

# Constructing Identity in Virtuality: A Critical Examination of the Case of Migrant Nigerians

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Renegotiation of the self in the individual or the collective sense is a central characteristic of diasporas. The redefinition of life away from an original *homeland* could be physical through the construction of *home* and *homeland*, or psychological via a nascent attempt at self-presentation (Wood, et al, 2001). Both cases are continuous, but moreso, when it is of the latter. The fragility of diasporic state directly or indirectly conditions an emergent effort for survival. That struggle is witnessed in multi-sectors, including economic, political, cultural, social, and religious, amongst many others. The sectors are reflected in the real world just as it is becoming increasingly represented in the virtual world. While the real world element has been more critically examined, the virtual element is yet evolving. This is importantly because of the relative newness of the Internet space, where virtually is represented, and the fact that its infinite depth showcases intricacies that constantly require care to gauge. The diasporic element connects with the virtual at the deterritorialised or decentered level, just as we are invited to investigate these dimensions through how segments of society matter in the matrix. In this situation therefore, my concern is to examine how diasporic Nigerians as a societal segment use the Internet to represent the self, in the face of ambiguity in a distance. In itself, the word diaspora is a contested word. An old Greek phrase, implying “scattering”, and “maturing” it was originally applied to seeds. To humans, it also became a metaphor for dispersals and settlements (Cohen, 1997). The timelessness of its meaning is exemplified in its relevance, as initially applied to the old, traditional and involuntary Jewish diaspora, and to migrating people in contemporary times like the new, and voluntary Nigerian diaspora, mainly displaced for economic reasons. The intersecting concept of identity which seeks, as related to diasporas, to see how the self is presented in the flux of migrancy is also a problematic word. A social construct (Wood, Ibid), or a spatially determined affair, which changes in sameness. The problematic concepts of *home* and *homeland* are italicized in this paper, as a reflection of their fluidity. It is here assumed as an imagined place, where emotional attachment, as against physical one is prevalent. (Gilroy, 1993) argued that identity is locked in a tangled connotation. Importantly, the question of construction (Deng, 1995; 1, cited in Fearon, 1999:4; Woodward, 1997:1), reflexivity (Giddens, 1991), and conceptuality, are fundamental to its understanding. Its determination in the Internet space, through the agency of the incipient (Sheffer, 2003) Nigerian diaspora is to be investigated in the present with gazes on the conditioning impact of the past. In doing this therefore, I shall first reveal in brief the routes from a recent historical perspective, before looking at present manifestations of virtual identity construction amongst Nigerian diaspora.

## 2.1: VIRTUAL IDENTITIES: AN INSTRUCTION FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT THROUGH POLITICS

The rise of the online agency of migrant Nigerians coincided with the expansion of the Internet. While the Nigerian diasporic online activities was initially triggered by political developments in *homeland* from 1993, Internet use was just soaring from two years earlier with the introduction of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1990. Specifically, on June 12, 1993, the military regime of President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida cancelled a Nigeria presidential election, widely believed to be the fairest and freest ever held in the chequered history of the country. The action triggered widespread national and international revulsion. Rather than conciliation, the military typically wielded the stick. In desperation, it became intolerant of oppositions. Many critics of the annulment were arrested at random. Detentions without trial were now a rule rather than an exception. A lot more, particularly protesters were killed. Many others fled the country. The fleeing populace regrouped in sundry western countries particularly the United States of America, (USA), the United Kingdom, (UK), Canada, other Western European countries, and elsewhere.

The escaping people, combined with concerned older members of the diaspora, to embrace the space of the Internet to further their anti-cancellation cause. It soon snowballed into a production of several virtual political activists. The emergent activists' political identity of the exiled Nigerians, reveal sets of people concerned about a political imperfection in *homeland* and were determined to right the wrongs, using the Internet as a mediating space. Online facilities like newsgroups, usenets, and websites become repositories of anti-military venom. This was also besides a conscious effort to sensitize the international community to the travails of *homeland* on the

one hand and their own travails as an endangered species on the other hand. Emails, email attachments, and web page sharing was as well a common feature amongst the troubled people.

