Bridging the Effects of Digital Divide on Representation of Roadside Artist Entrepreneurs in Anambra, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study explored the effects of digital divide on the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs in the Anambra South geopolitical zone, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, involving 70 participants purposefully selected from seven local government areas. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Bridging the effects of digital divide on representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs (BEDDRAER)" which was validated by experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra. A pilot test conducted in Idemili North, Anambra yielded reliability coefficients of 0.89, 0.85, 0.88 and 0.82 for the four research questions items, making the instrument reliable for the study. The questionnaire was administered directly, achieving a 93% response rate. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were utilized for data analysis. The findings revealed that the majority of the roadside artist entrepreneurs lack access to essential digital tools such as graphic design software, e-commerce platforms, and online learning tools. While some artists use social media and online payment platforms, these are predominately used for social interactions rather than business purposes. Key barriers identified include inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, limited government support, and a lack of mentorship. The digital divide significantly affects the artists' visibility, market reach, and ability to command competitive prices thereby confining their sales to local markets. Regression analysis indicated that improving digital access would enhance the representation and sales of roadside artist entrepreneurs. The study recommends, among other things, the implementation of targeted policies to support marginalized artists in leveraging digital platforms for business growth and representation.
Keywords: Digital divide, Representation, Roadside Artist, Entrepreneurs

Introduction

The digital divide has been widely discussed in various contexts, including education, health care, and economic development (Norris,

2001). The digital divide refers to the gap between individuals who have access to modern information and communication technology (ICT) and those who do not. This divide can manifest in unequal access to digital platforms that are increasingly essential for reaching global audiences. In the art sector, this divide is evident in the disparity between artists who can use digital tools to reach global audiences and those who cannot (Wilson, 2017). And the roadside artist entrepreneurs fall in this category, most of them may lack formal education and financial resources to acquire one thereby been affected by this divide. A roadside artist entrepreneur is a creative individual who combines artistic skills with entrepreneurial acumen to create, market and sell art in public spaces often directly to consumers. They operate from a roadside location and manage their own business activities. These artists typically produce various forms of visual art, such as paintings, sculptures or crafts and sell their work directly to the public in accessible, open-air environments like streets, markets or other public spaces. As a result, these artists remain marginalized in the global art market, unable to fully participate in the opportunities offered by digitalization. They depend on local sales and word-of-mouth marketing, which limits their exposure compared to artists who leverage digital platforms (Ojo, 2020). For instance, studies have shown that artists with access to online galleries and social media platforms tend to achieve greater visibility and financial success (Acken, 2018). They also participate in art fairs and exhibitions captivating the international audiences. However, these artist who could be found in rural and semi-urban as identified by Okonkwo and Ude (2019) are often face barriers like poor internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy and financial constraints, which limit their ability to participate in the digital art economy. This digital divide not only limits their economic opportunities but also affects their representation in the broader art community (Regnedda & Muschert,

2013). It is imperative to bring all the artists on same page for an enhanced creative expression and allowing them to experiment with interactive and immersive artworks. Representation in this context refers to the visibility, inclusion, and accurate portrayal of individuals or groups within digital spaces and platforms. Research by UNESCO (2021) highlights the importance of digital inclusion in the arts, noting that marginalized artists often miss out on opportunities for global recognition due to their exclusion from digital platforms. In addition, a study by Graham and Dutton (2014) highlight how the digital divide contributes to uneven representation in digital spaces, particularly in creative industries. They found that artists from regions with limited digital infrastructure are often marginalized in global digital art markets, leading to a homogenization of the art that is visible and valued online. This scenario may dampen the morale of these entrepreneurs which may force them out of business if not addressed. However, studies suggest that bridging the digital divide in the art sector can lead to greater diversity and representation in global art markets, fostering a more inclusive cultural landscape (Acker, 2018). Against this background, this study examines the digital divide among roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra South Senatorial Zone, Nigeria, exploring its effect on their artistic representation and suggesting ways to bridge this gap.

