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Citation: Petrylaite, Edita and Rusk, Michele (2021) Entrepreneurial marketing learning styles used by entrepreneurial teams. *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*, 23 (1). pp. 60-85. ISSN 1471-5201

Published by: Emerald

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRME-12-2019-0099> <<https://doi.org/10.1108/JRME-12-2019-0099>>

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Entrepreneurial marketing learning styles used by entrepreneurial teams

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Abstract

Purpose

This paper aims to explore the learning styles of nascent entrepreneurs in developing their entrepreneurial marketing (EM) skills in teams whilst studying for the entrepreneurial business degree in one UK university. It advances the interlink between EM and entrepreneurial learning (EL) theories and demonstrates how working in teams assists in developing EM skills through EL in the educational context.

Design/methodology/approach

This qualitative case study adopts a thematic approach to analysing nine audio-recorded workshops of 13 entrepreneurial students who work in teams to develop entrepreneurial ventures. Audio-recorded sessions were used to monitor the entrepreneurial and marketing behaviour of the young entrepreneurs and reveal the context and skills used in their learning process.

Findings

The findings show that the observed undergraduate entrepreneurial students develop their EM competence through collective, exploratory and exploitative as well as supportive and individual learning. These learning styles intersect and prove to be effective in mastering both marketing and venture development skills in teampreneurial educational setting.

Originality/value

This case study demonstrates how the concepts of EM and EL are linked in both theory and practice. It makes suggestions on how entrepreneurial courses at the university could be further developed to assist the young entrepreneurs in effectively acquiring business knowledge and skills. This knowledge can also be implemented by small and large

organisations to foster a co-creative collective learning environment leading to more innovations, experimentations and creative thinking.

Key words: entrepreneurial marketing, entrepreneurial learning, entrepreneurial teams, collective learning, supportive learning, individual learning, exploration and exploitation, team learning

Paper type: Case study

Introduction

In the past researchers interested in the organisational side of learning looked into how entrepreneurial skills were mastered within the context of three types of environment, namely individual small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), inter-organisational networks and national innovation systems (Erdélyi, 2010). Yet, recently a new debate appeared in the literature suggesting that entrepreneurial activities can also be carried out by entrepreneurial teams (Arenius and Laitinen, 2011; Backes-Gellner *et al.*, 2015; D'hont *et al.*, 2016; Harper, 2008; Kollmann *et al.*, 2017; Watson *et al.*, 2018) and not only in the business but also in the higher education (HE) context (Lockett *et al.*, 2017; Watson *et al.*, 2018).

The literature on team learning in HE settings highlights a few benefits that team learning gives for student development and enhancement of their learning experience. Students develop various business and personal competencies when working and learning in teams including collaboration (Scott-Ladd and Chan, 2008; Yazici, 2005), communication, conflict resolution (Scott-Ladd and Chan, 2008), problem solving, critical thinking (Mutch, 1998), self-management, business and team relations management (Blackwood *et al.*, 2014; Scott-Ladd and Chan, 2008) among many other skills. Such a set of abilities increases students' employability and prepares them for entrepreneurial careers (Wenninger, 2019).

Yet, despite its significant impact on student personal, academic and professional development, team learning in HE lacks further exploration, especially in the entrepreneurial area.

This research extends the recent discussion on team learning in the entrepreneurial and HE contexts and explores the development of entrepreneurial competencies of nascent entrepreneurs who work in teams whilst studying for an academic degree. Only a handful of studies began this scientific query within the context of the educational environment (Lockett *et al.*, 2017; Pittaway *et al.*, 2015; Täks *et al.*, 2016; Watson *et al.*, 2018); however, there has been no enquiry undertaken to explore the learning process of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) in the teams of nascent entrepreneurs who develop start-ups whilst studying. Thus, this paper aims to fill this void and contribute to the research fields of EM, entrepreneurial learning (EL), educational and management practice by answering the question as to *how entrepreneurial teams learn and practice EM in the higher education setting*.

To answer this question, the study brings EM and EL theories together to demonstrate the shared connection, particularly when exploring the learning of marketing skills in the entrepreneurial team context. In the review of the literature, particular attention is given to the discussion of similarities between entrepreneurship and marketing in order to reflect the commonality between these disciplines and practices and their linkage to EL. The complexity of EL is highlighted from the perspective of entrepreneurial and organisational literature.

The contribution of the paper is threefold. Firstly, it demonstrates how the terms EM and EL are linked in theory and practice. The paper advances the theoretical interlink between the

two concepts through the literature review and by undertaking empirical research illuminating how working in teams enhances EM through EL in the educational context. Secondly, it gives insight into the learning styles and experiences of nascent entrepreneurs mastering their marketing skills in teams in the educational environment. Thirdly, by conducting research on EM learning in the entrepreneurial team context, this case study demonstrates that EL is not only an individual but also a collective practice. The findings of this research inform us as to how courses should be arranged and developed to help the entrepreneurial learners enhance their marketing skills and build successful enterprises. The EM learning styles of nascent entrepreneurs can then be transferred into the work environment of marketing professionals in order to foster their entrepreneurial thinking and practices through communities of practice.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the concepts of team and entrepreneurial team are introduced in order to contextualise this research and demonstrate that entrepreneurial agency is not fixed and can be constituted not only of individual entrepreneurs but also entrepreneurial teams. Then the EM concept is discussed in relation to its key elements such as a social aspect, exploration and exploitation of opportunities, innovation and value creation that bring together the theories and practices of marketing and entrepreneurship. It then presents the recent advancements in EL to shed light as to how EL links to EM. This is followed by a discussion on team learning and its importance to both individuals and organisations. Second, the methodological design including the empirical setting is introduced. The findings from nine student workshops follow to illuminate how entrepreneurial students learn and practice their marketing competencies in the team context. Finally, the case study concludes with limitations and proposes recommendations for entrepreneurial curriculum developers and marketing practitioners on how to enable

effective EM and EL by nascent entrepreneurial teams within educational and work environments.

Entrepreneurial Teams

A team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems

(Cohen and Bailey, 1997, p. 241).

Similarly, in the entrepreneurial context, Harper (2008) defines an entrepreneurial team as a group of entrepreneurs who share a common goal and achieve it through their combined actions and skills. Entrepreneurial teams identify themselves as such and designate a specific role for each member of the team, devoting time and finances to business progress (D'hont *et al.*, 2016). However, an entrepreneurial team is more than just a group. It is a much stronger social unit committed to team and business performance (Schoedt and Kraus, 2009). Harper (2008) argues that entrepreneurial teams are institution neutral social entities and thus can exist not only within (Arenius and Laitinen, 2011; Kollmann *et al.*, 2017) but also across or outside firms. The latter type of teams are invariably multifaceted (Backes *et al.*, 2015).

Entrepreneurial teams differ by size, hierarchical structure, decision-making and communication pathways (Harper, 2008). While some teams, according to Harper (2008), can be described as *singleton entrepreneurial* teams (based on the one-person group that makes entrepreneurial discoveries independently or in consideration of other people's actions), other teams consist of more than one individual. For example in *hybrid entrepreneurial-economising* teams the entrepreneurs work with the manager who oversees the whole production process; in *nested entrepreneurial* teams two entrepreneurs are responsible for running an enterprise with one being the leader and another being the sub-

entrepreneur whilst *emergent entrepreneurial* teams comprise of at least two entrepreneurs who see themselves as equal and are united by a common goal and its accomplishment through their mutual effort (Harper, 2008).