A website, [www.naijanet.com](http://www.naijanet.com) was for example one of the earliest space for the articulation of their views. Administered from the United States by Chuk Odili, an old member of the country's migrant community, it encouraged maximum participation from fleeing people, who were sometimes assisted by leads from some determined *homeland* peers (Adebanwi, 2001). With time, there was a proliferation of these sites, as more and more migrants constructed theirs with an aggressive invitation of participation in similar vein. The pioneering role of the Odili construction nevertheless remained remarkable. The site has since mutated into a larger one, [www.nigeriaworld.com](http://www.nigeriaworld.com). While the assemblage of dispersed Nigerians on its space grows by the day, its role as a forum for the redefinition of the self as the politically agitated has also continued to crystallise.

A cue from [nigeriaworld.com](http://nigeriaworld.com) has as well probably led to various diasporic sites in cyberspace. [www.nigeriavillagesquare.com](http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com), [www.nigerianews.com](http://www.nigerianews.com), [www.saharareports.com](http://www.saharareports.com), [www.elendureports.com](http://www.elendureports.com), and [www.nigeriamasterweb.com](http://www.nigeriamasterweb.com) are some of those playing leading roles in the rendition of a longing for better *home*; the publication of daring news reports ordinarily unpublishable by the traditional media of *homeland* and in the creation of a wholesome forum for identification with *homeland*, with hostland peers and in relationship with host communities. Intersecting the virtual political activists' identity of the exilic (Bhaba, 1990; Naficy, 1999) people, is the more generic agency of other migrants conterminously displaced by economic reasons.

Differentiating the groups may though be tricky; the fact of a commonality of dispersal experience and the emergent vibrancy of their online life, coupled with the seizure of the space to represent them invites critical scrutiny. Studies of some of these websites alongside an observation of the virtual diasporic activities of the migrants have revealed that varied meanings for the self and "others" are constructed therein. I will now attempt an examination of these as critically as possible in subsequent sections. The observations were sometimes participatory, given the guest for first hand insight. They often happen as follow-ups to leads from website studies.

### 3.1: INTERNET AND THE DIASPORIC SELF

The Internet character as a bastion of possibilities helps the diasporic person to weave ways around a possible multiple challenge. The chances to be themselves, others, or to multiply the self in genuine or phoney fashion leaves ample allowances for experiments. The processes could be helpful to the individual or the collective, just as it could perverse the network (Castells, 1996). Important in the circumstance is fact that creativity for good or for ill is at work. The online reflections of the binaries testify to the inherent possibilities within. The individual is likely to be helped in the new discovery of the self as an agent capable of other trials.

While the political narration earlier on is representative of some identity construction, the self has also witnessed a transformation in the area of reputation. An exposure to another culture, which is a character of diaspora (Gilroy, 1997; Georgiou, 2006), has culminated in a confident cosmopolitan disposition amongst the migrants. The resultant superiority feelings over *homeland* people (Skinner, 1993) prompt regular opinionating on *homeland affairs*. Through the Internet spaces, the people pontificate on nearly every matter. They put forward solutions to every *homeland problem*, with a unique messianic perspective. Having being witnesses to life in the advanced, civilized west, it becomes easier to ask questions on why *homeland* development is slow-paced.

While the questions are indeed asked, the answers yet come easily in their online submissions. Not a few confess to the ease with which change can be effected in *homeland*, especially with their diasporic experience of how things work. This disposition may be real or illusory, given the likely gulf between theory and practice, the fact of the emergence of an epistemic character remains obvious. And the online expression of this defines the observed migrants, not only as people with an assumed better knowledge, but as persons exalted with the license of expression. In doing this, the identity of the purist and the public commentator is weaved into the depiction. The emergent purist, helped by the new knowledge in the distance is now maximally repulsed by the underdeveloped state of *homeland*.

