

THE SUSTAINABILITY
OF ASIAN WEALTH:
An examination of the Asian Business Sector in the UK

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Abstract

The continued success of Asian entrepreneurs in the UK testifies to the sustainability of the Asian business community which appears to combine the dynamism of the free market with the dynamic, risk taking heroism of the entrepreneur. Asian wealth in the UK has become more diverse in terms of the type of entrepreneur and the types of business. It now crosses from first through to second and third generations. It spans manufacturing and services, entertainment and fashion, hotels and property, food and pharmaceuticals. Asian enterprises have attracted the attention of academics, policy makers and practitioners and are increasingly enjoying a higher profile in the popular press. Whilst recent studies highlight this growing importance, when charting the success of the Asian entrepreneur they tend to focus on the transformation from '*rags to riches*' and the majority of studies concentrate on the characteristics of the owner, start up and the barriers to accessing finance. This study analyses the longer established, more successful enterprises of the Asian business community and seeks to draw out trends within this increasingly important sector of the economy and consider their economic sustainability.

The study draws on data provided by the annual Asian wealth index which focuses on the 200 richest Asians in the UK. It analyses the wealth-generating capacity of this upper spectrum of the Asian business community through a comparative economic and sectoral analysis. The analysis suggests that the Asian business community has delivered significantly higher than average growth and that this growth has been driven by a shift towards higher value industrial sectors, questioning the extent to which the traditional stereotypes of the Asian entrepreneur, portrayed in the academic literature, maintain their value.

For policy makers and the business support community the paper offers new insights into the economic nature of this growing business sector. The originality of the research process and data raises new issues in research into Asian entrepreneurship not just the UK. It thus offers significant challenges to the academic community.

Key Words

Asian Business Sector
Ethnic Minority Businesses
Entrepreneurship
Wealth Creation
Asian Wealth Index

Introduction

Over the past quarter of a century, a recurring theme in the commentary on the performance and characteristics of the UK economy has been its' *top heavy* nature; national levels of output, turnover, profitability, research and development expenditure etc are determined by the larger organisations (see, for example, Williams et al., 1983, Hutton, 1996 and Froud et al. 1997). This problem definition has resulted in two streams of policy initiative and suggestion. The first suggests that improved economic performance can be achieved only by accepting the reality of this situation and so policy attention should be directed to the behaviour of these big economic corporations (see for example Williams et al. 1994 and Floyd et al. 1999). The second and more relevant for the purposes of this paper, suggests that long term economic prosperity can only be attained through the reversal of this trend and the development of a thriving SME sector.

Despite two and a half decades of effort, generating a significant SME sector in the UK have been a little disappointing. For example, new start-ups have shown a generally flat trend over the past decade; in the early and mid 1990s there was some growth in the creation of new businesses but since the late 1990s numbers have fallen off significantly. In generating a thriving sector, the key issue is not just start-ups but how they measure up against closures and this is a far from balanced scorecard; since the early 1990s the stock of small businesses in the UK has fallen by upwards of 50,000 (Bank of England, 1999, 2002). However, whilst the overall results for the sector have been disappointing, this is not the case with the ABS. The general figures suggest that this sector is significantly achieving better results relative to the overall population, for instance, from just 8% of the working population, this sector accounts for 10% of all new start-ups.

In considering the nature of the Asian business sector (ABS) in the UK, most academic research offers a rich analysis of the entrepreneurial events, activities and personalities which underpin this thriving business sector. However, much of this analysis lacks a hard empirical economic foundation. The aims of this paper are to examine a number of much-neglected issues within this important area of entrepreneurial research.

The Economic Significance and Stereotyping of Asian Entrepreneurs

A significant body of research (Ram 1996; Ram and Jones 1998, Ram and Smallbone 2001, Stanworth and Gray 1991) suggests that this performance of the ABS has occurred against a backdrop characterised by a lack of support; the growth in the sector would seem to have happened despite, rather than because, of the support mechanisms in place. There is still a lack of consistency and continuity in small business support for ethnic minority businesses (EMBs) despite their high presence has resulted in some recognition from government initiatives (Ram and Jones 1998). Although the business support sector has evolved significantly, from Enterprise Agencies to TECs through to the establishment of Business Links, research suggests that these support structures have not proved popular with many EMBs (Curran and

