

Digital Marketing Adoption Among SMES in Lagos Island Lagos State: The Role of Business Incubators

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Abstract

In Nigeria's congested commercial hubs, business incubators aim to transition micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from traditional trading to the digital economy. However, a significant post-graduation disconnect persists when entrepreneurs leave these controlled environments. This qualitative study explored the role of incubators in promoting digital marketing platform adoption among MSMEs in the Lagos Island Local Government Area (LGA), investigating graduates' lived experiences and the operational barriers they face. Grounded in Social Capital and Effectuation theories, the methodology involved 40 purposively sampled, semi-structured interviews with MSME owner-managers across traditional markets (Balogun, Idumota) and modern sectors (Marina, Broad Street). Data were analyzed using the Braun and Clarke thematic framework via Nvivo software, with data saturation achieved by the 28th interview. The findings revealed a stark Hub-Reality Asymmetry. The artificial comfort of incubators (stable power, high-speed Wi-Fi) failed to prepare graduates for the operational chaos of peak trading hours. As a result, entrepreneurs discarded complex, high-data strategies like custom e-commerce websites and SEO. Instead, they leveraged pragmatic, "Bird-in-Hand" tools overwhelmingly WhatsApp Business and Instagram to bypass local consumer trust deficits via real-time video validation. However, long-term sustainability is severely constrained by an "infrastructure tax" (alternative power and data costs) and a sharp post-graduation resource cliff. The study concludes that standardized digital training fails without accounting for hyper-local constraints. It recommends that incubators deploy low-data, context-aware social commerce mini course and establish solar-powered, post-graduation micro-hubs directly within market clusters to mitigate infrastructure deficits.

Keywords: *Business Incubators, Digital Marketing Platform Adoption, MSMEs, Hub-Reality Asymmetry*

Introduction

In today's African economic environment, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are essential to local economies, fostering employment and grassroots innovation (Endris & Kassegn, 2022). In Nigeria, Lagos State serves as the commercial hub, featuring a vibrant yet intensely competitive small business sector. To thrive in this congested marketplace, small businesses need to move past traditional in-person transactions and embrace digital marketing platforms such as data-driven social commerce, localized Search Everywhere Optimization (SEO), and WhatsApp

Business APIs to expand their market presence. Taiwo, (2020) cited that, the rate of independent digital adoption remains low due to gaps in technical knowledge, high customer acquisition costs, and significant structural infrastructure challenges.

Institutional solutions, such as company incubation environments, have quickly spread throughout Lagos to close these disparities. Private innovation hubs and programs like the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund's Lagos Innovates project serve as structural lifelines. By offering pooled resources, organized mentorship, and specialized marketing capacity-building, these incubators are in a unique position to help small firms move from old trading models into the digital economy. In the Lagos Island Local Government Area (LGA), this dynamic is very important. Lagos Island offers a distinctive fusion of traditional informal business and up-and-coming modern startups as a historic and high-pressure commercial hub with large wholesale and retail clusters, including Balogun and Idumota marketplaces. The qualitative, lived experiences of how businesses really internalize, adapt, and employ these digital marketing tools within the chaotic, practical restrictions of Lagos Island remain under-explored, despite the fact that incubators provide a safe location to develop digital competencies. The core problem is that, despite the spread of incubator programs in Lagos, many of Lagos' graduates, once they leave the protective centre environment, fail to adopt and maintain successful digital marketing strategies. While incubators teach standardized digital skills, there is still a significant disconnect between the theoretical training of centers and Lagos Island's hyper-local operational realities, such as serious power failures, high internet costs, and a rapid decline in organic social media reach. In addition, existing literature relies heavily on quantitative metrics (e.g. counting the number of social media accounts opened), leaving a critical qualitative gap in terms of how and why these entrepreneurs experience friction or success during the adoption of the platform. Without a qualitative study of these lived experiences, hub operators risk using generic "one-size-fits-all" training, which fails to give long-term market resistance to urban traders. The primary objective of this qualitative study is to explore the role of business incubators in promoting the adoption of digital marketing platforms among small and medium-sized enterprises in Lagos. The specific objectives are to investigate the lived experiences of incubator entrepreneurs on how incubator-led training and mentoring shape their transition from traditional sales methods to Lagos Island's digital marketing platform. Also, to analyze the specific operational and environmental barriers (such as infrastructure deficits and technical constraints) that hinder or facilitate the practical adoption of incubator-recommended digital marketing strategies among MSMEs within Lagos Island LGA. Therefore, this study explores the role of business incubators in fostering digital marketing platforms among MSMEs in Lagos Island L.G.A.

