

Entrepreneurial Marketing in the Digital Age: A study of the SME tourism industry.

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Introduction

This paper contributes to developing research enquiry relating to research at the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface (MEI) from the small and medium-sized firm (SME) marketing perspective. The paper presents findings emanating from a digital destinations project based on the south coast of England and a new, ongoing project on implementing digital marketing strategies in the context of small owner-managed firms. This area of research advances knowledge in several areas and is significant to the developing research of Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) for a number of reasons. Firstly, there are still gaps in knowledge relating to the study of entrepreneurs (Li, 2008; Thomas et al., 2011) and the challenges associated with use of digital marketing and social media, including Twitter, Facebook etc. (Kim et al., 2011; Peltier et al., 2012). In addition there are reported difficulties with the embedding of e-marketing in SMEs for a number of reasons, notably employee resistance, a lack of technological ‘know how’ (Leeftang et al., 2014; Martin & Matlay, 2003) and, a lack of marketing competency, along with all the other associated limitations of a small business (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) such as lack of finance, lack of business resource (Thompson et al., 2013). Third, these firms are geographically remote, in a rural region where they are situationally embedded and dependant on the overall effectiveness of destination marketing and where small tourism businesses often rely on a range of stakeholder relationships and agents to help promote their businesses via traditional (administrative) marketing approaches (Getz & Carlsen, 2005). Rurality also creates additional challenges with weak transport links and poor Internet connections while coastal tourist visits are often dependent on good weather and influenced by seasonality (Getz & Nilsson, 2004). Finally the fourth key challenge for entrepreneurs is detecting who they need to target their marketing towards, as digital marketing offers entrepreneurs an unbridled opportunity to market globally.

Past researchers (Harrigan et al., 2011) have highlighted the role of digital marketing as a support mechanism for entrepreneurs to use in developing and strengthening their relationships with customers. This makes sense for entrepreneurs with firms which are embedded in local networks with customers who are geographically situated close to them. It is much more challenging for tourism sector entrepreneurs to find, identify and attract potential customers who are likely to be situated either much further away within their own country or overseas. The following key issues specific to tourism SMEs are outlined below:

- Customers require a much higher level of trust when booking a tourism visit experience rather than a product as it is intangible in nature. Customers are reliant on either referring to brochures, often from marketing intermediaries like regional tourism marketing boards

or larger tourism companies or increasingly, more directly via websites and other digital media. The tourism digital market is also dominated by large players (intermediaries) who are able to invest significant funds into marketing and promotion activities via digital marketing approaches.

- It is challenging for tourism entrepreneurs with limited business resources to evaluate new opportunities in the tourism market because it is difficult to carry out extensive market research to locate specific customers or segments of customers who are most likely already predisposed to visiting the specific type of tourism destination and take part in the ensuing type of activities on offer during their visit, in this case the Jurassic Coast in Dorset, England.
- It is much more difficult for the tourism entrepreneur to maintain customer relationships without significant investment in digital resources and a marketing team. Keeping in touch with the customer after they have visited and encouraging repeat business is difficult because of the physical distance involved between the entrepreneur and the customer.

Next, this paper next presents the relevant literature on EM, SME marketing, tourism and, digital marketing. The study background of the tourism project from which the data for this paper is extracted is described. Then, the findings relating to one key case study business and one entrepreneurial owner-manager involved in the project is analysed and discussed. While general data from the project provides critical insights in respect of the whole sample of SME tourism firms, only one case study is discussed as a key example, so as to allow for deeper focus and discussion as to the value creation outputs pertaining to this business. Findings are then discussed in relation to the extant literature, before conclusions are reached.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurial Marketing and SME Marketing in the Tourism Industry

The tourism research discipline offers a unique and highly relevant context within which to study entrepreneurs, EM and SME marketing. Very little research on tourism entrepreneurship and enterprise creation has been published, despite the significant contribution of tourism to regional territories and countries globally <http://www.wttc.org/research/economic-research/economic-impact-analysis/> (date accessed 09/08/2015). Tourism indirectly generates more than 10% of the European Union's GDP and provides about 12% of the labour force; over 90% of the European Tourism sector comprises SMEs, of which the majority each employ less than 50 people.

