REPRESENTING AFRICAN MIGRANTS’ EXPERIENCE IN EUROPE: A study of narratives on the Surprising Europe website.

By Anne Brenda Ochola

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Department of Journalism, Media & Communication (JMK)

Supervisor: Alexa Robertson

Stockholm University

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ABSTRACT

Migration is a continuous process in an increasingly globalized world and African migrants have for a long time migrated to Europe mostly for economic reasons. Due to biased reporting of life in Europe by both western and African media as well as half-truths by Africans living in Europe who seldom tell the whole story of their lives abroad; a lot of African migrants arrive in Europe with a very idealistic image. African migrants thereby risk a lot in pursuit of a better life in Europe. When they finally arrive, a lot of their idealistic expectations are not met, forcing them to be filled with regret and the wish that they had known the full truth before migrating. This study examines an online platform (Surprising Europe’s website), that connects African migrants by inviting them to share stories about their migration experiences in an effort to better inform those intending to migrate. The use of interviews of the producers to better understand the project as well as their intentions, and a narrative analysis of all the 30 articles on the website are analysed. The results indicate that the danger of telling one sided stories contribute to the existing narrative of a western idealistic image of “gold lying on the streets”; as well as an illustration of the authors exhibiting a transformation from people who were formerly Surprising Europe’s audience, now constructing narratives in a collaborative way with the producers. The website therefore demonstrates how an online platform for mediated communication can be used to offer fragmented identities as well as a sense of belonging, offering a voice to the previously voiceless despite their migration status.

KEYWORDS: African migrants, Globalization, Identity, Belonging, Authors, Narratives, Representation, Online media.
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1. Introduction

Ssuuna Golooba, a photojournalist in Uganda enjoying an average standard of living when he decided to move to The Netherlands with the hope of living a better life. He grew up with an idealistic image of Europe as a place where there was “gold lying on the streets”; based on the stories he had seen in the media and heard from friends and relatives living in Europe. Most of his friends who moved back to Uganda after living in Europe for a long time seemed to have a lot of money when they returned and this escalated his desire for a better life which he believed could only be found in Europe.

Ssuuna’s story is shared by many African migrants who migrate to Europe for various reasons. This study focuses on economic migrants\(^1\) in search of a better life who often have high expectations blinded by a biased perception of Europe, thus are often disappointed when they arrive. They find themselves in a foreign land, feeling lonely, missing home, and struggling to integrate. This causes them to wish that they had been informed of this other side of Europe that has suddenly surprised them, forcing them to search for people with whom they can identify and share their experiences so as to offer them the sense of belonging they yearn for.

According to the 2015 international migration report,\(^2\) the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past fifteen years with nearly two thirds of all international migrants living in Europe. 20 million Africans consist of the number of international migrants under the same report. Migration is a process that has become so complex in an increasingly globalized world. This is a study of the rise of communication in online media that is providing a space for interaction between members of the same group, collaborating with professional journalists in interplay of storytelling. It provides an understanding of the media’s role in shaping narratives, using forms of mediated communication where objectivity and impartiality in reporting is demanded as a process of connecting the local and the global.

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Georgiou (2006:2-3) suggests that the study of diasporic communication is an area of growing importance as it reveals how identities become fragmented and situational, and can thus contribute to understanding how communities can be sustained, re-imagined and re-defined in global times and spaces. The fragmentation and situational aspect here referring to varied identities being broken down to certain situations such as Africans in Africa viewing Europe as the place with “gold lying on the streets”, thereby contributing to how in these global times they find an online space (such as Surprising Europe’s website), which then becomes the platform where they interact with a community of people they can identify with.

The objective of this Master’s thesis therefore is to explore the way in which online media has evolved today to provide groups of people with a common platform to share their stories. In these spaces, people are able to express their opinions and identify with others who share their experiences, thus offering them a voice.

As Georgiou, (2006:29) states, it is necessary to [...] examine how media get involved in shaping everyday life and identities as it is through media consumption that everyday life is extensively framed, whereby people learn about the world from the media thus developing common codes of communication. This study does not intend to analyse all online media, but rather the focus is on Surprising Europe, an online media platform where producers and invited authors collaborate to construct narratives about the African migrants’ experience in Europe.

1.1 Research Aim and Questions

This study aims to deepen the understanding of how online media is used as a means of communication to construct narratives and connect people who identify with one another. To be more precise, it aims to examine the experiences of African migrants in Europe as narrated on the Surprising Europe website, and how they communicate with each other on a platform created for them. The following are the research questions:

Research Question 1: What is the purpose of Surprising Europe according to the producers?

Research Question 1.1: What is the intended message constructed for African migrants in Europe according to the producers of Surprising Europe?

Research Question 1.2: What is the Surprising Europe website comprised of?
Research Question 2: What are the experiences of African migrants in Europe as narrated by the authors on Surprising Europe’s website?

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Research gap and positioning in the research field

There is a wide range of research on audiences in media and communication studies (Morley, 1980); Handel (1950); Ang (1985); and even more recent ones such as Livingstone (1998); Kammer (2013), to name a few examples, whose discourses focus mainly on the perception of the audience as a participant in the construction of media meanings (Georgiou, 2006:32). There is however little research on a transformation of these audiences into their own narrators, whereby they transition from being passive audience members to participate in the production of narratives they previously were an audience of.

This study therefore contributes to scholarship by demonstrating the transformation of an audience in mediated communication from a former consumer of narratives, to a collaborative participant of production of the same, focusing on their narrations on an online platform. Whereas Robertson’s (2015:85-107) study was based on Surprising Europe’s TV series as was aired on Al Jazeera, this study offers an analysis of the narratives on the website which were introduced as a continuation of the previously aired TV series. Furthermore, the study substantiates Bruns’ (2008) portmanteau of “production” and “usage” with his study on the emergence of “produsers”, as the subjects in this study (Surprising Europe’s authors) play this role perfectly of being both producers and users of the website. In this context, they are the people using the website as it was initially intended and created for them; but they end up taking a transformative role of authorship, thereby collaborating with the producers to construct the narratives on the website.

2.2 Limitations of the study

While the Surprising Europe’s media comprises of a TV series, a Facebook page and a website, the main focus of this study is the narratives under the tab “your stories” on their website (www.surprisingeurope.com). The study uses a narrative analysis to understand the experiences as told by the authors, as well as an understanding of the aims of the project based on the producers’ interviews. This study therefore does not analyse the Facebook page, the TV episodes or videos found on the website.
2.3 Definition of terms as used in the study

For the purpose of clarity, it is important to highlight the definition of certain key words as will be used in this research study.

Authors – Used in this study to refer to the people telling the stories on the Surprising Europe website, in this case African migrants.

Migrants – While there is a debate on the difference in definitions between migrants, immigrants and refugees, the use of the term “migrants” is used to refer to both migrants and immigrants more generally. That is, whether they are people moving to a different country with the intention of settling permanently or with a temporary intention to stay.

Producers – In the results/analysis section, the term is used to refer to both the co-founder of Surprising Europe, Ssuuna, as well as one of the producers, Iris.

Africa; Africans; Africans in Africa; Africans in Europe – In this study the terms mentioned are mainly used to refer to the particular African countries mentioned on the Surprising Europe website, as in table 5.2.4, as well as the nationalities of Africans mentioned as in table 5.2.3. They are neither a representation of the entire African migrant population in Europe nor the entire African continent.

Europe – Mainly used to refer to the particular European countries in this study as mentioned in table 5.2.4.

2.4 What is ‘Surprising Europe’?

Reports indicate that a large number of African migrants mostly from North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa risk their lives in search of a better life. According to Al Jazeera’s report in 2015, about 2,000 people died trying to make the crossing to Europe. As a result, there are a number of European leaders who have been vocal in their quest to reduce the number of migrants moving to Europe. UK’s Prime Minister, David Cameron described the migration crisis as “the biggest problem facing Europe today, with a movement of people greater than since the end of the Second World War.” He also added that he is willing to commit almost

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4 http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/nov/12/david-cameron-to-use-475m-of-uk-aid-budget-to-ease-migration-crisis
half a billion of the UK’s aid budget over the next five years in an effort to ease the flow of migrants and refugees to Europe.

When Ssuuna (who acts as a protagonist in this study and is referred to severally due to his varied functions which are later discussed) moved to The Netherlands he was shocked to find that life was not easy and the images he had seen of successful Africans posing in front of luxurious cars actually did not belong to them. He lived as an undocumented immigrant for seven years working odd jobs and struggling to survive. A fire that broke out in Schiphol Airport in 2005 where 11 undocumented people died was the turning point for him. Realising that he could have been in that position as a deportee, he decided to take it upon himself to tell other Africans the truth about the “European dream”: that it was not all they imagined it to be.

He then decided to start a project that would highlight the real life experiences of African migrants in Europe, and thus co-founded Surprising Europe with the production company, Witfilm. It is a non-profit created with the aim of documenting migration experiences of legal and illegal migrants from Africa to Europe, which premiered on Al Jazeera as a news magazine series aired in August, 2011 and was later followed by a continuation of narratives on its website (www.surprisingeurope.com) which began in September, 2013.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This section introduces a theoretical framework as well as a discussion on relevant literature to demonstrate the importance of a mediated form of communication such as Surprising Europe that not only gives voice to the voiceless, but also provides a platform where its audience can in turn, tell their own story. It begins with a discussion on how the main subjects of this research transform from being audience members to become storytellers themselves, borrowing from Morley’s (1980) audience theory. A set of discourses in media and communication studies are discussed separately to provide a connection to this study’s position in the research field.

3.1. Morley’s (1980) audience theory

This section introduces the main framework in this study borrowed from Morley’s (1980) audience theory illustrating how a “people formerly known as the audience” (Rosen, 2006) transform from being audience members to narrators/authors. It is important to first of all
discuss the background and concepts behind audience participation in media narratives in an effort to understand Morley’s (1980) motivation and relation to the study.

While David Morley’s (1980) study of BBC’s Nationwide audience is a classic example in audience research of how different audiences interpret what they consume in the media, I do not wish to present an analysis of Morley’s research findings, but will highlight arguments that make it a significant example for this study. The importance of Nationwide’s research in media studies is evidenced in its evaluation of a media audience in a style that examines both the producer’s aim, and the viewer’s perceptions and interpretations of the message presented. It supports Hall’s (1980) study on the encoding/decoding model of communication which criticizes the linearity of mass communication research (sender/message/receiver), emphasizing the production structure of broadcasting where it is framed by meanings and ideas, and assumptions about audiences which frame the constitution of the programme.

According to Morley (1980:12), the role of the audience in the construction of meaning stresses that different members of the mass media audience may use and interpret any particular programme in a quite different way from how the communicator intended it, and in quite different ways from other members of the audience. This means that while the message may be encoded with a particular intention by the producer, there is no way of controlling how different audiences will interpret it.

The decoding of the message by different sections of an audience then needs an approach that links the different interpretations to the socio-economic structure of society, to show how members of different groups and classes share different cultural codes, how they interpret a particular message differently, and not just at a personal level, but in a way that is systematically related to their own socio-economic position (Morley, 1980:14-15). For instance, migrants relating to a constructed message at a personal level on a platform where they are invited to share, as it speaks to them.

The encoder (producer) presents messages which are then viewed by the decoder who then interprets the messages based on their own backgrounds, or personal experiences (Hall, 1980: 130-132). The forms of discourse constructed through the content of the programme (Nationwide) enable it to speak with the voice of the people, that is, to mirror and reproduce the voice of its own audience, according to Brunsdon & Morley (1978:8). Their analysis highlights the aim of the programme as being ‘a reflection of what you and your family talk
about at the end of the day’, as it is based on what it represents as ‘natural expectations of its audience’ (Brunsdon & Morley, 1978:11).

Halloran (1975) as cited by Morley (1980:15) argues that the [media] message is not so much a message, but more like a message-vehicle containing several messages which take on meanings in terms of available codes or sub codes. It is important that we know the potential of each vehicle with regard to all the relevant sub-cultures.

Morley suggests that audience research is studied as an attempt to examine the social effects of media (Morley, 1980). A quantitative empirical radio audience research conducted on the ‘sociology of mass persuasion’ (Morley, 1980:2) noted that in this type of media narrative, the powerful are connected to the powerless. Through the kind of chain of communication employed in radio audience participation, there were two different types of studies noted: message-based studies, and audience-based studies. Message-based studies moved from an analysis of the content of messages to their ‘effects’ on audiences; while audience-based studies focused on the social characteristics, environment, and needs which audiences derived from, or brought to the message. This background about audience participatory research is necessary as a lead to the argument I am about to make of a transforming audience into authorship.

Morley (1980:2) states that research following message-based studies focuses on how the behaviour of audiences reflects the influences on them of the messages they receive. This means that how the audience reacts to the messages is heavily dependent on their interpretation or how the messages they received influenced their behaviour or response. On the other hand, research that is audience-based is largely structural-functional in orientation and thus focuses on the social characteristics of different audiences, reflecting their different degree of openness to the messages they received.

There are however certain limitations with this type of audience research, as is illustrated in a related previous research conducted on ‘mass persuasion’ of a case study of Kate Smith war bond broadcasts in America by Merton (1946) as illustrated in Morley (1980:3-4). He argues that the research had previously been concerned almost wholly with the content rather than the effects and thus the actual processes of persuasion had gone unexamined, causing the effects of the materials studied to be assumed or inferred. Merton challenges this over-reliance on the content and emphasizes the importance of connecting together the analysis of
the message with the analysis of its effects. So, how does this relate to the specific study on *Surprising Europe*’s authors?

**The people formerly known as the audience**

It is said that Television is both new and an old medium, in the sense that the newness refers to television content as now being broadcast on websites as well (Robertson, 2017:13). I intend to demonstrate here how people who were formally a television audience, experience a transformation into authors on a website.

*Surprising Europe* began as a television series of nine episodes aired on Al Jazeera, whose narrative techniques are analysed in Robertson (2015:90-107), with the main audience being African migrants. After the completion of the aired series on Al Jazeera, the website became more interactive as a continuation of the already constructed narrative on the previous television series. This led to an invitation to African migrants who had watched the series and identified with the narratives, to tell their own stories as is evidenced by the “*tell us your story*” tab conspicuously located on the top right corner of the website (http://www.surprisingeurope.com/).

To borrow from Rosen’s (2006) popularly coined phrase “*the people formerly known as the audience*” with reference to those who were previously on the receiving end of a one way broadcasting pattern of a media system; this statement perfectly defines the authors on the *Surprising Europe* website.

As an example of a media narrative that is initially both audience and message based, it has a particular message created by the producers that is intended for a particular audience. It is therefore interesting to analyse how its audience (the people this mediated communication is created for), transform and become narrators (or authors) themselves- what Bruns (2008) refers to as a form of *produsers*- an amalgamation of the ‘producer’ and ‘user’.

These authors are the previous audience for whom the programme was created for, who then move to the website as storytellers of their own narratives, and this thesis makes the argument that it is at this point that they cease to become an audience. They take an active role that oversees their transformation from a mere audience on the receiving end of a narrative, to a

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5 The producers of *Surprising Europe* confirmed in an interview with the researcher, which is discussed in detail in section 6.1, that they created the project for the purpose of giving information to Africans in Europe and Africa about the real life experiences of African migrants in Europe. Their intended audience was therefore mainly African migrants.
more active role where they become narrators- contributing in the production of a series of narratives about their own lives.

Metaphorically speaking, it is as though, they (the authors) are initially on opposite sides with the producers who are speaking to them from a podium (*Surprising Europe* website). As they arrive on the website (from the television series), and are sitting there listening, they are at this point still regarded as audience members. As they listen to the message which basically says “we are a platform created to continue the conversation about narrating the African migrants’ experiences, tell us your story”; they then, choose to interpret this message by applying a dominant ideology (Morley, 1980:23), fully accepting the message. As they accept to share their own stories, it is at this point that they cross over and join the producers at the podium. Speaking to others, they transform into authors – participating collaboratively with the producers to form the existing narratives.

It is important also to note, as earlier stated, that according to Morley (1980:12) audience members may have varied interpretations from how it was intended by the communicators initially, as well as from other members of the audience. Needless to say, this thesis further makes the argument that not all members of the *Surprising Europe* audience transform and become authors. That is, some may have applied a negotiated or oppositional code (Morley, 1980:23), agreeing partly with the message, or rejecting it entirely, and may therefore still be considered audience members on the website. Of particular interest to this research however, are those that apply the dominant ideology as explained above – the authors, as they are now referred to.