Literature Review

Business Incubators

The formal concept of business incubation began in the United States in 1959, when Joseph L. Mancuso opened the Batavia Industrial Center in Batavia, New York. Since then, the incubation model has expanded globally, with an estimated 7,000 incubators worldwide as of 2021. Businesses can overcome the difficulties of the early phases of company development with the help of business incubators, which provide a variety of services and support. Non-governmental organizations, educational establishments, nonprofit development companies, profit-driven real estate development projects, venture capital enterprises, and any combination of these could be considered as potential sources of BI. Particularly, BI has been an integral part of the

entrepreneurial ecosystem in developing countries, where it plays an important role in the growth of the economy and job creation.

They are considered a great support for entrepreneurs, they offer an adequate ecosystem for new companies, helping them both to recognize new business opportunities and provide support in the three basic functions of entrepreneurship, which are innovation and technological development, financial risk, and administrative management of the business to guarantee its sustainability (Fernández Fernández et al., 2015; Lukeš et al., 2019; Zapata-Guerrero et al., 2020). In research conducted by Bob & Yoram (2020), it was stated that the ability of business incubator management to guarantee the triumph of incubatee start-ups is measured based on its potential to raise funds, employ qualified people, and maintain the resources needed to run the incubation process effectively and efficiently to support the graduation of the incubatees as well as survive as an incubator. The understanding of the specific focus and services offered by each incubator is crucial for entrepreneurs to find the best fit for their venture's needs, this makes the incubation program more important and provides nurturing grounds to provide a combination of critical resources, mentorship, and infrastructure to support young ventures through their initial stages. Helper & Robert (2023) also conducted research on the role of business incubation on SMEs, The results of the research show that there is a difference in the success of incubated and non-incubated businesses. BI serves as a catalyst for regional or national economic development and includes academic institutions, non-profit development corporations, for-profit property development ventures, venture capital firms, and combinations of the above.

(Kowo et al., 2019) supposed that business incubation is an effective tool for promoting economic growth throughout the world, it serves as a catalyst in the process, starting and growing companies by providing entrepreneurs with the expertise, networks, and tools necessary or needed to make their ventures successful. The significance of BI cannot be overestimated, as businesses that receive BI support have higher success rates than those that do not. (Jusyin, 2023). Noha (2020) echoes this, stating BI can meet a range of economic and social policy needs, such as fostering innovation growth, wealth creation, technology transfer, and support for innovation. Bi offers several benefits to startups and the community at large, such as increased survival rates, promoting entrepreneurship, fostering innovation, and driving economic growth.

By providing a comprehensive support system to startups, incubators help entrepreneurs overcome the challenges of the early stages of business development and increase their chances of success. Finally, business incubation will continue to be an essential aspect of the entrepreneurial ecosystem as long as it is developed and adjusted to the ever-changing demands of entrepreneurs, especially in emerging states such as Lagos State, Nigeria.

Digital Marketing Adoption Platform

Digital marketing has become a vital part of business strategy in the 21st century, fueled by the swift advancement of internet technologies, mobile devices, and social media. It includes all marketing efforts carried out through digital channels, such as social media, email, websites, search engines, and mobile apps (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In contrast to traditional marketing, which heavily depends on mass media, digital marketing focuses on interactivity, personalization, cost-efficiency, and real-time engagement with customers (Rejouani, 2026). Syalfudin (2024), also indicated that structural flexibility dramatically improves accuracy and customer retention while cutting overall marketing expenditures.

