Bridging the Gap

The London Olympics 2012 and South Asian-owned Businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street

Sean Carey and Nooruddin Ahmed

THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

agroni research

Contents

Preface

The Young Foundation is delighted to be publishing this report on our website. It provides useful information on the state of knowledge and preparation for the Olympics of two important, predominantly Asian retail and catering streets in London's East End. As the report describes, these two streets, one in Tower Hamlets and one in Newham, could be affected by the impact of the Olympics for better or for worse.

The report analyses what local retailers believe will happen to their street and to themselves. It also points to some of the possible hazards brought about by successful regeneration, in particular the danger of large retail chains driving out small independent and family-based businesses.

The Young Foundation feel that this exercise should ideally be repeated in two or three years' time, as 2012 approaches closer, to analyse further the impact on local property prices and rents, and to look at how local and national government's plans have affected the owners and managers of small businesses interviewed in 2006.

Geoff Mulgan and Kate Gavron
The Young Foundation

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to a number of friends and colleagues for their support and encouragement in carrying out this project. In particular, we are indebted to Kapil Ahmed who spent many hours compiling the data and producing the tables and diagrams. Thanks also to Thomas Carey, Rezina Choudhury, John Eade and Mark Speed for their comments on an earlier draft.

Thanks to our fieldworkers, Ferdous Ahmed, Mose Ali, Ferdousi Begum and Hassan Mahmud who worked tirelessly to obtain the necessary interviews in the time available. Marcela Frota also contributed to the project by her thorough desk research.

Thanks to Sumrin Begum for providing excellent administrative support and Ram Kundnani for overall project co-ordination.

We also want to extend appreciation to Kate Gavron of the Young Foundation for comments, encouragement and editing.

Finally, our gratitude must be expressed to all of the respondents in Brick Lane and Green Street who gave up valuable time to answer our questions. Without their cooperation the project would not have been possible.

Photography by Sophie Gordon

Design and document production
by William Howard

Executive Summary

Small businesses are meant to be an integral part of the economic regeneration connected with the London Olympics 2012. As Dee Doocey, Chair of the London Assembly's Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee, has said:

> ***"London promised a lasting legacy as part of its bid - it won't deliver the necessary economic regeneration unless small London firms are fully involved." (London Assembly, 2006)***

This report considers the implications of a pilot study of small south Asian-owned businesses in Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets and Green Street, Newham. The main aim of this research was to find out the level of awareness as well as the attitudes, perceptions and expectations of a sample of respondents from south Asian-owned businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street towards the forthcoming London Olympics in 2012. The study was commissioned and undertaken by Agroni Research.

Interviews were held during March and April 2006 and further research was conducted in late May 2006. In total, 50 businesses were surveyed. A significant amount of time was also spent in ethnographic observation between February and May 2006 in order to build up a profile of the everyday, routine behaviour of people using the area.

The report has six main strands:

1. The contemporary and historical aspects of south Asian business success in Brick Lane and Green Street. Brick Lane is known as the "curry capital" of the UK, while Green Street is renowned (at least to south Asians resident in the UK) for the multitude of fashion, jewellery and other shops along the length of its high street.
2. A profile of the sample of respondents including the ethnicity and residence of the owners of businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street as well as the ethnic, residence and gender patterns of the workforce.
3. The impact on and awareness of the London Olympics 2012 amongst respondents.
4. The business opportunities associated with the London Olympics 2012 as perceived by respondents (including whether these were perceived as essentially short-term, medium-term or long-term).
5. The level of support given to respondents by local business support agencies and other relevant institutions.
6. The potential benefits of a marketing campaign that would turn Brick Lane and Green Street into nationally and internationally recognised "brands".

Brick Lane

The key findings of the report are:

- A large number of respondents (90%) in the survey stated that they were aware that the Olympic Games will be held in London. Only a small minority were unaware of the forthcoming event
- The vast majority of the respondents (98%) who knew about the London Olympics 2012 were able to successfully identify the actual year of the Games
- A majority of respondents (60%) had discussed the London Olympics with friends and family members for a wide variety of reasons including a specific interest in sport and business opportunities, as well as the possible impact on the areas in which their businesses were located
- More than one third of respondents (38%) reported that they had discussed the London Olympics with other business people or colleagues in the local area
- Only a small percentage of respondents (16%) had discussed it with their suppliers
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) in the survey believed that members of the local community in the area of their business would benefit from employment opportunities linked with the Games. However, there was a concern, particularly amongst respondents in Brick Lane, that the expected jobs bonanza associated with the London Olympics might not benefit members of the less socio-economically successful south Asian groups in the capital like Bangladeshis
- Some respondents in Brick Lane were concerned that large retail and leisure chains might use the energy and momentum associated with the London Olympics to establish outlets in the Spitalfields and Banglatown area and irretrievably change the pattern of retail and leisure consumption in the area. This concern was not expressed by any respondent in Green Street
- Nine out of ten respondents said that they had not received any information on business opportunities from any agency directly linked with the London Olympics
- Only just over a quarter of respondents (26%) in both Brick Lane and Green Street had a nominated member of staff (normally the owner) to monitor business opportunities linked with the London Olympics
- A significant majority of respondents (72%) stated that they needed more information and support in order to take advantage of business opportunities likely to be connected with the London Olympics
- A significant number of respondents were either not confident (38%) or not sure (44%) that help or support that would enable them to take advantage of business opportunities connected with the London Olympics would be provided by the relevant authorities
- Half of all respondents stated that they did not think that the organisers of the London Olympics understood or sensitive to the needs of their businesses
- Only 34% of respondents thought that the organisers of the London Olympics either understood or were sensitive to needs of their community
- The majority of businesses surveyed were small businesses employing 8 staff on average
- The businesses included in the survey employed a mainly south Asian workforce

Overall, the research has revealed that there is undoubtedly a gap between the activities of the agencies responsible for the London Olympics and the expectations and attitudes towards the event indicated by the respondents who were included in the survey of small south Asian-owned businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street. Indeed, one of the most interesting findings of the research concerned the fact that four out of five respondents stated that they thought that the benefit to their businesses of the London Olympics would be either short-term or uncertain in its impact.

This report makes the case that, after a period of engagement and consultation between the relevant Olympic authorities and the south Asian business communities (and other groups), in both Brick Lane and Green Street, a marketing campaign should be launched highlighting the unique attractions of the two areas to visitors. This strategy would help turn Brick Lane and Green Street into nationally and internationally recognised "brands" and could have a lasting legacy on business opportunities in two very different areas of London's East End long after the Olympics have finished.

Queen's Market, Green Street

Introduction

This pilot research was commissioned and undertaken by Agroni Research. The main aim of this exploratory study was to find out the attitudes, perceptions and expectations of a sample of respondents from south Asian-owned businesses located in Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets and Green Street, Newham towards the forthcoming London Olympics 2012.

One of the key arguments in building a strong case for London to stage the Olympic Games in 2012 was that it would take place in some of the most deprived boroughs in London and leave an enduring sporting and cultural legacy that would continue to benefit local people long after the event is over. The London bid also promised that the Olympics would offer business and employment opportunities to the local population from one of the largest regeneration projects ever carried out in post-war Europe -estimated to be worth £10 billion of investment to the UK (of which around £2.5 billion will be construction related). Along with large and medium-sized firms, small businesses are meant to be an integral part of the economic process connected with the London Olympics 2012. As Dee Doocey, Chair of the London Assembly's Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee, has neatly put it:

> ***"London promised a lasting legacy as part of its bid - it won't deliver the necessary economic regeneration unless small London firms are fully involved." (London Assembly, 2006)***

We think that Doocey is right and it is important, therefore, to provide at least some of the entrepreneurs within the two selected business areas with an opportunity to highlight their expectations and express their concerns to the relevant bodies around the time of the first anniversary of London winning the bid to host the Olympic Games.

Because we were running a pilot study, we decided to focus exclusively on south Asian-owned businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street and not widen our study to include businesses owned by the other ethnic groups within these areas. One reason for this is that south Asian-owned businesses form the largest black and minority ethnic (BME) business grouping in London. Within this south Asian group, Indian-owned businesses are the most dominant, followed by those owned by Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. In 2004, the turnover of Indian businesses alone in the London area was estimated to be around £20 billion. These south Asian groups (and, indeed, other BME populations) also have enormous spending power which, in 2004, was estimated to be around £16 billion in London (see LDA, 2005, 5).

It was also decided to focus on Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets and Green Street, Newham for the following reasons:

- The south Asian population within these two boroughs alone represents over 34% of the overall BME population (43.5%) of the five London boroughs directly involved in the forthcoming Olympics
- Significant investment has previously been made in regenerating both Brick Lane and Green Street in recent years

- Brick Lane is widely recognised as the "curry capital" of the UK, while Green Street is renowned (at least to south Asians resident in the UK) for the multitude of fashion, jewellery and other shops along the length of its high street
- Both locations are at the heart of community activities - economic, social, political, and religious - for some of the diverse groups that make up a significant part of the south Asian mosaic in East London

We did not attempt to conduct a strictly random sample but, instead, selected a varied group of businesses in each area. Furthermore, we deliberately selected businesses that we considered had some economic or growth potential in relation to the forthcoming London Olympics 2012. This not only included the obvious opportunities associated with businesses like catering outlets (restaurants and fast food), especially those that already had an interface with mainstream ethnic groups resident in the UK as well as tourists (which was particularly relevant in the Brick Lane area), but also included businesses like clothing and jewellery (including fashion jewellery) and Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani sweet shops in Brick Lane and Green Street we thought could (and should) benefit from the influx of visitors both from within the UK and overseas. Some of these businesses had already been highlighted in the mainstream media, especially some of the annual London shopping and guide books including, for example, the *London Restaurant Guide 2006* and the *Time Out London Eating & Drinking Guide 2006* as well as the weekly guides, *Time Out* and *What's On In London*.

Chapter 1	describes the objectives of the study.
Chapter 2	is concerned with methodology. It describes how a survey of 50 respondents in Brick Lane and Green Street was carried out as well as the ethnographic and observational techniques employed in the study.
Chapter 3	looks at the contemporary and historical aspects of south Asian business success in Brick Lane and Green Street.
Chapter 4	documents the profile of our sample including the ethnicity and residence of the owners of businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street, as well as the ethnic, residence and gender patterns exhibited by the workforce.
Chapter 5	looks at the impact of the London Olympics and awareness of respondents. It documents where they currently receive information on business opportunities in their local area and the extent to which they were members of either local or national business associations.
Chapter 6	describes how respondents were monitoring business opportunities likely to be connected with the London Olympics; whether they thought these would be primarily short-term, medium-term or long-term opportunities; and which existing and new businesses in their local area they considered would be best placed to take advantage of the economic opportunities connected with the event. We also wanted to know how respondents defined the likely impact of the Olympics on the UK, London and their local area.
Chapter 7	assesses the level of support given to respondents by local business support organisations like banks, the local authority, community organisations and regeneration or development agencies. We also wanted to find out whether respondents believed that the existing organisations responsible for the delivery of the London Olympics had the capacity to provide them with the relevant information necessary for them to take advantage of the business opportunities connected with the forthcoming event.
Chapter 8	summarises the research and makes some recommendations.

1. Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this exploratory study was to document and understand the perceptions and expectations that the owners (and managers) of selected south Asian-owned businesses had of the forthcoming Olympics to be held in London and to answer some fundamentally important questions.

Our first set of questions was concerned with measuring the impact that the forthcoming Olympics had already had on respondents:

- What was the level of awareness amongst the owners/managers of south Asian-owned businesses in Green Street and Brick Lane of the forthcoming Olympics?
- What were the level and types of discussions that entrepreneurs have had with family, friends, business associates and suppliers?
- Where did entrepreneurs currently get information on business opportunities in their local area?
- Had owners/managers heard of any business and events connected with the London Olympics and had they attended them?

A second set of questions enquired whether our respondents thought that opportunities would develop for their existing businesses between now and 2012:

- Did they think it was possible to develop new businesses with a strategic focus on the London Olympics?
- How did business people define any new opportunities connected with the London Olympics and were these perceived as essentially short-term, medium-term or long-term opportunities?
- Did respondents think that the populations of the UK, London and, very importantly, the areas in which their businesses were located would benefit from the forthcoming London Olympics? Additionally, did respondents, for example, think that there would be job opportunities for local people in sectors already highlighted by the Olympic authorities like construction, transport, hospitality, accommodation, information technology and the media?

A third set of questions was related to exploring the level and type of formal, institutional support that was already available to businesses in the Brick Lane and Green Street areas:

- Did respondents think that existing agencies were adequate for the task of taking advantage of the commercial opportunities likely to be associated with the London Olympics?
- Did respondents consider that the existing organisations or agencies responsible for the London Olympics were sensitive to the needs of their businesses and, indeed, understood the social and economic dynamics of the local communities in which those businesses were located? Had respondents already received information from relevant agencies and institutions regarding the London Olympics?
- What type of information did respondents think that they required and how soon was this information needed?
- Finally, we asked our respondents what advice they would give to the organisers of the London Olympics that would ensure that as far as possible the event would benefit the local community including the local business community.

2. Methodology

Interviews were held with the owners/main partners (and, in a smaller number of cases, where this was not possible with managers) of businesses in the Brick Lane area of Tower Hamlets and the Green Street area of Newham. Bi-lingual interviewers were used when appropriate.

Interviews with 25 owners/managers were conducted in each area (**Table 1a and Table 1b** shown below) which meant that a total of 50 businesses were included in the survey. The interview schedule was semi-structured in format. Respondents were allowed and encouraged to comment on a wide variety of issues and concerns relevant to their businesses and the forthcoming Olympics.

Within the survey group of fifty respondents, more in-depth interviews were held with five selected respondents-always the owners of businesses (including business leaders in Brick Lane)-in each area which gave a total of ten overall. While this approach was necessarily time-consuming, it was more than offset by the richness of the data thus generated. A few interviews lasted an hour but most took between two and four hours to complete.

It is important to note that almost all the businesses (apart from two) in the Brick Lane survey were located on the main thoroughfare rather than on side- street locations. All businesses surveyed in the Green Street area were on the high street (although we did include two businesses from the Queen's Market) rather than other shopping areas on streets connecting with Green Street like Plashet Grove or Plashet Road. This was to ensure that the businesses included in the survey were already situated in areas of high/maximum levels of footfall/pedestrian flow and were, therefore, the most likely to benefit from any increase in the numbers of tourists associated with the London Olympics visiting these areas.

Interviews in Brick Lane and Green Street took place between March and April 2006. Some additional research was carried out in both areas in May 2006.

***Table 1a* Businesses Surveyed in Brick Lane**

Business	Number	Percentage
Indian / Bangladeshi Restaurants	12	48.0
Fast Food Outlets	2	8.0
Indian / Bangladeshi Sweet Shop	2	8.0
Travel Agencies / Money Exchanges	2	8.0
Sari / Clothing Shop	1	4.0
Pan / Music Shop	1	4.0
General Store / Food Shop	1	4.0
Hairdresser	1	4.0
Design and Media	1	4.0
Newsagent	1	4.0
Mortgage Broker	1	4.0
Total	**25**	**100.0**

***Table 1b* Businesses Surveyed in Green Street**

Business	Number	Percentage
Fast Food Outlet	3	12.0
Travel Agency / Money Exchange	3	12.0
Jewellery Shops (including Fashion Jewellery)	3	12.0
Pan / Music Shop	3	12.0
Sari / Clothing Shop	2	8.0
Telecom / Mobile Phone Shop	2	8.0
General Store / Food Shop	2	8.0
Restaurants	2	8.0
Mortgage /Letting Agent	1	4.0
Newsagent	1	4.0
Beauty and Health Centre	1	4.0
Indian Sweet Shop	1	4.0
Internet / Telecom Shop	1	4.0
Total	**25**	**100.0**

Additionally, informal discussions/interviews took place with other respondents who owned businesses in the two areas in order to check the accuracy of the data which had already been gathered. This was an important strategy given the relatively small number of respondents in the sample.

A significant amount of time between February and May was also spent in ethnographic observation which involved researchers walking around Brick Lane and Green Street at different times of the day to monitor events and the everyday, routine behaviour of people using the area.

In interpreting the data, we have sometimes separated the information according to whether the data was collected in Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets or Green Street, Newham. On other occasions, when there was no advantage in separating the results we have aggregated and added together the information from the two areas.

Green Street

3. Context

Brick Lane

Since the early days of mass male Bangladeshi migration to the Spitalfields area of London's East End, which began in the 1950s and accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s, the southern end of the Brick Lane and Osborn Street area (hereafter referred to as Brick Lane) has been an important male dominated social (as well as a highly significant economic and political) space, even after women and children began to be reunited with their men folk in the 1980s and 1990s. This pattern of spatial gender segmentation continues to this day. Very few Bangladeshi women or family groups use the retail outlets either on Brick Lane or the surrounding side streets for routine shopping - instead this task is performed by the men of the family - preferring instead to spend their money on the culturally specific and more general goods available at the shops and stalls in the more women and family-friendly retail areas of Whitechapel High Street, Bethnal Green Road and Cannon Street Road as well as the more convenient but smaller Bangladeshi-owned shops (normally grocers/general food stores and halal butcher shops) that have developed in recent years in ever increasing numbers on estates in Tower Hamlets (particularly in the central and eastern parts of the borough like the Lincoln, Ocean and Perring estates) where many families now reside. Bangladeshi women and family groups resident in Tower Hamlets also, of course, use the large supermarkets like Asda Wal-Mart, Sainsbury's and Tesco located in the borough for other items of general, household consumption. They also use the Green Street area of Newham for special shopping trips, especially for the purchase of jewellery and fashion products.

At present, Brick Lane is an area used by a variety of ethnic groups, with some outlets like the mainstream Bangladeshi restaurants (for example, Bengal Village, Preem or Shampan) having an overwhelmingly White British and White European middle-class clientele based largely on networks of friendship, while others such as the large Bangladeshi supermarkets (for example, Taj Stores and Bangla City) have an ethnically mixed customer base (with a significant proportion of White customers). Some shops in Brick Lane are used almost exclusively by male Bangladeshis (and other male south Asians) who live or work in the area (for example, the Azeem barber shop, the Gram Bangla cafe, the Modina Gift Centre and the Mira UK music shop).

Brick Lane has become an example of dual segmentation in terms of ownership of businesses: the street at ground level from Osborn Street (at the junction of Whitechapel Road) to Woodseer Street is an area of predominantly south Asian enterprises, largely Bangladeshi-owned and mainly, although not exclusively, focused on the restaurant trade, which has expanded to around fifty restaurants and cafes and makes Brick Lane the ‘curry capital’ of the UK (see Carey, 2004). This stretch of the high street is the location of several Bangladeshi food stores with a small number of Indian and Pakistani-owned clothing outlets and travel agencies, as well as the Indian-owned City Hotel. This zone also includes the London branch of the Sonali Bank of Bangladesh at the corner of Wentworth Street, the London Jamme Masjid, the Great Mosque of London, at the corner of Fournier Street (originally a Huguenot church which later became a synagogue) and a part-time police station.

The area of Brick Lane from the junction of Woodseer Street to Bethnal Green Road is host to a slowly diminishing number of Pakistani-owned clothing and leatherwear wholesalers - the emblematic remnants of Spitalfields’ once economically important clothing industry or ‘rag trade’ - shops which, when they become available (some traders, for example, have relocated to Bethnal Green Road and Commercial Road), are rapidly transformed into new retail businesses by White entrepreneurs selling neo-bohemian clothes, shoes, jewellery and art products. There are also numerous coffee houses (some with internet facilities), bars, clubs and covered and open-air food stalls that have developed over the last six or seven years in association with the conspicuous success of the three hundred or so new design, IT, media and music 'cultural industries' on the site of the Old Truman Brewery (with even more in the wider Shoreditch and Hoxton area), also predominantly owned and staffed by White British and White Europeans (see Carey, 2004).

The Brick Lane area is also home to a small number of long established Jewish-owned businesses like A.Elfes Ltd, the monumental mason (on Osborn Street), as well as Beigel Bake and Beigel Shop (both open 24 hours a day, with the latter supplying produce to many of the upmarket bagel shops located in London's West End) near the junction with Bethnal Green Road. These businesses are the last visible reminders that Brick Lane was once a busy and bustling Jewish high-street.

Apart from the William Hill betting shop and a branch of Winkworth estate agents, Brick Lane has no mainstream commercial, retail or leisure spaces operating along its thoroughfare, although some companies like Tesco Express and Strada, the contemporary 'Italian' restaurant chain (owned by Signature Restaurants) have developed outlets in the last year on the nearby and increasingly fashionable central zone of Commercial Street around the junction of Hanbury Street (also the location of the critically acclaimed St John Bread and Wine restaurant) and the newly refurbished Old Spitalfields Market area. Hanbury Street is also one of the main routes used by pedestrians accessing Brick Lane from the City.

Although many businesses like the large number of food shops, hairdressers, solicitors and accountants, travel agents and cafes (often located on side street locations or in offices above street level on Brick Lane) catering for the local south Asian residents and workers in the Spitalfields area are part of the 'old' daytime economy, the Bangladeshi restaurants as well as the assorted bars and clubs in the area (and, indeed, the bagel shops) are synergistic parts of the vibrant and fast growing 'new' night-time economy which is particularly busy at weekends as well as bank holidays.

Brick Lane

Green Street

Green Street is comparable in many ways to other high street locations in areas of dense south Asian settlement like, for example, Southall Broadway to the west of London, Ealing Road in the Wembley area of north London, Tooting Broadway in south London and, of course, Brick Lane in east London. All these locations reflect in different ways the multi-ethnic and multi-economic complexities of the diverse groups, social networks and populations - 'communities', as they are popularly known - that make up the south Asian mosaic within the UK capital and its suburban and outlying areas.