A description of a range of entrepreneurial teams shows that entrepreneurial agencies are not “structured or bounded in a particular fixed way” (Harper, 2008, p. 624). According to Harper (2008), structural uncertainty and common interests act as pull factors in forming a team of individuals who aim to pursue their entrepreneurial gains. This theoretical stance links to later studies confirming that entrepreneurial activity is not only a singular activity but can also be a collective action and that entrepreneurial teams do better than entrepreneurs alone (D’hont *et al.*, 2016; Nordström *et al.*, 2016). In fact, working together leads to financial success (Harper, 2008), creativity and a wider range of decision-making (Nordström *et al.*, 2016).

Although research on entrepreneurial teams remains at the development stage, nevertheless it has explored a range of topics; from the use of networks (Arenius and Laitinen, 2011); the impact of friendship on the development of entrepreneurial teams (D’hont *et al.*, 2016); the difference diversity makes to proactiveness, innovativeness and risk taking (Kollmann *et al.*, 2017); to the impact of peer pressure in tackling free-riding in entrepreneurial teams (Backes-Gellner *et al.*, 2015). The provided examples of previous studies show a growing presence of research on entrepreneurial teams. However, little is known about what impact entrepreneurial teams have on entrepreneurial skill development, in particular, EM in practice whilst studying for a business degree.

Entrepreneurial Marketing

The term EM appears in both marketing and entrepreneurship literatures and has been mainly associated with small firms' need to be creative and innovative (Miles *et al.*, 2015). However, another stream of literature perceives EM as entrepreneurship in marketing and views it as an entrepreneurial and innovative practice in corporate and large-scale businesses (Morris *et al.*, 2002). It defines EM, for example, as the "proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation" (Morris *et al.*, 2002, p.5). Clearly, EM can be interpreted differently depending on the context. In this paper, EM is viewed as a fluid term, which is fully applicable to both small and large, new and well-established ventures. Small and large enterprises can gain competitive advantage if they practice marketing in an entrepreneurial way, which is perceived as more creative, innovative and opportunity driven (Hills and Hultman, 2013).

The interface between entrepreneurship and marketing has been studied for over three decades (Hills and Hultman, 2013). EM has been researched from the perspectives of networks and relationships in the context of SME marketing (Miles *et al.*, 2015) and as early stage marketing and entrepreneurship (Hills and Hultman 2013). Others have explored the EM concept by focusing on the shared traits between the two disciplines (Lam and Harker 2015) or discussing the theoretical developments for marketing techniques associated with high growth (Hills and Hultman 2013). Despite this attention, researchers admit that EM needs a stronger theoretical underpinning. According to Webb *et al.* (2011), the terms entrepreneurship and marketing lack theoretical connection and, as a result, research on EM is fragmented and built on a weak conceptual basis (Lam and Harker, 2015). Researchers believe the link between the two business practices could be explored further. Jayawarna *et al.* (2014) indicate that little is known about the effect of marketing on enterprise development and performance despite the fact that marketing plays a central

role in the success of the enterprise. Therefore, more research is necessary to advance current knowledge in the EM field and offer alternative perspectives to strengthen the theoretical background of this discipline.

This paper responds to the call of Webb *et al.* (2011), Lam and Harker (2015) and Jayawarna *et al.* (2014) to advance the theoretical basis of EM and looks into the interlink between marketing and entrepreneurship and their connection to EL which can then be used to explain how working in teams enhances EM and other business development skills through EL in the educational context. In the entrepreneurial team context, this information will help in understanding how nascent entrepreneurs build their EM skills and how this competence helps them develop their start-ups and small enterprises whilst studying for the business degree in teams. To extend the debate on similarities between entrepreneurship and marketing, this research highlights the connections between the two business disciplines and practices. It discusses the social aspect, exploration and exploitation of opportunities, innovation and value creation as the key traits that bring both theories and practices together and form the concept of EM. In these discussions, the paper also demonstrates how EM is linked to EL. The empirical research then reveals the close relationship between EM and EL and demonstrate how EL enhances business development skills including EM in the team and HE contexts.

Social aspect

Entrepreneurial literature recognises entrepreneurship as a social enactment (Lam and Harker, 2015). It fosters business development skills and marketing competence (e.g. it creates new ventures and attracts customers: Gummesson, 1987; Lam and Harker, 2015). Marketing, on the other hand, generates profits through customer relation management (Lam and Harker, 2015) which as a result enhances the company's profile in the global

market (Steinhoff *et al.*, 2019). This suggests that entrepreneurship and marketing are social constructs – they are action oriented and help build stronger relationships with both businesses and private customers (Zontanos and Anderson, 2004).

EM literature agrees that entrepreneurship and marketing build relationships with customers through networking. According to Morris *et al.* (2002), small businesses rely heavily on personal networks to make their ventures successful and sustainable. Networking evolves as the firm grows. Relationship building tends to be identity-based at the start-up stage and more calculated and intentional at the stage of growth (Hite and Hesterly, 2001). It can be argued that such difference is determined by entrepreneurial experience with EL here playing a key part. Business owners recognise that investing socially, emotionally and financially creates a foundation for strong business partnerships (Lam and Harker, 2015) leading to social reciprocity and trust (Walsh and Winsor, 2019), access to new information, knowledge and markets (Fang *et al.*, 2010; Walsh and Winsor, 2019), finance (Boohene, 2018) and better business performance (Santarelli and Tran, 2013). These findings show that entrepreneurs enact the environment (Sarasvathy, 2001) and take an active role in creating and managing their internal and external resources.

Sarasvathy's (2001) study on effectuation and enactment contributes significantly to the theoretical advancement of the EM concept. Her effectuation theory of entrepreneurship, linked to Weick's (1979) theory of enactment and sense-making, suggests that entrepreneurs are effectuators, and that through entrepreneurial activities they create and enact the environment rather than react to it as it has been commonly argued in the past (Lam and Harker 2015). The two theories are linked together on the basis that enactment and sense making are posited as a model of effectuation. Hence, effectuation aptly describes entrepreneurship as enacted and not as a consequence of "means driven

decisions” (Lam and Harker 2015, p.324). Lam and Harker (2015) go further to say that an entrepreneurial environment is an output of individuals’ actions, therefore entrepreneurship is socially constructed. This links to contextual marketing, described as specific to a particular firm and socially constructed (Carson and Gilmore, 2000; Deacon and Harris, 2011; Resnick et al., 2016). The connection between the theories of effectuation, sense making, enactment, and contextual marketing shows a close interrelationship between entrepreneurship and marketing and provides “a unique framework to advance understanding of the process and entrepreneurship and its potential connection to marketing” (Lam and Harker, 2015, p. 324). Furthermore, the discussed theories underscore entrepreneurship’s close links to marketing and do not acknowledge the latter as a separate business function (Lam and Harker, 2015), essentially viewing marketing at the heart of, whilst simultaneously parallel to, entrepreneurship and EL.

Exploration and exploitation of new opportunities

Entrepreneurs and marketers engage in similar practices as both seek new opportunities for growth through exploration and exploitation (Morrish, 2011). For example, an entrepreneur not only creates but also “recognises, explores and exploits opportunities” for marketing purposes (Morrish 2011, p. 111). Marketers, adopting the EM principles, also create, discover and exploit economic opportunities for innovation in value propositions, promotion of value propositions and creation of new supply channels for economically sustainable exchanges (Morrish *et al.*, 2010). A shift from traditional marketing to an opportunity-seeking and opportunity-driven EM, which prioritises segmentation, targeting and positioning around innovation, opens the doors for the firm to disrupt and drive markets rather than follow them (Morrish *et al.*, 2010).