Statement of the Problem

The digital divide presents a significant barrier for roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra state especially in the south geopolitical zone of the state, limiting their participation in the global art economy, without access to digital tools and platforms, these artists struggle to gain visibility, sell their works online, and connect with wider audiences. This exclusion perpetuates economic disparities and cultural marginalization, as their arts remain confined to local markets with limited opportunities for growth and

recognition. Addressing this ensuring that all artists, regardless of their socio-economic background, can benefit from the digital revolution and contribute to the global cultural dialogue and economic development.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to explore the effects of digital divide on representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra south, Anambra. Specifically, the study sought to**:**

1. Assess the extent of digital access among roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra-South senatorial zone,

2. Investigate how the digital divide affects the representation of these artists in local, national and international art markets,

3. Identify the key barriers that prevent roadside artist entrepreneurs from accessing and utilizing digital tools and platforms,

4. To propose actionable strategies for bridging the digital divide and enhancing the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs in the digital art world.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the digital tools accessible to the roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra south senatorial zone?

2. How does the digital divide effects the representation of these entrepreneurs in local, national and international art markets?

3. What are the barriers that prevent roadside artist entrepreneurs from accessing and utilizing digital tools and platforms?

4. What are the strategies for bridging the digital divided and enhancing the representation of roadside artists in the digital art world?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Ho_1: the digital divide does not negatively affect the representation of roadside artists in broader art markets.
2. Ho_2: improving digital access for roadside artist entrepreneurs would not lead to increased visibility and economic opportunities in the art market.

Method

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to gather comprehensive data on the digital divide among roadside artist entrepreneurs in the Anambra South geopolitical zone. Anambra South comprises seven (7) local government areas, namely: Aguata, Orumba North, Orumba South, Ekwusigo, Nnewi North, Nnewi South, and Ihiala. A sample of 70 artists was purposively selected (10 from each local government area) for the study. A structured questionnaire titled "Bridging the Effects of Digital Divide on Representation of Roadside Artist Entrepreneurs (BEDDRAER)" was developed by the researchers and validated by three experts from the Faculty of Management Sciences and Arts at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section One collected personal data from the entrepreneurs, while Section Two addressed the research questions. Respondents were asked to choose from predetermined options using a four point Likert scale: "Full access" or "Strongly agree," (4), "Moderate access" or "Agree," (3), "Limited access" or "Disagree," (2) and "No access" or "Strongly disagree," (1). The instrument reliability was tested through a pilot study with 10 artists selected from the Idemili North local government area. The data were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficient values of 0.89, 0.85, 0.88 and 0.82 indicating high reliability. The questionnaires

were self-administered to the 70 roadside artist entrepreneurs across the study areas, with 65 questionnaires correctly completed and retrieved, resulting in a 93% response rate. The survey assessed the artists' access to digital tools, the effects of the digital divide on their representation in the global art scene, the challenges they face, and strategies to improve their inclusion. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to address the research questions and a t-test (Regression analysis) to test the hypotheses. Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to identify trends and patterns in the results.

Result

Demographic information

Figure 1: Geographical Representation of the Roadside Artist Entrepreneurs
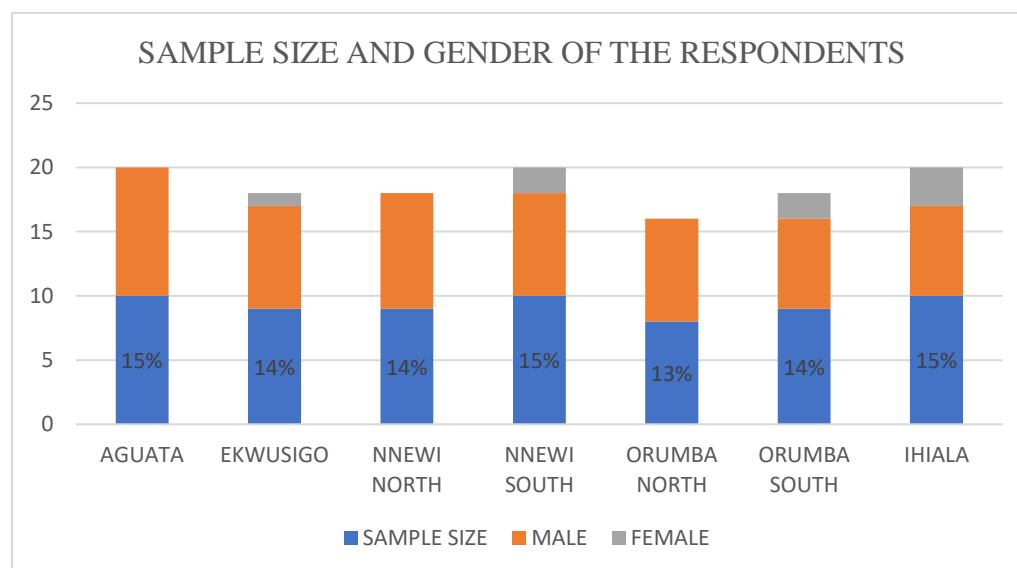