Undoubtedly, Green Street's national and international profile (except perhaps amongst those of south Asian origin) is currently much lower than Brick Lane. One reason for this is that nearly all the London guide books, with a few notable exceptions like the *Time Out Eating & Drinking Guide 2006* - which bestows the title of "Little India" on Green Street - focus on the more historically obvious and conventional areas of the capital (which includes Spitalfields and Banglatown). This means, therefore, that the geographical (and cultural) scope of these accounts or narratives do not stretch far enough to include any of the more recently established ethnically and commercially significant locations and spaces, particularly in outlying areas of London (cf. Eade, 2000). Another reason for the disparity in image/recognition between the two areas is the fact that Brick Lane has achieved a significantly increased level of fame after the enormous success of the debut novel of the same name by Monica Ali - an effect which will be hugely amplified once the film based on the book is released in 2007. However, this relative imbalance in representation which, at the moment, strongly favours Brick Lane over Green Street, may soon change (at least in the UK) because the latter forms part of the scenic backdrop to a new BBC comedy drama, *Chopratown*, starring Sanjeev Bhaskar as a private detective, the pilot programme of which was shown in 2005. (The Queen's Market area of Green Street is also the subject of a recent film, *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price,* which had its UK premiere in London in May 2006. The film documents the struggle of the market's shop owners and stall-holders against plans by the local authority to demolish it and build an Asda Wal-Mart superstore, housing and a much reduced market area in its place. However, given the specialist subject-matter and, therefore, its appeal to a relatively limited audience, it is difficult to envisage that this particular portrayal of contemporary urban conflict will have much or any impact on popular perceptions of the Green Street area[1]).

Green Street's south Asian retail sector effectively runs from the junction of Finden Street to the junction of Selsdon Road. A few south Asian shops were established in the 1960s but the major expansion took place in the 1980s and, especially, in the 1990s, reflecting in part the changing ethnic composition of the population in the London borough of Newham as well as the growing economic power of its settled migrant communities. This development also saw traditional 'British' high street retail heavyweights like British Home Stores, Marks & Spencer and Woolworths pull out of the area as demand for their goods and services dropped substantially. Green Street's independent retail sector is now dominated by Indians and Pakistanis with around a dozen Bangladeshi-owned businesses. This last group is almost exclusively composed of general food stores like Bangla Bazar and Sylhet City at the northern end of Green Street - outlets which are more or less identical in design, presentation and product range to those found in Tower Hamlets - as well as a handful of sari shops which serve the increasing numbers of Bangladeshis who have acquired homes in Newham in recent years. Additionally, there are another dozen or so businesses owned and used by members of other ethnic groups (largely focused on hair, nail and other beauty products and services), particularly African Caribbean and Black African (including Ghanaian, and Nigerian) outlets in the Queen's Market and the southern end of Green Street near the West Ham football ground. There are also several Somali-owned shops on Plashet Grove.

In marked contrast to other economically important high street locations in London, Green Street is host to only a relatively small number of mainstream retailers and leisure sites including Boots, Gregg's, Iceland, Percy Ingle, Ladbrokes, Priceless Shoes, Superdrug, Tesco Metro, William Hill and the Post Office as well as financial institutions like Barclays, HSBC and the Woolwich (although, significantly, KFC is the only international fast-food brand on the high street) but these are

[1] Although Asda Wal-Mart announced in late June 2006 that it was pulling out of the venture, Newham Council and its development partner, St Modwen, are now looking for a new supermarket group to complete the project. But whatever the final arrangements, it is clear that any significant reduction in the amount of space for small, independent operators in the Queen's Market will undoubtedly have an effect on the perceived character - or 'brand image', to employ a marketing concept - of Green Street which, in turn, could have important implications for the overall pattern of business, shopping and consumption in the area (see Rubin, Jatana and Potts, 2006).

massively outnumbered by more than three hundred or so south Asian-owned businesses on the high street (which includes the London branch of the Pakistani Habibsons Bank at the corner of King's Road) as well as approximately one hundred shops on side-street locations. These outlets dominate the retail and leisure space in the area.

Green Street is predominantly used by south Asian family groups, especially those of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian origin. These groups typically consist of extended kin (more often than not without accompanying adult males) and are often composed of two or three generations of family members including children of both sexes, a pattern which contrasts markedly to the same and mixed gender, friendship-based groups of predominantly White consumers in the twenty-five to forty year age range who frequent Brick Lane.

Many of the south Asian customers using the Green Street area for shopping live in Newham or Tower Hamlets but others come from a variety of other east and north London boroughs as well as outlying suburbs, using buses and the underground or the A11, A12, A13 M25/M11 and North Circular Road for access by car. The number of overseas south Asian visitors to the area - often the kin of UK-based south Asians resident in east and north London - is also numerically and economically significant. In sharp contrast to Brick Lane, the number of White people using the south Asian segment of Green Street for routine shopping or eating out either alone or in groups is minimal. The exception is the Queen's Market area where a recent survey revealed that around 16% of the customers are White and another 27% are Black or Black British (see Rubin, Jatana and Potts, 2006).

The number, concentration and sheer variety of south Asian shops (and stalls in the Queen's Market) including beauty and hairdressing salons, 'high' and 'low' fashion outlets, jewellery, household and electrical, furniture, telecoms, internet cafes, money exchanges, music and DVD outlets, opticians, pharmacies, photographers, printers, travel agents, Indian and Pakistani sweet shops, grocers and food stores (including several halal butchers and fishmongers), wedding and birthday party specialists and Islamic book and clothing shops offering consumers a wide range of goods and services at highly competitive prices exceeds anything available in comparable shopping areas of Tower Hamlets or, indeed, any other area of east London. The Green Street area also contains around twenty-five Indian and Pakistani-owned restaurants and cafes within the main south Asian shopping zone, segmented according to vegetarian (for example, Amita's, Sakhoni's and Vijay's Chawalla) and non-vegetarian halal outlets (for example, Himalaya, Lahori Baba and Mobeen).

This means that south Asian consumers - Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Muslim - drawn from both the local and the wider area find the Green Street area a rewarding and congenial place to spend a day (or a half day, anyway) shopping for general and ethnically specific goods and foodstuffs, as well providing them with the possibility of eating out. Green Street is also host to the Muslim Community Mosque at the corner of Studley Road and side street locations contain the Hindu Shree Swaminarayan Temple on Shaftsbury Road and the Ramgharia Sikh Gurudwara on Neville Road, all of which attract large numbers of people into the area. In general, Green Street is predominantly an area of daytime economic activity and is particularly busy at the weekends, bank holidays and school holiday periods.

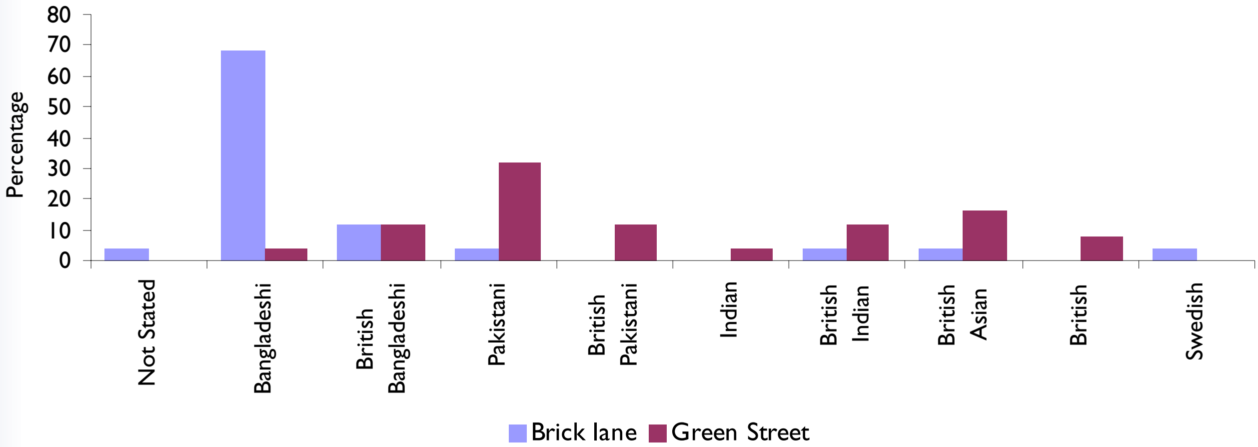
Green Street

4. Sample Profile

Ethnicity of Owners

All respondents of south Asian origin who were the owners/partners of businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street were asked to identify the ethnic group to which they considered they (or in the case of managers who were interviewed, the owners) belonged. Some of our respondents had dual nationality and this was sometimes reflected in their answer to the question. These figures are expressed in the following graph.

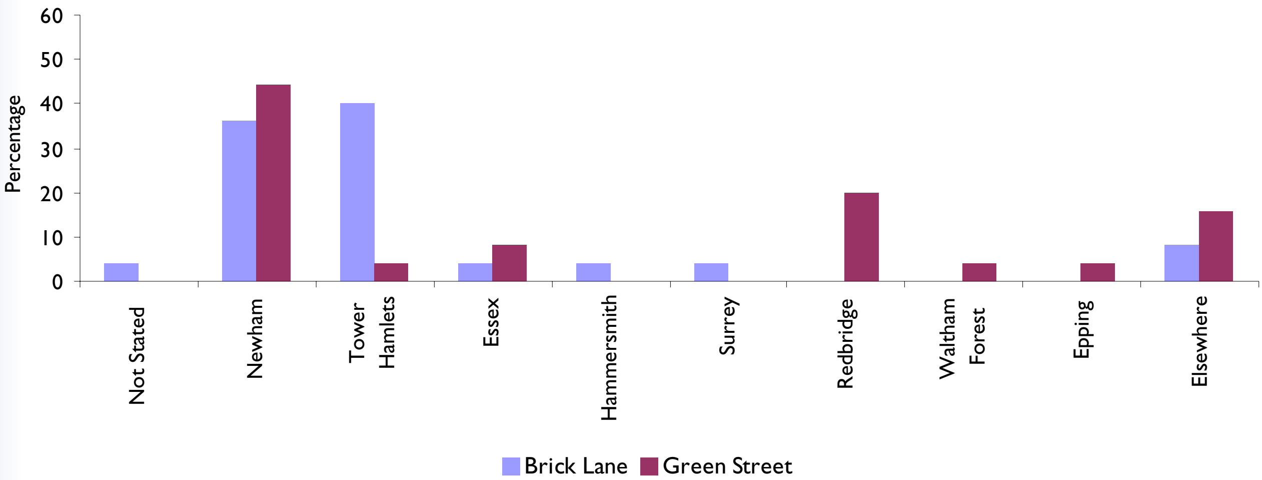
***Figure 1:* Ethnicity of business owners by area**



Eighty per cent of the owners in the survey of Brick Lane classified themselves as either Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi, whereas in Green Street 16% classified themselves in this way. Forty-four per cent of owners surveyed in Green Street classified themselves as either Pakistani or British Pakistani and another 16% classified themselves as Indian. Only a small number of respondents (16%) in both areas classified themselves as British Asian.