Authors who have considered the role of entrepreneurship in the tourism industry include Getz and Peterson (2005) who studied growth and profit-oriented entrepreneurship among family business owners in the tourism and hospitality industry. They noted the role of entrepreneurial owner influence and their motivation towards profit and growth in a two resort study. Family

values and rural challenges were also examined by Getz and Carlsen (2005); they noted the entrepreneur's influence on the firm, motivation, their lifestyle choices and autonomy, similar to the mainstream SME marketing and entrepreneurship literature on new and growing enterprises in a variety of sectors. Gertz and Peterson however, studied a wider range of themes to include life cycle stages, the issues of seasonality, culture and gender issues such as the difference between male and female entrepreneurs.

Kompulla (2014) carried out an in-depth case study of a tourism destination based in Finland from a micro enterprise, network and developing competitiveness in a rural region, context. Her study highlights the roles of entrepreneurial activity, cooperation between other businesses in the region and the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), providing a digital framework which highlights market intelligence capabilities and responsiveness to changes in demand.

The study of EM, entrepreneurs and customer relationships (Stokes, 2000; Morrish et al., 2010) and the entrepreneurial and SME networks (Shaw, 1999), personal contact networks (PCNs)(Carson et al., 1995) and network marketing literature (Jones, Suoranta and Rowley, 2013) to name but a few, has been overlooked in the tourism body of literature. Yet it provides substantive, useful and relevant theory and frameworks to support research investigation of tourism SMEs, and effective destination management, through initiatives which would provide new and increased popularity through tourist visits and; support growth initiatives involving networks of firms, both small and large. In the small business context, customer relationships and marketing activities, entrepreneurship and innovation are intertwined (Jones and Rowley, 2011). Successful implementation in SMEs may result in greater customer orientation, characterised by increased 'value creation' activity, viewed as a central element of EM and an entrepreneurial marketing characteristic (Bjerk & Hultman, 2002; Hills & Hultman, 2006); by understanding more effectively the value the customer seeks from the tourism SME's offer.

The embedding of digital marketing in the firm enables strengthening of customer relationships for which the entrepreneur is often already adept (Harrigan et al., 2011). This is normally face-to-face and marketing by '*word-of-mouth*', however for marketing of destinations, e-marketing and electronic '*word-of-mouse*' for geographically distant customer markets is particularly advantageous. Customer insights driven from digital data also create new opportunity for entrepreneurs to enhance their knowledge of customer and, they will have more means at their disposal in the form of competitive information (what they know). Importantly, this will allow entrepreneurs to take control of their future by shaping it rather than trying to predict it (Sarasvathy, 2001).

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing offers new opportunities for SMEs and in particular, tourism SMEs, who now have the potential to access increased opportunities to innovate on an unprecedented scale. For

example: how SMEs define target markets, as digital marketing offers an unparalleled access to information at a granular scale, which can redefine the ways in which customer segments are created using free-to-use web-based tools such as Followerwonk (<https://followerwonk.com>)(date accessed 09/08/2015). This allows the user to enter any person or brand's Twitter handle and analyse their followers. It also includes a rating of their 'social authority' on a scale of 1-100 that enables the business to identify and, crucially, to engage directly with a segment of influential followers. This represents significant innovation in digital market segmentation. There are also opportunities to embed digital marketing and insight throughout the firm in order to facilitate on-going innovation. For example, customer engagement through digital channels generates an immediate flow of data back to the firm in the form of 'web analytics' which can provide the firm with insight into which products, services, offers, campaigns, etc. are successful. An effective 'test and learn' strategy enables constant product/service innovation, which can facilitate cost effective growth strategies and operational efficiencies (Hoffman, & Novak, 2011).

El-Gohary (2012) calls for the need to build theory in e-marketing, however while Internet or digital marketing may be considered a field of marketing (Pomirleanu, Schibrowsky, Peltier, & Nill, 2013) the fundamental tenets of marketing hold true regardless of whether it is so-called 'traditional' marketing or digital marketing (Alford & Page, 2015; Chaffey, 2010; Wymbs, 2011). Is digital marketing really a new paradigm or a means for returning to what marketing is all about - a customer focus which affords us the opportunity to co-create value for mutual benefit (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Rather than focusing on what the technology can do, this paper concentrates on what the business owner can do with the technology in order to be entrepreneurial and innovative and to unlock value which resides in different areas (Chaffey & Patron, 2012).

