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The Impact of Incubators on the Success of Innovative Agribusinesses Founded by Youths in Cameroon

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is a credible option for countries that aim to solve the problem of youth employability by supporting them. Therefore, the relevance of support structures such as incubators in an agricultural developing country like Cameroon is still relevant, and the analysis of their impact is necessary to the relevance and effectiveness of their action. The objective of this article is to analyze the impact of incubators in the agricultural sector, on the success of incubated firms by analyzing the direct impact of accessing the proposed services on the performance (development

and growth) of incubated firms; we started from the Service-Dominant Logic to analyze the value of the proposed services from the point of view of the incubates. We mainly used the PLS method and found that incubators through their services (infrastructure, training and coaching, consulting and assistance, and networking) have an impact on the development (management, strategic alliances, innovation development) and growth (employment and wealth) of agribusinesses founded by young people. However, this impact is somewhat weak.

Keywords: Incubators, services, success, growth, development, service-dominant logic

Introduction

Youth employability is an issue that should be of interest to all governments, whether in Europe, Asia or Africa (Amouzou, 2012 and Fomba Kamga, 2019). In this sense, for several governments and international organizations, entrepreneurship has become the last reasonably feasible bastion (Simen & Nganafeï, 2018). In Cameroon, for example, where underemployment affects more than 70% of young people (Bandibeno, 2017), several initiatives have been taken by the government to promote entrepreneurship: according to the NSI (2018, p. 10), based on the strategic orientations for development by 2035 (the Vision Emergence 2035),

> the government is implementing the Strategic Document for Growth and Employment, which makes the promotion of the private sector the main lever for inclusive economic growth. These strategic directions and the public policies that stem from them are consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG8, which aims to "promote sustained, shared and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" and SDG9, which aims to "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation."

However, in OECD member countries, about half of new firms die within their first few years of existence (OECD, 2017); Berger-Douce (2005 a, b) noted already in 2005, regarding firm survival, that priority is given more to creation than to post-creation assistance.

In Cameroon, about seven out of ten businesses die before five years of existence, and 80% of SMEs in die within two years (Molou, Fotso and Tchankam, 2020). Companies in the agribusiness sector are no better, even though agriculture is the lifeblood of the Cameroonian economy, contributing more than 70% to economic growth in 2017 (Business in Cameroon, 2018): their survival rate is about 40% (Jeune Afrique, 2016). It

seems that they need support to grow from their first years, to experience initial success and to sustain it (sustainable growth and development).

Indeed, the factors of failure of small businesses are generally related to the profile of the entrepreneur, the organization and management or the macroeconomic environment (El Manzani, Asli & El Manzani, 2018; Aazzab & Benzaouagh, 2021); their control is important and support structures are part of the solution because "*support is often presented as one of the factors of success of the projects of creation, resumption or development of business*" (Cuzin and Fayolle, 2006, p. 2).

. According to Latouche (2018), despite the specific objectives of promoters, support structures are structures that provide tailored support services for the creation, development, and growth of new businesses.

The incubator industry (support structures) is relatively young in the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Cameroon, especially in the agricultural sector, which supports the economy. Faced with their proliferation, the Cameroonian State issued Decree No. 2020/0301/PM of January 20, 2020, which sets out the terms and conditions for the exercise of the missions of small and medium-sized enterprise incubation structures. The growth of this sector therefore calls for a measurement of its performance in order to avoid the proliferation of incubators (especially in the agricultural sector, which is the mining sector of Cameroon's economy, like other developing countries) without really evaluating their impact on the success of the incubated companies (Jittou &. Chroqui, 2020); performance measurement is important for all stakeholders in the incubation process (benchmarking, improvement of practices, efficiency of the incubation process, funding, etc). However, despite the various studies on incubators, it remains difficult to establish a direct impact of incubators on the outcomes of incubated firms due to both methodological difficulties and selection bias (Bakkali, Messeghem & Sammut, 2014). Since the analyses performed can be centered on incubatees, incubators, services, etc. (Dee et al., 2012).

We choose to analyze the impact of incubators from the perspective of incubatees (Kouame, 2012; Arlotto, Sahut, & Teulon, 2012; Bakkali, Messeghem & Sammut, 2014; Bouarara, 2020), particularly through the Service-Dominant (SD) Logic and value co-creation. because "value is an indication of benefit, a net change in the well-being of a particular actor (Vargo & Lusch, 2018; p. 8), and "what customers get out of a product" (Karpen, Bove & Lukas, 2012 , p. 22; referring to Gronroos 2006), “a customer’s outcome, purpose or objective that is achieved through service’’ (Macdonald et al., 2011, p. 1). Service is "what is exchanged in the co-creation of value" (Vargo & Lusch, 2018, p. 8), and as incubators offer services that aim to improve the success (growth and development) of incubated companies which is the expected benefit or outcome of the

incubation process (Arlotto, Sahut, & Teulon, 2012; Vedel & Gabarret, 2013; Cuzin & Fayolle, 2006; Benhaddouch & El Fathaoui, 2022; Haddad & Melliti, 2018), this paper aims to analyze the impact (value) of incubator services, particularly those in the agricultural sector in Cameroon as this sector is one of the most important sectors of the Cameroonian economy where our research takes place, on the success of youth-founded agribusinesses.