Robertson (2015:77-78) reifies this notion by highlighting the use of viewers (or audience members) being treated as shapers of a news story rather than merely recipients. She argues that “[…] digital developments have eliminated the distance between those who perform and those who watch, as audience members now have the skills and resources to be cultural producers in their own right”. The *Surprising Europe* authors thereby become active shapers, from a Robertson point of view.

On the other hand, there are limitations to this type of transformative authorship as rightly argued by Carpentier (2011), cited in Kammer (2013:115) that even when audiences have the opportunity of authoring and contributing (to production), the publication typically relies on approval by a curator at a production level and can therefore either be moderated or
withdrawn\(^6\). This argument by Carpentier therefore, is that this type of author ultimately has no actual power to exercise over the content in the final part of the mediated communication.

This study contributes to research by demonstrating a type of media narrative created for a particular audience, who in turn become “producers” in their own right, contributing content that was previously created for them. Furthermore, what is interesting about this is to examine how the authors narrate their own experiences, as well as what the intended aim of the platform was according to the producers. These authors’ represented narratives are found on the website’s “your stories” section and a narrative analysis of their stories is conducted at a later stage. This study therefore sees the authors as “the people formerly known as the audience” on the previously aired series on Al Jazeera as well as on the website before they accept the invitation to become authors. The circumstances that lead to their migration experiences are discussed in the discourses that follow, in an effort to understand why a platform of Surprising Europe’s nature is interesting enough to grasp the attention of willing contributors, voluntarily telling their own stories.

3.2 Globalization and media reporting

Globalization in the context of media reporting is crucial due to the claims in this study as reported in the results section, citing media’s biased reporting as a contribution to misconception of life in Europe. As people migrate in search of a better life, they may be seen as a threat based on representations in the media. Due to the long history of globalization as well as the availability of a wide range of literature on the same (among others: Berglez, 2007; Berglez, 2008; Hopper, 2007; Pieterse, 2009; Cottle, 2009; Cottle, 2014) the discourse here only focuses on Globalization’s relation to media reporting, and its correlation to identity and belonging which is in the discussion that follows. This section looks at various literature and author’s arguments on how Africa should or should not be reported by both Western and African media, and finally analyses the correlation to biased perceptions.

Robertson (2015:4) defines ‘Globalization’ as “the word most often used to describe how the world has become increasingly interconnected at all levels in recent decades”. In order to understand the African migrants’ story, it is important to deduce the background that causes

\(^6\) The producers of Surprising Europe in an interview with the researcher that is later discussed in section 5.1, confirm that they do edit the stories they receive before publishing, but insist that it is only for the purpose of ensuring grammatical coherence and not to distort the content.
their migration in the first place as for centuries people have been migrating for various reasons. As people continue to share various forms of cultural practices such as religion, transportation, and communication; there is an increase in this interconnectedness (Cottle, 2009:1) and shared cultural norms, which gives rise to the reality of international migration as we know it today. Communication plays a crucial role because gradually there has been the need to constantly keep in touch with people from various parts of the world, a phenomenon that has seen the constant transformation of global media (Pieterse 2004, as cited by Hopper 2007: 31).

Cottle (2009:169) argues that the personalization by the media “brings back home” to imagined and actual national audiences the meaning of distant events. What this means is that distant worlds don’t seem very distant today thanks to an increasingly globalized world. Berglez (2008) as cited by Dencik (2013: 124) points out that there needs to be a distinguish between reporting news from different parts of the world and reporting that provides an understanding of the world as a single place, or platform on which to legitimacy base the emergence of global citizenship. To reify this discourse would then mean acknowledging that media reporting as a transforming culture of globalization, contributes greatly to international migration.

Appadurai (1996) brings in an important aspect to this study as he confirms the argument that a good number of migration is caused by people’s imagination or ideas of a better life ahead of them. He explores this interconnectedness of media and migration by arguing that electronic media carries the sense of distance between the viewer and the events, providing an environment where the modern and the global appear as “flip sides of the same coin” thus contributing resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project (1996:3). Therefore, he adds that the media and mass migration mark the present world as seemingly impelling the work of imagination (1996:4), confirming the preconceptions and idealistic images of Europe pointed out in this study.

It is important to highlight the distinction between the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ which is at the core of globalization theory (see Savage et al., 2005:2; Beck (2002:23) as cited by Savage et. al., (2005:1) who insist on the notion that it is impossible to even think about globalization without referring to specific locations and places. This ‘glocalisation’ as popularized by (Robertson, 1995) explains that the local should be understood through the lens of the global relationships (Savage et al., 2005). The local and global are seen as “mutually constitutive
social processes” (Beck, 2002:17) and are irreversibly bound together through a dynamic relationship (Urry, 2002:84). The ‘global’ and the ‘local’ are two interconnected concepts which provide guidance in this study by exploring the manner in which they relate to people migrating from their local communities searching for an identity, and as migrants who are offered a voice, they seek to obtain a sense of belonging.

Who tells African stories has always mattered and has been a matter of contestation for a long time (Brunce et al., 2016:1). Western media has for a long period of time been portrayed as guilty of sensationalising events which lead to a distorted image of the African continent as argued by (Fitzgerald, 1989) who claims that Africa is the most “underreported” region in the world. She claims that the abuse of power by African governments masquerading as “censorship” makes it almost impossible for journalists to operate with a degree of independence. This then leads African journalists to rely on foreign media for reliable news coverage of what is happening in their own countries.

In Binyavanga Wainaina’s (2005) popular satirical essay, “how to write about Africa”, he criticizes the problematic language and imagery used by authors and reporters in the global North as highlighted in Brunce et al.’s (2016:2) analysis of his essay who argue that such negative and “othering” representations as satirized by Wainaina, inform intercultural relations and as such, language according to discourse theorists can operate to support and perpetuate oppression by the powerful. To quote a few words from the essay:

Never have a picture of a well-adjusted African on the cover of your book, or in it, unless that African has won the Nobel Prize. An AK-47, prominent ribs, naked breasts: use these. If you must include an African, make sure you get one in Masai or Zulu or Dogon dress. In your text, treat Africa as if it were one country. It is hot and dusty with rolling grasslands and huge herds of animals and tall, thin people who are starving. Or it is hot and steamy with very short people who eat primates. Don’t get bogged down with precise descriptions. Africa is big: fifty-four countries, 900 million people who are too busy starving and dying and warring and emigrating to read your book.

Adichie’s (2009) “the danger of a single story” as cited by Brunce et al., (2016: 3), points out the danger of the single, stereotypical story becoming the only story. She narrates how as a young Nigerian student in the United States, she met a roommate who expected her to be poor, unable to speak English or work appliances, as she only knew about Nigeria from popular culture. She argues that popular media has a huge role to play in shaping these
preconceptions and that if all she knew about Africa was from the media, she would also probably have the same biased perceptions.

They (Brunce et al., 2016:3) on the other hand, also argue that there have been profound changes in the media representations of Africa, with signs of a more positive tone and variations in subject matter, as they cite several scholars in support of this notion (Nothias 2014; Ojo 2014; Mahajan 2009). They make the argument that as Africa is misrepresented, the West is sensationalized and glorified. However, it is not only western media that is guilty of this misrepresentation as is argued by the following writers.

African media’s freedom has a long history that dates back to the late 1950s where the emergence of a “dominant state-owned and controlled media system” (Kupe, 2013:140) is said to have been as a result of dictatorial regimes that were brought about by the African independence wave from colonialism (Kupe, 2013). The thirst for control and power saw a significant increase in small urban-based ruling elite with access to state resources who demonstrated a lack of empathy for their fellow citizens, thus denying them access to freedoms of expression and association, contributing to a lack of diversity in voices. This restricting of media freedoms and censorship led to a strong opposition of this kind of oppression and a lot of arrests, killings and detention of journalists (Kupe, 2013: 140).

An Al Jazeera opinion writer, in response to the coverage of the violence in South Sudan in December, 2013, claims that Western media keeps getting the coverage of African issues wrong. Nyabola (2014) argues that western media will continue to get coverage of African issues wrong due to “the rest being seen in opposition to the west”. She explains that one of the causes of this is western media’s inability to confront an unspoken hierarchy of knowledge during the coverage of news in African countries. This is seen as the need to mention the race of the journalists for instance, “the first western journalist on the scene”, as she describes was apparent during the coverage of the South Sudanese story. She is of the opinion that to avoid the reinforcing of existing narratives among the western audience, an easy way to resolve this Western media bias of African stories is by asking the Africans themselves for their opinions and have them tell their own stories.

Another article published by the guardian responds to the claims of Western media being blamed for biased reporting of Africa by asking, “If western journalists get Africa wrong, who gets it right?” According to Gathara (2014), African journalists are not doing a better job either at “reporting Africa” based on their over reliance on western media for reports as most
African media stories on Africa are from international media outlets. He claims that African journalists seem oblivious of the events taking place on the continent as that most of their reports are only focused on their individual countries; but however rely on western media for stories about other African countries. He argues that it is rare that you would find Kenyans switching to Nigerian media for example, to check what they are reporting about them but would be regularly appalled by their portrayal on CNN, Al Jazeera and BBC, he adds.

While there are several conflicting opinions on Africa’s reporting, this study does not intend to give a verdict on who reports Africa best. The emphasis on this discussion however, is rather to demonstrate media’s influence as a powerful tool in shaping narratives, evidenced by the flawed portrayal of “gold lying on the streets of Europe” as is shown in the findings, which eventually prompts many stories of migration to the west. This study also seeks to understand what role Africans themselves play in the construction of this narrative – particularly of interest are those who now reside in the west (Europe, for this study). The discussion that follows looks at a series of arguments from various scholars for a deeper understanding of this media reporting of Africa.

According to Pieterse (2009:222) we are in an era of the “rise of the rest”, the rest being a reference to Africa. If western media has celebrated the rise of the west for 200 years, how then do they celebrate the rise of the rest? He argues that the rise of the rest is ignored because it doesn’t fit into the narratives of the west, or is celebrated in business media as a triumph in the marketplace.

Kupe (2013: 141) argues that the rise of movements demanding media freedoms, freedom of expression, and democracy marked an element of globalization in Africa. As a result, this rise of the rest, in relation to increasing migration of economic migrants from developing countries escaping repressive regimes, was therefore perceived as a threat based on media representations in western societies (Weedon, 2004:2). Going by Hall’s (1992:185) explanation of the “west”, the west does not exactly represent geography and location, but is more of an “idea”. Globalization theorists justify this increasing migration by arguing that social life cannot be seen as firmly located in particular places with clear boundaries, and therefore, identities are diasporic and mobile (Savage et al, 2005).

To conclude, the argument here is that Africa’s story is often misrepresented, and if you therefore want to get it right, you should let the Africans themselves tell their story. An increasingly globalized world causes the correlation between migration and media’s
formation of imaginative narratives based on the dangers of telling a one-sided story. This then causes an idealistic image of the west, leading to an increase in economic migration of migrants in search of a better life. What then happens when they arrive in these lands that once felt so distant and far away? When they are at a point of no return, in a place far away from home? This exploration of identity and belonging is discussed in the following section.

3.3 Identity and Belonging

The story of migrants in a foreign land would be incomplete without an exploration of their sense of identity and belonging. Identity is better described as something individuals do rather than have (Jenkins, 2008) as cited in La Barbera, 2014: 3). According to La Barbera (2014:3), individuals differentiate themselves by adopting criteria that are shared by the members of a group and by developing a sense of belonging to it. Migrants generally suffer an identity crisis. According to various researchers who are all migrants themselves as highlighted by La Barbera, (2014:3) migrants require a massive reconstruction of their identity, as they lose their families, social status, and social networks when they leave their countries of origin, and on the other hand find themselves in the receiving country without a history and an image. La Barbera (2014) argues that migrants face a harsh reality of exclusion that differs from their idealized image of the receiving country as a place to better their lives which was the motivation to leave their countries of origin. As a result of this, they struggle to constantly find themselves or identify with others, which is why they are automatically drawn to look for a place they can generate a sense of belonging that feels safe, familiar, and comfortable.

In her book about diasporic identity and the media, Georgiou (2006) explores the relocation of people and their ability, desire and persistence to sustain connections and commonality across the globe. Georgiou (2006:27-28) states that people are consumers as well as producers of representations. Thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in language and culture, therefore both linguistic and cultural meanings and identities rely on representations according to Hall (1997) as cited by Georgiou (2006:28). To illustrate the term ‘diaspora’ as will be used in this context, I will go by Georgiou’s (2006:4) definition that diasporic culture is not bound in one stable and exclusive place, or just one imagined community, but constitutes parts of various networks and communities while relating to at least two nations - one of their origin, and one of their settlement.
Everyday life is the context for social relations and network construction where identities take their shape in interactions with human (e.g. members of a community), and nonhuman (e.g. media and communication technologies) cultural actors (Georgiou, 2006:25). Inevitably the everyday life becomes a context for theoretical analysis where more and more media and communication technologies are integrated with domestic and public life which inform daily interaction and talk. These representations in turn promote particular political, economic, and social values which in their social use bring people together in sharing common discourses that shape identities in communal relations and communal consumption (2006:26).

In the same way that people are consumers of goods, cultural products, and symbols, they also produce meanings. They make choices as consumers and might choose alternative products and forms of consumption at specific times or within specific social formations, for instance in a diasporic context. Therefore, the increased diversity of the media- both mainstream and diasporic, across different subgroups requires attention of everyday life for suitable identity construction (Georgiou, 2006:28).

There are different forms that media consumption takes, for instance, family viewing translates into an everyday bonding experience (Silverstone, 1993 as cited in Georgiou, 2006:29). People generally shape their everyday communication around themes and representations they all share through media consumption (Hobson, 1989; Lull, 1990; Gillespie, 1995 as cited by Georgiou, 2006:29). Media gets involved in everyday life debates of what it means to belong, what identification with a group consists of, what the symbols of the imagined self, the other and the community are, and how the boundaries around communities and places are appropriated (Georgiou, 2006:13).

Savage et al.’s (2005) idea of ‘elective belonging’ elaborates the relationship between identities and finding that sense of belonging that migrants are faced with. They argue that people who still live in the place where they have been ‘born and bred’ do not necessarily feel like they belong there. Individuals attach their own biography to the places they “choose” to call “home” and therefore tell stories about how their journey, arrival, and settlement in these new environments, contribute to their sense of themselves. People who migrate to an area where they have no prior ties but can link this new location to their “biographic life history” can see themselves as belonging to that area (2005: 29).

It is largely the notion that large-scale migration means that significant numbers of the population in a particular area is occupied by non-natives (Savage et al., 2005:30). In a study
conducted in Manchester, England by Savage et al. (2005) in an effort to demonstrate elective belonging, they found that attachment to a place is detached from historical communal roots in that place. For instance, in one of the areas that was a subject of their study, Cheadle, they found that local people were now a small minority of the population, and that although they reported a sense of familiarity with the area, they did not necessarily convey a sense of belonging (2005:52-53).

Joe, for instance, is one of the respondents of the study. A born and bred local, he proudly proclaims that:

I’ve always lived in Ramsbottom, and I wouldn’t move out even if I won the lottery!

He however, disliked change in the town he lives and when asked if he “belonged”, he responded by saying:

Yes, definitely, to the local community, but not the community as a whole (Savage et al., 2005: 51).

They found from this study that when a place changes and develops, people feel that “their” place has been spoilt or lost, and that it is impossible to retain the best of both worlds-the old and the new. This view of residential attachment as demonstrated in the discourse of ‘elective belonging’ shows claims of locals trapped in the past, but is also a replication on the values of those who come today and stay tomorrow, who make a choice to move somewhere and decide to live there and call this new place “home”. This elective belonging therefore permits various kinds of global connections to be drawn as fixed places play crucial roles within the globalising processes and becomes locations of solidarity among people who have chosen to live in particular places (Savage et al., 2005:53).

