Entrepreneurial Marketing in Online Businesses: The Case of Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs in the UK

Abstract

Purpose

Many countries are seeing unprecedented levels of migration, raising questions about the economic contribution of individuals that settle in host countries. We explore the operation of online businesses by ethnic minority entrepreneurs. We apply an entrepreneurial marketing lens to explore how such entrepreneurs draw on the resources to market their businesses. We also consider if online businesses offer such entrepreneurs the opportunity to break out of the highly competitive sectors with which they are traditionally associated.

Design/methodology/approach

Key informant interviews are undertaken with 22 entrepreneurs operating online businesses in the UK and augmented by complementary sources of data such as their web sites and press coverage.

Findings

Use of an entrepreneurial marketing perspective demonstrates that marketing in such businesses is not haphazard or chaotic. Rather it reflects the emergent and flexible use of resources. The affordances of online businesses appear to offer opportunities for break out, but the reliance on incremental experimentation and copying others results in highly homogeneous approaches to marketing. We also provide empirical evidence of the link between visa status and entrepreneurial choices.

Originality/value

Despite the popularity of online businesses, previous studies have not explored them as an opportunity for ethnic minority entrepreneurs. Our study moves the

consideration of break out from market-entry to the ongoing marketing activities that sustain a business. It also demonstrates how the domains of ethnic minority entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial marketing can be brought together via a focus on resources. Finally, it enriches entrepreneurial marketing by evidencing connections with notions of effectuation and entrepreneur-venture fit.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial marketing, online businesses, digital businesses, ethnic minority entrepreneurs

Introduction

Migration has been identified as one of the greatest challenges currently facing the world (The Economist, 2015). War and civil unrest in many countries are causing unprecedented numbers of people to become refugees or asylum seekers in more stable countries (Amrith, 2014). Others seeking a better life are leaving under-developed countries in order to improve their life chances in more developed countries. In the European Union, the significant expansion following the accession of the A8 countries has further contributed to the number of people migrating (Migration Watch, 2015). The US has long attracted both legal and other migrants, with increasing numbers seeking to enter the country from Central America in order to escape violence and poor economic prospects (Villarreal, 2014). Australia also faced growing numbers of migrants travelling from or through South East Asian countries such as Indonesia, resulting in their adoption of policies that prevent migrants reaching their shores (Jensen, 2014). Migrants, who are allowed to settle, become part of the ethnic minority population within the new host country (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp, 2009). In many cases they augment existing groups, but as the scale and range of migration grows, many host countries have an increasing range of migrants, resulting in what is being termed 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007).

Prior research has found that ethnic minorities in many developed countries are associated with high levels of entrepreneurship (Broughton, 2015; Chaganti and Greene, 2002; Levie, 2007). This effect is particularly marked in liberal economies,

such as the UK and which has resulted in significant growth in the number of businesses started by ethnic minority entrepreneurs (Ram and Jones, 2008). Such businesses have been associated with constrained resources, often arising from the ethnic minority status of the entrepreneur (e.g. Jones *et al*., 2014; Achidi Ndofor and Priem, 2011). Online businesses have been identified as means of starting a business with limited resources, since, for example, they obviate the need to rent or buy commercial premises (Anwar and Daniel, 2014; Van Gelderen *et al.,* 2008).

Extant studies have characterised the marketing activities of ethnic minority firms as 'haphazard' (Altinay and Altinay, 2008 p.1187). The emergent domain of entrepreneurial marketing considers how small firms, usually with limited resources, can effectively undertake marketing (Bjerke and Hultman, 2002; Collinson and Shaw, 2001; Fiore *et al.,* 2013; Grünhagen and Mishra, 2008; Martin, 2009). Studies show that entrepreneurial marketing is dynamic, flexible, immersive, low cost and growth-orientated (Morrish *et al.,* 2010; Schindehutte *et al.,* 2008). Entrepreneurial marketing appears to provide an insightful lens to consider the marketing activities of ethnic minority businesses, suggesting that, rather than be haphazard they may demonstrate emergence and flexibility. Entrepreneurial marketing is also highly relevant and congruent with the operation of online businesses. For example, online businesses can be contingent, flexible, dynamic and allow the entrepreneur to be close to their customer, particularly through use of online exchanges such as social media (Nobre and Silva, 2014; Schaupp and Bélanger, 2014). We therefore adopt entrepreneurial marketing as a theoretical lens in order to address our first research question: how do ethnic minority entrepreneurs operating online businesses draw on resources to market their businesses?

Whilst there are significant numbers of ethnic minority-owned businesses, many are confined to 'poorly rewarded and fiercely competitive sectors' (Ram and Jones, 2008, p.64), such as catering and low margin retailing (Catney and Sabate, 2015). In a largely conceptual study, Kloosterman (2010) postulated that ethnic minority entrepreneurs should be encouraged, and helped, to 'break out' of these sectors and enter more attractive, high growth, high margin, post-industrial sectors. Online businesses, with their low entry costs, appear to offer unique opportunities for ethnic entrepreneurs to move into alternative sectors. This leads us to suggest our second

research question: does the empirical evidence from online businesses support the break out opportunities theorised in ethnic minority entrepreneurship literature?

Addressing these research questions is important as the unprecedented levels of migration, discussed previously, are leading to many people questioning the economic contribution of migrants and ethnic minority communities (Catney and Sabate, 2015). To date much focus has been on the quantity of entrepreneurship in such communities, rather than the quality (Clark and Drinkwater, 2010: Sepulveda *et al*., 2011; Verduijn and Essers, 2013). Whilst many studies have considered ethnic minority entrepreneurship, fewer have considered the important topic of marketing in such businesses, (e.g. Altinay and Altinay, 2008; Basu, 2011; Jamal, 2005; Masurel *et al*., 2004) which given the importance of marketing is a significant omission for both practitioners and academe. In particular, we are unaware of other studies that have applied an entrepreneurial marketing lens despite its unique consideration of limited resources. Previous studies have also tended to focus on the sectors with high proportions of ethnic minority entrepreneurs, resulting in a focus on traditional low growth sectors and limited opportunity to explore break out. Despite the ubiquity of online business, prior studies of ethnic minority entrepreneurs have not explored the opportunities offered by such businesses. Rather than studying the status quo of the majority, our study is unique in that it explores a type of business that may offer a route to break out.

This study brings together literature from the domain of entrepreneurial marketing with literature addressing the resources and opportunity structure available to ethnic minority entrepreneurs. We draw on both these bodies of literature to guide and interpret our exploration of marketing in ethnic minority-owned online business. The following section considers prior literature relating to entrepreneurial marketing. We then set the scene for our study by considering definitions and trends within ethnic minority entrepreneurship. The resources available and required by the entrepreneurial businesses represent the intersection of our two domains of interest. We therefore consider such resources, including how the major resource types manifest in our area of interest, online businesses. We describe the methodology of the empirical stage of our work, including our narrative approach to data collection. We report the findings of the study structured according to the resources considered in

the literature review and present a discussion of those findings. We conclude with a consideration of the practical and policy implications of the study and a note of limitations and opportunities for future research.

