

ASSESSING LEARNERS' DEMAND FOR MUSIC COURSES ON SWAYAM: INSIGHTS FROM ENROLLED LEARNERS

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Abstract

Introduction: The study emphasizes SWAYAM's potential to enhance education accessibility in India through MOOCs, addressing digital literacy and infrastructure challenges. Collaborative efforts and improved awareness are essential to achieving inclusive, quality education for diverse learners nationwide.

Objective: The study explores SWAYAM learners' demographics and examines their demand and interest in music courses offered on the platform.

Methodology: The study titled "Assessing Learners' Demand for Music Courses on SWAYAM" surveyed 243 learners. It analysed demographics, with 55% male and 61% urban participants. Respondents included students (69%), diverse age groups (16–61), and varying qualifications, predominantly undergraduates and postgraduates. Quantitative data highlighted interest in SWAYAM's music courses.

Conclusion: The study concludes that SWAYAM holds significant potential as a popular platform for online music education, driven by learners' personal interest, availability of free courses, and professional development opportunities. Classical music and vocal training emerged as the most sought-after areas, while interest in contemporary and niche music genres also showed steady engagement. Courses like Music Theory and Composition gained the highest popularity, reflecting the demand for foundational and creative skills. Learners expressed positive attitudes toward continuing music education on SWAYAM, highlighting its potential to cater to diverse interests and expand its reach by offering a variety of accessible and quality courses.

Key Words: SWAYAM Platform, MOOCs Courses, Music Course, Online Music Course and Learners

INTRODUCTION

The study examines the success of SWAYAM, an open and remote education system that provides massive open online courses via ICT. It focuses on determining the topic domains and enrolment of learners to evaluate their willingness to participate. The research aims to inform policymakers, determine enrolment characteristics, and determine the need for more government, coordinator, and institutional initiatives to ensure benefits are distributed to every segment of society, aiming for education for all (Samanta, 2018). Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have gained popularity in India since the early 2010s due to their low tuition costs, flexibility, and ease of access. These student-friendly courses promote open participation and free education, especially in rural areas. The Indian government has shown interest in MOOCs for standardized education, prioritizing MOOC provision at 2,200 colleges, 500 government institutions, 300 schools, and 50 vocational training centers in the Union Budget FY17. This demonstrates the government's commitment to improving online education quality (Haumin and Madhusudhan, 2019).

India's education system has evolved through various phases, including the Gurukul System, British model, government-controlled process, and virtual and satellite platforms. However, many graduates leave education due to financial, familial, or other factors. The Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD) has created SWAYAM, an online learning platform, to address these issues and provide employable skills. SWAYAM can host 80,000 hours of learning and 2,000 courses for various levels. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has announced Regulation, 2016 governing the credit Framework for online learning courses through SWAYAM (Subramanyam and Sowmya, 2019). The Indian Government has launched SWAYAM, a Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) platform, to provide accessible, equitable, and quality education. However, its success depends on user awareness and its potential to enhance lifelong learning skills. Low awareness among Commerce students is influenced by factors like lack of ICT skills, classroom teaching, and one-to-one contact with educators. Collaboration between the government, national coordinators of

SWAYAM, universities, and Industry Academia is needed to encourage students to adopt MOOCs (**Ambadkar, 2020**).

The SWAYAM platform, developed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the All-India Council for Technical Education, offers engineering and law courses using video lectures, printed reading materials, self-assessment quizzes, and discussion forums. SWAYAM, also known as Study Webs of Active-learning for Young Aspiring Minds, is a statewide MOOC podium in India that aims to provide high-quality, affordable, and accessible education at any time and location (**Kamble and Chavan, 2020**).

India's educational system faces challenges due to ICT expansion, leading to the implementation of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and the development of SWAYAM, an online national gateway for excellent education. SWAYAM offers free or low-cost courses, focusing on quality of learners, content developers, and course material. The success of SWAYAM depends on the involvement of students, government, national agencies, and educational institutions. MOOCs are becoming popular in western countries, affecting India's education system (**Vijayashekarayanayaka, 2020**).