Blackburn, 1993). For example, African-Caribbean entrepreneurs were significantly more likely to use the support of an agency than either White or Asian owned businesses (Jones and McEvoy 1992; Ram and Deakins 1995). Whilst equal opportunity agendas and quotas suggest that there is a wide scale recognition of this poor take-up of support services by EMBs, there is, as yet, no national co-ordinated policy to address this issue. Activity tends to occur at the local level through support organisations exploring different avenues as to how to increase the take-up of their services by EMBs or to customise their services to meet the specific needs of EMBs. However, Ram (1996), suggests that this approach tends to focus on myopic target setting, such as a focus on a specific ethnic minority group each year, rather than the development of a cohesive long-term strategy. More recently Smallbone *et al* (2003) conducted a large-scale survey into the accessing of finance which showed variation between ethnic minority groups. This shows that support needs to target the specific group rather than treat minority businesses as homogenous.

The macro picture reinforces this view as take-up rates for these support services are universally very low; typically only 4-5% of all new start-ups access the various support networks (Storey, 1994 and Barratt *et al.*, 1996) and, within the EMB community, take-up rates are even lower (Bank of England, May 1999). Fadahunsi *et al.* (2000) suggest that the two main causes of this are problems of cultural reluctance and wider issues of trust. This conclusion is further supported by Dhaliwal (2003) amongst others who argues that the main sources of business advice and support for the ABS are professional accountants followed by family and friends. Ram and Carter (2003) note the diversification into professions and explore the case of ethnic minority accountants operating as entrepreneurs. The most recent evidence (Bank of England, 2002) suggest that little has changed in the last few years and suggests that official support agencies are not sufficiently tailored to the specific needs and demands of EMBs in general and the ABS in particular. The Government's Small Business Service is keen to address this issue and has made it a part of its seven key policy themes.

Despite all of these shortcomings in support structures and the resultant low take-up rates, ethnic minorities in the UK have, nevertheless, generally higher self-employment rates than the rest of the population (Barrett *et al.*, 1996). Although there is some disparity between the different groups, this move towards in business start-up can be accounted for by both *push* and *pull* factors (Ram, 1996, Ram and Jones, 1998). The push factors which force individuals into entrepreneurship as a personal economic choice include prejudice found in employment and frustration at being overlooked for promotion. Pull factors include cohesive family structures and strategies, the desire for a greater degree of independence and keeping the rewards of your own efforts (Ram and Jones, 1998, Dhaliwal, 2003)

Having considered the growth in the EMB sector and the ABS in the context of a relatively unsupportive environment, the paper now turns to consider how this sector has been treated once it has been established. In dealing with the phenomena of EMBs and the ABS, this study would argue that much of the literature makes use of stereotyping and the result of this is that, rather than deal with the sector on a case by case basis, it is treated as an homogenous group. These stereotypes take a number of different forms. For example, Asians tend to be risk averse relying, first, on personal savings and then family money followed by community support, before finally considering bank finance (Dhaliwal 2003). The ABS is characterised as being more easily frustrated

with bureaucracy thus preferring informal relationships and minimum paperwork. A common problem faced by new entrants into the ABS is over ambitious and poorly written business plans which, given the banks' reluctance to talk to potential business customers until they have produced viable business plans, serves to deter many serious business propositions.

The stereotyping approach also occurs at a generational level. First generation businesses are usually seen as embodying a home and work environment where traditions and values are maintained in order to deliver comfort and security. This approach survived as the culture was heavily interwoven with religious beliefs and the view that there was no need to integrate with the wider host population. Long hours, mentally and physically demanding work often led to the Asian entrepreneur developing emotional ties with the business where the entrepreneur spends more time at work than with the family (Janjuha and Dickson, 1998). Brought up in the west and exposed to influences from their schools, the media and peer groups, the next generation of Asian entrepreneurs are stereotyped with the characteristic of increasing independence. Faced with this challenge, the typical response was that the first generation closed ranks to outsiders and became increasingly reliant on advice from the community or co-ethnic professionals (Dhaliwal, 2002).

The push-pull factor explanation of the development of the ABS is also prevalent in the stereotyping literature. For example, Chavan and Agrawal (2000) argue that the first generation moved into business due to *push* factors whereas second and third generations placed a greater significance on the *pull* factors. For first generation entrants into the ABS, many businesses were set up as a cohesive family strategy which kept the family members together and in employment (Dhaliwal and Amin, 1995, Ram, 1992, Ram and Jones, 1998 and Dhaliwal, 2000). Furthermore, the status of being *business* people was enjoyed as it carried weight in the local community (Dhaliwal, 1998 and 2000). This was particularly the case with East African Asians trying to recapture the self-esteem they lost as they were forced to leave their businesses behind in Africa to become an unwelcome minority in the UK where the businesses compensated, to some degree, for the lack of respect from the wider community (Gidoomal 1997).