Entrepreneurial literature differentiates between exploitation and exploration of opportunities. Both terms involve different sets of actions: for example, exploitation includes choice, production, efficiency, refinement, implementation and execution, whereas exploration is more concerned with search, risk taking, experimentation, flexibility, discovery and innovation (March, 1991). Exploitation is defined as a static efficiency (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017) and relates to exploitation of the internal capabilities of a firm to use its resources and competences for knowledge development (De Noni and Apa 2015) and “reaping value from what is already known” (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017, p. 382). A firm’s focus on efficiency and refinement gives short-term rewards but a more stable performance (He and Wong, 2004) and adds significant advantage to domestic firms (De Noni and Apa, 2015). Exploration, on the other hand, is an ability of a firm to gain new knowledge through new possibilities (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017). It gives long-term benefits such as an improved financial performance and competitiveness in the global market (De Noni and Apa, 2015), however this route involves more risk and failures (Su *et al.*, 2011). The search for new opportunities through exploration proves to be beneficial for firms operating in the emerging (He and Wong 2004) and international markets (De Noni and Apa, 2015). It gives a competitive edge, which, according to Miller and Le Breton-Miller (2006), can then be utilised to develop the SME’s core capabilities and relationships with external stakeholders and also improve its ability to further exploit or explore.

However, a view exists that it is best to keep a balance between exploration and exploitation, especially in fast changing markets. Combined explorative and exploitative activities are central for business growth and long-term survival (Goel and Jones, 2016), and can lead to more distinctive innovations (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Yet, it requires considerable time and effort for a firm to manage new possibilities and knowledge creation through exploitation and exploration (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017). This managing process is

closely linked to EL and EM. It is through learning that new possibilities are discovered and new knowledge is applied within established processes to create new or improve existing products, services and processes (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017). This further links to the earlier discussed connection between entrepreneurship and marketing. Through entrepreneurial opportunities and “formation of new means, ends, or means-ends relationships” new goods, services and organising processes are introduced to new or existing markets (Eckhardt and Shane, 2003, p. 336). This confirms the central role of marketing in building, maintaining and progressing entrepreneurial ventures. The latter view re-affirms the interconnection between the concepts, disciplines and practices of entrepreneurship and marketing and the connection of EM to EL in developing small and large ventures.

Innovation

Entrepreneurial literature reports that global competition and changes in market dynamics demand more frequent and visible innovations (Ngugi *et al.*, 2010). Innovations vary from incremental to more visible modifications to product features or service quality and processes that marketing is responsible for communicating to customers. These changes are closely linked to a firm’s entrepreneurial capability to exploit or explore or undertake both directions. Incremental innovations are exploitative innovations and used to improve existing procedures, technologies or make better use of resources for cost gain advantages (Dahlin and Behrens, 2005). Radical innovations derive from exploring external opportunities. They are novel and distinct from existing procedures and aimed at discovery and experimentation (McGrath, 2001) through technological developments (Verona and Ravasi, 2003), and are thus named as explorative innovations (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017). Firms tend to implement either incremental innovations or radical innovations and their position in the market depends on the overall company’s strategy to exploit or explore (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; March, 1991). Nevertheless, some firms manage to combine both explorative and

exploitative behaviours leading to incremental and radical innovations (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Goel and Jones, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2017) and more value creation to new and existing customers through marketing (Verona and Ravasi, 2003). In both processes, marketing plays a key role as it communicates a company's competitive advantage through new propositions to the market (Verona and Ravasi, 2003).

Value creation

Zontanos and Anderson (2004) distinguish value creation as the most significant characteristic shared by both marketing and entrepreneurship. According to them, marketing creates value whereas entrepreneurship recreates value from the existing value. From the organisational perspective, this can be achieved through EL or entrepreneurial orientation [EO] which with time allows the firm to develop capabilities to create more value for its customers (Kreiser, 2011).

The focus in creating value should be placed on market demands and differentiation through innovative offerings, which are seen as entrepreneurial competencies. The capabilities that can assist the firm in meeting customer needs and demands through innovative propositions and closer connections with customers are entrepreneurial in nature since it is the entrepreneurs who focus on identifying the needs that have been unrecognised by competitors (Morris *et al.*, 2002). This is also linked to exploratory behaviour and innovation in marketing, which lead to "unique selling propositions and enhanced customer satisfaction" (Chaston, 2016, p. 132). Large organisations can achieve this if they practice marketing with entrepreneurial vision and skills (Morrish, 2011) obtained through EL.

Entrepreneurial and marketing literatures identify value co-creation as a new way of building closer relationships between businesses and their customers. A customer and a firm can create value and can co-create value through their interaction (Dellaert, 2019; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Morrish *et al.*, 2010; Salomonson *et al.*, 2012). Grönroos and Voima (2013) state that co-creation of value can occur in three spheres – the provider sphere, the joint sphere and the customer sphere. This means that both parties involved in the value creation process can create value beyond the joint sphere with the customer co-creating value as a co-producer in the service production stage and the seller doing the same in the customer sphere by contributing to the service experience and influencing the flow and outcomes of that experience. Through interactive processes, consumers co-create value with firms not only for themselves but also for other customers, and this is achieved with the help of technology which turns the interactive online platforms into “consumer co-production networks” (Dellaert, 2019). Such value is viewed as advantageous to all parties involved. The consumer reaps economic, emotional, social, ethical and environmental benefits (Barnes, 2003; Nordin and Kowalkowski, 2010; Salomonson *et al.*, 2012), whereas the firm gains knowledge about the market (Morrish *et al.*, 2010), builds more sustainable relationships with customers (Dellaert, 2019) and applies this knowledge and skills through marketing to creating innovative products or services to customers (Morrish *et al.*, 2010). When a company practices EM, the customer becomes an equally important player in creating the company’s strategy and competences (Morrish *et al.*, 2010).

Although a significant number of researchers agree on the similarities between both business philosophies of marketing and entrepreneurship, a view exists that:

EM is not simply the nexus of marketing and entrepreneurship, but both wholly marketing and wholly entrepreneurship – both customer-centric and entrepreneur/innovation-centric. EM is more than a summation of aspects of MO [Marketing Orientation] merged with EO but is a synergetic opportunity-driven,

innovation-oriented, proactive, risk-accepting set of processes for a marketer to gain competitive advantage.

(Morrish *et al.*, 2010, p. 311).

This study agrees with the view of Morrish *et al.*, (2010) and contributes to the scholarly debate by aiming to demonstrate the unity between the concepts and practices of entrepreneurship and marketing and their link to EL in the business-venturing context.

The literature review in this paper looked at the EM concept in the context of small and large organisations. Yet little is known about how marketing is exercised in the entrepreneurial team setting and how nascent entrepreneurs learn and practice EM through EL whilst creating new ventures in the educational context. Thus, this research aims to fill this gap in the EM and EL literatures and explores *how entrepreneurial teams learn and practice EM in the higher education setting*. It will contribute with empirical findings gathered from a contextual setting of the young “teampreneurs” running their businesses whilst studying for an entrepreneurial business degree at university. To extend the debate on the development of marketing competence in the entrepreneurial and educational contexts, EL and team learning literature will be discussed next prior to introducing the methodological design and findings of this study.

