Research Article

Artistic Inspiration through Digital Platforms and Offline Experiences: How Artists Use Instagram and Beyond

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Abstract
The rapid development of digital platforms has changed how artists find inspiration. In particular, visual content-driven platforms like Instagram have become a key tool for artists to easily access a wide range of work and stay up to date with the latest trends. However, there has been less specific research on how this trend affected artists' search for inspirations and the blending of opportunities from offline (traditional) and online (recent) channels. In this context, through an online survey (N=23), this study aims to explore how artists utilize digital platforms to find the inspiration they need to create, and to understand what the interplay of digital and offline inspiration means for the contemporary artistic process.
Keywords: Online Platform, Artistic Inspiration, Instagram.

1. Introduction
Recently, the functionality and usage range of digital platforms has been rapidly increasing [1]. This wide expansion of usage are serving more than just a personal communication tool, and dramatically changing the way individuals get, share, and consume information [2, 3]. For example, as a digital platform that mainly deals with visual contents, Instagram has been an important tool for artists and creators by providing creative inspirations. Among this variety of usages, how people seeking for artistic inspiration are taking advantage of Instagram can be considered as a significant research interest.

Figure 1. The range of Instagram usage is expanding.

However, how effective these digital platforms such as Instagram are working as sources of artistic inspiration and how artists use them as a tool for getting insights are less clearly studied yet. In this context, we are exploring how artists are utilizing digital platforms for collecting artistic inspirations, with these following three research questions:

1) How do artists get artistic inspiration from Instagram?
2) How do artists utilize digital platforms other than Instagram to get artistic inspiration?
3) How do artists get artistic inspiration from offline experiences?

Among popular digital platforms, we especially focused on Instagram, as its visually driven interface and extensive global user base make it a prominent platform for artists. Additionally, we also included

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inspirations from offline experiences, aiming for comparing it with digital platform experiences and determining unique characteristics of both sides.

Through a survey (N=23) adapting these questions, we explored how artists and creators are combining digital and offline environments to find inspiration for their work. The analysis of the survey result revealed three important findings. First, the convenience and nice recommendation algorithms might play an important role in the search of artistic inspirations. Second, even if Instagram is a powerful source of such inspirations, artists also seem to utilize other digital platforms like YouTube or Pinterest, where they can search wider variety of visual content and professional artwork. Third, offline activities tend to remain an important source of artistic inspirations. Building on these findings, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of how arts practitioners use a combination of digital platforms and offline activities to find creative inspiration.

2. Background

The way artists find inspiration has changed dramatically over time. In the past, contact with the outside world-nature, religious symbols, mythology, etc.-was a primary source of artistic inspiration [4]. Many artists were inspired to create through direct observation of nature, religious rituals, or philosophical thought. In physical spaces such as art galleries and museums, artists were stimulated to create by viewing other works of art [4]. In addition, traveling and cultural exchange exposed artists to different cultures and allowed them to explore new modes of expression [5]. These offline experiences provided artists with deep inspiration and allowed for a reflective, long-term creative process [6].

But in the second half of the 20th century, advances in mass media and technology began to change the way artists found inspiration. New visual media such as photography, film, and television provided artists with a wider and more diverse source of inspiration [7]. In particular, pop culture and visual symbols became more frequently featured in artwork, which allowed art to evolve into a medium that could communicate with a wider audience.

In the 21st century, the prevalence of digital technology and the internet has once again changed the way artists find inspiration. Digital platforms, especially visually-oriented social media like Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube, have provided artists with an instant and vast source of inspiration [8]. Artists now have real-time access to the work of a wide range of creators from all over the world, allowing them to quickly pick up on new trends or techniques. These digital platforms have transcended the physical constraints of the past, allowing anyone, anywhere to access a wide range of artistic stimuli.

Based on this historical context, this study aims to analyze how digital platforms and offline experiences provide inspiration for contemporary artists, compare the advantages and disadvantages of each method, and explore their impact on the artistic creation process.

3. Method
3.1. Participants
We gathered 17 art students and 6 art teachers for the study. The students' ages ranged from 17 to 20 years old (average = 17.9, SD = 0.9) and their artistic practice varied from 1 year to more than 5 years. On the other hand, the teachers aged from 43 to 64 years (average = 56.3, SD = 7.9), with a similarly diverse range of artistic experience.