Residence of Owners

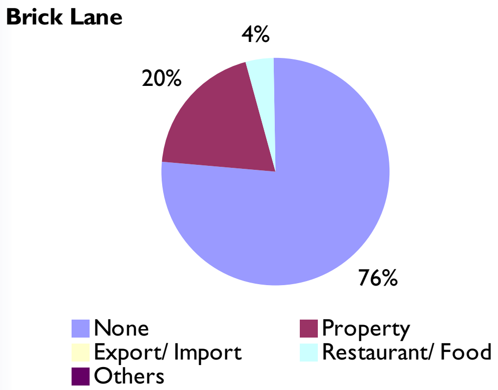
***Figure 2:* Residence of business owners by location of business**

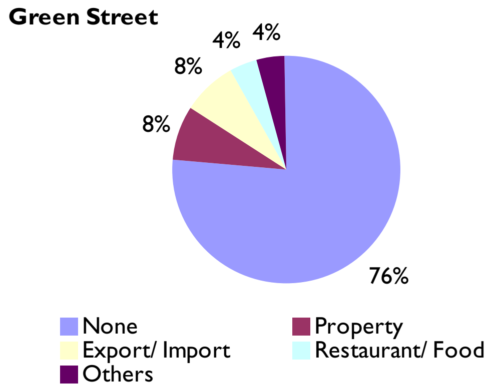


The majority of owners (76%) of businesses in Brick Lane either lived in Tower Hamlets (40%) or Newham (36%). The majority of owners (64%) of businesses in Green Street lived in either Newham (44%) or Redbridge (20%). Only one owner of a business in Green Street lived in Tower Hamlets.

Other Business Interests

Figure 3: **Other business interests of respondents in Brick Lane and Green Street**





Just over three quarters of our respondents (76%) in both areas stated that this was their only business. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) in Brick Lane and one fifth of respondents (20%) in Green Street who did have other businesses listed property, import/export and restaurants/food outlets as their other business interests.

Only two respondents - interestingly both in the Green Street area - stated that there was an international or transnational dimension to their businesses. The first business was part of a restaurant franchise with other outlets in north London, Leicester and Dubai. The second business, a fabric shop, was at present the sole UK outpost of a Pakistani-owned group which had 38 outlets in Pakistan as well as one in India. The shop had only been established in the last year but was clear evidence of the growing international retail significance of the Green Street "brand" for both UK-based and visiting overseas south Asian consumers.

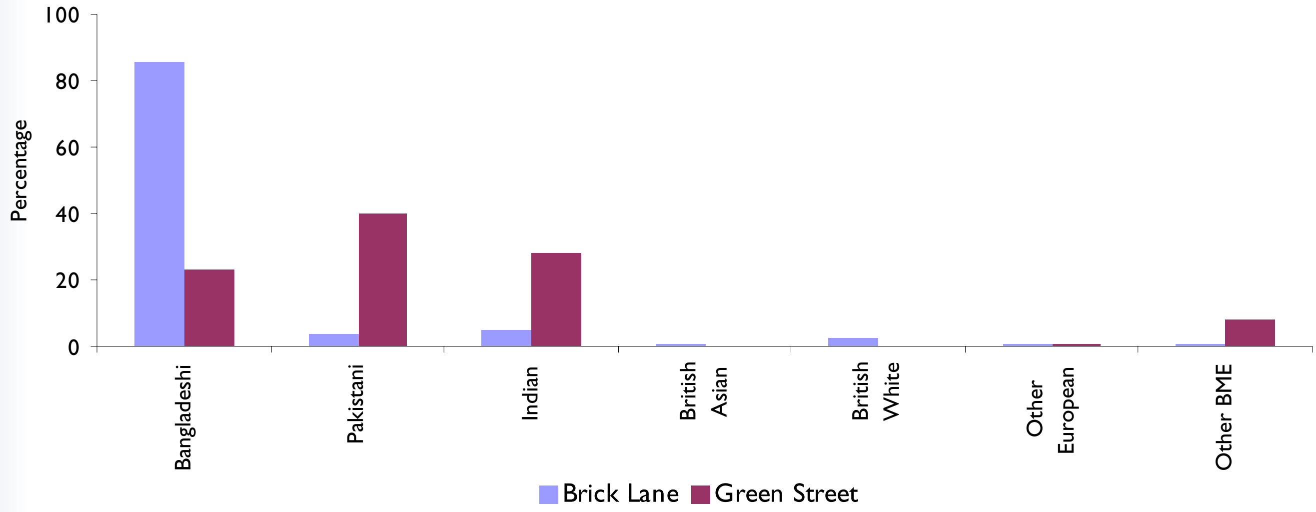
The Workforce Profile - Numbers, Gender and Ethnicity

Five respondents (three in Green Street and two in Brick Lane) refused to disclose either the number or the ethnicity of their staff. The total number of staff (excluding owners/partners) working in the 23 businesses surveyed in Brick Lane was 231. This figure included 203 full-time and 28 part-time employees (and excluded extra personnel recruited at festival times like the Bengali New Year, Baishakhi Mela, and the annual International Curry Festival). The total number of staff (excluding owners/partners) working in the 22 businesses in Green Street was 128. This figure included 96 full-time and 32 part-time employees. The total workforce (including full and part-time staff) in the 45 businesses surveyed in both areas was 359 (giving an average number of staff of 8 per business). The average number of staff for businesses in Brick Lane was 10 while the average in Green Street was 6.

The total number of male staff working in the 23 businesses in Brick Lane was 195 (181 full-time and 14 part-time personnel) and the total number of female staff was 36 (22 full-time and 14 part time). The total number of male staff reported to be working in the 22 businesses in Green Street was 88 (73 full-time and 15 part-time) and the total number of female staff was 40 (23 full-time and 17 part-time). The average number of female employees in Brick Lane was 1.57 and in Green Street was 1.82.

We also asked respondents to provide a classification of the ethnic origin of their workers. The results are expressed in the following chart:

Figure 4: **Ethnicity of workforce by area**

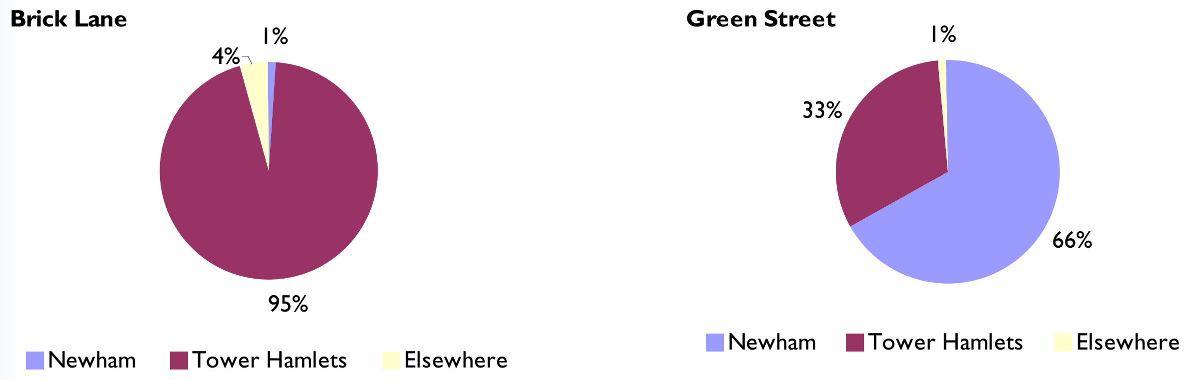


The results revealed that the staff employed in typical south Asian-owned businesses in the two areas were overwhelmingly of south Asian origin, although with a much higher proportion of Bangladeshi employees in Brick Lane (85.7%) compared to Green Street (23.4%). On the other hand, a higher proportion of Pakistanis (39.8%) and Indians (28.1%) were employed in Green Street whereas in Brick Lane the number of Pakistanis (3.9%) and Indians (5.2%) employed was relatively low. It was also evident from our survey (as well as ethnographic research) that south Asian businesses in these areas have not so far accommodated any significant numbers of the new migrants from Eastern Europe or, indeed, elsewhere in the recently enlarged EU who have journeyed to the UK to find work. This is in marked contrast to businesses located in other areas of London and the South-east and, indeed, the white British and white European-owned businesses (including bars, clubs, restaurants and a variety of retail outlets) in the Brick Lane area. A few restaurant owners in Brick Lane reported that they had occasionally employed young women from Eastern Europe as waitresses but stated that it was difficult to hold onto them when there were other comparable jobs - often with fewer hours of work (and no late shifts) for the same amount or more money - available in the area. Only one respondent in Green Street stated that he had employed two Eastern Europeans (from Lithuania) in his newly established fabric shop. Our respondent told us that this employment practice was specifically designed to see if a visible, white European employee presence would attract new types of customers (including other Eastern Europeans resident in Newham) into his shop. The respondent stated that this small-scale economic/marketing experiment was not very successful and he ended his Lithuanian recruits' employment after a couple of months. The respondent explained that his new employees had conspicuously failed to attract a new client base and because of significant differences in culture (language and familiarity with fabric and dress styles) had failed to make a connection with existing and new south Asian female customers. He therefore felt obliged to look elsewhere for help in the shop. "That's why we brought in an Indian woman, people can relate to her more," he said. But the respondent also stated that he would be keeping an eye on the dynamics of the market place and review and, if necessary, alter his employment policy if the visitor/tourist profile in

Green Street changed significantly in the future. He thought that this would be particularly important around the time of the forthcoming Olympics, when he fully expected large numbers of non-south Asian customers to visit the area.

The overwhelming majority of staff working in the businesses surveyed in both the Brick Lane and Green Street areas lived within the boroughs in which the businesses where they worked were located.

Figure 5: Residence of workforce in Brick Lane and Green Street



Business Communications

- All respondents (100%) in both Brick Lane and Green Street reported that they had a telephone connection. In the case of fax facilities the relative figures were different with 68% of respondents in Green Street having a connection compared with only 28% in Brick Lane.
- In the case of electronic communications, 36% of respondents in Brick Lane and 40% in Green Street stated that they had an e-mail address. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents in Brick Lane and 32% of respondents in Green Street said that they had a website.

Green Street

5. Impact of the London Olympics

Knowledge, Perception and Attitude towards the Olympics

A large majority of respondents (90%) in our survey stated that they were aware that the Olympic Games will be held in London. Only a small minority were unaware of the forthcoming event. Furthermore, of those who claimed to know about the London Olympics, the vast majority of respondents (98%) were successfully able to identify the actual year, 2012, of the competition with only a small number of respondents (2%) getting the date wrong.