Entrepreneurial Learning

Entrepreneurial literature defines EL as an emergent, interactive and social process, which equips entrepreneurs to recognise and act on opportunities, enhance the knowledge, abilities and attitudes needed for starting and developing business ventures (Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Rae, 2005; Watson *et al.*, 2018). EL as a theoretical perspective emerged from the interface of entrepreneurship and organisational learning and knowledge studies and remains a developmental topic (Erdélyi, 2010; Karataş-Özkan, 2011). Systematic literature reviews conducted by Erdélyi (2010), Rae (2005) and Wang and Chugh (2014)

highlight the variety of theoretical angles (e.g. organisational learning, experiential learning, social cognitive theory, population ecology, configuration theory, object-oriented perspective including actor-network theory, evolutionary theory of the firm, organisational routine theory, economic theory and behavioural perspective) from which EL has been explored and recorded in the academic literature to date.

EL literature is in agreement that the cognitive paradigm of learning despite its popularity is limited if it solely focuses on individualistic processes (Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Rae, 2005). Researching only the cognitive processes of entrepreneurs does not add much value given how important dynamic and contextual learning is for entrepreneurs (Karataş-Özkan, 2011). Similarly, the economic theory has also been found to have limitations in explaining the human, psychological and sociological side of entrepreneurial behaviour (Rae, 2005), therefore, a suggestion has been made to shift the focus from individuals to the characteristics of events when researching EL (Binks and Vale, 1990).

Erdélyi (2010) divided all the above mentioned approaches to studying EL into two camps based on what the research is focusing on – the entrepreneur or the organisational context. Such division reflects the dual view on the concept of EL: it is either perceived as an individual learning experience or a collective activity:

The former approaches are concerned with the personal learning experiences and cognitive capabilities of the 'entrepreneurial individual,' while the latter focus on how entrepreneurial learning takes place as a collective activity at various scales, from the 'entrepreneurial firm' and its immediate networks all the way to 'national systems of innovation.' To put it more succinctly, entrepreneurial learning is either conceived of as an individual activity or as a collective activity.

(Erdélyi, 2010, p. 4)

Recently, Karataş-Özkan (2011) has challenged this dual view by exploring EL through micro and meso-relational level analysis with the former focusing on the individual learning experiences when building cultural, social and economic capital and the latter examining relational experiences when managing ventures. This theoretical perspective through constructionist methodology bridges all three levels of analysis – the macro-contextual (socio-cultural and economic), meso-organisational (venturing with and within groups or teams) and micro-individual (the nascent entrepreneurs themselves) (Karataş-Özkan and Chell, 2010). According to Karataş-Özkan (2011), relational perspectives are necessary if we want to better understand the complex and multidimensional phenomenon of EL.

Although individualistic and collective approaches to studying EL differ in nature, there is an agreement that EL is a collective and social construct (Breslin and Jones, 2012; Erdélyi, 2010; Rae, 2005). Rae (2005) suggests “both entrepreneurship and learning are inherently constructivist, behavioural and social processes” (p. 324) and are learnt experientially and practically rather than traditionally in the educational environment. The same can be said about marketing which involves a great deal of interaction with customers and other stakeholders (Carson and Gilmore, 2000; Deacon and Harris, 2011; Resnick *et al.*, 2016; Zontanos and Anderson, 2004), and is thus mastered through experience and experiential learning. Therefore, “learning must be explored as a contextual and active rather than a purely educational process” (Rae, 2005, p. 324).

The same approach will be employed in this research to explore *how entrepreneurial teams learn and practice EM in the HE setting*. The data gathered will give an insight into how marketing is learnt and practised in the educational entrepreneurial team environment and whether learning in teams makes the whole EM and EL experience more effective for business development.

Team Learning

The importance of team learning was already being discussed in the 1990s. Barker and Neailey (1999) argued that organisations must develop and learn if they are to remain successful and competitive, and this process “must encompass individuals, collections of individuals (teams) and the organisation as a whole” (p. 60). According to Barker and Neailey (1999), individual learning becomes more effective if learning occurs within teams.

Teams are considered as important units not only in general but especially within organisations because they contribute to individual or organisational learning, increase team performance and innovation in organisations (Decuyper *et al.*, 2010). Research agrees that working in teams has more advantages than working alone (D’hont *et al.*, 2016; Harper, 2008; Nordström *et al.*, 2016) and benefits every individual involved. Due to interpersonal and sociocognitive interactions, each person enhances their learning experience through the experiences of their fellow team members (Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017).

Since the publication of Barker and Neailey’s (1999) work, scholars have proposed 30 different explanations as to what team learning means and used this concept interchangeably with other similar terms such as “group level learning, cooperative learning, adaptive team performance, adaptation, group level information processing, collective induction” (Decuyper *et al.*, 2010, p. 112). In this research, we are using the term proposed by Edmondson (1999). Team learning is “[a]n ongoing process of reflection and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 129). Team learning does not occur unless team members share their own knowledge and

experiences through continuous communication in the form of questioning, disagreeing, enquiring and giving advice (Erhardt *et al.*, 2016; Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017; Savelsbergh *et al.*, 2009). These cognitive interactions lead to new team agreements and co-construction of new meanings (Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017).

The literature highlights a few behaviours that are applicable to team learning. Learning in teams involves exploring new opportunities and ideas, accepting differences and challenges, and reflecting on the processes and outcomes of implemented actions which all lead to a co-construction of new knowledge (Erhardt *et al.*, 2016; Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017; Van der Haar *et al.*, 2015). However, Decuyper *et al.* (2010) argued that in the team learning process teams not only share knowledge, construct new knowledge and reflect but also engage in constructive conflict. Conflict is “a process of negotiation or dialogue that uncovers diversity in identity, opinion, etc. within the team” and helps teams to reach new agreement, take action, reflect and even cross boundaries (Decuyper *et al.*, 2010, p. 117). “Teams can neither learn nor work effectively if they cease to share knowledge, competency, opinions or creative ideas across their boundaries with the different stakeholders in the learning process (such as other teams, customers, teachers and trainers, management, other organisations, etc.)” (Decuyper *et al.*, 2010, p. 118). According to Decuyper *et al.* (2010), crossing boundaries enables teams to share new information with the team and effectively disseminate learning that is closely linked to active and experiential learning.

Active learning is self-directed learning understood as learning by doing (Carr *et al.*, 2015), whereas experiential learning is viewed as the process informed through previous knowledge and practice (Hill, 2017). This type of learning “enables learning through ‘doing’, ‘learning while experiencing’, and learning through ‘hands on practice’ and ‘reflection’” (Hill,

2017, p. 934) and is perceived to be effective in the team learning context. Although both types of learning are associated with an individual learning process, both can equally take place in a collective environment by bringing “individual learning needs and experiences to their learning environment and learning communities” (Hill, 2017, p. 934). These learning communities, as a result of sharing and building interpersonal relations, construct new knowledge and experiences (Carr *et al.*, 2015) and develop a variety of enterprise skills including EM in the team environment. Indeed, through cooperation and collaboration the teams of nascent entrepreneurs enhance their social and teamwork skills including various management aspects (Blackwood *et al.*, 2014; Mendo-Lázaro *et al.*, 2018; Scott-Ladd and Chan, 2008; Yazici, 2005), critical thinking (Mutch, 1998) and most importantly entrepreneurial knowledge and practice (Breslin and Jones, 2012).

In their research, Edmondson *et al.* (2007) identified three traditions of learning with the first one focusing on testing and explaining the differences in improvement rates of the teams, the second tradition paying attention to how the team members engage at a cognitive level and how that impacts the team performance and the third tradition arguing that team learning is more a process rather than an outcome. This study views learning as a process, therefore aims to explore the behaviours involved in the learning process of the teams of nascent entrepreneurs in the HE environment. With this view, the paper aims to build an understanding as to how learning in entrepreneurial teams shapes students’ development of EM skills whilst studying for the business degree. The main goal of this case study is to bring a deeper understanding as to how nascent entrepreneurs learn when they work in teams and how working in teams helps them develop EM skills. Thus, this research in the form of a case study will be exploring the process rather than the results of this type of learning.