Researchers have pinpointed several fundamental components of digital marketing: social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), email marketing, content marketing, and mobile marketing (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Each component gives SMEs the chance to increase revenue, improve customer relations, create leads, and raise brand awareness. (Ojeka-John et al., 2025). However, depending on the availability of infrastructure, digital literacy, and cultural context, SMEs' use of these tools differs by area. Adoption of digital marketing is increasingly seen by SMEs in developing nations like Nigeria as a strategic tool to get around market restrictions, grow outside of their local borders, and compete with bigger businesses. However, because of contextual and systemic obstacles, adoption is still uneven.

Hub-Reality Asymmetry

Hub-Reality Asymmetry conceptualizes the structural mismatch between the controlled, fully provisioned environment of a business incubator (the "Hub") and the volatile, infrastructure-deficient marketplace where entrepreneurs must actually operate (the "Reality"). Within the protective cocoon of an incubator, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are socialized into digital marketing under idealized conditions, supported by uninterrupted electricity, high-speed Wi-Fi, and immediate technical mentorship (Ayatse et al., 2017). This is in line with (Singh, 2024, stated that, once enterprises are isolated from incubators, they face severe infrastructural gap and volatile local market dynamics entirely on their own

(Obinna-Azubuike, 2026) added that, upon graduation, entrepreneurs experience immediate environmental shock when plunging into hyper-local commercial hubs like Lagos Island. The asymmetry manifests as a sharp operational cliff: the complex, data-heavy strategies taught at the hub—such as custom e-commerce websites and Search Engine Optimization (SEO)—collapse under the weight of erratic power grids, high data costs, and the frantic chaos of peak trading hours. To survive this, disconnect, graduates aggressively filter out theoretical frameworks. Grounded in effectuation, they pivot from sophisticated corporate systems to pragmatic, low-data "Bird-in-Hand" tools like WhatsApp Business and Instagram (Johanson et al., 2024). (Suleiman, 2024), in his view stated that, enterprises consistently reject high-cost, high-maintenance web applications in favor of free or low-cost social media tools to reduce marketing overhead and build localized customer.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Every nation and every industry have a slightly different perspective on MSMEs; typically, the number of employees, yearly turnover, or asset value of the business are used to determine what qualifies as an MSME. The number of employees and the company's assets—not including land and buildings—are the two primary factors used in Nigeria's National Policy on MSMEs (SMEDAN, 2017). As a result, a microbusiness, excluding land and buildings, employs fewer than ten people and makes less than ten million naira. Small businesses employ between 10 and 49 people and have assets between 10 million and 200 million naira. MSMEs are described as follows by the Bank of Industry (2020): Microbusinesses employ up to ten people, have assets of no more than ₦5 million, and have yearly

Eventually, their assets go above ₦5 million but don't exceed ₦100 million, and their annual turnover stays at ₦100 million or below. Loan amounts for these small enterprises are above ₦10 million but not more than ₦100 million.

Mentorship in Lagos Island Local Government

The quality of mentorship programs within Lagos Island local government incubators is a critical determinant of their effectiveness in fostering startup success. Key aspects of evaluating these programs include the establishment of clear and specific objectives for the mentorship program, the essence of which is to align the mentorship with the specific needs and goals of the mentee; and, in addition, ensuring that the mentor provides guidance and support. In view of this, LIC carefully selects mentors based on their expertise, industry knowledge, and compatibility with the needs of startups. Thoughtful matching ensures that entrepreneurs receive guidance from mentors with relevant experience. (Greco, 2023, Nijenhuis, 2020). Ghulam & Imran (2021) added that the role model function performed by the mentor is to enhance entrepreneurial intentions and to persuade mentees that unpleasant emotions (e.g., uncertainties, anxieties, and fears) are manageable, just as they have done themselves. This structured approach ensures that mentorship is purposeful and aligned with the developmental needs of startups. In Lagos Island Local Government, high-quality mentorship programs are recognized, the inclusion of mentors from various industries, backgrounds, and expertise areas is not left out. Incubators also enrich the learning experience for startups and expose them to a broader range of insights. Furthermore, the evaluation process is important, this is built into the program design from the beginning, and based on the mentor-mentee relationship. Furthermore, effective mentorship programs establish feedback mechanisms to assess the impact of mentorship on startup growth, regularly track and report on mentorship capacity, registration by the day and feedback from registration questions to ensure the program is on track and make necessary adjustment. Mentorship program in Lagos Island is an ongoing program, therefore, regular evaluations from both mentors and mentees for continuous improvement of the program are observe Successful programs provide continued support, facilitating mentorship relationships beyond the initial stages of incubation and adapting to the changing needs of startups (Aguiar, et. al., 2019, Schulz, 2020).