Therefore, the argument here is that to enable migrants to fully identify with their new environments, communication plays a vital role. The contrast between locals and newcomers as demonstrated here is displayed in the sense that while migrants move to a new place, adjust to the environment and call this new place “home”; the locals on the other hand may find it difficult to adjust to changes in “their own” environments. The role of media as a medium of representation thus demonstrates the formation of a communication and culture interplay, whereby people can understand and interpret the world meaningfully for themselves, and then to others around them who they feel they can identify with.
3.4 Media and Representation

The concept of ‘representation’ in the study of culture and meaning is defined by Stuart Hall (1997:16) as the production of meaning through language. He further suggests the definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary* to illustrate the term as meaning: ‘to represent something is to describe or depict it, to symbolize, stand for, or substitute for’. It connects meaning and language to culture and means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent the world meaningfully to other people (1997:15). Representation is therefore the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language, the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events (1997:17).

Hall (1997:17) argues that we carry mental representations in our heads, without which we cannot interpret the world meaningfully at all. ‘Belonging to the same culture’ means that we understand and interpret the world in totally different unique, individual ways, but we are able to communicate to each other because of our shared conceptual maps and our ability to make sense of the world in roughly similar ways. We are able to communicate through the existence of common languages which enable us to translate our thoughts into words, and to use these to express meanings thus communicating thoughts to other people (1997:18).

Hall (1997:24-25) highlights that social actors use conceptual systems of their culture to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful so as to communicate about that world meaningfully to others. There are certain representations of assigned meanings in some cultures which may or may not be universal, and if it is universal, then these representational symbols are obeyed even in other cultures, for instance, ‘the language of traffic lights’ as illustrated in Hall (1997:26-27). What then is the relationship between representation and the media? This correlation is explored in the following paragraphs.

Cohen (2001: xiv) as cited by Orgad (2014:9) states that “we are the objects of some chapters, but mostly we gaze at distant others in poor, unstable, and violent places”. Orgad (2014:9-10) argues that specific groups and individuals, who were previously excluded from the public media space, are increasingly gaining visibility and voice. She says that a study on media representation demands an account for the complex nature and consequences of interactions and communication in the context of globalization.
The work of media representation is characterized by contestation where institutions, groups, and individuals are increasingly competing for visibility and a voice by using symbolic representations in the global media space (Orgad, 2014:5). This competitive logic therefore dominates the media space, leading to an expansion of collective and individual imaginations which leads to high competition for telling stories, images, and points of view of people’s imaginations, making it easier to begin thinking and caring about issues beyond “the self” (Orgad, 2014:5-6).

Therefore, as seen in Orgad’s (2014) argument above, the media space in today’s world is crowded with various groups and individuals desperately seeking a platform for their voices to be heard so as to feel represented. Media and specifically online media, has as a result transformed into a public space offering a platform for people to tell their stories and to in turn, identify with messages they can relate to. Having looked at varied contestations of who gets Africa’s reporting right, or wrong based on the arguments presented earlier, the following section analyses an example of a mediated communication that seems to get it right; offering “specific groups and individuals previously excluded from the public media space visibility and voice”, from an Orgad (2014) point of view.

*Surprising Europe as a platform for representation*

In an increasingly “interconnected” world (Cottle, 2009:1) self-representation through various media has emerged as a digitalized way of storytelling. Storytelling here refers to shaping up a story, creating it and telling or sharing it with others afterwards (Lundby, 2008:3) either by using videos or text, which *Surprising Europe* is comprised of.

The *Surprising Europe* television series expresses how our lives relate to those of others where codifications of both ‘self’ and ‘other’ are being transformed and can be achieved in practice (Delanty, 2006:37 as cited by Robertson, 2015:86). The title, *Surprising Europe*, can be interpreted as having two meanings, that is on one hand, how Europe can be surprised by the advent of people who are “born and bred locals” looking at the others from a different point of view; and on the other hand how Europe can look surprisingly different when seen through the eyes of people coming to it from “across the waters” (Robertson 2015:86). This “othering technique” displays how everyday conversations and repeated encounters with difference of daily life can transform our relations with others over time (Appiah, 2001 as cited by Robertson, 2015:87).
The style of storytelling as seen in *Surprising Europe*, where the actors do most of the talking as opposed to a reporter speaking on their behalf, highlights the formation of discursive connections between people taking part in events, and viewers watching the events in real time from screens in distant homes and work places. Furthermore, it also captures the dynamics of what happens when people are bearing witness in media reports, as well as when these same reports are crafted in such a way that the audiences are positioned in turn, as witnesses (Peters, 2009:24 as cited by Robertson, 2015:87).

Robertson’s (2015) analysis displays that the viewer of the series learns to think and refer to certain problems in ways that were perhaps strange before tuning in to the programme. She exhibits five types of ‘others’ as depicted in the series (106-107) that include among others, excluding others, familiar others, and Europeans as strange others, as seen from the view of the African migrants in Europe in the series.

Robertson’s (2015) focus is on the point of view of Europeans and their perceptions of the documentary, where “othering” of “people from across the water” (meaning Africans) is demonstrated. Her findings indicate that the narratives on *Surprising Europe* view ‘othering’ as something negative and unidirectional as non-Africans in the series are implicitly “othered”, and situated in the position of an auditor as opposed to an interlocutor (Robertson, 2015:107).

As a continuation of Robertson’s (2015) in-depth analysis of displaying television stories (with *Surprising Europe* as an example) as key elements of the “imaginative work that helps us get our bearing in the world and maintain or negotiate a sense of belonging” (87); this study of the *Surprising Europe* website analyses both the producers and authors as representatives of the African migrants’ experience. The authors therefore, not only represent themselves and their experiences on the website, but are also representing others like them. To quote Hall (1997: 16) as illustrated earlier, they describe, symbolize, and stand for African migrants as they are able to communicate with each other because of their shared conceptual maps. The producers on the other hand also participate in this representation of the African migrant experience as they are the creators of the platform that is now giving voice to the voiceless. In order to understand the best methods derived to conduct this analysis, a section on literature justifying the main method used in this research follows.
3.5 Narrative Research

“We make meaning through our stories, we are our narratives and our stories are who we are”- Marmon (1996) as cited by Mills & Birks (2014:240).

The methodology in this study is influenced by several narrative researchers whose varied approaches to the narrative research analysis are briefly highlighted in this section. Narrative according to Mills & Birks (2014: 236) is the everyday practise of storytelling, where the teller uses the basic story structure to organize events and experiences to bring forward what is considered important to both the teller and the audience. Narrative research is therefore an exploration of the stories humans tell to make sense of their life experiences.

Narratives represent storied ways of knowing and communicating where events are selected, organised and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997 as cited by Riessman, 2005:1). Furthermore, a narrative proposes a systematic means by which to analyse how texts function as narrative stories and what underlying ideological messages are being conveyed in them (Sellnow, 2013:50).

Narrative research as a qualitative research method incorporates the philosophical perspective that narrative inquiry aims to create a space for the researcher to immerse himself or herself in a particular world to observe, reflect and be a part of it (Mills & Birks, 2014:238). A narrative perspective helps to discover the underlying moral of the story, and shows us how we ought to and ought not to believe and behave. Throughout the text actions and consequences are offered as being valid (Sellnow, 2014:9).

Narrative research has grown over the years as there are a lot of studies using a narrative analysis that have produced good work (Mills & Birks, 2014:236). As stories are an important element in making meaning and understanding lived experiences, both our own and those of others (Mills & Birks, 2014:236), it is therefore the most relevant method to understand what African migrants say about their experience in Europe based on the words they use, and whether that qualifies as a fulfilment of the producers’ aim of the project. The analysis allows for a comparison between what the makers of the platform intended to achieve on the one hand, and a look at the author’s interaction with the platform on the other. Therefore, this choice of research method was chosen as it fits with the research questions as Mills & Birks (2014:241) correctly argue that a research method should not be
predetermined, but rather one should choose a method that is appropriate to what they are trying to find out.

Robertson (2017:6) emphasizes that “there is no, and must not be” only one best method of conducting a narrative analysis but one’s choice should be influenced by the individual researcher, and the research questions guiding the study. Mills & Birks also agree that there is no one “cookbook recipe” of conducting narrative research, stating that narrative inquiry can be used differently as no two studies can be exactly the same. Even though interviews are the continued working method of narrative analysis, the field is certainly not confined to this one approach. Furthermore, narrative analysis positions the researcher as the sole interpreter of the narratives with a fixed meaning to the text created (Mills & Birks, 2014:237).

It is for this reason that in keeping with Riessman (2005:2-3), this study combines a structural and thematic mode of narrative analysis. The thematic approach helps to find common elements across different participants and the narratives they report, with specific interest lying in the content of speech, that is, “what” is being said more than “how” it is said, the “told” rather than the “telling”. The basis here is seeking to understand ‘what is said’ by focusing on the meaning in each narrative that is part of the sample size on the Surprising Europe website.

The structural approach focuses on the “way” the story is told-how the narrator/author, makes the story persuasive. Unlike the thematic approach where language is only viewed as a resource and not a topic of investigation, in the structural approach language is treated seriously, as an object of close investigation (Riessman, 2005:3). In Robertson’s narration of Surprising Europe’s television episodes (2015:86-107), her analysis is based on a structural narrative analysis as illustrated above, while this study employs both thematic and structural methods.

So, why narrative analysis for this research study? Despite its limitations such as the danger of over-personalising the personal narrative as argued by some critics for instance, Riessman (2005:6); its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. In the words of Marmon (1996) who describes one of its strengths as providing justice gained through the power of stories and narratives; it has a capacity for social justice which allows for historically marginalized and silenced people to tell their stories for others to respond (Mills & Birks, 2014: 240).
The theories and concepts in communication studies all provide a connection to the African migrants’ need to narrate his or her experience as has been discussed in this section. It is now necessary to look at the justification governing the use of the suitable methods to provide accurate results to justify this qualitative study.

4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This thesis uses qualitative methodology (Mills & Birks, 2014: 213) in which the methods of choice are interviews and a narrative analysis. A general mapping to provide an understanding of the unit of analysis (Surprising Europe website) and the sample size (your stories tab) is also conducted. In this section I briefly give an account of the pilot study, the ethical considerations involved while carrying out the study, justification of validity and reliability, and a background of each choice of methodology, providing arguments as to why they are the most suitable methods for this research.

4.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was previously conducted to test the capabilities of this research whereby the original idea was to study Surprising Europe’s Facebook page, Twitter page, as well as the website. During an interview with one of Surprising Europe’s producers, Iris, it was expressed that there was a twitter page which was shut down due to the alleged number of racist tweets received. The Facebook page was also analysed with the intention of extracting all posts on the page by the creators of Surprising Europe, and comparing it with their audience’s responses in the comments of the same posts. However after careful consideration I came to the realisation that this would have warranted more time and space which is unfortunately limited for this research. The unit of analysis for this study is therefore the Surprising Europe website, where the sample size is narrowed down to the 30 articles under the “your stories” tab on the website.

In the pilot study, content and narrative analyses were selected as the choice of methodology. This was then revisited so as to provide adequate results to the research problem, thus the decision to use interviews and narrative analysis as the preferred methods of choice. Since the research aims to give an account of both perspectives of the producers of Surprising Europe as well as the authors, two interviews of the producers and a narrative analysis of the authors’

7 A list of the interview questions is available in Appendix 2.
account were conducted. The mapping was included for the purpose of creating a general understanding of the sample.

4.2 Ethical considerations & position of the researcher

It is important to note that this study adhered to the ethical standards of research throughout, in keeping with Bryman’s (2012:133) universalist stance that ethical precepts should never be broken.

Maintaining objectivity of the participants’ words (Mills & Birks, 2014:165) throughout the interview process was of utmost importance so as not to cross the ethical boundaries of communication research. Since I had had previous engagement with this research as indicated earlier in the pilot study, I often found myself prodding the interviewees further for answers that I hoped to receive. I must add that the contents of the interviews were not altered as they were transcribed verbatim. It is important to also note that Iris’s interview was an audio skype call, while Ssuuna’s was a video skype call, according to the preference of each interviewee who also provided full consent to analyse the website, as well as to use the information provided by them for purposes of this research study. Some of the quotes as reported in the narrative analysis section have also been slightly edited with the sole purpose of providing grammatical coherence but under careful consideration to abide by the ethical standards not to distort the intended meaning by the respective authors.

Furthermore, according to Mills & Birks (2014:240), in narrative research, a fundamental question one must ask throughout is how am I positioned in this research? They explain that it is not an easy question to answer due to the positioning and repositioning of the researcher throughout the research relationship with the participants in the study. An ethic of care and respect was kept throughout the entire process despite any uncomfortable or deeply held biases, prejudices, or beliefs.

4.3 Validity and Reliability of the study

Bryman (2012: 46) states that reliability is concerned with whether the results of a study are consistent and repeatable, while validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions generated from a piece of research. Intercoder reliability was conducted so as to test the validity and reliability of the coded information particularly in the narrative analysis. It was important to select an inter coder who was of a completely different background from the researcher, with no previous knowledge about this research.
Two stories from each of the three dominant themes in this research (*Return, Life in Europe,* and *Leaving for Europe*) were randomly selected, as well as one other story from a subordinate theme whose analysis has since been incorporated with the other more dominant ones. The intercoder was then asked to answer the question ‘what is being said in each story?’ according to each underlying theme so as to observe whether there was a compatibility with the researcher’s interpretations of the main message laid out in each of the themes. Due to the advantage of intercoding in qualitative research over quantitative being less complex, the measurement of the compatibility with the researcher’s coding results were simply analysed by comparison with the intercoder’s results and were found to be similar. (See appendix 8 for the intercoder’s results).

### 4.4 Interviews

This section gives a justification for the use of interviews in this research from a theoretical standpoint, as well as highlighting the steps undertaken throughout the entire interview process from preparation of the interview, to reporting of the results.

The qualitative interviewing process in this research was guided by the grounded theorists’ perspective (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) on how to conduct and analyse the interviews so as to gain a conceptual understanding of the data collected. These steps involved forming preliminary research questions based on the initial areas of interest, exploring and examining the concerns of the research participants: the producers of *Surprising Europe* as well as the authors, and thereby using that information to develop questions for the interviews (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002:675-676). It is argued that using this method inspired by grounded theorists helps to keep researchers close to their gathered data, rather than focusing on assumptions or wishful results on the researcher’s part (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002:676).

The basis of my interviewing process is formed by Gubrium & Holstein’s (2002:676) argument that: “qualitative interviewing provides an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight which can elicit views of the interviewee’s subjective world.” This was an important aspect of the interview process as my intention was to gain a deeper understanding of the aim of the producers, as well as their intended message. The interviews were both held separately via skype, thus it was not uncommon that there were often noticeable non-verbal cues such as sounds of deep breaths after I asked a question, suggesting
that what the interviewee was about to say was either difficult to discuss, or evoked an emotion of some kind.

The first one was of Iris Lammertsma, producer at Witfilm, the company that produced *Surprising Europe*, and the second of the co-founder, Ssuuna Golooba. Ssuuna has two different functions in this study because not only is he a reporter and co-founder, but is also a participant on the website as he is an African migrant whose life experience in Europe inspired the creation of the project. The significance of his varied roles is discussed at the end of the study.

Following Morley (1980:33), I began with an overview of a deeper understanding of the background and creation of the project itself, the direct involvement with the television documentary series on Al Jazeera, as well as information that was not easily available from previous personal research. I then engaged them in questions about the programme material based on my earlier pilot study and previous analysis. Therefore, the movement of the discussions went from open-ended prompting such as “what is your role in *Surprising Europe*?” to more specifically structured questions, such as “what did you as a producer of *Surprising Europe* want to achieve by creating the website?” (See appendix 2 for the interview questions).

After each interview, the next steps were transcribing, analysing, categorizing, verifying, and finally reporting and analysing the information produced. The analysis involved coding which played an important role in getting an overview of the textual material.

I agree with Brinkmann & Kvale’s (2015:203-204) argument that the transcription of the messages is just as important as the quality of the interview itself due to its involvement in an interpretative process, where there are significant differences between oral speech and written texts. The transcripts are therefore a translation from two different narrative modes: oral discourse into written discourse. During the transcription process, which was quite lengthy as the audio recordings were long, there were certain words that were inaudible and this were marked as such in the transcriptions, but however did not distort the meaning intended by the interviewees.

On the other hand, Brinkmann & Kvale (2015:218-219) also suggest that it is important to avoid over-emphasis on the transcription as this may reduce the text to a mere collection of words conceived as verbal data. It is a continuation of the conversation by unfolding of the
meaning of what was said, as the interviewer assumes the role of co-author of the interview. The transcripts are thereby seen as tools of the interpretation of what was said during the interviews—a hybrid between an oral discourse, where what was said was addressed to a specific listener present, and written text that is created for a general, distant public.