Entrepreneurial Marketing

Entrepreneurial marketing (EM) is most frequently used to describe the marketing undertaken by small entrepreneurial ventures, often at start-up or early growth phase (Carson *et al.*, 2001; Collinson and Shaw, 2001; Morris *et al*., 2002; Martin, 2009). Entrepreneurial approaches to marketing are not the sole preserve of small, neophyte firms, and the term can be applied to larger or established firms that adopt innovative approaches to their marketing (Foxall and Minkes, 1996; Jones and Rowley, 2011; Morris and Paul, 1987). However, as firms grow and mature they often evolve highly structured and routinized approaches to marketing, sometimes referred to as administrative marketing (AM) (Morrish *et al.,* 2010).

Although difficult to characterise precisely, entrepreneurial marketing has been described as informal, dynamic, responsive to customer needs and often simple in its design and execution (Collinson and Shaw, 2001; Bjerke and Hultman, 2002; Fiore *et al.,* 2013). Marketing is often undertaken by the owner of the business, who is likely to be a generalist, rather than a marketing expert and will typically be undertaken part-time alongside other activities (Hills *et al.,* 2008), suggesting a more seamless and integrated approach than is often evident in administrative marketing. In this paper we follow the premise that marketing is a broader discipline than advertising and promotion, and includes activities such as product development, decisions on pricing and the choice of appropriate distribution channels (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Whilst prior studies have suggested a 4Ps of entrepreneurial marketing (purpose, practices, process, and people) (Martin, 2009; Zontanos and Anderson, 2004) this does not abrogate the need for entrepreneurs to consider issues such as product, pricing and distribution channels. Since the owner will typically address all of the varied and broad range of marketing activities, these are likely to be iteratively addressed and hence highly integrated and synergistic (Morris *et al*., 2002).

Whilst access to resources is important for all types of marketing, entrepreneurial marketing in particular is seen as 'based on the resources available at the moment' (Hills and Hultman, 2013 p.438). Hence, since the acquisition of certain resources may be difficult, entrepreneurs will shape their marketing strategies according to the resources they have at hand or can readily acquire. Also, rather than base their business and marketing strategy solely on customer needs, as suggested in administrative marketing, entrepreneurial marketing seeks to meet the desires, needs and motives of both the entrepreneur as well as the customer (Miles and Arnold, 1991). Morrish *et al*. (2010 p. 309) therefore suggest that 'the starting place for an entrepreneurial firm and therefore entrepreneurial marketing activity is and must be the entrepreneur'.

Entrepreneurial marketing is particularly in evidence in neophyte online ventures, and hence highly apposite for our study. Consistent with the often modest start-up costs of such businesses, marketing undertaken online is relatively low cost and can have rapid and high impact outcomes (Amit and Zott, 2001; Anwar and Daniel, 2014). It allows entrepreneurs operating online businesses to experiment with different aspects of the marketing mix, including pricing and promotion. It also allows the entrepreneur to remain close to their customer, particularly if they stimulate, and act upon, customer feedback and dialogue, generated through social media and other online platforms and services (Nobre and Silva, 2014; Schaupp and Bélanger, 2014).

Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship

Definitions and Trends

Extant literature adopts a number of definitions in order to aid the study of migration and ethnic minorities (Aliaga-Isla and Rialp, 2013; Ma *et al*., 2013). The term immigrant or migrant tends to be used for individuals who have been in the host country for 12 months or less, that is they have arrived relatively recently (Sasse and Thielemann, 2005). In contrast, co-ethnics are born in the host country or are long term residents, but have a heritage from a different country (Achidi Ndofor and Priem, 2011). Such definitions are important for studies that have sought to explore the differences between these groups (e.g. McPherson, 2007). In other studies, such as

this, the lived-realities and the commonality of experience is of interest, regardless of the duration of residency. Such studies adopt the term ethnic minority in order embrace both migrants and co-ethnics (e.g. Clark and Drinkwater, 2010). It is this approach that we adopt in this paper.

Consistent with other studies in the domain, we use the term ethnic minority to describe groups based on socially or culturally recognised categories, with which they self-identify (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990). Whilst some studies refer to colour or race, we prefer to adopt terms that reflect the geographical origin (e.g. Asian) of the individuals or of previous generations of their families. Our focus on geographical origin is consistent with the definition of ethnic minority entrepreneurship 'a set of connections and regular patterns of interaction among people sharing a common national background or migration experiences' (Waldinger *et al.,* 1990, p.3).

Clark and Drinkwater (2010) provide statistical data on trends in ethnic minority entrepreneurship in Britain between 1991 and 2006. As they observe, 'a fairly stable aggregate rate of self-employment in the UK disguises considerable ethnic variation' (p.144). The highest incidence of self-employment in the most recent data (2006) was for Pakistani males, where 31.3% of those in work were self-employed. In contrast, the rate was 10.5% for African men. Self-employment rates were lower for females compared to males in the same ethnic group. The highest rate was for Chinese females (15.9%) and the lowest was for African and Caribbean females (3.8% for both). Their trend analysis showed that rates of self-employment had changed over the period considered. For example, it had fallen for Indian and Chinese males. They attribute part of this decline to changing demographic factors of these groups including increased levels of higher education and a higher proportion being born in the UK, both of which are negatively associated with self-employment (Clark and Drinkwater, 2000; Thomson *et al.,* 2010). Other factors may also differentially influence trends in the rate of self-employment in ethnic groups, including resilience to macro-economic conditions such as the post-2008 recession (Villarreal, 2014) or concentration in sectors more exposed to competition and globalisation (Jones and Ram, 2003).

A Focus on Resources: The Intersection of Entrepreneurial Marketing and Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Resource Based Theory posits that firms are shaped by the bundle of resources that they have available to them or can acquire (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996). Ethnic minority enterprises have been characterised as having limited financial resources (Bates and Robb, 2013). Hence it is important for them to acquire and leverage a wide range of other resources, which they must adapt to their needs (Altinay and Altinay, 2008). It is this centrality of resource mustering and mobilisation that makes entrepreneurial marketing, with its focus on resources (Hills and Hultman, 2013), an apposite lens for the consideration of ethnic minority businesses.

Extant studies have suggested that human, financial, social and ethnic resources are important to the operation of ethnic minority businesses (Dana and Morris, 2007; Gilmore and Carson, 1999; Stokes, 2000). We consider each of these in turn, including how they manifest in the particular case of online businesses. These four resource types are used to structure the empirical phase of this study and to structure our findings and analysis.

Human Resources

Extant studies provide a mixed view of the impact of human resources on entrepreneurial opportunity and proclivity. McEwan *et al.* (2005) find that the improved educational attainment of UK-born Indians has resulted in them participating as entrepreneurs in high-growth, high-margin sectors such as information technology and professional services. In contrast, other studies find that increased educational attainment reduces the propensity for entrepreneurship, as employment can offer the highly educated greater rewards (Clark and Drinkwater, 2000; Thompson *et al.,* 2010). In their study of recent migrants, Jones *et al.* (2014) find that educational attainment had little influence on the type of business formed, with many not being able to utilise their qualifications. In some cases this was due to lack of opportunity and for others, particularly those from outside Europe, lack of recognition of their qualifications. Education has also been found to influence the approach to marketing adopted by ethnic minority entrepreneurs, with those with more education adopting more of a relationship and strategic approach to marketing,

including analysing the wider socio-economic forces on their ventures (Altinay and Altinay, 2008).

