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BRIDGING THE SKILL GAP: YOUTUBE-BASED INFORMAL LEARNING AMONG ARTISANAL WORKERS IN ANYIGBA METROPOLIS, KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract - The growing demand for skilled labor among artisanal workers underscores the need for flexible and accessible learning avenues. This study explored the role of YouTube-based informal learning in bridging skill gaps among artisanal workers in Anyigba Metropolis, Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted for the study and a 26 - item questionnaire, with reliability index of 0.76 was validated and used as instrument for data collection. A total of 60 artisans, purposively drawn from a population of 1.500 artisans participated in the study. Data was analyzed using means. The findings revealed that the artisans use YouTube-based learning primarily to enhance their technical skills, keep up with industry trends, and improve career prospects. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that YouTube based learning should be integrated into formal vocational training programs. YouTube's accessibility and capacity for repeated viewing make it an effective learning tool, though challenges include data costs, unreliable internet connectivity, and concerns about content credibility. Based on the insights, the study recommended integrating YouTube-based learning into vocational training and improving digital infrastructure to maximize its educational potential.

Keywords: YouTube, informal learning, artisanal workers, skill acquisition, vocational training

Introduction

Artisanal workers are skilled individuals who produce goods using manual techniques, often without industrial machinery. Their contributions span diverse fields—carpentry, metalwork, food production—and form a substantial part of the informal economy. Wildschut & Meyer (2016) define an artisan as an individual skilled at practicing a particular trade or handicraft, whose training combines vocational education with extensive practical experience. This definition highlights the blend of technical knowledge, manual skill, and experience, especially within changing labor markets. These craftspeople typically acquire their skills through experience or informal training; however, limited access to formal education restricts their ability to adapt to market changes and improve their socioeconomic standing (UNESCO, 2019; King, 2017).

Bridging the skill gap within this group is essential for economic advancement and social mobility. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) estimates that nearly 2 billion people globally are employed informally, many lacking adequate training for better-paying jobs. Informal learning has gained recognition as a powerful avenue for skill acquisition, offering flexible, collaborative opportunities outside formal institutions (Colley et al., 2003). The growing shift from traditional classrooms to virtual platforms offers artisans new possibilities to learn without being enrolled in formal educational programs. One such platform is YouTube—a multimedia site launched in 2005 that enables users to upload, watch, and share videos. With entertainment, news, and education, YouTube offers learners the ability to engage through both audio and visual stimuli. Videos support learning in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, with features like repetition and self-paced viewing enhancing mastery (Ofili & Okoye, 2013;

Bury & Oud, 2005). Though not structured around curricular frameworks, YouTube has emerged as a democratizing force in education. It enables learners, especially in under-resourced regions, to explore content tailored to their needs and interests (Burke et al., 2010; Tan & Pearce, 2011). Whether for keeping pace with evolving techniques or exploring new vocational skills, YouTube provides accessible and informal avenues for continuous learning. In this context, the present study investigates how youth artisans in Anyigba Metropolis use YouTube to develop skills in fashion design, building construction, makeup artistry, and culinary arts. By focusing on motivations, perceived effectiveness, and challenges faced, the study seeks to illuminate the potential of YouTube-based informal learning as a tool for empowering artisanal workers and closing skill gaps.

