"Rapid" but not "raid": A reflection on the use of rapid ethnography in entrepreneurship research

Nadeera Ranabahu Mudiyanselage

University of Wollongong, nurm263@uowmail.edu.au

Publication Details
"Rapid" but not "raid": A reflection on the use of rapid ethnography in entrepreneurship research

Abstract
Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to explain how rapid ethnography (RE) is used to understand the business decision-making process of micro-entrepreneurs. The objective of this paper is to highlight the applicability of RE in entrepreneurship research and outline practical strategies that can be used by future RE researchers. Design/methodology/approach: This paper is written as a reflection using the author’s experience in using RE. Findings: This paper highlights that RE can be used as a research technique in entrepreneurship research. The study shows how to incorporate technological advances into RE without violating the underlying ethnographic principles. The paper also explains how preparation, planning, technology-assisted techniques, non-traditional socialisation processes, and multiple and parallel data collection strategies enhance the effectiveness of RE. The paper outlines practical strategies for researchers such as collaborations, using field guides, clear schedules and time gaps in the data collection. Originality/value: Although RE is widely used in research related to human-computer interactions, medicine, education and marketing, RE in entrepreneurship research seems to be limited. Thus, this paper explores this gap and contributes to the scholarly field of entrepreneurship research by highlighting the methodological potential of RE. In addition, the paper contributes empirically to the qualitative research domain by explaining practical steps in using RE.

Disciplines
Business

Publication Details

This journal article is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/buspapers/1313
‘Rapid’ but not ‘Raid’: A Reflection on the Use of Rapid Ethnography in Entrepreneurship Research

Abstract

Purpose: This paper explains how rapid ethnography (RE) is used to understand the business decision-making process of micro-entrepreneurs. The objective of this paper is to highlight the applicability of RE in entrepreneurship research and outline practical strategies that can be used by future RE researchers.

Design/methodology/approach: This paper is written as a reflection using the author’s experience in using RE.

Findings: This paper highlights that RE can be used as a research technique in entrepreneurship research. The study shows how to incorporate technological advances into a RE without violating the underlying ethnographic principles. The paper also explains how preparation, planning, technology-assisted techniques, non-traditional socialisation processes, and multiple and parallel data collection strategies enhance the effectiveness of RE. The paper outlines practical strategies for researchers such as collaborations, using field guides, clear schedules and time gaps in the data collection.

Originality/value: Although RE is widely used in research related to human-computer interactions, medicine, education, marketing, RE in entrepreneurship research seems to be limited. Thus, this paper explores this gap and contributes to the scholarly field of entrepreneurship research by highlighting the methodological potential of RE. In addition, the paper contributes empirically to the qualitative research domain by explaining practical steps in using RE.

Key words: Rapid ethnography, entrepreneurship research, reflection

Paper type: View point
1.0) Introduction

This article is a reflection on the application of rapid ethnography (RE) to entrepreneurship research. Here, RE is defined as a type of ethnography where the fieldwork is undertaken in a short and well-defined timeline (Reeves et al. 2013) while entrepreneurship research is defined broadly as ‘studying individuals or groups, acting independently or within organizations, to create new opportunities and to introduce new ideas into the market in different environment conditions’ (Carlsson et al. 2013). Even though RE requires researchers to spend less than three months in collecting data (Handwerker 2001; Reeves et al. 2013), it is not as widely used in entrepreneurship research, as ethnography. The main criticism against rapid data collection procedures in ethnography is that not enough time is spent in the field to collect quality in-depth data (Spradley 1980) where a range of activities and practices can be observed allowing a researcher to interpret values, norms and other cultural and social practices (Watson 2011). However, researchers such as Baines and Cunningham (2013), Handwerker (2001) and Millen (2000) indicate that quality data can be collected even during a short period of time. Hence, the title ‘rapid but not raid’ summarises the main objective of this paper; that is, to explain how to apply RE effectively to collect rich data in a short period of time without compromising ethnographic principles.

This paper is a result of the data collection experience I had during my doctorate (in progress). The topic of my research is the entrepreneurial decision-making logic of microfinance clients in Sri Lanka (see section 4.0). I used RE to study this phenomenon and this paper discusses how RE is applied in my research. In addition, this paper explains the adoption of key ethnographic principles to RE and describes some practical strategies of using RE in entrepreneurship research. Hence, this reflection tries to answer research questions of: a) how can RE and its data collection tools be used to collect quality data during a short period of time, and b) to what extent can RE be used as a research tool in entrepreneurship research?