In the remainder of this article, we will present the theoretical framework and hypotheses, the methodology, the results, and the ensuing discussions and recommendations, respectively, before concluding.

I. Theoretical framework and hypothesis

I.1 Innovative agro-industrial company

An enterprise can be understood as an economic unit that mobilizes resources to provide services or products to customers (Yao & Diomande, 2021).

The agricultural sector includes the subsectors of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and forestry (UNDP, nd). Agribusiness covers different types of agricultural activities or associated agro-industrial activities (Yumkella et al. 2011). In our study, agribusiness refers more to the agri-food system, operating in the different agricultural subsectors.

Innovation can be seen as the introduction of a new product, a new production method, a new organization or the conquest of a new market: it can be a product, process, organizational, commercial or even environmental innovation (OECD, 2005 and Schumpeter, 1934 cited by Assielou, 2008; Wallen Rural Development Network, 2015). This study focuses on innovative agribusiness firms.

I.2 Success of incubated companies and hypothesis

According to Masmoudi (2007), an incubation structure is an organization that nurtures ideas for (business) projects and/or business creation. They can be incubators that act upstream of business creation, incubators that intervene afterwards, gas pedals or incubators (Masmoudi, 2007; Cameroonian State, 2020). In this study, as in the one conducted by Albert, Bernasconi & Gaynor (2002), the term incubator refers to incubation structures regardless of their stage of intervention.

I.2.1. Incubator performance

According to Bakkali, Messeghem & Sammut (2014), the literature is not unanimous on measuring the success or performance of an incubator.

Incubator performance can be evaluated on internal criteria that they can control (process, services provided, and incubator staff) and external criteria (environment, incubates) over which they have no control Arlotto,

Sahut, & Teulon (2012), on incubation outcomes, incubates, network, incubation processes, or incubator management (Bakkali Messeghem, & Sammut, 2013).

According to Dee et al. (2012, p.15), research methodologies used to assess the impact of incubators on new business performance can be divided into studies that compare firms with and without incubators, studies that follow a comparative evaluation approach, and studies that focus on an in-depth investigation of specific tenants, incubators, or regions. We position our study in the last category. According to the same authors, the appendices for measuring the performance of incubators are based on performance outcomes, management policies and their effectiveness, or incubator services and their value added. It should be noted that services are offered at various levels of quality, quantity or intensity; these include networking, assistance and advice, infrastructure, coaching and training (Albert, Bernasconi & Gaynor, 2002; Dai, 2014; Gafsi, 2017)

We place ourselves in the last approach given that the measurement of performance through services is based on an examination of the actual provision and their perceived added value to the tenant companies) and convene for that the SD Logic.

SD Logic is "a meta-theoretical framework for explaining the creation of value through the exchange of services among multiple actors integrating resources and forming institutionally coordinated service ecosystems" (Vargo & Lusch, 2018, p.740). The concept of service is very important to SD Logic; it can be understood as "the application of resources for the benefit of another actor or oneself" while value which is another important concept is "an emergent change, with positive or negative valence, in the well-being or viability of a particular system/actor" (Vargo & Lusch, 2018, p.740). SD Logic has established a few axioms: (1) service is the fundamental basis of exchange; (2) value is created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary; (3) all social and economic actors are resource integrators; (4) value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary; and (5) the co-creation of value is coordinated by institutions and institutional arrangements generated by actors (Beckett & Dalrymple, 2020).

Since we conduct our study from the perspective of the incubatees, we pay particular attention to the fourth axiom. In relation to the latter, Beckett & Dalrymple (2020, p. 5) in their study "A triadic actor view of business incubation value co-creation" state: "Desired and realized outcomes are determined by the recipient". Lange & Johnston (2020) measured the value of the incubation program as Outcome value: the value of the program toward improving business outcomes.

We consider the "improving business outcomes" as the success of the incubated companies.

Thus, referring to Bakkali, Messeghem & Sammut (2014), who stipulated that one could admit the existence of an intrinsic positive effect of incubators on the outcome performances of incubated firms, we hypothesize:

Main hypothesis P: *Incubator services increase the level of success of innovative agribusinesses founded by young people.*

I.2.2. Success of the incubatees

The apprehension of success varies according to the stage of development of the enterprise (Witt, 2004); the start-up phase (70% chance of failure) being very important for the subsequent development of the enterprise (Berger-Douce, 2005; Kouame, 2012; Benhaddouch & El Fathaoui, 2022). We consider in our study, for this reason and without excluding them, the enterprises that are in their first years.

For Djea (2018), success is a multidimensional concept: economic, business, organizational, social, and environmental. It is therefore measured along several dimensions; incubators are assumed to impact the success of companies in terms of growth and development (Latouche, 2018 ; Nicholls-Nixon & Valliere, 2020).