Figure 1 describes the sample size and gender of the respondents. It reveals that 10, 9, 9, 10, 8, 9, and 10 artists, representing 15%, 14%, 14%, 15%, 13%, 14%, and 15%, respectively, were selected from Aguata, Ekwusigo, Nnewi North, Nnewi South, Orumba North, Orumba South, and Ihiala Local Government Areas of the Anambra South Senatorial Zone. It

further shows that only 8 females were part of the respondents, indicating male dominance in the art space.

Figure 2: Educational Qualification

Qualifications

First School leaving Certificate

Senior Secondary School Certificate
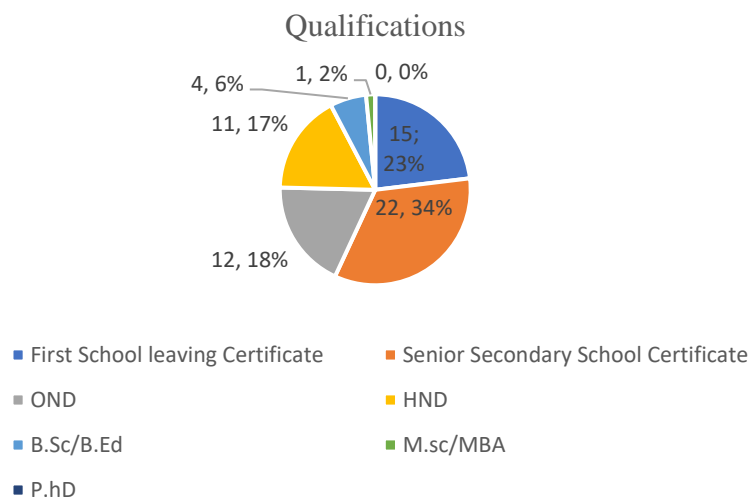
OND

HND

B.Sc/B.Ed

M.sc/MBA

P.hD

Figure 2 reveals the academic qualifications of the respondents. It shows that 15 respondents, representing 23%, have only lower basic primary education; 22 respondents, representing 34%, have a senior secondary school certificate. The sample also comprises 12 OND holders, representing 18% of the sample. Furthermore, 11 respondents (17%) and 4 respondents (6%) are graduates, while 1 respondent holds a master's degree, and none has a Ph.D. This implies that most of the roadside artist entrepreneurs are secondary school certificate holders.

Question 1: What are the digital tools accessible to the roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra south senatorial zone?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of respondents on the digital tools accessible to the roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra south senatorial zone, Anambra, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1	Graphic design software like corelDRAW, Adobe Photoshop	65	1.23	.553	Non accessible
2	Drawing and painting software (Procreate, Clip Studio Paint)	65	1.23	.523	Non accessible
3	3D Modeling software (Blender, Maya, 2Brush)	65	1.12	.331	Non accessible
4	Photography and video Editing tools (Adobe light room, Final Cut Pro)	65	1.05	.211	Non accessible
5	Digital Publishing Platforms (Behance, DeviantArt, Artstation)	65	1.15	.441	Non accessible
6	E-commerce Platforms (Ebay, BigCartel, Redbubble	65	1.05	.211	Non accessible
7	Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram)	65	2.78	.545	Accessible
8	Digital Payment Solution (Online banking, Soft wallet)	65	3.29	.522	Accessible
9	Online Learning Platforms (Skillshare, Udenny, Coursera)	65	1.34	.713	Non accessible
10	Cloud Storage and Collaboration Tools (Google Drive, Dropbox, Trello)	65	1.31	.683	Non accessible
	Valid N (listwise)	65			

Source: SPSS version 25 output (2024).