Methodology

The methodology for this study began with qualitative research emanating from an action learning project with a sample of 60 SMEs on a Digital Destination Project funded by ESRC at Bournemouth University. The overarching aim of the project was to 'Capture change in the adoption and use of digital technologies by small visitor economy businesses to enable them to engage more effectively with existing and new customers and develop a strong, competitive local tourism economy'. For the detailed output from the project see Alford & Page (2015). Subsequently another linked project, Digital Transformation, with a smaller number of participating SMEs is currently taking place. During both projects owners and managers of SMEs have been filmed and interviewed and studied. For the ongoing project, individual interviews have been carried out with entrepreneurs and data from owner-managers has been used as a distinct sample (see Table 1 for details of sample), as participant replies were different for those who were owner-managers than those who were employee managers.

Table 1. Profile of owner-managed businesses

Case	Business type	Employees FT & PT	Age
Acorns of Lyndhurst	Bed & Breakfast	1	9
Bennetts Water Gardens	Retail/restaurant/online sales/public garden	30	60
Daisybank Cottage	Bed & Breakfast	2	5
Discover Dorset	Sightseeing tours	30	11
Hotel Terravina	Hotel and restaurant	35	8
Splashdown	Tourist attraction	45	25
Longpuddle	Bed & Breakfast	1	5
Pioneer Expeditions	Tour operator	3	9
Surfsteps	Watersports centre	6	10
Norburton Hall	Self catering cottages	1	10

Motivations were different, and knowledge of the whole business was limited for managers. Data was extrapolated from a number of sources including interviews via Skype, workshops convened at the university, application form to join Digital Destinations and online posts. Interview findings were summarised and presented to participants and feedback was obtained as member checking is a method of improving content validity (Carson et al., 2001). Data was coded and analysed using NVivo software. For the purposes of explaining the interaction between the entrepreneur and use of digital marketing in a tourism business one case study firm was chosen for this paper, Norburton Hall.

Findings

General data from the project

Tourism SME owners (entrepreneurs) have a range of goals, (personal and business are often intertwined) which more effective digital marketing can help to facilitate. There are also concerns about business sustainability and growth (customer acquisition and retention and combating seasonality), innovative marketing through digital media and autonomy (reducing

dependency on intermediaries for marketing), personal development (satisfaction in mastering digital marketing and technology) and profitability (more effective and efficient marketing). Tourism entrepreneurs face a number of organisational challenges which affect sustainability and growth of their business. A significant issue facing entrepreneurs in tourism SMEs is the dominance of large online intermediary businesses, for example Booking.com which increase the cost of marketing for SMEs significantly. Entrepreneurs in this sample are reluctant to use such powerful intermediaries who are perceived by entrepreneurs to be ineffective, creating indirect links between the entrepreneur and his or her customers and unresponsive to the entrepreneur's needs.

Social media issues for these entrepreneurs include being overwhelmed by speed and choice, with entrepreneurs having a 'me-too' attitude rather than using informed marketing planning activity. They also have difficulty measuring the impact of their marketing activities but in general they recognise that some impact related to use of social media is for the long term and cannot always be measured by immediate sales or bookings. Entrepreneurs in this sample feel the need to gain competency in using social media and as yet are unsure of its usefulness and application. A key finding is that these entrepreneurs want to be able to assess the return on investment (ROI) for their efforts, i.e. the balance between time taken to use social media and being able to measure the effectiveness of marketing using social media.

The study revealed that value resides in three key areas - the owner, networks and customers - in a small business and that the adoption of marketing technology, coupled with support and facilitation, has a key role to play in unlocking that value. This section discusses that value in the case of Norburton Hall, through the eyes of its owner, Karen Venn.

The Case Study -Norburton Hall

Norburton Hall is a collection of 5 holiday cottages located on the Jurassic Coast in southern England. It is a year-round business however its peak months are from April through to October and a significant challenge facing the business is to attract customers in the 'shoulder months'. The owner, Karen, joined the Digital Destinations study in October 2012 and has been engaged with the university through to the present time.