Methodology

Methodological approach and sample

In line with its exploratory nature, this research used a qualitative research approach and through the philosophical stance of interpretivism aimed to investigate the learning of EM skills of nascent entrepreneurs running business ventures in teams whilst studying for a business degree. According to Hennink *et al.* (2011), qualitative research is best suited for exploring people's behaviours, beliefs and in general new or complex topics and issues that are difficult for quantitative researchers to access (Pope and Mays, 2006) whilst the philosophy of interpretivism gives insight into a specific social reality through the views and experiences of the research participants (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Neuman, 2011).

To achieve this, this research adopted a case study approach (Yin, 2018) which is deemed suitable for this type of work as it focuses on the learning process rather than the outcomes of the learning and therefore looks at "how" learning takes place as opposed to "what" is learnt in the HE environment. In order to answer the question as to *how entrepreneurial teams learn and practice EM in the higher education setting*, this study used one cohort as an example from the Entrepreneurial Business Management (EBM) programme introduced in 2013 at [name of the university], in the UK.

A three-year experiential undergraduate EBM programme is based on the Finnish Team Academy (FTA) model, which views entrepreneurship as a social and interactional business development form within which an entrepreneur has the opportunity to develop and test business ideas together with other nascent entrepreneurs in a team (Belet, 2013; Blackwood *et al.*, 2014). On this programme, the teams of students establish their own business ventures and organise various business activities starting from identifying business opportunities and proposing business plans to managing the actual ventures

(Blackwood *et al.*, 2014). Such a process entails finding customers, networking and business relationship building (Wenninger, 2019). In this way, the programme fosters and develops the young entrepreneurs' various business skills including EM.

In order to find out how entrepreneurial students on the EBM programme learn and practice EM in teams, nine workshops of 13 entrepreneurial students were observed and audio-recorded for data collection. The observed workshops lasted from 44 minutes to over two hours. Observation was considered as the best and least obtrusive tool to monitor the entrepreneurial and marketing behaviour of the young entrepreneurs. According to Breslin and Jones (2012), it is not always easy to communicate about the learning process during the interviews given that entrepreneurs are not always aware of what and how they learn. Therefore, recording workshops is a good alternative to reveal the context, skills, heuristics and frameworks used in the learning process, and provide the most complete picture of EL (Breslin and Jones, 2012).

The workshops were of a practical nature. Entrepreneurial teams discussed their business progress together with other teams and a coach. In these sessions, the young entrepreneurs shared their achievements with the rest of the group, gave and received feedback on the work completed and provided further advice to each other on the development of start-ups.

The entrepreneurial teams that took part in this research matched the description of *emergent entrepreneurial* teams (Harper, 2008). Such "team members depend on one another for having the capacity to identify and solve a range of entrepreneurial problems. This type of team epitomizes entrepreneurial discovery as an integrated, socially distributed process" (Harper, 2008, p. 623).

As HE literature reports, a collaborative social learning environment has a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Beckers *et al.*, 2016; Foldnes, 2016) and creates a sense of community (Dytham, 2019) which makes learning, including the development of enterprise and marketing skills, more effective. “A key feature of any collaboration, including TBL [team-based learning], is the co-construction of meaning through group discourse. By engaging in discussion with one another, students provide and receive immediate feedback about their understanding of ideas” (Swanson *et al.*, 2019, p. 47) and develop their entrepreneurial and marketing competence through active and experiential learning.

Data coding and analysis

For this paper, nine audio-recorded sessions were transcribed verbatim, anonymised, coded and analysed. In total, all sessions lasted for 14 hours and generated 200 pages of data. Data coding was carried out by the first author in three stages by adhering to the thematic coding and template analysis principles (King and Brooks, 2017). Initially, the first two transcripts were coded by looking for themes linked to marketing and learning aspects. At stage two, the codes were reviewed, condensed and grouped under more meaningful and broader categories. At stage three, the categories were checked by the second author and presented in the hierarchical order under the key concept – *collective learning*. This coding template was then applied to the other transcripts to ensure consistency in coding. The new codes that emerged were compared with the existing codes from the template. Similar codes were merged together to reduce the number of themes and enhance the quality of coding (King and Brooks, 2017).

The thematic relationship of the key concepts and categories is depicted in Figure 1. The concept *collective learning* represents the overall learning style of teampreneurs, who aim to set up and market their entrepreneurial ventures in the HE context. The *collective*

learning style tends to be *explorative* and/or *exploitative*. The young entrepreneurs look for ways leading to new sources for social and economic development and succeed in this by first *exploiting* their own and the team's capabilities through advice, feedback and shared knowledge and experiences. They also explore new opportunities through networking and links to external resources. Although *collective learning* dominates throughout transcripts, *supportive* and *individual learning* are also present and intersect with the former learning styles.

<Insert Figure 1 here>

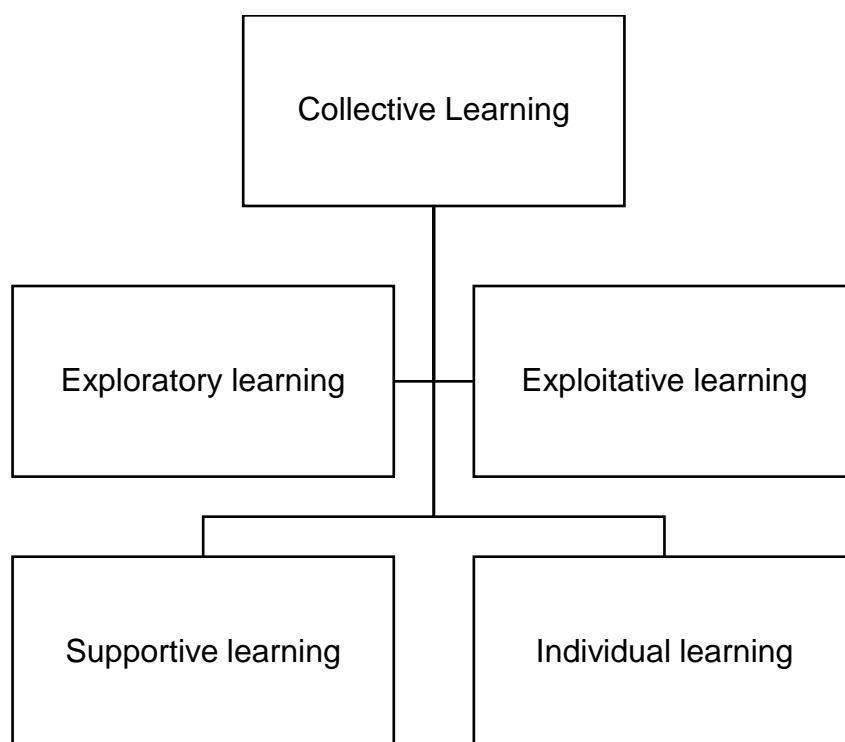


Figure 1. A hierarchical representation of key concepts.

The themes of *collective*, *exploratory*, *exploitative*, *supportive* and *individual learning*, illustrated in Figure 1, will be discussed in more detail in the Findings section and supported with examples from the nine recorded sessions to demonstrate how the learning styles of EM connect and intersect in the entrepreneurial activities of nascent entrepreneurs. *Exploratory* and *exploitative* expressions of learning were in evidence in all three modalities

– *collective, supportive* and *individual* learning – therefore, they will be discussed in each of these sections.