Informal learning plays a critical role in skill development among artisanal workers, especially those outside formal education systems. Colley et al. (2003) describe informal learning as self-directed, context-driven, and often collaborative, offering personal and inclusive educational experiences. This kind of learning empowers individuals with practical knowledge, particularly where formal avenues are inaccessible or unaffordable. The emergence of digital platforms has revolutionized informal learning, with YouTube standing out as a tool for vocational education. As a video-sharing site founded in 2005, YouTube offers diverse content across entertainment, news, and education (Linkletter et al., 2010). Educational videos combine audio-visual stimuli that support cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning outcomes (Ofili & Okoye, 2013). Features like repetitive playback and asynchronous access make it appealing to learners who prefer flexibility and independence. Bury and Oud (2005) found that instructional videos embedded within learning management systems help learners master complex skills. Similarly, Burke et al. (2010) argue that YouTube promotes educational equity by giving individuals open access to instructional materials regardless of socioeconomic background. These insights affirm YouTube's value as a non-traditional, democratized educational platform. In the Nigerian context, artisans often rely on YouTube to explore creative ideas, refine technical skills, and stay current with industry innovations. Tan and Pearce (2011) highlight YouTube's effectiveness for non-formal learners pursuing lifelong education. This aligns with the experience of Nigerian artisans, particularly youth, who use smartphones to watch instructional content on YouTube anytime and anywhere. However, concerns about content reliability, misinformation, and the absence of structured learning pathways persist. Patel and Davis (2021) recommend enhancing digital literacy and content evaluation skills among users. These challenges reinforce the need for strategic frameworks that support safe, effective, and inclusive online learning. Taken together, the literature affirms YouTube's growing significance in informal vocational education while pointing to structural and accessibility barriers that must be addressed. This study explores how these dynamics play out among youth artisans in Anyigba Metropolis.

YouTube, like other social media platforms, is easily accessible through internet-enabled devices such as personal computers, tablets, and smartphones. Among these, smartphones stand out as the preferred tool of the 21st-century youth, serving not only communication and entertainment purposes but also offering untapped potential for learning. Notably, YouTube comes pre-installed on most smartphones, eliminating the need for users to download it separately. Given their ubiquity and multimedia nature these devices can be repurposed for skill acquisition and enhancement, particularly for youths seeking self-directed vocational development. Building on this premise, the present study

investigates how young artisans in Anyigba Metropolis harness their smartphones to access YouTube content for enterprise development. The scope of this investigation spans four key vocational areas: fashion design, building construction, makeup artistry, and culinary skills Field. These fields align closely with local economic realities and youth aspirations. Fashion design exemplifies the intersection of creativity and technical expertise. It encompasses a wide skill set ranging from drawing and patternmaking to textile selection and garment construction. While traditional education has historically supported this profession, access to fashion design tutorials on YouTube now enable designers to learn at their own pace. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs places aesthetics as a higher-order necessity, reinforcing the enduring nature of fashion. Today's demand for trendy styles has increased pressure on designers to stay relevant. Through YouTube, artisans can access contemporary designs, refine their craft, and download instructional content for future use, ultimately boosting visibility and income. Similar dynamics exist in the building construction sector. Shelter, being a fundamental human need, places consistent demand on skilled trades such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and electrical work. Nigeria's staggering housing deficit, estimated at 28 million units (Adaji, 2025), underscores the urgency for competent builders. Just as fashion evolves, so too do architectural aesthetics and techniques. To remain competitive, builders must stay abreast of modern designs, which YouTube tutorials conveniently provide. Thus, this study also explores how construction artisans use YouTube to supplement their skill sets and adapt to industry shifts.

Makeup artistry presents yet another avenue for empowerment, Makeup artistry is both a creative and technical discipline that involves the application of cosmetic products to enhance, transform, or stylize a person's appearance. Conceptually, makeup serves purposes ranging from personal grooming and aesthetic expression to theatrical effects and professional branding. Contextually, in today's fast-evolving beauty industry, makeup artistry spans everyday wear, bridal styling, editorial fashion, film production, and even medical camouflage. It is no longer confined to gender stereotypes as both female and male professionals are equally visible and influential in this domain. Indeed, many of the industry's most renowned makeup artists globally are men, demonstrating that makeup expertise transcends gender. In Nigeria, makeup artistry continues to grow in popularity and relevance, offering economic empowerment to youth across gender lines. As digital platforms democratize access to vocational knowledge, YouTube stands out as an invaluable tool for aspiring makeup artists to learn new techniques, master product usage, and follow global beauty trends, whether it's foundational tutorials for beginners or advanced sessions. YouTube provides on-demand, repeatable lessons that formal training may not readily offer. This study emphasizes the importance of such digital resources in bridging skill gaps for makeup artists. In a climate where traditional training opportunities may be limited, YouTube allows learners to explore diverse styles, stay updated with industry innovations, and build proficiency at their own pace, ultimately enhancing their employability and creative confidence. Likewise, the culinary arts serve both creative and practical functions. Food, identified by Maslow (1943) as a basic physiological need, creates business opportunities across social and economic strata. Cooking, as a discipline, combines technical precision with creativity. YouTube's vast library of tutorials feature detailed visual aids and segmented instructions which help caterers learn advanced recipes and preparation methods such as baking or frying. In a country where dining out is common due to time constraints, acquiring these skills via digital platforms has proven to be financially empowering.