The process that followed thereafter included reading, and re-reading the transcriptions, making notes, and underlining any important points such as if something said was considered surprising, important relation to concepts relevant in this study, if something was repeated several times (such as an outstanding theme) or if it was specifically stated by the interviewee to be important. What followed was a general interpretation of the transcripts on a Microsoft Excel sheet that was divided into two main categories: purpose and intended message (see appendix 3). Under themes, the three underlying themes used in the narrative section of the stories on the website were coded so as to establish later in the discussion whether the producers and authors were ‘speaking the same language’ or not. Did they use the same code, a negotiated code, or an oppositional code? (Morley, 1980:23); this is discussed later in the discussions section.

Finally, after creating these broad categorizations, a separate excel sheet was then created (see appendix 5) to break down the information into other categories that would make the analysis simpler, providing an easier interpretation for the purpose of answering the first research question. The information derived from the initial excel sheet was then broken down into four other categories which form the basis of the analysis in the results section namely: background, explanatory frameworks, and themes (these were mainly topics raised by the interviewees that were categorized under the themes mentioned earlier). This coding and categorization is borrowed from Morley (1980:22-24) and guides the analysis in section 5.1.

4.5 Mapping

A mapping of the website was conducted so as to provide a general understanding of the website. Of particular interest is the composition of the “your stories” tab, this study’s sample, to provide a general overview of the composition and structure of this study’s sample. The general mapping was conducted of the article ID, actors/authors, gender, nationality, country of residence, and each article title (see appendix 6 for the full coding of the mapping).

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8 See appendix 4 for a detailed coding of themes derived from the interviews.
The information was then coded in Excel, and transferred to SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for a more reliable and accurate analysis of the frequencies and percentages. Highlighted in the results section are only a few of the key categories that are most relevant to the study.

4.6 Narrative analysis

Using Sellnow (2013) and Reissman (1993) as a guide, narrative is the chosen rhetorical perspective for conducting this study and a combination of a thematic and structural qualitative narrative analysis inspired by Reissman who emphasizes that a typology of narratives organised by theme is the typical representational strategy. The themes Leaving for Europe, Life in Europe and Return are the three most dominant in the narratives on the website as is illustrated later in the results section. The other themes are Music, Running out of luck, and Taking Action, are incorporated in the overarching three themes.

Furthermore, Sellnow (2013:50) emphasizes that narratives propose a systematic means by which to analyse how texts function as narrative stories and what underlying ideological messages are being conveyed in them. This study, with regards to the analysis on the narratives on the website, combines both the thematic approach of analysing what is being said, as well as the basic components of the structural approach according to Riessman (1993:35); (2005:3) which entails:

- the abstract (summary and/or point of the story); orientation (to time, place, characters and situation); complicating action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis and turning point); evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotion-the “soul” of the narrative); resolution; and a coda (ending the story and bringing back to the present).

This is what formed the basis of coding and categorizing as a method of collecting data from the website (see appendix 9 for an illustration of how the structural analysis was coded). The structural analysis enabled each of the stories to be fragmented into the categories mentioned above so as to fully understand what was being said at every stage of the narrative.

The combination with the themes therefore makes the results more comprehensive as no part of the narrative is ignored. If for instance, the stories were just to be read passively and only coded thematically, there is a danger that certain bits would be easily ignored. The active combination therefore with the structure ensures that every part of the story has been taken
into account, making the analysis more in-depth. The results were then organized thematically for the purpose of consistency in the study.

Following Morley (1980:22-24) after all the information on what was being said on the website was collected, they were then compared with the previous analysis from the interviews so as to see if the desired aim of the producers was achieved, if what the makers of the website constructed as the African migrant experience was similar to the author’s message. This is discussed in the discussions section. The following section presents the results and analysis.

5. RESULTS/ANALYSIS

This section is comprised of the study findings and analysis which are divided into three sections to answer the research questions. First, the result of the interviews conducted with two producers of Surprising Europe, a general mapping showing the composition of the sample; and finally, a narrative analysis of the authors’ experiences as expressed on the Surprising Europe website.

5.1 Purpose and message constructed by Surprising Europe’s producers.

This section’s analysis responds to the following research questions as earlier stated:

Research Question 1: What is the purpose of Surprising Europe according to the producers?

Research Question 1.1: What is the intended message constructed for African migrants in Europe according to the producers of Surprising Europe?

It is mainly divided into two parts: what is the purpose of Surprising Europe? And what is the intended constructed message?

It is then further broken down into simpler questions which are used to provide the results:

Purpose: Why did they create this platform? What was their intention?

Message: What did the producers say about their intended audience (the authors) and their narration of the African migrant experience under the specified themes?
This section basically gives an analysis of what was said by the interviewees. It will only focus on the analysis of the conversation in terms of: background, explanatory frameworks, (used to answer questions on the ‘purpose’ of Surprising Europe); and themes (used to answer the part of the question on the ‘message’ constructed by the producers). The themes as earlier stated are the same themes used in the narrative analysis. (Appendix 4 provides a full thematic coding of the interviews).

5.1.1 The purpose of Surprising Europe’s website according to its producers

Background

What is the key background information discussed by the producers that is relevant to this study?

Ssuuna, the co-founder of Surprising Europe, migrated to Europe in search of a better life and upon experiencing hardships based on what he and other migrants he met were going through, felt the need to tell the story of life in Europe as he had experienced it. Initially some of his friends, fellow migrants, disagreed with the idea as they felt he should just let people who want to migrate have their own experiences.

After approaching the production company, they began working together towards the project whose aim was to tell the stories of African migrants. They were in contact with a lot of illegal migrants in The Netherlands who were living under very poor conditions, and thus wanted to make content about migrants who wanted to return back home. They did a lot of research to find the protagonists they wanted to film in the initial TV series, and also tried to find people in Europe and Africa who could tell their stories on the website.

They travelled to different countries in Africa, where they found that almost everybody thinks there’s gold lying on the streets in Europe. Producer Iris says:

I could not believe it at first, until I travelled there and saw it for myself that many people we spoke to thought there was gold lying on the streets waiting for them to come and pick it up.

The producers both said that this image of “gold lying on the streets” of Europe is supported by human trafficking organizations, as there are a lot of people earning money from human trafficking and smuggling. They give the example of a Nigerian they interviewed that was

9 See appendix 5 for the full coding of the background and explanatory frameworks.
trafficked by her aunt to become a prostitute in Europe. The human traffickers are responsible for keeping the story alive that there is “gold lying on the streets” they said.

**Explanatory frameworks**

This section answers the question: *Why were they doing it? What are the reasons they give for their creation of this online platform?*

Their main purpose of telling the stories of African migrants and providing a platform where people could share, they say was to pass the information to African migrants in Africa to be informed before they make the decision to migrate. The website platform was created as a continuation of the series aired earlier on Al Jazeera to allow people to carry on the conversation on the platform, and to allow those who had not gotten a chance to share their stories in the series to do so on the website. Iris says:

> I feel that everyone should be able to live wherever they want, but it is good if people are going to migrate to another country, they should know where they are going and what the possibilities are.

They believe that there is lack of adequate information provided in the media about life in Europe that is available to Africans. Ssuuna adds that:

> Western media has a major role to play in contributing to a biased perception of Africa which includes painting a negative picture of Africa while painting a positive picture of Europe. Africans also have a role to play in contributing to the narrative of “gold lying on the streets of Europe” as the journalists seldom travel to Europe to cover news, and thus rely on western media for their news coverage of the western world. Africans living abroad also do not say the truth about their lives in Europe.

Despite the risks involved for some of the authors especially those living in Europe illegally, they were still eager and willing to share their stories on the website. They also add that they want to let Africans in Europe know that if you’re honest with your family, they will believe and understand you.

**5.1.2 Surprising Europe’s constructed message for its intended audience-(the authors)**

This section analyses the same themes used in the narrative analysis to better understand the expected message constructed by the producers under each theme. To simplify the question:
What did the producers say about their intended audience (the current authors) and their expectations of the African migrants’ experience under the specified themes?

Leaving for Europe

According to the producers, the website was created for Africans in Europe as well, with the intention of welcoming them to share their own stories on the platform. Ssuuna says:

The website was created as a free platform for everyone who wanted to share their experience, so that Africans in Africa may be aware of the situation of life abroad and be able to say: “this is the situation ahead of me but I am ready to face it”.

The intention was to tell people the truth so as to know what to expect before making the decision to migrate. Ssuuna says he was initially motivated by a strong desire to warn Africans against moving to Europe based on his own experiences. Before moving to Europe himself, he said he was inspired by the success of his friends who lived there and therefore wanted to be equally successful. He wanted to move to the UK because he felt he would make more connections there as most fellow Ugandans he knew lived there. He says:

I did not think about life in Europe, the language, culture, or what to expect. I only knew the positive side, as nobody told me the truth about what life was really like, so I felt a responsibility to tell other Africans the truth.

The producers say that it should be one’s own decision on whether they want to stay in their countries and develop them there; but they deserve to know the truth before leaving. That is, both sides of the story of life in Europe so as to be prepared on what to expect and make better informed decisions.

Life in Europe

Throughout the project, they noticed that people who succeeded in the European migration story were people who came to Europe to pursue an education. They therefore wanted them to tell their success stories on the platform as well. There was also the observation that a good number of Africans went back to their countries and participated in development projects.

About what motivated them to create an online platform for the specific intended audience, Iris says:
I’ve spoken to a lot of migrants in bad situations; they thought they would get a good job and become rich. However, that’s not possible if you’re here (in Europe) illegally, and there’s no way to get legal status unless you’re a refugee with a legal status. So they end up doing odd jobs. This is what motivated us the most to start this project.

Ssuuna, who is also one of the authors on the website, also says:

I spoke with other migrants when I got to Europe in the hope that one day our situation would change. Life was difficult from the moment I arrived, so I felt that somehow, since Africans always help each other, I could get help from any African and began asking for help from Africans on the street.

He also notes that people back home in Africa do not care what one does in Europe, as they are only concerned about asking for money and once the money is sent they are satisfied. These messages led them to create the platform, as through these assumptions, they believed that telling the African migrant’s story was important.

**Return**

The producers say that the authors on the website were eager to share their stories because they hoped that through this platform people back home would be more understanding of the challenges they faced in Europe. They couldn't share their stories back home because it is considered a big taboo to have not succeeded in Europe. One has to send money back home, as they cannot go back to their country of origin with no money lest they are considered a loser. To quote one of the producers:

> We also hope that through this platform, Africans in Europe can also say “perhaps I can go back and invest my savings in businesses back home”.

According to the producers, Africans in Europe also have a role to play in the biased perceptions created about Europe as they do not say the truth about their lives abroad. Iris says:

> When they go back, they only talk about the good experiences and leave out the bad ones.

This according to the producers is attributed to the fear of being despised or not being believed if they said the truth about their lives abroad. Not giving the full story to family and friends then becomes the easier option and contributes to the idealistic image of Europe. They
wanted therefore, for their audience (African migrants) to use the platform to give the full story of their experiences in Europe.

Ssuuna’s inspiration to create the Surprising Europe project was formed by his desire to return back home. However, whenever he spoke with his relatives and friends back home and told them of his desire to go back, they discouraged him and said life was harder there and he should not think of going back. It was also impossible for him to get his old job back as a photojournalist because he had lost all his professional contacts back home as they expected him to be doing quite well in Europe.

The producers felt therefore, that a platform of Surprising Europe’s nature was not only important, but also necessary so as to provide African migrants a space where they can communicate with each other as they share their experiences and hopefully contribute in reducing the unrealistic image of Europe that many seemed to possess.

5.2 Mapping

In order to provide a general understanding of the composition of the sample size (your stories tab), this section answers research question 1.2: What is the Surprising Europe website comprised of?

Table 5.2.1 Actors/ Authors: Different categories of actors and authors of the narratives in “your stories” section of the website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors/Authors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student in Europe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa dealer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African leaving for Europe</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Africans (living in Africa)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to understand the dominant voice and protagonists in the narratives on the website. I therefore developed different categories after a pilot overview of all the articles, and coded each author, key speaker, or protagonist under the category that befitted them the most (see appendix 6 for the full coding). As is shown in table 5.2.1 above, 60% of the actors
and authors in the narratives on *Surprising Europe*’s website are ‘Africans in Europe’, while a good number are also ‘Africans leaving for Europe’. Actors included notable characters that were specifically mentioned by the authors.

**Table 5.2.2 Gender mapping of the actors/authors in the narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of gender, males constitute 75% of the actors and authors in the narratives. This is significant in understanding the gender balance in the sample.

**Table 5.2.3 Nationalities of the actors and authors based on each of the narratives in “your stories” section of the ‘Surprising Europe’ website.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationalities of the authors and actors in the narratives</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugandan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenyan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“African”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in table 5.2.3 above, Ugandans are the dominant majority of nationalities in the narratives as actors or authors in the stories. A good number of the stories provide an indication that the actors are African, which was coded as such when they only referred to themselves as being “African” without specifying their nationalities. For instance, one author
gives reference to her nationality only by using phrases such as “my native land”, and “I met a few other women, also from African villages”. This indicates both her gender, as well as the fact that she is also African despite having not indicated her specific nationality.

Table 5.2.4 Countries of residence of the authors and actors in the narratives on the Surprising Europe website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Residence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe (not specified)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stories indicate that a majority of the actors and authors reside in The Netherlands, while a good number are also stories centered upon the lives of the African migrants in Uganda, before migrating to Europe. This then corresponds with the findings that a majority of the stories are under the themes ‘Life in Europe’ and ‘Leaving for Europe’ as it shows that the narratives are mainly set in Europe (The Netherlands), and Africa (Uganda).

Europe and Africa both have important elements that complement each other in this study. While Africans form a clear majority of the actors and authors on the website, on the other hand, a majority of them also reside in Europe. It is also important to note that the Africans are narrating their stories and experiences on a platform created by both an African migrant and a European production company. Specific countries and cities are mentioned throughout, but the recurrent identities are the key concepts of ‘Europe’ and ‘Africa’ with the key players being Africans and European as highlighted by Robertson (2015:106), and are therefore referred to as such, in this study.
5.3 Narrative Analysis of stories on the Surprising Europe website

This section is an analysis of the narratives on the Surprising Europe website that seeks to answer the last research question: What are the experiences of African migrants in Europe as narrated by the authors on Surprising Europe’s website?

Table 5.3.1 Categories/Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Themes</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Europe / Running out of luck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music / Life in Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running out of luck/Life in Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The section “your stories” on Surprising Europe’s website has 30 different narratives which form the sample size in this study. These 30 stories are divided into six different categories or themes, with some stories falling under two different categories, for instance a story on music and the author’s life in Europe at the same time. The findings are reported based on a thematic and structural narrative analysis coding guided by Riessman (1993:35); (2005:3) as earlier illustrated. (See appendix 7 and 9 for the thematic and structural coding, respectively).

5.3.2 Leaving for Europe

Since this is one of the dominant themes in the narratives, the findings are subdivided into sub-themes namely: misinformation, fear, desperation, and risk. These sub-themes clearly categorize the various stories that are in line with the theme “leaving for Europe” as stated in the narratives on the Surprising Europe website.

Misinformation

The most outstanding factor expressed throughout all the stories on the website, is the fact that a majority of the African migrants lack proper information prior to their journey to Europe. They have misguided perceptions of Europe as a place that will provide a better life for them as long as they get there, and are therefore willing to do anything including risking
their lives, to get there. There is the perception that the only thing that can save one from poverty is a life in Europe. This is majorly reiterated by stories they hear about Europe from others who have been there or who live there, and either human traffickers or visa dealers who paint a false perfect picture of Europe for their own selfish gains.

Ssuuna, a photojournalist from Uganda who migrated to The Netherlands, explains how he was inspired by his friends’ lifestyle abroad to migrate. His friends returned from Europe with lots of money and were more successful according to him, which gave him the desire to go to Europe with the hopes of “making it” like they did. Despite having a noble profession in Uganda, working as one of the most talented photojournalists in the country, Ssuuna could not stop dreaming about how he would be more successful if he moved to Europe. He says:

I was enjoying an average standard of living and was content with what I was earning as I could survive and support my family with the basic necessities of life despite my small salary. However, when I saw the luxurious life of my friends who had migrated to Europe, I admired them greatly to the extent of regarding myself as one of the disadvantaged people in society.