Cultural stereotypes of success for the first generation entrepreneur include thrift, hard work and reliance on family labour (Werbner, 1990 and Waldinger et al., 1990) which, according to Soar (1991) give Asian entrepreneurs a competitive edge on other businesses. However, the stereotype also suggests that cultural factors may restrict growth by creating excessive reliance on the local ethnic community market, informal sources of finance and family controlled businesses (Jones *et al.*, 1992, Metcalf et al., 1996, Ram, 1994 and Basu and Goswami, 1999). The result of this is the stereotypical Asian business which is concentrated in low entry threshold industries with low value-added activities and limited opportunities for market expansion through the development of non-local sales.

There is a paradox at the heart of much of the literature on Asian entrepreneurship. On the one hand are the quantitative studies that suggest a thriving and flourishing sector and, on the other, is the deeper evidence, often qualitative in nature, which suggests a largely unsupportive environment and a business sector characterised by uniformity,

homogeneity and a whole series of different stereotypes. This has implications for both economic and social sustainability.

Methodology and Data

In raising questions about the value and reliability of the dominant stereotypes of Asian entrepreneurs, the data on which much of this paper relies is drawn directly from the annual wealth index produced by Eastern Eye magazine. Whilst this source does provide the definitive guide to Asian wealth in the UK, the study recognises that there are a number of methodological and empirical issues raised by this source. In particular the study draws attention to two problems. First, the quality and reliability of the data set and the inevitable impurities contained within it. Second, the interpretation and analysis of such *impure* data will inevitably be problematic, particularly in drawing out conclusions and recommendations.

The empirical impurities of the data set focus on the extent to which it provides a reliable and accurate measure of Asian wealth creation. The methodology adopted in the compilation of the data, termed *the rules of engagement*, recognise these problems and point out the following conditions: First, stakes in public companies are valued on their rating at the end of each year as published in the Financial Times; second, whilst the valuation of privately owned companies is dealt with on a case by case basis, it is inevitable that in some cases sectoral price/earnings ratios or equivalent companies will be used as a proxy; third, assumptions sometimes have to be made about the value of, for example, holding companies located in tax havens and, finally, individual wealth is often aggregated into family wealth. Thus, even with sources like Companies House, the lack of access to, say, private bank accounts can lead to problems of both under and over estimation of *hidden* wealth.

In justifying the use of this source of data, it should be pointed out that there are a number of mitigating variables which means that the source still has significant academic value. In particular attention is drawn to the consistency in compiling the index across the seven years of its publication; the rules of engagement explained earlier have remained constant throughout. Thus the data collection and presentation process used in each of the seven years for which figures are available is consistent and follows the same guidelines. For example, to appear in the wealth index, individuals must generate their wealth from primarily UK based activities. For this reason, the 2003 and 2004 indices (edited by, Dhaliwal, S - the author of this paper) do not include the top 2 individuals from the 1998-2002 period as most of the wealth generated in these cases is from non-UK activities. The decision was taken not to include these individuals in the years prior to 2003 for these reasons. No unrealistic claim is made that errors across each year or between different years work in some way to cancel each other out or that overestimation in one area is compensation for underestimation elsewhere. The more plausible argument is made that the consistency shown in both the process and outcome of compilation demonstrates a certain validity and reliability of evidence.

Equally important is the next problem of attaching weight and significance to any conclusions that are drawn or recommendations that are made; even with the mitigating variables above, it would be impossible to draw specific conclusions about,

for example, generalisability, or to make a series of bold recommendations. Here we would make a further point about the quality of the data and also point out the intentions behind this paper. In drawing conclusions about both the traditional stereotype of Asian entrepreneurs and the economic significance of the top end of the ABS, the constituents of the wealth index are an important consideration. Practically all of the wealth which appears in the index is generated from business activities; less than 1% of the total over the seven year period is generated from non-business activities (which are mainly lottery wins and inheritance). Using, for example, the DTI definition of an SME, the inference is drawn that most of the wealth is generated from this sector. This is clearly not the case at the top of the index; private companies valued at £4-500 million could hardly be described as either small or medium. However, given the movement up and down the rankings that has been noted over the time series, it can be concluded that the wealth index comprises a mixture of current and past (successful) SMEs and thus the analysis goes much further than the numismatistical exercise for which the data is usually used.