The Indian government's SWAYAM program aims to achieve three key Education Policy objectives: access, fairness, and quality. It aims to make instructional materials accessible to all students, including those not part of the digital revolution. To successfully implement SWAYAM-MOOCs, high-speed internet connections are required on all campuses, and teachers must motivate students to use MOOCs effectively. The program also aims to preserve the country's cultural and linguistic legacy (**Pujar, 2021**).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study, **Samanta (2018)** stated that SWAYAM is a transformative step in open and distance learning, providing educational opportunities across diverse subject domains through ICT. The platform's success relies on government support, national agencies, and top educational institutions. This study underscores the importance of expanding awareness and enrolment to achieve inclusive education for all. Fostering broader participation can help bridge educational gaps and empower learners from all sections of society, fulfilling the goal of education for all. **Subramanyam and Sowmya (2019)**, in their research, presented that the SWAYAM platform is a significant innovation in the Indian education system, addressing the gap between formal education and the skills demanded by industries. By offering a wide range of courses online, it provides an accessible and affordable opportunity for learners to upgrade their skills, making them more employable in a competitive job market. The platform's integration with modern technology and its focus on practical, application-based learning make it a vital tool for the future workforce. As internet accessibility and smartphone usage rise, they play an important role in shaping skilled, job-ready graduates in India.

Agnihotri and Pandit (2020), in their research, revealed that SWAYAM is a unique initiative in India's education sector, aiming to provide free online courses accessible to all. However, despite its potential, SWAYAM faces significant challenges, including low enrolment and completion rates, limited reach, and the absence of career counselling and placement assistance. To enhance its impact, it needs to expand its horizons, improve course content, and increase awareness among students about the benefits of MOOCs. With better support and engagement from users, it can play a significant role in enhancing education accessibility and quality in India, contributing to sustainable development, and reducing educational inequality. **Lakshmi and Karthika (2020)** in their study highlighted the importance of SWAYAM as a cost-effective and accessible educational tool that enhances students' skills and knowledge. By leveraging digital platforms, it provides quality education to both urban and rural students, breaking down sociological, geographical, and political barriers. The findings suggested that it is a valuable alternative to online coaching, offering a blended learning model that benefits both students and teachers by providing access to diverse educational resources.

In the paper, **Vijayashakaranayaka (2020)** explained that SWAYAM represents a significant step by the Indian government to improve the quality of education nationwide using ICT and MOOCs. By providing free or low-cost access to quality learning resources, it aims to improve skill development and create a skilled workforce. However, its success depends on the quality of course content, the involvement of educational institutions, and the engagement of learners. The initiative's future will reveal whether it can fulfil the national dream of accessible, quality education. **Kaushal, Singh, and Devi (2022)** in their research paper highlighted that the Digital India plan aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society yet faces significant challenges like low digital literacy, inadequate infrastructure, and slow internet connectivity. While technology offers benefits such as improved academic quality, global access, and cost savings, persistent issues like illiteracy, accessibility, and information overload hinder progress. To overcome these challenges, the researcher suggested enhancing digital literacy, especially for women, and improving infrastructure. Initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan are critical in addressing these gaps, ensuring that digital transformation is inclusive and beneficial across all sectors of society.

Kaushal (2023) in his research article explained that while the Indian government's initiatives like Digital India and Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan aim to enhance digital literacy and inclusivity, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, slow internet, and high costs hinder progress. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative effort between central and state governments to improve digital accessibility, particularly in rural areas. Enhancing digital literacy, especially among women, and integrating digital tools in education are crucial for fostering a more inclusive and digitally empowered society. **Siddiqi and Kaushal (2023)** in their research paper revealed that adapting pedagogy for the 21st century requires more than just integrating technology; it demands a comprehensive shift in educational philosophy. Digital teacher education equips educators with essential competencies, adaptive strategies, and ethical awareness, enabling them to create inclusive and dynamic learning environments. This transformation empowers teachers to guide students in a technology-driven world, fostering innovation, adaptability, and lifelong learning. As education evolves, ongoing exploration and refinement of these intersections are crucial for future growth.