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on two major theories: the social capital theory (SCT) theory and the Effectuation theory. These theories are considered appropriate because they collectively explain resource utilization, technology adoption, and business adaptability in a competitive environment.

Social Capital Theory

In the 1980s and 1990s, three prominent academics Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam—were the main proponents and developers of social capital theory. Although Lyda J. Hanifan first used the phrase in 1916, these three political scientists and sociologists codified it into a multidisciplinary academic theory. SMEs' operations and performance are enhanced by social capital (SC) (Akintimehin et al., 2019). According to Analia, Syaukat, Fauzi, and Rustiadi (2020), social capital is a resource that SMEs use to increase their performance. Consequently, social capital extends beyond the success of SMEs to include politics.

The framework that explains how network-driven resources facilitate the adoption of digital platforms is Social Capital Theory. For traditional merchants, incubators serve as social capital engines, transforming intangible connections into tangible company assets. By physically connecting Lagos Island SMEs with IT specialists, suppliers, and digital agencies, they close structural gaps. They create a trustworthy atmosphere that reduces the perceived operational and financial risks of switching from cash-and-carry arrangements. By converting digital tools into a

regional, common language of commerce, they demystify complicated marketing jargon. Adoption naturally spreads when trusted peers in the incubator successfully increase sales. SMEs use technology because incubator-built social capital gives them the trust and access to use it, not just because it is available.

Effectuation Theory

Effectuation Theory, created by Saras Sarasvathy in 2001 focuses on how entrepreneurs truly think and behave when faced with high uncertainty. Conventional business models rely on causation that is, establishing a specific objective and figuring out how to get there. Effectuation, on the other hand, is an action-oriented paradigm in which business owners consider their present resources ("Who I am," "What I know," and "Whom I know") and envision a patchwork of potential results. The future is rather uncertain for a Lagos Island SME choosing whether to implement sophisticated digital marketing tools. This is how the function of business incubators in promoting such adoption directly relates to Effectuation Theory. The incubators engage in five principles, there are, Bird-in-Hand which includes a smartphone, physical customer base, and now, the incubator's free Wi-Fi and workspace. Incubators teach SMEs to run tiny, micro-budget ad experiments. In addition, incubators bring together tech startups, logistics providers, fintech partners, and fellow SMEs, helps SMEs pivot, and teaches the SME of how to control their content consistency, their customer engagement, and their data collection.

Underpinning Theory

The main focus of this research is the "Function of Business Incubators." An incubator's essential offering goes beyond simple amenities like office space and internet access; it includes connection to networks, guided mentorship, and access to a supportive ecosystem. The foundation for your study is grounded in Social Capital Theory, which is closely tied to this concept via three key dimensions that facilitate the adoption of digital marketing platforms among small and medium-sized enterprises facing resource limitations: structural capital (Networks), relational capital (Trust), and collective knowledge.

Empirical Review

Chetouane Hania (2023) conducted a study titled, digital business incubators and digital entrepreneurship: the case of digital incubation center in Qatar. The research utilized a qualitative design, employing content analysis to interpret both textual and visual data from sources including online databases, documents, reports, and scholarly articles. International benchmark reports were referenced to evaluate Qatar's position on a global scale in research, development, innovation, and digital entrepreneurship. The results indicated Qatar's dedication to digital transformation and its endeavor to establish a nurturing ecosystem for small and medium enterprises. The Digital Incubation Center in Qatar plays a crucial role in offering resources, mentorship, and a collaborative environment for startups. By teaming up with various entities such as government agencies, academic institutions, and industry partners, the DIC aids in fostering growth. There is absence of critical findings as the study did not provide specific, measurable, unique findings.