The article finally turns to the issue of purpose and an explanation of what may come out of the analysis which follows. The article does not intend to draw specific conclusions and recommendations from this data. In questioning the value of the dominant stereotype, for instance, the aim is not to emphatically close one debate but rather to open new debates and potential avenues of investigation. Thus, the intention is to examine broad trends and, in doing this, attention will be drawn to the consistency within the results of the analysis both in terms of the data itself and in terms of other studies carried out in the general area.

Bucking the Trend: The numbers behind Asian wealth creation

This section of the article considers two key issues: First, how does this sector of the economy perform in terms of the creation of wealth and, second, what are the main drivers behind that wealth creation. The analysis of Asian wealth creation which follows rests on the *a priori* assumption that wealth must be created, it is not, for example, simply harvested. This is neither a new nor original idea. For example, as far back as the 1930s, Schumpeter (1934, 1939) argued for the central role of the entrepreneur in wealth creation and economic development and, more recently, Chaharbaghi and Newman (1997) have discussed a “*crisis of wealth creation*” which again places the entrepreneur in a central role. At the broader, macro-economic level, writers like Hutton (1996) discuss this issue of wealth creation in a wider economic context and draw attention to 2 central weaknesses in the UK economy. The first weakness is the inability of the economy to deliver sustained economic growth over the long term due to a lack of competitiveness. Whilst measures of international competitiveness are riddled with difficulty, when measured by simple comparative economic performance, the UK’s record against its cross-Channel and trans-Atlantic competitors is poor over the long term. The second structural weakness of the UK economy is its’ *top heavy* nature which means that when growth does occur, it tends to be concentrated in a few giant firms. In terms of overall wealth creation in the UK, the 600 biggest companies account for something in the region of 70% of total wealth (Froud et al. 1997). The study, therefore, makes the general point that the performance of Asian wealth creators must be analysed in the context of a top heavy and sluggish economy with an ever widening gap between top and bottom.

Table 1 offers some basic data on the top 200 Asian wealth creators in the UK along with some broader economic data for the purposes of comparison. Over the past 7 years, the UK economy has demonstrated sustained growth which can be characterised as more steady than spectacular. This is in marked contrast to the sector of the economy on which this article focuses; Asian wealth creation has happened at almost 3 times the level of the economy as a whole.

Table 1: Index of Real Asian Wealth Generation and GDP 1998-2004

Year	Nominal Asian Wealth Creation	Real Asian Wealth Creation	Real GDP
1998	100.0	100.0	100.0
1999	117.9	116.1	104.4
2000	145.4	139.1	106.4
2001	160.6	150.9	110.1
2002	165.7	153.2	113.2
2003	159.5	145.7	117.5
2004	175.0	156.6	120.9

(Source: Eastern Eye 1998-2004, OECD)

This part of the Asian sector has grown, on average, at just over 8% per annum compared to just over 3% for the economy as a whole. Just as growth rates are significantly different, so too are the constituents of this growth. Table 2 suggests that, unlike the UK economy, the Asian wealth creating sector is not overly reliant on just a few stellar performers. For example, since 1998, the top 10% of Asian wealth creators

have accounted for a diminishing proportion of total wealth generated; whilst almost two-thirds of Asian wealth was generated by the top 20 performers in 1998, by 2004 this proportion had fallen to under a half. Despite the proportionate fall in the contribution of these elite wealth creators, the point should not be lost that in 2004 the top 10% accounted for almost £900 million more wealth than 7 years previously. This suggests that the general British economic problem of slow growth is not one seen in this element of the ABS and this conclusion is reinforced through further examination of key components of this wealth creation.