When asked how they had first heard the news about the Olympics coming to London, the majority of respondents who were aware of the event stated that they had heard about it through the general and local media (newspapers, radio and television etc as well as newspaper billboards and news flashes on time/route indicators at bus stops in the Green Street area) or by being informed by friends and colleagues:

> ***"We were all watching it on Sky News on the TV in our shop. It was a big thing." (Brick Lane respondent)***
>
> ***"It was all over the press and TV - it was everywhere. Everyone knew about it." (Green Street respondent)***

Only one respondent in the sample said that he could not exactly remember how he had heard the news about the forthcoming event. Overall, therefore, it was very evident from interviews that a clear majority of all respondents in both Brick Lane and Green Street had taken a keen interest in the announcement concerning London's successful Olympic bid for a wide variety of reasons:

> ***"It's good. Everyone was delighted when the news came through. We need something to boost England. We haven't had anything big since the World Cup in 1966." (Brick Lane respondent)***
>
> ***"I have children, two boys, and I hope they can participate in some way. I've asked them to join the local football or cricket club but they won't. So maybe the Olympics coming to our borough will encourage them. It'll be healthy if it gets them off their computers for a change." (Green Street respondent)***

A majority of respondents (60%) stated that they had discussed the London Olympics with either friends and/or family members. Respondents who had discussed the forthcoming Olympics indicated that the content of these conversations (expressed as multiple responses) revolved around a specific interest in sports/games (37%), business opportunities (33%), the likely impact (for example, regeneration and property development) on the areas in which their businesses were located (17%), and an expected increase in tourist numbers (13%) to their particular areas of east London.

More than one third of respondents (38%) also reported that they had discussed the London Olympics with other business people/colleagues in the local area. Respondents who had discussed the forthcoming Olympics indicated that the content of these conversations were primarily business- oriented and included (expressed as multiple responses) the likelihood of an increase in general business opportunities (68%), the establishment of specific shops or retail outlets (16%), and the development of property or construction projects (16%) in the area (or surrounding area) of their existing businesses. Respondents in this group typically owned larger (and often more recently established) businesses in both the Brick Lane and Green Street areas. The following responses were typical of respondents in this segment of our sample:

> ***"Some of us have talked about establishing a Bangladeshi-style shopping mall focusing on clothes, food, jewellery and handicrafts like paintings. A lot of British people have heard of Rabindranath Tagore because he won the Nobel Prize for literature, but very few people know that he was also a great painter. So we can use this in a new business - it might go some way to counter the idea that Bangladeshis can only run restaurants." (Brick Lane respondent)***

> ***"We've been trading in Green Street for nine years now and one and a half years in this location. So we regularly chat to about nine or ten people around here, all in the fashion side of things like ourselves. We've talked about all the business opportunities that might be linked to regeneration in this area because of the Olympics - anything from retail to property, really." (Green Street respondent)***

We found that only a relatively small number of respondents (16%) had discussed the forthcoming London Olympics with their suppliers. Where conversations had taken place respondents stated that talk was clearly focused around expectations of future business opportunities connected with the Olympics. But most of our respondents (84%) stated that they felt that it was far too early to enter detailed discussions regarding supplies, particularly when even basic information, say, concerning the numbers of prospective visitors/tourists (as well as their possible ethnic and national composition) coming into the areas where their businesses were located was unavailable. As one respondent put it:

> ***"It has come up in conversation with my suppliers but so far it's just been casual chat. People think they've got a couple of years yet." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Another said:

> ***"Hopefully, there'll be more tourists coming into the area and it will be good for our business but it's a bit early to think about it." (Green Street respondent)***

However, a small number of respondents with larger businesses - particularly in the Brick Lane area - stated that they thought it was crucial to start thinking as soon as possible about the likely impact of the London Olympics on east London in order to take advantage of any economic opportunities. As one respondent commented:

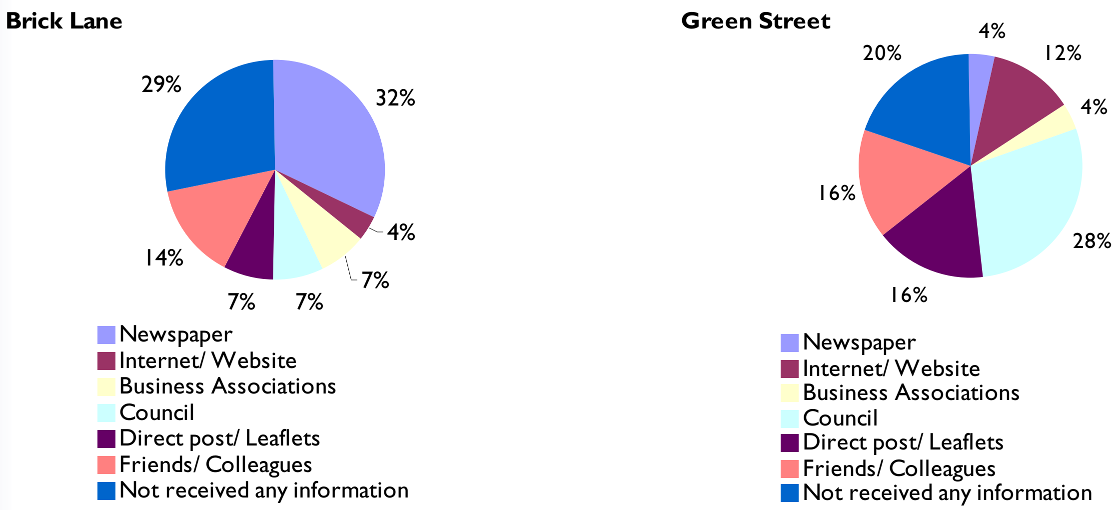
> ***"Marketing is a big thing. How do we market Brick Lane? No one's doing it at the moment but we really need to otherwise we're all going to get left behind. The Olympics is a big thing too - it's a chance for us to get on the map." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Thirty per cent of our respondents stated that they had not discussed the forthcoming London Olympics with anyone at all.

Business Information

Respondents in Brick Lane stated that they received information on business opportunities in their local area from a variety of sources (expressed as multiple responses) including local newspapers (36%), friends and colleagues (16%), local business associations (8%), the local council (8%), advertising (8%) and the Internet (4%). However, a significant number of respondents (32%) indicated that they rarely or had never received information on business opportunities from any source.

***Figure 6:* Sources of information on business opportunities in Brick Lane and Green Street**



Respondents in Green Street stated that they received information on business opportunities in their local area (expressed as multiple responses) primarily from the local council (28%), friends and colleagues (16%), advertising (16%), the Internet (12%), local business associations (4%) and newspapers (4%). A lower proportion of respondents (20%) in Green Street compared to those in Brick Lane stated that they rarely received information from any source, reflecting the diffuse social and ethnically segmented ties among sections of the business community in the area.

Only a minority of respondents (40%) in both areas indicated that they were members of either a local or national business association:

> ***"It would help if there was more co-operation around here. People should get together and form a group but instead the competition is cut-throat. I'll give you an example: we only make 49p on a bag of rice that costs £25. We should be making £2 a bag at least but if we charged any more we go out of business. It's crazy." (Brick Lane respondent)***

> ***"There's no focus for helping business people in this area. The Chamber of Commerce is not very active, nor is the Council. Most of the information I get comes from knowing people in the area." (Green Street respondent)***

"There are no really active business organisations in this area. It all stopped when the SRB funding ended in 2002 or 2003. "(Green Street respondent)

Interviews with respondents who were involved in local or national associations - interestingly, even those who were leading members of such institutions - strongly suggested that they thought that membership of formal, local organisations was of limited practical, economic use and significance. Business organisations, even when they did exist, tended to reflect other social realities. This was particularly evident in Brick Lane:

"Brick Lane is not organised for that kind of thing. There is no kind of real help - it's all just social or political." (Brick Lane respondent)

Only one in ten respondents stated that they had received any information on possible business opportunities connected with the London Olympics from either a local or national business association. All those respondents who had received information stated that communication had been in English (rather than, or in addition to, the relevant mother tongue).

Only one respondent in Brick Lane reported that he had heard of any business event - for example a workshop, seminar or open day - connected with the London Olympics. However, just over a quarter of respondents (28%) in Green Street indicated that they had heard of a business event. Of those respondents (including the one respondent in Brick Lane) who had heard of a business event, the majority (75%) had been aware of Newham Council's 'Big Sunday' event (which was held at the Excel Centre in Docklands on February 6, 2006).

None of the respondents in Brick Lane reported that they had attended any meeting or business event connected with the forthcoming London Olympics. In contrast, five respondents in Green Street stated that either they or a work colleague had attended a meeting or business event connected to the London Olympics. Of these respondents, two had attended 'Big Sunday', one had gone to a local council meeting and another had visited a locally organised business development meeting.

Four out of the five respondents in Green Street who had attended a meeting stated that they had found attendance at any business event useful.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) with businesses located in either Brick Lane or Green Street were unaware of any future or follow up meetings or events connected to the London Olympics.

The Old Truman Brewery, Brick Lane

6. Ability to Compete

Just over a quarter of respondents (26%) in both Brick Lane and Green Street reported that they had a nominated member of staff to monitor business opportunities connected with the London Olympics. Of those, it was primarily the owners of the businesses (62%), followed by managers (31%) and a small number of other personnel (7%) that were directly involved in this task. The majority of these respondents (86%) reported that they were spending less than an hour per week in any sort of monitoring activity. Interviews also revealed that even when monitoring was taking place it was being carried out on a piecemeal and largely ad hoc basis. As one respondent, a restaurateur, said:

> ***"I'm sort of keeping my eyes open and trying to figure out whether there will be any impact on what I do." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Another respondent in the fashion retail business said:

> ***"I'm just listening to what is happening day by day really. There's nothing formal about it." (Green Street respondent)***

Nearly three quarters of our respondents (74%) were not involved in monitoring news on business opportunities connected with the London Olympics. The two main reasons mentioned by respondents for not monitoring business opportunities were time pressures (26%) and their lack of knowledge and awareness of the possible economic benefits (18%) connected with the London Olympics for their businesses. However, nearly one in five respondents (18%) stated that they would definitely think about the business opportunities associated with the Olympics at a later date nearer the time of the event.

Interestingly, a significant proportion of respondents (62%) stated that they were certain that opportunities would develop for their existing businesses between now and the 2012 London Olympics. As one respondent commented:

> ***"There will be a big increase in the volume of people coming to this area. A lot of them will come to restaurants like mine. It's bound to be good for business." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Another said:

> ***"It's definitely going to have an effect. It will be a spin-off from the whole area regenerating." (Green Street respondent)***

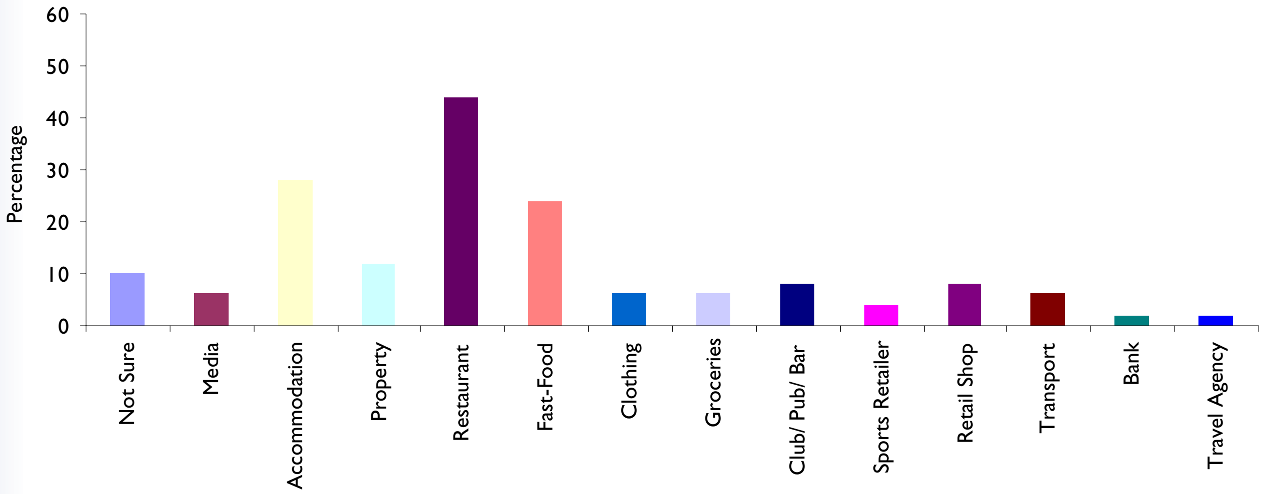
Very few of all respondents (16%) did not think that there would be opportunities for their businesses in this time period. However, just over one fifth of respondents (22%) were unsure or uncertain of the possible benefits to their businesses of the London Olympics.

