly used by respondents to refer to Ighalo. On a few occasions, it referred to other MUFC's players such as Martial, De Gea, Matic, Chong or Mata. 'E' was sometimes employed to signify 'it'. 'Him' as well as 'imself/himself/him sef' were mostly used by repliers to refer to Ighalo. It was also employed to designate MUFC's players (De Gea, Fernandes, Greenwood) or Chief Executive (Ed Woodward). 'It' was also used on a couple of occasions by MUIP's repliers either referring to the fact that other continents have players at the highest football level, or to the fact that Ighalo is entering the pitch replacing Greenwood (on a Premier League match against Everton on the 1st of March 2020).

'I' was used by any specific audience member to refer to themselves. 'Me' achieved the same outcome like in this tweet: *"But me I happy as Martial dey injury ooooi, make Ighalo get*

chance show imself". This tweet was a reply to a MUIP content creator's tweet on the 26th of February 2020 reporting that Anthony Martial was injured and was highly unlikely to play against Club Brugge the day after. This follower said that they felt happy that Anthony Martial was injured as he would give Ighalo a chance to show what he was capable of. It suggested that this follower could be Nigerian and that they were excited to see their compatriot starting a match with MUFC and playing for the full duration of that match. Ighalo did indeed start that match the day after and scored his first goal as a MUFC player.

MUIP's respondents used 'dem/them/den' in their replies to MUIP's tweets mainly to refer to MUFC (often when they would not recognise themselves in MUFC's activities or choices). 'Dem/them/den' sometimes designated Ighalo and another MUFC's players (Fernandes or Bailly) or MUFC's opponents (Everton or LASK). It once referred to Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's family or journalists or fans interviewed outside Stamford Bridge stadium. 'They' was also used by repliers to achieve similar outcomes.

When employed by repliers, 'You/yu/u' mostly designated MUIP's content creator (s). It sometimes referred to Ighalo, previous repliers to a specific tweet, another MUFC's player (Mata for instance), or an individual known by a replier. MUIP's respondents used 'we' as an inclusive pronoun to mark their belonging to specific social and/or cultural communities: MUFC team/fans, Nigerians, or Africans. 'Us' was employed to achieve a similar outcome. This implies, as Turkle (1995) would argue, that MUIP's audience reconstruct and reassert their fandom and cultural identities on the other side of the screen when engaging with MUIP's virtual community and content. 'Una' was used by MUIP's audience in their replies to refer to MUIP's account, suggesting that MUIP is constructed as a collective self not only by MUIP's content creator but also by MUIP's audience.

Impersonal grammar

Also known as impersonal language, impersonal grammar designates the use of passive voice or any other grammatical structures such as impersonal verbs (Jensen, 2002). In all the main MUIP's tweets I have selected and analysed; I did not come across any impersonal language. In fact, they all employed an active voice. However, I noticed on one occasion the use of impersonal grammar in one of the respondents' replies to MUIP's main tweets. This reply simply said: *"it's happening"*. It referred to Ighalo replacing Greenwood and entering the pitch at the 72nd minute against Everton.

Figures of speech

Figures of speech designate written or spoken forms of a given language which deviate from the ordinary use of these language's forms and give a particular meaning or expressiveness to the subject matter (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021). MUIP's content creator (s) mostly employed three main figures of speech in the selected main tweets: humour, metaphors, and rhetorical questions. Humour is a figure of speech that is to be perceived as any mocking wit used in order to make people laugh or to entertain them (Csajbok-Twerefou, 2011; Klatzmann, 1998; Sen, 2012). In fact, MUIP's content creator often used nicknaming to make his audience laugh, like in this tweet:

> *"Na our #mufc XI vs Agberos: Capt Davido, Issakaba, Baba Blue, Maggi, General Shaw, Awilo, Matic, Pastor Fred, Uncle B, Dano Milk, Toto. Ighalo dey bench. Eric Bailly aka Baba Blue don return. Africa United"* [This is our MUFC XI vs Agberos: Captain Davido, Issakaba, Baba Blue, Maggi, General Shaw, Awilo, Matic, Pastor Fred, Uncle B, Dano Milk, Toto. Ighalo is on the bench. Eric Bailly aka Baba Blue has returned. Africa United].

In this tweet, Chelsea's players were nicknamed by MUIP's content creator as 'Agberos'. The latter is a Nigerian slang meaning area boys/hooligans/thugs/jobless male individuals who do nothing but loiter around neighbourhoods and making their living off the streets. MUIP also nicknamed most MUFC players: David de Gea ('Capt Davido'); Aaron Wan Bissaka ('Issakaba'); Eric Bailly ('Baba blue'); Maguire ('Maggi'); Luke Shaw ('General Shaw');

Brandon Williams (‘Awilo’); Fred (‘Pastor Fred’); Bruno Fernandes (‘Uncle B’); Daniel James (‘Dano Milk’); and Anthony Martial (‘Toto’). Out of these nicknames, the ones I particularly find intriguing and rather funny are Maggi (seasoning cube brand sold mainly in Africa), Dano Milk (milk powder brand sold principally in African and South Asian countries) and Toto (genitalia: penis or vagina in Nigerian slang). Awilo seems to refer to a famous Congolese singer and dancer: Awilo Longomba.

Some MUIP’s tweets were absurdly funny if not ridiculous, like this one: *“Man United don finally post Odion Ighalo jersey picture after we tension dem with juju”* [Man United finally revealed Odion Ighalo’s jersey picture after we (MUIP) pressured them (MUFC) with black magic (‘juju’)]. Instead of simply saying that it was their constant pressure (MUIP’s and fellow Nigerian/West African MUFC’s fans) on MUFC which made MUFC disclose that information, MUIP jokingly said that it was their use of black magic that made MUFC to eventually disclose Ighalo’s jersey number.

Memes created by MUIP were also charged with some degree of humour (see Image 1 below):

Image 1: Ighalo and Maguire MUIP's Meme

MUIP Meme of Ighalo and Maguire checking each other (presumably at the end of their 2-0 win against Chelsea) with a fictive conversation between Ighalo and Maguire in Pidgin English where Ighalo was congratulating Maguire for scoring with an excellent header. In that fictive conversation, Ighalo pointed that if there was no net, that ball would have reached his house in Ajegunle (Nigeria). Maguire fictively replied that Ighalo knows how to hype someone up. Maguire added that he likes Nigerians because they have fine slippers (flipflops). To provide some context to Maguire's last fictive comment, I should point that the Nigerian forward Kelechi Ilheanacho was caught in a video where he accused "former Leicester City teammate Harry Maguire of moving his pair of slippers/scuffs inside the fixes dressing room" (Adedayo, 2019). This was before Maguire's transfer to MUFC.

Metaphor is an analogical figure of speech where a speaker or a writer implies a resemblance (an analogy) between concepts/things/people. MUIP's used metaphors on a few occasions like in this example: *"Ighalians, wetin you think about Igwe Ighalo's goal? Na wetin Lagbaja dey call 'Thunder'"* [Ighalo's fans, what do you think of King Ighalo's goal? This is what Lagbaja calls 'Thunder']. Here, MUIP's content creator thought Ighalo goal was like what Lagbaja calls 'Thunder'. Lagbaja is a Nigerian Afrobeat musician who is reputed for saying 'thunder' in his 2000's song titled 'konko below' just before percussion instruments (congas, drums) are played to replicate thunder sounds. In the video clip of that song, Lagbaja and other people can be seen twerking and dancing sensually, some alone, others as couples grinding their waist against one another as if they were having sex.

On a few occasions, MUIP also used rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is a figure of speech that consists of asking a question that does not expect an answer, the latter being known by the person asking it. MUIP content creator once asked these rhetorical questions to MUFC's official Twitter account: *"Wetin you wan use Ighalo do? After you sell Lukaku?"* [What do you want to use Ighalo for after selling Lukaku?]. By asking these two rhetorical questions, MUIP's content creator was implying that the answer was nothing and that this was a poor choice. These rhetorical questions also implied his disappointment as he did not understand MUFC's choice of recruiting Ighalo.

In a tweet, MUIP used an exaggeration (figure of speech) designating Ighalo as the 'GOAT' (Greatest of All Times). It may be an exaggeration to consider Ighalo as the greatest of all times. In fact, Odion Ighalo has never (at least until now) been designated as the best African football player in any given year. Neither has he received a single *Ballon d'Or*. This hardly qualifies him to be the greatest of all times.

MUIP's content creator also employed anaphora once when he repeated 'hin' 6 times at the beginning of 6 consecutive lines of this tweet: *"Dis na Odion Ighalo first half by numbers vs. LASK: Hin get 100% pass accuracy - Hin get 100% shot accuracy - Hin create 2 chances - Hin win 2 fouls - Hin fire 2 shots - Hin score 1 goal. IGWE IGHALO".* The figures of speech employed by MUIP's content creator in the selected tweets (re)created cultural significances that are now in circulation in the digital public sphere. Let me consider two figures of speech often used in MUIP's tweets: humour and metaphors. MUIP's use of nicknaming not only served to make the audience laugh but also to circulate specific cultural meanings across the virtual public sphere. With regards to humour, MUIP's content creator tweeted that Ighalo offered a laptop to the Babalawo (oracle priest) who helped him secure his transfer to MUFC. Attached to this tweet is a picture of a Babalawo character (probably from a Nigerian movie) using a laptop disposed on his lap with his left hand and holding a big vase with his right hand. A bottle of 'Harp' (a brand of lager commercialised in many West African countries) can also be seen near him. This implied that such a transfer, according to MUIP content creator's initial thought, could not have occurred naturally, without the intervention of supernatural forces. This indicated how such considerations on spiritual forces potentially influencing individuals' lives, are significantly present in Nigerian and West African social and cultural contexts. Similarly, MUIP's content creator tweeted about fictional conversation that occurred between Ighalo and a Babalawo which I summarised in the subsection on personal pronouns. Such tweets, while acknowledging the strong impact that spiritual/supernatural conceptions have on many Nigerians and West Africans, also mock them. In fact, they highlight that oracle priests usually pretend to be uninterested in mundanities and to be deeply connected to the nature and to natural forces, while what they are is usually a different story. As a matter of fact, behind their impossible demands (lions' heads, urine of a virgin from specific forests, specific fish from specific rivers), it seems like they have many mundane aspirations. They want to own

laptops or money, and to drink lager. It appears that what they are doing is putting up performances in order to be able to keep recruiting adherents to their 'cult' and alleged spiritual achievements even though they may have not been proven to be accurate or genuine. These performances are quite laughable according to MUIP's content creator who implies that he finds them hard to believe.

MUIP's content creator drew a metaphorical analogy between one of Ighalo's goals and Lagbaja's concept of 'thunder' without giving any further information as to who Lagbaja is and what he refers to when talking about 'thunder'. This implies that his network shares this discursive reference. This also suggests that MUIP's narrative is building and sustaining an identity to which its audiences (and their multiple and diverse identities) can relate and identify themselves to within Twitter.

In a tweet describing Ighalo's goal against LASK, MUIP's authors drew a couple of analogies between elements of a football stadium and specific Nigerian and West African places. In fact, he labelled the edge of the box as 'Accra' and the underside if the crossbar as 'Obalende'. Accra is the capital city of Ghana and is indeed at the very edge of the country (in the southeast coastal area of the West African country). Obalende is a crowded and congested suburb area in Lagos (Nigeria). That area is known for its festive night life and its 'suya meat'. The latter is a grilled meat, of Hausa origin (ethnic group from the Sahel region mainly established in the north of Nigeria but also in many Central, Western and Northern Africa's nations like Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sudan, Tchad, Gabon, and Togo), popular in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Ghana, and Sudan. Suya is made from beef, mutton, or chicken. There is also a Nigerian restaurant called 'Obalende Suya Express Restaurant' in Peckham, London. These analogical references put into circulation cultural markers connected to the West African geography and culinary arts, as well as to happenings and representations associated to certain Nigerian areas.

Respondents to MUIP's tweets also used some figures of speech such as simile, humour, rhetorical questions, and metaphors. A respondent to one of MUIP's tweets used simile in their comment; explicitly comparing MUFC (their team) to a complete joke and to a time when they were not. *"We are now a complete joke"* – commented this respondent. Similarly, another respondent stated that: *"He's preparing for championship next season"*. This was some dark humour. It implied that MUFC were preparing for relegation by recruiting players like Ighalo - who was then perceived as a second-class player who would turn MUFC into a joke. Another one metaphorically referred to Ighalo and Bailly as *"bench warmers"*. A replier also asked: *"How's getting more Nigerians to support the club going to save our season?"* followed by laughing faces (emojis). The user implied that Nigerians' support was not going to save MUFC's 2019/2020 season. It showed that many members of the MUIP Twitter community were initially disappointed regarding Ighalo's recruitment within MUFC. I discuss this disappointment further in the next couple of sections.

MUIP's interactions and the construction of a West African online identity

An investigation of MUIP account's activities allowed me to highlight how MUIP's followers on Twitter interacted with the selected and analysed MUIP's tweets via their replies to the said tweets. This was done by determining the key semantic networks that MUIP's followers built in response to MUIP's main tweets. See table 7 below for a summary table of the 27 semantic networks I identified in the replies to MUIP's tweets:

Semantic networks identified	*Number of times used*
Disappointment	52
Pride	46
Happiness	38
Joke	32
Disagreement	32
Agreement	28
Prediction	20
Bemusement	19
Hilarity	15
Thought	14
Explanation	8
Suggestions	7
Sarcasm	5
Irrelevance	4
Correction	4
Thanksgiving	2
Mockery	2
Fear	2
Envy	2
Compassion	2
Threat	1
Special or unusual	1
Scepticism	1
Pity	1

Encouragement	1
Boredom	1
Belief	1

Table 7: Semantic networks identified in the replies to MUIP's tweets

As it can be observed on the above table, disappointment was the top semantic network identified in the replies to the selected and analysed MUIP's tweets. Followers' disappointment was mostly directed towards MUFC (transfer choices, coach's choices, players' performance, specific games' performances). Sometimes, it was directed towards a specific MUIP's tweet. On one occasion a MUIP follower said that they would *'naked curse'* MUFC should the team sign Odion Ighalo in. This tweet was in response to a MUIP's tweet indicating that MUFC wanted to recruit Odion Ighalo. In some West African communities, if a parent wants to curse their disappointing child, he/she (the parent) should stand naked before him/her (the disappointing child) showing him/her his/her private parts. It is told that such action would cause failure in all aspects of their offspring's life. On another occasion, a follower asked, "*By subbing them in 80th minute abi?"* in response to this MUIP's tweet reporting on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's words after MUFC's draw (1-1) during their round of 32 first leg match against Club Brugge (February 20th, 2020): *"Solskjær: 'We gats dey take our chances when we see am. I feel say we go score more now Bruno and Ighalo dey. Na the koko'*. There was a hint of disappointment in this reply. In fact, this follower wondered how MUFC were going to score more goals with Ighalo and Fernandes when they would not start games or enter the pitch at a very late stage in second halves.

Some followers sometimes felt disappointed regarding some of MUIP's tweets. In fact, one follower replied to one of MUIP's jokes saying: "*I refuse to laugh to this cos i really believe odion is a gem of a player..man got a spot light at late 20's plus it's just loan deal...we need to be happy imo"*. MUIP's joke was saying that Odion Ighalo bought a new laptop to the

Babalawo who helped him secure his transfer to Man United. It suggested that Odion Ighalo was not worthy to play for MUFC. This was clearly not what this follower thought. He seemed quite disappointed by such allusions and refused to laugh even if it was supposedly humour.

Some MUIP's followers used their replies to throw jokes. When MUIP tweeted that Ighalo could potentially be joining MUFC on a loan deal, a MUIP follower joked that MUFC could just as well sign them in on a loan deal. This MUIP's tweet reported on a news item by Sky (on the 24th of January 2020) stipulating that MUFC was looking at "Odion Ighalo and Islam Slimani as loan targets". According to the original Sky news item, they were two of several players MUFC were interested in as the club wanted to "bring in a striker on loan following the long-term injury of Marcus Rashford". This follower therefore joked that since MUFC were interested in those two, they might just as well collect him on loan; hinting that he/she was as good as they are. On another occasion, a follower replied *"Corona virus"* to a MUIP tweet saying that Ighalo had just missed one goal opportunity. During MUFC match against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on the 17th of February 2020, Ighalo replaced Martial at 90+1' to play for the first time in MUFC. When he entered MUFC was leading 2-0. A minute later, he could have made it a 3-0 when he threaded through on goal but poked his finish straight at Chelsea's goalkeeper with defender swarming around him. MUIP called it a 'one on one'. This follower, in what seemed to be to me an attempt to joke, said that it was because of coronavirus that he did not score. Ighalo was playing in China before his loan contract with MUFC. China is where the covid-19 crisis started in late 2019.

Many followers also expressed pride towards MUIP (and MUFC) as well as towards Ighalo. In fact, many of them gradually accepted this recruitment and became proud of Ighalo as he started scoring for MUFC. They were proud to see a fellow Nigerian/African join their favourite club and scoring goals. A follower once proudly tweeted: *"Ajegunle to the world"*

before adding clapping hands emoji. Ajegunle is where Ighalo is from in Nigeria. Similarly, MUIP's followers have expressed happiness regarding Ighalo in their comments.

On some occasions, MUIP's followers commented MUIP's tweets to assert their disagreement or agreement with what was being expressed in MUIP's tweets. MUIP's followers were also asked on some occasions to predict the outcomes of games; and to share their thoughts by rating MUFC's players or games. Some replies suggested that MUIP's followers were sometimes confused/bemused by the information given in MUIP's tweets. Some replies explained situations or suggested things to MUIP's content creator like this follower who said that Ighalo should be nicknamed 'IGOALO' after scoring his fourth goal in three starts within MUFC.