Online home based entrepreneurs have been found to be significantly better educated than those operating similar offline businesses (Deschamps *et al.,* 1998), suggesting that such businesses may afford ethnic entrepreneurs the opportunity to leverage their qualifications and experience. Such businesses have also been associated with continuous learning, often by experimentation or observing the activities of others (Phillips, 2002; Sulaiman *et al.,* 2009), suggesting that if ethnic entrepreneurs are lacking experience, they may be able to acquire this as their business develops (Betts and Huzey, 2009; Sayers, 2009-2010).

Financial Resources

Ethnic minority entrepreneurs have been associated with funding their businesses with personal finance or gifts and loans from friends and family (Achidi Ndofor and Priem, 2011). In some cases this is because they see this is a means of reducing risk and avoiding control from external providers of funding (Bates and Robb, 2013). However, in other cases it reflects the reluctance of traditional sources of business finance to invest in ethnic minority businesses. (Altinay and Altinay, 2008; Sepulveda *et al.,* 2011). Limited capitalisation restricts the sectors that such entrepreneurs can enter to those with low entry barriers, where competition is likely to be most severe. It may also limit the opportunity to leverage human resources, since it is not possible to enter sectors such as technology manufacturing, making it difficult to utilise higher science or engineering qualifications, knowledge or experience (McEwan *et al*., 2005).

Online businesses have been characterised as inexpensive to establish and operate (Betts and Huzey, 2009). The costs of IT equipment, software and web hosting have continued to decrease, whilst functionality has improved (Pflugheoft *et al.,* 2003; Yang, 2012). Consistent with the private financing of ethnic minority businesses, many online businesses, particularly those based in the home are funded through private sources and the business models are designed to reduce the need for working capital (Mason *et al*., 2011; Van Gelderen *et al.,* 2008).

Social Resources

Ethnic minority entrepreneurs have been associated with extensive social networks (Wang and Altinay, 2010). Such networks include 'ties of kinship and common ethnic identity' (Jones *et al.,* 2014 p.503) and provide multiple sources of support for entrepreneurs, including employees, customers, advocates, advisors and sources of finance (e.g. Kloosterman, 2010). These dense and close networks result in ethnic minority entrepreneurs being better resourced than their personal resources would suggest, since the networks can mitigate some of the deficiencies in their personal resources. For example, Sepulveda *et al.* (2011) describe such entrepreneurs turning to established co-ethnic entrepreneurs for business advice. Such networks have also been associated with a natural affinity for relationship, rather than transactional marketing, with Altinay and Altinay (2008, p.1194) observing 'relationship marketing seemed to emerge more as an 'ethnic minority-related cultural practice' rather than a management practice'. Whilst a social network can provide many benefits to entrepreneurs, it has also been noted that it can stifle businesses, preventing them from developing new products and services and learning how to react and survive external shocks and limiting growth (Basu and Altinay, 2002; Beckers and Blumberg, 2013). Online media have been associated with the development of broad social networks that transcend local geographies (Durst *et al*., 2013). Hence online operation appears to afford entrepreneurs with an opportunity to support their existing networks and also to increase the size and diversity of those networks (Di Domenico *et al*., 2014).

Ethnic Resources

Closely related to the notion of social resources, studies of ethnic minority entrepreneurship have identified importance of ethnic resources (Rath, 2002; Jones and Ram, 2007). These include: language, cultural understanding, credibility due to authenticity and access to co-ethnic networks. These resources can give rise to knowledge and experience of products and services from specific geographies, races, cultures and religions, together with access to suppliers and consumers of these products and services (Kloosterman *et al.,* 1999).

Many entrepreneurs relying on ethnic resources are required to operate their businesses in geographic areas with high densities of co-ethnics (Achidi Ndofor and Priem, 2011). However, with the international growth of the internet, ethnic networks are becoming increasingly transnational (Jones *et al.,* 2012). Ethnic entrepreneurs can therefore leverage social networks in their country of heritage and across the diaspora (Williams, 2006). Vertovec (2007) views entrepreneurs operating within transnational networks as bi-located. Consistent with notions from liminality (Turner, 1982; Van Gennep, 1960), whilst such a state of 'betwixt and between' can be associated with increased anxiety, it has also been associated with increased creativity due to being freed from local constraints (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003; Garsten, 1999). This echoes the sentiments of Jones *et al.* (2014), who consider that entrepreneurs with a 'cross-border mentality' (p.511) may be better resourced than other entrepreneurs. Since they are freed from specific geographical location, online businesses appear particularly suited to allowing entrepreneurs to operationalise and exploit this bi-location (Van Gelderen *et al.,* 2008).

Mixed Embeddedness and Opportunity Structure

Ethnic minority entrepreneurs operate in the social, economic and institutional context of their adopted country, and increasingly a global context (Jones *et al.,* 2012). The importance of the wider context is highlighted in theory of mixed embeddedness, first proposed by Kloosterman *et al.* (1999). These authors characterise the influences on entrepreneurial businesses as three concentric spheres: an inner microsphere influenced by the resources available; a mesosphere is influenced by the socio-economic conditions of the market and an outer macrosphere by the institutional framework of the country or countries of operation (Jones *et al.*, 2014; Kloosterman *et al.*, 1999). The mesosphere is often referred to as the opportunity structure (e.g. Lassalle, 2014) as it reflects the availability of attractive (e.g. high margin and/or high growth) market sectors and niches, and the ability of ethnic entrepreneurs to access these. The outer macrosphere includes consideration of the legal status of individuals, including visa status. Sepulveda *et al.* (2011) emphasise that legal status is important as it can 'produce particular entrepreneurial behaviours and opportunity structures' (p.491). Despite identification of the link between legal status and entrepreneurial behaviour, prior studies of ethnic minority entrepreneurs have not considered the links between visa conditions and entrepreneurial choices.

Traditionally, ethnic entrepreneurs have been found to be clustered in low margin and low growth sectors, termed 'vacancy chain' opportunities (Kloosterman, 2010), such as small scale retailing, restaurants, fast food provision and personal services (Azmat, 2010; Dana and Morris, 2007; Edwards and Ram, 2006; Ram and Smallbone, 2001). More recent studies (e.g. Jones *et al.,* 2014; Sepulveda *et al.,* 2011) have found that despite increased numbers and 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007) in migrants to the UK, ethnic minority entrepreneurs continue to be clustered in sectors that have low rewards, referred to by Sepulveda *et al.* (2011) as 'sectoral-inertia' (p.477). In proposing the concept of opportunity structure, Kloosterman (2010) asserted that entrepreneurs can escape marginal sectors and enter high growth, high threshold, post-industrial sectors, if they can muster and mobilise appropriate resources. Hence, whilst mixed embeddedness suggests certain forces are exogenous to the entrepreneur and their business, the resources of the entrepreneur can influence, and be influenced by, their place in the mesosphere (opportunity structure) and their interactions with the macrosphere (laws and regulations) (Kloosterman *et al.*, 1999).