**Fear and Desperation**

The Africans in these stories generally seem to suffer from a fear of the unknown about life in Europe, as well as fear of leaving their own families and friends back home. As a result, they are willing to do anything to find their way to Europe. Visa dealers and human traffickers take advantage of this and con them into paying large amounts of money with the promise of getting them a visa, flight ticket and means of settling in Europe.

At the visa dealer’s office in Uganda, the level of desperation is shocking as is expressed by Ssuuna who went there with the hopes of obtaining a visa to Europe after being denied one at the UK embassy in Uganda. The dealer charges them an outrageous amount of money with the promise of a visa and flight ticket, and if one does not pay, he either keeps your passport until the visa expires, or sells it to someone else who has money. A man at the office is seen to be crying and full of fear, kneeling down begging the visa dealer for mercy, that he will pay him as soon as he starts his hotel job in Belgium. The dealer however had very little patience, ordered him out of his office and shouted:

Don’t waste your time, I will keep your passport and when the visa expires you will come for it!
One lady, who is also unable to raise the high price of the visa, is told that she will pay “in kind” which means that she will have sex with the visa dealer as payment for the visa service. She is led to a lodge by the visa dealer’s messenger as Ssuuna and the rest of the waiting customers watch in disbelief- only speculating what would happen in the lodging.

The visa dealer took advantage of Ssuuna’s ignorance as he did not even know what a ‘Schengen visa’ was, and planned a fake trip for him. The visa dealer, Richard, convinced him that he could take a boat from The Netherlands to the UK, and would thus only need a Schengen visa. “Your trip will be from Entebbe-Amsterdam and Amsterdam to London”, he said to him. Ssuuna however says of that trip:

I never reached, since he didn’t provide me the proper visa. I got stuck in The Netherlands as there was nobody there to receive me. I cursed him.

Despite everything, Ssuuna’s family is excited to bid him farewell on his journey to Europe as they believe that he will be successful when he returns. They send him with pictures of themselves, having written the gifts they would like him to buy for them upon his return: a new shirt, a sewing machine, school fees, mobile phone, TV etc. Deep down however, Ssuuna is engulfed with intense fear of the unknown which he desperately tries to hide he says. He knows that he will miss his family dearly, and does not know when he will return, or what life is awaiting him in Europe. His family and relatives watch him from a glass window as he goes through the procedures in the airport in Entebbe; he is overjoyed when he thinks about how much money he will make when he gets to Europe he says; so as to repay the loss of selling his house at a throw-away price in order to obtain the visa.

**Risk**

Some of the authors decide to offer advice to other Africans by emphasizing that Europe is not worth risking one’s life. They say that there are a lot of unknown rules and regulations, making it impossible or difficult to build a life or succeed in Europe. This is contrary to popular belief of the Africans who are desperate to migrate. Etty, who has lived in Europe for more than 10 years, has this to say about whether or not Europe is worth taking the risk:

Those who have never been to Europe often listen to stories told by other people. The ones involved in human trafficking tell us stories to manipulate our view of Europe. They will tell you that “hamburgers grow on trees”; if not in Spain, then in The Netherlands. And once you
are in the Netherlands (promoted as one of the richest countries in the world) you will hardly be able to make ends meet, even if you’re lucky enough to receive a residence permit.

Many Africans risk all their life’s savings and earnings to obtain a means of getting to Europe. Sunny from Nigeria for instance, who was fleeing political unrest for fear of being murdered due to his activism, sold his family’s house in order to raise funds for the trip. Like many other migrants, he also illegally acquired a fake passport and visa, impersonating someone whose passport photograph slightly resembled him, so as to use those documents to get in to Europe. Sunny boarded a flight scheduled to get to Nice via Amsterdam from Nigeria, upon arrival at Schipol airport however, he sought political asylum. According to one story posted on the website:

More than 12,000 immigrants reached Malta by boat over the last 10 years. Out of these, only 90 could settle in Europe legally.

Dayo from Nigeria, an asylum seeker who travelled to Europe by boat and is now living in a detention camp in Malta, says he feels fortunate to have made it alive as he watched several of his fellow passengers pass away. He however doesn’t like to recall his trip, he says:

I don’t even want to remember the sea.

Ferhan from Somalia, also in the same camp as Dayo says:

Coming to Europe was all but easy, but I'm happy I made it. At least we're at peace here, we feel at rest.

The authors constantly use words that suggest they are talking to people who are like them, in this case, an African audience of either people living in Europe, or back in Africa with the intention of migrating to Europe. They use phrases such as “my dear fellow immigrants...” or “my brothers and sisters in Europe”. Gina from Ghana for instance, writes:

I want to warn anyone who thinks that Europe is paradise.

Having picked on a few examples and highlighted the experiences of the African migrants’ narratives in leaving for Europe, the following section looks at what they say about their experiences in life in Europe.
5.3.3 Life in Europe

The theme ‘Life in Europe’ is dominant throughout the stories on the website. This is mainly due to the fact that all the stories are centred upon the lives of the African migrants in Europe, and *Surprising Europe* itself as a project, is based on the lives of African migrants in Europe. For the purpose of clarity and understanding, this theme is broken down into sub-themes namely: *false perceptions of Europe, racism, work-life, success, and emotions.*

**False perceptions of Europe**

There is an illusion of Europe being paradise that is expressed in a number of the narratives where the African migrants believe that moving to Europe will lead to the immediate end of their poverty and problems. This however, is not the case when they get to their destination countries and realise that Europe is not all what it seemed. Ssuuna says prior to moving to Europe, he only thought positive things about Europe and Europeans. He is therefore quite shocked that there are some Europeans “who are not different from some immigrants, surviving by picking up old items from the streets”; he says when he sees his Dutch friend’s house full of boxes with old and used items. Who when he asked why he keeps all those old and used items, said

*Some rich people throw nice things on the streets. When I see them I pick them and bring them to my house. In fact I never buy things because I don’t have the money, I instead pick them from the streets.*

Another author, Etty, who works as a secretary in The Netherlands, claims that while many Africans risk their lives to travel to Europe even on tiny boats wishing that their lives would be better, human traffickers on the other hand are profiting from them by telling them manipulative stories which in turn fuel their desire to migrate.

However, a Kenyan rapper living in Germany who goes by the name K-Nel argues that many people who leave Africa with “high hopes” of making it in Europe find themselves depressed when things take a sour turn. He credits his success and “making it” to not having high expectations when moving to Europe. He says:

*People (in Africa) have the mentality that Europe is 'heaven'. We used to watch Hollywood movies and all those documentaries about the Western world and one would think "wow, what a place?" If you’re coming to Europe, be prepared for the worst so you are ready to face the worst when exposed to certain situations.*
Racism

A number of the stories report to have experienced some behaviour which led them to believe they were treated differently due to the colour of their skin. A Ugandan author says he felt the Europeans were not as hospitable as Africans, and attributes that to the fact that in Europe he feels he cannot go anywhere without an appointment, or be welcomed to someone’s house without prior planning. He explains that:

One day I called a taxi to take me somewhere but before the driver could start the car he first asked me if I had the money to pay him. “Do you really have the money?” he asked me three times in a loud voice.

According to him, the taxi driver had racially profiled him and thought he could not afford to hire a taxi.

Racist experiences of the African migrants in Europe make even the most successful long to go back to their countries of origin. Mensah, a Ghanaian professional footballer playing for a football club in France, experienced racist attacks from supporters who jeered at him by making monkey noises. He is reported in one of the stories to have said:

After hearing their voices I only wanted to do one thing: go to my home country, Ghana, and forget all this.

An 18 year old Eritrean living in Holland says he often sees old ladies grab their bags when he passes by them but says “it’s something we need to learn to live with”. He had a conversation with his teacher about racism who expressed that she thought racism was dead nowadays, to which the young boy replied:

Just walk a mile in my shoes for a day and you will find out that racism is not dead.

Nkebi from Uganda, was beaten up in Germany by people he said came running down the stairs when his dog got into a fight with another dog. He says they looked outside the window and saw he was alone then came down and started hitting him, one of them with a baseball bat. When asked if he would like to leave Germany after the depressing incident, he says:

I don’t want to leave, but it makes me sad that there are people who are just waiting for a black guy to do something, so that they can go out and hit him.
Rapper K-Nel while on a music tour was held at an airport in Russia for nearly an hour as the authorities scrutinized his Kenyan passport. An experience he says motivated him to apply for a German passport to avoid such incidences in the future.

One story reports that African migrants experiencing racism in Europe is a sign that the racists are afraid to absorb the "outsiders" into their society. The harsh rejection of the migrants is considered a sign of hypocrisy and entitlement. It argues that:

Being told to "go back to your country" denies you the right to feel free. What is it the racists are so afraid about immigrants? Change? That they will become too multi-cultural?

**Work-life in Europe**

“In Europe you may be even poorer than you were in your native country”. –Etty, *Surprising Europe.*

The rate of unemployment among the African migrants in Europe is quite high. Many of them are highly educated, some even with a European degree, yet they still find it difficult to get a job worthy of their qualifications. This leads some of them to resort to a life of prostitution or crime as a means of survival.

Etty says that many Africans risk their lives to move to Europe thinking that they will have a better life; however, many end up living in poverty and wishing they would go back. She says that despite living in Europe for more than 10 years and even speaking Dutch fluently, she still feels that she will always be considered an immigrant. She argues that:

Stories about the ‘good life in Europe’ were true 45 years ago. There were jobs available for unskilled workers, which local people did not want to have. These good times are over. Now, dozens of people (many with a university degree) apply for cleaning jobs. Nobody dreams about finding a job good enough for his or her qualifications. Whatever job is available is good and no work opportunities, or next to none remain for immigrants.

She offers advice to her “dear fellow immigrants” to avoid getting involved in crime despite their unemployment statuses. She says she misses her native land and feels there is no way back home for her, though she does not explain why.

Annie, a Dutch college graduate with an Associate’s degree, is excited when she finally lands a job as a cleaner, even though she would have expected something better.
D-Avis, a Ugandan living in the UK says:

You have to know people in order to get a job in the UK.

Ssuuna, like many other immigrants, falls into the temptation of getting involved in crime so as to try and make ends meet. He says he feels hopeless and depressed due to his underpaid job of distributing newspapers. His Nigerian friend and former colleague, Emeka, offers him a job to work with him as a drug smuggler to and from Spain. In an effort to try and persuade him, Emeka says:

Why do you look so miserable? I asked you to join me and you refused. Look at me; I’m enjoying the benefits of the job. I have no legal documents to stay in The Netherlands, but I’m doing well.

Ssuuna contemplates the offer but decides to refrain from getting involved in activities that could endanger his life. He says:

I escaped this dirty job, but I never escaped from dying a slow death perpetrated by the unnoticeable silent killers of immigrants in Europe: depression and related diseases, because I had too much on my mind.

A Gambian man selling drugs on the streets of Barcelona has to constantly be on the lookout for police for fear of being caught says that his parents back home in Gambia would not approve of what he does but it is what he has to do to send money back home.

Even with proper documentation i.e. a work visa and residence permit, life in Europe is still not a bed of roses as one author who goes by the name Londonboy explains. He says he had to work crazy hours, three jobs, and slept for only four hours a day to make ends meet. He says he was able to make enough money to save, educate his siblings, and buy a house. He adds:

Having the right documents to live in Europe is not enough. You have to work hard to make ends meet.

Success in Europe

Some immigrants however, have found fortune by trying to make it in Europe using their musical talent. A Liberian reggae artist by the name Clay 2 Nine came to Europe as a result of escaping war in his country. He initially had a full time job, unrelated to music, but felt the
need to build his music career. He says that despite Europe being expensive to record songs; it is easier for him to save money there to buy instruments than in his home country. He interacts with other African migrants like him, and writes songs about their plight and how they wish to live “the American dream in Europe”. To which he states that:

Even though my journey in this European train hasn’t quite turned out to be an American Dream, it may well lead me to realizing my African Dream—a dream of becoming one of Africa’s biggest reggae sensations. I am going back to my roots: Africa!

Kenyan rapper K-Nel attributes his success to being smart, focused and hardworking. He encourages his “fellow brothers and sisters in Europe” to not only share their negative experiences in Europe, but to also discuss ways of getting out of these negative situations. He believes that:

If I made it in Africa, I can make it here in Europe too!

**Emotions:**

D-Avis misses his friends, family and the life status he had back home he says. As an illegal immigrant living in the UK, he is constantly on the move from house to house because he cannot live in the same place for too long so as to avoid his chances of deportation. What keeps him going is that he makes more money in the UK than he would back home, and is therefore able to send money back home. He has saved a good amount of money and plans to move back home he says.

Etty says:

The snow looks beautiful and pleasant to look at when you are seated in a well-heated apartment, or when you walk outside wearing good winter clothes.

She was however very emotional when she received donations in the form of warm clothes and boots from a group of people that offered assistance to refugees. She says she burst out crying but was also very thankful, because she had never received clothes from charity before as she was well off back in her native country.

Gina, a Ghanaian woman who left her husband and five children to move to Europe in search of a better life, feels very lonely, is desperate, cries all day and misses her family she says. She considers life in Europe hard as she has no residence permit in The Netherlands where she lives, therefore has no job despite her nursing qualifications. She gives an example of a
pregnant woman who was sick and could not be treated because she did not have a residence permit, thus no health insurance. She warns those intending to move to Europe:

There are so many rules and laws that nobody told me about. It is extremely difficult to build a life or obtain a job. I can still return to Ghana but I am afraid that my family and relatives will be greatly disappointed in me. That is why I stay here, but I do not know if I can live like this any longer.

Life in Europe as a refugee is not easy at all, says a woman who fled arrest from her country and has been living in Holland for nine years. She lived a good life back home, had a diploma from a European university and had travelled the world for work and studies before; then suddenly all that was gone. She was initially afraid that she would not fit in when she first arrived at the refugee camp where she stayed with two other women. The other women, whom she says did not have much education but were also African, turned out to be good people who made her feel welcome, and became her friends. She says:

Meeting the women in the asylum seeker’s camp was one of the best things that happened to me. They offered me moral support, said kind words, and were ready to build a new life in Europe. They encouraged me to forget my past and rebuild my life.

5.3.4 Return

This study found that many of the Africans living in Europe were misinformed on what life would be like for them prior to moving to Europe. They are therefore disappointed when they arrive, and decide that it is better to go back home after living in Europe for a period of time. While their intentions of seeking a better life were genuine, their lack of proper guidance and information causes them to regret their decision thus prompting the desire to return.

While African migrants go to Europe for different reasons, others such as Chris, are only in search of advancing their education, and never had the dream of migrating to Europe. Chris, a former student in The Netherlands, says:

I never dreamt of going to Europe, though I knew life was better there. I used to tell my friends that the only reason I would travel to Europe would be to study. When I arrived in Amsterdam, I enjoyed my studies there as the university arranged everything including accommodation for me, and I also travelled to several countries in Europe because of my flexible student visa. However, after finishing my studies, life changed and I found myself
alone. I suddenly realised what people meant when they said “it is impossible to find a house in Amsterdam”.

Chris’s story implies that life in Europe is only bearable once there is a proper plan put in place with someone to guide you when you arrive as well as to help you settle down. As soon as that luxury is over, one suddenly has to face the harsh reality of life in Europe and begins to think that perhaps, this place where they dreamed of a better life is not what it seemed, thus considering that maybe their home, where they came from, is much better after all.

Finding a job is a major challenge faced by Africans in Europe as many find it difficult to attain a job that is related to their career. Chris, for instance, is educated in The Netherlands, but however cannot find a job with his qualification even in the same country where he got his Master’s degree. He is often turned down due to his inability to speak the local language, as well as his student visa status. He therefore decides that is better to go back home to his country DRC, and plans to join the academic sector there so as to educate and inform others about life in Europe and what to expect.

Many find it difficult to survive and thus resort to illegal activities such as drugs and prostitution to make ends meet, according to Chris. They are also unable to adjust to the weather conditions which are quite harsh in comparison to their homeland. The culture is also quite different and some find it difficult to understand or integrate. There is a concept of loneliness where one feels like an outsider, or like they don’t belong. Chris in one of the stories explains that when he was studying he had a lot of friends, but as soon as he completed his studies, he felt all alone. He says:

I remember on my graduation day, after the ceremony at the university, I just went home and slept. I had then to taste the individual life of a European, where you need an appointment to meet with your friends. I forced myself to adapt and try to understand that people are different but it was difficult for me to understand. Why do people like to be alone? Why don’t they smile? Why do they look so sad when they have everything? I asked myself.