Sarcasm was also used in MUIP's followers' responses to MUIP's tweets. In fact, a follower once replied that 'that small team' (Chelsea) was 4th in the Premier League table in response to a MUIP's tweet saying that as Odion Ighalo could not stop scoring for MUFC, every Nigerian was becoming MUFC fans. The tweet added that even Chelsea FC's fans abandoned their 'small club' to join Ighalo FC (and MUFC). This follower sarcastically said that that small team (Chelsea) was 4th in Premier League table. MUFC was ranked 5th on March 8th, 2020. Furthermore, this was probably a Chelsea's fan.

A few followers corrected some MUIP's tweets or judged them as being irrelevant. A few comments denoted mockery or hilarity. Other comments were compassionate or thanksgiving. Envy and fear were also expressed in some replies. In fact, when Ighalo was recruited by MUFC, MUIP reported that rumour had it that Ighalo would wear jersey number 7. A follower stated that the number was a 'juju' (black magic) number associated with David Beckham and his high performances within MUFC and the English National Football Team. This number is also associated with Cristiano Ronaldo who won his first *Ballon d'Or* in 2008 while he was playing for MUFC (he first played within MUFC from 2003 to 2009, then joined the team again in August 2021). This follower feared that Ighalo would not be able to play up to number

7's (Beckham and Ronaldo's) standards. Another follower was being envious of 4 Nigerians who, as reported by MUIP's content creator, went to see MUFC play (as well as Ighalo, I imagine) against Watford and asked when they would start to represent Nigeria from afar in the abroad. They expressed that they would like to go abroad and be able to attend such events; and represent Nigeria. They added crying faces at the end of their reply.

Threat, scepticism, pity, encouragement, boredom, belief and a sense of unusualness were all expressed at one point by MUIP's followers in their replies to the selected MUIP's tweets. A follower said he was bored by MUIP's choice of nickname for Odion Ighalo – 'Gala'. Gala is one of the most popular Nigerian street snacks. It is a sausage roll. MUIP's content creator tried to draw an analogy between Ighalo's name and Gala. It also indicated where Ighalo's grew up and the sort of food/snack he consumed then. This follower found all of it boring.

The wide range of semantic networks used by MUIP's readers in their replies to MUIP's tweets displayed the sorts of activities and content (re)created and circulated by them when engaging with MUIP's virtual community on Twitter. They would mark their disappointment; joke or laugh; disagree or agree with one another or with MUIP's account; share their feelings, ideas, ratings, or predictions; and correct or judge MUIP's content. Each of these activities or interactions were expressed as an individual response and circulated in a dual or hybrid networked space (personal and public at the same time). Therefore, MUIP's readers are (inter) active consumers of MUIP's content. Their replies imply the production or creation of new contents which themselves circulate social and cultural meanings. In fact, when marking their disappointment regarding Ighalo's recruitment rumour, a reply to one of MUIP's tweets said: *"Dem no go sign any rubbish in Jesus name!"* (They will not sign any rubbish in Jesus' name!). "In Jesus' name" is a common line used by evangelical pastors and worshippers in West Africa to supposedly prophesise things or prevent them from happening. When "in Jesus' name" is said, other worshippers of evangelical churches usually reply "Amen". In other replies, some

readers expressed their pride or happiness regarding Ighalo using words and expressions such as *"blessed pikin"* or *"Igweeeeeeh"*. Those words and expressions constitute cultural markers which indicate how the word 'child' is translated in Pidgin English (pikin) and how the word 'king' is translated in the Nigerian Igbo language (Igwe). They also imply a distinction between insiders who are able to grasp such cultural references; and outsiders who would fail to do so.

MUIP's content creator and repliers, through the discursive resources displayed in their interactions, express their struggles and attempt to resist to them. In fact, with the arrival of satellite television, African local football has been culturally neglected and silenced on the continent itself (Goldblatt, 2020). Local fans became over-exposed to European football leagues; and this built an affection for European football (Premier League Football particularly) on the continent. MUIP readers' and content creator's struggles are perceivable through this domination. However, their interactions are loaded with discursive resources that establish a counterpoint to mainstream discussion of Premier League Football. While it is true that the existence of such an account that tweets on MUFC and Premier League Football embodies the cultural hegemony of western cultures over African ones, there are layers of resistance to such western cultural hegemony. In fact, I mentioned earlier the use by MUIP's content creator and his audience of figures of speech and semantic networks that are embedded in cultural references and representations that are not only football specific, but also and most significantly Nigerian or African centred or specific. Nigerian or African particularistic discursive features are incorporated in MUIP content creator's and audience's interactions. Through these interactions, they generate social power within the cyberspace. In fact, their Nigerian/African interactions are expressed within a cyberspace and football environment where the symbolic power is owned by Western/European identities and meanings. Their interactions appear in a Twitter environment displaying the unequal relations that exist between Western/European and Nigerian/African cultures, while resisting such inequalities and generating power and

knowledge about Nigerian/African identities and meanings at the same time. These features enable their empowerment in a global football arena where they tend to be marginalised or underrepresented (not heard nor read nor viewed enough). Both content creator and audience engage in an interactive process on Twitter where they can convey certain discursive resources such as frustration, happiness, or pride that they would hardly be able to express publicly in traditional or mainstream media, or at all. They connect their discussions to contexts such as MUFC's transfers, news, players, and matches (Premier League, Europa League, and FA Cup matches).

Furthermore, there are levels of orthodox/hegemonic masculinity performed both by MUIP's author and his readership on Twitter. These levels of orthodox/hegemonic masculinity were displayed in some discursive resources they used in the selected and analysed tweets. In fact, while there were most likely hints of humour in MUIP's tweets and followers' replies, there were also discursive resources associated with being loud and/or using aggressive/offensive language as it would be expected of male individuals in many parts of the world, like calling players *'mumu'* (stupid) and/or using capital letters to ask if people were mad. Many discursive references used by MUIP's author and audience were embedded in nudity, sexual penetration, and genitalia. I already mentioned that a follower said he would *"naked curse"* MUFC in response to a MUIP's tweet that reported a BBC news item: *"Manchester United wan close deal for Odion Ighalo [bbc]"*. I also indicated what it means within West African traditions. Such traditional practices seem rooted in religious imperialism or colonialism. In fact, according to the Leviticus' 18th Chapter (verse 7), seeing your father or mother naked is considered a sin from which you must repent. According to The Holy Quran (2011), exposing one's genitals and breasts (if a woman) is proscribed. The African Counter (2021) took the example of Cameroon's *Kaba* (a popular women's dress which translates as 'covers') and indicated that it was initially fashioned because colonisers' wives felt threatened by naked

natives' bodies being exposed to their husbands' glance. These colonisers' wives succeeded in convincing most natives that nudity was ungodly. I can also share a personal experience supporting the point I am making here. I met one of my great grandmothers (my mother's grandmother – her father's mother) one time only, a few months before her death. I must have been not older than 5 years old and it happened in my mother's village (in Cameroon) which I was also visiting for the very first time. When we (my mother, her driver, my older brother, and myself) arrived there, I was asked to go and hug my great grandmother but at first, I could not. In fact, I nearly ran away. It was not until I saw my older brother and my mother hug her that I went to hug that very old woman whose breast was uncovered. I asked my mother a few years later why she was not covering this private part of hers. My mother replied that she never did. Therefore, perhaps what is nowadays (and has been for some time now) seen as a curse in West African cultures is an outcome of the important place Christianism and Islam occupy in those cultures.

MUIP's content creator and audience sometimes used the expressions: *"their daddy"*, *"their real daddy"*, *"their father"*, *"their dad"*, or *"their real papa"*, referring to teams they were scoring against and/or defeating. All these expressions mean one thing in Nigerian cultural contexts: their father's ass (has been penetrated). It implied that they (the teams and their fathers) were weak and deserved to be penetrated by stronger teams and men. MUIP's content creator nicknamed Anthony Martial as 'Toto'. While this was perhaps about his first name (Anthony), it also referred to his position in MUFC's team (striker). In fact, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, *'Toto'* is a Nigerian slang used to either refer to a penis or a vagina. Thus, the use of 'Toto' to refer to Anthony Martial also implied that he was perceived by MUIP's author as a phallus which would penetrate or strike opposing and generally weaker teams. I cannot speculate on this sexualised language translating into sexual violence in Nigerian contexts. I can nonetheless say this sexualised language constitutes one of the means

of expression of masculinity in many parts of the globe. Furthermore, reporting on MUFC's former coach words, MUIP's content creator translated Solskjær's "This is the truth" as *"Na the koko"*. Although those were Solskjær's words translated from English to Nigerian Pidgin English by MUIP's content creator, what intrigued me was his choice (MUIP content creator's choice) to use *'koko'*. While the latter signifies 'truth' or 'fact', it also means 'penis'. This implies that MUIP's content creator and the wider Nigerian community associate maleness and masculinity with truth and fact, and link femininity or femaleness to anything that is untrue or non-factual. These discursive interactions nonetheless suggest gender disparities within the Nigerian society and the hegemony of masculine ways of thinking within that society.

MUIP's rhetorical features and the construction of a West African online identity

I proceeded to a rhetorical analysis of the selected MUIP's tweets. The aim was to discover the identities expressed in/by these tweets. This rhetorical analysis assessed 3 main questions: what are the relationships between MUIP's main tweets and their contexts? What realities do these tweets construct for MUIP's audience? What do these tweets suggest about MUIP's author/content creator?

The selected MUIP's tweets, which covered the period going from the 24th of January 2020 to the 12th of March 2020, were linked to various contexts. On the 24th and 25th January, the selected tweets were mainly related to a rumour reported by news channels which announced that Ighalo (and Slimani) could be joining MUFC on a loan by the January Transfer Window Deadline Day of the 2019/2020 season (January 31st, 2020). Several tweets then followed, linked to this reported news and displaying MUIP content creator's disappointment and bemusement regarding Ighalo's recruitment in MUFC which could be perceived on this 24th of January 2020 MUIP's tweet: *"Wetin you wan use Ighalo do? After you sell Lukaku?"* This tweet from MUIP is a reply to a tweet from MUFC official account saying: *"Find out which of our #PL games have been rescheduled in March 21 #MUFC"*. There was no direct link

between this MUFC's official tweet and MUIP's reply to it, but one could see that MUIP's content creator was not particularly pleased by this rumour. In fact, during summer 2019, Lukaku was sold to Inter (Milan). Fans believed that he left because Ole Gunnar Solskjaer did not think he had the MUFC's DNA. His performance in the club was not solid enough. Yet he is said to be a crucial player for Inter and his country's national team (Belgium). Was Lukaku the problem? The rhetorical question asked by the author suggested that he was not. He clearly did not see Ighalo as an adequate substitution to Lukaku.

Thus, the first main tweets suggested that MUIP's author was sceptical and reluctant regarding Ighalo's possible recruitment in MUFC. This scepticism appeared in his use of sarcasm: *"Odion Ighalo > Firminho #DeadlineDay*". MUIP's content creator was being sarcastic when he tweeted that Odion Ighalo was superior to Firmino. The latter is a Brazilian international footballer who currently plays as a striker at Liverpool FC (when I was doing this analysis and writing up my thesis – this may have changed by the time it is examined). His transfer to Liverpool FC was announced on the club's official website on June 24, 2015, which took him away from Manchester United. In 2019, he won the Champions League with his club Liverpool by contributing strongly to the coronation of the English Premier League team. In 2018, Firmino won the Golden Samba for the best Brazilian player of the year. On December 29th, 2018, in a 5-1 victory against Arsenal, Firmino scored 3 goals and put Liverpool 9 points ahead in the middle of the season. On December 21, 2019, Firmino scored the only goal of the Club World Cup final against Flamengo in extra time and achieved the treble by adding this title to the Champions League and the UEFA Super Cup. A hint of disappointment could therefore be perceived in that tweet as well.

On the above-mentioned deadline day, MUIP's tweets were related to some key aspects: follow-up on Ighalo's potential recruitment context; Ighalo's recruitment and terms of the loan agreement between MUFC and Shanghai Shenhua; Ighalo's transfer updates; Ighalo's signed

deal; Ighalo's weekly salary (£100,000); the loan fee charged by Shanghai Shenhua to MUFC for Ighalo's deal (£4,000,000); and Ighalo turning down clubs' offers (Tottenham and Milan FC) to sign a loan deal with MUFC. Once this semester loan deal between Ighalo and MUFC was finalised, MUIP tweeted: *"Odion Ighalo get time plenty weaknesses but God go do am for him! E go give Man Utd the best 6 months of hin life! Naija no dey carry last!"* [Odion Ighalo has many weaknesses, but God will help him (improve)! He will give Man United the best 6 months of his life! Nigeria/Nigerians can't be last]. This tweet showed that despite MUIP's content creator earlier disappointment and scepticism, he was ready to move forward and to fully support Ighalo's as a fellow Nigerian. As a result, many tweets that followed suggested that MUIP's content producer belongs to a Nigerian and African community. He often used emojis and symbols such as: the Nigerian flag; the black backhand index pointing down at a picture (usually of Ighalo); and the gorilla emoji. He constantly referred to Ighalo as *'Igwe'*, which means king/ruler in Igbo. The latter is one of the main languages/cultural poles in Nigeria. Another main language/cultural pole in Nigeria is Yoruba. Odion Ighalo is Yoruba and king/ruler is translated in Yoruba as 'Oba'. All these elements implied that MUIP's creator is black and lives in Africa. They also suggested that MUIP's producer is Nigerian (Igbo), and he is talking to Nigerians in some of his tweets. These tweets often implied a sense of pride, happiness, and excitement he feels when it comes to MUFC's African players and to Nigerian and African communities/groups at large.

After that, MUIP's tweets mainly revolved around MUFC's games played between February 17th, 2020, and March 12th, 2020. During that period, MUFC played 4 Premier League games against: Chelsea (February 17th, 2020); Watford (February 23rd, 2020); Everton (March 1st, 2020); and Manchester City (March 8th, 2020). MUFC played 3 UEFA Europa League matches against Club Brugge (February 20th, 2020, and February 27th, 2020) and LASK (March 12th, 2020). They played one FA Cup game against Derby County (March 5th, 2020). In those

instances, MUIP's tweets reported on games' actions/moments, MUFC's players or coach words (all translated in Pidgin English by MUIP's content creator). The information given usually revolved around MUFC's line-ups, players, team, performances, statistics, etc. MUIP's content creator also used these tweets to generate interactions/actions from the audience. MUIP's followers would be asked to share their feelings/emotions/thoughts; to rate games and players; to share predictions; to draw comparisons between players; and to like or retweet.

The 17th of February 2020 was Ighalo's debut match in MUFC (vs Chelsea). Ighalo replaced Martial during the 90+1 minute to play for the first time in MUFC. When he entered MUFC was leading 2-0 and he nearly scored a minute later. The day after this match, MUIP tweeted: "*if say Odion Ighalo score that goal, some people go naked go work"* [If Odion Ighalo had scored that goal, some people would have gone to work naked]. This implied that MUIP's content creator was haunted by that missed occasion to the point of tweeting very early in the morning the day after (5:46am). It also implied that he would have been more than delighted if Ighalo had scored one minute after starting to play with MUFC for the first time.

MUFC played a UEFA Europa League last 32 first leg game against Club Brugge on the 20th of February 2020. It was Ighalo's second match with MUFC. He replaced Martial (who scored during the first half at the 36th minute) at the 67th minute. When Ighalo made his entry on the pitch, it was 1-1. There were apparently hopes that he would score and get a win. It was a draw.

On the 23rd of February 2020, MUFC's had a Premier League match against Ighalo's former Premier League Team (Watford). This was also Ighalo's first match in Old Trafford. MUIP reported that some Nigerians in Manchester went to the stadium to support their compatriots and watch him play. During that match, Ighalo replaced Anthony Martial at the 80th minute.

MUFC played against Club Brugge on February 27th, 2020. This was a UEFA Europa league last 32 (second leg) match. It was Ighalo's fourth match with MUFC and his first start with the

team. One of MUIP's tweets that day (prior to the match) was giving a 'warning' to Mata who had, according to MUIP's content creator, failed to pass the ball to Ighalo during the previous encounter. During that encounter, Ighalo scored his first goal with MUFC. A series of tweets followed putting an emphasis on that achievement. They highlighted that this was the first time Ighalo was starting a match with MUFC and that he managed to score. A tweet also highlighted that he dedicated this goal to his deceased sister: *"Odion Ighalo bin dedicate hin first ever Manchester United goal to hin late sister Mary Atole"* [Odion Ighalo has dedicated his first ever MUFC goal to his late sister Mary Atole]. The latter collapsed in her home in Canada and died before medics' arrival. This happened in December 2019. Attached to this tweet, there was a picture of Ighalo and some other MUFC players (McTominay, Bailly and 2 that I was unable to identify). Ighalo lifted part of his jersey to reveal a white shirt with the picture of a woman on it (probably his sister).

MUFC played a Premier League game against Everton on the 1st of March 2020. It was a draw (1 - 1) and MUIP's content creator was not very satisfied with the team performance. MUIP's also evaluated Ighalo's performance in Premier League. Ighalo replaced Greenwood at the 72nd minute. When he entered the pitch, he had an opportunity to score but he could not as Everton's goalkeeper pushed the ball aside. After this match, MUIP tweeted that Odion Ighalo must work on his finishing actions. MUIP pointed that Ighalo had already missed 3 big chances for MUFC in Premier League. The content creator added that some people would say it is lack of match fitness but when Nigeria played against Argentina during the 2018 World Cup, had Ighalo been clinical enough, Nigeria would have won that game.

On the 5th of March 2020, MUFC played a FA Cup game vs Derby County. MUFC won that match 3-0. Ighalo played the whole match and scored two goals. MUIP's tweets principally revolved around that performance/achievement. On the 8th of March 2020, MUFC played their penultimate game before the first English National lockdown against Manchester City. It was

a Premier league match which they won 2-0. Ighalo entered the pitch at the 88th minute, replacing Bruno Fernandes.