Comments made on her application form to join the DD study in October 2012 reveal Karen's uncertainty and her lack of knowledge: *"I don't know what I don't know"* and *"I tend to use gut instinct rather than hard facts"*. However other comments on the application form indicate greater insight, than those above suggest, recognising the importance of being able to evaluate her online marketing: *"I am keen to expand my knowledge and to measure effectiveness"* and *"I would like to set up something that would measure and automatically report the success of our different online channels"*. This frustration at not knowing how to measure her marketing is revealed further during the first meeting of her cluster group:

“And that was the question I had really about the best way to measure Twitter, because there's loads of stuff that's going out there and we've got more followers on Twitter than we have on Facebook but I don't know how to measure the Twitter followers and the success of tweets”

Applications including Followerwonk (<https://followerwonk.com>)(date accessed 09/08/2015) and True Social Metrics (TSM) (www.truesocialmetrics.com) (date accessed 10/08/2015) will allow small business owners to analyse and evaluate their Twitter followers and activity in detail. For example a review on TSM of Karen's activity on Twitter revealed that the majority of her tweets do not result in any form of engagement (retweets, favourites, comments). However an analysis of those tweets that secured the highest engagement revealed one ("Dorset - where celebrity chefs are flocking" Beautiful English coastline packed with foodie delights <http://dailym.ai/1ISj9f5> via @travelmail), that was favourited by three people including @ChowHoundGTA, a Toronto-based account, with 11.5k followers, whose description includes: "Bringing you the best food and drink reviews, restaurant happenings, recipes, and foodie links". Karen expressed an interested in targeting the North American market with niche products and this insight provides an opportunity to engage directly with a key online influencer in the area of 'foodie tourism'. However crucially this is not just a matter of technical competence but also of mindset, whereby Karen recognises the inherent opportunity. It also underlines the need for small business owners to be effectual in their approach and to be prepared to use the means at their disposal to realise new goals and sources of value. This is an approach that Karen is clearly comfortable with: *“We intend to set objectives that relate to our digital activity but one of the joys is not being entirely sure where the journey will take us”* and *“it's a bit like the house that Jack built, start doing something small and then you just add on what you can do”*. In this instance, there is an opportunity for Karen to add @ChowHoundGTA to her network, thereby expanding her means (who she knows). This could lead her into a niche market - foodie tourism - that she may not have originally envisaged but was enabled by marketing technology adoption. The added advantage of digital marketing is that it does not take a large time or financial investment to create digital content around a particular themed experience.

The use of social media has also been instrumental in Karen expanding her local network of partners that can add value to her product offer:

“Something that has happened to us is this week is that because the house [NBH] is an arts and crafts house, there's a local company called Sitting Spiritually and they make handcrafted swing seats and benches, and things like that. They've been commissioned by the RHS [Royal Horticultural Society] to make a centenary bench which will be at the Chelsea Flower Show. And they want to photograph it where - they might be doing it now because they're waiting for some nice weather - they wanted to do it in our grounds. So that's really nice and that came about because of our links and knowledge

through Twitter. So for me, Twitter's not just a one-way thing, I'm learning a lot about our market through it as well."

It is interesting that Karen refers to Twitter as two-way channel that allows her to develop knowledge and expand her network. Indeed this is the essence of social media as a means to engage in conversations and be social.

The type of insights referred to above have implications for how small businesses approach market segmentation in a digital age. Karen demonstrates a competent, if somewhat traditional, understanding of segmentation:

"It's mostly in like life stages really. We're looking at ... our major markets are either professional people who are stressed out and want to escape London and come to the countryside. And then others are newly retireds, so empty nesters that are looking to enjoy life again, their freedom. And things that people would be interested in will be say like good food or the natural environment, architecture, some culture, those sorts of things as well"

However the challenge in an increasingly competitive digital landscape is how to attract these customers. Traditional approaches to market segmentation, adopting causal reasoning, would advocate targeting a segment and assembling the means to reach that segment - which may involve, in a digital context, embarking on a keyword strategy to optimise the website for search engine optimisation (SEO), securing partners to enrich the website content, connecting with social media influencers who may provide access to these markets, investing in website development, and adopting paid digital marketing (for example, Google Adwords or paying to promote posts on Facebook or Twitter). However in a recent initiative, The Engagement Project, Google advocates that, rather than starting at the top of the sales funnel and trying to build awareness and attempt to push customers through the funnel to conversion, businesses should start at the other end of the funnel, where loyal advocates or those who are more likely to have a keen interest are located, and engage with them to spread positive word of mouth and influence.