Some authors also feel that there is an urgent need for Africans living in Europe, especially those living illegally, to go back to Africa and contribute towards developing their own countries. They argue that instead of elderly Africans living in Europe depending on the church for their survival, they could go back to their countries and participate in the various development projects put in place to support the diaspora community. Elizabeth says that most of the Africans in the diaspora are not aware of the developments in their countries and
should therefore be well informed of the success stories of other returnees so as to motivate them to focus on investing or setting up businesses back home. She argues that:

Success stories from home should be making their way back to Europe as a means of encouraging our people to find their way back home instead of suffering in the cold grey weathers of Europe. Countries like Kenya have made diaspora a political issue and are making rules and regulations which are diaspora friendly. However, most people living in the diaspora are really not aware of these opportunities and also do not trust them for one reason or another.

One author who only identifies as an African American who longed to live in Africa and has since moved to Gambia, advises that there is a stronger future in Africa, if only its people would decide to go back home and contribute to its development. The author suggests that while there are still plenty of Africans taking their chances in the west, many are also discovering that life is not easy and returning back to their countries. She argues that Africa is a destination source for income, development, and investment; and should thus be viewed as a continent full of opportunity rather than an underdeveloped entity.

6 DISCUSSIONS

This section evaluates the results based on the theoretical concepts, earlier research, and the dominant themes. What follows is a discussion on the specific contributions to scholarship, limitations and problems with the study, as well as recommendations for further research.

6.1 Globalization and media reporting

As discussed earlier, due to an increasingly globalised world migration is increasingly becoming complex. This is evidenced in the results that both the producers and the authors of the narratives hold the view that the media, both western and African, portrays an unrealistic image of Europe. This danger of telling one side of the story as discussed by authors Adichie (2009) & Wainaina (2005) cited in Brunce et al., (2016) in this study, contributes to the biased perception that causes unrealistic expectations of African migrants finding “gold lying on the streets”. The producers and authors therefore seem to be speaking the same language as they also agree that human traffickers contribute a great deal to this narrative of “gold lying on the streets” of Europe.
6.2 A people formerly known as the audience – The authorship in *Surprising Europe*

The producers state that their intention with the creation of the website was to maintain continuity of the narratives previously broadcasted on Al Jazeera by inviting their previous audience to the website to narrate about their migration experiences. The authors proceed to employ a dominant ideology (Morley, 1980:23) as they fully accept the constructed message transmitted by the producers which is to “tell us your African migrant experience”.

This group that were previously audience members are then seen experiencing a transformation from audience members to become authors – narrating their experiences in a collaborative manner with the producers, thereby participating in the production of the narratives. Carpentier (2011) as cited by Kammer (2013:115) as explained earlier in this study makes the argument that this type of author has no power to exercise over the final part of the mediated communication. This is seen to be true as evidenced by the producers’ agreement to editing stories, though they maintain that it is for the sole purpose of grammatical coherence and never to distort the content.

The authors are seen in this study as being active storytellers, sharing their experiences, offering advice to others, and in some instances even warning others against making the same mistakes they did. This confirms the nature of their role as earlier discussed, that they are collaboratively participating with the producers in the construction of narratives.

6.3 Identity and Belonging

The narratives shared by the authors on *Surprising Europe* echo the argument by Savage et al., (2005:29) stated earlier in this study that individuals attach their own biography to the places they choose to call home. This is seen by the authors who choose to tell stories about their journey, arrival, and settlement in their new environments as a contribution to their sense of themselves along a quest to identify with others like them, as well as feel that they belong. This is reified by the constant reference to their audiences (mostly speaking to other Africans) as “my brothers and sisters”; or “my fellow immigrants”.

While Savage et al.’s previous research indicated that people who have lived in the same place for a long period of time may find it difficult to adjust to change or be willing to move; the migrants in this study demonstrate that moving to a different environment and calling a new place “home” comes with its own challenges, as a majority of them express a lack of settling in their new environments. They constantly mention regret and a desire to move back
home, thereby confirming Savage et al.’s argument on the one hand because these migrants were once locals somewhere, before they migrated. Their demonstration of a difficulty in adjusting confirms that they too, like the born and bred local of Ramsbottom, Joe, feel that they once “belonged” somewhere but unlike Joe, they considered moving- and moved.

6.4 Narrative analysis

The three dominant themes are summarized below based on what was the main discussion from the results.

Leaving for Europe

The producers during the interviews expressed that their interest in establishing the project was motivated by their desire to inform Africans in Africa about real life experiences in Europe so as to be well informed before migrating. The authors (African migrants) generally had biased perceptions of Europe prior to moving and were therefore willing to sacrifice anything, some even selling their houses, with the hope of finding a better life in Europe.

Life in Europe

The producers state that based on their own experiences, a majority of successful migrants in Europe were people who had moved to Europe to pursue an education. The authors’ experiences vary however as there are those that claim to be successful (a good number who are musicians), while there is also a good number who even have a European education but are unable to find jobs, and thus resort to cleaning jobs to make ends meet. Since a majority of them admit to have expected Europe to offer them an immediate end to their poverty upon arrival, they end up disappointed and some turn to crime and selling drugs to make ends meet. There are also instances of racism experienced, with one author claiming that despite living in Europe for more than 10 years and even fluently speaking the language of her resident country, she feels that she will still always be considered an immigrant.

Return

The general overview is that a majority of the migrants express a desire to go back home to their countries in Africa. The producers express that there were many authors interested in sharing their stories because they wanted people back home to be more understanding of the challenges they face and the realities of life in Europe. They (the producers) also wanted the Africans in Europe to be able to say at the end of the day that “it’s ok to go back”.

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At the same time, many of the authors expressed a desire to go back to their countries including those who had been successful, mostly owing it to the fact that they still feel that they don’t “belong”. They did not seem to want to settle in Europe for the rest of their lives. Though going back has its own challenges as they expressed, such as being considered a loser by people back home for having not succeeded in Europe, there is the expression that they would like to invest in businesses back home, and contribute to development in their countries when they return.

6.5 Representation: The role of Ssuuna as both producer and author

Ssuuna’s role as a combining feature of both producer and author is an important element in this study as he has varied functions. He is the dominant narrative voice throughout the study, representing the migrant living in a foreign land, with unmet expectations of his new “home”; feeling lonely and missing home, he wishes he could go back. He is desperate to find people he can identify with, to help him create the sense of belonging he yearns for. As a migrant with no voice, he finally finds a place on the Surprising Europe platform where he and others like him, finally gain a voice despite their migration status and become producers of a narrative, telling their stories to others.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Surprising Europe’s website therefore, as demonstrated in this study, reveals how identities can be broken down and contribute to online communities being sustained, re-imagined and re-defined as a result of globalised spaces and times (Georgiou, 2006:2-3). Its limitations according to me are the following: First, a majority of the stories contributed are dominated by Uganda and The Netherlands; it would have been interesting to get a wider perspective from a variety of other countries in Europe and Africa. It also does not allow us to hear the voice of the audience. The authors of the narratives are heard, but what about the people they are speaking to? This could be a suggestion for a continuation of this mediated communication whose role in the African migrant’s life has demonstrated such vitality. The study’s limitations also are that it did not look at other aspects of the website such as the videos and Surprising Europe’s Facebook page due to time and space constraints, though this is hereby recommended for further research.
8 REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Code book for narrative analysis.

CODING BOOK AND PROCEDURE

i. Unit of analysis: “Your stories” section of the Surprising Europe website

The coding questions are intended to answer the research questions, which in turn makes sense of the aim.

Coding questions

1. What is the African Migrants’ experience according to the ‘Surprising Europe’ website?

2. Who are the actors?

3. What are the main themes represented in each article?

4. What is the dominant gender, nationality, country of residence, and Article titles?

5. What is the main thing being said in each narrative?

Sample and coding instructions

1. The headline to be coded for is: ‘Your Stories’. There are a total of 30 stories in this section of the website.

2. The period in which these stories will be coded is:

Your stories: 3rd September, 2013 to 19th June, 2015

3. All the stories on the website for are divided into 6 categories:

- Leaving for Europe
- Life in Europe
- Running out of luck
- Taking Action
- Return
- Music

4. Actors: Who is speaking? Whose voice is being heard? Is it the migrants telling their own story or someone is telling/interpreting the story for them?
ii. Coding procedure

Article ID

This is the title + sub-title + date + article number (e.g. Surprising Europe_YourStories_20130903-01, for the first article appearing on the “your stories” section of the website. This will be abbreviated in the code sheet as: SE_YS_20130903-01 and so on.

Gender

If you are able to identify the gender in each story, mark as either male or female. If not stated, mark as Not stated then code as below:

1 = Male
2 = Female
3 = Not Stated

Nationality

This refers to the nationalities of the actors/authors mentioned in each article. Indicate the nationality of the actors if stated and code as below:

1 = DRC
2 = Ugandan
3 = Nigerian
4 = Liberian
5 = Kenyan
6 = Somali
7 = Ghana
8 = Gambian
9 = Dutch
10 = American
11 = African (not specified)

Themes

These are the different categories in which the articles are organized on the website. They can also be referred to as “themes”.

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**Article title**

The titles of the articles will help to identify the specific article being analysed.

**Authors and Actors**

The authors and actors in each article are important to note so as to know the key speakers or protagonists in each article. It is important to identify who the actors in the narratives are, for instance, stories told by Surprising Europe’s producers, and stories told by migrants. What are they identified as? It helps us identify the voice in each narrative. Who are the actors and authors in each article? Fill in with the subsequent code number for the main actors/authors in the story according to the general categorization as detailed below:

1= Student in Europe
2= Visa dealer in Africa
3= African leaving for Europe
4= African in Europe
5= Non-Africans (living in Africa) this refers to actors who are not African, living in either Europe or Africa, but have contributed.

**Country of Residence**

This category refers to the countries of residence of each actor or author in each of the stories. It is important to know the countries in which the actors reside for the purpose of getting a clear understanding of how many, and which specific countries are represented in the narratives. Code as stated below:

1 = Netherlands
2 = Uganda
3 = Rwanda
4 = Nigeria
5 = Germany
6 = Gambia
7 = United Kingdom
8 = Malta
9 = Spain
10 = Europe (not specified)
iii. Narrative Analysis

There are 6 overall themes which will be used to discuss the narrative analysis. Each narrative/story has a theme.

Coding question: What is mainly being said about each theme?

Do you see any indication of words, phrases that indicate a sense of belonging and identity from the authors?

Instruction: Read through each story and answer the above questions.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is Surprising Europe?

2. What is your role in the production company?

3. What’s the relationship between the website and the Al Jazeera series?

4. Who created the project?

5. What was the purpose and aim?

6. How did Al Jazeera become a part of airing the series?

7. What’s the background of the financing for the series and the website?

8. What did you (as producers of Surprising Europe) want to achieve when you started the project?

9. The section on your website that reads “Your stories”, how do you verify the credibility of the stories that come in?

10. What about the visual content; the pictures, do the contributors send them in or are they your own?

11. How has the Surprising Europe project been received so far in both Europe and Africa?

12. What’s the story behind Facebook and Twitter?

13. Did people always readily agree for you to tell their stories?

14. What was your intended message?

15. Who was your intended audience?

16. Did you edit the content on the website?
17. Was there any manipulation of the content provided by the authors?

18. What, according to you, is the African migrant’s experience in Europe?

19. What inspired you to start this project?

20. How did you find the authors?

21. How did you gain the trust of the migrants who told their story to you, especially the undocumented migrants, were they afraid that it could lead to their deportation?

22. What was the reception of this series, in terms of the perception of Africans in Africa and Africans in Europe?

23. According to you, do you feel that the aim was achieved?

24. What role do the media play in the African migrants’ experience?

25. Do you believe that Africans should then stay in their countries and develop them there?

26. Was the series aired in Africa as well?

27. What came first between the website and the TV series?

28. Do you think that the platform created on Surprising Europe’s website provides communication between people who are searching for a sense of belonging?

29. How credible was the information provided by the authors on the website?

30. What’s the future for Surprising Europe?

APPENDIX 3: General interpretation of interview transcripts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>Intended message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We've done a lot of research to find the protagonists we wanted to film&quot;.</td>
<td>Co-founder Ssuuna decided to start a TV series documenting the life of immigrants in Europe inspired by his own experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We tried to find people around the world that had experience with migration to place content on our website&quot;.</td>
<td>&quot;We made a lot of content about returning migrants: migrants who want to return home&quot;-Iris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content on the website mainly intended for use in schools, educational programs, to provide information about countries, it shows them information about possibilities.</td>
<td>Felt that it is good that if people are going to migrate to another country they should know where they are going and what the possibilities are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had contact with illegal migrants in Holland living under very poor circumstances, we saw how they lived.</td>
<td>Everyone should be able to live wherever they want, but you must know what's awaiting you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main purpose was to: pass this information to the migrants to know before they migrate.</td>
<td>&quot;I've spoken to a lot of migrants in bad situations; they thought they would become rich and have a job- but you can't if you're illegal here, then there's no way you can get legal unless you're a refugee with a legal status. So you end up doing the really low jobs. This is what motivated us the most to start this project.&quot; - Iris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The website is free for everybody who wants to share their experiences.</td>
<td>We've travelled around the world, and especially to different countries in Africa, almost everybody thinks there's gold lying on the streets waiting for you to come and pick it up&quot;. &quot;I couldn't believe it at first, until I went there and saw it for myself&quot; - Iris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite it being a risk especially those living in countries illegally, they were also very eager and really wanted to share their stories.</td>
<td>This image (of gold lying on the streets) is supported by human trafficking organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To tell the stories of African migrants.</td>
<td>A lot of people earning money from human trafficking and smugglers. For instance, a woman we filmed from Nigeria who was trafficked by her aunt to become a prostitute. They are responsible for keeping the story alive that there's gold lying on the streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Africans in Africa to become more aware of the situation of life abroad, being able to say: this is the situation ahead of me but I am ready to face it.</td>
<td>Initially some of his friends (other immigrants like him) disagreed with the idea and felt he should just let them go to Europe and experience it for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Africans in Europe to be able to say: perhaps I can go back home and invest my savings in businesses back home.</td>
<td>Africans in Europe do not say the truth about their lives abroad. When they go back, they only talk about their good experiences, and leave out the negative ones, thereby creating a biased perception of Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone including Europeans who travel to Africa, should be able to tell the truth about life in Europe for people to be well informed before making the trip.</td>
<td>Fear in Africans living in Europe that they would be despised or would not be believed if they said the truth about their lives abroad. So they lie to relatives and friends back home who then always assume that because they live abroad, they have money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To let Africans in Europe know that if you are honest with your family, they will believe and understand you. (Ssuuna says he was honest with his family, and they understood).</td>
<td>Western media especially, has a major role to play in the biased perception as they paint a negative picture of Africa, while painting a positive one of Europe. African media also plays a part because first of all, not many of these journalists travel to Europe to cover news and thus rely heavily on western media for their news coverage of the western world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Website introduced after the series so as to continue the conversation and to allow people who had not watched the series to catch up on the website.

APPENDIX 4: Thematic categorization/coding of themes derived from the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>What is being said by the producers of <em>Surprising Europe</em>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaving for Europe</strong></td>
<td>To warn Africans not to come to Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determined to tell people the truth so as to know what to expect before making the decision to migrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>His friends making money abroad—he thought that's where the money is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspired by friends' success and wanted that also. Didn't think about life in Europe, the language or culture, didn't know that it would be tough. Nobody told him the truth about what life really was like, and he felt he should inform the rest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initially wanted to go to the UK because he felt he would make more connections there as most Ugandans he knew were there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It should be their own decision on whether they want to stay in their countries and develop them there; but they deserve to know the truth—both sides of the story of life in Europe so as to be prepared on what to expect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life in Europe</strong></td>
<td>Ssuuna shared with other immigrants in the hope that one day their situation will change (having no job, life was hard).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People back home don't care about what you do in Europe—once you send them money they are satisfied. That's what they care about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life was very difficult. I felt that somehow, Africans always help each other, so I started looking for any African on the street and asking for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Throughout the project we noticed that most of the people who succeed in their migration story are people who came to Europe to pursue an education. We also saw that a lot of people also go back to their countries and participate in development projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Return</strong></td>
<td>They couldn't share their stories back home, because it's considered a big taboo to have not succeeded in Europe. You have to be rich and send money back home, and you cannot come back to your country of origin with no money as you will be considered a loser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They were eager to share their stories with us and hope that through this series the people back home could be more understanding of how difficult life is in Europe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Had lost his professional contacts back home, and they expected that he was doing well in Europe, made it difficult to go and ask for his job back in Uganda.