MUFC last match before the first lockdown was on the 12th of March 2020. This was the first leg match of their UEFA Europa League round of 16 against LASK. They won that game 5-0. Ighalo started it and scored one goal (at the 28th minute). Some MUIP's tweets proudly highlighted that this was Ighalo's fourth goal in 3 starts with MUFC, thereby wondering if Ighalo's loan deal should not be reassessed and turned into a permanent one. Ighalo's recruitment in MUFC created bemusement/confusion. Some fans (including MUIP's author and some MUIP's followers) wondered if it was wise to recruit Ighalo while they let Lukaku go, implying that Lukaku was a better player than Ighalo. At the end of this last match before lockdown, MUIP's content creator changed his views on this matter and tweeted: *"IGWE IGHALO > LUKAKU".* With this final tweet, MUIP's author explicitly change his comparison of both players, asserting that Ighalo was a better player than Lukaku and implying that he was proud of Ighalo's results so far in MUFC where he was, according to MUIP's content creator, representing Africa in general and Nigeria particularly.

One major suggestion given by many of these tweets is that MUIP's content creator is well informed and uses a wide range of reputable and reliable sources of information. It indicates that he does not make up his own stories but draws them out of his various and well-established sources of information (BBC, Telegraph, Manchester United's official website, Evening Standard, Guardian, Fabrizio Romano, etc.). Once he is done gathering his news, and as MUIP's founder mentioned in the interview I had with him in November 2019, he adds layers of entertainment to them.

In fact, another key rhetorical suggestion given by some MUIP's tweets is that their author is an entertainer. MUIP's content creator like making fun of people/players to make people laugh

or entertain them. For example, he tweeted: *"Breaking News: Odion Ighalo to Manchester United na Done Deal Tottenham bin wan sign am but e tell dem say make dem go chop Mourinho shit. [Fabrizio Romano]"* [Breaking News: Odion Ighalo to MUFC is a done deal. Tottenham wanted him but he told them to eat (chop) Mourinho shit (Fabrizio Romana)]. While it is true that Ighalo turned down an offer from the Spurs, here is what Fabrizio Romano had to say about that: *"Tottenham called him but the player decided for Man Utd – he's #MUFC fan since he was a kid"* (LIANOS, 2020). MUIP's content creator also tweeted: *"Odion Ighalo bin give Inter Milan and Tottenham ela because e wan join Manchester United. Him na United fan. (Source: Sky Sports)"*. Ighalo turned Inter Milan and Tottenham offers down. According to MUIP's content creator, Ighalo said *'ela'* to Inter Milan and Tottenham because he wanted to join MUFC and had always been a MUFC fan. I am not quite sure what *'ela'* means in Nigerian slangs/languages, but this made the only replier to this tweet laugh so it is most likely that the humour value of this tweet is in that word.

In a tweet, MUIP's content creator gave the list of the MUFC's players who were to start their game against Chelsea Football Club on the 17th of February 2020. While he gave an accurate line-up, he added layers of entertaining banter to that piece of information. To start with, he referred to Chelsea's players and fans as 'agberos' (hooligans). Then he went on listing the nicknames he gave to the 11 MUFC's players that were to start that game. Most of these analogies were deeply rooted in Nigerian's and West African's systems of meanings and representations. After another game against Chelsea on the 5th of March 2020, MUIP's content creator said that the 2-0 win of MUFC against Chelsea in Stamford Bridge was far from being easy as Chelsea had plenty of occasions and invalid goals as well. Chelsea's lack of luck was due to Ighalo's recruitment in MUFC and his village people's black magic, MUIP joked. With his constant use of socially and culturally specific analogies and humour along with his choice of Pidgin English as his language of expression, he intends to make his (Nigerian and West

African) audience laugh. This clearly confirms one of the findings of the online survey I designed and used to study MUIP's followers on Twitter. The last question of this survey was: "why are you following Man United in Pidgin"? Many indicated that they follow the account because they find it informative, funny, and entertaining.

In a few instances, the content creator's use of humour gave an indication of his values and beliefs, and that of many Nigerians and West Africans, like in this tweet: *"Thank God Odion Ighalo dey go Man United. We don see person wey go give Lingard & Pereira hot slap if dem play rubbish"*. It suggested that MUIP's author thought Lingard and Pereira performances then were poor and that he did not mind them receiving slaps because of that – even though he knew it was highly unlikely to happen. It also suggested that he thinks that physical punishments should be part of the correcting of mistakes. Many West Africans use such punishments on their children if they are "misbehaving". Furthermore, this implies that MUIP's author adhere to such punishments in case of misbehaviour.

MUIP's tweets sometimes suggested that the author was performing the identity of a TV football commentator; writing as if he was shouting *"IGHALO!!!!!! E SHOOT!"* (using capital letters), holding his breath, then resuming to normal voice range with *"Ball knack post"* (using lowercase letters), and finishing with a *"Jesus"* (to highlight the flow of emotions). That performance constituted an aspect of MUIP's content creator entertaining character. This also suggested that he was always watching these games live.

A few tweets suggested that MUIP's content creator has partnerships with well established brands and companies in Nigeria like DStv – MultiChoice. In fact, MUIP's content creator used his content to promote DStv Nigeria services. Ultimately, MUIP's tweets suggested that the content creator is interested in his followers'/audience's views, opinions, ideas, and suggestions, as he often asked for them.

Through these discursive suggestions, it can therefore be argued that the realities constructed by MUIP's tweets for the audience were principally those of information and entertainment. In fact, as I shall highlight in the next section, the most used emoji by MUIP's readers in their replies to MUIP's main tweets was the laughing face. MUIP's content creator also shared his own feelings/emotions with the audience like in this tweet: *Manchester United striker Odion Ighalo don repost our caption on hin instagram. Wow Na Humble guy"* [Manchester United Striker Odion Ighalo reshared our caption. Wow. A humble guy]. A sense of achievement was felt by MUIP. This pride also highlighted the fact that their account is an alternative account (as opposed to official). They felt like their work/content was being acknowledged by MUFC players. Therefore, some of the selected MUIP's tweets constructed realities such as pride; love; and sense of belonging to an "*Ighalian*" community, an African/Nigerian community, and a MUFC community. This created a reality where those supposedly privileged communities – at least in MUIP content creator's opinion – were to be distinguished from outsiders, especially from other teams' (such as Chelsea) fans and players (agberos or hooligans).

MUIP's social media languages and the construction of a West African online identity

Social media languages were also used by MUIP's content creator in his tweets and by MUIP's audiences in their replies. By social media languages I mean emojis, hashtags and netspeak. McCulloch (2020) highlighted that emojis serve as means to illustrate symbols/emblems and body/facial gestures. Hashtags are clickable words that allow people on social media to either mark content with keywords in order to share these contents and refer to them more easily; or to group together all the discussions referring to the same topics (Timms and Heimans, 2019; McCulloch, 2020). According to McCulloch, netspeak refers to internet acronyms.

Emojis, hashtags and netspeak were employed both by MUIP's content creator and by the account's audience in many of their tweets and replies. The 3 most used emojis by MUIP's

content creator were the gorilla emoji, the Nigerian flag and the backhand index pointing down. All these symbols appeared to be indicative of MUIP's content creator's subject position. In fact, the gorilla emoji, which was always following the hashtag #MUIP, can be associated with the wild or nature life as well as with power. Therefore, MUIP's content creator positions himself in the cyberspace as being part of a developing world, a developing Africa, and intends to use the natural power that lies within that developing continent not only to establish himself significantly in that cyberspace but also to counter mainstream cultures or civilisations. With his constant use of the Nigerian flag, MUIP's author evidently position himself as being part of a Nigerian community within that developing Africa. He also used the eagle symbol to convey that same idea. The players of the Nigerian male football team are called the 'Super Eagles' (those of the female national football team are known as the 'Super Falcons'). Furthermore, the backhand index pointing down, when used, was always a black one. Thus, MUIP's content creator indicated that he is part of the black ethnic or racial group, which constitutes the predominant ethnic/racial group in Africa.

Considering the emojis used by MUIP's readers in their replies to MUIP's tweets, I observed that the most used one was the laughing face. This once again demonstrates the entertaining and funny character of this account for its audience. It was also observed that one of the three most used emoji in MUIP audience's replies to MUIP's main tweets was the Nigerian flag. This suggests that the readers also mostly position themselves as being part of a Nigerian community within the cyberspace.

The hashtags used by MUIP's content creator and by his readers also indicated a few identity markers. In fact, the most used hashtag by MUIP's content creator was #MUFC. This asserted not only that Manchester United Football Club is at the centre of all discussions generated by MUIP, but also that MUIP's account wants to be part of the bigger MUFC cyberidentity picture. Hashtags like #TeamAfrica or #NaijaSpirit used by MUIP's content creator and

MUIP's audience indicated the cultural team they belong to (Africa) as well as the cultural spirit they embody ('Naija' also known as Nigerian or Nigeria). Some other hashtags suggested the existence of an advertising partnership or contract between MUIP's content creator, and the Nigerian branch of South Africa's DStv company. Those hashtags were: #WeekendLifeOnDStv, #DStvStepUp, or #AlwaysFootballTime. DStv adverts' posters were often attached to the tweets that contain such hashtags. Thus, one could argue that MUIP's account is not a simple MUFC's fan account but one capable of generating incomes and open to business partnerships.

MUIP author's and readers' use of netspeak was quite standard or westernised with no direct connection to African or West African cultural references. Internet acronyms such as 'lol' (laughing out loud), 'WTF' (What The Fuck), 'Fr' (For real), 'SMH' (Shaking My Head), 'Lmao' (Laughing my ass out), or 'GOAT' (Greatest of All Times) are often used within the mainstream (Western) cyberspace. However, such internet acronyms used by an African/Nigerian content creator and by an African/Nigerian audience implied that their identities are multifaceted and integrate heterogeneous elements (both local and global). This also suggested that they both have a good command of a globalised way of speaking on the internet. Furthermore, this implied that most of them who are already literate, and university educated (as highlighted in Chapters Four and Five), are also digital media literate. They can easily navigate between regionally or locally based codes and languages and internationally based codes and languages. Therefore, they are able to insert themselves adequately into mainstream or Western communication processes, while outsiders (Westerners) may most likely find the opposite process (inserting themselves adequately into the communicative processes established by MUIP) rather uneasy. It also indicated how the developed world is culturally overexposed to the developing world while the contrary is most likely not the case.

See table 11, table 12, table 13, table 14, and table 15 in Appendix 5 which are series of tables detailing the social media languages used in MUIP's main tweets and replies.

MUIP's multimedia content and the construction of a West African Identity

On many occasions in the selected main tweets, MUIP's content creator used multimedia content. These were principally pictures or memes. They mostly displayed Ighalo or things related to him. Such images or memes not only put an emphasis on the player who was the principal subject matter of the selected and analysed tweets (Ighalo), but also offered some valuable cultural information on Nigeria and West Africa to the general public on Twitter. In fact, on one picture, Ighalo was wearing a Nigerian national football team jersey. General members of the public therefore had the opportunity to see how the Nigerian national football team jersey looks like. Another meme designed by MUIP's content creator captured Ighalo after he was denied a goal opportunity by Pickford's leg (Everton's goalkeeper). This meme displayed what he may have thought, according to MUIP's content creator, after that failed attempt to score: *"Ahh Mogbe! See wetin I miss ???"* (Ahh Mogbe! Did you see what I missed?!) – see image 7 in Appendix 6. 'Mogbe' is a word used by Yoruba people to express regret. Yoruba people are a large ethnic group present in Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire. Most of this ethnic group speak the Yoruba language. As highlighted in an earlier section (MUIP's rhetorical features and the construction of a West African online identity), Odion Ighalo is himself part of the Yoruba ethnic group.

A few pictures/memes displayed other MUFC's players; supporters; and Babalawo's characters. MUIP's content creator not only used figures of speech that were Nigerian or African specific, but also multimedia contents (images) that were Nigerian or African specific as well. In fact, one image that was particularly significant was the picture of Chiwetalu Agu dressed like a Babalawo (see image 13 in Appendix 6). A Babalawo is a Yoruba's *Ifa* priest that usually claims to secure the future through the communication they have with spirits.

Chiwetalu Agu is one of the most famous actors or comedians of Nigerian indigenous movies. I wonder if any person unfamiliar with Nigerian movies/actors and/or Babalawo would understand such cultural references. In any case, such references assist MUIP's content creator in establishing a Nigerian or West African identity on Twitter thereby exposing that cultural identity to the world.

MUIP's content creator also attached advertisement posters to his tweets on a couple of occasions (see images 14 and 15 in Appendix 6). On these two occasions, those posters were advertisements promoting DStv services (the South African main Cable Television provider in Anglophone Africa). Those posters appeared to indicate that MUIP's has established partnerships with companies from which the account gets financial resources. See in Appendix 6, a display of pictures, memes, and posters analysed in this thesis.

MUIP's content creator also attached a video to a couple of the selected and analysed MUIP's main tweets. The first one was a 15 seconds' video of 7 black supposedly male MUFC fans (apparently Nigerians) standing in front of what looked like one of Old Trafford ground's shops. They were all wearing MUFC's jersey and on 3 of the jerseys, the number 25 could be seen (Ighalo's jersey number). One of the fans was playing a music instrument and holding a Nigerian flag, while some of the others were dancing. They were probably there to support their Nigerian compatriot and to showcase their pride regarding that historic moment as Ighalo has so far been the first and only Nigerian national to ever play for Manchester United Football Club.

The second one was a 25 seconds' video of a MUIP's content creator recorded in Pidgin English with another person (a Nigerian Arsenal's fan). MUIP's content creator predicted that MUFC would defeat Everton at Everton's stadium on the 1st of March 2020: 1 goal to Everton and 3 goals to MUFC. This was a Premier League match and it ended up being a draw (1 - 1).

But when MUIP's content creator was asked by the other person in the video (recorded prior to that match) if Ighalo would score, he said that he certainly would, and added that all goals scored by Ighalo in MUFC would be on behalf of Nigeria. Even though Ighalo did not score during that Premier League encounter against Everton, this video – as well as the other one - conveyed a feeling of attachment to and pride for the Nigerian cultural community.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the discursive resources used in MUIP's tweets and assessed how they help setting up a West African online identity among MUIP's followers and Twitter. This chapter was the outcome of my discourse analysis of 107 MUIP's main tweets mentioning the key word 'Ighalo', and the 505 replies to these tweets, during the period between the 24th of January 2020 and the 12th of March 2020. Through this analysis, I investigated MUIP's instances of language within the socio-cultural contexts it created not only for itself but for its followers. I also gathered information about the account's systems of meanings and discursive culture.

What is worth taking from this chapter is that MUIP Twitter account tweets as a collective self which materialises via its regular use of 'we' or 'us'. Similarly, MUIP's followers use 'we' or 'us' as an inclusive pronoun to mark their belonging to specific socio-cultural communities: MUFC team/fans, Nigerian, or (West) African. Thus, this community's content creator has clearly taken the position of a well-informed Nigerian/(West) African fan of MUFC and Pidgin English speakers and speaks to and for fellow Nigerian/(West) African fans of MUFC and Pidgin English speakers. Humour was the key element constructing that community. It confirmed the ideas expressed by MUIP's founder and audience in Chapters Four and Five. Humour was indeed the predominant figure of speech used in MUIP's main tweets, and that humour put into circulation cultural markers connected to the West African geography and culinary arts, as well as to happenings and representations associated with certain Nigerian

areas. MUIP's content creator mainly informs his followers and audience on MUFC but does so in an entertaining way embedded in Nigerian and West African systems of meanings and representations. In fact, the laughing face was the most used emoji by MUIP's audience which suggested that they often could easily relate to those systems of meanings and representations, hence find MUIP's content funny.

Thus, MUIP's main tweets and audience replies are establishing a West African MUFC fandom identity on Twitter. However, this fandom identity is deeply masculine which was articulated in their occasional use of aggressive and vulgar language as well as their humour often embedded in nudity and penetrative sex. It implies that Nigerian and West African (orthodox) men are most likely to find MUIP's regular sexual innuendos funny.

The hashtags used by the content creator and the audience also indicated a few identity markers: their belonging to the overall MUFC fandom community, the African community, or the Nigerian community. Their use of netspeak was quite standard or westernised with no connection to African, Nigerian, or West African cultural references. These elements suggested that MUIP's content creator and audience belong to a global internet village while they also establish a *glocal* one within it. This establishment of a *glocal* internet village within a global one was also clearly articulated in some of the multimedia texts used. They offered some valuable cultural information on Nigeria and West Africa to the general public on Twitter. They informed the public on expressions used in Nigerian and West African languages, on Nigerian and West African traditions, and also referred to the Nigerian cinema industry.

One may wonder if there was, in the examined tweets on Ighalo, any mention of racism. There was only one mention of racism in the tweets examined. It was a tweet on the 2nd of February 2020 by MUIP's content creator shortly after Ighalo joined MUFC. This tweet was giving a warning to MUFC's fans should they be racists towards Ighalo if he ever underperformed. I

never came across any MUIP's tweets or any other news item reporting that Ighalo was victim of racism during his 23 match appearances as a MUFC player (he was recruited on a loan deal on January 31, 2020, and his loan contract with MUFC ended on January 31, 2021). When the George Floyd tragedy happened in May 2020, a tweet by MUIP saying *"Rest in Power, George Floyd, one love"*, gathered two controversial comments out of four. One comment broadly said that the account should focus on football only and leave (black) Americans' problems to (black) Americans. The other emphasised that Nigerians are killed by the Nigerian police, and it goes unnoticed while it should be noticed by the world as well. These elements point back to the concept of *glocalisation* as MUIP's audience is being assertive regarding the way in which they want to experience the global MUFC within the MUIP Twitter community. They want MUIP to constitute a fandom community where they experience MUFC locally without necessarily being constrained by issues happening in global north societies to non-Nigerians or non-West Africans.

Now that I have highlighted MUIP's discursive features and how they assist MUIP's content creator in setting up a Nigerian or West African identity on Twitter, I shall, in the next chapter discuss the findings of the 3 analytical chapters (the discourse analysis, DDS's interview analysis, and the online survey analysis). In that chapter, I indicate the wider interpretations, implications, limitations, and recommendations of my research project.