Findings

Collective learning

It can be argued that the educational set-up arranged by the university predetermines the *collective learning* style of entrepreneurs. It fosters a culture of sharing entrepreneurial business knowledge, thus the learning that takes place among the 13 nascent entrepreneurs is predominantly *collective* and *exploitative*. They learn together as a group in facilitated group sessions, share and listen to each other's business stories and experiences in marketing or finding potential business partnerships and customers. In such meetings, they unconsciously *exploit* their own resource – the entrepreneurial team – before looking for external help:

Alex: You will probably need a different package for it.

Hugo: Yeah that is the only thing I am unsure of is that I don't know how to package it. If any of yous have any ideas that would be good.

Liam: Is there a company that currently sells them? Then why don't you order one online and see what way it comes.

Hugo: That is a good idea. Actually, I will do that.

Brian: [...] [Use] a little cardboard thing and just put it with like see through like little boxes that fit into each other.

Liam: Like a watch box. That might put your cost up a bit for the packaging.

Brian: It would make the quality look good though. It would make it seem much better. How much you're selling for?

In this example, students discuss one of the 4-Ps (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) tactics and suggest how to best package the jewellery product. Embracing the views of other nascent entrepreneurs leads to more innovative, faster and effective decisions.

In another example, nascent entrepreneurs discuss how to make the business appealing for potential customers. Talking openly about the business progress gives opportunity for other students to advise and share their marketing knowledge:

Alex: The more businesses you sign up, the more assets you will have and the more people will buy it [a discount card].

Garry: I think that platinum thing is a really good idea and in this marketing book they were saying "You need to give a reason for people to talk about you". If people are bragging that they have got a platinum card or something, then that us going to make people talk about themselves, don't they. It has to be a unique thing and not something that 100 people in [the city] already have.

The *collective learning* style of the teampreneurs is also *exploratory*. Nascent entrepreneurs seek ways to expand their EM experience through networking that can secure new business collaborations and open doors to potential markets and customers (Eckhardt and Shane, 2003; Fang *et al.*, 2010; Schiele, 2006). Two young entrepreneurs seek to form collaborative business relationships with the Design students. They envisage that a combined set of strengths can benefit both teams:

Whilst speaking to Design students we might invite one of them through to the office. If you wanna get a one-to-one opportunity. We might get an opportunity to get some work on.

Steven

They [Design students] really wanna push it. Cause they can make ideas all the time. They have loads of ideas but don't know what to do with them. See, we struggle to make ideas.

Hugo

Steven and Hugo understand the value of networking and encourage others to meet the Design students who possess different talents. The nascent entrepreneurs believe that network sharing broadens entrepreneurs' social capital, entrepreneurial knowledge and experience (Fang *et al.*, 2010; Santarelli and Tran, 2013) leading to stronger competitiveness (De Noni and Apa, 2015), profitability, assistance with marketing and growth in the form of new resources, customers and information (Arenius and Laitinen, 2011; El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Fang *et al.*, 2010). By organising such networking events, the students *explore*, *exploit* and learn *collectively* as a team and acquire skills that currently they lack on their own or in teamwork. Entrepreneurial literature agrees that *exploratory learning* leads to a new way of working and change. Venturing is closely linked to the unknown, therefore requires *exploration* beyond existing markets, products and competencies (Neill and York, 2012).

These findings confirm the view that EM and EL are network based (Morris *et al.*, 2002). Building social relationships for business purposes is essential to any firm and particularly to those that operate in dynamic markets (Moss *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, knowledge needed

to operate within the dynamic market can be acquired through networking and *exploration* which open doors for the nascent entrepreneurs to learn marketing, collaboration and further venturing.

Supportive learning

There is a high level of support between the nascent entrepreneurs when they learn *collectively*. It reflects the *exploitative* learning style and unity that exists between the students.

Supportive learning manifests mostly within the group when updating each other on business progress. It provides opportunities for nascent entrepreneurs to give advice and share their knowledge, ideas and experiences:

Businesses don't have to be amazing. So you could even open it up once you launch it in the [place] initially and ask people like "How much do you want to pay?". You usually find that whenever you use that, people pay more than like you would ask for anyway, so. If you said to someone, "How much are you willing to pay?" and then after doing that with like 40 people, you would have a good idea about your pricing strategy.

Liam

This excerpt demonstrates how students *exploit* their primary source of knowledge, such as their own team and how openly discussing their business plans and ideas with other nascent entrepreneurs can help them make better marketing decisions.

Supportive learning can take place both internally and externally. The networking event with the Design students reflects the intersection between these two dimensions:

Yeah, four o'clock. Will help you massively. To get them [Design students] to know you, and they will just do loads for you for free. They are spot on as well. Obviously, it's up to you if you believe it would be beneficial to you, for your time or not but ...

Hugo

The purpose of the meeting was to *explore and exploit* how both teams can complement their skills. In team-based settings, support and encouragement are essential and lead to cultivation of external networks for the benefit of the whole team (Arenius and Laitinen, 2011). Such interactions lead to potential external *exploratory* partnerships and build trust and appreciation within the team for shared knowledge and resources. Caring for one another helps the entrepreneurial team members to deal with novelty whether the latter is market, team or management based (Blatt, 2009).

In team settings, sharing is a common practice (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Erhardt *et al.*, 2016; Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017; Savelsbergh *et al.*, 2009). Willingness to help other entrepreneurs build their competence in marketing and entrepreneurship by answering questions, voluntarily offering advice, information and resources increases the entrepreneurial team effectiveness (Backes-Gellner *et al.*, 2015) and co-construction of knowledge (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017; Van der Haar *et al.*, 2015). The nascent entrepreneurs' interaction with the Design students reveals that support can also be sought *externally* – beyond team members. The literature reports that cooperation increases relational competencies, gives access to information, markets and technologies

and opens doors for more innovative practices (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Fang *et al.*, 2010; Morrish *et al.*, 2010; Ngugi *et al.*, 2010; Schiele, 2006; Walsh and Winsor, 2019).

An ability to see what skills are needed for further work demonstrates the nascent entrepreneurs' desire to both *explore* and also *exploit* which is possible if the team critically evaluates its strengths and capabilities. This suggests that *collective learning* in this particular environment brings *exploratory* and *exploitative learning* together for the benefit of individuals, teams and their businesses. This leads to the development of new skills (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017), the ability to adapt in changing contexts (Reyt and Wiesenfeld, 2015) and offer incremental and/or radical changes to one's products or practices (Verona and Ravasi, 2003).

Individual learning

Although teamwork predetermines a *collective learning* style, nascent entrepreneurs also master entrepreneurial and marketing skills *individually* when producing, pricing or networking for business purposes. The *individual learning* style was less apparent in this research. Nevertheless, it took place with students learning independently (Järvi, 2015) when they engaged in *exploitative* learning by seeking knowledge from the other nascent entrepreneurs and *exploratory* learning when they sought new contacts (see excerpts above) and *experimented* with the business partner to make products cheaper, more innovative and/or suitable for the target market:

Bottle wise, we researched and bottle wise we contacted a lot of companies for bottles and they gonna cost like six to seven pounds to just make one bottle and you have to order 50 pieces. So to cut the cost down, did some experiments at home. This is like a vinyl that goes in the car. You know like people stick black

mat vinyl and stuff in the car. This is vinyl. So I have some samples of this bigger at home and then like cut it with a cutter and stick it on in this and we run a test in the dishwasher and see if this come off or not.