Research Gap and Questions

The scale of international migration and the growth of ethnic minority populations render ethnic minority entrepreneurship as an important topic of study (Aliaga-Isla and Rialp, 2013; Ma *et al*., 2013). Recent studies that find ethnic minority entrepreneurs remain clustered in low margin sectors (Broughton, 2015; Catney and Sabate, 2015) provide a valuable over-view of ethnic minority entrepreneurship. However, they fail to account for the vast heterogeneity amongst the entrepreneurs, their access to resources and the type of businesses that they create. Extant studies have recognised and addressed this heterogeneity by considering specific ethnic groups (e.g. Altinay and Altinay, 2008; Lassalle, 2014). Other studies have considered specific sectors, but these have tended to reflect the aforementioned 'sectoral-inertia' and focussed on sectors traditionally associated with ethnic minority entrepreneurs, such as retailing and catering (e.g. Altinay, 2010; Ishaq *et al*., 2010; Jamal, 2005; Leung, 2003). Despite the opportunities suggested by online operation (Betts and Huzey, 2009; Phillips, 2002; Sayers, 2009-2010; Sulaiman *et al.*, 2009),

prior studies have not considered such businesses. We therefore suggest our first research question:

- How do the resources available to ethnic minority entrepreneurs operating online businesses shape the marketing of those businesses?

The affordances offered by online businesses suggest that they may allow ethnic minority entrepreneurs to move beyond traditional low margin sectors (Anwar and Daniel, 2014; Van Gelderen *et al.,* 2008). Such movement would provide evidence of break out and would counter the prevailing narrative of ethnic minority entrepreneurs being looked into low margin niches by sectoral inertia (Sepulveda *et al.*, 2011). This leads to our second research question:

- Does the empirical evidence from these firms support the break out opportunities theorised in ethnic minority entrepreneurship literature?

We address these questions by applying an entrepreneurial marketing lens to the development of online businesses by ethnic minority entrepreneurs. Our adoption of an entrepreneurial marketing lens, which has not previously been applied to ethnic minority businesses, provides a theoretical basis for exploration and understanding of the marketing activities of these firms.

Method

Kloosterman (2010) asserts that 'qualitative research [is required] to grasp the social embeddedness, strategies and careers of immigrant entrepreneurs' (p.41). We therefore adopted a qualitative research method. Since this is the first study, to our knowledge, to apply an entrepreneurial marketing lens to ethnic minority entrepreneurship, we also sought an exploratory research design. Key informant interviews represent a well-accepted qualitative, exploratory research method (Kumar *et al*., 1993) that enables researchers to access the multi-faceted lived-experiences of a wide range of respondents (Dibbern *et al*., 2008).

Key Informant Enrolment

The population of interest was key informants who were from an ethnic minority and who operated an online business. The online businesses spanned a range of sectors and included: online retailing, web design, digital marketing services, IT consultancy and business services. All of the businesses were operated from the home of the entrepreneur, a location which is well-suited to the operation of online businesses and ensured all the businesses were small and the marketing was influenced by the founding entrepreneurs and their accessible resources (Anwar and Daniel, 2014; Sulaiman *et al.,* 2009).

We used three approaches to identify and recruit key informants. First, we adopted a purposive sampling strategy (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2008) in which the researchers identified four entrepreneurs matching the study's requirements and who were known to them. All agreed to take part in the study. Second, we adopted a snowballing approach (Bryman, 2004) by asking the first informants to identify others who had started businesses matching the study requirements. Ten additional participants were identified through this approach. Third, we used the web, particularly social networking services such as LinkedIn, in order to identify individuals who appeared to fit our population of interest. We then approached these individuals via email and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. Eight additional informants were identified and recruited from this approach. Our total sample consisted of 22 key informants.

Table 1 presents key descriptive data for the 22 interviews conducted. The data has been presented in aggregate form in order to protect the identity of the informants. All the businesses were active and viable when the interviews took place; however, we did not set limits on how long they had been in operation. Of the key informants, 19 were male and 3 were female.

Take in Table 1 about here

Data Collection

Data collection followed a narrative interviewing approach (Bryman, 2004; Larty and Hamilton, 2011; Riessman, 2004). In such approaches, informants are encouraged to describe their experiences in their own way, for example using their own words and in

the order they choose (Riessman, 2004). Rather than a precisely worded set of questions, such interviews are guided by loose prompts which do not lead the informant (McCormick, 2004). The prompts in the interview guide, which are shown in the Appendix, were therefore purposefully broad, for example "tell me the story of your business - why you started it and how you started it" and their order and specific wording was contingent on the narrative flow of the informants (Hamilton, 2006).

Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face (18) with the remaining four being undertaken by telephone. The majority of face-to-face interviews (13) took place in the entrepreneur's home which was the primary business location. In two cases, the entrepreneur asked to meet in a public location such as a café and three interviewees came to the University where the researchers are based. Conducting interviews in the businesses' location allowed us to observe and collect field notes on aspects relevant to marketing, such as the use of promotional signage. The interview and field note data were supplemented with other data sources (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), such as examination of the businesses' websites and press coverage.

Data Analysis

All of the interviews were recorded. In four cases, interviews were conducted by two interviewers, allowing field note comparison to aid understanding and the internal validity of the study. In all other cases, interviews were undertaken by the same single interviewer. We followed an iterative and reflexive approach to data collection (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), jointly reflecting on each interview before subsequent interviews were undertaken. Interview transcripts and field notes were coded using Nvivo software (Dey, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1984). Due to the central role of resources in the execution of entrepreneurial marketing, coding was guided by the four resource types identified in extant ethnic minority entrepreneurship literature: human, financial, social and ethnic. Coding was first undertaken intra-interview. The additional data sources were used to substantiate the comments of the interviewees and to provide additional insights (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). In order to identify shared experiences, codes were subsequently aggregated across interviews and given an appropriate label or code. Internal validity was increased by the two researchers undertaking coding of the first three interview transcripts independently. Whilst

consistency was high, differences were discussed and resolved. Subsequent coding was undertaken by the lead researcher with the coding being reviewed by the second researcher.

Research Ethics

The research design was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the researchers' University prior to commencement of the empirical work. All stages of the research were undertaken in accordance with this approval and with the research ethics guidelines of the University. These included consideration of informant recruitment, particularly lack of coercion and informed consent, the safety of the researchers and secure storage of research data. All informants were assured anonymity, were provided with a written description of the aims of the study and how the findings of the study would be disseminated and research data would be stored. They were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Findings

As we have noted, the role of resources is common to both ethnic minority entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial marketing. Hence, we analyse the findings of the study according to the four key resources: human, financial, social and ethnic.

Human Resources

Human resources refer to the skills, interests and experience that entrepreneurs bring to their businesses. Only one of the 22 interviewees had formal marketing qualifications (informant 12). However, for all of the interviewees the key elements of the marketing mix, particularly the product and services they offered were heavily influenced by their personal skills, qualifications and interests. Whilst all of the businesses were online, analysis of the sample suggested two distinct levels of knowledge of IT which led to two distinct types of business: those based on IT skills of the individual entrepreneur, and those that draw on other skills or interests and where the entrepreneur often has very few IT skills.