A puritanical outlook becomes evident through virtual contributions, when excuses for underdevelopments are no longer pardonable. Opinions on how things should work become trenchant. They are also impatient with suggestions on delays. Tempers easily rise against pronouncements of *homeland* leaders. Past ones are castigated over lost opportunities. Longing for *home* begin to come with pains, just as nostalgia is accompanied with regrets about missed chances. Sometimes, the assumption of a capability to personally effect the change given the prospect is evident. Other times, a subdued wish for a special invitation from *homeland* to implement redeeming ideas are expressed. Idealising is equated with practicalising. While the thoughts may be realistic in some cases, many, it can be argued, may not be. This is because of the cultural and historical disparities between *homeland* and hostland, aside the complexity of their institutional variations.

As distant purists, their ideas live long in the distance given the myth of return. The feelings of attachment to *homeland nonetheless* showcase a concern which could at times take the nationalism turn that Anderson

(1994) regards as “long distance nationalism”. The migrants can also be identified as virtual public commentators. The space of the Internet is controlled as a place to relate with the public. In their case, this public may be triangulated. This means that mediation happens online between them and *homeland*; with hostland; and amid fellow travellers in the diaspora. In the assumption of a public image, the self is refined, not as an end in itself, but also a means to it. The self is presented and represented for many. The process changes the self just as the Internet device is also affected (Castells, 2001). The dialectics psychologically satisfies the absent citizens in the renegotiation of life through diasporic ambivalence, and in the relationship with the “absent other” (Giddens, 1990).

The public expression is a further witness to differences. Some writers are occasional, say once in a long while. Many are however regular, writing on a weekly basis. A few contribute to more than one website. The writers also sometimes simultaneously contribute to newsgroups discussions, if not initiating them. Many also maintain *blogs*. Through these engagements, a lot of the migrants have become virtual celebrities. They have become popular as online writers, journalists, webmasters, website administrators or newsgroup moderators. These identities happen only online, in what amounts to the expansion of the individual’s imagination of the self, which was probably not achieved in real life.

While real life diasporic celebrities amongst Nigerians are discerned by their wealth, length of stay in hostland; position in a diasporic community organisation; appearances in offline Nigerian diasporic media; and influence in *homeland*, celebrities are determined in virtual life through the regularity of their contributions; the popularity of their websites and/or newsgroups or through the expression of controversial ideas. The famed democratic space of the Internet is consciously or unconsciously used by the concerned individuals to project the self in manners possibly unattainable in real life. In online agency, participation is not necessarily determined by wealth, depth of voice, race or creed, but by the interest of the concerned to so do.

Many concerned Nigerian diasporic members have therefore achieved celebrity status through a constant sharing of their thoughts, the joining of others on issues, and/or the triggering of debates on issues. It is also observed that many of those who pass as celebrities are not necessarily judged on the basis of quality of contributions but on quantity. The celebrated freedom of the Internet is somewhat a condition for relaxed rules of participation, which could translate to a reduction of quality. In traditional real life media, gate-keeping could be stricter, and usually done by another. On the Internet however, it could be weaker, as publication decision could be self-taken, which may rob it of the possible benefit of an alternative review. The worth of publication regardless, the fact of the construction of the identity of the celebrity, or being able to celebrate their other identities online is noteworthy.

In using the Internet as a new vista of liberty, the migrants again convey some passion earlier associated with them in *homeland*. One of this is religion. Its propagation is unmistakable in real life. Before migration, many belong to different sects. It could either be Christianity, Islam or the traditional African religion. Believe in God through religion provides a steady psychological gait through the vagaries of dislocation and relocation. The physical place of the church in real life is now however represented in virtual life, through websites, newsgroups, e-mail lists belonging to different sects, especially as it pertains to Christianity. Many WebPages abound for the uploading of sermons. On there, different preachers also labour to reach the faithful. In some instances, a netcast (Bonchek, 1997), or webcast of Sunday real life worship is reproduced online like the case of the Living Faith Church.