The former approach is akin to traditional market segmentation and, with the increasing level of competition and 'noise' on the Internet, is increasingly challenging and expensive to achieve. Securing a position on the first page of Google's search results for a term such as 'luxury self catering cottages', would be very difficult for Karen to obtain, with the results dominated by online booking agencies and powerful intermediaries. The value inherent in the latter approach can be enabled through effective adoption of marketing technology. For example, the free application, Followerwonk (<https://followerwonk.com>) allows the user to enter any person or brand's Twitter handle and analyse their followers. This includes a rating of their 'social authority' on a scale of 1-100 that enables the business to identify and, crucially, to engage directly with a segment of influential followers. This represents significant innovation in digital

market segmentation. Karen demonstrated her awareness of this form of marketing when she referred to one of her goals as making the most of “ambassador marketing”, however she lacks the skills and knowledge to be able to facilitate it through technology.

On a personal level there is a sense that Karen is on a journey of discovery in her adoption of marketing technology and that being part of a network of peers and having the support of the university is key to maintaining momentum and direction on that journey: “We started the Digital Destinations Project with great anticipation that turned to trepidation, in January 2013, as we realised the enormity of the task ahead.” Later in the DD study she reflects through a blog post:

“Six months on, with the help of the project team at Bournemouth University we are relieved to have survived our plunge into the digital deep end and are now enjoying going with the flow of a digital current.”

The sense of personal value which Karen derives from involvement with digital marketing is palpable and this is reflected in later comments during interviews where she refers to digital as an “addictive” topic. It is also clear however that she prefers not to undertake that journey on her own, as reflected in one of her motivations for joining the DD study, namely “working with a group of like-minded organisations rather than as a lone voice”. This reveals the sense of isolation that small rural businesses can feel and the barrier it presents to technology adoption. As the study progressed it is clear that Karen was deriving tangible value from the project: “I’m so glad that we’re sharing ideas with other businesses with the support of Bournemouth University”. It is clear that Karen is receiving limited support from local organisations and she alludes to the politics in the region where certain types of business receive favourable treatment from public authorities. This underlines the value of being attached to a wider network of organisations with a proactive facilitating organisation driving the agenda forward.

The value of networking extends to marketing her business and not just to learning about digital marketing. Referring to the growing level of competition in the form of home share businesses, which would now include digital disruptors like AirBnB, she is aware of the value in partnerships:

‘I am one small voice which is where it would be really good to join up with others or, maybe strategic alliances, or something like that, I don’t know. I don’t want to go to an agency where we’re paying, sort of, another 20% margin or something.’

However Karen also demonstrates her resistance to increasing her marketing costs by partnering with a commercial agency that will charge a high level of commission. There is an opportunity for small businesses in this sector to reduce these costs if they can build more direct online relationships with customers.

Karen understands the importance of having a unique proposition, referring to one of her challenges as trying “to connect with people where we have the real value-added area”. However a key challenge in an increasingly competitive and complex online world is not only how to define the value that the customer derives from the experience but also how to use that knowledge to attract customers. The proliferation of user generated multimedia content on forums such as TripAdvisor, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, provide an opportunity for small business owners to understand the intrinsic value that customers derive from the service they experience. Reviews of Norburton Hall on TripAdvisor contain significant levels of detail which underlines the uniqueness of the value that customers derive. In many cases they resemble more short stories than factual accounts and are a rich source of insight for the business owner. The value extends beyond customer understanding and the development of value-added propositions, to the opportunity to curate this content for promotional purposes. Applications including Storify and Paper Li provide low cost solutions for curating user generated content and featuring it on the businesses’ own sites.

Discussion - Creation of Value

The NBH case demonstrates the value that resides in a number of areas: with the owner, in knowledge exchange networks, promotional networks, customer interaction with the business, customer to customer interactions, and the data that results from those interactions. Customer engagement through digital channels generates an immediate flow of data back to the firm in the form of ‘web analytics’ which can provide the firm with insight into which products, services, offers, campaigns, etc. are successful. An effective ‘test and learn’ strategy enables constant product/service innovation, which can facilitate cost effective growth strategies and operational efficiencies.

These sources of value are discussed below.