Thus, as we consider success as the benefit and outcome (SD Logic) of the incubation process, we retain as success criteria, growth in terms of employment, sales, market, finances etc. (Taher-Gheryaani & Boujelbène, 2015; Ayatse, Kwahar & Iyortsuun, 2017; Kiyabo & Isaga, 2020; Lange & Johnston, 2020) and development in terms of management, innovation, or strategic alliances (Bearse 1998 and Udell 1990 as cited by Masmoudi 2007) that occurred in the early years of firm formation (Kouame, 2012 ; Djea, 2018;) ;

To do this, we make the following assumptions:

H1: *Incubator services improve growth (jobs and wealth) of innovative agribusinesses founded by youth.*

H2: *The services offered by the incubators allow the development (management, strategic alliances and development of innovations) of innovative agribusinesses founded by young people.*

II.2.4. The profile of the entrepreneur

In terms of management, the human capital of the entrepreneur plays an important role in the performance and potential success of the firm: age, education, professional experience, gender (Woywode & Lessat, 2001; Laichi, Beddaa, & El Bakkouchi, 2022). In addition, the characteristics of the firm also influence its growth and thus its success (Woywode & Lessat,

2001). This can be the age of the company, the innovation, the incubator solicited, etc.

We group these elements of human capital and business characteristics under the name of the entrepreneur's profile.

For our part, we make the following assumption:

H3: Entrepreneur profile moderates the impact of incubator services on the success of youth-founded agribusinesses.

Incubator research is at the intersection of several theories. We have drawn on a few of these that are relevant to the purpose of this study.

II. Research Methodology

Our (empirical) study takes a positivist approach through the hypothetico-deductive approach and a quantitative methodology (Thietart, 2014).

II.1 Research model

Our search model looks like this.

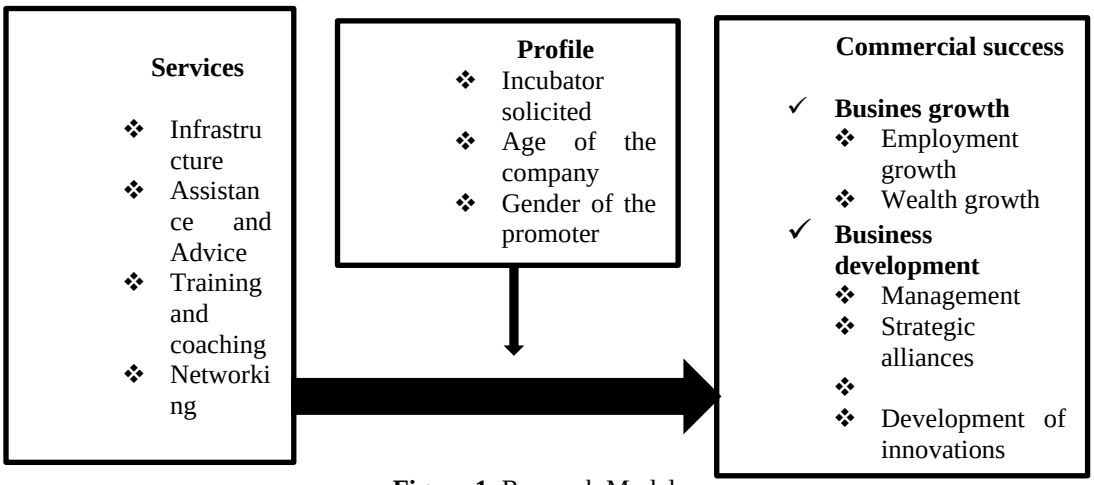

Figure 1. Research Model

Services are the basis of exchanges in value co-creation; in the case of incubators, Beckett & Dalrymple (2020) say that a service entity responsible for orchestrating the value co-creation process and integrating the required resources. In our study, with respect to incubatees, we measure services in terms of extent of access on a Likert scale of 1-7.

The success of companies is distributed in the dimensions of growth and development and are composed of indicators measured on the Likert scale on a scale of 1 to 7 (Masmoudi 2007; Kouame, 2012; Djea, 2018, Latouche, 2018).

II.2 Population, study sample and data collection technique

Given the emergence of the incubator industry in Cameroon and the socio-economic importance of agriculture to Cameroon, we conducted convenience sampling (Thietart, 2014) among incubators working in agriculture in the central region of Cameroon. These are the incubator Practical School of Agriculture of Binguela (EPAB), the incubator of the Agricultural Institute of Obala (IAO), the Seeds of Talent incubator of Yaounde, the incubator of the Catholic University of Central Africa (Incubator by UCAC).. They allowed us to contact their incubates.

Incubatees (entrepreneurs) and their companies are the primary target of our study. As the innovative agri-food companies were founded by young people, the companies studied had to be between 0 and 5 years old, the required age to be supported.

Our questionnaire was developed with 47 items measuring variables of the incubator's services and the success of the incubated company. Incubatees had access to the questionnaire via Google Form, through purpose-built WhatsApp groups, phone calls, and physical meetings. They were sometimes bothered by the incubators. The survey began in late January 2021 and ended in June of the same year; we obtained 128 usable responses (Bennaceur & Chafik, 2019).

The data processing concerned those obtained through interviews with the incubators and those resulting from the survey (through questionnaires) of the incubatees.

Content analysis (Thietart, 2014) of interviews with incubator staff contacted identified incubator-related factors associated with incubatee success (Masmoudi, 2007).

The descriptive analysis of the data from the questionnaires was carried out using Xlstat and Excel software in order to present the overall data obtained and the trends. This analysis was preceded by a partial least squares (PLS) analysis using Smart PLS3 software. The procedure for estimating the model by the PLS approach, consisting of testing the measurement model and the structural model (Bennaceur & Chafik, 2019), for this purpose we used the bootstrapping method with 500 iterations and a significance level of 0.1.