Many others including the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church (MFM), and the Deeper life Bible Church construct sites that represent the entire religious ministry or a local branch. E-mail groups on church programmes, crusades and/or for evangelical purposes also proliferate. The online notices are meant to further offline relationships through meetings and day and night prayer sessions. Most of these churches were founded in *homeland*. The leaders in turn establish real life branches abroad. These are subsequently replicated online, in what appears a portrayal of the dispersed people as religious.

The identity of the holy may however be fluid or constant. This is in the sense that some migrants may bear this before displacement. Others might have cultivated it during the travails of dislocation, while some others are irregular about religious commitments. Central in the argument is that a vibrant virtual religious life is evident in the agency of Nigerian diaspora. While activities offline sometimes move online and vice-versa, the role of virtual spiritual engagements to the smoothening of diasporic life remains largely personal and most times impossible to gauge. Suffice it to say nevertheless that a communion with an all-important God as enhanced by an online agency substantiates the identity of the saintly.

Virtual gatherings for the propagation of common faith usually conceal the ethnic and tribal differences of *homeland*. As it is with the religious gathering, so it is with other online forum where the migrants interact. To start with, *homeland* is a multi-ethnic society. There are well over 250 ethnic groups, spread over 36 states that comprise the federation, occupying a landmass of 923,768 sq.km. Regional, tribal or ethnic considerations are often a determinant of political and economic positions in *homeland*. Sometimes, the age-old co-habitation of these groups becomes a pain, given tension and threats of collapse or crisis. As could be natural, individuals of

common ethnic and tribal origin gravitate to themselves in social, business and political relationships, while the “internal outsider”, turns, or is turned into the opposition. In virtuality however, a momentary relieve from these tension, mutual suspicion and disbelief is achieved. On many newsgroups, websites and email lists, participants act more as Nigerians than as members of some traditional ethnic and tribal society within *homeland*. The space of the Internet therefore provides a place for the shielding of primordial sentiments as contributions reflect an attachment to the country as a nation-state and not to nations within the nation-state.

The momentary respite from ethnic or tribal identity again exemplifies life online as one that blurs cultural details of agents. The resultant broad-based atmosphere shakes off the insular identity offline, therefore redefining, even temporarily, the migrants as a dispassionate lot. Other than this, many Nigerian diaspora members observed are expectedly faced with the challenge of acceptance. It is importantly founded on two grounds. One is the racial discourse, where as blacks, they contend with the vagaries of their chequered history and the need to negotiate existence away from evolving perceptions of the disadvantaged. Two, is the modern day true or erroneous perception of the Nigerian as a representative of dubiety. While their continued interest in dislocation and relocation undermines concern for these challenges, the dawning of difference upon migration prompts and maintains imagination of return. The interplay of the subjects finds a template in modern communications equipments predominantly the Internet.

Online life for the Nigerian migrants therefore, is a new way to suspend offline representation and misrepresentation. This is because when the vagaries of offline life are eased off through online agency, a subsequent return to offline diasporic life is assumably bettered. It represents a late-modernity’s way of adaptation and readaptation, even from a marginal perspective. The marginality is nevertheless strong enough to stabilise the vanquished migrant, who hopes for some redemption in a host environment. As investigated, the stability comes via the virtual construction of identity, where in this instance the self is continually appreciated in the independent online world, as against the likely crisis from a dependent disposition on host community offline.

Though the migrants are associated with the usual loneliness and trials of migration, an unusual drive to beat the odds is propelling. *Home* is though still cherished, especially with the presence of families and friends therein, but the discouraging state of *homeland*, combine with the regular nudge of loved ones behind to continue the diasporic struggle, coupled with their (the *homeland* people) simultaneous interest in embracing similar migration opportunity, adds to the drive. This compelling situation brings in a sense of urgency. The urgency is one for success, at the level of job, sustenance and remittance. The objectives become strong enough to ward off the crisis of difference and discrimination. The presence of communication tools, with the

Internet having a generic headstart bridges evident divides. Though physically distant from *homeland*, and again culturally distant from hostland through difference, mediation of the distances happens in the virtual life. The strong sense of freedom offered by life online obliterates the detachments through the provision of a sense of an alternative life, which is independently or collectively liveable. Their agencies online eventually leads to the remaking of diasporic characters, at the political, social and economic sphere, just as it translates into a modus operandi for continuing survival in locations where identity may be resented.