Of those respondents who thought that there would be opportunities for their existing businesses in connection with the London Olympics, just over a quarter (28%) thought that these would be primarily short-term, while a smaller number of respondents thought that benefits would be either medium term (16%) or long-term (18%). A significant minority of the same respondents (38%), however, were unsure about the overall impact of the London Olympics on their existing businesses. This attitude often expressed uncertainties regarding the likely (especially the medium and/or long-term) impact of the Olympics on the local economy. As one respondent, a Brick Lane restaurateur, said:

> ***"It might just be only for four or five weeks, you know. It might be all just a short-term thing. It will only be useful if we get a proper infrastructure in place and we get to know how it can be used afterwards." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Respondents were also asked to list which existing businesses in their local area they thought would be best placed to take advantage of the forthcoming London Olympics. Overall, 90% of respondents identified a wide variety of businesses (expressed as multiple responses) including restaurants (44%), accommodation (28%), fast food outlets (24%), property (12%), retail shops (8%), clubs, pubs and bars (8%), clothing (6%), grocery stores (6%), transport/taxi services (6%), media (6%), sports shops (4%) and banks/money exchange and travel agencies (4%).

***Figure 7:* Types of existing business thought likely to take advantage of the forthcoming Olympic Games**



Only a small number of respondents (10%) were unable to state or identify any local businesses they thought would benefit from the London Olympics.

Respondents were also asked which businesses that might be developed in their local area they considered would be able to take advantage of the business opportunities connected with the London Olympics. Again, in a multiple-choice answer, over half of the respondents (52%) identified a wide range of business opportunities associated with hospitality and food (66%), property development and construction (16%), sports retailers (14%), general stores (10%), transport/taxi services (6%), money exchange (2%), newsagents (2%) and photography, printing, and copy shops (2%). As stated above, many respondents considered that the food sector offered the best new business investment opportunities. In-depth interviews with respondents owning larger businesses in both areas, for example, revealed that many thought that there would be a significant increase in the number of novel restaurants and fast food outlets - differentiated by cuisine and design format - opening before the event, particularly in the areas of their existing businesses rather than the immediate area around the Olympic village.

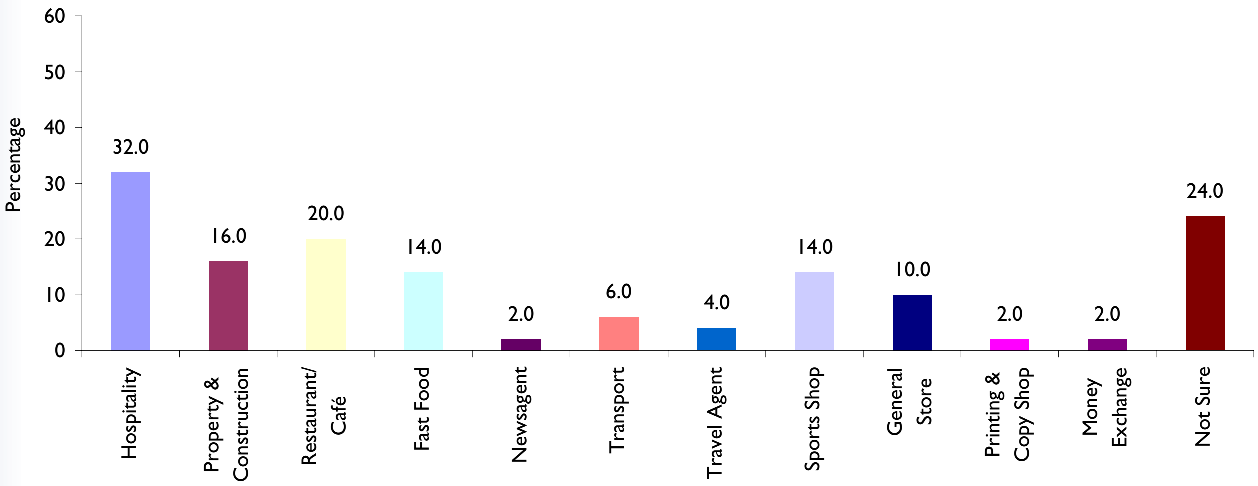
As one respondent in Brick Lane stated:

> ***"I don't think we have to go to the Olympic Village. We can do it here in Brick Lane-we can pull people into the area. I want to set up a 1200-seater food court based on a Bangladeshi-Indian McDonald's. If you go to Stratford and set up that type of business, what happens after the Olympics? We don't want to be like Athens, the Olympic Village there is deserted. No one uses it - it's like horror city!" (Brick Lane respondent)***

In a similar vein, a respondent in Green Street said:

> ***"We are all thinking that Green Street might boom. If I have the opportunity, I'll go for the food business. At the moment, it's all Asian food in this area but in India and Pakistan there are lot of Chinese restaurants where people go out to eat. In Pakistan, my family owns a Chinese restaurant called 'Silver Spoon' in Sialkot so maybe I will start one over here." (Green Street respondent)***

Figure 8: **Types of new business thought likely to take advantage of the forthcoming Olympic Games**



However, just over one third of respondents (34%) – significantly, nearly always those with smaller business interests - thought that any new business opportunities would almost certainly be the territory of the more successful entrepreneurs in their respective business areas and did not think that they themselves had sufficient business acumen or the necessary financial strength to be able to establish new enterprises. A smaller number of respondents (14%) were unsure about the business opportunities that might develop in connection with the London Olympics.

In-depth interviews with a number of respondents in the Brick Lane area (but not those in Green Street) suggested that although there was a perception that business opportunities would definitely increase, there was a concern that large retail and leisure chains - with the formidable marketing power associated with their national and international "brands" - might use the momentum associated with Olympics as a platform or opportunity to move into an area which, until recently, was composed almost exclusively of independent businesses and outlets. According to these respondents, this potential shift in business ownership would significantly transform the spatial/retail identity (and associated consumption patterns) of the Spitalfields and Banglatown area for the worse:

> ***"You've already got Tesco's opening up on Commercial Street and it's only a question of time before Starbucks and the rest of them turn up. Then when people visit the area and want a cup of coffee they won't go into one of the local ones, they'll go into Starbucks instead." (Brick Lane respondent)***

The Impact of the Olympics on the UK, London and the local area

Just over four in ten of our respondents thought that the population of the UK as a whole would benefit from the London Olympics, while just over a quarter (28%) said that there would be no benefit, and nearly a third (30%) stated that they were not sure about the national impact of the event.

Nearly three quarters of our respondents (74%) thought that the population of London would benefit from the London Olympics, while only one in ten said that there would be no benefit. Nearly one in six of respondents stated that they were not sure about the impact of the event.

Approximately three quarters of our respondents (72%) thought that the population in the area of their businesses would benefit from the London Olympics (especially from the impact of new businesses and employment training schemes), while 8% said that there would be no benefit and one in five stated that they were not sure about the impact of the event. In-depth interviews with respondents indicated that giving a negative response to this question involved concerns with a number of issues: some felt that prices and rents would go up for local business people, as local landlords and local authorities made of the most of the event for revenue raising purposes: " The rich will get richer, it will benefit the big business people", as one respondent in Green Street neatly put it, while some respondents, particularly in the Brick Lane area, cited the absence of any visible strategic thinking by the Olympic authorities in specifically targeting the local Bangladeshi population:

> ***"London as a whole will benefit but not our community unless somebody does something. I've not seen any evidence that the Olympic people are thinking how to involve our people. It's just not happening." (Brick Lane respondent)***

> ***"They're just pen pushers. Maybe they have talked to the 'Big People' people at Canary Wharf but not to us. They haven't got a clue of the level that we're operating on." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Brick Lane

Other respondents in Brick Lane also expressed concerns about the impact of the Crossrail project development in Hanbury Street and Princelet Street and its likely effects on local businesses and residents:

> ***"Look, people in Tower Hamlets want Crossrail but we are against the idea of digging a shaft around this area because of all the traffic problems it would cause. It will slow all the businesses down. It will be a nightmare. The air will be polluted too - it will damage people, especially children and the elderly." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Another respondent indicated that he was worried that he and his partners could lose their restaurant business if compulsory purchase orders became necessary for the implementation of the Crossrail project:

> ***"This Crossrail thing is a big problem for us. If they come along and say we've got to take over your premises what can we do?" (Brick Lane respondent)***

Respondents were also asked whether they thought that there would be job opportunities for people in a variety of business sectors that had already been highlighted by the Olympic Delivery Authority. Overall, we found that respondents (expressed as multiple responses) were extremely optimistic, with the overwhelming majority stating that new employment would very likely be created for local people in the construction industry (96%), hotel and accommodation (92%), working or providing transport (86%), working in the media (84%), food and hospitality (78%), information technology (78%), and sports administration (78%) connected with the London Olympics.