III. Results and comments

III.1 Descriptive analysis

In the survey of incubatees contacted through the incubators, we had 128 usable responses. The profile of the respondents is presented as follows:

Table 1. Profile of respondents

Demographics/Entrepreneur	Percentage	Demographic/Company Profile	Percentage
Education level of the promoter		Legal structure	
Primary	10%	Unregistered company	60%
Secondary	35%	Limited liability company	10%
Undergraduate University	25%	Cooperative	2%
Second cycle University	28%	Establishment	16%
Postgraduate University	2%	Arts and crafts	11%
		Economic interest group	1%
Incubator requested by the promoter		Type of innovation promoted	
EPAB Incubator	25%	Product	38%
IAO Incubator	50%	Commercial	40%
Seeds of talent	20%	Process	11%
Incubator by UCAC	5%	Organization	4%
		Environment	7%
Gender of the promoter		Sub-sector and field of activity	
Woman	34%	Agriculture	48%
Male	66%	Livestock	52%
		Age of the company	
		Less than one year	51%
		1 year	20%
		2 years	14%
		3 years	4%
		4 years old	3%
		5 years	4%
		More than 5 years	4%

From these presentations, it appears that half of the respondents are from the CAI incubator, which provided us with the largest usable list of incubatees. 78% of the entrepreneurs believe that they are promoting in the selected agriculture sub-sectors (almost the same proportion for agriculture and livestock), product innovation and business innovation. Half of the respondents started their activities less than a year ago. In addition, half of the respondents have not yet formed their businesses. Finally, the majority of respondents (38%) have a high school education and 66% of them are male.

Since our questionnaire is composed of several variables, the table below presents a description of the latent variables in our model.

Table 2. Description of model variables

Built	Statistics	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation (n-1)
Infrastructure	Im1	1,000	7,000	4,539	1,761
	Im2	1,000	7,000	4,563	1,635
	Im3	1,000	7,000	4,430	1,601
Assistance and advice	SCA1	1,000	7,000	4,531	1,357
	SCA2	1,000	7,000	5,039	1,288
	SCA3	1,000	7,000	4,906	1,354
	SCA4	1,000	7,000	5,109	1,443
	SCA5	1,000	7,000	5,508	1.027
Training and coaching	FMC1	3,000	7,000	5,789	0.911
	FMC2	3,000	7,000	5,609	0.872
	FMC3	4,000	7,000	5,867	0.864
	FMC4	4,000	7,000	5,492	0.896
Networking	MR1	1,000	7,000	4,414	1,423
	MR2	1,000	7,000	4,727	1,373
	MR3	1,000	7,000	4,445	1,640
Employment growth	CE1	1,000	7,000	4,172	1,164
	3RD GRADE	1,000	7,000	3,930	1,358
	CE3	1,000	7,000	3,930	1,299
Wealth growth	CR1	1,000	7,000	4,094	1,200
	CR2	1,000	7,000	4,031	1,183
	CR3	1,000	7,000	4,211	1,278
	CR4	1,000	7,000	4,211	1,188
	CR5	1,000	7,000	3,875	1,204
Management	MA1	1,000	7,000	4,617	1,151
	MA2	1,000	7,000	4,844	1,097
	MA3	1,000	7,000	4,750	1,191
	MA4	1,000	7,000	4,820	1,207
Strategic Alliance	AS1	1,000	7,000	4,352	1,440
	AS2	1,000	7,000	4,023	1,180
	AS3	1,000	7,000	4,258	1,256
Development of innovations	DI1	1,000	7,000	4,898	1,279
	DI2	1,000	7,000	4,641	1,266
	DI3	1,000	7,000	4,469	1,304

III.2 Estimation of the model

III.2.1. Validation of the measurement model

III.2.1.1. Composite reliability

The following table presents the reliability of the constructs in our research model.

Table 3. Reliability of constructs and external loads (external loaders)

Latent variables	Manifestos variables	External expenses	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	Reliability of the composite	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Strategic Alliance	AS1	0.859	0.804	0.812	0.884	0.717
	AS2	0.849				
	AS3	0.832				
Employment growth	CE1	0.745	0.806	0.869	0.882	0.714
	3RD GRADE	0.885				
	CE3	0.898				
Wealth growth	CR1	0.907	0.906	0.925	0.930	0.726
	CR2	0.857				
	CR3	0.813				
	CR4	0.855				
	CR5	0.825				
Development of innovations	DI1	0.832	0.823	0.886	0.891	0.731
	DI2	0.851				
	DI3	0.880				
Training and coaching	FMC1	0.730	0.724	0.800	0.822	0.539
	FMC2	0.853				
	FMC3	0.661				
	FMC4	0.677				
Infrastructure	Im1	0.722	0.652	0.729	0.800	0.576
	Im2	0.885				
	Im3	0.651				
Management	MA1	0.834	0.859	0.863	0.905	0.704
	MA2	0.879				
	MA3	0.788				
	MA4	0.852				
Networking	MR1	0.812	0.685	0.706	0.822	0.607
	MR2	0.787				
	MR3	0.735				
Assistance and advice	SCA1	0.724	0.792	0.798	0.856	0.544
	SCA2	0.772				
	SCA3	0.758				
	SCA4	0.761				
	SCA5	0.667				