Considering the first of these, businesses based on IT skills include web design, web hosting, IT consulting, search engine optimisation, digital marketing, IT security and

IT networking. In most cases the choice of business arose from the skills of the entrepreneur, skills that were often either gained or reinforced by formal education. The majority of those running such businesses had either a bachelors or masters degree in a relevant subject. This reflects that many of the interviewees were from countries that placed a high regard on formal qualifications and had well developed education systems (Biswas 2004; Narasimha 2008; Thatchenkery *et al.* 2004). The pride in formal qualifications and their being seen as a basis for entrepreneurial business formation is illustrated by the comments of informant 2:

"I am from Bangladesh, but I am trying to be an entrepreneur in this country, and I want to establish my own business where I've got the expertise…. I have my honours in computer engineering from the University of Eastern Mediterranean, Eastern Turkey with a full scholarship. Then I had my Masters from the University of Bedfordshire." (informant 2)

The second group of entrepreneurs (informants 15 – 22) were operating online businesses that did not offer IT products or services, rather they offered products and services that drew on other expertise and interests of the entrepreneurs. Despite operating online, these informants were forthright in stressing that they had little IT knowledge. They managed this lack of knowledge in two different ways. Some were developing their own IT skills. Others felt that it was not necessary for them to know about IT, and like other activities related to their business, this could be outsourced, as described by informant 15, who was selling her own clothing designs online:

"I've just been trying to decide which things I need to learn about.. and which things are going to be a waste of time. For me, sewing, for example, is a waste of time. …. The same with the IT side. It just never occurred to me to do anything myself, to be honest. I thought, what's the point, there are lots of people out there who can do it for me." (informant 15)

The majority of the interviewees, who did not have formal marketing expertise, described how they undertook the key marketing activity of promotion by learning-by-doing, incremental experimentation and by observing the marketing activities of other businesses, copying or adapting these as appropriate. For example, informant 16

17

who runs an online education and tuition business, described how he had experimented with advertisements for their business in the newspaper, but stopped them after getting little response. In contrast, he reported that their learning and experimentation with search engine optimisation (SEO) had been more successful:

"*We do search engine optimisation for our business... what I have observed after working a bit on my website.....we have seen that our website was in the top two, top three searches in the Middle East and Africa, so we are having more clients now from Qatar, Oman, and Nigeria.*" (informant 16)

In some cases the interviewees described how they had relied on others to undertake marketing related tasks for them during the start-up phase of their businesses, but they either did not want to be reliant on others for these key tasks or they were not satisfied with the quality of the work provided by others. For example, informant 17 who promoted her personal beauty treatment business online, described how she had been reliant on her sons who had developed her first website, but she was now gaining her own IT skills by attending a local college. Similarly, informant 16 described how he and his partners taught themselves how to undertake search engine optimisation (SEO) as they were not happy with the firm that had been doing this for them:

"*We do search engine optimisation for our business. Initially there were some people who were doing the SEO, but I did not like their work. So I learnt it and started doing by myself.*" (informant 16)

In addition to maintaining their own web sites and learning how to undertake marketing activities such as SEO, interviewees described how they used online fora, not only to generate more clients, but also to develop their own learning and expertise. For example, informant 20, who operated an online accountancy and tax service, described how the use of fora provided a valuable means of keeping up with developments in his specialism:

"... I answer people's questions in online business forums, this helps a lot in generating clientele and it also keeps me up to date with the things that I am doing. Also I get a chance to read the comments/responses of people who are in practice a lot longer than me, so it's an opportunity for me to learn new tricks of the trade." (informant 20)

Consistent with the contingency and flexibility associated with entrepreneurial marketing, although their businesses were based online, the interviewees described how they used physical marketing materials, the telephone and were happy to attend face to face promotional and networking events. For example, some of the interviewees described how they had produced business cards, leaflets and brochures and delivered these to local businesses or handed them out at face to face networking events. The interviewees described how they were continually promoting their businesses and were always looking for new ways to do this. In an approach that takes the notion of harnessing human resources beyond its usual meaning, informant 20, described how he used his own body as an advertisement for his business, by wearing a branded T-shirt, even when he was outside work:

"As I said, it is not a 9 to 5 thing, therefore, you are continuously promoting your business all the time, as I take this jumper off I am wearing a branded t-shirt of my business. So while I am playing badminton or cricket, one can see me and my business. Some people make fun of it but I do not care as long as people see me and notice my business." (informant 20)

Whilst all of the marketing activities undertaken were intended to make the interviewees' businesses stand out from their competition, the high degree of copying and adaptation meant that they were all carrying out very similar approaches (see Discussion section and Table 2 for summary of promotional approaches). The only unique approach identified was to write a book. Informant 10 described how writing a book was intended to mark himself out as an expert in his field:

"It was the only thing that I could do to separate myself from the competition ..... Writing a book is a good way to give yourself the stamp of an expert." (informant 10)

Financial Resources

In accordance with the findings of prior studies of ethnic minority businesses, all of the interviewees had financed the start-up and ongoing operations of their business from their own funds or from funding provided by friends or family (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Kloosterman and Rath, 2001). The majority stressed that they had based their business online and operated it from their home because of the low costs involved. All of the interviewees stressed the desire to keep control of their businesses and eschewed the risks and reduced control associated with borrowing money from banks and investment from external funders. Hence, consistent with the notion from entrepreneurial marketing, key elements of their business were shaped by their own personal needs and preferences (Morrish *et al.*, 2010). The attractions of an online home based business were described by informant 10:

"*If you want to start up an online business in a very cost effective way then you don't want the overheads of office and staff and telephones and travel and all those kind of things, because typically you won't be making money from day one.*" (informant 10)

Pricing was seen as an important part of the marketing mix by the interviewees. Some felt that as new, small business they were not in a position to determine their own prices, but had to follow the prices of other providers:

"*We are not in a position to set a price but to take the price from the market and that's how we have done it. ... we are a price checker at the moment, until our services and our portfolios are more glorified.*" (informant 21)

One interviewee described how he set his prices to cover the costs of moving into a dedicated office in the future. Hence the pricing decision reflected not only current needs but included provision for personal ambitions for business growth.

Eight of the interviewees were either living in the UK on entrepreneurship visas or were applying for such visas. Under such visas an entrepreneur, or two entrepreneurs acting as partners, are required to invest a minimum of £50k in their business in the UK over the three year period of the visa. During that time they must create two full time jobs or the equivalent in part-time employment (UK Border Agency, 2014). The

entrepreneurs on such visas had therefore been required to fund their business from their own or private sources. The formation of an online business that could be operated from home allowed them to reduce overhead costs and hence spend the majority of their initial investment on directly developing their business.