In-depth interviews with respondents, however, did reveal concerns that the expected employment bonanza might not provide jobs for particular categories of local people, especially (but not exclusively) for those from the ethnic minority groups at the lower end of the socio-economic order to which they themselves belonged or with which they identified in an ethnic or cultural sense. Although this attitude was evident to some degree among respondents in Green Street, it was much more prevalent amongst Bangladeshi respondents in Brick Lane which clearly reflected the strong historical, kinship, social and political ties of respondents to the area - all of them, for example, originated from the Sylhet district in the north-east of Bangladesh and nearly all had grown up in the Spitalfields area. This attitude was also indicative that Brick Lane was perceived by them to be the social/spiritual centre of the UK Bangladeshi "community" and, therefore, regarded as much more than a space simply to 'do business' or 'make money' (although it was definitely that as well). Significantly, this attitude was even evident among Brick Lane's most wealthy and successful Bangladeshi entrepreneurs included in our sample (only one of whom still lived in the Tower Hamlets area), reflecting their status not only as successful businessmen (all respondents were male) but also their related positions as social and political leaders in the locality. As one respondent with a number of restaurants in Brick Lane commented:

> ***"The opportunity might be there but how many local people will really get the chance to get a job?" (Brick Lane respondent)***

Another Bangladeshi respondent with multiple business interests in Brick Lane said:

> ***"The people in charge are living in another world. Only last week the fellow in charge of construction of the Olympics said, 'I don't care where are the workers come from, I just need the people'.***

Believe me, this place will suffer - we won't get the jobs but we will get all the negative things like traffic and stuff. At the end of the day people who are unemployed around here will still be unemployed." (Brick Lane respondent)

Several Bangladeshi respondents also indicated that "cultural" factors needed to be taken into account by the relevant Olympic authorities if they wanted to engage constructively with the local Bangladeshi population in Tower Hamlets, particularly in connection with any employment initiatives related to the building industry. Jobs in the construction industry, it seems, had an 'image' problem - they were generally perceived as menial and deemed inappropriate for this generation of Bangladeshis who wanted other, higher status types of employment. As one respondent explained:

"A lot of Bengalis don't think that being a bricklayer or a plumber is a good job. The kids and the parents will need some convincing. But they need to understand that people can make good money doing these things, otherwise the jobs will just go to East Europeans and the chance will be gone for ever." (Brick Lane respondent)

It was clear from in-depth interviews that the respondents in Green Street did not have anything like the same attitude to the space in which their businesses were located as respondents in Brick Lane. This clearly reflected differences between respondents in Brick Lane and Green Street in terms of the histories of settlement of the respective migrant groups in the two areas and, in Green Street in particular, the absence of close kinship links, the ethnic segmentation amongst members of the south Asian business 'community' (and the absence of effective business associations) as well as the relative absence of residency of owners in the immediate area surrounding the south Asian business zone. Put simply, although respondents in Green Street were justifiably proud of what they had achieved in a commercial and entrepreneurial sense in a relatively short space of time, they tended to define the area as a place that was more about business than anything else. As one respondent who lived elsewhere in the borough of Newham put it:

"You can get anything you want in Green Street - this is a business area. We come here to work but then we go home again." (Green Street respondent)

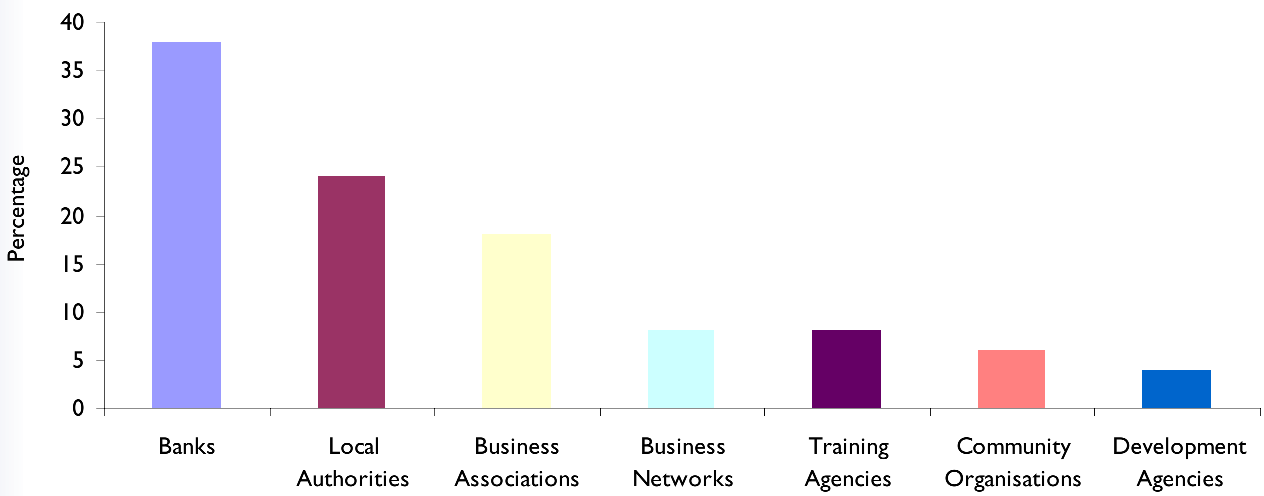
Green Street

7. Identifying the Need for Support and Help

In order to determine the extent of support by formal institutions, our respondents were asked a series of questions detailing the links or connections they currently had with a number of local economically relevant agencies and organisations. The results are listed below:

- Only 38% of respondents were receiving support from mainstream banks or comparable financial institutions (including those operating according to Shariah law).
- About a quarter (24%) of respondents was receiving support from the local authority.
- Only 18% of respondents were receiving support from local business or trade associations.
- A few respondents (8%) were receiving support from local business networks.
- Four respondents (8%) were receiving support from local training agencies.
- Three respondents (6%) were receiving support from local community organisations.
- Two respondents (4%) were receiving support from regeneration or development agencies.

***Figure 9:* Level of assistance received from business support agencies**



Overall, support from formal agencies was relatively limited and largely confined, according to respondents, to suggestions concerning the procedures involved in securing bank loans (16%) and advice on new businesses initiatives (14%). In-depth interviews with respondents in both Brick Lane and Green Street singled out their local authority (as well as local councillors although, interestingly, not local MPs) for criticism for failing to provide adequate economic and business support:

> ***"The local authority has been very slow and ineffective in terms of regeneration of this area." (Brick Lane respondent)***

> ***"I've not even got an idea who my local councillors are. In the last nine years my business has been here, we've only attended one event organised by the Mayor. That was about one and a half years ago. My wife and I went along but I don't think we learnt very much." (Green Street respondent)***

Several respondents in Green Street compared the absence of support in their existing area of business with the other areas of which they had experience. As one said:

> ***"I worked in Southall for 10 years and I can tell you that they've got good trade organisations there. The Chamber of Commerce is really good." (Green Street respondent)***

A number of respondents in the Brick Lane area expressed unhappiness that previously successful marketing initiatives for the area and, indeed, London as a whole had ended. As one commented:

> ***"This area's stuck. A few years ago Ken Livingstone did 'Totally London' and that helped us quite a bit, but it's just died out. We also had Gordon Ramsay's 'Hell's Kitchen' and the 'Bodyworlds' exhibition in Brick Lane which brought in a lot of people into the area. But nothing's happened since then - it's all gone quiet." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Indeed, it was evident from in-depth interviews with our respondents that the main support/financial agency for the overwhelming majority of South Asian-owned businesses in both Brick Lane and Green Street was the extended family (as well as friendship networks to a much lesser extent), a feature which was consistent with previous research on Bangladeshi-owned businesses carried out in Tower Hamlets in the 1990s (Dench, Gavron and Young, 2006, 131-132). The partial exception to this pattern was a handful of the larger businesses in both Brick Lane and Green Street where the need for capital that had either been required in the past or would be needed for future business expansion, far outstripped the resources of either family or friends. In these cases, contact had been made with mainstream financial institutions although even in these cases respondents stated that family finance (and advice) was still an important aspect of any entrepreneurial initiatives.

Respondents were asked whether they thought that the existing organisations/agencies responsible for the forthcoming London Olympics had the capacity to provide them with the relevant information and support necessary to take advantage of any new business opportunities connected with the event. The majority of our respondents (66%) gave a positive answer to this question while exactly one in five gave a negative response. Another small proportion of respondents (14%) were unsure about the capacity of existing agencies to help them take advantage of new business opportunities connected to the forthcoming Olympics. In-depth interviews revealed that no respondent could accurately name any of the agencies or institutions responsible for the delivery of the London Olympics (although Sebastian Coe as the visible 'face' of the Games was mentioned by two respondents).

A significant majority of respondents (72%), however, stated that they thought that further support needed to be developed for them to take advantage of business opportunities connected with the London Olympics. Of these respondents, the majority (73%) wanted more information while nearly one in five indicated that they thought that they required some type of additional financial support. Just over one in ten respondents stated that issues of safety and security needed to be reviewed before the influx of visitors to the London Olympics. In-depth interviews revealed that respondents in the Brick Lane area in particular were concerned about security for two reasons; first, the absence of good, routine policing in the area, particularly at night time, that would tackle the problem of groups of young Bangladeshi men harassing visitors to the area as well as the occasional but, none the less, regular pattern of 'gang' fights that take place in Brick Lane and surrounding streets. As one respondent, a partner in a Bangladeshi restaurant put it:

> ***"Sometimes we don't see a single police officer in uniform in an evening. You see them during the day but not at night. If there were more police in the area, people would feel safer. If there were three duty officers, it would change the place completely." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Another respondent also commented:

> ***"We need more police, 24/7, to make the area safer for the tourists to come in. Otherwise the local kids will harass people." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Second, respondents were concerned that the Brick Lane "brand", as it had in the past, would be readily and adversely affected in the event of any terrorist outrage either before or during the Olympic event. As one respondent put it:

> ***"People see this area - Brick Lane - as a Muslim area. So if there is any trouble - any bombings or anything like that - we're going to be hit hard. I'll give you an example: on that Thursday of the July bombing - 7/7 - I only took £150 instead of the normal £800 or £900. That's a big loss in one night. And it hit takings hard for months afterwards - some restaurants in this area are still down. But friends of mine who run Indian or Bangladeshi restaurants outside London weren't affected at all." (Brick Lane respondent)***

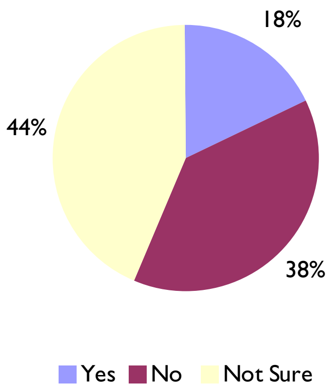
Brick Lane

Respondents in Green Street seemed much less concerned with security problems than their counterparts in Brick Lane and this attitude clearly reflected the absence of groups of young men of any ethnic group routinely using the streets, either during the day or at night, as a significant recreational or leisure space. Indeed, observation revealed that south Asian young men who were in the area tended to use the two pubs on the high street, the Duke of Edinburgh and the White Hart, rather than the streets or other public spaces for recreational purposes. Respondents in Green Street also seemed to be less concerned about the possibilities of a terrorist attack in London and the implications that this might have for their businesses, clearly reflecting the relative stability of the local ethnically based high-street economy as well as the absence of almost any dependency on white consumers' discretionary income in business turnover.

Overall, the majority of respondents (76%) stated that they were uncertain about exactly when information concerning the London Olympics would be required. However, nearly one in seven of these respondents stated that they wanted the flow of information concerning the event to begin within three months of the interview period so that they could begin to think about and review possible future business initiatives. This point was also emphasised in in-depth interviews, where all respondents stated that they wanted information "as soon as possible" and certainly "within the next three months".

Interestingly, only 18% of respondents who had stated that existing organisations responsible for the London Olympics had the capacity to provide information that would allow them to take advantage of new business opportunities connected with the event were confident that support would be forthcoming. A significant number of these respondents were either not confident (38%) or not sure (44%) that help or support would be delivered to them at some point in the future.