The topic of Intensive Incubation in a Changing Ecosystem: Concrete Evidence of Business Incubation and Start-Up Success in Nigeria was studied by Adeyemi et al. in 2025. This study investigates the impact of entrepreneurial support services on new venture success. This study is motivated by the growing significance of comprehending how non-financial support systems

contribute to the longevity and competitiveness of rising enterprises. 200 active start-up businesses that are presently undergoing incubation at the Technology Incubation Center in Kwara state between 2023 and 2025 make up the study's population. Using the MACORR sample size method, the study created a sample group of 123 that represented the entire population while taking into consideration a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. A well-structured questionnaire was distributed to chosen start-up owners and managers, and the gathered data were evaluated using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through R statistical software. The findings showed that all three types of support, including training assistance, business advisory services, and technical aid, have considerable positive impacts on the performance of start-ups. The model explained 67.8% of the variation in performance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.678$), suggesting it has robust explanatory capability. The research highlights that systems providing support for entrepreneurs are crucial for the development of start-ups and suggests improved capacity-building programs, mentoring opportunities, and focused technical support to boost the success rates of new businesses. Esin et al. (2025) investigated the role of business incubators in supporting start-ups in emerging markets, where resource limitations require entrepreneurs to either rely on entrepreneurial bricolage or invest in developing dynamic capabilities in their early stages. A quantitative research design using data from 403 start-ups, the study tests the moderating effect of incubator support on the relationship between bricolage, dynamic capabilities, and venture performance. The findings revealed that incubators significantly strengthen the positive impact of dynamic capabilities on start-up performance compared to that of bricolage. In emerging markets, incubators thus enable start-ups to cultivate adaptive, growth-oriented capabilities rather than relying solely on static bricolage practices. Christiana et al. (2024) investigated the adoption of digital marketing among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Lagos State, Nigeria, emphasizing challenges like limited resources, lack of expertise, and insufficient infrastructure. The research utilized a descriptive survey design, collecting data from 387 participants through structured questionnaires from a total of 11,663 registered SME owners. Descriptive statistics were employed for the analysis, and the data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study's results indicate a high level of digital marketing adoption, with social media platforms being the most widely used, followed by mobile marketing tools and SMS. Email marketing and multimedia brochures also play a significant role, while search engine optimization (SEO) and on-hold mobile ringtones are less commonly used. The overall findings show a consistent engagement with digital marketing strategies. The research indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) must uphold a strong online presence, emphasizing the importance of social media and mobile marketing to remain competitive. The limited adoption of SEO highlights the necessity for better education and support. Suggested actions include specialized training to enhance SEO and overall digital marketing capabilities for SME owners. Chiamaka et al. (2024) examined how digital transformation affects the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria. They conducted secondary data research and employed online content analysis to review information from textbooks and journals. The findings revealed that digital transformation is influencing the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria. As a result, many small and medium enterprises in Lagos are utilizing Facebook, though only a limited number are employing modern technologies like Instagram for product promotion. The study found a substantial effect of digital transformation on the advancement and sustainability of small and medium enterprises. Consequently, it was

suggested that business managers should be motivated to allocate resources toward digital marketing efforts.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was adopted in this study. The population of the study consist of 40 owners of small and medium scale enterprises in Lagos Island LGA. A multi-stage sampling method was used. The thematic analysis for this study is (Braun & Clarke framework), this will transcribe verbatim, it will generate initial codes and clustering code using qualitative software like NVivo or Atlas. The semi-structured interview was used to collect data, which is why the participants were able to describe the role of business incubators in fostering digital marketing adoption among SMEs. The data were transcribed, and analysis using thematic analysis to extract recurring patterns, the result of this process is the thematic framework in Table 4.2 which comprises of pragmatic platform selection, the Hub- Reality Asymmetry, infrastructure tax and the post-graduation resource cliff.