Inspired by his own story- Ssuuna really wanted to go back.

Whenever he called home and told people he wanted to go back, they would discourage him, and say life was harder there.

**APPENDIX 5: Coding of the Background and Explanatory frameworks of the interviews.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BACKGROUND INFORMATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORKS:</strong> (A set of ideas/rules developed to make people understand by giving reasons for it.) Why were they doing it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initially some of his friends, Ssuuna (other immigrants like him) disagreed with the idea and felt he should just let them go to Europe and experience it for themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We've done a lot of research to find the protagonists we wanted to film&quot;.</td>
<td>Content on the website mainly intended for use in schools, educational programs, to provide information about countries, it shows them information about possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We tried to find people around the world that had experience with migration to place content on our website.</td>
<td>Main purpose was to: pass this information to the migrants to know before they migrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had contact with illegal migrants in Holland living under very poor circumstances, we saw how they lived.</td>
<td>To tell the stories of African migrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We made a lot of content about returning migrants: migrants who want to return home&quot;- Iris</td>
<td>Website introduced after the series aired on Al Jazeera so as to continue the conversation and to allow people who had not watched the series to catch up on the website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We've travelled around the world, and especially to different countries in Africa, almost everybody thinks there's gold lying on the streets waiting for you to come and pick it up&quot;. &quot;I couldn't believe it at first, until I went there and saw it for myself&quot;- Iris.</td>
<td>Co-founder Ssuuna decided to start a TV series documenting the life of immigrants in Europe inspired by his own experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This image (of gold lying on the streets) is supported by human trafficking organizations. A lot of people earning money from human trafficking and smugglers. For instance, a woman we filmed from Nigeria who was trafficked by her aunt to become a prostitute. They are responsible for keeping the story alive that there's gold lying on the streets.</td>
<td>Felt that it is good that if people are going to migrate to another country they should know where they are going and what the possibilities are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Western media especially, has a major role to play in the biased perception as they paint a negative picture of Africa, while painting a positive one of Europe. African media also plays a part because first of all, not many of these journalists travel to Europe to cover news and thus rely heavily on western media for their news coverage of the western world.

Everyone should be able to live wherever they want, but you must know what's awaiting you.