CHAPTER SEVEN – DISCUSSION

Introduction

My research project on MUIP's Twitter account investigated how the *glocalisation* of MUFC made possible via that account has enabled the construction of a postcolonial West African online identity, thereby creating and fostering an imagined cyber community or fandom. My research addressed two questions: which discursive features do MUIP's tweets employ? In what ways do these features help setting up a West African online identity? To answer them, I proceeded to a discourse analysis of some MUIP's tweets and readers' replies to these tweets. I also conducted an online survey and interviewed MUIP's founder to illuminate MUIP's production and consumption processes.

Now that all these data have been collected and analysed, in this seventh chapter, I highlight the interpretations, implications, limitations, and recommendations of my research project. In the first part of this current chapter, I give my interpretations of the findings and results thereby revealing their significance and showing how they answered my research questions. In the second part, I articulate why these findings matter by linking them back to theories and ideas I assessed in Chapter Two (Literature Review) and by highlighting how they contribute to existing knowledge on social media, football fandom, globalisation, and cultural identity construction. Thirdly, I acknowledge the limitations of my research and reiterate why my findings are nonetheless important as they effectively answered my research questions. In the final part of this chapter, I give recommendations for further studies.

Interpretations

The three research methods used enabled me to assess MUIP's production (through a Skype interview with MUIP's founder), MUIP's consumption (through an online survey on 100 MUIP's followers on Twitter), and MUIP's message (through a discourse analysis of some

MUIP's main tweets and readers' replies to them). Each of these research techniques helped to illuminate my research questions and contexts. Thus, in line with a key purpose of the survey on MUIP's followers on Twitter, which was to find out whether or not MUIP's followers were from West African countries, it was revealed that 98% of the respondents were originally from four West African countries: Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana and Sierra Leone. These followers performed an online culture that is mainly male (86% of the respondents were male individuals), educated (90% of the respondents had at least a university undergraduate degree). They were football fans (99% of the respondents), MUFC fans (95% of the respondents), and with a Nigerian or West African sense of humour.

This last point was illustrated in many of the selected and analysed MUIP's main tweets and readers' replies. The discourse analysis revealed that humour and metaphors used by MUIP's content creator in MUIP's main tweets were deeply grounded in Nigerian and West African systems of meanings and cultural representations. MUIP content creator's use of nicknaming was linked to specific cultural references. In one tweet, MUIP's author not only nicknamed Chelsea's fans (and players) as 'Agberos'; but also nicknamed MUFC's players Harry Maguire as 'Maggi', Daniel James as 'Dano Milk', Anthony Martial as 'Toto', and Brandon Williams as 'Awilo'. All these 5 nicknames evoke a connection to culturally specific contexts and references. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 'Agberos' is a Nigerian slang word for 'hooligans'; 'Maggi' is a seasoning cube brand sold principally in Africa; 'Dano Milk' is a milk powder brand sold principally in African and South Asian nations; and 'Toto' is a Nigerian slang word for 'penis' or 'vagina'. 'Awilo' (or Awilo Longomba) is a famous singer and dancer from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These ridiculous nicknames were used to make the audience (who would get those cultural references) laugh. Considering Anthony Martial's nickname 'Toto' and the humour associated with it among MUIP's followers and creators, it can be argued that sex related topics in Nigerian or West African

settings are laughable matters. Perhaps it is because sex related topics make Nigerians and/or West Africans so uncomfortable that the only way they feel they can express themselves about such topics is through jokes and banters. In fact, as Epoge (2012) highlighted, Pidgin English is often used by young individuals in Cameroon when having sex related discussions in an attempt to make them less uncomfortable, more playful, and fun.

Many of MUIP's main tweets were sometimes absurdly funny, like a tweet in which MUIP's content creator said that it was their use (him and fellow Nigerian and West African MUFC's fans) of *'juju'* that made MUFC disclose Ighalo's jersey number eventually. There was another cultural reference here with the word *'juju'*. The latter is a Nigerian slang word for 'black magic'. MUIP's author jokingly stated that their use of black magic made MUFC disclose that information. The analysis of these tweets indicated that MUIP's readers find MUIP's content funny. The most used emoji by MUIP's audience in their replies was indeed the laughing face.

MUIP's content creator also drew an analogy between Ighalo's goal against LASK and what the Nigerian musician Lagbaja referred to as 'thunder' in his 2000's song 'konko below'. MUIP's content creator gave no indication whatsoever as to who Lagbaja is and what his concept of 'thunder' refers to; thereby implying that his audience already knew and shared this reference with him. I already indicated who Lagbaja is, as well as what 'thunder' referred to in 'konko below' in the previous chapter. I must now point that Lagbaja is always wearing a mask, so it is impossible to know how his face looks like. In fact, his stage name (Lagbaja) is a Yoruba word that expresses the idea in the previous sentence (one who does not have a recognisable face). The only certainty is that he is a male individual. In the video clip of this song, women are seen dancing sensually and twerking. That implies that the song is charged with sexual connotations and innuendos. He also sings in Yoruba in that song. This suggests that Lagbaja and hence many Nigerians feel they have to use an indigenous language or Pidgin English

slangs whenever their discourse is charged with sexual connotations and inuendo to make them less awkward and more playful.

All these indicate that MUIP's readers, when using and engaging with MUIP's tweets, reactivate cultural identity markers (Nigerians and West African identity markers). They do so through the discursive resources and cultural references they use. MUIP's content creator uses figures of speech such as metaphors and humour to communicate specific cultural meanings (Nigerian and West African meanings) to his followers, enabling them to construct knowledge about themselves and their world.

In the last question of the online survey, respondents were asked why they follow MUIP. A significant number of them said they follow MUIP because of the love or fandom they have for MUFC, Pidgin English, MUIP, or the three of them. They claimed to have developed a significant emotional attachment to and appreciation for MUFC teams and players, MUIP's content, and the Pidgin English language. This claim is in line with Anderson's (1983) concept of 'collective imagination' from which he defined nations as imagined communities that bring together people who feel strongly attached to these communities. Although Anderson's work was more about nationalism than anything else, it can nonetheless be observed that MUIP's followers (at least those who responded to the online survey) have a strong emotional attachment to an imagined community built around their love or fandom for MUFC's team and players, MUIP's account and content, and Pidgin English. This imagined community is an imagined cyber community as this account was established on social media and has created and fostered a West African online community. The imagined cyber community of MUIP is, in part, a linguistic community. It is also defined by football fandom in general and MUFC in particular, but Pidgin English's use draws people in. The discourse analysis of MUIP readers' replies to the selected MUIP's main tweets corroborates such a claim. When looking at personal pronouns used by MUIP's readers in their replies to MUIP's tweets, it can be observed that

they often used ‘we’ or ‘us’. Those two personal pronouns served as inclusive personal pronouns to indicate their emotional attachment or belonging to specific imagined communities. Besides, elements of nationalism and regionalism were displayed in these analysed replies via the aforementioned personal pronouns, which implied an exclusion of non-Nigerians or non-Africans from the discussions/tweets. On the one hand, ‘we’ or ‘us’ was employed by MUIP’s followers to mark their belonging or strong emotional link to the MUFC’s team or fans community. On the other hand, ‘we’ was used to indicate a sense of attachment or belonging to the Nigerian or African imagined communities. It implied a couple of things: they are Nigerian or African, and the MUIP tweets and discussions are made by Nigerians/Africans for Nigerians/Africans. The use of ‘we’ serves as an implicit barrier to outsiders (non-Nigerians and/or non-Africans) and an explicit cultural identity marker.

Through their interactions with MUIP’s account, MUIP’s followers are involved in constructing an online culture on Twitter around the content delivered by the said account. The discursive analysis of the replies to MUIP’s tweets allowed me to identify the main semantic networks that MUIP’s readers built in their interactions with MUIP’s main tweets. 27 of those semantic networks were identified. Out of these 27 semantic networks, 4 were often and significantly used in MUIP’s followers’ replies: pride, happiness, thanksgiving, and encouragement, which were shown in the expressions, words, and emojis used. These semantic networks validated that sense of identity and emotional link to specific imagined communities claimed by many MUIP’s followers in their response to the question: “why do you follow ‘Man United in Pidgin’”? In their replies to the selected and analysed MUIP’s tweets, many followers expressed their pride regarding MUIP, MUFC, and Ighalo. They felt happy and proud to see a fellow Nigerian/African football player joining MUFC (their favourite team). They also expressed their pride and happiness regarding his performances within MUFC. Similarly, they directed encouragements and expressed thanksgiving towards Ighalo. By expressing these

semantic networks through their interactions with MUIP's content on Twitter, MUIP's followers expose their sense of identity or belonging to a Nigerian/African community, a MUFC community, a MUIP community, a Pidgin English community; as well as their pride for Nigeria/Africa and key figures of this nation/continent. They make and circulate their own Nigerian/African meanings and systems of representations within the digital public sphere.

The latter point aligns with MUIP founder's (DDS) aims for his account, expressed in the Skype interview I had with him in November 2019. DDS aims to make his own cultural meanings and systems of representations and circulate them across the digital public sphere. Thus, with MUIP, DDS seeks to expose an under-exposed Africa to the world and to serve the needs of those who, like him, are MUFC's fans from Nigeria or West Africa and fluent in Pidgin English.

I already discussed how the discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets showed how MUIP content creator's use of some figures of speech is very Nigerian or West African culturally specific. Perhaps I should also mention that taking a look at some of the pictures or memes attached to these main tweets would highlight similar cultural dimensions. On some images and the tweeted words attached to them, MUIP's content creator not only circulated the notion of 'Babalawo' (Ifa Priest in Yoruba cultures) across the digital public sphere but also exposed one of the most famous Nigerian actors/comedians of Nigerian indigenous movies (Chiwetalu Agu) to the same digital public sphere. That identity reconstruction was also noticeable through the recurrent use of the Nigerian flag emoji by MUIP's content creator and of the nickname he gave to Ighalo: Igwe Ighalo. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, 'Igwe' is the Igbo word for 'king'. During the interview I had with DDS, he highlighted that his native language (tribe language) is the Igbo language. As highlighted by Campbell and Page (2018), Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani/Hausa are the main tribes or ethnic groups in Nigeria. Yoruba people are found in Southwestern Nigeria as well as in Benin, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Igbo

people live in the southeast of Nigeria, where Nigeria's main natural source of income (oil) can be found. Fulani/Hausa people are mostly found in Northern Nigeria. The cohabitation of Yorubas, Igbos, and Fulani/Hausa has not always been a peaceful one. As highlighted in the literature review (Chapter Two), after Nigeria's independence (October 1st, 1960), various tensions among these groups rose to climax in 1966 and led to a three-year civil war from 1967 to 1970. The cohabitation of these groups seems less tensed nowadays, at least on social media platforms like MUIP. In fact, MUIP's founder is Igbo and he, as well as many of MUIP's account followers, were proud of Odion Ighalo, a Yoruba. The use of Pidgin English seems to reconcile the ethnic tensions among different Nigerian ethnic groups. However, I would argue that such tensions still exist even on platforms such as MUIP. When MUIP's content creator decided to nickname Ighalo as *"Igwe Ighalo"*, I remember one follower pointing out that Ighalo should be called *"Oba"* instead. 'Oba' is the Yoruba word for king or ruler. Therefore, this follower's remark implies that some Nigerians still want differences between Nigerian tribes to be acknowledged. This follower implied that Ighalo's nickname should be in Yoruba, not in Igbo, because Ighalo is a Yoruba football player, not an Igbo one. This follower was probably Yoruba, and associated Ighalo's claimed greatness to his tribal identity, not his national one. He/she therefore appeared to think Igbo people were to be treated as outsiders with regards to Ighalo's success within MUFC.

With MUIP, DDS can relate to more than 100,000 people on Twitter (in July 2022, MUIP's account had more than 100,000 followers on Twitter). During our interview, he claimed that these people are from Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, other African countries, and some non-African countries. The survey mostly confirmed that claim. However, it is perhaps worth mentioning that DDS, who classified Ghana as the second main country where MUIP's followers are from, did not align with the survey results. The survey showed that the second country where the respondents were from is Cameroon. 78% of them were Nigerians, 10%

were Cameroonians, and 8% were Ghanaians. Regardless of these positions, it can be argued that DDS has nonetheless proceeded to a specific adaptation of Premier League Football's and MUFC's coverage to his Nigerian and West African cultures and to the cultures of those who are like him (Nigerians and West Africans). Therefore, MUIP has enabled DDS to create within his followers a feeling of attachment to an imagined cyber community, as previously mentioned.

Furthermore, DDS created an environment similar to Football Viewing Centres (FVCs) described by Onyebweke (2018), where matches and activities are televised. With what DDS created, matches and activities are covered online, creating virtual stadiums that provide information, entertainment, and socialising platforms. In fact, in our interview, DDS claimed that his account positions itself within the narrative of a Nigerian MUFC fan that speaks Pidgin English and conveys an up-to-date diary of MUFC's activities with humour. The discourse analysis of the selected tweets validated that claim. Through most of the tweets, the reality constructed by the MUIP content creator for his audience was that of information and entertainment. It suggested that MUIP's content creator is well-informed, funny, and can perform, via some of his tweets, the identity of a TV football commentator. He used well-established sources of information, and his tweets were grounded in a Nigerian or African sense of humour, referring to Nigerian or African cultural meanings and systems of representations. With that, and after mentioning that MUIP's account has a reach of more than 100,000 people on Twitter (in July 2022), I can argue that MUIP's account has the potential to improve MUFC's image, reputation, and reach – at least among the Nigerian and West African audience.

However, while I was analysing some of the tweets released by MUIP's content creator, I was reminded of one of the things MUIP's founder said when I was interviewing him. In fact, during that interview, DDS highlighted that one of his key rules is that he never uses insults or

aggressive language. While it is true that when I went through the 107 main tweets selected and analysed, I never came across a tweet where MUIP's content creator was employing offensive or insulting language to address his readers or followers; he did so on a few occasions when referring to MUFC's players or opponents. He sometimes used the word 'mumu' (stupid) to refer to some MUFC's players when they were not performing well or to his standards. He called Chelsea's fans (and players) 'agberos' (hooligans). He sometimes employed the rather sexually offensive expression 'their daddy' (which I explained earlier) to refer to opposing teams MUFC had scored against or had defeated. All these elements displayed hegemonic or orthodox masculinity embodied by MUIP's account and content creator. It reflects that MUIP's was founded by a male individual and that 86% of those Twitter followers who responded to the online survey were male individuals. Here is perhaps the rationale behind the use of such language.

DDS said in our interview that he does not classify Pidgin English as a type of language. It is most likely related to the fact that, as highlighted in a 2016 BBC's article, Pidgin English does not serve as an official language in any African countries where it is spoken. According to that BBC article, there is also an element of trauma associated with Pidgin English within those countries as children are regularly punished when caught speaking the language. It appears that there is a strong colonial tie preventing DDS or even some other Pidgin English users from valuing Pidgin English as a type of language. They do not classify it as such because it has not been classified as such by mainstream cultures (former colonisers' cultures). It might imply that DDS thinks that MUIP and Pidgin English will never be serious enough to counter mainstream languages, cultures, and coverage of Premier League Football. There are some negative connotations associated with Pidgin English in West Africa. Those connotations reflect on the colonial history of Pidgin English and the communities that use it. Therefore, its use echoes with social, political, and global power formations. The choice of Pidgin English

by itself sets up a demarcation between global football fandom and the local identities formed in the MUIP's imagined cyber community. Through analysing MUIP's tweets, I discovered a rich range of speech acts, semantic networks, and rhetorical features in Pidgin English.

Implications

Globalisation has been presented as the process of linking nations together (Clavio, 2020; Delaney and Madigan, 2015). According to Steger (2020), this phenomenon is by no means a recent one and can be traced back to the earlier travel and trade and the age of exploration in the 15th century. Axford (2013) nonetheless stressed that digital communications contributed to intensifying that long going process. As far as sports are concerned, Giulianotti and Robertson (2013) argued that their relation to globalisation followed a similar path. It has also been argued that the globalisation of sports and football in particular is marked by universalism as well as particularism which are materialised through *glocalisation* and reflected in the ways football and sports are played across the globe, how media, particularly social media, cover them, and how they are followed (Tomlinson, 2013; Amenta and Miric, 2013; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2013, Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004). Therefore, my research findings build on this existing evidence of how football is covered and followed on social media. They contribute to an understanding of how these practices are enacted in Nigeria and West Africa. The MUIP's account is built around a universal and internationally known football team (MUFC) and Nigerian or West African linguistic codes and discursive practices (Pidgin English). My research went further than that of Igwe et al. (2021). They assessed the *glocalisation* of top English, Italian, Spanish, German, and French football leagues in Nigeria. They indicated that Nigerians are more loyal to these leagues than they are to the local one. On one hand, they highlighted that such *glocalisation* generates important profits for FVCs and the hospitality sector. On the other hand, they claimed that due to that *glocalisation*, Nigerians' moral values are being replaced by Western ones which can potentially lead to an over westernisation of

future generations. They took the example of gambling, which has become increasingly popular in Nigeria with the popularisation of top football competitions in the country, and said it is giving rise to addiction, indebtedness, suicides, domestic violence, and evictions within the Nigerian youth. My research developed that by Igwe et al. thereby focusing on the *glocalisation* of a specific football team within a specific football league and looking at how this *glocalisation* operates within the specific MUIP online fandom community. Igwe et al. indicated that the *glocalisation* of the aforementioned leagues sets a sense of belonging among Nigerians watching these leagues but did not provide an understanding of what constitutes its basis and characteristics. My study of MUIP's founder, audience, and content revealed that the cultural identity and the feeling of attachment enabled by this *glocalisation* of European football leagues in Nigeria is only partially related to football or team fandom. The discursive and linguistic sense of commonality is as important as the sense of commonality brought by a football team, if not more important. Thus, MUIP constitutes an example of how the *glocalisation* of a European League team is multidimensional and not solely relying on football fandom or club's fandom. That *glocalisation* takes into account the linguistic and discursive resources and the quality of the content/service. Furthermore, the Nigerian or West African identity markers activated by MUIP's coverage of MUFC contributes to transforming non-fans into followers who, with the content they feel culturally related to, are now regularly aware of the team's news and activities; and perhaps building a bond with the team.