Overview of Data Analysis Process

The total of semi-structured in –depth interviews conducted with the SME managers operating in the Lagos Island LGA who have completed formal business incubation programs in Lagos State. In this study, participants are referred to as P1 to P40. The data was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to extract recurring patterns, however, saturation was achieved by the 28th interview, and the remaining 12 interviews confirmed the established thematic framework. The data transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to extract recurring patterns.

Demographic and Operational Profile of the Participants

The 40 participants cut across the two distinct economic identities of Lagos Island L.G.A, the traditional retail/ wholesale trading clusters such as Balogun, Idumota and modern tech enabled services (e.g Marina/ Broad Street axis)

Participant Code Range	Core Sector	Primary Market Location	Predominant, Pre-incubation Marketing Mode
P1-P18 (18 Firms)	Apparel, Textiles and Fashion Retail	Idumotal and Balogun	Traditional Foot-traffic and word of mouth
P19-P28 (10 Firms)	Cosmetic, Beauty and consumer goods	Idumota Market	Physical product display and wholesales agent
P29-P35 (7 Firms)	Electronics and Gadget retail	Broad axis	Direct flyers and physical storefront
P36 –P40 (5 Firms)	Tech Enabled Model Services	Marine axis	Social media (rudimentary / unstructured

Presentation and Analysis of Emerging Themes

Four meta-themes emerged from the transcripts of the 40 interviewees, directly addressing the research objectives.

Theme 1: The Hub- Reality Asymmetry

The theme captures the psychological and structural gap between the controlled, fully provisioned environment of the incubator and the messy operational reality of Lagos Island market structures.

Sub- theme 1.1: Artificial Comfort vs. Operational Chaos. Participants noted that while digital tools felt intuitive within the incubators high – speed Wi-Fi and air- conditioned spaces, implementing them in real – world stalls caused severe mental friction.

“In the hub workplace, creating video content felt seamless. However, when you return to Balogun market, you are running your business under intense noise, heat and physical disruption. The mental space to sit down and script a digital marketing campaign is not there during peak trading hours. (P6, Apparel Retailer).

Sub- theme 1.2: Shift from Transactional to Relationship Marketing. Despite the friction, 34 participants acknowledged that mentorship successfully broke their reliance on passive foot-traffic, forcing them to conceptualize value – driven digital branding.

Theme 2: Pragmatic Platform Selection & The trust Deficit (Emergence 40 out of 40 participants)

When moving from theory to practice, the 40 participants aggressively filtered the platforms taught at the incubators based on consumer trust behaviours and data efficiency.

Sub-theme 2.1: The Dominance of WhatsApp Business and Instagram, rather than building complex websites or running abstract Google Ads, participant overwhelmingly chose interactive, relationship – driven channel

“The incubators taught us about SEO and building e-commerce website, but on Lagos Island , customers do not buy from websites, they buy from people they trust , I chose Instagram as my digital showroom and WhatsApp Business as my closing table. WhatsApp allows me to send real-time videos of fabric to prove I am not an internet scammer. (P14, Textile Vendor)

Theme 3: Hyper – Local Socio – Economic Friction

This theme details the micro- environmental bottleneck unique to Lagos Island LGA that heavily undermine the digital marketing taught in incubators.

Sub- theme 3.1: Infrastructure Tax (Power and Data Volatility). The steep cost of internet data subscriptions and alternative fuel for generators emerged as a massive tax on consistency.

"Consistency requires constant uploading. With data costs rising so fast, uploading high-definition reels or doing product video shoots daily burns through my profit margins. If grid power is out, the noise of my small generator ruins my voiceovers for social media." (P22, Cosmetics Wholesaler)

- **Sub-theme 3.2:** The Digital-Physical Disconnect in Logistics. Successful digital marketing generates off-island orders, which immediately crash into the physical congestion of Lagos Island transport bottlenecks.