***Figure 10:* Level of confidence in Olympic agencies' ability to deliver business support**



Exactly half of all respondents (50%) stated that they did not think that the organisers of the London Olympics understood or were sensitive to the needs of their businesses. Just under a quarter of respondents (24%), however, did think that the organisers of the London Olympics were sensitive to their business needs while slightly more respondents (26%) were unsure about this aspect. In-depth interviews revealed that a significant concern of respondents who either did not think or were not sure that the organisers of the London Olympics understood or were sensitive to the needs of their businesses were directly related to the absence of any information so far provided to them by any agency or institution. As one respondent in the Brick Lane area said:

> ***"If they understood our needs they would have come to us by now and explained things. But nothing has happened yet. We're all in the dark." (Brick Lane respondent)***

Another respondent in Brick Lane commented:

> ***"We have the Baishakhi Mela coming up in May and we'll have thousands of people coming in to the area. But no one from the Olympics has so far come along and made contact with us. They should have grabbed the opportunity." (Brick Lane respondent)***

A respondent in Green Street said:

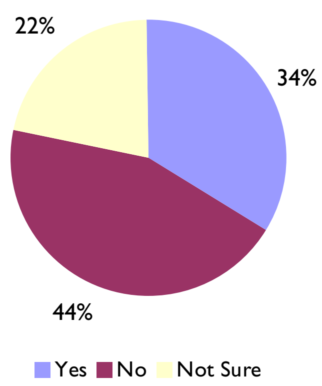
> ***"There hasn't been any one come to talk to us about the Olympics apart from you. It has surprised us really. We thought we would have heard a lot more about what was going to happen by now." (Green Street respondent)***

In-depth interviews also revealed that sometimes an attitude of scepticism was often based on respondents' previous experience of interventionist schemes controlled by agencies or institutions that were managed by people regarded as 'outsiders' with little local knowledge and no degree of sympathy for the ecology of the area in which their businesses were located. As one respondent explained:

> ***"I'm not sure what they will get up to this time. I don't think they listen to local people very much. For example, when there was the SRB funding a few years ago they made the footpath wider and the road narrower which made it impossible for anyone to park outside my shop. It totally killed off any passing trade. It's hit my business badly." (Green Street respondent)***

Only 34% of respondents thought that the organisers of the London Olympics understood or were sensitive to the needs of the local community. The majority of respondents either thought that the organisers of the London Olympics did not understand their local community (44%) or were not sure about their understanding or commitment to their community (22%). The reasons given by these respondents (expressed as multiple responses) for their lack of faith in the London Olympic authorities included the absence of information so far received (8%) or the perception that large institutions had a habitual tendency not to listen to people like them (12%) or, further, that the same institutions had a negative or indifferent attitude towards ethnic minority communities (18%).

***Figure 11:* Level of confidence in Olympic agencies' understanding of community needs**



Finally, we asked our respondents what advice they would give to the organisers of the London Olympics that would ensure as far as possible that the event would benefit the local population (including local businesses). The overwhelming majority of respondents (92%) had some suggestions to make. In particular, these respondents indicated that they wanted meetings, open days or seminars that would both inform and involve local people in the process connected with the London Olympics. The same respondents also wanted publicity and marketing initiatives that highlighted the attractions of their communities/areas and businesses to visitors. Exactly one in five respondents also wanted their safety and environmental concerns addressed. And nearly one in six respondents wanted parking, traffic and congestion problems tackled. Interestingly, only four of the respondents in the sample had no suggestions to make to the organisers of the London Olympics about possible initiatives connected with the event.

Green Street

8. Summary and Recommendations

This research has explored the attitudes, expectations, and perceptions of a sample of respondents drawn from a selected group of south Asian businesses in Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets and Green Street, Newham towards the London Olympics in 2012. Some of the more significant findings of the study are summarised below:

- South Asian-owned businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street were significant employers for those of south Asian origin or background. The small business sector in the two areas of study plays an important part of the local economy in Tower Hamlets and Newham as well as London and other parts of the South-east.
- The vast majority of owners and the employees of the businesses in the survey lived in the borough (or neighbouring areas) in which the businesses were located.
- Nine out of ten respondents (owners or managers) were aware that the Olympic Games will be held in London in 2012. Interviews with respondents indicated that there was a genuine sense of excitement and anticipation about the event for both sporting and, to some extent, business reasons. The majority of respondents stated that they had already had discussions about the Olympics with family members, friends and business colleagues.
- Four out of ten respondents in Brick Lane and Green Street were members of either a local or national business association. Respondents in both areas indicated that membership of such institutions rarely conferred any tangible benefits as most of the organisations were not active in a business sense.
- One in ten respondents stated that they had received information on possible business opportunities connected with the forthcoming London Olympics from any institution. These communications had always been in English rather than, or in addition to, the relevant mother tongue of respondents.
- Only one in four respondents reported that they had a nominated member of staff to monitor business opportunities connected with the London Olympics, although around six out of ten believed that opportunities for their existing businesses would develop between now and 2012. Nine out of ten respondents thought that there would be opportunities for local entrepreneurs to develop new businesses in both Brick Lane and Green Street in the period leading up to the event, particularly in food and hospitality.
- Some respondents in the Brick Lane area expressed a concern that large retail and leisure chains might use the energy and momentum surrounding the Olympics to establish themselves in Spitalfields and Banglatown, an area that has until very recently been composed almost entirely of independent retail and leisure outlets. This concern was not voiced by any respondent in Green Street. However, respondents in both Brick Lane and Green Street did express concern that landlords and their respective local authority might use the London Olympics as an opportunity to increase rents, rates or otherwise interfere and damage the local economy in which they were often long-established stakeholders.
- There was a concern among respondents in both areas, but particularly amongst those in Brick Lane, that the expected jobs bonanza in construction, food and hospitality, transport, information technology, sports administration and the media that had been flagged up by the Olympic authorities might not benefit members of the less socio-economically successful south Asian groups in the UK, particularly Bangladeshis. Some respondents suggested that better information dissemination as well as confidence-building measures were required to help overcome these hurdles.
- According to respondents, support from all institutions like banks, training and regeneration agencies or, indeed, the local authority (including elected representatives) was found to be low. Respondents were clear that the most trusted and relied upon

institution for sourcing capital for entrepreneurial initiatives was the extended family and, to a lesser extent, friends.

- Seven out of ten respondents thought that they needed additional support-either more information or some sort of financial help - so that they could take advantage of the business opportunities likely to be connected with the London Olympics. However, fewer than one in five respondents were confident that the required support would be forthcoming.
- Exactly half of our respondents stated that they did not think that the organisers of the London Olympics either understood or were sensitive to the needs of their businesses.
- Only around three out of ten respondents thought that the organisers of the London Olympics - like many other big organisations in the UK - were sensitive to the needs of the local community in which their businesses were located (and nearly one in five respondents thought that this was because large, mainstream organisations ignored or were indifferent to the concerns of ethnic minority groups and communities).

Overall, the research has found that that there was undoubtedly a gap between the activities of the agencies responsible for the London Olympics 2012 and the expectations and attitudes towards the event of the respondents who were included in the survey of south Asian-owned businesses in Brick Lane and Green Street. One of the most significant findings of the research concerns the fact that fewer than one in five respondents were confident that the Olympic Games would confer either medium or long-term benefits on their existing businesses. The remaining respondents were convinced that either the benefits would be primarily short-term or stated that they were uncertain about exactly what the Olympics might mean for their businesses. We think that the latter group of respondents are right: the economic advantages of the London Olympics to the small businesses in both areas even when it does occur will almost certainly be short-term (or uncertain) in its effects – most probably there will be an influx of visitors who will promptly leave again once the event is over.

There is an alternative, however, and one that could provide a lasting legacy for the small businesses in the two areas: a properly conducted consultation and liaison exercise between the relevant Olympic authorities and the south Asian business communities and other interested parties in both locations as a prelude to an effective marketing campaign highlighting the attractions and uniqueness of the two spaces (which obviously would need to take into account existing public perceptions and mythologies), would ensure that both Brick Lane and Green Street could be transformed into highly recognisable national and international "brands". In effect, they would then become important "sub brands" within the overarching London "master brand" or "parent brand" to use the appropriate marketing terms – thereby attracting a much larger and more permanent flow of visitors from within the UK and overseas than at present. In turn, this would have a substantial impact on business profitability, creating a context for business expansion and creation as well as securing new and enhanced employment opportunities for members of south Asian and other groups in two very different areas of London's East End, long after the Olympic Games have ended.

Brick Lane

References

Carey, S, 2004, *Curry Capital: the Restaurant Sector in London's Brick Lane*, London, Institute of Community Studies

Dench, Geoff, Gavron, Kate, Young, Michael, 2006, *The New East End*, London, Profile Books

Eade, John, 2000, *Placing London*, Oxford, Berghahn Books

London Assembly, 2006, *The Business of the Games*, Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee

LDA, 2005, *Redefining London's BME-Owned Businesses*, London

Rubin, Guy, Jatana, Nina, and Potts, Ruth, 2006, *The World on a Plate: Queen's Market. The economic and social value of London's most ethnically diverse street market*, New Economics Foundation

Biography

Nooruddin Ahmed (BA, Lon) has worked for many years with BME communities in Tower Hamlets, Camden and Westminster. This included a period 1981-1998 working at the Central London Law Centre, where he campaigned for better awareness of employment rights within the catering industry. In 1989, he was a field manager for the Spitalfields Skills Survey, a project conducted by the Local Economy Policy Unit at South Bank University. Noor later worked as a researcher for the Centre for Social and Evaluation Research at the London Metropolitan University between1999 and 2001. Whilst working for the university, he researched and organised a conference on the recruitment of nurses from the Bengali community in the London area. He has also worked as a freelance research associate for the Public Policy Research Unit at Queen Mary College, University of London between 1998 and 2002.

Noor has held a number of honorary positions within the voluntary and public sector including the post of non-executive director of Barts and The London NHS Trust (1998 - 2001).He was also Chair of Tower Hamlets Association of Racial Equality (the predecessor of Tower Hamlets Council for Racial Equality) between 1987 and 1989. Noor was an elected member of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets from 1990-94 and he was chair of the Equalities and Personnel Committee from 1991 to 1994.Noor has been managing director of Agroni since July 2000.

He can be contacted at nooruddin.ahmed@agroni.co.uk

Sean Carey PhD studied social science as both an undergraduate and postgraduate at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. He has lectured at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic and was a research associate at Royal Holloway College, London University investigating 'Street Life and Ethnicity' in a number of north London boroughs. He has written extensively on several Hindu religious movements in the UK as well as the Bangladeshi community in east London including *Curry Capital: The Restaurant Sector in London's Brick Lane*, The Institute of Community Studies, 2004. Sean has also written numerous articles for *New Society* and on political and social developments in Mauritius for *New Internationalist*, *Africa Journal*, *Africa Now* and *New African* magazines.

He can be contacted at sean.carey@agroni.co.uk

THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

agroni research