Another key particularity of MUIP's Nigerian/West African *glocalisation* of MUFC's coverage is that it is established by a Nigerian/West African community rather than by well-established firms or organisations such as MUFC or the BBC. In fact, unlike the creation in 2016 of 'BBC News Pidgin' which can be read as a BBC's market expansion to serve its fairly large audience in English-speaking West African countries, a Nigerian/West African online MUFC's fandom community took this *glocalising* process into their own hands by creating

MUIP. The latter tweets in Pidgin-English principally for Nigerian and West African Pidgin English speakers. Besides, as highlighted in Chapter Four, there was no formal agreement or request elaborated by MUFC, asking MUIP's founder to create this social media account. MUIP founder's initiative was driven by his fandom for this Premier League Football team but not requested by the said team. Through this independently conceived localisation of MUFC, MUIP's founder nonetheless started what now seems to be a fairly lucrative social media account. Some of the discursive features highlighted via the discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets clearly indicated that MUIP's account can be used as an advertising tool by local, national, regional or continental companies. MUIP seems to generate *glocal* online media flows within the Nigerian, West African and African spheres generating visibility and revenues. Scholars such as Tomlinson (1991), Thussu (2006) and Shim (2006) would argue that globalisation is the tool that enables MUIP to produce such an impact. Through its use of Twitter (and of other social media platforms) MUIP can be seen as generating global cultural or media flows as well - Nigerian/West African Pidgin English football tweets that can be seen by global football and MUFC fans. However, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the MUIP's community is not necessarily producing a new Premier League agenda, or it does so only partially. What the MUIP's community does is adapting a mainstream Premier League to the needs and tastes of its community. As Morley (2005) would argue, MUIP's capacity to fully generate a global cultural agenda is therefore still quite limited. I would argue that MUIP's account is followed by many (more than 100,000 followed MUIP on Twitter in July 2022) partly because MUFC is overwhelmingly famous across the world. MUFC's official Twitter account has more than 31 million followers. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if a similar account tweeting in Pidgin English about local Nigerian or West African teams would achieve the same level of popularity and gather the same level of advertising opportunities. That being said, and as noted by Campbell and Page (2018), Nollywood is a very lucrative and famous

film industry within the African continent and among African Diasporas. Campbell and Page also emphasised that Nigerian Afrobeat and Afrobeats genres and artists have achieved even more by being worldwide phenomena in Africa as well as in Western countries. Thus, it can be argued that local music and cinema from Nigeria have achieved more than Nigerian online football coverage on a global scale. Therefore, Nigeria seems to be reasonably influential on the African continent with regard to its ability to generate cultural flows (music and cinema) locally and globally.

Onyebueke (2018) argued that many European football teams like MUFC, Chelsea and Barcelona are followed in Nigeria using FVCs where these clubs' matches - and that of other top European clubs - are televised. As Onyebueke acknowledged, allegiance to European leagues is not only perceivable through tele-viewing. Additionally, it is mirrored through print media and the internet. He recognised that the study of Nigerian and West African football fandom on the internet and social media has until now been glossed over. My research findings fill that gap and contribute to a clearer understanding of how Nigerian and West African fandom identities are constructed and performed on social media, particularly on Twitter. This gap is indicative of a profound global inequity in how frameworks of knowledge and understanding are defined. Therefore, my research exposes that structural inequity. In fact, as pointed out by Young (2020), academic enquiries often tend to prioritise the experiences of Western European and North American communities and their views of the world. The significance of my research is that it throws light on something new (the MUIP's imagined cyber community) and demonstrates how that new object (the MUIP's imagined cyber community) is different and distinct in important ways. For instance, with MUIP, its founder created an environment similar to a Football Viewing Centre (FVC) where matches, players, and activities are covered online, creating virtual stadiums that provide entertainment and socialising platforms to Nigerian or West African fans of MUFC and Pidgin English speakers.

MUIP constitutes an open window to worldwide Premier League Football and a space where local MUFC fandom can be formed, reinforced, and, as MUIP's founder wishes, be exposed to the world as coming from Africa. With this research on MUIP, I also add something to the study of football fandom. One insightful and subversive aspect of my research is the linguistic one. The choice to tweet about MUFC in Pidgin English has, of course, an important element of humour. Still, the language used almost automatically defines the potential target audience of the account's tweets. Therefore, language (along with culture) can be an important factor in creating and shaping football fans' communities.

As far as I am aware, MUIP has never been studied and linked to a West African online identity construction. What is also worthy of study is a framework for perpetuating global power (connecting the very local with the global). The significance of focusing on Pidgin English's use in online fandom settings is perhaps also there in the fact that nobody (except me) has taken to looking at this form of fandom seriously. The topics (football fandom, social media, globalisation, and cultural identity) and methods (interview, online survey, and discourse analysis) I chose are topics and methods other researchers have investigated and used before. However, nobody has focused on the involvement of MUIP's discursive features on Twitter in the setting up of a West African online identity. Other scholars researched identity and West African identities (for example, Barber, 2018; Obidi, 2005), but I provided new insights into that. I investigated how the participatory culture enabled by MUIP via the involvement of its audience in the creation of content is creating, shaping, and exposing a West African online identity. I also described the cultural foundations on which this social media account is built. I assessed how the *glocalisation* of MUFC by MUIP met its audience cultural affiliations and tastes on Twitter and how/if it established a fandom tool enabling Nigerians or West Africans to counter mainstream coverage of Premier League Football.

The interview findings with DDS build on an existing argument that digital technologies and social media are a fundamental part of our personal and social lives (Turkle, 1995; Fuchs, 2014). Turkle (1995), as a pioneer, argued that computers enable individuals to relate to millions of others across the globe, thereby reconstructing their "identities on the other side of the looking glass" (p.177). Similarly, Fuchs (2014) later argued that social media constitutes an inherent aspect of nowadays life and society as they enable people to communicate with other people worldwide and understand the global society in which they now live. More recently, Timms and Heinmans (2019) noted that the digital revolution enabled new power to be generated, allowing ordinary people (outsiders) to amplify their voices. MUIP's founder created this account on Twitter, enabling him to relate to more than 100,000 people found in some West African countries, other African countries, and a few non-African countries. By establishing this virtual community and engaging with it, he and the account's followers reconstruct and perform aspects of their identities on Twitter.

Furthermore, the interview's findings build on existing arguments by Meikle (2016) and Castells (2009) that the key cultural aspect of social media resides in the fact that individuals can produce and distribute their meanings and systems of representations; and in the fact that they are mass self-communication tools where mainstream cultures and countercultures (alternative cultures) are deployed. DDS makes and circulates his meanings that can reach multi-audiences spread across various countries. These audiences are not entirely self-directed as Pidgin English constitutes a barrier which encloses and excludes. The use of Pidgin English is a really important factor for many followers of MUIP, rather than, as people might expect, the focus on MUFC. Nevertheless, there is still an element of self-direction in the account's followers' consumption of the tweets brought by MUIP's unique humour and up-to-date news. Through this, DDS shares ideas on MUFC and Premier League Football and counter the cultural foundations of mainstream football civilisation (which use English as the principal

disseminating language), thereby conveying this counterculture to the world (using Pidgin English as an alternative language to cover a mainstream football team).

Neither the interview nor the online survey results fit with the anti-sport approach, which argues that football and sports serve as propaganda for brutality, brutishness, vulgarity, intellectual regression, and the crowds' infantilization (Brohm and Perelman, 2006; Brohm, 1976). DDS himself has a university degree, and 90% of the MUIP account's followers surveyed have at least an undergraduate degree. It implies that both MUIP's producer and consumers align themselves with the pro-sport approach that perceives football and sports as a means of expression of human tussle and a creative and artistic tool (Goldblatt, 2020; Miller et al., 2001; Carrington, 2002; Turner, 2003) at least on the intellectual/academic ground. However, the discourse analysis of MUIP's main tweets and readers replies offered a slightly different picture. While it appears clearly that MUIP's authors and audience are intellectually more than capable, both can also be vulgar at times when tweeting. Such vulgarity partly aligns with the idea that football serves as propaganda for brutality, brutishness, and vulgarity, as expressed early in this paragraph. That vulgarity can also be associated with hegemonic or orthodox masculinity. Connell (1995) outlined that orthodox/hegemonic masculinity refers to customs validating male individuals' prominent place in the world and accounting for the subjection of female individuals and non-orthodox male individuals. As the online survey demonstrated, 86% of the respondents were male individuals, indicating that MUIP's followers are overwhelmingly male. Therefore, my research highlighted some aspects of gender performativity (Butler, 1990, 1993) within Nigerian and West African contexts. It offered insights on how hegemonic or orthodox masculinity is constructed and performed online by Nigerian and West African followers of MUFC, Premier League Football, and European football leagues. Such masculinity was articulated in some of the discursive resources MUIP's content creator and audience used in their tweets and replies. Those included

aggressive/offensive language (that are usually linked to orthodox/hegemonic masculinity) as well as the frequent references to nudity, penetration, and genitalia. While this appears not to be very different from Western hegemonic masculinity, further studies might explore the matter and unpack differences and similarities between these types of masculinities.

The overall findings also build on the existing argument that language is the key means enabling individuals to establish knowledge about themselves and their living environment (Barker and Jane, 2016; Alleyne, 2015; Page, 2012; Barker, 2012; Hall, 2002). MUIP's content creator uses Pidgin English to convey specific cultural representations and meanings to his followers, enabling him and those followers to form knowledge about themselves and the world in which they live. In fact, through Pidgin English and the various other discursive resources used by MUIP's content creator and audience in their tweets and replies, they brought their Nigerian or West African worlds into an online existence, maintained them and shaped them for their desired purpose. Thus, the MUIP's Twitter community possesses its description of the world, football and fandom that goes hand in hand with the linguistic codes and discursive resources they use. The humour and metaphors used by MUIP's content creator (re) established Nigerian or West African meanings and conveyed them across the digital public sphere. They referred to culturally specific places (Ajegunle, Obalende, etc.), oracle priests (Babalawo), brands (Maggi, Dano Milk), actors or musicians (Chiwetalu Agu, Awilo Longomba, Lagbaja), and food/snacks (suya, gala).

Similarly, MUIP's followers used expressions and words like *"blessed pikin"* or *"Igweeeeeeh"* which indicated their cultural affiliation by displaying unknown words to outsiders (non-Nigerians and most importantly non-West Africans): *'pikin'* and *'Igweeeeeeh'*. They mean 'child' and 'king', respectively. Therefore, my research adds elements of understanding of Nigerian and West African cultural landscape. It explains specific words and expressions,

analogical references and humour values that penetrate Twitter via MUIP's main tweets and users' replies to these main tweets.

Furthermore, many youngsters in Nigeria and West Africa are nowadays facing DDS's linguistic dilemma: they are not fluent in their indigenous languages. Thus, a lingua franca like Pidgin English often serves as a means of expression demarcating them from non-Nigerian/West African English speakers. Therefore, Pidgin English should be viewed as an important and valuable tool enabling the youngsters facing that dilemma to authoritatively establish their linguistic peculiarities. Besides, Pidgin English is likely to be the only language (apart from Western languages) they will be able to teach to their potential offspring (since they are not fluent in their own indigenous languages). It is that language that many will be able to present to their offspring as being part of their Nigerian/West African cultural and linguistic heritage.

My research findings should also be taken into account when considering Africans' struggles and resistance to those struggles. For instance, as Goldblatt (2020) argued, local football in Africa has been silenced and culturally neglected on the African continent due to satellite television. It meant that Africans were and are over-exposed to Premier League Football and other European football leagues. MUIP's authors and readers, via the discursive codes used in their interactions, displayed those struggles, and attempted to counter them by loading their interactions with utterances conveying a counterpoint to the mainstream discussion of Premier League Football. These interactions were grounded in Nigerian and West African cultural references and representations and attempting to establish a Nigerian and West African socio-cultural power within the digital public sphere. Therefore, I argue that MUIP's authors and audiences express themselves within a digital public sphere and a football sphere where the symbolic social power belongs to Western or European cultural meanings and systems of representations. Through Twitter, they are given a voice that they would hardly be given in

traditional or mainstream media. Thus, this research on MUIP offers a further understanding of African social media users struggles and resistance to those struggles within online settings, putting an emphasis on football.

My research findings also build on Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity and provide an understanding of how Nigerian and West African fans of MUFC, through their discursive practices, rework dominant (western) MUFC's coverage and create a hybrid and ambivalent third-space destabilising binary oppositions between former colonisers and colonised. MUIP constitutes an example of hybridity in the postcolonial era. It is not only a Twitter account dealing with news, players, and activities from a football team of a former coloniser, but it is also an account that has incorporated, through codes and discursive resources, elements of formerly colonised entities through the use of Pidgin English which is a hybrid language incorporating English and Nigerian/West African indigenous languages or slangs. Furthermore, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, MUIP's content creator and readers often used globally established social media languages in the tweets and replies I selected and analysed.

On the one hand, the most used emojis by MUIP's creator (Nigerian flag, gorilla emoji, and black backhand finger index pointing down) all indicated the content creator cultural subject position. On the other hand, MUIP's content creator and audience used internet acronyms in a quite standardised, mainstream, and westernised way with no clear link to their Nigerian or West African cultural identities. These two aspects imply that both MUIP's content creator and audience perform globalised as well as *glocalised* identities. While they can both establish allegiance to their specific Nigerian or West African systems of representations and cultural meanings on social media (particularly on Twitter), they also have a good command of a globalised way of speaking on social media. Therefore, these findings fit with Lyotard's (1984), Hall's (1992) and Butler's (1997) perspective of the post-modern subject as being fluid,

decentred, fragmented, multiple, and sometimes contradictory. MUIP content creators' and readers' identities are decentred, multiple, and fragmented between various shades of local cultural elements (Nigerian and/or West African cultural elements) and various shades of global cultural ones (global internet languages and cultures). My findings can also be considered by other researchers if they want to assess how processes of homogenisation and heterogenization compete and are at play in Nigerian and West African identities' construction in the digital public sphere in this current postcolonial era. They also provide insights into how postcolonial theory and globalisation are dealt with by Nigerians or West Africans in online settings, thereby contributing to a clearer understanding of the processes used by MUIP's producers and consumers to address those matters. These all pertain to *glocalisation* within this context as MUIP has developed a *glocal* village out of the Premier League and MUFC's global village thereby transforming these global entities within Nigerian and West African online contexts and investing them with distinctive Nigerian and West African meanings and systems of representations. While the English Premier League and MUFC constitute a global media village, it is not a fully blended one, unlike what McLuhan (1962, 1964) would have insinuated. MUIP is one of the English Premier League and MUFC '*glocal* villages' and has unique and specific socio-cultural characteristics.

Nevertheless, I would argue that the shift from old power structures to new power structures, which is, according to Timms and Heimans (2019), enabled by the digital revolution, is hardly visible or even yet to occur in West Africa. This (claimed) democratic power enabled by the internet and digital media is still held by few who can afford it and know how to use it. Furthermore, with what the online survey revealed, one could argue that MUIP's platform remains quite inaccessible to female individuals who are overwhelmingly underrepresented among the account's followers.

Limitations

I conducted the online survey titled "Football Fandom, *Glocalisation* and 'Man United in Pidgin'" from the 11th of January 2020 to the 11th of February 2020. 100 MUIP's followers on Twitter participated, which is by no means a representative sample. My online survey's sample size was small. Therefore, this limits the generalisability of the survey's results. However, this online survey did not constitute my main research method. A greater emphasis was put on the qualitative methodological perspective (the discourse analysis of MUIP's main tweets and users' replies to these tweets; and the interview with MUIP's founder). This survey was only used as a triangulation tool to add some context and help to identify units of analysis for the discourse analysis.

A few changes occurred since the original proposal was approved when I started my research degree in September 2018. My research initially aimed to answer two questions: (1) what are the linguistic and semiotic resources used in MUIP's Twitter and Instagram publications? (2) How do these help the construction of a West African online identity? While the second question did not change, the first one did, as linguistics and semiotics are two broad disciplines which made that question too wide, broad, and unspecific. That question became: which discursive features do MUIP's tweets employ? That alteration of the first research question also suggested that I would focus on Twitter only. Focusing on two different social networking platforms was too broad and over-ambitious. I opted for a more manageable and convenient approach. However, studying MUIP on Instagram and Facebook in addition may have been more significant. Therefore, since I did not study this account on those two social media platforms, it is beyond the scope of this study to confirm that the findings of my research would have been the same or different regarding these two other social media platforms.

As mentioned in the previous chapter and in Chapter Three (Methodological Design and Research Methods), I encountered problems when gathering data for the discourse analysis of

MUIP's main tweets and readers' replies to these main tweets. When capturing as datasets tweets posted by MUIP's content creator from the 24th of January 2020 to the 12th of March 2020 mentioning 'Ighalo', it often covered a few days of that period only. Besides, it only gathered the main MUIP's tweets without the readers' replies. Saving one tweet after the other as web page PDFs, partly achieved the desired outcome but it meant that I could not go through all the 3000+ MUIP's tweets that were published by MUIP's content creator during the aforementioned period as it would have been fastidious. Therefore, I randomly selected 107 tweets constituting a 3.5% sample which is, according to Ahmed (2019), a good sample of data for the discourse analysis.

My research project was also impacted by my level of Pidgin English. As mentioned on countless occasions throughout this thesis, MUIP is a social media account providing its audience or followers with MUFC's news and commentaries in Pidgin English, which is a lingua franca spoken in some West African countries. My level of Pidgin English is just about advanced and has not always been that high - which affected my capacity to analyse MUIP's main tweets and users' replies. However, scrutinising and analysing all these tweets and researching Pidgin English made me improve my Pidgin English level.

It is perhaps also worth mentioning that, although I do not speak Yoruba or Igbo and I have never resided in Nigeria (as people would also assume when reading the meanings and descriptions I gave throughout my thesis), I was, from a very young age, exposed to Nigerian cultural products – especially Nigerian movies and Afrobeat songs. Therefore, I would go as far as to say that my perspective on Nigerian cultures is nearly an insider one.