"Your Instagram ad can be highly successful, but if the dispatch rider gets trapped in Lagos Island gridlock for three hours, the customer gets angry and cancels the order. Physical logistics often kills the trust we build digitally." (P31, Electronics Retailer)

Theme 4: Post-Incubation Isolation and Need for Cluster – Based Support (Emergence: 35 out of 40 participant)

Participants expressed a uniform feeling of abandonment upon graduating from their programs, noting that incubators operate with a tech-startup bias that ignores traditional retail commerce models

- **Sub-theme 4.1:** The Post-Graduation Resource Cliff.

"The moment your cohort ends, the support stops. We don't need more theoretical classes on brand equity. We need incubators to set up physical or digital cooperatives right here inside the market hubs, where graduated traders can pool funds for bulk data or share a unified, subsidized logistics hub." (P39, Modern Service Entrepreneur)

Discussion of Findings

The results of this research support the fact that business incubators foster digital marketing platform adoption among small and medium scale enterprises in Lagos Island LGA. Based on the answers to the interview, it was clear that most business managers' business incubators foster the adoption of digital marketing platforms in Lagos Island. This is consistent with the findings of Chetouane Hania (2023), that digital business incubators under the influence of digital incubation centers in Qatar, have the significant impact on the success of startups, fostering innovation, providing resources, mentorship, and a collaborative environment. Likewise, Esin et al., (2025), this study pointed out that incubators significantly strengthen the positive impact of dynamic capabilities on startup performance. These studies support the current findings that business incubators are not only the driver of business growth but they foster the adoption of digital marketing platform adoption in the highly competitive environment of Lagos Island.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research examined how business incubators contribute to the adoption of digital marketing platforms by MSMEs in the rapidly changing, highly competitive commercial environment of Lagos Island LGA. The qualitative results indicate a distinct divergence, which is termed Hub-Reality Asymmetry, between the well-organized, resource-abundant setting of business incubators and the unpredictable, infrastructure-challenged conditions of conventional markets like Balogun and Idumota. Though incubators effectively guide entrepreneurs from relying on passive, foot-traffic-driven approaches to embracing value-oriented digital branding, mere standardized technical training falls short. To thrive after leaving the incubator, entrepreneurs abandon intricate, data-intensive strategies like customized e-commerce websites and advanced technical SEO in favor of more practical, relationship-focused approaches specifically WhatsApp Business and Instagram. These platforms function as digital exhibition spaces and tools for building trust, directly addressing the local consumer "trust gap" through immediate video interactions and personal connections. Therefore, if the issues of resource scarcity faced after graduation and local environmental challenges (like the "infrastructure tax" related to power instability and data fluctuations) are not tackled, standardized incubation programs that do not cater specifically to individual needs may lead to the development of skills that only last temporarily instead of fostering enduring market resilience. Based on the empirical insights and structural frictions identified, the study recommends that managers of incubators ought to move away from expensive, data-heavy digital methods such as intricate Google Ads or complicated website development. Instead, the focus of training should be on efficient, low-data social commerce systems (for instance, sophisticated WhatsApp Business APIs, automated catalog management, and localized mobile video marketing) that cater to the specific buying patterns of consumers on Lagos Island. To avoid entrepreneurs facing a "resource gap" after completing their programs, incubators ought to collaborate with local governmental bodies to set up decentralized, solar-powered micro-work facilities or communal digital kiosks right in high-density market areas like Balogun and Idumota.

Additionally, Administrators of incubators should shift away from costly, data-intensive digital strategies such as elaborate Google Ads or complex website creation. Instead, training prioritize effective, low-data social commerce solutions (for example, advanced WhatsApp Business APIs, automated catalog management, and localized mobile video promotions) that align with the buying behaviors of consumers on Lagos Island.

To prevent entrepreneurs from encountering a "resource gap" upon program completion, incubators should work alongside local government entities to establish decentralized, solar-powered micro-work hubs or community digital kiosks situated in densely populated market regions like Balogun and Idumota. These hubs would provide graduates with affordable, temporary access to high-speed internet and technical support services.

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