While global literature affirms YouTube's instructional capabilities, its localized impact in communities such as Anyigba Metropolis remains insufficiently studied. This research contributes to closing that gap by exploring how artisan youth engage with informal learning on YouTube. The study examines the motivations, perceptions of effectiveness, and challenges encountered by the youth artisans in using YouTube for skills development. By shedding light on this digital learning practice, the study offers insight into how technological tools can redefine education delivery and foster inclusive, skill-based development for underserved populations. By exploring the role of YouTube in informal learning by artisanal workers, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on reimagining education and promoting more inclusive and equitable development outcomes.

Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the motivations for artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development.
2. To find out how artisanal workers perceive effectiveness of YouTube-based learning in addressing skill gaps in performance
3. To find out the challenges to artisanal workers in the use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development.
4. To determine the potential benefits of scaling up YouTube-based informal learning initiatives for artisanal workers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the motivations for artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development?
2. How do artisanal workers perceive the effectiveness of YouTube-based learning in addressing skill gaps in performance?
3. What are challenges to artisanal workers in the use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development?
4. What are the potential benefits of scaling up YouTube-based informal learning initiatives for artisanal workers?

Methods

This study adopted descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Anyigba metropolis, Kogi state, North Central, Nigeria. The sample of the study comprised 60 individuals (15 artisans drawn purposively from each of the four trades; fashion design, building construction, makeup artistry, and culinary arts), out of a population of 1500. A 26 - item questionnaire titled "Bridging the Skills Gap (BSG) was the instrument for data collection. The instrument developed by the researchers comprised of items designed to elicit artisans' responses on the potential of YouTube-based informal learning in bridging the skill gap among artisanal workers. The instrument contained two sections A and B. Section A comprised of the respondents' background information, while Section B had items designed to obtain data from the artisans on the potential of YouTube-based informal learning in bridging the skill gap among them. Section B had four clusters. Cluster one comprises 5 items designed to find out the motivations for artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development. Cluster two has 9 items designed to obtain data on how artisanal workers perceive the effectiveness of YouTube-

based learning in addressing their skill gaps and improving their work-related performance. Cluster three, with 8 items, sought to elicit data on the challenges to artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development while cluster four, with 4 items, sought responses on the potential benefits of scaling up YouTube-based informal learning initiatives for artisanal workers. The BSG was validated by three experts: two in Educational Technology, and one in Measurement and Evaluation. Using Cronbach Alpha, the reliability of the BSG was found to be 0.76 and this was considered adequate. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. In answering the four research questions, a four–point response options of Strongly Agree (SA-3.50-4.49), Agree (A-2.50-3.49), Disagree (D-1.50-2.49) and Strongly Disagree (SD-0.00-1.49) was used in rating the responses to the questionnaire items. Any item with a mean response value of 0.00-2.49 was regarded as Disagree, while any item with a mean response value of 2.50 and above was regarded as Agree.

Results

Research Question One: What are the motivations for artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development?

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation of the Motivations for Artisanal Workers' Adoption and use of YouTube for Informal Learning and Skills Development*

S/n	Motivation	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	To improve my work-related skills and knowledge	3.03	.181	A
2.	Learning new techniques to stay up to date with industry	3.51	.503	A
3.	To enhance my career prospects and increase my earnings	3.61	.490	A
4.	To gain recognition and respect from peers and clients	3.45	.501	A
5.	To fulfill personal interests and hobbies	3.60	.494	A

Data in Table 1 shows the mean ratings of respondents on motivations for artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development. Artisans were found to agree with statements in item 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, with mean value of 3.03, 3.51, 3.61, 3. 45 and 3.60 respectively. Therefore, artisanal workers expressed strong motivation to use YouTube in skill development as all items recorded mean values above the benchmark of 2.50. Standard deviation values ranged from 0.18 to 0.51, reflecting consistency in responses.