APPENDIX 6: General mapping of the “your stories” tab.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article ID</th>
<th>Actors/Authors</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Country of Residence</th>
<th>Article Titles</th>
<th>Category/Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20130903-01</td>
<td>Student in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>I want to go back Part 1</td>
<td>Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20130906-02</td>
<td>Student in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>I want to go back Part 2</td>
<td>Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20130909-03</td>
<td>Student in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>I want to go back Part 3</td>
<td>Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131001-04</td>
<td>African leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Inspired by friends to migrate</td>
<td>Leaving For Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131002-05</td>
<td>Visa dealer in Africa</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Money talks in the visa dealer's office</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131004-06</td>
<td>African leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>To the UK on a Schengen visa</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131008-07</td>
<td>Visa Dealer in Africa</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Revealing the tricks of visa scammers</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131009-08</td>
<td>African leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>I sacrificed my house for Europe'</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131010-09</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Some Whites live in poor conditions like Africans</td>
<td>Running out of Luck/Life in Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20131016-10</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Europeans are less hospitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20131022-11</td>
<td>African leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ugandan</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>My wife warned me against traveling with a big suitcase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20131030-12</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ugandan</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>I almost joined criminal gangs due to lack of jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140605-13</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>What they call a &quot;success story&quot; of dreaming of home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140704-14</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>A cleaning job for a college graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140722-15</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>The story of my life-Episode 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140724-16</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>High hopes in Europe, real opportunities back home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140801-17</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Liberian</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>This is my story; these are my songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140808-18</td>
<td>Non-African in Africa</td>
<td>N/State</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>Africans returning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140819-19</td>
<td>African leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>The story of my life-Episode 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y20140827-20</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Being a refugee in Europe is not all roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Code</td>
<td>Region in Europe</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Home Country</td>
<td>Host Country</td>
<td>Story Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20140912-21</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>You have to work so hard to make ends meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20140916-22</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>The story of my life- Episode 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20141003-23</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>The weather in Europe is what many immigrants really hate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20141030-24</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>I made it in Europe; you can too!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20141204-25</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Longing for home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eritrean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150129-27</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Reaching European shores- A journey between hope and fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>African</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150318-28</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>A terrible situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150417-29</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Sex at the margins of Surprising Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150619-30</td>
<td>African in Europe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Racism and other culture shocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 7: Thematic coding of what was said in the narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article ID</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Narrative: What is being said?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20130903-01</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Student wants to go back home after completing studies in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20130906-02</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Wants to go back home because of loneliness, unable to find a job, feels he is needed more back home in Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20130909-03</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Advising people who are thinking of migrating to Europe to get proper information before moving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131001-04</td>
<td>Leaving For Europe</td>
<td>Perception of Europe having greener pastures; Friends' portrayal of Europe as a place of riches fuelled his desire to emigrate to make it as much as they did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131002-05</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Visa dealers back home conning desperate migrants and taking advantage of their desperation. Women asked for sex, in exchange of visa services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131004-06</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Visa dealer lying and taking a lot of money but making false promises. Said he would take the author to the UK with a Schengen visa which was false information. After which he promised the author that he would make a lot of money in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131008-07</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Visa dealers rob people of a lot of money, using dishonest means such as teaming up with bank staff to modify bank statements, gather fake invitation letters and documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131009-08</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>People would do anything to go to Europe; this author even sold his house so as to be able to pay the visa fees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131010-09</td>
<td>Running out of Luck/Life in Europe</td>
<td>Positive picture of Europe distorted after seeing white people begging on the streets and without food and shelter in Europe. Shocked that his friend, a Dutch national, picked used items from the streets as he did not have money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131016-10</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>The author experiences racism in Europe and feels that Europeans are not as hospitable as compared to Africans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131022-11</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>High expectations from family members while leaving for Europe - they sent him a long list of things they wanted, and a large number of people came to pray for him and bid him farewell on his journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20131030-12</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>Author is depressed, due to lack of money and no job in Europe - resists the temptation of getting involved in drug dealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YE_20140605-13</td>
<td>Life in Europe/Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>The author claims that Europe is not worth taking the risk especially to those who risk their lives traveling by boat. Even though he is highly educated and speaks Dutch almost as well as the natives, he would always be regarded as an immigrant. Migrants choose any job regardless of their qualifications, while some choose to get involved in crime to make ends meet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Version</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140704-14</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>College graduates settle for cleaning jobs because it is difficult to find work suitable for one's career in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140722-15</td>
<td>Taking Action</td>
<td>Grew up in the oil rich region of Nigeria, was actively involved in politics; taken captive along with his friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140724-16</td>
<td>Return/ Life in Europe</td>
<td>Africans living in poor conditions in Europe could be more successful back home where there are more opportunities available for them. Going back, is however out of question for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140801-17</td>
<td>Music/ Life in Europe</td>
<td>Stayed in Europe due to the war in his country, Liberia. A musician living in Holland, writes songs highlighting the plight of African migrants in Europe, every migrant or asylum seeker he spoke to, talked of living 'the American dream' one day. The author dreams of going back to his roots in Africa to continue his musical career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140808-18</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Many Africans are looking to invest and start businesses back home in Africa so that they would return home one day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140819-19</td>
<td>Taking Action</td>
<td>Fled his country, Nigeria for The Netherlands in 1995 due to political unrest after his mentor was assassinated he felt he wasn't safe anymore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140827-20</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>Sense of identity and belonging: Left her country after fleeing arrest. Was warmly welcomed by fellow asylum seekers in Holland who understood what she had been through and encouraged her to try and start a new life in Europe just as they wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140912-21</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>Harsh weather conditions made the author go back home. He then returned but had to work three different jobs to make ends meet, of which he managed to save and support his family back home in Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20140916-22</td>
<td>Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Sold family home to flee political arrest and be able to afford the trip. Asked for political asylum upon arrival in Amsterdam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20141003-23</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>Suffering from the harsh weather conditions; had to rely on donated winter clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20141030-24</td>
<td>Music/ Life in Europe</td>
<td>A musician and entrepreneur who moved to Europe as a student encourages others that they too can make it if they work hard and don't go to Europe with very high expectations. He chooses not to focus on racism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20141204-25</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>Experienced racism as a footballer in Europe where people made monkey sounds at him; longs to go back home to Ghana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20150107-26</td>
<td>Life in Europe</td>
<td>You need to know people to get a job. The author has had to work several jobs, but now plans to go back home to Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_Y3_20150129-27</td>
<td>Running out of luck/ Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Thousands risk their lives to make the crossing to Europe by sea, watching others die. They finally feel at peace when they get there and do not want to think about the journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item ID</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Narrative: What is being said?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150318-28</td>
<td>Life in Europe/Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Left husband and five children in Africa in search of a better future for her family. Suffering from loneliness, she is disappointed and warns others that Europe is not paradise. She fears returning back home because she feels her family and relatives will be disappointed in her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150417-29</td>
<td>Running out of luck/Life in Europe</td>
<td>Struggling to survive in Europe; selling weed on the streets, women involved in prostitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150619-30</td>
<td>Running out of luck/Life in Europe</td>
<td>African migrants undergoing racism in Europe a sign that the racists are afraid to absorb the &quot;outsiders&quot; into their society. The harsh rejection considered a sign of hypocrisy and entitlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 8: Intercoder’s results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item ID</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Narrative: What is being said?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20130903-01</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>The author wants to return because he couldn't find house in Amsterdam and felt that he is not welcomed in Europe anymore since he finished the studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131001-04</td>
<td>Leaving For Europe</td>
<td>The author wanted to go to Europe because he felt that he was a great professional whose job is underpaid in Uganda and he saw his friend who made great money in UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20131010-09</td>
<td>Running out of Luck/Life in Europe</td>
<td>The author was surprised that some white people in Europe are poor, homeless or they pick used items on the streets as can't afford buying them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20140808-18</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Not clear who is author. The content is that today Africans do not want to simply move to Europe, they want to earn money in developed world, come back and invest in Africa countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20140819-19</td>
<td>Taking Action</td>
<td>The author wrote that he had to leave Africa because he took part in environmental action in Nigeria and feared unjust prosecution from the authoritarians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20141030-24</td>
<td>Music/ Life in Europe</td>
<td>K-Nel explains what helped him to succeed as an artist in Europe stressing the right expectations of Europe and attitude are important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE_YS_20150129-27</td>
<td>Running out of luck/Leaving for Europe</td>
<td>Not clear who is author. The article tells stories of Africans who cross the Mediterranean sea by boat, many die, but survivors feel relieved and hope for the peaceful life in Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9: Coding of the structural analysis of all the 30 narratives on the Surprising Europe website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT (Summary &amp;/or point of the story)</th>
<th>ORIENTATION (attitude or feeling to time, place, characters and situation)</th>
<th>COMPLICATING ACTION (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis and turning point)</th>
<th>EVALUATION (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotion- the &quot;soul&quot; of the narrative)</th>
<th>RESOLUTION (the outcome of the plot)</th>
<th>CODA (ending the story and bringing action back to the present).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life in Europe was better as student; but is now tough.</td>
<td>Thought life was better in Europe than DRC; got a scholarship, arrived in Amsterdam in August when weather was nice, that changed after a few months.</td>
<td>After 1 year of a great life as a student where he was taken care of, life became hard, he couldn't find a place to live, had to look for a job.</td>
<td>He had so many friends from all over the world, but after finishing his studies, he felt alone; no help to find housing.</td>
<td>He dreamed of studying in Europe, got the chance, enjoyed life while a student, but after finishing his studies, life changed.</td>
<td>He now needs to find a job, find a place to live, and make friends as his life is no longer what it was, or what he wished it would be.</td>
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<td>Difficult to find a job, and to adapt to life in Europe after studies, wants to go back home.</td>
<td>Found it hard to adjust to time planning in advance, understanding why people want to be alone, felt lonely after studies.</td>
<td>Feels that no matter how hard he works in Europe, he may never see the real impact-feels he will make more of a difference in Africa.</td>
<td>He wonders why people look so sad/want to be alone/yet they have everything.</td>
<td>He is traumatized by the weather, feels happy with his decision to go back home.</td>
<td>Already has a plan to work in the academic sector once he is back home. Plans to give advice to others about migrating to Europe based on his personal experience.</td>
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<td>Gives advice to Africans to be well informed before moving to Europe.</td>
<td>Feels that many Africans think obtaining a visa is the solution to all their problems as soon as they get to Europe.</td>
<td>Upon arrival, many find themselves unable to go back home thus are involved in illegal activities.</td>
<td>Wants Africans to be well informed, to know what they're going to do in Europe before heading there.</td>
<td>Once you get to Europe, sometimes there's no way out, as it is a decision that will affect the rest of your life, according to the author.</td>
<td>Advises that &quot;Africa needs you&quot;- to those thinking that moving to Europe is just an adventure.</td>
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<td>Living in Uganda; working as a photojournalist; inspired by friends to migrate to Europe in search for greener pastures.</td>
<td>Africans' perception that in order to get out of poverty, they must migrate to Europe. Despite earning a small salary, few could make as much money as he did.</td>
<td>His friends who had returned home from Europe lived a good life, had lots of money, etc. But when he asked about life there- they recommended him not to go.</td>
<td>He felt that the only way to improve his life and that of his family was to migrate to Europe.</td>
<td>Wanted to go to UK because a lot of friends lived there-visa was rejected at the British embassy in Uganda.</td>
<td>Very determined to migrate to Europe in search of greener pastures-despite the setbacks he had undergone.</td>
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<td>Ssuuna goes to a visa dealer's office to try and get a visa to go to Europe- what he witnesses there shocks him.</td>
<td>People at the visa dealer's office are very desperate to go to Europe, as the visa dealer charges an outrageous price for the visas.</td>
<td>One lady who is unable to raise the high fee, is told that she will pay &quot;in kind&quot; and is whisked away to the dealer's lodge.</td>
<td>He is shocked when a man unable to pay begs for his passport, promising that he will pay as soon as he starts his hotel job in Europe.</td>
<td>The visa dealer refuses to listen to the begging man, and says he will keep his passport until the visa expires.</td>
<td>Without money, you are nobody at the visa dealer's office. Those who raised the money walk away smiling out of the office.</td>
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<td>Ssuuna negotiates to get a visa from the visa dealer to go to UK-but with a lot of false promises.</td>
<td>It was a very stressful and tense moment for him, as he did not have the money the visa dealer was asking for, but was also very desperate to get to Europe.</td>
<td>Initially his applications for a tourist UK visa were rejected because: 1.) what he was going to see in UK was in Uganda, 2) lacked adequate finances.</td>
<td>The visa dealer told him that he could get to the UK via Netherlands by boat.</td>
<td>He was later stranded in The Netherlands when he arrived with just the schengen visa which was not enough to go to UK.</td>
<td>The visa dealer took advantage of the author's ignorance and planned a fake trip for him.</td>
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<td>Visa scammers are on the rise in African countries.</td>
<td>Visa dealers conspire with bank workers and companies to acquire fake bank statements for clients.</td>
<td>People's passports who have money to pay for visas but fail to raise enough for tickets-their passports are sold to those with money for tickets.</td>
<td>It is shocking that even in the church people are conned into believing they will be taken abroad by church ministers.</td>
<td>Purchasing of real passports from people in Europe who are then subjected to a fee from the new arrival's salary.</td>
<td>7 out of 10 immigrants holding fake passports are likely to be arrested due to lack of likeliness in the passport pictures.</td>
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<td>Ssuuna then sells his house to get money to pay the visa dealer.</td>
<td>He had a small house he had built with savings from his photojournalism job which turned out to be the only means of raising the urgent funds for the visa to Europe.</td>
<td>He was very desperate to raise the balance left in time to pay the visa dealer that he sold his house at a throw-away price to raise the money.</td>
<td>He felt that it was a matter of time that he would make the amount of money lost in selling his house as soon as he gets to Europe.</td>
<td>He finally found a buyer for his house, a diasporan who was visiting, he paid the visa dealer and kept the remainder as pocket money for his trip.</td>
<td>He sold his house with the silent hope that upon arrival in Europe he would make a lot more than what his only house was worth.</td>
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<td>Ssuuna is shocked that there are white people in Europe that also live on the streets, and buy used items because they don't have money.</td>
<td>Prior to moving to Europe, he thought only positive things about Europeans and is therefore shocked to see that it's not only the immigrants that live on the streets and buy second hand items.</td>
<td>His Dutch friend lives in a house full of used items picked up from the street because he says he has no money to buy new ones. He is shocked that there are Europeans who live like immigrants.</td>
<td>Is shocked that there are Europeans living in poor conditions in Europe-such as drunkards, on the streets, etc. Comparable to people poor people back in Uganda.</td>
<td>There are people living on the streets in Europe as well, and not everyone in Europe is rich, as initially assumed by the author.</td>
<td>&quot;I couldn't believe that some white people were not different from some immigrants who are surviving by picking up old items from the streets&quot;. - Ssuuna.</td>
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<td>The author explains why he thinks Africans are more hospitable than Europeans.</td>
<td>He feels that the welcome he received in Europe was not as warm as if he were in Africa.</td>
<td>A young Dutch lady explained to him how she was well received on a visit to Rwanda.</td>
<td>He feels that he is treated differently in Europe because of the color of his skin.</td>
<td>Feels that racism in Europe is shown in small ways. e.g. when asking for directions.</td>
<td>&quot;It's African culture to welcome everyone who comes to you despite their race, color, religion, or if he/she had an appointment. We even have a saying: &quot;There is no road in the house, every person who comes is a visitor&quot;. I figured it's not like that in Europe&quot;.</td>
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<td>He is preparing for his departure to Europe finally after such a long struggle.</td>
<td>Despite everyone being excited for him, he feels stressed about the situation-he sold his house, will miss his family, doesn't know how long it will take to get back, etc.</td>
<td>His entire family and relatives escort him to the airport but are not allowed past a certain point. He used to go to the airport as a journalist to take pictures-now he is the one travelling.</td>
<td>While his wife was giving him advice on how to dress, what suitcase to carry so as not to look suspicious, he was worried that he would lose her and miss her.</td>
<td>He finally goes through security at the airport, as his family and relatives watch him leave from a glass window.</td>
<td>Despite his sadness of leaving his family behind, he was overjoyed by the fact that he would go to Europe and finally become a rich man in the society.</td>
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<td>He almost got involved in drug trafficking due to lack of money, and a job.</td>
<td>He feels hopeless and depressed about his situation (lack of a job, money) that he contemplates getting involved in crime.</td>
<td>His Nigerian friend, Emeka, asks him to join his group of drug smugglers to Spain. He decides not to, and later meets Emeka looking like he is doing very well.</td>
<td>He says, &quot;I made a final decision not to get involved in risky ventures that might put my life in danger&quot;.</td>
<td>His friend, a professional teacher, says that it is not easy to make it in &quot;a good way&quot; as Europeans will think he is uneducated, poor, or lazy because he is an immigrant.</td>
<td>Despite being broke, he still refused to get involved in criminal activities but says: &quot;I never escaped dying a slow death perpetrated by the unnoticeable silent killers of immigrants in Europe: depression and related diseases because I had too much on my mind&quot;.</td>
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<td>Many Africans risk their lives to move to Europe thinking they will have a better life- however many end up living in poverty and wishing they would go back.</td>
<td>The author claims to have been living in Europe legally for more than 10 years, but feels that no matter what, she will always be considered an immigrant.</td>
<td>She emphasizes that Europe is not worth taking the risk, especially those who travel by tiny boats and other desperate means to get there.</td>
<td>Those who have never been to Europe often listen to stories told by others; human traffickers tell manipulative stories about Europe. &quot;Hamburgers grow on trees!&quot;</td>
<td>Stories about &quot;good life in Europe&quot; were true 45 years ago. Now dozens of educated people with degrees scramble for cleaning jobs &quot;a job is a job&quot;</td>
<td>Advises her &quot;dear fellow immigrants&quot; to avoid choosing the ways of crime, but to rather live in poverty. Even if you're better off, you still have other problems: weather, language, etc.</td>
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<td>Having a degree still doesn't help immigrants get good jobs in Europe.</td>
<td>Feels that one's qualification does not matter—finding a job is hard. Annie, her friend, is a Dutch college graduate but works as a cleaner.</td>
<td>Annie receives unemployment benefits, but when she lands a job, her income is actually lower than when unemployed due to the benefits cut off.</td>
<td>&quot;This is the reality of European countries: college graduates have to work as cleaners!&quot;</td>
<td>No matter how difficult it may be, Annie is really glad. She was tired of social security. &quot;I just could not bear it anymore&quot;, she says.</td>
<td>The author has a master's diploma from a European university and has a secretarial job. Her friend was out of a job for a year, so finding a cleaning job finally, is good news!</td>
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<td>The author talks about what his life was like, growing up in a rich oil region in Africa.</td>
<td>He wanted to work in the oil company in Nigeria so as to be successful, and participated actively in politics in university.</td>
<td>During the most free and fair election that saw the country that is usually divided among Muslims and Christians, elect a muslim as their leader. However a military coup attempt that caused political unrest.</td>
<td>He was very passionate about his beliefs, and was inspired by his fellow activists.</td>
<td>As part of the activists that protested the military coup attempt, a lot of people were killed during the protests. The country was at the brink of civil war.</td>
<td>Although being an activist in Nigeria was deemed dangerous, it shaped his life forever.</td>
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<td>Africans living in Europe as illegal migrants could be taking advantage of the opportunities for development back home.</td>
<td>The author is angry at the elderly Africans relying on African churches for money and food, yet they could be back home in Africa, playing their role as grandparents.</td>
<td>Most of the diaspora community is not aware of the available opportunities back home, instead of living under the inhumane conditions in Europe.</td>
<td>Gives an example of Kenya, which has rules and regulations that the diaspora community could benefit from.</td>
<td>Various projects in Africa, make it ideal for the diaspora community to be part of them so as to have something to fall back on.</td>
<td>Success stories in Africa should make their way back to Europe so as to encourage people to go back instead of suffering in Europe.</td>
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<td>A story of a Liberian reggae artist who moved to Europe to study, and ended up building his music career.</td>
<td>Surprised at how it is more expensive for him to record a song in Europe in comparison to his home country.</td>
<td>Had a full time job, unrelated to making music. He began uploading demos online and got more followers for his music.</td>
<td>Easier to save money in Europe to buy instruments, etc than when in Africa. It is however more difficult for his songs to receive airplay on European radio stations.</td>
<td>Interacted with African asylum seekers and immigrants like him. He wrote songs on the plight of African migrants in Europe—who wish to live &quot;the American dream in Europe&quot;.</td>
<td>Hopes that despite having not lived &quot;the American dream in Europe&quot;, his European experience will lead him to be the next big African reggae star.</td>
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<td>The current international African is thinking of saving money while in Europe, so as to invest or set up businesses in Africa.</td>
<td>The time has changed, brain drain of 80s and 90s has subsided since technology allows communication and commerce to merge.</td>
<td>The author has been living in Gambia and claims that their reasons for going to Europe are to save and invest in real estate, land, etc, back home.</td>
<td>There is a stronger future in Africa, if only its people were to decide to go back home and be part of its development.</td>
<td>Many Africans still taking their chances in Europe; many also discovering that life there is not easy.</td>
<td>The author suggests to be ready to make Africa a destination source for income, development and investment, so as to view the continent as a place of opportunity rather than an underdeveloped entity.</td>
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<td>Political unrest in his country led him to flee.</td>
<td>He felt he was unsafe in his country due to the political unrest.</td>
<td>His mentor, Ken Sarowiwa and 8 other leaders were sentenced to death by hanging for trying to protest for the safety of their country.</td>
<td>The author was very emotional when his mentor was killed and cried bitterly.</td>
<td>He decided to leave Nigeria as he feared for his life—he had a strong voice in the protests led by the student union.</td>
<td>Fleeing was his only option as his parents would not have been able to afford bail if he was arrested.</td>
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<td>Moved to Holland to flee arrest. Had both good and bad experiences in Europe.</td>
<td>She was initially afraid that she would &quot;not fit in&quot;. The warm and kind nature of the women at the asylum camp turned out to be better than expected.</td>
<td>Lived a good life back home—she had a diploma from a European university, had traveled the world for work and studies before, and suddenly all that was over.</td>
<td>Her fellow asylum seekers became her friends, offered her moral support, and encouraged her to forget the past and rebuild her life.</td>
<td>Meeting the women in the asylum seeker's camp was one of the best things that happened to her in Europe. They were ready to make a new life in Europe.</td>
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<td>The author narrates about his work-life experience in the UK.</td>
<td>Knows from experience that even when the proper documents (working visa), life is not a bed of roses.</td>
<td>He was determined to live in UK legally, returned several times, until he finally got a job.</td>
<td>He was able to make enough money to educate his siblings, save money, and build a house.</td>
<td>Having the right documents to live in Europe is not enough—you have to work hard to make ends meet.</td>
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<td>Escaped Nigeria and sought political asylum in The Netherlands.</td>
<td>It was not a good time for him to live in Nigeria because of the religious crisis where Muslims and Christians were killing each other. He felt unsafe and decided to flee.</td>
<td>Sold their family home to raise funds to go to Europe, he moved to a different city in Nigeria to plan his departure, got fake documents and used them to enter Amsterdam.</td>
<td>He went to the beggars on the street in Kano after failing to make it to leave Nigeria, gave them all the money he had, and asked them to pray for him to leave.</td>
<td>The next day after he asked the beggars to pray for him, he finally made it to leave Nigeria by boarding a flight to Nice via Amsterdam.</td>
<td>After struggling to leave Nigeria, he finally gets on a flight to Nice via Amsterdam, gets off at Schipol in Amsterdam and asks for political asylum without an international passport.</td>
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<td>The weather in Europe is not easy for many immigrants to get used to.</td>
<td>Feels that because she lived in Europe before, she is well accustomed to the cold weather.</td>
<td>Lived in an asylum camp at first where the heating was good, it was warm. When she moved to an apartment she experienced having to pay for heating which was quite expensive.</td>
<td>Was emotional when she had to receive donations in terms of warm clothes and boots. She had been well off back in her home country.</td>
<td>Feels she is more used to this kind of weather than newly arrived immigrants.</td>
<td>Snow looks beautiful when you see it in a picture- certainly the experience is very different and what many immigrants hate.</td>
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<td>Rapper K-Nel from Kenya, talks about how he &quot;made it&quot; in Europe.</td>
<td>He feels that if he was successful in Kenya, then he can also be successful in Africa. You can make it in Africa if you are smart, focused and hardworking.</td>
<td>He lived in Europe legally where he moved to live with his mother and to study. Encourages other Africans to have no &quot;high hopes&quot; when moving to Europe, so as to be ready to face challenges.</td>
<td>Had a terrible experience while traveling to Russia to perform where he was held at the airport and his passport scrutinized.</td>
<td>He then decided to apply for German passport, so as to avoid such incidences in the future with his Kenyan passport.</td>
<td>Says that while it’s good to share negative experiences with each other, it’s also necessary to discuss how to make the best out of every negative situation.</td>
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<td>The story gives two illustrations about racism in Europe.</td>
<td>Racist experiences make even the most successful long to go back to their home country.</td>
<td>Ugandan John Nkebi was walking on the streets when his dog started fighting another dog, and he got beaten up by strangers.</td>
<td>&quot;I had a conversation once with my teacher, she actually thought racism was dead nowadays. I told her to walk a mile in my shoes for a day&quot;.</td>
<td>Ghanaian footballer John Mensa says &quot;I wanted to go back home&quot; when he heard the monkey noises made at him during a football match.</td>
<td>People experience racism quite a lot in Europe but don’t speak about it. They are more vocal on the internet though.</td>
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<td>Talks about his working life in the UK.</td>
<td>You have to know people in order to get a job in UK. Working as a security guard was hard because of the night shift, it wasn’t possible to sleep in his room during the day.</td>
<td>As an illegal immigrant in the UK, he was not settled. He could not stay in one place for too long. He had to keep moving for fear of being caught.</td>
<td>Misses his family and friends and the status he had back home.</td>
<td>What keeps him going / staying in the UK is that he makes more money than he would back home, thus allowing him to send money back home.</td>
<td>He has saved a good amount of money, and plans to go back home soon he says.</td>
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<td>Shocking statistics of the number of African migrants who die on their journey by sea trying to get to Europe.</td>
<td>Two migrants: Dayo from Nigeria, and Ferhan from Somalia share briefly about their lives at the detention center in Malta after dangerously crossing the sea.</td>
<td>Over the last 10 years, more than 12,000 immigrants reached Malta by boat. Only 90 could settle in Europe legally. Besides the large numbers reaching Europe-a lot of them die trying to make it.</td>
<td>Dayo from Nigeria, saw some of his fellow travellers die at sea, and was fortunate to have made it alive. He doesn’t like to recall his trip. He says: &quot;I don’t even want to remember the sea!&quot;</td>
<td>One of the travellers in a documentary where a reporter went undercover on a boat from Somalia to Yemen, says &quot;we’ve seen people die at sea, but we have no choice. In spite of that we want to cross it&quot;.</td>
<td>Ferhan from Somalia, who lives in the detention center in Malta, says &quot;Coming to Europe was all but easy, but I’m happy I made it. At least we’re at peace here, we feel at rest&quot;.</td>
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<td>Story of a Ghanaian woman who left her husband and 5 children to move to The Netherlands with the hopes of earning money for her family to live a good life.</td>
<td>She is very lonely especially when sick. Considers life in Europe to be hard, is homesick, and has no job despite her nursing qualifications and work experience.</td>
<td>Gives an example of a pregnant woman who was sick in Netherlands, but couldn’t be treated because she had no health insurance.</td>
<td>Without a residence permit, you cannot get health insurance and thus shunned away at the hospital. She compares it to Ghana where doctors would treat you even if you offered to pay cash.</td>
<td>She warns that Europe is not paradise. There are many rules and regulations she knew nothing about, difficult to build a life or get a job.</td>
<td>She is desperate, cries all day she says. However, is afraid to go back to Ghana because she thinks her family will be disappointed that she did not make it in Europe. Though she’s not sure how much longer she can survive that life.</td>
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<td>Undocumented African immigrants in Europe turn to crime to survive as they have no legal permission to work.</td>
<td>In Barcelona, a Gambian guy who spent 4 months looking for a job, finally decides to join his friends in selling drugs on the streets.</td>
<td>Some resort to prostitution, while others get involved in selling drugs on the streets, always looking out so as not to get arrested- they constantly live in fear from the moment they step out of the house.</td>
<td>&quot;Imagine trying to survive without the permission to do any kind of work. You’ve got to eat, which isn’t free, and you’ve got to sleep somewhere, so you need money. What would you do?&quot;</td>
<td>The Gambian guy says, &quot;most of the city’s weed-sellers are Gambian while the cocaine-sellers are mostly Nigerian&quot;.</td>
<td>The Gambian guy says his parents back home in Gambia would not approve of what he does, but it is what he has to do to send them money.</td>
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<td>Racism towards Africans immigrants in Europe is real.</td>
<td>Stories about racism and discrimination don’t make their way on mainstream news in Africa, neither do the diaspora community talk about them. Therefore, Africans are largely unaware of its existence until they experience it.</td>
<td>Examples: A group of people screaming &quot;these are white seats&quot; to two female passengers while the other European passengers pretend not to have heard or seen what is happening.</td>
<td>Being told to &quot;go back to your country&quot; denies you the right to feel free. &quot;What is it the racists are so afraid about immigrants? Change? That they will become too multi-cultural?&quot;</td>
<td>Europeans have never worried about what effect they might have on a local culture and society when they have migrated to other parts of the world.</td>
<td>&quot;Until the end of the second world war Europe was a continent of emigrants. Millions left for North and Latin America. They arrived en masse without visas and without conditions imposed on them by authorities. And gradually they integrated into society. It was by no means smooth going, but the harsh rejection of today’s African immigrants to Europe is a sign of deep hypocrisy and entitlement&quot;.</td>
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