Table 2: Components of Asian Wealth Generation 1998-2004

Year	Asian Wealth Generated (£ mill)	High Value (£ mill)	Low Value (£ mill)	Share Taken by Top 10% of Wealth Generators (%)
1998	4437.4	500	2.0	60.5
1999	5232.3	450	5.0	54.9
2000	6453.6	325	6.0	48.9
2001	7124.9	300	6.0	45.6
2002	7354.7	450	8.8	43.4
2003	7078.4	460	4.0	44.8
2004	7767.5	500	4.0	45.8

(Source: Eastern Eye 1998-2004)

Over the period of analysis there have been some significant changes in the composition of wealth creation. For example, there has been a shift in activities away from traditional manufacturing companies towards newer, higher-tech, higher value companies in industries like pharmaceuticals. However, despite these changes in activity, there are relatively few changes in the value of individual wealth at the top end of the scale. Between 1998 and 2004, the average value of those entrepreneurs at the top of the scale was usually between £400 and £500 million. Given the falling proportion of wealth accounted for by the top 10% of wealth creators, changes in the composition of wealth creation elsewhere would not necessarily be expected. At the bottom of the scale, for example, the entry level criteria for joining the elite wealth creators has increased dramatically from an initial £2 million in 1998 through to a high of almost £9 million in 2002 before stabilising at £4 million in 2004. Stability at the top coupled with the changes towards the bottom of the league table have resulted in a dramatic growth in average wealth across the sample; in the period average wealth has grown by over two-thirds. Our general conclusion on this issue is that growth in this area of the ABS is characterised by economic push from the middle and bottom rather than economic pull from the top.

The article now turns away from the issue of absolute wealth creation to the issue of what is driving that wealth creation and, again, the overall message is that the Asian sector under discussion has behaved in a significantly different manner to the UK economy as a whole. On a sector by sector basis, there are some interesting shifts in the balance of wealth creation. Table 3, for example, shows that at the start of the time series, the sector was dominated by the *traditional* Asian businesses of manufacturing and retailing but by 2004, the focus of wealth creation had shifted to different sectors; whilst manufacturing remains important for its contribution, the highest wealth

creating sector was the pharmaceuticals industry and, whilst it is not reflected in a simple “league” table, other industries like fashion and IT have grown strongly.

Table 3: Ranking of Sectors by Contribution of Asian Entrepreneurs to Total Wealth Creation 1998 and 2004

Ranking	1998	2004
1	Manufacturing	Pharmaceuticals
2	Retailing and Wholesaling	Manufacturing
3	Fashion and Textiles	Fashion and Textiles
4	IT/Media/Internet	Retailing and Wholesaling
5	Food and Drink	Hotels/Property
6	Hotels/Property	IT/Media/Internet
7	Pharmaceuticals	Food and Drink

(Source: Eastern Eye, 1998-2004)

One of the main causes of this shift in ranking is the variable growth rates across the different sectors under discussion. In real terms the fastest growth has been seen in the pharmaceuticals sector which has grown almost 50 fold in the time period and the big loser has been the basic textiles sector which has contracted by just over 5% in real terms. Given that the time series is for just seven years, it is probably too early to conclude that these represent structural shifts in wealth creation but the changes that have taken place are notable nonetheless. For example, one of the main criticisms of the UK economic performance over the past quarter of a century has been its apparent inability to make the shift from an industrial to a post-industrial base but, as Table 4 demonstrates, the Asian sector would seem capable of making that shift: Whilst the increase in wealth creation from the manufacturing sector has been relatively small, between them, the pharmaceutical, fashion and new economy sectors have seen wealth creation increase by more than £2.2 billion.

Table 4: Asian Wealth Creation by Sector 1998-2004 (£ mill)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Food and Drink	386	569	724.8	697.8	548.8	582.5	760
Hotels/Property	321.2	509.4	634.7	730	1212.8	1113.8	900.5
IT/Media/Internet	489.6	496	390.5	568.5	704.1	725.6	770
Manufacturing	853.2	847	1236.5	1154.5	1068.5	989.8	1147
Pharmaceuticals	31	295.4	448	943	1222.4	1264.5	1517
Retailing and Wholesaling	647.9	650	953.2	901.7	1019.6	1080.7	1024
Fashion and Textiles	632.5	700	499.4	631.6	831	837.3	1068
Other	1076	1165.5	1566.5	1497.8	747.5	484.2	581

(Source: Eastern Eye 1998-2004)

These shifts in make-up are also influenced as much by the growth in some sectors as by the decline in others. The *crowding out* explanation of British de-industrialisation may be paralleled in the Asian sector as new entrants tend to come from growing rather than mature industries. For instance in the broad Asian ‘rag’ trade sector

(comprising Fashion and Textiles) there is a major shift from basic, low value activities such as sub-contracting towards more specialised high value fashion houses such as The Legendary Joe Bloggs. Whilst there is certainly a cyclical element to these changes, the overall picture in Table 5 perhaps suggests something more structural.