With my discourse analysis, I also faced a couple of technical challenges. When I started using NVivo and NCapture, my command of these two tools (especially my command of NVivo) was quite limited but my level gradually improved, and I now have a good command of what

was required of me in using NVivo for that aspect of my research. The second technical challenge I faced was my laptop's ability to cope with the high use of NVivo. When the Covid-19 pandemic forced everyone to study remotely because the university buildings were closed, I had to rely on my laptop, which could not cope with large data and highly demanding research computer programmes. Luckily, I could use the London Metropolitan University's cloud app centre that would enable me to use computer programmes on my computer without necessarily having those computer programmes on my laptop.

Another major limitation was that throughout my research degree, I was dealing with long term health conditions and other personal challenges that were all aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, as a vulnerable person, I was advised on a couple of occasions to shield. I also regularly received news that I had lost friends or family members in Cameroon whose funerals I could not attend. At some point, I was even anxious whenever my phone rang as I often thought I was about to receive some bad news. However, while that period was quite harsh and bitter in many aspects, it was also somehow sweet as well as it kept me focused on my research project.

After noting all these limitations, I can nonetheless reiterate that the findings of my research are credible, transferable, and confirmable as I provided enough descriptions of contexts, research techniques, data, and analytical instruments, for other researchers to employ in similar studies. My results and analysis are the consequences of a dependable process. My research is also confirmable as I recorded all steps taken and ensured that the research findings reflected participants' answers and thoughts instead of mine via a triangulation of the research methods. A detailed description of these methodological elements can be found in Chapter Three (Methodological Design and Research Methods – see subsection on the paradigm's weaknesses and strengths).

Recommendations

Now that I have highlighted the interpretations, implications, and limitations of my PhD research project, it appears important that I state my recommendations for further research. First of all, I will start by stating that further studies of the use of MUIP or the use of social media and internet in West Africa may even be more critical if they investigate class or income levels. When I studied MUIP's followers on Twitter, I did not consider that parameter at the time, which would have perhaps offered a different or additional perspective to my investigation. It is because the internet is not accessible to everyone in West Africa. Internet penetration rates in this thesis' group of West African countries range from 8.6% - in Equatorial Guinea – to 53% - in Ghana (Kemp, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e, 2022f). Therefore, it can be argued that internet use in that region is still part of a privileged consumption. It takes financial (money to buy internet data and internet devices) and technological resources (internet data and internet devices themselves) to regularly use the internet and social media on that side of the world. By introducing this parameter, further research would get an extra snapshot of MUIP's followers profile indicating – apart from their age groups, gender, country (origin, nationality, residence), the type of area they live in, and their highest level of education – their income levels.

Furthermore, this might determine the types of West African people (income-wise) using the internet and social media to convey their identity and counter mainstream or western cultures. As I mentioned in the previous section and throughout the thesis, my competence in Pidgin English was not high but improved with time. Pidgin English is frowned upon by the upper classes in Cameroon (which I belong to). MUIP's linguistic choice sets up an alternative frame that is exclusionary, not only based on a distinct West African identity but also perhaps based on social class.

Secondly, further research is needed to establish MUIP's account similarities or differences across multiple social networking sites (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). As I highlighted in the preceding part of this chapter, it was beyond the scope of my research to confirm that my research findings would have been similar or different on Facebook and Instagram. Further studies should therefore consider studying MUIP's account (or similar accounts) on multiple social media platforms. Investigating socio-demographic characteristics and other characteristics of the users of a social media account on multiple social media platforms may display different findings.

Finally, it would be significant to proceed to a comparative analysis of similar accounts and websites. Since MUIP was first launched on Twitter in August 2015, a few social media accounts have emerged, conveying news and commentaries of some Premier League Football teams exclusively in Pidgin English. A couple of examples of such accounts are 'Arsenal in Pidgin' (@ArsenalInPidgin), with more than 6,300 followers on Twitter (in July 2022), and 'Chelsea in Pidgin' (@cheIseainpidgin) with more than 2,300 followers on Twitter (in July 2022). It might be worth scrutinising and comparing their production and consumption processes to determine what makes MUIP more successful (in terms of overall followers' number). It might be interesting for further research to compare MUIP with BBC News Pidgin from a wider perspective. The latter is an online BBC World Service's platform based in Lagos (Nigeria) and launched in 2016, conveying news items in Pidgin English for a West African audience. It might be worth assessing if MUIP inspired the latter, which has more than 19,500 followers on Twitter (in July 2022) and about 635,000 followers on Instagram (in July 2022). It might also be interesting to compare their production and consumption processes.

Conclusion

In this discussion, I presented the interpretations, implications, limitations, and recommendations of my research. What is important to acknowledge here is that with this

adaptation of the Premier League and MUFC's coverage to Nigerian and West African tastes via the use of Pidgin English and of culturally specific humour and analogies, the MUIP Twitter community set up a Nigerian and West African postcolonial online football fandom identity which they circulate within the digital public sphere and expose to the world. However, this football fandom identity is overwhelmingly masculine as most adherents to this community are male individuals and the discursive resources used within that online fandom community can be attributed to hegemonic masculinity performances. MUIP's founder has nonetheless created an environment similar to a Football Viewing Centre where Nigerian and West African football and MUFC's fans can be informed, entertained, and socialise. The choice of Pidgin English has set up a demarcation between global football fandom and the local identities formed within the MUIP's imagined cyber community. By establishing this virtual community and engaging with it, MUIP's founder and audience reconstruct aspect of their identities on Twitter, as Turkle (1995), Castells (2009), and Meikle (2016) would have argued. They also attempt to counter mainstream coverage of MUFC and Premier League Football. Thus, my findings should be considered when investigating how processes of homogenisation and heterogenization compete and are at play in Nigerian and West African identities' construction online in this current postcolonial era as they highlight how this global football industry has been transformed within a local context and invested with new meanings that reassert a distinctive West African identity and create a MUFC and Premier League's *glocal* village.

In this chapter, I indicated that I faced limitations related to data gathering, my proficiency in Pidgin English, some technical matters, long term health conditions, and personal challenges. I nonetheless highlighted how I overcame these limitations (or mitigated them) and reiterated the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of my research. I also recommended that further studies of the use of MUIP or the use of social media in West Africa should always investigate class or income levels which might determine the types of West

Africans (income-wise) using social media to convey their cultural identity and counter mainstream cultures. Further studies are also needed to compare MUIP's accounts on multiple social media platforms, and to compare MUIP with similar social media accounts or websites.

Now that I have highlighted this thesis interpretations, implications, limitations, and recommendations, I shall now move to the concluding chapter (see Chapter Eight – Conclusion). In that chapter, I shall rearticulate the answers to my research questions and summarise the thesis. The following chapter shall also reassert the core contributions to knowledge of my thesis.

CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION

This research project aimed to assess how the *glocalisation* of MUFC enabled by MUIP assists the construction of an online postcolonial West African identity. It studied the imagined cyber community or fandom that this Twitter account has generated and stimulated since August 2015. Thus, it examined two questions: (1) which discursive features do MUIP's tweets employ? (2) In what ways do these features help setting up a West African online identity among MUIP's followers? I used a discourse analysis as the principal method of investigation which was illuminated by preliminary data emerging from an interview of MUIP's founder and a study of MUIP's followers on Twitter (via an online survey). Based on the discourse analysis used to investigate a selected sample of MUIP's main tweets and users' replies, it can be concluded that MUIP's content creator, as well as his audience, give meanings to their utterances through two principal types of speech acts: personal pronouns and figures of speech. This discourse analysis also showed that MUIP's followers constructed 27 semantic networks in response to the selected MUIP's main tweets. A main rhetorical suggestion given by many of MUIP's main tweets was that their author is well informed and uses a wide range of reputable and reliable sources of information. Another one was that he is an entertainer. It made me conclude that the realities constructed by MUIP's tweets for the audience are those of information and entertainment. MUIP's tweets sometimes created interactions and actions from the readers. The realities and suggestions constructed by MUIP's tweets were deeply embedded in specific contexts: the rumour announcing that Ighalo would join MUFC on a loan deal; the administrative/legal and the financial considerations of that deal; Ighalo's other offers; and MUFC's games played between the 17th of February 2020 and the 12th of March 2020. Furthermore, the discourse analysis also indicated that the main emojis used by MUIP's author were the gorilla emoji, the Nigerian flag, and the black backhand index pointing down. While the audience sometimes used these emojis as well, the principal emoji used by MUIP's

audience was the laughing face. MUIP's author often attached pictures or memes to his tweets displaying Ighalo or about matters related to Ighalo.

Regarding one of the online survey's aims, which was to determine whether or not MUIP's followers were from West African countries, it was observed that 98% of the participants were originally from Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. These followers produce a cyberspace culture, which is predominantly male and highly educated. MUIP's followers are predominantly football fans and MUFC's fans. They also have a Nigerian or West African sense of humour. Humour can be used to underline the funny side in all experienced situations (good or bad) in order to entertain people or make them laugh (Klatzmann, 1998). As shown throughout this thesis, MUIP's content creator is an entertainer who aims to make people laugh. He does so through Nigerian-loaded humour, which contributes to the exposition of Nigerian cultures.

The last question of the online survey was about why MUIP's followers follow that account on Twitter. Many participants said they follow MUIP because they have developed a significant emotional attachment to and appreciation for MUFC teams and players, MUIP's content, and the Pidgin English language. Therefore, this imagined cyber community produces and stimulates a West African identity (through affiliation to specific markers such as the West African geography and culinary arts, humour, happenings, and representations associated with West African areas) in cyberspace. Furthermore, when looking at personal pronouns used by MUIP's readers in their interactions with MUIP's tweets, it can be noticed that they often used 'we' or 'us'. These pronouns served as inclusive pronouns to indicate their sense of attachment or belonging to specific cultural communities.

The four often used semantic networks in MUIP's followers' replies (pride, happiness, thanksgiving, and encouragement) also validated that sense of attachment or belonging to

specific cultural communities claimed by many MUIP's followers in their answers to the last question of the online survey. Through the expression of these semantic networks, MUIP's followers revealed their sense of attachment or belonging to a Nigerian/African community, a MUFC community, a MUIP community, a Pidgin English community; as well as their pride for Nigeria/Africa and key figures of this nation/continent. They created and disseminated their cultural meanings and systems of representations within the cyberspace. What these semantic networks conveyed aligns with MUIP's founder aim for his account, which is to make his cultural meanings and systems of representations and to circulate them across the cyberspace (that of a Nigerian/West African MUFC fan who wants his marginalised voice heard); thereby exposing an under-exposed African fandom to the world and meeting the cultural tastes of MUFC's fans who are from his country (Nigeria), region (West Africa) and continent (Africa), as well as of those who are fluent in Pidgin English.

Considering some of the pictures or memes attached to some of MUIP's main tweets, it was observed that they highlighted cultural dimensions such as the Nigerian national football team jersey or words like *'mogbe'* used by Yoruba people to express regret. Through some of these memes/pictures, MUIP's author reconstructed and conveyed elements of his identity, such as his belonging to the Nigerian cultural community and his pride regarding that cultural community. That identity reconstruction was also noticeable through the recurrent use of the Nigerian flag emoji by MUIP's author and through the nickname he gave to Ighalo (*Igwe Ighalo*).

It can be concluded that MUIP's founder has proceeded to an adaptation of Premier League Football's and MUFC's coverage to his Nigerian or West African cultures and the cultures of fellow Nigerians/West Africans. This account has enabled its founder to create within his online community not only a feeling of attachment to an imagined cyber community but also

a setting similar to Football Viewing Centres, thereby creating virtual stadiums that provide entertainment, information, and socialising platforms.

The findings of my thesis build on how football and sports are covered and followed on social networking sites. They contribute to the discovery of how these are done in Nigeria and West Africa. The MUIP Twitter community is built around a universally and globally known football club as well as Nigerian and West African linguistic and discursive resources. My research contributes to a clearer understanding of how Nigerian and West African fandom identities are constructed and conveyed on Twitter. It is indicative of a profound universal inequity in how structures of knowledge and comprehensions are decided, which my research has exposed. Academia often prioritises the experiences and views of/from the West (Young, 2020). My research went further than that by Igwe et al. (2021) who focused on offline football globalisation and fandom in Nigeria. They highlighted that the *glocalisation* of European football leagues in Nigeria creates a sense of communal loyalty or belonging for those watching these leagues in FVCs, but they did not shed light on what it is built upon. My study of MUIP's founder, audience, and content revealed that the identity and belonging enabled by the *glocalisation* of European football leagues in Nigeria is only partially related to football or team fandom. One insightful aspect of this thesis is the linguistic one, with the choice to tweet about MUFC in Pidgin English. The MUIP Twitter community's popularity among Nigerians and West Africans is related to football fandom in general, and MUFC particularly, but it is nonetheless the community's use of Pidgin English that attracts these Nigerians and West Africans. The type of humour and the language used almost naturally determine the desired audience of MUIP's tweets. Thus, MUIP constitutes an example of how the *glocalisation* of a European League team is multidimensional and not solely relying on football fandom or club's fandom. That *glocalisation* considers the linguistic and discursive resources and the quality of the content/service. Furthermore, the Nigerian or West African identity markers activated by

MUIP's coverage of MUFC contributes to transforming non-fans into followers who, with the content they feel culturally related to, are now regularly aware of the team's news and activities; and perhaps building a bond with the team. Therefore, the significance of my research is that it throws light on something new (the MUIP's imagined cyber community) and demonstrates how that new object is different and distinct in important ways.

The research findings build on the existing claim that people use language to construct knowledge about themselves and their society (Barker and Jane, 2016; Alleyne, 2015; Page, 2012; Barker, 2012; Hall, 2002). The use of Pidgin English by MUIP's author conveys specific cultural meanings to his followers, allowing them to construct and convey knowledge about themselves and the world in which they live. Through Pidgin English, they bring their Nigerian and West African worlds into a cyber existence, maintain them, and shape them for their purpose. This imagined cyber community possesses its description of the world, football and fandom that are related to the linguistic codes and discursive resources they use. In fact, the discourse analysis unveiled that humour and metaphors used in MUIP's tweets are deeply embedded in Nigerian and West African systems of signification and cultural representations. As an example, it was shown that MUIP's author use of nicknaming can be connected to specific cultural references. MUIP's author often also used culture-specific analogies without indicating who or what they were referring to, thereby implying that his audience knows and shares these cultural references with him. Therefore, my research adds layers of comprehension of the Nigerian and West African cultural landscape.

The findings build on Bhabha's (1994) hybridity as MUIP is not only an account dealing with news, players, and activities of MUFC, but it is also an account that has incorporated elements of Nigerian and West African identities through the use of Pidgin English. MUIP's author and readers have various globalised and *glocalised* elements attached to their identities which fit Lyotard's (1984), Hall's (1992) and Butler's (1997) perspective of the postmodern subject. The

account's author and followers' identities are decentred, multiple, and sometimes fragmented between various shades of local cultural elements and various global cultural ones. The results of this research project should be kept in mind when examining how processes of cultural homogenisation and heterogenization clash and occur in Nigerian and West African online identities' construction in this current postcolonial era, because they provide insights into the ways in which Nigerians, and West Africans apprehend postcolonialism and globalisation on social media.

Additionally, many young Nigerians and West Africans are nowadays facing DDS's linguistic dilemma: they understand their indigenous languages, but they cannot speak those fluently. Thus, Pidgin English can demarcate them from non-Nigerian/West African English speakers. Pidgin English should therefore be viewed as an important and valuable tool enabling those young Nigerians/West Africans to establish their linguistic particularities. Pidgin English is likely to be the only non-Western language they will be able to teach to their potential offspring. It is that lingua franca that they can present to their offspring as being part of their Nigerian/West African cultural and linguistic heritage.

Nobody has focused on the involvement of MUIP's discursive resources on Twitter in constructing a West African identity in cyberspace. I provided new insights by investigating how the participatory culture enabled by MUIP via the involvement of its readers in the creation of content is producing, shaping, and exposing a masculine West African online identity. I also presented the cultural foundations on which MUIP is built and assessed how the *glocalisation* of MUFC by MUIP met the needs and expectations of its readers on Twitter and how/if it constructed a fandom tool, allowing Nigerians/West Africans to counter mainstream coverage of Premier League Football. Through the MUIP Twitter community, MUIP's founder shares MUFC and Premier League Football ideas and (attempt to) counter the cultural foundations of mainstream football civilisation, thereby conveying this counterculture to the cyber world.

Another key particularity of MUIP's Nigerian/West African *glocalisation* of MUFC's coverage is that it is established by a Nigerian/West African online MUFC's fandom community that took this *glocalising* process into their own hands by creating the MUIP community. There was no formal agreement or request elaborated by MUFC, asking MUIP's founder to create this social media account. MUIP founder's initiative was driven by his fandom for this Premier League Football team but not requested by the said team. Through this independently conceived localisation of MUFC, MUIP's founder nonetheless started what now seems to be a lucrative social media account. Some of the discursive features highlighted via the discourse analysis of MUIP's tweets clearly indicated that MUIP's account can be used as an advertising tool by local, national, regional, or continental companies.

However, MUIP's capacity to fully generate a global cultural agenda is still quite limited. MUIP's account is followed by many (more than 100,000 followers on Twitter in July 2022) partly because MUFC is overwhelmingly famous across the world. MUFC's official Twitter account has over 31 million followers. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if a similar account tweeting in Pidgin English about local Nigerian or West African teams would achieve the same level of popularity and gather the same level of advertising opportunities.

This thesis also offered insights on elements of the discursive construction and performance of masculinity (Butler, 1990, 1993) within Nigerian and West African online football fandom contexts. This masculinity was displayed in some of the discursive resources MUIP's author and audience used in their tweets/replies. It included aggressive/offensive language as well as frequent references to nudity, penetrative sexual intercourses, and genitalia. While this is not very dissimilar to hegemonic masculinity performance within western settings, further studies might investigate and unpack differences and similarities between Western and West African masculinities.