#### **4.1: THE NET, SELF, AND HOMELAND/HOSTLAND DIGITAL DIVIDES**

Again, the effectiveness of the Internet to migrants in the framing of their diasporic image stems from their use of new sites, websites, and even newsgroups. Some of the newsgroups are especially fast in posting breaking news in *homeland* to users, with the usual prompting to sites where details of the stories would be read. The process of engaging the Internet, leading to the judgement of efficiency points to the role the technology plays in the construction of their world view in the distance. While physical distance is real, it minimally exists in the psychology of the migrants given the availability of a bridging network space. That space is not only connecting but refining existence and the displaced self in the fluid world of the sojourner.

It is also to be noted that the space of the Internet is found effective in the renegotiation of their identity because many diasporic location, especially those in the developed west have the requisite connection infrastructures. Level of connectivity in the host society is high. Educational centres are all connected, so are most other societal sectors including the health and the business sectors. Cafes also abound aplenty, where a small denomination could be sufficient for an hour or two. Various computer equipments are easily available. They are also more modern and affordable in some cases. Electric power supply is regular. They all combine to ease access.

One online Internet World Stats reports say while the UK for instance has 62.9% penetration rate, Nigeria has 1.1%. It says again that while the UK has 37,800,000 of its 60,139,274 population as Internet users in 2006, Nigeria posted 1,769,700 from latest data of Internet users, of its estimated 159,404, 137 populations. This divides can in any case be situated within the broader context of its debate, which, I can argue, reduces the credentials of the Internet as having global spread. The partition is not just between the “North” and “South” classification, but also within many sections of the “North”. It is also trite to note that divides within locations



are not peculiar to the South. It is, as well evident in sections of the North. Degrees may however differ.

For example, US and Japan, according to a 2000 statistics (cited in Castell, 2001; 261) had 139.6 million and 26.3 million people having Internet access. For the UK, 30.8 percent of its population were “netizens”, while Germany had 24.7. In that year, more than 93% of world populations were not online. What was worse? A year earlier: “over half the people on the planet had never made or received a telephone call” And the total number of Internet users in Africa in the late 1990s was estimated to be 1.14 million” (Slevin, 2000; 41). Access to the network, is also restricted by modes of identification like education, age, income and “race”. The US statistics shows as instance that “74.5 percent (of its population) had access to the Internet, but the proportion fell to 30.6 percent among high school graduates and to 21.7 percent among those not having graduated from high school” (Castells, Ibid; 249).

Then: “50.3 percent of whites and 49.4 percent of Asian Americans had access to the Internet, but only 29.3 percent of African- Americans and 23.7 percent of Hispanics did” (ibid; 249). Many Nigerian diasporic members in my study have attested to the access problem in *homeland*. One person said: “They (my family) have nothing to do with the Internet. Not probably because they are not interested, but because they are still indifferent or unaware of computer related issues, and again the cost, beside the dearth of facilities that would enable access...” Then another interviewee stated: “...In Nigeria...not many people have access to the Internet...” And another added: “...Very few people have access to the Internet...” Availability is subsequently limited to the few urban centres. Even then, epileptic electric power supply remains an impediment.