Owner value

Small businesses such as NBH are unique from larger SMEs owing to the central role and influence of the owner (Barnes, Clear, Dyerson, Harindranath, Harris, and Rae, 2012; Simmons, Armstrong, and Durkin, 2008; Jones, Simmons, Packham, Beynon-Davies, and Pickernell, 2014). The NBH case reveals the extent of value that resides in the owner’s ideas and enthusiasm - innovative approaches to segmentation, an effectual approach to doing business where agility and adaptability are key features, the concept of ‘ambassador marketing’, recognising the power of online influence, and prioritising the need to acquire data gathering and analysis capability. Karen has moved from a position of ‘not knowing what she does not know’ to a heightened awareness of what she needs to do to embed technology adoption in her business.

Network value

In order to sustain her adoption of marketing technology, Karen has clearly revealed the value she derives from being part of a peer-to-peer network enabled by an active facilitator organisation, in this case a university. The study has highlighted the gaps in provision and support by public authorities in the area of marketing technology adoption by small businesses. It is a gap which not only constrains the growth of the individual small business but of the region as a whole. This study has revealed that owners are passionate about what technology can do for their business which will have a direct impact on the rate and effectiveness of technology adoption (Ritchie & Brindley, 2005). However this passion has to be channelled and maintained through a support network where ideas and knowledge can be freely and openly created and exchanged.

The network value also relates to business partnerships and strategic alliances that can strengthen the service and its promotion and distribution. The physical components of the customer experience are a servicescape (Bitner, 1992) which can be strengthened through short term and long term partnerships. The NBH case demonstrates how channels such as Twitter provide a means for the business owner to extend his/her network of potential partners. In a digital context there is a strong argument for collaborative partnerships as they significantly strengthen a business's ranking on the search engines. This is due to a number of factors that include an increase in quantity and quality of content that links back to the business website (backlinks which signify importance to the search engine) and the depth of content on the website which increases keyword richness.

Customer value

Vargo & Lusch contend that 'innovation is not defined by what firms produce as output but how firms can better serve' (2008, 5) and that the value which a customer derives from a service can only be determined by the customer. The predominantly 5-star reviews of NBH on TripAdvisor indicate that service is exemplary when the customer is at the physical location and the extent of customer storytelling provides the business owner with an unparalleled insight into the value as perceived by the customer. However in a digital world, there is a virtual location pre and post trip which form part of the total experience. A series of customer touchpoints throughout this virtual-physical-virtual relationship provides an opportunity for the business to add value and to engage in ambassador marketing, in keeping with the shift from 'a business-centred to a user-centred model' (Kim et al., 2011, 157).

Data value

The effective adoption of marketing technology requires that business owners develop competency in the area of web analytics in order to be able to unlock the value which is contained in that data. This relates to data generated across a range of platforms where customer engagement takes place - paid media, social media, owned media (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). This facilitates a test and learn culture which enables a more effectual and agile approach

to marketing (Read, Dew, Sarasvathy, Song, and Wiltbank, 2009). However lack of time and knowledge represent significant barriers to realising this opportunity.

Conclusion

This paper has introduced EM and SME marketing in the tourism industry. Although research of tourism SMEs and tourism entrepreneurship and enterprise is slowly growing there are significant gaps despite government interest world wide. There is much less on the research of digital marketing in SMEs and much less so in the tourism sectors. Therefore this paper reports on a valuable project with tourism SMEs and entrepreneurs as they enthusiastically adapt and learn to make full use of digital marketing. In the small business context, business owners are engaged in various activities and roles; engaging with customers, marketing their business, entrepreneurial activities and innovation in terms of new innovative products and services (Jones and Rowley, 2011). Digital marketing offers tourism SMEs increased opportunities to innovate on an unprecedented scale for example: in defining target markets, as digital marketing offers an unparalleled access to information at a granular scale, which can redefine the ways in which customer segments are created using a range of paid-for and free-to-use applications.

Clearly the adoption of marketing technology offers new opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses to unlock value. Indeed there is a large government drive for the uptake of e-business to generate business growth in Europe and the UK and, globally. This includes the recent establishment of a Digital Steering Group by the European Commission to help identify the challenges and opportunities which small businesses are facing in Digital Europe. However, use of e-business, e-marketing and use of social media still present additional challenges for entrepreneurs. It is hoped that this project will generate insights and some solutions for entrepreneurs, practitioners and government agencies, while furthering our understanding of entrepreneurial marketing in the digital age.

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