3.2. Survey
The survey was distributed online via Goolge Forms. Since we aimed at looking into this topic in multi-faceted viewpoint, survey items consisted of three sections, each relevant to research question: collecting artistic inspiration through Instagram, various digital platforms, or offline activities. The questionnaire included different question types, such as single-choice, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions.

3.3. Analysis
The survey data was analyzed through methods appropriate for each specific type of question. For multiple-choice questions, our analysis was focused on the top three most popular answers, or those chosen by the majority. In the case of single-choice questions, the percentage of responses for each option was employed in order to gain insight into the preferences of the participants. Responses on a Likert scale (1 to 5) were analysed using a one-sample t-test, with the aim of comparing the average score to 3.0 and checking for statistical significance at a 95% confidence level. Lastly, for open-ended questions, the key themes were

identified through a process of summarizing the important ideas mentioned by participants. These methods allowed us to explore how art practitioners find inspiration through both digital platforms and offline activities.

<div align="center">Table 1. Questionnaire used for survey.</div>

Section	Question	Answer type
#1: Collecting artistic inspiration through Instagram	How useful do you think Instagram is for getting artistic inspiration?	Likert scale (1-5)
	What is your main way of getting artistic inspiration from Instagram?	Multiple-choice
	What elements influence you the most when getting artistic inspiration from Instagram?	Multiple-choice
	Why do you use Instagram as a source of inspiration?	Multiple-choice
#2: Collecting artistic inspiration through various digital platforms	What platforms other than Instagram do you mainly use to get artistic inspiration?	Multiple-choice
	Why do you prefer other platforms for better artistic inspiration?	Multiple-choice
	How do you mainly get inspiration from the selected platforms?	Multiple-choice
	Do you think you get inspiration more often from other platforms compared to Instagram?	Single-choice
#3: Collecting artistic inspiration through offline activities	What methods do you use, other than internet browsing or SNS for artistic inspiration?	Multiple-choice
	How often do you get artistic inspiration from non-internet sources?	Likert scale (1-5)
	What are the advantages of getting artistic inspiration offline rather than through SNS or internet browsing?	Multiple-choice
	How do you perceive the quality differences between inspiration gained online and offline?	Single-choice

4. Result
4.1. Collecting Artistic Inspiration through Instagram
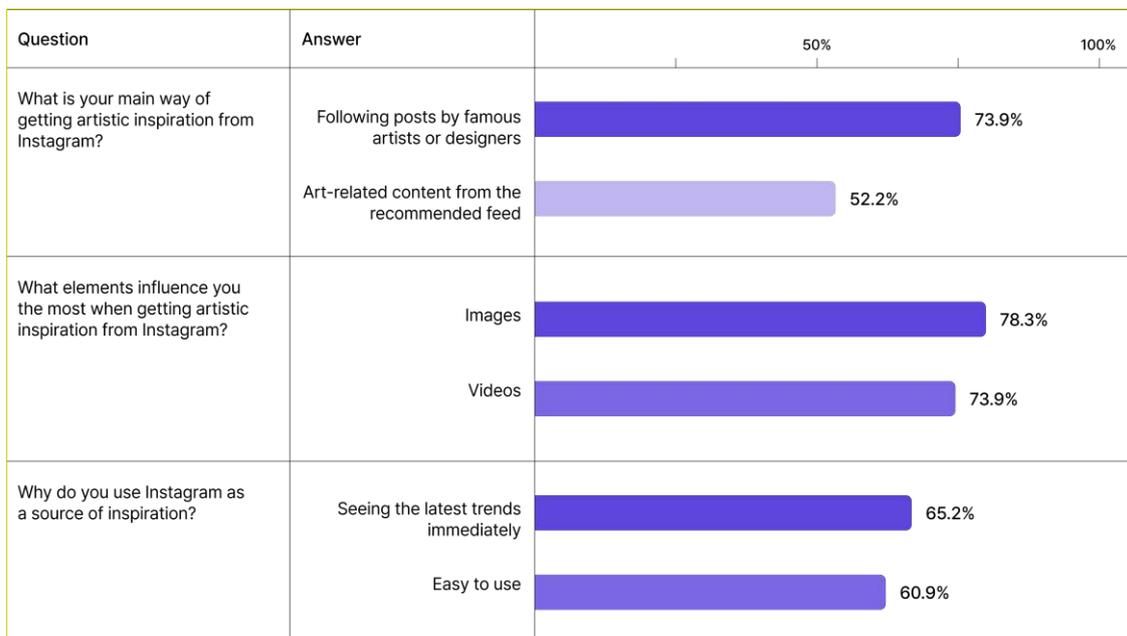
<div align="center">**Figure 2.** Answers for section #1.</div>