Table 1 shows that artist entrepreneurs have no access to the following digital tools: graphic design software, drawing and painting software, 3D modeling software, photography and video editing tools, digital publishing platforms, e-commerce platforms, online learning platforms, and cloud storage and collaboration tools, with means and standard deviations of 1.23:0.55, 1.23:0.52, 1.12:0.33, 1.05:0.21, 1.15:0.44, 1.05:0.21, 1.34:0.71, and 1.31:0.68, respectively. Furthermore, it reveals that they have access to social media platforms and digital payment solutions, with means and standard deviations of 2.78:0.55 and 3.29:0.52, respectively.

Question 2: How does the digital divide affects the representation of these artists' entrepreneurs in local, national and international art markets?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation of respondents on the effects of digital divide on representation of the roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra south senatorial zone, Anambra, Nigeria.

Descriptive Statistics

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1	My artworks lack visibility and exposure	65	3.54	.502	Agree
2	I miss sales opportunities because my work is confined to a limited geographic area.	65	3.43	.499	Agree
3	I am excluded from professional networks in the art community	65	3.45	.501	Agree
4	I sell my artwork at lower prices compared to my counterparts in more accessible markets.	65	3.43	.499	Agree
5	I have limited opportunities to develop my skills and experiment with new techniques.	65	3.54	.502	Agree
6	I am not involved in emerging art movements and trends.	65	3.54	.502	Agree
	Valid N (listwise)	65			

Source: SPSS version 25 output (2024)

Table 2 displays the mean ratings and standard deviations regarding the effects of the digital divide on the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs. The table shows that the respondents agree with the statements on the effects of the digital divide on the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs. This indicates that the digital divide results in a lack of visibility and exposure for their artworks, missed sales opportunities, exclusion from professional networks, selling artwork at lower prices, limited opportunities for development and experimentation, and less involvement in emerging art movements and trends.

Question 3: What are the barriers that prevent roadside artist entrepreneurs from accessing and utilizing digital tools and platforms?

Table 3: Mean rating and standard deviation of respondents on the barriers that prevent roadside artist entrepreneurs from accessing and utilizing digital tools and platforms?

Descriptive Statistics

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1	Lack of adequate infrastructure	65	3.66	.477	Agree
2	Non Availability and affordability of quality art supplies	65	3.48	.503	Agree
3	Financial constraints	65	3.48	.503	Agree
4	Insufficient government support.	65	3.54	.502	Agree
5	Limited exposure to international markets and audience.	65	3.60	.494	Agree
6	Mentorship and training programs not readily available.	65	3.48	.503	Agree
	Valid N (listwise)	65			

Table 3 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations provided by respondents regarding the barriers that hinder roadside artist entrepreneurs from accessing and utilizing digital tools and platforms. The respondents consistently identified all the listed factors as significant barriers, with mean ratings and standard deviations of 3.66:0.477, 3.48:0.503, 3.48:0.503, 3.54:0.502, 3.6:0.494, and 3.48:0.503, respectively. These results highlight key obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of availability and affordability of digital tools, financial constraints, insufficient government support, limited exposure to international markets, and a lack of mentorship and training opportunities.

Question 4: What are the strategies for bridging the digital divide and enhancing the representation of roadside artists in the digital art world?

Table 4: Mean rating and standard deviation of the respondents on the strategies for bridging the digital divide and enhancing the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs in the digital art world.

Descriptive Statistics

S/N		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1	Forming clusters for ease of access to digital tools.	65	3.00	.829	Agree
2	Government interventions in funding and logistics	65	3.65	.482	Agree
3	Collaboration with international artists.	65	3.46	.502	Agree
4	Establishing studios for training and retraining of artists.	65	3.48	.503	Agree
5	Exhibiting artworks in international galleries for enhanced representation and sales.	65	3.35	.482	Agree
6	Creation of Online platforms for global visibility and accessibility of art works.	65	3.45	.501	Agree
	Valid N (listwise)	65			

Source: SPSS version 25 output (2024)

Table 4 highlights the strategies for improving access to digital tools for enhanced representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs. It shows that all the listed strategies are effective in improving access to digital tools for better representation and increased sales. This is evident in the mean ratings and standard deviations of the statements.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Ho₁: the digital divide does not negatively affect the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs in broader art markets.

Table 5: Regression Analysis on effect of Digital divide on roadside artist entrepreneurs' representation in Anambra south senatorial zone, Anambra, Nigeria.