Rory

McGrath (2001) agrees that experimentation generates information, variety and improved performance, which are the essential components for innovation and adaptation to new situations and competitive markets. In her view "... the most fruitful form of learning is not always learning that takes you where you meant to go and that discovery and recognition can be as important as planning and control" (McGrath, 2001, p. 129).

The nascent entrepreneurs learn and practice entrepreneurial marketing tactics individually or together with their business partners behind the scenes. The outcomes of their implemented ideas and decisions are revealed only when students learn *exploitatively* by asking for advice or report progress to the team:

Brian: Keith, what are you doing about the delivery? Are you charging for the delivery? How much are you charging?

Keith: For the some stuff one pound because it can be sent in a large envelope. You will need to research into that but you can get special small packages. Not large envelopes, for small parcels I am charging three quid which is £2.80 to send, so.

It can be concluded that although nascent entrepreneurs learn separately from the team, for example, when they experiment at home, negotiate or set prices, the experience remains the entrepreneur's alone unless he chooses to talk about it with the team. The *individual*

learning takes place when the entrepreneurial business students discuss each business development case in the team. The level of knowledge and experience of each student in running and marketing their business differs, therefore learning that occurs in the team is not only *collective* but also intertwined with *individual learning* experiences as each and every student takes different lessons from entrepreneurial actions, debates and updates when *exploiting* or *exploring* in and with the team. They learn from the experience of others (Järvi, 2015), and this method proves to be effective in mastering their individual marketing and entrepreneurial competences.

Discussion

This research looked at the learning styles and experiences of nascent entrepreneurs who construct their entrepreneurial knowledge and skills whilst studying for the EBM degree in the UK. A specific focus was given to the EM practices and competences that the participants in the course under consideration develop along with other business skills in a team. The team context remains a novice setting, therefore this research took a timely approach to share knowledge about the impact of teamwork on the development and application of both entrepreneurial and EM skills in business venturing in the premises of the HE institution.

This case study contributes to EL and EM literatures with the new insight revealing the holistic approach adopted by the emerging entrepreneurs as they explore their paths to opening new start-ups and the enhancement of entrepreneurial and marketing competencies whilst studying in one UK university. Their learning style is never one-sided but always intersected, fluid and multifaceted. The same argument can be applied to discussing the concept of EM, which is fluid and closely linked to EL. This finding supports the earlier mentioned theoretical argument that EM and EL are a synergy of innovative, risk

taking and opportunity-driven processes (Morrish *et al.*, 2010) and can be best seen in the entrepreneurial business development context. The results of this study revealed that EM and EL intersect in the entrepreneurial development process and are inseparable from each other when entrepreneurial teams make decisions, design and run their ventures in the educational community.

The analysis of nine sessions from one cohort demonstrates that *collective, exploratory, exploitative* and *supportive learning* styles were dominant in the educational entrepreneurial environment at one UK University. The nascent entrepreneurs, studying for the EBM degree, not only update each other on their business development process in team sessions but also share knowledge, skills and experience to support each other in building entrepreneurial ventures (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Erhardt *et al.*, 2016; Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017; Savelsbergh *et al.*, 2009) and marketing competence through interactions with other teampreneurs or their external networks. Knowledge and information seeking behaviours are common to entrepreneurs helping them expand their external networks for the development of firms (Arenius and Laitinen, 2011; Santarelli and Tran 2013; Swanson *et al.*, 2019). The participants of this study are building their marketing competence exploitatively within the team or through external networks. As a result, learning together leads to more discoveries, new ideas and co-construction of knowledge (Erhardt *et al.*, 2016; Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017; Van der Haar *et al.*, 2015). It is through such supportive socio-cognitive interactions that nascent entrepreneurs enhance their entrepreneurial business and marketing competencies and co-construct new entrepreneurial meanings (Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2017).

Although student-entrepreneurs from this case study learn *individually* as they develop their business ideas through practice, *exploitation* of their team skills and *exploration* of internal

and external opportunities, their knowledge and experience are very much shaped through and by *collective learning*. Wang and Chugh (2014) confirm that *collective learning* is socially enacted and therefore interactive, public and involves sharing knowledge. As the findings from one cohort show, the nascent entrepreneurs enhance their marketing knowledge and practice by updating each other on business progress and personal achievements, and thus construct EM knowledge and experience socially and collectively (Carr *et al.*, 2015). This finding confirms Karataş-Özkan's (2011) theory that entrepreneurs learn through relational experiences when managing firms. This suggests that social and economic capital cannot be generated without relational support and cognitive exchanges and therefore, EL is neither purely an individual activity nor a collective activity as was argued a decade ago by Erdélyi (2010). In fact, EL is an intertwined individual and collective practice. The *individual* experience in running a start-up is fed to the rest of the team and, as a result, enhances everyone's competence whilst learning *collectively* in and as a team. This collective action learning method "supports active learning, provides students the freedom to make decisions together and encourages them to take responsibility for those decisions" (Järvi, 2015, p. 189).

This proves the earlier argued point that entrepreneurial learning is best learnt actively and experientially and not through traditional educational means (Rae, 2005). Through cooperation and collaboration the entrepreneurial teams enhance their relational skills for business development, various management aspects (Blackwood *et al.*, 2014; Mendo-Lázaro *et al.*, 2018; Scott-Ladd and Chan, 2008; Yazici, 2005), entrepreneurial knowledge and practice (Breslin and Jones, 2012) and socially constructed marketing (Carson and Gilmore, 2000; Deacon and Harris, 2011; Resnick *et al.*, 2016).

The approach to marketing new business set-ups that originate in the educational environment appears to be informal and based on internal networks. Entrepreneurial students from this case study first *exploit* their private channels (family, relatives and other students) before *exploring* new avenues for promoting a business to new customers and potential business partners. Their initiative to work with Design students can be viewed as interdisciplinary collaboration leading to the creation of new knowledge (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017) and better social and economic performance (De Noni and Apa, 2015; Power and Handley, 2019).

Entrepreneurial students from this case study adopt interactive and informal marketing in their practices with the word-of-mouth being one of the key tactics for increasing business awareness (Resnick *et al.*, 2016). They learn and apply the 4-Ps model without much planning, thus their EM is opportunistic, creative and chaotic (Carson and Gilmore, 2000; Hills and Hultman, 2013; Morris *et al.*, 2002). They act opportunistically and acquire marketing and entrepreneurial skills through an *exploratory* work style that is common to both EM and EL. Such an EM style is predetermined by the two liabilities of start-ups, newness and smallness (Jayawarna *et al.*, 2014), and could also be linked to poor planning, lack of knowledge and experience in marketing (Hisrich, 1992).

Overall, the findings from this research confirm the views discussed in the literature around the concept of EM. The current knowledge has been built around the argument that EM is a synergetic and interdependent enactment of entrepreneurship and marketing (Morrish *et al.*, 2010). These two concepts and practices are connected through social capital (Lam and Harker, 2015; Zontanos and Anderson, 2004), exploration and exploitation (Morrish, 2011; Morrish *et al.*, 2010), innovation (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Goel and Jones, 2016; Verona and Ravasi, 2003) and value creation (Kreiser, 2011; Zontanos and Anderson, 2004).