IV.2.1.2. Evaluation of the discriminant validity

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Built	Strategic Alliance	Employment growth	Wealth growth	Development of innovations	Training and coaching	Infrastructure	Management	Networking	Assistance and advice service
Strategic Alliance	0.847								
Employment growth	0.567	0.845							
Wealth growth	0.695	0.663	0.852						
Development of innovations	0.586	0.573	0.619	0.855					
Training and coaching	0.121	0.307	0.169	0.315	0.734				
Infrastructure	0.168	0.263	0.214	0.098	0.178	0.759			
Management	0.477	0.525	0.619	0.625	0.320	0.256	0.839		
Networking	0.406	0.343	0.256	0.212	0.344	0.137	0.124	0.779	
Assistance and advice	0.062	0.313	0.160	0.048	0.452	0.333	0.236	0.465	0.737

Table 5. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	Strategic Alliance	Employment growth	Wealth growth	Development of innovations	Training and coaching	Infrastructure	Management	Networking	Assistance and advice service
Strategic Alliance									
Employment growth	**0.713**								
Wealth growth	**0.813**	**0.787**							
Development of innovations	**0.715**	**0.699**	**0.694**						
Training and coaching	**0.248**	**0.338**	**0.196**	**0.370**					
Infrastructure	**0.229**	**0.331**	**0.248**	**0.125**	**0.247**				
Management	**0.580**	**0.641**	**0.696**	**0.746**	**0.384**	**0.328**			
Networking	**0.519**	**0.408**	**0.303**	**0.253**	**0.501**	**0.313**	**0.155**		
Assistance and advice	**0.147**	**0.354**	**0.183**	**0.145**	**0.566**	**0.476**	**0.269**	**0.650**	

III.2.2. Estimation of the structural model

III.2.2.1. Predictive relevance

Table 6. R2

	R^2	**R Square adjusted**
Strategic Alliance	0.213	0.188
Employment growth	0.198	0.172
Wealth growth	0.103	0.073
Development of innovations	0.142	0.114
Management	0.146	0.118

IV.2.2.2. Validation of the hypotheses

Table 7. Testing the Service Hypothesis and Aspects of Business Success

Hypothesis	Initial sample (O)	Sample average (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	t-value (| O/STDEV |)	p-values	Interpretation
Training and coaching -> Strategic alliance	0.030	0.037	0.126	0.239	**0.811**	**Rejected**
Training and support -> Employment growth	0.163	0.169	0.102	1,602	**0.110**	**Rejected**
Training and Coaching -> Wealth growth	0.078	0.093	0.109	0.716	**0.475**	**Rejected**
Training and coaching -> Innovation development	0.334	0.339	0.103	3,241	**0.001**	**Accepted**
Training and coaching -> Management	0.266	0.270	0.137	1,936	**0.053**	**Accepted**
Infrastructure -> Strategic Alliance	0.175	0.181	0.110	1,594	**0.112**	**Rejected**
Infrastructure -> Employment growth	0.178	0.185	0.105	1,693	**0.091**	**Accepted**
Infrastructure -> Wealth growth	0.182	0.190	0.112	1,636	**0.103**	**Rejected**
Infrastructure -> Development of innovations	0.085	0.090	0.118	0.718	**0.473**	**Rejected**
Infrastructure -> Management	0.190	0.207	0.134	1,424	**0.155**	**Rejected**
Networking -> Strategic alliance	0.480	0.479	0.112	4,302	**0.000**	**Accepted**
Networking -> Job growth	0.228	0.232	0.114	1993	**0.047**	**Accepted**
Networking -> Wealth growth	0.222	0.224	0.112	1,980	**0.048**	**Accepted**
Networking -> Development of innovations	0.187	0.189	0.110	1,702	**0.089**	**Accepted**
Networking-> Management	-0.023	-0.026	0.112	0.202	**0.840**	**Rejected**
Assistance and advice -> Strategic alliance	-0.233	-0.208	0.136	1,712	**0.087**	**Accepted**
Assistance and advice -> Employment growth	0.074	0.100	0.141	0.529	**0.597**	**Rejected**
Assistance and advice -> Asset growth	-0.039	-0.022	0.137	0.286	**0.775**	**Rejected**
Assistance and advice -> Development of innovations	-0.218	-0.190	0.146	1,494	**0.136**	**Rejected**
Assistance and advice -> Management	0.063	0.083	0.126	0.502	**0.616**	**Rejected**

The table above shows the results of the hypothesis testing. Networking is the service that has the most impact on aspects of business success.

The moderating effects that make up the profile of respondents and have an impact are presented below.

Table 8. 1Moderating Effects

Moderating effects	**p-values**	**Decision**
Type of innovation promoted by the company		
Networks -> Management	**0.065**	**Accepted**
Education level of the promoter		
Training and coaching -> Strategic alliance	**0.067**	**Accepted**
Infrastructure -> Management	**0.076**	**Accepted**
Infrastructure -> Wealth growth	**0.076**	**Accepted**
Assistance and advice -> Strategic alliance	**0.024**	**Accepted**
Incubator solicited		
Networking -> Development of innovations	**0.087**	**Accepted**
Networking -> Management	**0.007**	**Accepted**
Assistance and advice -> Development of innovations	**0.070**	**Accepted**
Gender of the company's promoter		
Infrastructure -> Strategic Alliance	**0.064**	**Accepted**
Networking -> Job growth	**0.050**	**Accepted**
Company age		
Infrastructure -> Employment growth	**0.044**	**Accepted**
Assistance and advice -> Employment growth	**0.085**	**Accepted**

IV. Discussion and implications

Discussions revolve around theoretical and practical implications.