Table 5: Composition of the Asian ‘Rag’ Trade 1998-2004 (% share)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Fashion	48	58	76	69	63	63	66
Textiles	52	42	24	31	37	37	34

(Source: Eastern Eye 1998-2004)

The final element of this sectoral analysis is comparative in nature and looks at the performance of the Asian sectors against performance in the UK sectors as a whole. In this case a comparison is made between the performance of the two fastest growing Asian sectors, pharmaceuticals and hotels and property, and the two of the poorer performing sectors, manufacturing and fashion and textiles. Whilst the individual cases have their own peculiarities, the general conclusion drawn is that this Asian sector has outperformed the wider UK economy. The quadrupling of value in the pharmaceuticals sector has happened at the same time as relative stagnation in the UK sector as a whole and, given continuing uncertainty in the tourism and property industries, the growth in the Asian sector has been more pronounced than the general trend despite a significant downturn in the past two years. In terms of the poorer performing sectors, the Asian manufacturing sector has more than sustained its position against further hollowing in the UK and, in the fashion and textiles sector, over the period, growth has been roughly the same as the national sector as a whole.

Table 6: Comparative Sectoral Performance 1998-2004

		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Pharmaceuticals	Asian		100	152	319	414	428	514
	UK		100	124	108	77	83	90
Hotels/Property	Asian	100	159	198	227	378	347	280
	UK	100	97	90	89	72	80	81
Manufacturing	Asian	100	99	145	135	125	116	134
	UK	100	122	100	91	62	67	67
Fashion and textiles	Asian	100	111	79	100	131	132	169
	UK	100	140	130	123	120	155	164

(Source: Eastern Eye 1998-2004, OECD, UN, www.comdirect.co.uk, www.londonstockexchange.com)

CONCLUSION

This paper started with a consideration of the key interventions in the debate on Asian entrepreneurship and focused on the economic contribution of the ABS and the issue of entrepreneurial stereotyping which dominates much of the literature. The paper then considered the strengths and limitations of the Asian wealth index as a data source for tracking the performance of, and changes in, the ABS and concluded that this is a much undervalued and underutilised resource. Using this evidence, the next section analysed the comparative economic performance and changing nature of the ABS and highlights major shifts away from low to high value businesses.

The paper considered two key contexts of the changing face of Asian wealth. First, Asian wealth, as generated by the larger SMEs in the ABS was considered through a discussion of the role and position of the ABS in the wider SME sector in the UK; in particular the paper considered the extent to which the ABS receives adequate business support from the mechanisms currently in place. Secondly, the paper considered the role of entrepreneurial stereotyping in the literature on the ABS as one of the key issues raised by the data concerns the value and relevance of current approaches in this area.

Any broad conclusions to be drawn from the presentation of this empirical data must necessarily be both tentative and equivocal. As stated previously, the intention has been to open new avenues of investigation and debates much more than to close old and existing ones. We would, therefore, make four suggestions as to how this data can be interpreted:

- First, in comparison to the UK economy as a whole, and across many sectors within it, the capacity for wealth creation in the upper reaches of the ABS would appear to be much higher;
- Second, unlike the UK economy where growth is dependent on a few large companies at the top, in this part of the ABS, overall growth is pushed by the middle and bottom, more specifically the Asian SME sector;
- Third, there is a change in the composition of the sector with important shifts away from the traditional engines of growth like retailing, textiles and manufacturing towards higher tech and higher value activities with higher levels of economic sustainability;
- Finally, the policy implications of this for the economy as a whole are that, in promoting a thriving SME sector, it may be just as important for policy makers to focus on ethnic and socio-cultural issues as it is to focus on specific economic and industry based activities.

This study is not without its limitations, namely the businesses in the sample are the larger, more successful businesses whereas the majority Asian businesses are still micro or small family run concerns. Nevertheless, the issues raised and the profiles of the businesses are representative of a notable number of enterprises around the country, and touch on issues of minority ethnic businesses and support provision internationally and within other cultural contexts. Further research in this area is needed to improve the quality of data on minority ethnic communities both at the quantitative and qualitative levels. The Minority ethnic business population remains significant and is a key driver to growth within the increasingly important SME sector. Continued advances in this area need to be made.

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