Sometimes, it becomes very expensive where commercially available. Computer literacy level is also still low. Likely users are also urban based. It discourages therefore the surfing Nigerian Diaspora person from sending e-mail to the deep of the village, where the Central Processing Unit (CPU), would likely still be mistaken for a television screen. This pops up the subsisting debate on digital divide. Participants’ studies are nevertheless consciously or unconsciously content with their advantaged position in connectivity terms, and its reconstructive role, as again indicated by this diaspora member:

“Internet is useful for me in terms of enabling me to read newspapers, emerging news websites on Nigeria, and in getting or confirming information that I would ordinarily not get through telephone conversation. Some new sites are also now very daring. In reporting what newspapers would not report, they have attracted me to their websites and then the Internet the more in terms of current affairs. Some of these sites are [www.elendureports.com](http://www.elendureports.com); [www.saharareports.com](http://www.saharareports.com) amongst others. The Internet to me is another *home*. When I don’t have anything to do, I do it on the Internet. And even when I should be doing more “serious” things, the site of the Internet distracts me. I surf and surf until I become really tired. I am usually everywhere on the Internet; you name it; sports sites, personality sites, government sites, etc. It is a technology that electrifies me. When I have not surfed in a day, then that day is not completed. I have about six e-mail accounts which I do nothing with, about one or two for different purposes. I discuss Nigerian politics with those back *home* as if I am *home*... They may have edges over me in terms of local or domestic gossips but not in terms of what is seriously reported in the online media **Angela, 39, London**

This speaker integrates the Internet to her life in the diaspora. The network, she reasons, is an alternative *home*, which to her is synonymous with peace, and security. In keeping abreast of developments in the online *home*, there is an emotional rediscovery, which helps the self. And in idling away online, she looks to protect herself from the pains of boredom, which might be negative on the self. The moderating influence of the network space on her identity therefore comes to the fore once more. Her confident identity through being well informed about *homeland*, like those in *homeland* also owes much to her interest in surfing. Though displaced, she finds a place to be confident about the state of *home* affairs, probably erasing the character of the uninformed. An engagement with the Internet is always probably done for many reasons. The multiplicities of motives combine to shape the conception of the migrant about the self, about *homeland*, and hostland, and the interrelationships in-between.

The course of redefining the self is partly coming from reading Nigeria press online; reaching friends and family in Nigeria; reaching friends and family in the UK; reaching non-Nigerian friends and family in the UK; reaching friends and family elsewhere and to network with groups, organisations or online communities. Performing each and all of the above functions online predominate from the views of respondents. Apart from highlighting the state of the Internet as a place with limitless possibilities, it shows as well that the paths to identity construction are fluid and continuous. Importantly, participants share information in the new “Internet life”. The information which comes in multiple forms and interests, serve participants. Because they are sharing ideas and thoughts in furtherance of a common culture (Hall, 1997), and concern, the Internet as a media variant

mediates their chats (Georgiou, 2001:14). It also reminds them of their similar social, economic and political interest. By interacting through the Internet medium, they are likely to construct meanings through re-identification, in the virtual space despite their absent status. That is however largely undermined in the manner in which meanings are often seen (Louw, 2001:1), but it makes sense to argue that the migrants construct the self in the process.

### 5.1: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Dispersed Nigerians go through multiple re-identifications in their distant location. The process may be conscious or unconscious, but it helps the redefinition of their past and present worlds. The Nigerian self is re-conceived, not just personally, but through continuing socio-communal life. The construction also goes through the gender, educational and the class status. The shaping and the re-shaping of the self in a temporal and spatial context, essentially through the mediative possibilities of the Internet. The network helps the migrants through a cyclical rediscovery. Though physically away from *homeland*, the *homeland* is re-imagined via cyber activities that span reading of online Nigerian newspapers; Nigerian-related new sites, sending and receiving e-mails to loved ones with access in *homeland* and networking with fellow diasporic members. The online mediation of his affairs with *homeland* re-creates a sense of belonging, absent through the dominance of the “others”, in hostland. And while those “others”, may in turn instill a sense of otherness in the Nigerian diaspora, participants finds his/her place in the virtual space, wherein a union with *homeland* is invented. The invention is continual, while the consciousness of distance is reduced upon connection.