Coefficientsª

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B Lower Bound	95.0% Confidence Interval for B Upper Bound	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics VIF
1	(Constant)	4.461	.396		11.270	.000	3.670	5.252		
	Digital_divide	-.268	.115	-.283	-2.338	.023	-.498	-.039	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Representation
Source: SPSS version 25 output (2024).

Table 5 reveals B (unstandardized Cofficient): -0.268 indicating that for each one-unit increase in the digital divide, the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs decreases by 0.268 units or 26.8%. Furthermore, significance (p-value): 0.23 indicates that the effect is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Also confidence interval: shows that the entire interval is negative, confirming the significance of the negative effect.

Hypothesis Two

Ho₂: Improving digital access for roadside artist entrepreneurs would not lead to increased visibility and economic opportunities in the art market.

Table 6: Regression Analysis on effect of improving digital access on roadside artist entrepreneurs' visibility and economic opportunities in the art market.

Coefficientsª

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B Lower Bound	95.0% Confidence Interval for B Upper Bound	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics VIF
1	(Constant)	1.907	.382		4.994	.000	1.144	2.670		
	Digital_Access	.433	.117	.423	3.703	.000	.199	.667	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Improved_Representation_Sales

Table 6 shows the coefficients, the unstandardized B coefficient of .433 refers to the estimated regression weights for the effect of digital access (independent variable) on improved representation and sales of roadside artist entrepreneurs (dependent variables). The significance level (p-value) of 0.000, indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, suggesting that digital access has a significant effect for their improved representation and sales. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is upheld. Also, the coefficient for the independent variable is 0.433 while the t-value associated with this coefficient is 3.703. Additionally, there is a constant in the equation with a coefficient of 4.994. The coefficient values help in understanding the magnitude and direction this effect has on representation, showing that 43.3% variation in roadside artist entrepreneurs' representation and sales can be explained by digital access.

Discussion of Findings

Regarding the demographic of the respondents, the study includes: 10 participants from Aguata, 9 from Ekwusigo, 9 from Nnewi North, 10 from Nnewi South, 8 from Orumba North, 9 from Orumba South, and 10 from Ihiala Local Government Areas of the Anambra South Senatorial Zone. The data further show that only 8 female respondents participated in the study, while the rest were male, indicating a male-dominated art space. This supports the assertions that historically, women were exclude from formal art education and professional opportunities (Chadwick, 2012), market biases (Adams, 2018), and underrepresentation of women in leadership (Gupta, 2020), all of which contribute to the exclusion of women. Additional, the study reveals that most of the respondents hold senior secondary school certificates, which may explain their limited access to digital tools due to computer illiteracy.

The investigation into the effects of digital divide on the representation of the roadside artist entrepreneurs provides valuable insights into their accessibility to digital tools in the Anambra South Senatorial Zone, Anambra, Nigeria. The study successfully identifies various digital tools that can enhance the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs in the art market, such as graphic design software, drawing and painting software, 3D modeling software, photography and video editing tools, digital publishing platforms, social media platforms, online payment solutions, e-commerce platforms, online learning platforms, and cloud storage and collaboration tools. The results show that most of these tools are not accessible to roadside artist entrepreneurs, reinforcing the digital divide and potentially exacerbating existing inequalities, as artists who cannot use digital platforms remain invisible in the global market. This finding aligns with the work of Graham and Dutton (2014), who noted that artists operating outside formal institutional settings often lack access to essential digital tools and platforms due to infrastructural challenges.

One noteworthy aspect revealed by the study is that roadside artist entrepreneurs are involved in social media platforms and online payment solutions. However, further probing reveals that these platforms are primarily used for social interactions, such as connecting with friends and family, rather than leveraging them for business purposes. This usage pattern is often influenced by limited digital literacy and a lack of awareness about the potential commercial benefits of social media for promoting and selling artwork (Wyche, Schoenebeck & Forte, 2013; Olutayo & Akanle, 2021).