Negi and Kaushal (2024) in their article highlighted that digital education has become an essential part of modern learning, offering accessibility, personalization, and flexibility. AI, VR, AR, and blockchain will shape the future of education as technology advances, offering innovative and global learning opportunities. These developments will transform the educational landscape, requiring adaptation from individuals, institutions, and policymakers. Embracing these changes is crucial to unlocking the full potential of digital education, ensuring it remains relevant and impactful in an evolving world. **Patidar, Sharma, and Kaushal (2024)** in their survey revealed SWAYAM's effectiveness in delivering quality online music education, with learners expressing strong satisfaction and engagement, particularly valuing the video lectures. The platform's music courses have successfully met the needs of a diverse learner demographic, driven by personal interest and professional development. High levels of awareness, interest in certifications, and the likelihood of recommending them to others highlight their positive impact. The appealing course pages and overall user experience further enhance its potential for sustained growth and continued success in the field of online music education, positioning it as a valuable resource for lifelong learning.

Sharma and Kaushal (2024) in the research article revealed that bridging the digital literacy gap is central for India's progress towards a digitally inclusive society. Despite advancements in internet access and digital infrastructure, challenges remain, particularly in rural and underserved areas. By prioritizing digital education, skill development, and inclusive access, India can overcome these barriers. Collaborative efforts from the government, private sector, and civil society are essential to empower citizens and fully harness the benefits of the digital revolution, fostering a truly inclusive digital age.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The title of this study was entitled as "Assessing Learners' Demand for Music Courses on SWAYAM: Insights from Enrolled Students".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following were the objectives of the study:

- To know demographic information of learners enrolled in SWAYAM courses.
- To examine the demand and interest for music courses among SWAYAM learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design was survey in nature. Quantitative research methods were used to collect data. Quantitative data was collected using surveys. The survey link was shared with the learners enrolled in SWAYAM courses. A total of 243 respondents filled out the survey.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

A total of 243 learners participated in the study. Out of 243 learners, 55% learners were male while 45% learners were female. 22% respondents were from rural area, 17% respondents were from semi-urban area while 61% respondents were from urban area. 29% respondents were from 16-19 age group, 33% respondents were from 20-23 age group while 38% respondents were from 24-61 age group. 30% respondents were post graduates, 23% were graduates, 34% respondents were from 12th standard, while 7% respondents were PhD, 4% respondents were diploma/certificate holders and 2% had other qualifications. 69% respondents were students, while 31% respondents were from various occupations like business, service, self-employment etc.

RESULTS

Following are the results of the study:

• Internet Profile of the Enrolled learners

The most frequently used devices in accessing the internet are tablets and mobile phones. Desktops and laptops are also being used, while smart TVs are not that popular. The vast majority of individuals (86%) use the internet every day, while only a small percentage use it just on the weekends or one to four days a week. 37% of users spend one to three hours a day on the internet, 33% use it for three to six hours, and 30% are heavy users, using it for more than six hours a day. Education or learning accounts for 76% of the total, with entertainment coming in second at 15% and business, news, and other activities at 3% each.

Table No. 1: Online Music Learning

Which platform you prefer for online learning?	Frequency	Percentage
App	52	21
Website	80	33
YouTube	99	41
Other	12	5
Total	243	100.0
In which category are you interested in?	Frequency	Percentage
Dance	23	9
Instruments	55	23
Songs	138	57
Others	27	11
Total	243	100.0

What genres of music are you most interested in learning about?	Frequency	Percentage
Classical	118	49
Electronic /Digital music	67	28
Jazz	30	12
Pop	65	27
Rock	42	17
World music	64	26
Other	66	27

From the above table, it is evident that:

- **Most preferred online learning platforms:** YouTube emerges as the most preferred (41%) perhaps due to accessibility and availability of free stuff. Websites are preferred by 33%, so structured formal courses or platforms like SWAYAM are not only in trend for learning. Apps are also used by 21%, thus pointing to preference for mobile-based learning. In the "other category – 5%," it was pointed out that some or the other alternative platforms are being used.
- **Interest in Music Categories:** The largest interest is in songs (57%), which indicates a high interest in vocal music. Instruments (23%) also have a considerable interest, which may indicate a need for instrumental training. The smallest but still significant share (9%) is interested in dance, which may indicate a wider interest in performing arts.
- **Types of Music:** Classical music was the most popular type of music, with 49% of respondents having an interest in it, and therefore there is an even greater demand for more classical or formal music learning. Electronic/Digital (28%) and Pop (27%) are also popularly known genres, representing present or contemporary music. The remaining ones included Jazz (12%), Rock (17%), and World music (26%), each showing fluctuating but steady interest in an eclectic range of music types. Other genres (27%) also indicate an exploratory interest in less popularly known or alternative kinds of music.

Table No. 2: Music Courses on Online Platforms

Learners had taken following music courses online Total 99 learners had taken music courses	Frequency	Percentage
Introduction to Music Theory	41	17
History of Western Music	14	6
Folk Music Traditions	11	5
World Music Cultures	19	8
Music and Society	11	5
Music and Technology	23	9
Basics of Carnatic Music	10	4
Music Appreciation and Criticism	8	3
Basics of Music Composition	29	12
Introduction to Indian Classical Music	19	8

From the above table, it is clear that who has taken music courses on the online platforms reveals the following trends:

- **Introduction to Music Theory** is the most popular course, with 41% of respondents having taken it. This suggests a strong interest in foundational music knowledge, making it a key entry point for many learners on SWAYAM.
- **Basics of Music Composition** also has significant engagement, with 29% of respondents opting for this course. This highlights a notable demand for creative and technical skills in music creation.

- **Music and Technology** attracts 23% of learners, indicating that modern tools and technologies in music production and performance are a key area of interest for many.
- Courses like **World Music Cultures** and **Introduction to Indian Classical Music**, each taken by 19%, show that learners are interested in exploring both global and traditional Indian music forms.
- **History of Western Music** (14%) and **Folk Music Traditions** (11%) attract more niche audiences, likely those interested in specific cultural and historical perspectives.
- Other courses like **Music and Society**, **Music Appreciation and Criticism**, and **Basics of Carnatic Music** each have smaller but consistent engagement, with around 8-11% of learners choosing these topics.

Table No. 3: Motivation behind Music Courses on SWAYAM Platform

What motivated you to enrol in a music course on SWAYAM Platform?	Frequency	Percentage
Personal interest in music	68	40
Availability of free courses	29	17
Professional development	29	17
Recommendation from others	8	5
Requirement for academic or career purpose	10	6
Others	25	15
Total	169	100.0

From the above table it is evident that:

- **Personal interest in music** is the leading factor, with **40%** of respondents driven by passion.
- **Availability of free courses** and **professional development** each motivate **17%** of learners, reflecting the appeal of cost-free learning and career growth.
- **Recommendations** and **academic/career requirements** have a smaller influence, with 5% and 6% respectively.
- **Other reasons** account for **15%**, indicating additional personal or unique motivations.

Table No. 4: Music education in future through SWAYAM

Overall, how likely is it that the SWAYAM website will be used for music education in the future?	Frequency	Percentage
Likely	64	33
Neutral	44	23
Unlikely	7	4
Very likely	77	40
Total	192	100.0

Most respondents (40%) are very likely and 33% of the respondents are likely to continue using the SWAYAM website for music education in the future, followed by those who are neutral (23%), and unlikely (4%).

CONCLUSION

The findings from the study conclude that most of the participants are eager to learn music due to interest in it personally, the availability of free courses, and for professional benefits. Over half the respondents indicated they would like to take the SWAYAM offered music courses. Such variety would make SWAYAM a very popular destination for online music education by offering a variety of music courses to the learners.

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