



Tv debut for Bolton entrepreneur

ONE of Bolton's most successful young entrepreneurs will make his television debut tonight.

Viewers of Dragons' Den on BBC Two will see Imran Hakim pitch for £140,000 from the Dragons, to invest in his latest product, the iTeddy.

Mr Hakim, aged 29, who was last year's winner of the Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award at the Bolton and Bury Business Awards, said: "The product is a teddy bear with a built in MP3 or MP4 player, providing children with a toy for fun and learning.

"I originally had the idea in October last year when I was thinking about a gift for a relative with a very young daughter. I thought about a cuddly toy, but I wanted to make it different. That's when the idea of the iTeddy came to me."

Mr Hakim who has made his name in opticians' practices and computers, added: "We spent some time doing research and development, and decided we had a winner, so we built a prototype. "We took it to a business to business exhibition where they were interested in hearing from people who wanted to appear on the next Dragons' Den."

The programme sees inventors stand before a panel of self-made millionaires including health club owner, Duncan Bannatyne and telecommunications guru, Peter Jones, and ask for cash in return for a share in their idea or company.

Mr Hakim, from Astley Bridge, is keeping tight-lipped about whether he is successful in the programme, filmed last month.

Mr Hakim started his business career as a 15-year-old schoolboy, organising trips to Alton Towers for his friends and making a profit. He progressed to selling computers after his father bought him one, which he then sold at a profit and bought another.

At university where he studied optometry, he was still making money selling computers.

The first thing he bought at university was a photocopier machine, which he charged fellow students to use.

Today he owns several companies, in areas such as shopfitting, along with 13 opticians' practices.

Mr Hakim's teddy will be up against other inventions including an energy saving kettle, a colourful new take on the rocking horse and a high tech service for diagnosing and solving problems with feet.

I Dragons' Den is on BBC Two, tonight, at 8pm.