Research Question 2: How do artisanal workers perceive the effectiveness of YouTube-based learning in addressing their skill gaps and improving their work-related performance?

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Artisanal Workers Perception of the Effectiveness of YouTube-based Learning in Addressing their Skill Gaps and Improving their Work-related Performance.*

S/n	Perceived effectiveness	Mean	SD	Decision
6.	Improvement in my work-related skills and knowledge	3.50	.504	A
7.	Access to repetitive watching leads to mastery of relevant contents	4.00	.000	A
8.	Anywhere and anytime access provide answers to nagging	3.81	.394	A

	questions			
9.	YouTube-based learning has helped me adapt to new technologies and techniques	3.50	.504	A
10.	YouTube based learning has no positive impact on my work	1.66	.751	A
11.	Brings me up-to-speed with recent developments in my vocation	3.70	.462	A
12.	YouTube- based learning supplements my formal training	3.35	.755	A
13.	YouTube -based learning addresses specific skill gaps	3.41	.497	A
14.	YouTube-based learning engenders exploration of new areas of interest	3.70	.720	A

Data presented in Table 2 reveal that item 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14, with mean value of 3.50, 4.00, 3.81, 3.50, 3.70, 3.35, 3.41and 3.70 respectively, are above the benchmark of 2.50, while item 10 had a mean value of 1.66, below the benchmark of 2.50. The responses suggest that the artisans perceive YouTube as highly effective, with the highest mean at 4.00 for repetitive watching. Item 10 was disagreed with, further affirming positive perceptions. Standard deviation ranged from 0.00 to 0.75, indicating moderate to high consistency.

Research Question 3: What are the Challenges to artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development?

Table 3: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Challenges to artisanal workers' adoption and use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development*

S/n	**Barrier**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Decision**
15.	Concerns about the credibility and reliability of YouTube sour	3.05	.534	A
16.	Difficulty in applying theoretical knowledge to practical work situations	3.41	.497	A
17.	Inability to ask questions and receive answers real-time	2.95	.286	A
18.	High cost of data	3.40	.494	A
19.	Limited availability of high- quality and relevant YouTube content	3.00	.000	A
20.	Poor internet coverage	3.00	.000	A
21.	Lack of digital literacy and technical skills	3.00	.000	A
22.	Limited access to digital technologies, e.g., smartphones	3.15	.605	A

Data presented in Table 3 reveal that items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22, with mean values of 3.05, 3.41, 2.95 3.40, respectively 3.00, 3.00, 3.00 and 3.15 are challenges as experienced by artisanal workers in the use of YouTube for informal learning and skills development All items scored above the benchmark of 2.50, with standard deviation values from 0.00 to 0.60, showing that many challenges are commonly experienced across the sample.

Research Question 4: What are the potential benefits of scaling up YouTube-based informal learning initiatives for artisanal workers?

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Potential Benefits of Scaling up YouTube-based Informal Learning Initiatives for Artisanal Workers

S/n	Benefit	Mean	SD	Decision
23.	Improved access to skills training	3.33	.475	Agree
24.	Increased flexibility and convenience	3.00	.000	Agree
25.	Enhanced work- related performance	3.05	.534	Agree
26	Better adaptation to changing industry demands	3.35	.755	Agree

Data in Table 4 shows the mean rating of respondents on the potential benefits of scaling up YouTube-based informal learning initiatives for artisanal workers. Artisans were found to agree with statements in items 23, 24, 25 and 26 with mean value of 3.33, 3.00, 3.05 and 3.35. Mean scores fell above 2.50 benchmark, suggesting clear optimism toward digital learning potential. The standard deviations range of 0.00 to 0.76 imply generally consistent responses.