Reliance on their own funds and a desire to avoid risk resulted in the interviewees seeking opportunities to promote their business that were either free or very low cost. The limited size of their funds also meant that they needed to find promotional approaches that had rapid impact, which was particularly important for those on entrepreneurship visas who were required to create a sustainable business within a limited time. These requirements resulted in the informants making extensive use of social media and other online platforms to promote their businesses:

" *... what I can do with social media, it's all free, it doesn't cost me anything. Whereas if I had to do the same thing, get the same kind of reach using traditional marketing, it would be quite expensive.*" (informant 10)

"*I get advertisements in free advertisement websites. There are many free advertisement websites on the internet such as Gumtree.*" (informant 2)

"*There are a quite a few online business networking fora such as 4Networking and UK Business Forum.*" (informant 20)

"*I use professional social media, it is called BizCloud.. this connects all the business professionals in the UK.*" (informant 7)

In addition to considering the financial cost of various marketing approaches, the interviewees were aware of the investment of time required by different approaches, even if they were free. For example, a number of interviewees described how they did not use blogs to promote their business as they felt that they could get a greater return from other types of social media.

Social Resources

Social resources refer to the support, both tangible and intangible, provided by the network of people with whom an entrepreneur interacts (Wang and Altinay, 2010). These may include family, friends or professional contacts such as customers, suppliers, lawyers, accountants and other business advisors. Entrepreneurial marketing and ethnic minority entrepreneurship both highlight the salience of social and professional networks (Gilmore and Carson, 1999; Kloosterman and Rath, 2001). The interviewees described how friends and family were a significant source of help for their business. For example, as mentioned previously informant 17 relied on her sons to create and update her business' website and informant 11 described how his wife answered the phone and took orders. Whilst informant 21 described how friends had introduced customers to their businesses:

"*Some of our friends and a couple of our contacts introduced a couple of clients and we started talking to them.*" (informant 21)

Recommendations between customers were also very important to the businesses. For example informant 19 observed "*most of my customers come from word of mouth*". The importance of advocates and personal recommendations is consistent with the need to adopt low cost, highly effective approaches to marketing discussed in the previous section and another recognised entrepreneurial marketing approach (Morrish *et al.,* 2010).

Previous studies of ethnic minority entrepreneurship have recognised that personal networks are often restricted to specific geographic locations, often consistent with the spatial concentration of co-ethnics (Achidi Ndofor and Priem, 2011; Lassalle, 2014). In contrast, whilst recommendations were very important to the online entrepreneurs, their personal networks existed online and hence were not limited to specific spatial geographies. For example, informant 6 described how he made use of Facebook and LinkedIn to maintain a professional network that was not restricted to a specific geographical area.

Ethnic Resources
Ethnic resources refer to the knowledge, skills and experiences of entrepreneurs that arise from their country or region of origin or their family's heritage (Kloosterman,

2010). Ethnic resources may influence a number of the key elements of marketing: for example, the type of products and services offered or where the products are sold (Dana and Morris, 2007; Lassalle, 2014; Ram and Smallbone, 2001).

Ethnic resources influenced the businesses of all the informants and provided a valuable resource, but to varying degrees and had been used in varying ways. The products and services offered by informants whose businesses were not IT based (informants 15 – 22) tended to be more influenced by ethnic resources than those whose businesses were IT based. For example, informant 15 designed and sold ladies clothes. Whilst she did not want to categorised the clothes she sold as Islamic, she recognised that they were influenced by her cultural background:

I'm Asian, I'm Bengali and you make a choice between wearing completely English clothes or Western clothes, or completely wearing Asian clothes. ....What I wanted really was to try and produce something that expressed both of those identities. ..... (informant 15)

Informants described how they spoke to customers using their shared native language. As exemplified by informant 21, this not only eased communication, but established a shared background and interests between himself and his customers which he felt was beneficial to his business:

 "We do attract some ethnic customers because of our ethnic background. It is a plus point. It's not the limitation but people who are from the same background or at least speak the regional languages that we have spoken back in our countries. This gives that extra what do you call that – safety ... That extra factor that he's from our side...." (informant 21)

Others recognised that whilst the products that they offered were influenced by their ethnic background, that due to the online nature of their business, their market was not limited to co-ethnic customers or customers from a limited spatial geography. For example, informant 18 described how she attracted non-Asian customers to buy her jewellery:

You'd be surprised, not all my customers are Asians. Some of them are English, as well. ... they get the more intricate things like earrings and so on. So, you get a variety of customers. (informant 18)

The businesses that offered IT products and services were focussed less on ethnic orientated products and services or seeking to attract ethnic customers. Indeed, they were all focussed on producing offerings that would be attractive to a wide customer base. However, a number of them described drawing on ethnic resources to a limited extent. As described above, many relied heavily on introductions and recommendations from friends and family. Whilst the online nature of their businesses meant that these social networks were not limited to specific geographies, such networks often include high numbers of individuals of similar ethnic or cultural background. Hence there was a strong overlap between the use of ethnic and social resources.

Other informants described how their background allowed them to understand the culture and business operations in other countries, particularly their country of origin where they often still had family, friends and a network of contacts. They therefore felt confident in hiring and managing staff overseas and also attracting and servicing customers overseas. This supports Jones *et al.*'s (2012) observation that internationally connected ethnic entrepreneurs 'can fruitfully exploit a mind-set that is tantamount to living in two places at once, a virtual cross-border bi-location' (p.3170). The fact that their businesses were based online meant that they could more easily exploit this bi-location. For example, informant 12 and informant 5 both described that the ability to work from any location allowed them to run an office in Pakistan, although they were based in the UK. Similarly informant 3 described his ability to support customers in the USA:

"Well, I am a single owner, but I have other people who are working for me. Initially I managed like a virtual team, three contractors in two different countries. Now I have an office as well back in Pakistan, and I am here [in the UK]. So I am still managing it like virtually." (informant 12)

"XXXX is a home business, but that home business has an office with six people in Lahore, Pakistan. We have two account managers, two developers and two designers constantly working in Lahore." (informant 5)

"I'm working for some companies in the USA as well. I set up servers for them. We had an initial conversation, then they allowed me to access their system and I set it up. Now they are using my service from there." (informant 3)

Ethnic minority entrepreneurs in offline sectors are often limited to customers located in close spatial proximity (e.g. Lassalle, 2014). If they are located in a non-affluent neighbourhood, this may result in them being restricted to customers with limited financial means. They may also be restricted to a highly homogeneous customer base, resulting in difficulty in diversifying their business, and hence limiting their ability to learn, develop new products or services and reduce their exposure to risk. In contrast, the ability to attract and serve overseas customers afforded by the online nature of their business, exposed the interviewees to a wider set of customers and hence broadened their experiences and promoted learning and opportunity for diversification. For example, informant 12 described how serving international clients allowed him to learn different skills:

"If you have your own business and different clients from different cultures, different backgrounds, different industries, so you get many, many opportunities to learn more. So, I have learnt a lot." (informant 12)

Discussion

Consistent with notions from entrepreneurial marketing and ethnic minority entrepreneurship, the findings show that the entrepreneurs have drawn on the resources available to them to market and hence sustain and grow their small businesses. Resources arising from their ethnic heritage have formed an important part of the entrepreneurial marketing mix and hence have shaped the formation and ongoing development of these businesses.