IV.1 Discussion of the results

VI.1.1. Research model

According to Table 4, the indicators selected in our study do indeed contribute to the formation of the selected constructs. Indeed, several of them have an outer loading greater than 0.6. Moreover, the values of Cronbach's Alpha are all higher than 0.65 and the AVEs are all higher than 0.5, thus testifying to the reliability of our constructs.

Moreover, after observing respectively the Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Table 5), which compares the square root of the AVE values to the different correlations of the latent variables, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT, Table 6), we find the discriminant validity of our constructs. They are easily explained ; the model is therefore stable.

VI.1.2 Impact of the service

From a theoretical point of view, our study is in line with the rare studies on incubators in the Cameroonian context.

While it has been acknowledged that it is difficult to establish a direct link between the incubation process and the outcomes of incubated firms (Bakkali, Messeghem & Sammut, 2014) or that direct measures have their limitations and do not seem to be useful for assessing the performance of incubatees or incubators (Dee et al, 2012), we convened SD Logic to assess the impact of incubator services from the perspective of incubatees on the development and growth (understood as the value or benefit of the incubation process and services) of their firms.

Our approach will have allowed us to consider, with regard to agricultural incubators in Cameroon, the relevance of their offers and their weight in the success of the incubated companies by specifically questioning the appreciation of the services offered. In this last impulse, through our study Following authors who have found that incubators are a factor in the success of enterprises (Cuzin and Fayolle, 2006; Bakkali, Messeghem & Sammut 2014), we can say that the services offered by incubators have a positive impact on the success (growth and development) of incubated enterprises. Nevertheless, as services (Ditandy & Meyronin, 2011), their weight is low (Table 7): we found that all R^2 are greater than 0.1 (Table 7).

According to Mourre (2013) referring to Croutsche (2002) and Chin (1998), we can say that our independent variables, which are services, explain to a small extent (less than 30%) the dependent variables, which are alliance strategy, employment growth, wealth growth, innovation development, and management; thus their impact is small; The results therefore reflect the value that the inucubates place on the various services offered by the incubators.

This result (Table 7) can also be explained: according to El Bassim & Elgraini (2021), citing the European Commission (2002), the success of an entrepreneurial support process depends on the following factors: the entrepreneurial environment, access to support and investors, and market visibility. Considering the economic environment of our study, which is that of a developing country whose economy is based on agriculture with a low average business environment (World Bank, 2020), we can invite incubators in the agricultural sector to adjust their offers as well as the environment to which their incubates belong. Faced with the low impact rate of incubators in the success of their incubates, we can also note the possibility of entrepreneurs (primarily responsible for the success of their businesses) to have used non-incubator resources for their businesses (Lesakova, 2012).

Furthermore, according to Table 8, which presents the results of the hypothesis tests, infrastructure services have a positive impact on job growth. These are physical or material resources offered by incubators (technical platforms, laboratories, etc.). As in the studies by Dai (2014) or Gafsi (2017), these services are likely to create value for firms and influence their performance in the early years when heavy investments are sometimes required.

Training and coaching have a positive impact on the development of innovations and management. In addition to the theory of resources evoked to explain this result, we can also raise the conclusions of the studies of Dai (2014) or Gafsi (2017), or Bosma et al. (2009) for whom training, taken as learning, has positive effects on the success, and even the performance of companies.

Consulting and support services have a positive effect on strategic alliances. Counseling and assistance could enable strategic alliance orientation for incubatees. According to Lin, Wood & Lu (2012), the role of incubators is not to advise entrepreneurs but to create the conditions in which firms can find resources for their development. The positive impact of the advisory and support service on strategic alliances fits into the latter concept. This also corresponds to the SD Logic axiom that social and economic actors are resources integrators (Beckett & Dalrymple, 2020).

Networking is the service that has the most impact on business success (multiple dimensions of success). This is similar to the findings of Bakkali Messeghem, and Sammut (2013) or Pouka, Nomo, and Houssou (2019) for whom networking is the most valuable service for incubators and entrepreneurs. Networking is a way for the entrepreneur to grow their business in the early years (Gafsi, 2017). Indeed, networking has a positive effect on job growth, wealth growth, innovation development and strategic alliances. Incubators provide their incubatees with access to networks that are difficult to access for an isolated company (Gafsi, 2017): markets,

information, technical support, visibility, etc. Some of the incubators studied have financial partners that fully handle the financing of entrepreneurs; others offer coaching and hands-on training opportunities with their network of professionals.

Networking can thus be important because the benefit of the incubation process (development and growth) that is the value, is in reference to the SD Logic, co-created: the network partners bring their resources that allow to co-create the value with the incubatee (Karpen, Bove & Lukas, 2012).