Those studied benefits from the various online functions including use-nets or bulletin boards; list serves or e-mail groups; sundry websites, where images, sound text can be downloaded; telephone calls; listening to radio and web conferencing , amongst others. The practice of engaging the Internet reshapes their identity at different levels. It is obvious at the individual level, as it is in the social, and the religious level. The junctures of gender, sex, education, class, marital and professional status are not excluded as well. Though the junctures could conflict, shaping occurs when affairs are mediated with *homeland*, with hostland and with his/her diasporic community members. The relationship evolves through “sameness and difference” (Gilroy, 1997: 302), and then helps the location of a balance in between.

As seen therefore, the reconstruction of identity amongst Nigerian diaspora proceeds from a past, which is rooted from the fixed and fluctuating characterisation and perception of alleged negativities of blackness, of criminality, of Africanness, and of poverty. They re-negotiate their identity not as “reflexively understood” (Giddens, 1991: 53) by them, but against internalizing (Freire, 1972: 38), the characterisation of the host. The success or failure of these engagements may not matter more than it would help to gauge the double vision (Bhaba, 1994: 8) of the Nigerian diaspora, as with many other diasporas.

Positioned in the diaspora, they visualize return using the Internet as nurturing point even if return is hardly realistic. Their ethnic and other identities get re-invented in diasporic and virtual spaces (Georgiou, EMTEL; 16) beyond geographies or homogenous populations (Hall, 1998, 1992) foregrounding therefore an expansion of the borders of ethnic image construction through the Internet place. Projected as a space for the negotiation and re-negotiation of everyday life, the Internet reactivates their identities following their common history and culture. As interaction with the “absent other” continues, there is a distanciation of time and space (Giddens, 1990) substantiating the reality of new grounds of mediation.

Apart from reconstructing their identity, the Internet provides Nigeria diaspora more claim to rights, space, a celebration of same, and indeed a greater right to place (Georgiou, 2002;4), in everyday life, where activity transpires even in passivity (Silverstone, 2001;13). As shown above, and like Appadurai (1996) argues, the new technology has influenced how the *home* is visualized and how their identities are constructed. Besides, homogeneity of interests as related to the *homeland* or country of origin is achieved when they meet online, even though cultural homogeneity is absent among groups (Hall, 1996). And through their relocation, their interaction and cross-cultural exchanges, their identities are altered (Gillespie, Ibid; 7), and most times for good, and can actually be channeled for the benefit of original country of origin. This altered identity is reflected online via their viewpoints on *homeland* and host community emphasizing as a result their flux in the context of globalisation.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Dr. Abiodun Adeniyi** graduated with a Second Class Upper Honours in Sociology from the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, after which he worked as a reporter and writer for *The Guardian Newspapers*, Nigeria, covering various beats in Lagos and Abuja, for more than a decade. He won the British Chevening Scholarship in 2003 to study International Communications at the University of Leeds, England and began his Ph.D. research immediately after his Master's Degree programme at the same University, where he also taught. Widely published, he was awarded his doctorate degree in Communication Studies in 2008, for his research on Migrant Nigerians and the Online Mediation of Distance, Longing and Belonging, as a case in Internet and Diasporic Communication.

Adeniyi returned to his native Nigeria in 2009, working as a Communications Consultant on the platform of the World Bank Economic Reform and Governance Project (ERGP) at the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), Presidency, Abuja. On expiration of the project, he became Lead Consultant at Witswords Consults Limited (WCL), Abuja, before joining Baze University as a senior lecturer in Mass Communication. His present research interests are in the fields of Public Relations and Advertising Practicum, Strategic Communications and the dynamics of media and governance.

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An alumnus of Georgetown University's prestigious Georgetown Leadership Seminar, Suleiman was executive editor of the online news platform, NigeriaIntel from 2011 to 2015 and is on the editorial board of the online forum, Nigeria Village Square. He was also a director at the Civic Media Institute of Nigeria, an organisation dedicated to promoting citizen journalism. A widely published columnist with Peoples' Daily, NEXT and Blueprint newspapers, Dr Suleiman teaches at Baze University, Abuja, and has research interests in public information management, new media and e-governance.