Table 2 tabulates the promotional approaches adopted by the informants as part of their marketing activities. The table shows that the informants adopted a wide range of approaches spanning and at times blending both online and offline channels. This use of a range of approaches demonstrates the contingent and flexible nature of the entrepreneurial marketing demonstrated by the informants. The most frequently employed approaches were the development of a website, use of social media and word-of-mouth marketing. These are highly consistent with the resources available to the entrepreneurs and their intention for the business to meet their own needs, since these are relatively low cost, take limited time and draw on extant social and ethnic networks. The highly transparent nature of the online environment supported learning from others, which also results in the entrepreneurs being able to learn from, and even copy others. This results in the entrepreneurs adopting well recognised marketing approaches and contributes to a high degree of homogeneity across the ethnic minority enterprises. The only examples of unique approaches were the wearing of branded clothing and the writing of a book. Interestingly both these are based in the offline domain, suggesting that whilst the online domain may ease learning from others, it is more difficult to identify and sustain unique entrepreneurial marketing approaches

Take in Table 2 about here

A powerful insight from the interview findings is that, whilst all the businesses were operated predominately online, and viewed as online businesses by the informants, the promotion of these businesses combined both online and offline marketing approaches. For example, all of the businesses drew heavily on their social networks of family, friends and business contacts as a source of introductions. Whilst the majority of these social ties were forged and reinforced by means of time spent together in the offline world, they led to introductions being made to new customers via online networks and those online connections being used to forge and foster further contacts, both in the online and offline world. Hence, whilst choosing to operate online businesses for the advantages that these offered, the informants have had to become skilled in moving between both the online and offline world and learning how to effectively, and often seamlessly, blend these two domains (Di Domenico *et al*., 2014).

As noted, despite recognition of the influence of migratory status on entrepreneurial behaviours (Sepulveda *et al.,* 2011), previous studies have not explicitly considered the role of entrepreneurship visas. A number of our informants were in the UK on entrepreneurship visas. These have strict requirements about the start-up funding required and also 'success' measures, both of which were not developed specifically for online businesses and hence may not be appropriate. For example, previous studies have identified how many online home based entrepreneurs prefer to grow their businesses through sub-contracting rather than hiring staff, termed 'jobless growth' (Mason *et al.,* 2011). Our findings show that the ethnic minority entrepreneurs felt confident in managing overseas staff, something that could offer an advantage compared to non-ethnic minority operated businesses. However, such globally distributed employment would not meet visa requirements, denying the ethnic minority entrepreneurs the opportunity to exploit their advantage.

Many of the entrepreneurs in our study were operating in post-industrial sectors such as web-design, digital marketing and IT services. Whilst these are highly competitive sectors, and therefore do not guarantee high earnings, they provide the opportunity for innovation, growth and the opportunity to serve an international customer base. Online businesses would therefore appear to offer the opportunity to break out from low-growth, vacancy chain openings theorised in extant ethnic minority entrepreneurship studies (Kloosterman, 2010). However, our study suggests that the adoption of entrepreneurial marketing contributes to a high degree of homogeneity in their marketing approaches (Table 2). This suggests that whilst the online environment may allow ethnic entrepreneurs to avoid the high-levels of competition inherent in operating in physically-bounded enclaves, they may unwittingly be creating similarly highly-competitive environments online by failing to differentiate their offerings.

Our findings also suggest links to entrepreneurial theories in addition to entrepreneurial marketing. The theory of entrepreneur-venture fit suggests that the venture type both shapes and is shaped by an entrepreneur's skills and experiences (Dvir *et al.,* 2010). Our findings indicate the online operation of their businesses have shaped the resources, particularly their human resources, through copying others and

learning-by-doing, and their social resources, through the expansion of the size and scope of their networks. Similarly the needs and desires of the entrepreneurs have shaped their businesses, for example, their wish to start a business that would meet the requirements of an entrepreneurship visa and hence provide them with the opportunity to stay in the UK.

Our focus on the use of resources available to entrepreneurs and their use of these to create their new and ongoing ventures is also highly consistent with effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001). In contrast to the more frequent view of entrepreneurship that considers 'the task of the entrepreneur is to discover opportunities and exploit them' (Read *et al.,* 2009, p. 573), effectuation posits that the role of the entrepreneur is to create opportunities by drawing on the means that they have at their disposal. An effectual approach has been associated with a number of approaches or orientations that were evidenced by our informants, including setting a low affordable loss, experimentation and learning-by-doing. This suggests that our informants were adopting a largely effectual approach. Identification of an effectual approach provides an explanation of marketing activities that were notably absent from our findings. For example, none of the informants described undertaking formal market research either before entering their chosen market, or as a means of identifying growth opportunities. This lack of planning is consistent with studies that have sought to differentiate entrepreneurial and administrative marketing, which also find that small firms substitute formal market research with 'an active process of market immersion' (Hills and Hultman, 2013 p.445).

Conclusions

We have used the theoretical lens of entrepreneurial marketing to explore the marketing activities undertaken by entrepreneurial businesses. The study is unique in that it considers the specific case of online businesses. Prior studies that consider ethnic minority businesses have tended to combine different business types. This obscures that different business types can offer different affordances and hence opportunities. Our specific focus on online businesses show that they allow ethnic minority entrepreneurs to address some of the challenges they face. For example, the entrepreneurs interviewed used personal sources to fund their businesses, either to

reduce the risk associated with external funding or due to perceived difficulties in obtaining commercial funding. Online businesses allowed them a relatively low cost option for starting a business. They also allowed a relatively low cost and contingent approach to marketing, for example, allowing the entrepreneurs to learn marketing skills themselves by observing others, rather than pay for external expertise, either in the form of consultancy support or hiring staff. Operating their businesses online also allowed the entrepreneurs to leverage the strengths that arose from their heritage. For example, a number of the informants described how they felt confident in both hiring staff and serving customers overseas, particularly in their country of origin. Online businesses are ideally suited to the use of distributed staff, since it is not apparent to customers where staff are located, nor do customers expect to be able to visit physical premises.

As noted, migration is being viewed as one of the greatest challenges facing the world (Amrith, 2014; The Economist, 2015). Our study is important since it identifies and provides empirical examples of opportunities available to once those migrants have settled. However, as noted in previous studies, the focus should not be only on increasing the quantity, but also the quality of such entrepreneurship (Clark and Drinkwater, 2010). Online businesses appear to offer the opportunity to break out from low-growth, vacancy chain openings that are associated with physical enclaves (Kloosterman, 2010). Whilst the focus on Kloosterman's (2010) study is on business formation, our focus on the marketing activities extends the focus from market entry to longer term sustainability and growth. Recognition of the role of marketing is an important extension, since without the ability to harness resources to effectively sustain and grow a business, the ability to enter a market is at best of theoretical value, and at worst, potentially damaging, since ethnic minority entrepreneurs may be attracted into market sectors where they cannot sustain their business, leading to business failure. Our identification of high little originality and differentiation in the marketing of their online businesses, suggests that the ethnic minority entrepreneurs may recreate similar high levels of competition in the online domain.