The profile of the entrepreneur has a moderating effect on the success of the firm. Laichi, Beddaa, & El Bakkouchi (2022) and Woywode & Lessat (2001) have emphasized in their studies the importance of the characteristics of the firm and the entrepreneur in the growth and success of firms. To this end, the promoter's level of education (Table 9) has a moderating effect on the impact of training and coaching services and advice and assistance on strategic alliances. It has the same effect on the impact of real estate service on growth and asset management. Laichi, Beddaa, & El Bakkouchi (2022) noted a link between education level and the quality of business management. Entrepreneurial education also enables entrepreneurs to better seize opportunities in their environment (Bosma et al., 2009). Similarly, the gender of the promoter, which is one of the elements of human capital and whose influence on firm success was noted above, has a moderating effect on the impact of real estate service on strategic alliances as well as on the impact of matchmaking service on job growth. By gender, the impact of infrastructure or networking is rated differently by gender.

The incubator used has a moderating effect on the impact of the matchmaking service on the development of innovations and management. It has the same effect on the impact of the consulting and assistance service on the development of innovations. Finally, the type of innovation promoted by the company has a moderating effect on the impact of the matchmaking service on management; this effect is also explained by the characteristics of the company and the diversity of the incubators. The legal form of the company does not have a moderating effect in our study.

IV.2 Practical implications, limitations and future studies

Throughout our study, we further emphasize the importance of incubators in agriculturally oriented developing countries like Cameroon by focusing on their impact as a token of their importance (Al-Mubaraki & Busler, 2015; Jamil et al., 2016; Bakkali, Messeghem & Sammut, 2014). However, the weight of these (agricultural) incubators as perceived by the incubatees, in our case, is low.

According to Lesakova (2012), the responsibility for making one's business a success lies primarily with the entrepreneur. Therefore, it is

important that the latter gets the maximum benefit from the incubator resources despite the observed shortcomings. Moreover, as in SD Logic the incubatee is considered part of the value co-creation process, the incubators' role is that of facilitator by maximizing their effectiveness as business support by better understanding the incubatees and adapting their direct services (Karpen, Bove & Lukas, 2012).

Knowing that the success of an incubator depends on the entrepreneurial environment, access to support and investors, and market visibility (El Bassim & Elgraini, 2021), the incubators studied (and more) need to make adjustments in order to be productive for both themselves and the incubated companies (Benhaddouch & El Fathaoui, 2022). For example, with regard to the entrepreneurial environment and access to support, incubators whose training has an impact on the development of innovations and management, but which is also subject to the moderating effects of the promoter's level of education on strategic alliances, should favor longer and more practical training; the reinforcement (in terms of number and skills) of their staff could allow them to better support entrepreneurs. In the same vein, the training of those close to the entrepreneurs who also constitute the socio-entrepreneurial environment in which they evolve would be likely to reinforce the success of the incubation process.

Also, with respect to the success factors mentioned above, incubators could strengthen their technical platforms. Of the incubators surveyed, only IAO has an advanced technical platform. Technical and state support would also be needed in this regard. Finally, knowing that the networking service is the most appreciated in the different dimensions of success, incubators should strengthen it. For example, they could further develop their commercial networks (for example, the acquisition of production equipment; the status of public utility could be important for incubators in this sense), their financial networks (by working with the state or other partners to set up or search for innovative financing means).

In addition, this study has some limitations. The lists of incubatees were provided by the incubators, which may lead to a sampling bias, without necessarily meeting the age criteria of the companies we had previously. In addition, this study involved only a few incubators that agreed to collaborate with us. Finally, we did not have access to documentary sources (e.g., financial statements) of the companies to make a thorough and reliable assessment. Finally, the next studies to be carried out should also concern more incubators and entrepreneurs in a prospective dimension.

Conclusion

The reasons for the emergence of incubators in the global entrepreneurial ecosystem remain valid: start-up failure, high mortality of

new enterprises, management problems, etc. In Cameroon, as in most developing countries focused on the agricultural sector , several agribusiness incubators have been created to promote the success of agribusinesses. They offer services as varied as infrastructure, advice and assistance, training and coaching, and networking. While we recognize that there are limitations to the absolute generalization of results due to the number of incubators surveyed or incubatees contacted, which were listed by the incubators without any control, t this study has shown from the perspective of SD Logic and the incubatees , that the services offered by the incubators have a positive effect on the success of youth-founded agribusinesses, i.e., on their growth and development; Networking is the most important service that has an impact on job and wealth growth, innovation development and strategic alliances. In this study, which is one of the few in the Cameroonian context, we use (following the panoply of methodological approaches already used in such studies) the SD Logic to understand the impact of incubators by focusing on services and their value from the point of view of incubates. Nevertheless, the entrepreneur's profile has a moderating effect on the impact of services on the different dimensions of success studied. Improvements in the incubator offer and the entrepreneurial environment are necessary to ensure that the support provided to entrepreneurs is effective.

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Disclosure Statement

The authors indicate that there are no competing interests to declare.

Data availability

Data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request.

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Annexes

A-Items and questionnaire

Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. Hello! We are researchers associated with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the Catholic University of Central Africa. We are conducting a study on the impact of incubators on the success of agribusinesses founded by young people. The objective is to find out if the services offered by incubators have an effect on the success of incubated companies, i.e. on their growth and development. This study evaluates the impact of incubators on both the incubators and the incubatees. It provides stakeholders in the field of entrepreneurial support with elements that may have an impact on their future strategic decisions.

The information collected in this survey is strictly confidential in accordance with Law No. 91/023 of December 16, 1991 on censuses and statistical surveys. Please take about eight to ten minutes to complete this questionnaire.