While the online survey's sample size was small, which limited the generalisability of the survey's results, it was nonetheless a valuable triangulation instrument used with the two other qualitative methods used. A few changes to my planned research and challenges related to data gathering for the discourse analysis, my proficiency in Pidgin English, some technical matters, long term health conditions, and personal circumstances all impacted my research. However, the research findings meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability presented in Chapter Three. Furthermore, this research's methodological design and techniques clearly stated my position regarding the research topic: MUIP constitutes a platform designed for Nigerians and West Africans where Nigerian and West African identities are constructed and at play. I later discovered that the sorts of identities at play were Nigerian and West African masculine identities.

To better understand the MUIP phenomenon or the use of social networking sites in Nigeria and West Africa, further studies should always address class and income levels. By considering income and class levels, those further studies would get an additional snapshot indicating which types of Nigerians/West Africans use social networking sites to display their identities and try countering mainstream or western cultures. Further studies are also required to determine the MUIP account's similarities and differences across multiple social media platforms, as the findings can differ from one platform to another. Ultimately, it might be worth proceeding to a comparative study of similar social media accounts or websites that were launched after MUIP's creation. It might help determine if MUIP inspired these similar social media accounts/websites.

The shift from old power structures to new power structures, which is, according to Timms and Heimans (2019), enabled by the digital revolution, is hardly visible or even yet to occur in West Africa. This alleged democratic power enabled by the internet and digital media is still held by a few who can afford it and those who know how to use it. Furthermore, with what the online

survey revealed, one could argue that MUIP's platform remains quite inaccessible to female individuals who are overwhelmingly underrepresented among the account's followers.

This research was an investigation by a West African of an online community that matters to West Africans. It investigated the *glocalisation* of MUFC fandom within a West African online community thereby addressing the concern raised by Onyebueke (2018) that the study of online football fandom in West Africa has until now been overlooked. It assessed the transformation of the English Premier League global football industry within West African contexts and discussed how this global football industry was invested with new meanings re-asserting a distinctive West African identity. MUIP has developed a *glocal* village out of the Premier League and MUFC's global village thereby transforming these global entities within Nigerian and West African online contexts and investing them with distinctive Nigerian and West African meanings and systems of representations. While there is to a great extent a global village created by the global media reach of the English Premier League and MUFC, it is not as unified as McLuhan (1962, 1964) would have implied. The sort of global village described by McLuhan seems to be a series of '*glocal* villages' with unique and specific cultural attributes – MUIP constitutes an example of such villages.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: some West African countries' demographic, internet, and social media data

Table 8: Some West African Countries demographic data

Country	***Population (million)***	***% Living in urban settings***	***% Living in rural settings***	***% Aged 0 to 34***	***% Male***	***% Female***
Nigeria	214.1	53.4	46.6	76.4	50.7	49.3
Ghana	32.06	58.6	41.4	71.4	50.7	49.3
Cameroon	27.57	58.7	41.3	76.4	50	50
Sierra Leone	8.22	43.8	56.2	75.3	49.9	50.1
Liberia	5.24	53.1	46.9	74.1	50.3	49.7
Equatorial Guinea	1.47	74	26	76	55.6	44.4

Table 9: Some West African countries' internet and social media use data

Country	***Internet penetration rate (%)***	***% Social media users***	***Number of social media users***	***% Social media's male users***	***% Social media's female users***	***Number of social media users aged 13 and above***
Nigeria	51	15.4	32.9M	58.3	41.7	32.5M
Ghana	53	27.4	8.8M	59.8	40.2	8.8M
Cameroon	36.5	16.5	4.55M	58.4	41.6	4.55M
Sierra Leone	32.4	11.3	927.8K	56.8	43.2	925.7K
Liberia	22	14.4	748.2K	44	56	747K
Equatorial Guinea	26.2	8.6	126.1K	63.2	36.8	124.89K

Appendix 2: DDS's Skype interview transcription.

The Investigator (TI): Okay… So… (sound breaking) … To start… (sound breaking) … would like to… get a sense of… (sound breaking) … the creator of… (sound breaking) … Man United in Pidgin is…

DDS: Hello, I can't really hear you. Well, as clear as before (before recording was started).

TI: I would like to get a sense of who the creator of who is the creator of Man United in Pidgin…

DDS: O… O… Okay! So Mmm… My name is DDS, I am from Anambra State in Nigeria. I… I'm a Nigerian, obviously. So… I think… that… is there more to add?! Okay… Yeah, that I live in Lagos…Yeah, in Lagos, Nigeria. Yeah… That's basically it.

TI: Okay, that's fine. So… what's your highest level of education?

DDS: (Sighing and laughing uncomfortably) Mmmm… Mmmm…

TI: You don't have to answer…

DDS: So… Yeah, Okay! So, I finished from… on… Babcock University at… in Ogun State at Ilishan…

TI: Yeah…

DDS: I studied Computer Technology.

TI: Yeah?

DDS: Yeah. So that's the highest level.

TI: So, what's your occupational background now, your profession?

DDS: Like right now, like I'm a… I am… into a lot of things, sir. But I'm a banker, I'm a blogger and… I'm a vlogger as well. So, I would say that, like it's just those three.

TI: Good… So, euh… What's your native language if you don't mind me asking?

DDS: Igbo.

TI: And how many languages do you speak?

DDS: Right now, I can only speak English. Like, English is the only language that I speak. Even Igbo, I can't speak Igbo that well. So, I would say English and… (hesitation)… I wouldn't really classify Pidgin as a type of language because… because it is not really classified under a type of language even though a lot of people speak it. So, I would say just English.

TI: So, yeah… so, I guess Pidgin… Euh… English is the language you use in your daily routine…

DDS: Yes…

TI: …You use the most…

DDS: Yes… English… that I use the most.

TI: Right… Thank you… Well, to create such an account, you should probably be a football and Manchester United Football Club fan… So, …

DDS: Yes…

TI: … why did you choose to call it 'Man United in Pidgin'?

DDS: Euh… Okay… I… am a strong Man U fan, so, obviously… I was awake and thought just in… that in 2015, that I could actually have Pidgin handle because a lot of people in Africa speak Pidgin. That I could just do it. I…. mmmm… that it just came, and I didn't really ask anybody about it. So, I just went ahead, and I did it. Then the reception for it was actually good.

So, it was from the reception of it that I now chose to really take it serious. Yeah, I just started it because… because… like, it just came, like a hint. Because then… Because then there was no… there was no Pidgin… like sport or Pidgin anything in Africa. It was all English. So, after I started, then a lot of people started going into the whole Pidgin stuff because they see that okay, there's a… there's a… that mmm… that people have started accepting Pidgin in Sports. Yeah… So, it just came.

TI: So, and why did you… why did you decide to start with Twitter?

DDS: Mmmm… Because… Because… Mmmm… Okay… That then I was really into Twitter. Because I was a Twitter addict. Yeah… then I already had a large following on my personal handle on Twitter so… like it made more sense if I would start on Twitter than all the other platforms. Because I didn't really have a lot of followers on Instagram and then when I first started, I didn't really know how I was going to push it on Instagram. Because… Because Instagram was mostly just pictures. So, that's why I started with Twitter. Yeah.

TI: And why… why did you expand on other social networking sites and digital platforms, like Facebook, Instagram? You now have a YouTube page...

DDS: Yeah… Yeah… Yeah…

TI: …Or account?...

DDS: Yeah… Yeah…

TI: And a blog? And a mobile app?...

DDS: Yeah… Yeah, because… because… okay… because, after I started it, I started reading on digital marketing and everything and one of the things they talked about is spreading from one platform to another. Because you can't put all your eggs in one… platform. Because, what happens if that platform crashes or goes down? All your fanbase are gone… Yeah… But if

they are spread across… like multiple platforms... it is possible that… that the same people that are following you, the more people that are following on another platform. So, it's more like you are keeping your audience with you. Yeah… so, that's… so, that's why that… I looked onto spread across multiple platforms. Because of the… because of…mmm… the tips that I started reading on digital marketing on how to promote a brand.

TI: So, mmm… how would you… how would you describe your process of production of tweets?

DDS: Mmmm… Okay, I would say that if I would use myself as an example, I would say… that since I am already used to it, it just comes naturally. But with the other people that help to manage the handle, some of them… some of them, it takes a while… Some of them do not really get the hang of it so… mmm… they just choose to maybe just post on Facebook. It's only a few other people that have gotten the hang of it. Because… like, it looks extremely easy but it's not really easy because it has to be… because it has to be… because it has to be funny in a way… like… it has to be funny and… mmmm… and the message that you are trying to get across has to be passed but it has to be funny. Because if it is not funny… then it wouldn't really fly and reach much audience, people. So… I would say that it is not really hard, but it takes some getting used to. Yeah… like, once you are used to it, it should just come naturally. It's more like speaking English. When you are speaking English and you start posting content, in English, it might take a while to get used to it. But if you are used to it, it just comes naturally. Because, all you have to do is: get your news, then you find how to spread your news in your own way. Like in the way that you are used to spreading these. Yeah.

TI: So do you… do you have a set… a set number of tweets to produce per day, week or month?

DDS: Mmmm… Not really… it depends, because… on match days, obviously, that is more tweets… mmm… non-match days… fewer tweets. During international break, lesser tweets than usual. But… then during the summer period, when there are a lot of transfer stories, then there is a lot of tweets. So, it depends… it depends on if there is content of football… That content comes out. If there's no real content on Football, then we look at personal lifestyles of the players and some… and some other things. So, it really depends on some external factors… Yeah… it really depends.

TI: I was just about to ask; do you follow specific themes or guidelines, when you…?

DDS: Yeah, like… Yeah… I follow… I… I follow some specific things, like, for example, I do not insult anybody, I mostly do not retweet anybody because if I retweet people… like… some people that are your target audience, most of them just want to come to your timeline and say that it's only you they want to see… So, it's only you they want to see your tweets on your timeline. **The ones that are asking me a lot of retweets from other people** (not sure I heard this one right), like, some of them tend to go away and not come back. So, most times, it's just like a passive handle then once in a while it becomes active of… there are some interactive sessions… Yeah… but it is mostly passive. Yeah… it is mostly passive.

TI: So, do you do it yourself? Or are you helped? Or do you use social media management tools like Tweetdeck or Hootsuite?

DDS: Yeah… I use… I use… both of them. I use Tweetdeck, I use Hootsuite. I use Tweetdeck when I'm using the laptop. I use Hootsuite when I'm using the phone because it's easier. You just post one thing and it goes on three different platforms at the same time. So, it saves… it saves you time.

TI: Alright… So… mmmm… if you don't mind, I would like us to talk a bit about 'Man united in Pidgin' history and projection on Twitter…

DDS: Yeah… Okay… Okay. So it started in… October 2015… No, August 2015 and… and at first it was… more like a joke then it became serious so… like, at first, the aim was just to build it on Twitter then later on it was to expand it on other platforms… then later on as well… then we decided to look into the mobile app… then as well… then we… then we… like, we intend to go… Okay… we intended to… mmm… to… mmm… **come out real time this season** (not sure I got this part right) but we might push it back till next or till next two seasons, it depends on some other external factors. Yeah… so that's just basically it. But the aim is just to grow the brand… like to grow the brand… because before the aim was to grow it on Twitter. But since that the reception on some other platforms are much more than Twitter right now, so… the aim is just to grow the brand. Yeah, yeah… and… Cost… like, advertising on Twitter is more expensive than other platforms so… like… like, it's more like to maintain the things that we are doing then… then… we keep trying to push, but… obviously the push is not as strong as it is on other platforms because other platforms are cheaper… Because… Because if you try to advertise on Twitter and you now look at the price that they will charge you and you compare with what they will charge you on Facebook, then… then you might most likely opt for Facebook and Instagram because Twitter is too expensive, so… mmm… that's just basically it…

TI: So are you… are you...

DDS: That's basically it…

TI: Are you happy with what 'Man United in Pidgin' have achieved so far?

DDS: Yeah, I'm happy with what it has achieved because if I would compare it to the initial plan of it, I didn't think it would reach this stage… like, I didn't think it would reach the stage where almost everybody would be trying to imitate… like… what I'm doing or… or that… or that people… or maybe like, an official station would be trying to study my handle to create

their own platform… Or that an official club would… would actually try to study my handle to look at how it can grow its fanbase in Pidgin. Like, I didn't think that would ever happen, so… like, I'm actually happy of what it has achieved and…. I'm actually happy at… other platforms that's going into Pidgin as well, because that's like more publicity for it as well. So… I'm happy with what it has achieved.

TI: So… mmm… I can see that you have produced and released a few music tracks and videos about Manchester United Football Club…

DDS: Yeah…

TI: … and you have created Man United in Pidgin Fantasy Premier League…

DDS: Yeah…

TI: … where winners bank accounts are usually credited…

DDS: Yes, yes.

TI: So… Are all these initiatives self-funded? Have you got any partnerships?

DDS: For the FPL, no external sponsors. I'm like… the one sponsoring it. The first year we did, we started small to see how much people we could get. So… the first year went well and we went again and increased the prize money. Yeah… So, when we increased the prize money and it went well, we would still do it again next year… because it all stills fall down to… when you tell people… like when you… mmm… like when you draw out a list of rules and you tell people like, okay, this is what you start to gain if you join us and they join and… and… them like, everything you said you would do is what you are doing, meaning like… meaning… meaning that you are keeping your words… so, it obviously leads to people referring their friends because they start to trust you more. Because the first year was, because… it was hard to get people to trust you in something that you have never done before. But… like second year

was easier because… because the first year showed that we kept our words. Then this second year, as we are keeping our words, so, people… more people are seeing that… okay that… that this is actually real… that this is happening so… it's good… maybe… like hopefully… hopefully in the future there might be more sponsors… maybe like… it might increase the prize money from where it is at but right now… right now… like, for how much we actually stake, we don't actually need a sponsor for that. Yeah… Right now. But if a sponsor comes in, obviously… like… like how much is at stake will obviously increase and there will be more external factors involved… Yeah…

TI: So… Is Manchester United Football Club aware of your account?

DDS: … That, I can't say. I don't… I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. Like, I can't say. Because I've not… because I've not… Okay, like, I've had a couple of interactions with some of the players but that's just on a personal level but as with club, no. Like, I can't say.

TI: Do you see yourself collaborating with the club in the future?

DDS: If the opportunity presents itself, that will be an amazing opportunity and I will grasp it but it hasn't happened yet so, I will keep on… I will keep on doing what I can do… Like, that's…. that's trying to build the brand in Africa because that's where the largest target market is. If eventually the brand becomes extremely big in Africa, and that were to be put on the table, I would gladly accept… Yeah… But it's not like one of the main goals right now because… it's… it's more like goal but it's not… Okay, I'm more like this, yeah?! I mostly consider… Like I mostly… I mostly consider the factors I have power over but not the factors I do not have power over. So… Yeah. So, I focus on the things that I know that I can change and not on the things I cannot change.

TI: So, how and where would you like to see your account in the next few years?

DDS: Possibly… I… I… I would say maybe Facebook, like in the next few years, maybe like… that… maybe half a million followers on Facebook. It's almost at a 100K already. Then obv… and then… then Twitter hopefully… if… if it can reach the 100K mark it will obviously lead to more… like… it would lead to more business partnerships with people that want to promote their stuff on our platform. And Instagram as well… Yeah… that's just basically it. Then, possibly when we reach that level, we might possibly do some stuff in real time, yeah. So… like everything altogether because it's more like a big project with MUIP and MUIPFPL. They are like two different projects that were kind of joined together so… Yeah… So, that's just… So… that's just basically what… what we're looking at right now. Growing… growing everything… that's like growing everything together, like, MUIP, MUIPFPL… Yeah…

TI: So, to finish with, I want us to talk about your followers on Twitter… So… Who do you think…

DDS: Okay, okay.

TI: Who do you think are your main followers on Twitter?

DDS: My main followers on Twitter? I would say a lot of people come from Nigeria, a lot of people come from Ghana… Then… I would say some people come from South Africa… Yeah, yeah… Some people come from South Africa. Then… it's now spread across a couple of all the other African countries. However, there are some English people… no… some foreigners that also follow it because it's a language that they are not used to and because… like, Pidgin is not really as crunk as the row.. the row… the row Nigerian Pidgin so, there are some tweets that some foreigners… that if they have followed us for a while, like, they would be able to understand some of the language. Then there are some people that are foreigners that understand Pidgin, so… that as well…. So, it's… it's pretty much cut across a lot of countries… it's pretty much cut across a lot of countries… but the two major countries on Twitter are Ghana

and Nigeria. The two major, like, the two countries that have the highest number of people following us are from Ghana, Nigeria.

TI: Why do you think they follow your account on Twitter?

DDS: Mmm… I would say... it's more like… there are some people… okay, there are a lot of people that even if they like English, they… they really love speak Pidgin, so… and… if you'd have the opportunity to… to relate with something in a language you mmm… love to speak in, then I believe you would go for it. It's more like…that… it's more like, my handle falls under, like… because there are some principles that govern people so, like, when… when… when somebody, like, follows those principles… Like, there's liking, then… then there's authority and some other principles like that. Like, it's more like, when people know… know that you like what they like, then they tend to like your handle. And it seems that the handle has a sense… like a little bit… like, authority. There are some other factors too as well. My head is not really there at the moment but I sure know that those factors: they like Pidgin, my handle is tweeting in Pidgin; they like Manchester United, my handle is tweeting on Manchester United so they can relate to you well. So, they will choose to follow you. Some even set… set, like, reminders on our tweets so that once you tweet they get it. And the news is actually updated so… that as well. They can be like, why would they… why would they follow the news in English when they can follow it in Pidgin and… and they would laugh about it. And it's… I think, for some people, they believe it helps to cure them from the usual depression because, like, before the handle came about… like… it's… there was… I think there was pretty much a lot of depression that revolves around, like all the handles in the… like at… like during the bad states maybe when the club is not winning...like it's… there would be a lot of depression among… like a lot of people because most of the other platforms do not really know how to… mmm… crack jokes about it and maybe yab a few people to make some people laugh. But those… those things that you do, like, it tends to make some people laugh and forget about

the fact that okay… that… that… mmmm... they are depressed. So I believe that is… that is a factor as well.