Contribution to Theory

This study contributes to theory by using entrepreneurial marketing as a theoretical lens to explore ethnic minority entrepreneurship. Our focus on available resources has demonstrated how these two perspectives can be brought together. Despite the common theme of entrepreneurship, we are unaware of the application of entrepreneurial marketing to ethnic minority entrepreneurship. To date, marketing in ethnic minority businesses has been characterized as chaotic and haphazard (Altinay and Altinay, 2008; Carson and Cromie, 1990). Use of an entrepreneurial marketing perspective allows recognition that marketing in such businesses is not chaotic, rather it reflects the emergent and flexible use of the resources that the entrepreneur has available or can easily access. Entrepreneurs in such businesses should therefore not be dismissed as having limited marketing skills and that the study of them is of little value. They may well lack formal marketing qualifications and experience, but they provide compelling empirical evidence of entrepreneurial marketing.

Our particular empirical setting has also demonstrated connections between entrepreneurial marketing and other entrepreneurial theories, namely that of effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001; Wiltbank *et al*., 2006) and entrepreneur-venture fit (Dvir *et al.,* 2010). Again, despite the common foci of these theories, the linkages between them have not been empirically demonstrated. Inclusion of an effectuation perspective, extends and enriches the ideas of contingency and emergence that characterise entrepreneurial marketing by recognising notions of low affordable loss and a lack of market research and planning are part of a valid entrepreneurial approach and not symptoms of lack of knowledge or chaos (Altinay and Altinay, 2008; Carson and Cromie, 1990).

Practice and Policy Implications

The study provides real-world examples of how ethnic minority entrepreneurs have drawn on the resources they have available, or can easily access, to market their businesses. These can provide valuable lessons for aspiring ethnic minority entrepreneurs. Table 2 sets out a wide range of practical approaches that such entrepreneurs can harness. However, due to the high degree of homogeneity shown, we would encourage such entrepreneurs to identify unique means of marketing their businesses. Whilst entrepreneurial marketing characterises current approaches, and

hence is an apposite theoretical lens, ethnic minority entrepreneurs may do better to adopt alternative marketing approaches that foreground innovation such as breakout marketing (Basu, 2011).

The study also provides policy relevant findings. Many government initiatives seek to increase levels of employment by increasing entrepreneurship. Such initiatives should be inclusive, and hence policy makers and business advisors should also be aware of the opportunities that online businesses offer ethnic minority entrepreneurs to break out of low growth sectors and how those opportunities may be realised. The study raises particular issues with relation to entrepreneurship visas. As we highlight, the requirements for such visas to be extended include the employment of staff in the UK. This may deny ethnic minority entrepreneurs the advantage they have in being comfortable in hiring and managing staff overseas.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

It is important to recognise the limitations of our study. As shown in Table 1, our sample consisted of entrepreneurs who had been born in the UK and those that had migrated to the UK. Extant research has shown mixed findings when comparing first and second generation entrepreneurs, showing both similarities (Masurel and Nijkamp 2004) and differences (McEwan *et al*., 2005). Future studies could seek to compare the marketing approaches of these entrepreneurs and the underlying causes of those differences. As discussed previously, we recognise that our sample contained a high proportion of male respondents with Asian heritage. It would be beneficial to explore how entrepreneurs from other ethnic minority backgrounds have formed and marketed online businesses.

Our focus on the resources that were available to our informants results in our study being positively framed. This may be reinforced by the likely positive-bias in our sample of informants who view their ventures in a positive light and were therefore willing to participate in the research. Some interviewees in our study described the challenges they faced. For example they viewed language as an important barrier to winning business with non-ethnic minority clients. Whilst they could ensure that their websites displayed perfect English, they described how their use of social media,

phone and face to face meetings could show limitations in their language proficiency. Other studies have suggested that the online environment can be as discriminatory as the offline world and that the visually and socially rich interactions that occur online do not conceal or 'transcend racialised bodies' (Daniels, 2009; 2012). Martinez Dy (2014) presents the notion of 'whitewashing', where online ethnic entrepreneurs seek to conceal their racial or ethnic identities as a means of improving the status and performance of their business. Whilst our interviewees did not report pressure to whitewash their identity, future studies would provide a counter-point to our current study, by exploring the challenges faced by ethnic minority-owned online businesses.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

The following are prompts to aid the narrative interview approach. The order and exact wording of prompts are contingent on the narrative of the informant (e.g. Riessman, 2004; Hamilton, 2006).

About the business

- Tell me the story of your business - why you started it and how you started it?
  [to elicit human and financial resources]
- [If not explicitly covered already] Why did you start an online business - what are the benefits and challenges of an online business?
  [to elicit affordances of online business and identify support for break out]

About the entrepreneur

- How long have you lived in the UK? If you have a visa, what type?
  [to elicit context]
- How has your background influenced your business? e.g. What on-going links with [state name of country of origin/heritage] – and how do these influence your business?
  [to elicit ethnic resources]
- Are your family involved in the operation of your business – or friends? How and why are they involved?
  [to elicit social resources]

Marketing Approaches

- Describe your approach to marketing your business?
  [to elicit marketing approaches]
- Are there any other issues or factors that you have found important in marketing your business?
  [to ensure informant has not been constrained]

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Key Informants

Total number of key informants		22
Gender	Males	19
	Females	3
Age	Average	39.5
	Standard deviation	9.6 years
Highest qualification	Masters	6
	Batchelors	11
	School/college	5
	Total	22
Family heritage	Pakistan	12
	Bangladesh	6
	European	2
	Caribbean	2
	Total	22
Migration generation	Born outside UK	16
	1st generation (i.e. born in UK)	6
	Total	22
Visa status	Have or have applied for entrepreneurship visa	8
	British passport holders	9
	Other (EU passport, student visa)	5
	Total	22
Time in UK for those born outside UK	Average	8.3 years
	Standard deviation	6.7 years
Industry sector of business	Web development	5
	Digital marketing and search engine optimisation	4
	IT consultancy	5
	Online retailing	3
	Accountancy	3
	Education	2
	Total	22

Table 2. Promotional approaches adopted by key informants

Promotional Strategies	Informants																						Total
	IT based businesses														Non IT businesses								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
Online																							
Business Website	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	21
Online Business Forums					X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X		X			10
Blogs / Online Newsletters			X		X					X						X				X			5
Free online advertisement (Gumtree)		X	X			X	X			X						X						X	7
Online sales platforms (e.g. eBay, People per Hour)	X		X							X						X		X					5
Google Marketing		X							X	X						X							4
Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	16
SEO (Search Engine Optimization)									X	X		X		X		X				X			6
Offline																							
Writing books										X													1

Branded clothing									X											X			2
Advertisement in local magazines and newspapers		X		X				X	X		X				X	X						X	X	9
Leafleting / Business cards		X				X	X	X	X	X	X						X						X	9
Business catalogue such as Yell.com or yellow pages	X			X			X	X														X		5
Networking events					X			X	X	X					X		X	X		X				8
Combination of Online and Offline																								
Word-of-mouth marketing	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		14
Total	4	7	6	3	5	5	5	7	9	13	6	5	2	5	6	7	5	4	3	7	5	6	125