Section 1: Incubator Services

Response Mode: Simply indicate your response number: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Moderately disagree 4 = Neutral 5 = Moderately agree 6 = Agree
7 = Strongly agree

Infrastructure (Im)	**Answer**
Im_1: the incubator has provided an equipped space (field, laboratory, etc.) for the work.	
Im_2: the incubator provided various facilities (technology, etc.) for the work.	
Im_3: the incubator provided a room rental service for the incubatees.	
Support and consulting services (SCA)	
SCA_1: the incubator provided legal advice and assistance for day-to-day operations	
SCA_2: the incubator provided advice and assistance in banking relations for daily operations	
SCA_3: the incubator provided consulting and accounting assistance for daily operations	
SCA_4: The incubator provided on-site management advice (production) and support for daily operations.	
SCA_5: the incubator provided strategic consulting services	
Training and coaching (CME)	
FMC_1: The incubator provided a training service for entrepreneurs.	
FMC_2: the incubator provided a business management training	

service.	
FMC_3: the incubator provided a training service for business ideas	
FMC_4: the incubator provided individualized mentoring and coaching	
Networking (MR)	
MR_1: the incubator provided a service of access to commercial networks: customers, suppliers	
MR_2: the incubator provided a service to access the financial network	
MR_3: the incubator provided a service of access to technological networks: research centers, universities, technical partners.	

Section 2: Commercial Success
Response Mode: Simply indicate your response number: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Moderately disagree 4 = Neutral 5 = Moderately agree 6 = Agree
7 = Strongly agree

Growth of the company	**Answer**
Employment growth (EC)	
CE_1: thanks to the various services of the incubator, the number of jobs has increased.	
CE_2: thanks to the services of the incubator, the salary treatment has improved.	
CE_3 : thanks to the different services of the incubator, important recruitments have been made	
Wealth growth (CR)	
CR_1: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, sales have increased.	
CR_ 2: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, the net profit has increased.	
CR_ 3: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company's assets have increased.	
CR_ 4: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company's resources have increased (resources and assets).	
CR_ 5: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company has expanded geographically (sales, production).	

B business development	
Management (MA)	
MA_1: Thanks to the different services of the incubator, resource management has improved.	
MA_ 2: thanks to the different services of the incubator, the accounting management has improved.	
MA_ 3: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, the management of production has improved.	
MA_ 4: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, the management of finances has improved.	
Strategic Alliances (SA)	
AS_ 1: thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company has new financial partners.	
AS_ 2: thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company has new technological partners.	
AS_ 3: Thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company has new business partners.	
Development of Innovations (ID)	
DI_ 1 : thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company was able to frame its innovative ideas.	
DI_2 : thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company was able to conceptualize its innovations.	
DI_ 3 : thanks to the various services of the incubator, the company was able to implement its innovations in concrete terms.	

Profile
Answer mode: Write the number corresponding to your answer in the last column.

Profile	Answer
Education level of the promoter	
1= Primary 2= Secondary 3= Undergraduate 4= Graduate 5= Postgraduate University	
Incubator requested by the promoter	
1= EPAB Incubator 2= CAI Incubator 3= Talent Seeds 4= ACU Incubator	
Gender of the promoter	
1=Woman 2=Man	
Legal structure	
1= Unregistered company 2= Limited company 3= Cooperative 4= Establishment 5= Arts and crafts 6= Intercommunity grouping	
Type of innovation promoted	
1=Product 2=Commercial 3=Process 4=Organizational 5=Environmental	
Sub-sector and field of activity	
1= Agriculture 2= Livestock	
C ompany age	
1= Less than 1 year 2=1 year 3=2 years 4=3 years 5=4 years 6=5 years 7 = More than 5 years	

B - Presentation of the incubators (according to the interviews)

	EPAB Incubator	**CAE Incubator**	**Seeds of talent**	**Incubator by UCAC**
Year of creation	2014	2015	2010	2018
Developer	Cameroonian State	Obala Institute of Agriculture	Agro-SME Foundation, SIAD (International Development Support Service)	Catholic University of Central Africa
Financing	Grants, partnerships, institutional programs	Incubator services, institutional programs for youth training	Funders, services to project sponsors, grants	Catholic University of Central Africa, incubation services, partnerships
Tasks	Promote entrepreneurship and support projects	Development and production of technical-economic models (youth), technical reinforcement and training of rural entrepreneurs	Training and support for project leaders	Promotion of entrepreneurship, follow-up and support of projects and companies
Target	Rural youth who are not in school or who are already active in the agro-pastoral field	Profiles sought by the development programs that use the incubator, young people with the BEPC (general secondary education	Any project leader in the agro-industrial field	Primary target: students, alumni and staff of the Catholic University of Central Africa.

		certificate) level or higher.		
Network	Banks, microfinance, referents, trainers, commercial networks	Private, technical, public, financial and commercial partners	NGOs, microfinance, government, commercial and financial network, technical partners	Banks, financial structures, technical partners
Services	Advice, tax return follow-up, training to better manage your business, KAIZEN training, technical training with referents, classrooms.	Training (GERME: how to better manage your company, moral rearmament), Rental of premises, provision of training premises, etc. Technical platforms, networking	Personalized support for the creation and consolidation of business models, low-cost accommodation, access to financing, collective offices, networking.	Sharing spaces between creators, group training, personalized accompaniment by professionals, support in the search for financing.