The study also highlights the effect of the digital divide on the representation of these artists' entrepreneurs in local, national and international art markets. The findings indicate that the digital divide has severely constrained their ability to market and sell their work beyond their

immediate localities. This confinement not only restricts their customer base but also forces them to sell their art at lower prices compared to digitally connected artists who can access broader markets and attract higher-paying clients. These findings are consistent with the studies of Khan (2020), Deloitte (2016), Graham and Dutton (2014), and Ragnedda and Muschert (2013), which suggest that the digital divide contributes to uneven representation in digital spaces, particularly in the creative industry.

On the barriers that hinder roadside artist entrepreneurs from accessing and utilizing digital tools and platforms, the findings reveal that respondents consistently identified all the listed factors as significant barriers. The results highlight several key obstacles faced by these artists, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of availability and affordability of digital tools, financial constraints, lack of government support, limited exposure to international markets, and a lack of mentorship and training opportunities. These findings are consistent with the research of Olutayo and Akanle (2021), and Ragnedda and Muschert (2013), on the obstacles faced by roadside artist entrepreneurs in accessing digital tools.

Regarding the investigation into strategies for enhanced representation, several strategies were identified by respondents as crucial for improving access to digital tools and enhancing the representation of roadside artist entrepreneurs. These strategies address the multifaceted challenges these artists face in engaging with digital platforms and expanding their market reach. For instance, forming clusters to facilitate easier access to digital tools would enable improved access by pooling resources and collectively investing in shared equipment like computers, cameras, and software, which might otherwise be unaffordable for individual artists. This collaborative approach not only reduces costs but also fosters a supportive community where artists can exchange knowledge

and skills, thereby enhancing their overall digital literacy. This finding supports the work of Olutayo and Akanle (2021) on cluster formations. The study also reveals that government intervention in funding and logistics, collaboration with international artists, establishing studios for the training and retraining of artists, showcasing artworks in international galleries to enhance representation and sales, and creating online platforms for global visibility and accessibility of artworks are other strategies for bridging the digital divide for roadside artist entrepreneurs. These findings align with the studies of Graham and Dutton (2014), and Ragnedda and Muschert (2013), on ways to enhance digital access for improved representation and sales.

To determine the magnitude of the effect of the digital divide on the representation of roadside artists entrepreneur, the regression analysis reveals a significant negative influence of the digital divide on their representation in the Anambra South Senatorial Zone. The data indicate that for every increase in the digital divide, there is a corresponding 26.8% decrease in artist representation. This finding aligns with existing literature, which demonstrates that the digital divide exacerbates disparities in visibility and market access for artists, particularly those in marginalized communities. As digital access becomes more limited, artists find it increasingly difficult to showcase their work, connect with potential buyers, and participate in global markets. This is supported by research conducted by UNESCO (2022) and Shen and Jiang (2024) on the correlation between digital access and growth.

Furthermore, on the effect of improving digital access on roadside artist entrepreneurs' visibility and economic opportunities in the art market, the regression analysis demonstrates that improved digital access significantly enhances their representation and boost sales. The B coefficient of 0.433 indicates that improvements in digital access are

positively correlated with enhanced representation and sales for roadside artist entrepreneurs. This suggests that as access to digital tools and platforms increases, there is a significant likelihood of improved visibility and market reach for these artists. This assertion aligns with the findings of Wilson et al. (2021), who found that artists who effectively utilize digital tools report significantly higher sales and broader market engagement compared to those with limited digital access.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of digital divide on representation of roadside artists' entrepreneur. The study concludes that digital divide reduces the artist entrepreneurs' representation in the modern art world and highlights the barriers that roadside artists entrepreneurs in Anambra south senatorial zone face in accessing these tools. The digital divide not only limits their economic opportunities but also affect their cultural representation. Bridging this divide is essential for ensuring that all artist entrepreneurs can benefit from the digital economy and contribute to the global cultural landscape, it also requires collaborative efforts from government, art institutions and the wider community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Digital Literacy Training: implement targeted training programs for roadside artist entrepreneurs to improve their digital literacy and ability to use online platforms effectively.
2. Access to Technology: facilitate access to affordable digital devices and reliable internet services through government or NGO-led initiatives.

3. Creation of Local Digital Art Platforms: Develop and promote digital platforms specifically designed to showcase the work of roadside artist entrepreneurs in Anambra south senatorial zone and in general, allowing them to reach broader audience.

4. Policy Advocacy: Advocate for policies that support digital inclusion in the arts, ensuring that artists from all backgrounds can participate in the digital economy through forming clusters.

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