The first section of this survey was designed to understand how artists get inspirations through Instagram. As a result, we could find that they mainly take advantage of convenient user experience and strong recommendation algorithm of Instagram. In other words, it can be said that these characteristics of Instagram play important roles in the search of artistic inspirations.

When asked in the survey how useful they think Instagram is for artistic inspiration, the average Likert scale (1-5) of the respondents was 3.5, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.011. This suggests that artists perceive Instagram as a useful source of inspiration. In particular, the top two ways artists find artistic inspiration on Instagram are by following posts from famous artists or designers (73.9%) and exploring art-related content in the recommended feed (52.2%). Additionally, we also found that images (78.3%) and videos (73.9%) are the most influential factors when it comes to finding artistic inspiration on Instagram. This means that visual content is the most stimulating for artists. Lastly, the main reasons they use Instagram as a source of inspiration were that they can see the latest trends right away (65.2%) and that it is easy to use (60.9%). These results show that the convenience and immediacy of Instagram is a key factor in finding artistic inspiration.

4.2. Collecting Artistic Inspiration through Various Digital Platforms

The second section was focused on how artists make use of digital platforms other than Instagram to get inspirations. The results suggested that other platforms are also widely used, each on their own merits. YouTube (73.9%) and Pinterest (69.6%) are the most popular platforms used in addition to Instagram, suggesting that multiple digital platforms are being utilized as key tools for artistic inspiration. Moreover, 39.1% of the participants said they find inspiration more often on other platforms, while 34.8% said it's about the same. This shows that most artists might prefer other platforms besides Instagram. The reasons why other platforms are more favorable for artistic inspiration than Instagram are that they offer more visual content (60.9%) and more professional work (43.5%). In addition, the main ways artists use YouTube and Pinterest are to search and save images (69.6%) and follow artists/designers (69.6%). This shows that artists value platforms that provide rich, diverse, and professional content, which helps them in their creative process.
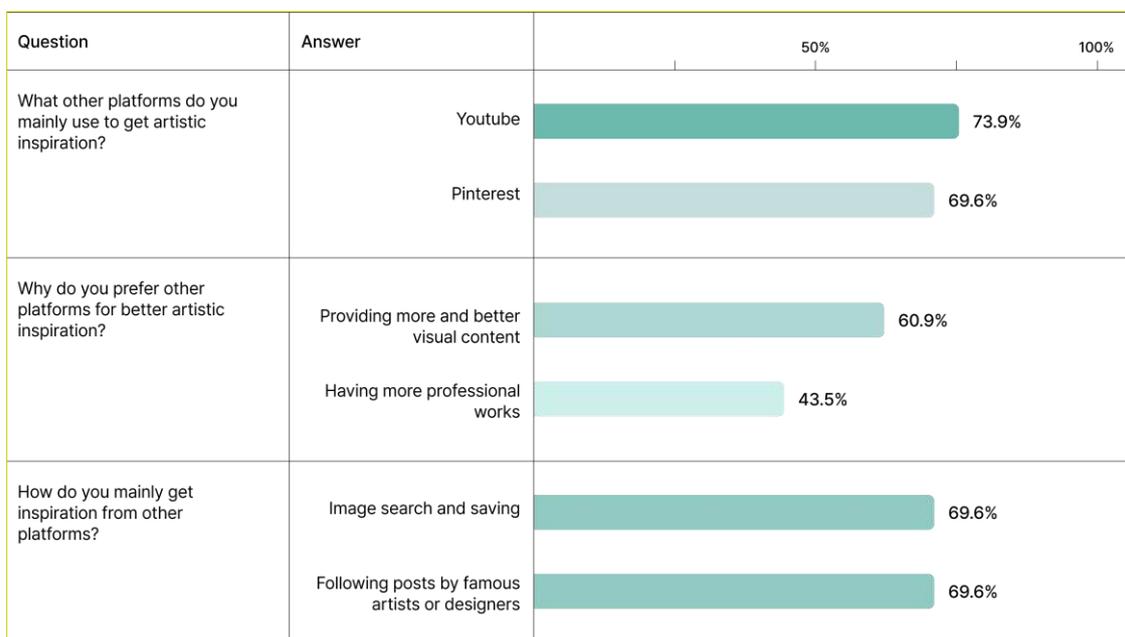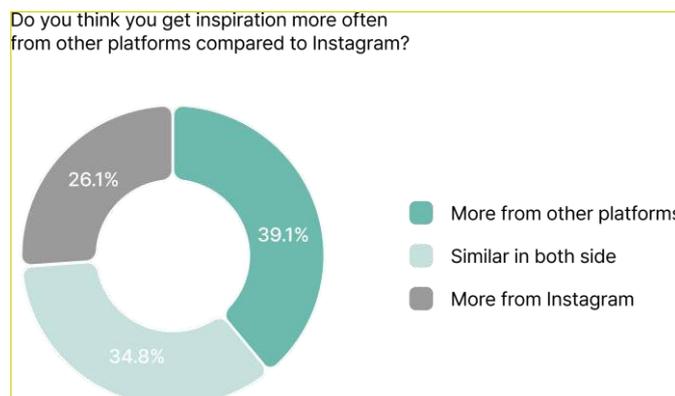