TI: Right… mmm… And who else do you believe is likely to follow your account on Twitter?

DDS: What?

TI: Who else do you believe is likely to follow your account on Twitter?

DDS: I… I… well I believe people that support other clubs because I have seen… I have seen… I have seen a couple of Chelsea fans, I have seen a couple of Arsenal fans, I've seen a couple of fans… It's more like… you would always want to follow… follow somebody that is from an opposing club when you like what they are doing because you are looking for the day that maybe their team doesn't do well so you can really come after them… yeah… that as well. Then there are some people that, they are not into football but they just love the content because it's Pidgin so they follow it as well. Yeah…

TI: So…

DDS: That's basically… then people that want to study the account because obviously, when you want to study an account you have to follow it. Because there are people that have studied it because they create something like it or they want to create or **they want to create different content that revolves around it** (not sure I got this bit right) so… those people… so they follow it as well.

TI: Alright… so… and what cultural meanings and representations do you seek to convey to your followers on Twitter?

DDS: Mmmmm… I don't really understand that question.

TI: So… what is that you want to achieve culturally, in terms of cultural representations on Twitter in general and to your followers?...

DDS: Mmmmm…

TI: What cultural identity would you like to convey to them?

DDS: Okay, I would… I would… I would say… that… that… that to an extent my handles are showing that you necessarily do not have to belong to what the majority is doing. That even if what you are doing doesn't make sense to a lot of people, and you stick to what you are doing because you believe in it, and you know that, okay, there's a target market for it, it may be hard to find it, but eventually when you find it, it… it will eventually pay off. Yeah… Because… because there's this thing that people tend to do things because a lot of people are doing it so… and… there's actually a… a… a, **like a theory that actually governs what you into towards what the majority are doing** (not sure I got this bit right). But at the end of the day… Yeah… If you... stick to something even if it's really odd and not what everybody is doing and you start getting love and reception for it, obviously it lead more people into doing it so… yeah… so… I would say that the messa… that… that, like the message that we are trying to pass across is like uniqueness. And it's more like… it's more like taking… it's more like exposing Africa to the world as a whole because, everyday like, more foreigners tend to find out about Pidgin… yeah… because there are… there are a lot of people that do not know that Pidgin actually exist. Yeah… like, a lot of people do not know so… some of them, when they know, they actually say that they're going to google it or there are some people that they have, like, come across it before but they did not really pay too much attention to it until this happened and they are like "Oh", that they've actually been in classes where they talked about Pidgin but they did not really pay attention to it because they didn't really think that people speak it... Mmm mmm.

TI: Oh, thank you for taking part into this interview…

DDS: You are welcome.

TI: I wish you to have a nice day and…

DDS: Yeah, you too.

TI: And please, feel free to contact me or someone other than myself, as you've seen specified on the information leaflet and consent form,...

DDS: Yeah, Okay.

TI: … if you have any questions, concerns or complaints regarding this interview.

DDS: Yeah, okay… okay. Fine, that's fine.

TI: I will send you the transcription as soon as it will be ready for you to review it and possibly amend it.

DDS: Yeah, okay. That's fine.

TI: Thanks: Goodbye now.

DDS: Yeah, okay. Yeah, bye.

Appendix 3: Survey questions, Age, and Gender data on the survey's respondents.

Survey questions

1. Age group
    - 18 – 25
    - 26 – 35
    - 36 – 45
    - 46 – 55
    - 56+
2. Gender
    - Male
    - Female
    - Other
    - Prefer not to say
3. Country of Origin
    - Nigeria
    - Cameroon
    - Ghana
    - Equatorial Guinea
    - Sierra Leone
    - Liberia
    - Other (specify)
4. Nationality
    - Nigeria
    - Cameroon
    - Ghana

- Equatorial Guinea
- Sierra Leone
- Liberia
- Other (specify)

5. Country of residence
   - Nigeria
   - Cameroon
   - Ghana
   - Equatorial Guinea
   - Sierra Leone
   - Liberia
   - Other (specify)
6. What type of area do you live in?
   - Urban area
   - Rural area
7. What is your highest level of education?
   - Primary education
   - Secondary education
   - Undergraduate (BA, BSc, etc.)
   - Postgraduate Taught (MA, MSc, etc.)
   - Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil/PhD, etc.)
8. Are you a football fan?
   - Yes
   - No
9. Are you a Manchester United fan?

- Yes
- No

10. How would you rate your Pidgin English level?
    - Zero
    - Novice/Basic
    - Intermediate
    - Advanced
    - Superior

11. Why do you follow ‘Man United in Pidgin’ on Twitter?

Table 10: Age and Gender repartition of the survey's participants

Age group			Gender		
18 - 25	26 - 35	36 -45	Male	Female	Prefer not to say
42	53	05	86	13	1
Total: 100			**Total: 100**		

Appendix 4: Reasons given for following MUIP account

1. The pidgin interpretation is quite funny even when the team plays badly..the acct interpretation of the match is Always funny. So I like it
2. Because I like pidgin
3. Yes
4. They offer a fresh take on Football fandom - by communicating exclusively in Pidgin they've succeeded in building a real pidgin english community around football, and Man United
5. To be having updates on Man united news
6. I follow 'Man United in Pidgin' on Twitter I enjoy the pidgin aspect of analysing the club(Man United).
7. Because I Love Everything About Manchester United...And I Like Their Updates
8. I just love it
9. For the fun of it
10. I followed them because (they talk a lot about Manutd) and I love how they react during match days and how they present their pidgin
11. The reason why I followed Man United in Pidgin on Twitter is because the handler of the said page analysis football in Pidgin to the level a lay man can understand with the use of Pidgin English and some memes in Pidgin.
12. I like the account's personality, it's funny and down to earth, also i like learning new things and my understanding of Pidgin has reached a decent level, though i cannot speak it.
13. Amazing content
14. Because it’s the team I love in a language I appreciate

15. I follow Man United in Pidgin daily through their twitter and Facebook page. I basically go there first when ever I log in to my various social media accounts because of our locally spoken pidgin English and I get all Manchester United related news there. It's quite easier to read, understand and interact.
16. The platform brings me Manchester United news in easy to understand and comic expression.
17. Because he has good content about Manchester United club in a very relatable way.
18. Uniquely publishing Man Utd related stories in a well relatable language
19. I am a Manchester united fan, and I just enjoy the pidgin language
20. It is in a language that is familiar
21. I am a die hard united fan, and seeing tweet in a language we mostly use in the military is pleasing. I too love MUIP ah swear.
22. I use to I stopped it became boring and not funny
23. Very interesting posts
24. At first I was ameazed to notice somebody usually tweeted in pidgin about my favourite club. The words and expressions used in tweets make them hilarious.
25. For fun
26. Great page , with detailed update about the Man United and their sarcasm is everything.
27. They supply me with man united correct news
28. The pidgin interpretation is quite funny even when the team plays badly..the acct interpretation of the match is Always funny. So I like it
29. For Man United football club
30. The pidgin translation of football tweets have a vibe I can rock with
31. Its a fun account and its an account I feel Nigerians can vibe to
32. Loyalty to man United, football humor and banter.

33. Unique angle of Manchester United,from a pidgin view
34. It makes me know more and relate with my club easily. And they help drive out frustration I go through in my club.
35. I love their content and they're funny
36. Pidgin is like the unofficial lingua franca in Nigeria. So reading my favorite club's news and information gives me a form of satisfaction
37. It represents our fandom in the language with which we communicate daily
38. basic information and cranks me up
39. Though I'm not a Man United fan, I find their Twitter page enjoyable and interesting. Plus, it's in Pidgin - that separates it from other football accounts I follow
40. Its relatable.. It gives pidgin English the much needed exposure it needs.
41. Because he supports my club
42. Best news on Manchester United and they keep me updated on any news concerning Manchester United and football in general.
43. I find the page very funny.
44. YES
45. Because a friend told me about it and it's kinda interesting
46. Its funny and as well as great to read about your club in your local English language.
47. Current [up to date]
48. Informed and funny.
49. As a Nigerian, pidgin is attractive.. i have follow because I'm a hard core United fan.
50. His hilarious Pidgin content... Its one of a kind..
51. For football update
52. the page gives updated about man united in a language I understand very well .

53. Cause it's in a language I deem 'African' and I can relate to.. The way they portray football makes it fun and more enjoyable.
54. It serves news and updates about Manchester United in a way more welcoming way with a bit of comedy
55. Because anything that's got Man United in it is ❤️ for me
56. Bants
57. omo na david beckam free kick be the first ball wey I first watch na since then I don dey glue to man utd. I don dey follow man utd before I even sabi say na man utd be the name.
58. Because I love Manchester United and the MUIP page was humorous
59. A page I can express my opinion in Pidgin without checking for errors in my statement
60. Awesome content...offers information and entertainment from a different angle.
61. I love pidgin from movies etc but I ddnt really grow up in Nigeria so it's always fun for me to read ur news in a language I feel close to.
62. I am a man United fan
63. I like the pidgin thingy. Besides y'all used to make funny picture illustrations before. Dunno why y'all stopped.
64. For fun
65. Pidgin English creates for me a level of freedom in communication above the regular English language. So on the 'Man United in Pidgin' platform, there are no restrictions whenever I get to express myself exactly as I feel.
66. Hilarious tweets, i can easily relate with folks who engage in his contents cos they mostly speak pidgin, his giveaways too. All in all his contents are dope
67. They relay relevant news in a relatable manner

68. They offer a fresh take on Football fandom - by communicating exclusively in Pidgin they've succeeded in building a real pidgin english community around football, and Man United
69. Because I'm a United fan and I think his analysis is pretty accurate.
70. Its fun and interactive
71. E dey sweet me say one of us get that kind idea to dey represent us for pidgin... And the guy sabi Sha.
72. Other countries dey get that kind handle wey Dem dey use tweet and Man United in Pidgin be our own... Tankio!😎
73. E go be brother✌
74. Because I'm a Man United Fan and I love Pidgin
75. Funny to see my dear club have a group in "indiginous" language
76. I enjoy the page
77. I followed them because am a Manchester United fan from Nigeria and pidgin is our own
78. Cause i follow everythjng that has to do with Man-Utd..
79. Coz I be die hard Fan and pidgin nah my 2nd language
80. Coz I be die hard man united fan and pidgin nah my 2nd language
81. It's because I'm a Man United fan and the pidgin speaking fan base catches my fantasy
82. Crazy Post from the user
83. I love the way the present news in pidgin
84. I follow ManUtd in Pidgin cos I love their content
85. To identify with Manchester United in a Nigerian?/African way
86. I do follow them on Facebook and Instagram, but twitter is easier

87. Man United in Pidgin is a social media account that is centred about all the news and activities that involves manchester united and it passes its informations with the use of pidgin English. The sole reason I follow Man united in pidgin is cause I am a man united fan and I understand pidgin
88. Because I love their write ups and funny commentary
89. I love Man United, the pidgin adds a bit more fun and excitement to the news about my favorite club. It takes away a bit of formality from the message though, it however provide the information needed to be conveyed. I love the language (dialect) as well. The page is also an active one with intermittent updates. It's no fluke that I've its notification ON.
90. It’s fun
91. Good as he dey okay
92. I love its contents.
93. I love pidgin English and Manchester united
94. Although I am not a Man U fan, I really enjoy reading football content in a language I am familiar with and that has hardly been so visible before. The tweets are also very funny.
95. Cos I am a man united fan and I have the local feel to a club that sometimes feel distant.
96. updates on Manchester united and also the humor in their tweets is superb
97. There is a distinct humor that comes with the pidgin language that I enjoy very much
98. It fun
99. Just love the page!
100. The pidgin interpretation is quite funny even when the team plays badly..the acct interpretation of the match is Always funny. So I like it

Appendix 5: Social media languages used in MUIP's main tweets and replies

Table 11: Emojis used in MUIP's tweets

Emoji's description	***Emoji's illustration***	***Number of times used***
Gorilla Emoji		46
Nigerian flag		29
Black backhand index pointing down		10
Red Circle		8
Laughing face	 or 	4
Football ball		4
Côte d'Ivoire Flag		3
Raising hands		2
Flushed face		2
Winking face		1
Weary face		1
Speaking head		1
Rocket		1
Red heart		1
Portuguese flag		1
Planet earth		1
Digit Two	2	1

Digit Five	5	1
Grinning face with sweat	😅	1
French flag		1
Fire symbol	🔥	1
Eyes	👀	1
Eagle		1
Cross mark	❌	1
Direct hit	🎯	1
Check mark	✔️	1
Airplane	🛩️	1

Table 12: Emojis used by MUIP's repliers

Emoji's description	***Emoji's illustration***	***Number of times used***
Laughing face	😂 or 🤣	78
Red heart	❤️	6
Raising hands	🙌	5
Nigerian flag		5
Grinning face with smiling eyes	😄	5
Fire symbol	🔥	5
Crying face	😭	5
Grinning face with sweat	😅	3
Folded hands	🙏	3

Flexed biceps	💪	3
Winking face with tongue	😜	2
Victory hand	✌	2
Unamused face	😒	2
Grinning face with big eyes	😃	2
Smiling face with heart-eyes	😍	2
Red circle	🔴	2
Clapping hands	👏	2
Check Mark	✔	2
Hundred Points	💯	2
Waving hand	👋	1
Thumbs up	👍	1
Snail	🐌	1
Smiling face with heart	😻	1
Sleepy face	😪	1
Sign of the horns	🤘	1
Sad face	😔	1
Rocket	🚀	1
Raised fist	✊	1
Man walking	🚶	1
Man facepalming	🤦	1
Kenyan flag		1
Grinning squinting face	😆	1
Grimacing face	😬	1

Gorilla emoji		1
Football ball	⚽	1
Eyes	👀	1
Disappointed face	😞	1
Broken heart	💔	1

Table 13: Hashtag used in MUIP's tweets

Hashtag	***Number of times used***
#MUFC	82
#MUIP	45
#CHEMUN	8
#MUNWAT	7
#MUNMCI	7
#EVEMUN	5
#DeadlineDay	4
#WeekendLifeOnDStv	1
#FACup	1
#TeamAfrica	1
#DStvStepUp	1
#AlwaysFootballTime	1

Table 14: Hashtags used by repliers in response to MUIP's main tweets

Hashtag	***Number of times used***
#pogbafc	8
#mufc	6
#muip	2
#mcfc	2
#Ighalo	2
#Ole	1
#lapioche	1
#naijaspirit	1
#ggmu	1
#favoroverlabor	1
#EVEMUN	1

Table 15: Netspeak used by MUIP's content creator and by MUIP's tweets repliers

Netspeak used by MUIP's content creator

Acronym	**Meaning**	**Number of times used**
GOAT	Greatest of All Times	1

Netspeak used by repliers

Acronym	**Meaning**	**Number of times used**
lol	Laughing out loud	2
mofo	Motherfucker	1
GGMU	Glory Glory Man United	1
WTF	What the fuck	1
Fr	For real	1
SMH	Shaking my head	2
Goat	Greatest of all times	1
Lmao	Laughing my ass out	2

Appendix 6: key pictures, memes, and posters analysed in this thesis

Image 2: A picture of Ighalo wearing a Nigerian National Team Jersey

Image 3: A picture of Ighalo's MUFC jersey

Image 4: A picture of Ighalo clapping to say thank you to the crowd

Image 5: A picture of Ighalo with McTominay, Bailly, and 2 unidentifiable MUFC players

Context: Ighalo lifts part of his jersey to reveal a white shirt with the picture of a woman on it (probably his sister). This might have been after he scored his first MUFC goal.

Image 6: A MUIP's of Ighalo in a crowdy stadium

Context: Ighalo standing in what looks like a crowdy stadium (although the background is very blurry) lifting both his indexes to the sky supposedly thinking: *"Baba God Na You o! I dey give thanks"* (Father God this is your influence in my life! Thanks!). One of the blurred spectators is supposedly saying/thinking: *"Igwe Ighalo you too much"* (King Ighalo you are perfect).

Image 7: Ighalo's Ahh Mogbe Meme

Context: A meme designed by MUIP portraying Ighalo after he was denied that goal opportunity by Pickford's leg (Everton's goalkeeper) and what he may have thought: *"Ahh Mogbe! See Wetin I miss???"* (Ah Mogbe! You see what I missed?!) Mogbe is a word used in Yoruba (language spoken in Nigeria) to express regret.

Image 8: A picture of Eric Bailly

Context: Cote d'Ivoire's Eric Bailly holding the Europa League trophy won during season 2016/2017 with MUFC.

Image 9: A picture of Bruno Fernandes

Image 10: A picture of Greenwood

Context: A picture of the then 19 years old MUFC's forward Greenwood in his MUFC jersey kneeling on a football pitch (supposedly after scoring a goal).

Image 11: A picture of four Nigerians holding a Nigerian flag

Image 12: A picture of a Babalawo character (1)

Context: a Babalawo using a laptop on his lap with his left hand, holding a big vase with his right hand. A beer (Harp) can also be seen near him.

Image 13: A picture of Babalawo character (2)

Context: A picture of Chiwetalu Agu dressed like a Babalawo. Chiwetalu Agu is one of the best Nigerian actors/comedians of indigenous movies.

Image 14: An advert poster by DStv (1)

Description and context: 1. Top left: SuperSport Logo - Top right: DStv logo. 2. Title: “The Hornets face the Devil they know”. The Hornets => Watford. The Devil (as in the Red Devils = MUFC) they know => Ighalo (who used to play with Watford).

Image 15: An advert poster by DStv (2)

Description and context: It advertises the ‘Double Sunday Thriller’ (Chelsea vs Everton; MUFC vs Man City) starring 4 players from Chelsea (Tammy Abraham), Everton (Alex Iwobi), MUFC (Odion Ighalo) and Man City (Sergeo Aguero). The poster says that these two Premier league games are to be broadcasted live on SuperSport 3 on the 8th of March 2020: Chelsea vs Everton (3:00pm) and MUFC vs Man City (5:30pm).