Similarly, in the education context, the teams of nascent entrepreneurs from one cohort develop their start-ups through collaboration and networking that first takes place in the inner circle and expands further to the external business environment. New business partnerships or relationships with customers are built through exploitative and explorative actions leading to innovative solutions and more value creation as a result of working with others collectively and collaboratively. Experiential and active learning in particular help the teams of nascent entrepreneurs achieve their business goals and build their entrepreneurial capital. Indeed, experiential learning is considered as a more effective way of learning and especially in the entrepreneurial education environment (Pittaway *et al.*, 2015).

The team aspect is particularly helpful in the entrepreneurial and the EM learning context. It is the learning together that makes the development of one's entrepreneurial and marketing skills more effective and enacted in the entrepreneurial business environment. This finding reaffirms the existing view that entrepreneurs create and enact the environment as opposed to reacting to it (Lam and Harker, 2015; Sarasvathy, 2001) and construct knowledge with other members of the team making learning a more advanced social enactment (Lam and Harker, 2015).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study intended to explore *how entrepreneurial teams learn and practice EM in the HE setting* whilst studying for the EBM degree in one UK university. This study met this objective and found that although *collective learning* is more distinctive in the educational environment, it also intersects with other learning styles; hence, it is never purely *collective* but also *exploratory*, *exploitative* and *supportive* at the same time. The *collective learning* is always intertwined with the opposite type of learning namely *individual learning* because the entrepreneur, while talking and working with the team, takes something personal from these

experiences and applies new discoveries in his/her own entrepreneurial journey. Thus, educational programmes that allow students to set up enterprises and experience the joys and challenges of running start-ups achieve much more than the programmes that focus only on developing entrepreneurial behaviour. In fact, EL cannot be separated from experiential and active learning, especially in the entrepreneurial team environment.

The EBM course builds students' EM and overall business knowledge through practical engagement, discovery, *exploitation* and active learning. Through this method, the university brings theory and practice closer to each other as students can incorporate theoretical knowledge into their entrepreneurial practices and vice versa. Programmes like the EBM degree promote entrepreneurship by allowing students to run a business and earn instead of seeking employment. In this way, a HE institution contributes to the economy by turning business students into nascent entrepreneurs. Students can then follow this path independently after graduating from the university and integrate themselves into the labour market through economic participation (Rae, 2017). According to Rae, entrepreneurship education can promote "an enterprising culture, and engender indigenous entrepreneurial activities which support self-employment, rejuvenate existing business and organisations, and aim to create local economic growth" (Rae, 2017, p. 488) as well as market competitiveness and regional development (Walsh and Winsor, 2019).

Large organisations can adopt similar behaviour and learn from the practices of HE institutions. The latter innovate and seek new ways to foster students' creativity and entrepreneurial spirit by immersing students into the co-creative spaces of enterprise development. Start-ups in this environment emerge from working in teams through active, experiential and EL. Their outputs in the form of small businesses derive from working in a supportive environment that is created through collaborative actions, such as sharing

knowledge and experience, going an extra mile for the team and creating a collective learning culture. Yet, undeniably, mastering EM and other business development skills involves failures, therefore large organisations need to be more tolerant to experimentations and replicate a similar learning environment to that of nascent entrepreneurs that leads to new discoveries and marketing strategies.

While an argument exists that educational institutions should move their focus from developing students as entrepreneurs to creating opportunities for the entrepreneurial potential (Morris *et al.*, 2002), it would be hard to achieve that without letting students experience the entrepreneurial process through developing and implementing business ideas in practice. The key essence of EL is learning from and through experience. Therefore, it is essential to provide such educational programmes because of the experiential nature of EL (El-Awad *et al.*, 2017; Wang and Chugh 2014). This particularly applies to EM which can be best mastered through learning-by-doing and experimenting with one's own ideas and the ideas of others (Järvi 2015; McGrath 2001). The teamwork context is particularly effective for achieving this potential. The key EM skills of creativity, innovativeness, networking, *exploration* and *exploitation* are best experienced through practice and applied in real life business contexts. Although Morris *et al.* (2002) argue that "greater attention is needed in educational programmes to such topics as opportunity identification and assessment, management of creativity, risk assessment and management, cross-functional innovation processes, lead user research techniques, and development of unique business models" (p. 14), we believe that especially management of creativity and risk assessment should move from a discussion level to an experience level in the educational setting. It is only then that students can develop, *explore* and *exploit* these capabilities *collectively* and *individually* and feed them back into practice with greater confidence.

The same requirements apply to large organisations if they want to drive markets and achieve a competitive advantage. Creating teams of marketers for projects can boost their creativity and innovation through EL that is closely linked to EM as the findings from this research show. Communities of practice can in particular aid in the mastering of EM skills. Since acquisition of knowledge is a social process (Lave and Wenger, 1991), learning in a group can increase one's knowledge and competencies and can be particularly useful to newly appointed staff (Hildreth and Kimble, 2004). Gradually increasing the level of involvement and responsibilities can lead to efficiency, creativity and increased collaborative effort. However, for the communities of practice to function, shared practices is one of the key essentials and that involves information sharing, having a common goal and forming informal work relationships (Hildreth and Kimble, 2004).

In the view of Fontaine and Millen (2004), communities of practice bring benefits not only to the individuals and the community itself but also the organisation with individual members developing skills and know-how, job satisfaction, personal reputation and a sense of belonging; the communities share knowledge, expertise and resources, and improve collaboration, problem solving, reputation and trust between the group members, whilst the organisation reaps benefits in operational efficiency, cost savings, employee retention and increased sales or level of service. As a result of "thinking together" communities of practice are able to prepare more competent practitioners (Pyrko *et al.*, 2017) whereas organisations can reap competitive advantages.

This research achieved its key aim to demonstrate *how entrepreneurial teams learn and practice EM in the HE setting* in the UK. It discussed the key features such as the social aspect, exploration and exploitation of opportunities, innovation and value creation that

unite entrepreneurship and marketing in theory and practice and form the concept of EM, which is always closely linked to EL. This empirical study showed that EM and EL are inseparably connected and the discussion about learning one business element cannot take place in isolation. The literature review and empirical findings from one cohort demonstrate connections between EM and EL and suggest they are linked not only in theory but also in practice and especially in the team context. The nascent entrepreneurs in this study acquire entrepreneurial and marketing skills *collectively* and *individually* when networking, *exploring* and *exploiting* opportunities for the development of start-ups.

Research Limitations and Future Research

This research looked at *how entrepreneurial teams learn and practice EM in the HE setting* in one university in the UK. Although this research achieved its aim and demonstrated through provided examples that entrepreneurial teams enjoy a variety of learning styles when running their business ventures in the HE setting, this investigation was not without limitations. The paper used a case study approach and therefore the research sample was limited in size. It comprised of one cohort of 13 students from the entrepreneurial business degree programme from one university in the UK, yet we believe that this number was appropriate to demonstrate how running a business venture in teams facilitates the entrepreneurial and EM learning. In qualitative research that adopts a case study approach such a sample size is deemed appropriate (Yin, 2018) given that it aims to explain and not to generalise the findings as in the case of quantitative studies. This however leaves room for further research that could include more cohorts from the same degree programme to conduct a comparative analysis.

A specific framework could be added in future research to explore how entrepreneurial and marketing skills are being enhanced and how theoretical knowledge is put into practice to

advance EM and EL in the team context. In particular, the view of the coaching team would be useful in order to explore the effectiveness of the curriculum in enhancing the entrepreneurial and marketing skills of the entrepreneurial cohorts. In relation to large organisations, future research can look into how big companies develop their EM competences and how the new techniques of learning EM in a team context can change the way modern organisations market their products and apply traditional marketing models in their day-to-day practices.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest has been reported by the authors.

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