Figure 3. Answers for section #2.

Figure 3.1. Do you think you get inspiration more often from other platforms compared to Instagram?

4.3. Collecting Artistic Inspiration through Offline Activities

Through the third section, we looked into how artists get inspiration from offline experiences or activities. The results of the study showed that offline activities are still an important source of artistic inspiration, despite the active use of online platforms.

The main sources of artistic inspiration offline include visiting art galleries and museums (78.3%), listening to music (73.9%), and observing nature or cityscapes (56.5%). The average Likert scale (1-5) frequency of finding inspiration offline was 3.91, with a highly significant difference at a p-value < 0.001. This suggests that offline activities remain a deep source of inspiration for many artists. The most frequently cited benefits of offline activities are that they allow for more spontaneous and intuitive inspiration (87%) and that the physical space or atmosphere inspires them (78.3%). Additionally, when asked about the qualitative difference between finding inspiration online and offline, the most common response was that offline inspiration is deeper and more lasting (47.8%). These results suggest that there is a significant difference in the quality of inspiration that offline activities provide compared to digital platforms, and that many artists still value the value of offline inspiration.
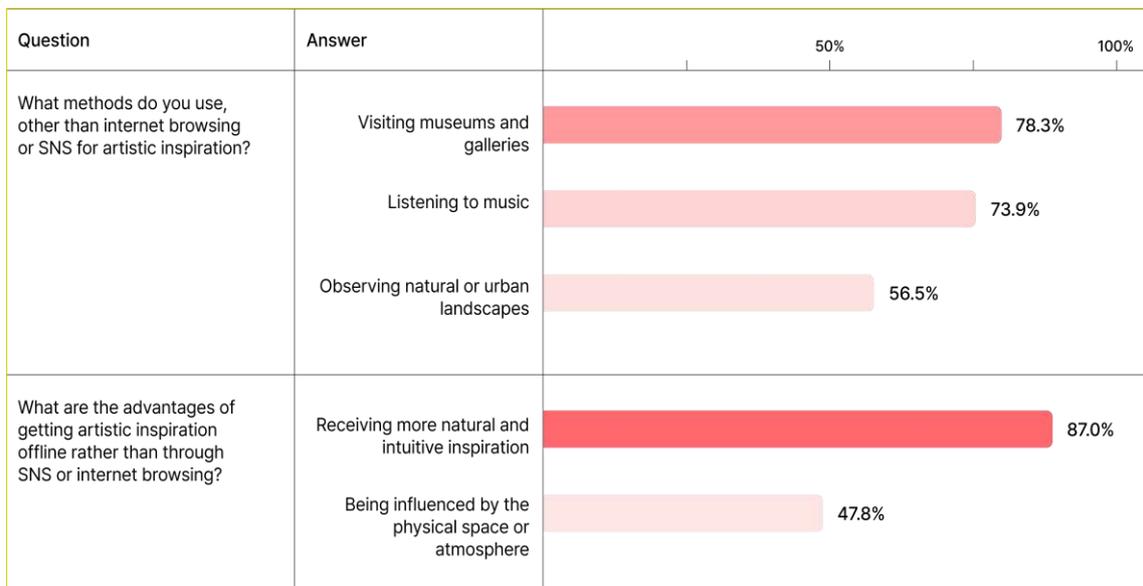