Discussion

The findings of this study affirm the growing relevance of YouTube-based informal learning among artisanal workers in Nigeria. Participants indicated that their motivations for using YouTube extended beyond career advancement to personal fulfillment and social credibility, highlighting the platform's multifaceted value as both an educational and aspirational resource. These results align with global observations. Tan and Pearce (2011) emphasized how nonformal learners increasingly use YouTube to explore niche interests, master practical skills, and adapt to modern techniques. Burke, Marlow, and Lento (2010) similarly underscored YouTube's democratizing power, granting underserved populations access to open educational resources. Locally, a study at Bells University of Technology by Uche & Adeyemi (2020), revealed that over 60% of students preferred YouTube to classroom teaching for its simplicity and accessibility. Similarly, Adebayo & Olatunji found that vocational learners frequently engaged with YouTube content to acquire skills in makeup, fashion design, and photography, trades identical to those analyzed in this study.

Despite strong affirmations of YouTube's instructional utility, contrasting perspectives suggest caution. Some studies note low engagement with educational content, with learners gravitating toward entertainment instead. For instance, the same Bells University study found that only 14% of students consistently viewed academic material. based investigation highlighted that habitual use of YouTube, when focused on non-educational content correlated with reduced academic performance. These findings signal the risk of distraction when learners are not guided by structure or curriculum. In addition, issues of digital literacy and content navigation emerged prominently. At the Petroleum Training Institute in Delta state, in a study conducted by Eze & Okafor (2021), students had access to smartphones and data but struggled to locate credible, relevant educational materials. This mirrors challenges reported by artisanal workers in Anyigba, including difficulty translating video-based theoretical knowledge into practice and concerns over misinformation. Despite these barriers, the study's high mean ratings for effectiveness—particularly regarding repeated access, mastery of content, and adaptability suggest that artisans perceive YouTube not merely as supplemental, but integral to their vocational

growth. The strong motivation to learn, paired with the convenience of mobile access, indicates a shift toward self-directed, lifelong learning among informal-sector workers.
Synthesizing both supportive and opposing findings, it becomes clear that YouTube's value as a vocational tool hinges on structural support. Without curated content and improved digital infrastructure, artisans may struggle to access quality resources. Yet, when empowered with training and reliable connectivity, artisans stand to benefit from a transformative, scalable, and inclusive platform for skill development.

Conclusion

This study underscores the transformative potential of YouTube-based informal learning in bridging skill gaps among artisanal workers in Anyigba Metropolis. Participants affirmed that YouTube offers accessible, flexible, and content-rich learning experiences which support both technical advancement and personal growth across trades such as fashion design, building construction, makeup artistry, and culinary arts.
Comparative studies reinforce the relevance of YouTube as a tool for vocational education, confirming artisans' motivations to stay competitive, improve earnings, and pursue lifelong learning. However, contrasting findings highlight risks of distraction, digital illiteracy, and inconsistent content quality, suggesting that unstructured digital environments may not always lead to meaningful skill development.
To harness YouTube's instructional capacity, stakeholders must address key challenges: ensuring reliable connectivity, curating credible educational content, and equipping learners with digital navigation skills. Structural interventions such as subsidized data plans, vocational partnerships, and training programs are critical to unlocking the platform's full benefits.
Ultimately, when effectively integrated into vocational training ecosystems, YouTube can empower artisans to evolve with industry trends, achieve economic mobility, and contribute more robustly to Nigeria's informal economy. With coordinated efforts, YouTube-based learning can serve not only as a bridge across skill gaps but as a pathway toward inclusive, scalable, and sustainable development.

Recommendations

The findings of the study prompted the researchers to make the following recommendations:

1. Training programs should be developed to equip artisanal workers with the necessary digital skills to effectively navigate and evaluate YouTube content. Government agencies, NGOs, and private organizations should collaborate in delivering such training initiatives.
2. Policymakers should work towards reducing data costs and expanding internet infrastructure to improve connectivity, especially in rural and underserved areas.
3. There is a need for industry professionals and educational institutions to create high-quality, structured instructional videos that address the specific needs of artisanal workers. Establishing verified channels with credible content can help mitigate misinformation concerns.
4. YouTube-based learning should be integrated into vocational and technical training programs to complement traditional learning methods and provide a hybrid approach to skill development.

5. Microfinance initiatives or government-sponsored schemes can help artisans acquire digital devices such as smartphones or tablets to facilitate access to online learning resources.

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