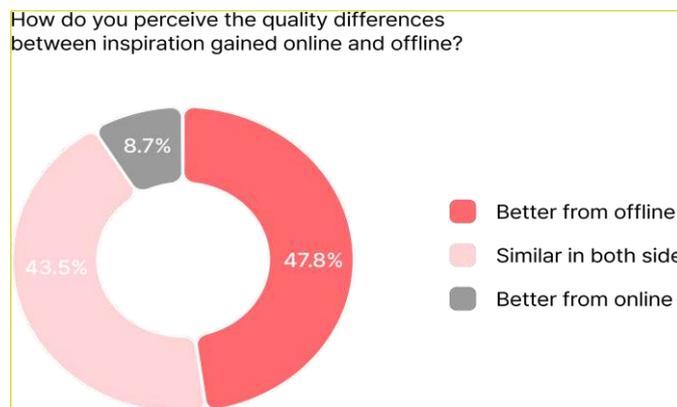**Figure 4**. Answers for section #3.

Figure 4.1. How do you perceive the quality differences between inspiration gained online and offline?

5. Discussion

Before the study, we assumed that artists would primarily utilize digital platforms for artistic inspiration, based on their rising popularity. In particular, we expected Instagram to play an important role. Indeed, the result suggested that Instagram is an important source of inspiration for artists due to its easy user experience and powerful recommendation algorithms. Additionally, other digital platforms, such as YouTube and Pinterest, are also frequently used as tools for artists, and are favored by artists owing to the richness of visual content and the availability of professional work. This suggests that digital platforms are serving as an important medium to quickly find inspiration and access a wide range of works.

However, contrary to expectations, many artists still report deeper and more lasting inspiration from offline activities. This shows that despite digital platforms' strengths in convenience and providing real-time trends, it is hard to replace the intuitive, sensory experience of being in a physical space. Offline activities such as visiting museums, observing nature, and listening to music offer immersion and sensory stimulation that digital platforms cannot provide, and these are important sources of inspiration for artistic creation. The spontaneous and serendipitous experiences that offline activities offer provide a different kind of inspiration that is difficult to achieve in a digital environment.

Nevertheless, the influence of digital platforms on artists cannot be ignored, and the ability to quickly access the latest trends and diverse works from around the world has become an invaluable tool for contemporary artists. Digital platforms have become an integral part of the artistic inspiration process, and artists are using them to connect with a global network and as a broader window into the formation of new ideas. As a result, artists seem to be utilizing digital platforms and offline activities complementarily, maximizing the benefits of each. This is a positive sign that both digital platforms and offline activities play an important role in artistic creation.

Limitations of this study include the fact that the artists surveyed were limited to a specific group of artists, so the results may not be generalizable to all artists, and the lack of in-depth analysis of the specific use of each digital platform. Future research could expand the survey to include a more diverse group of artists and analyze more specifically the qualitative differences in inspiration from different digital platforms and their impact on the creative process. It would also be useful to track the impact of digital and offline activities on artistic inspiration over the long term to examine the actual differences in creative practice.

6. Conclusion
This research aimed for understanding how artists get inspirations in the era of digital platforms, particularly focusing on Instagram as a prominent visual content-based platform. The result of the survey (N=23) indicates three findings: (1) The convenience and reliable content recommendation of Instagram is helpful for getting artistic inspirations, (2) Other digital platforms with profound visual contents, such as YouTube or Pinterest, are also capable of providing inspirations, (3) Offline activities are still remaining as an important source of deep and lasting artistic inspirations. The contributions of this research are, first, that it provides insights into how digital platforms and offline activities complement each other in the artistic creation process, and, second, that by specifically analyzing how artists combine different platforms and experiences for inspiration, it provides direction for future creative tool development.

Declarations

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