This paper is arranged as follows. The reflection starts with a brief introduction on ethnography (section 2). This is followed by RE and its principles (section 3). Section four provides a brief overview about my research to evaluate the suitability of the research technique. Section five explains the practical strategies and my reflections. Finally, the paper concludes with a reiteration of research questions and interpretation (section 6).
2.0) Ethnography

Ethnography is the study of people’s interactions, behaviours and perceptions in natural settings including groups, teams, organisations and communities (Reeves et al. 2008; 2013). Ethnography has its origin in anthropology and often involves studying cultures (Brewer 2000; O’Reilly 2012). Currently, ethnography has been adopted in a number of research disciplines such as education, business, social science, engineering and so forth (Brewer 2000; Van Maanen 2006) by maintaining underlying fundamentals.

Salient features and principles of ethnography can be highlighted using definitions of Brewer (2000), O’Reilly (2012) and Watson (2011). For example, Brewer (2000) highlights the objective, the approach and the role of the researcher in ethnography: the objective is to understand social meanings and activities in a specific social setting; the approach is to participate and have a close association with the setting; and the role is to collect naturally occurring data without a meaning being externally imposed. The definition introduced by O’Reilly (2012, p. 11) includes, more or less, the same underlying principles. O’Reilly’s (2012) highlights that ethnography evolves when the study progresses; that it is iterative. In addition, she also highlights that a number of techniques are needed to collect data to capture the complexity of the social world. Watson (2011) and Reeves et al. (2013) explain that ethnography can be a product of the research process, focusing on the end product. These highlight that multiple interpretations and definitions are available for ethnography.

The evolution of ethnography in different research domains includes customising ethnographic principles to suit the unique features of different subject domains (Millen 2000). This customisation process has resulted a variety of forms of ethnographic techniques (O’Reilly 2012; Reeves et al. 2013). Some of these are: rapid (Handwerker 2001), also known as rapid assessment process in medicine (Goepp et al. 2008; Mignone et al. 2009); feminist (Ezzell 2013; McNamara 2009; Stacey 1988); and visual and virtual (O’Reilly 2012), auto (Pope 2016; Upshaw 2016;), duo (Farquhar & Fitzpatrick 2016), and so forth. These different types highlight methodological and theoretical developments associated with ethnographic research (Reeves et al. 2013).

However, the use of ethnography seems to be limited in the field of entrepreneurship compared to other disciplines; this may be because ethnography is time intensive. Holliday (1995) as cited in Mouly and Sankaran (2006) highlights that in small and medium business, the reason for not having a number of ethnographic studies may be because there was not enough time for another person to hang around and ask questions as entrepreneurs engage in a number of activities. The available
ethnographic research in entrepreneurship includes but is not limited to Dana and Remes (2005), Lalonde (2013), O’Neill (1997), Palmås et al. (2013) and Reichman (2013). These studies note the wider context and culture along with the main research issue. Thus the main advantage of ethnographic studies in entrepreneurship, as emphasised by Johnstone (2007), is the wider contextual coverage that explains different issues related to changing values, rules and norms of the culture and society. By incorporating these contextual factors and transformations, one can obtain a comprehensive picture of the research issue. In addition, as in managerial contexts, these ethnographic studies can be used to take informed decisions (Watson 2011) on a particular entrepreneurial phenomenon.

3.0) Rapid Ethnography

Unlike ethnography, RE has a short and well-defined time line for field activities (Reeves et al. 2008). In addition, RE has a clear research focus and the initial socialisation is done without the researcher being physically present at the research site (Handwerker 2001; Reeves et al. 2013). Baines and Cunningham (2013) attempt to capture these characteristics in their RE definition. RE is a:

form of multi-method ethnography involving data collection from numerous sources over a relatively short period of time including interviews, participant observations, document review and sometimes survey and focus groups. (Baines & Cunningham 2013, p. 74)

Baines and Cunningham (2013), Handwerker (2001) and Millen (2000) highlight several practical strategies to enhance the effectiveness of RE. The main strategy is to have a clear research focus before the field data collection (Handwerker 2001; Millen 2000). As Millen (2000) suggests, this narrows the general area of interest and specific questions that need to be addressed through the fieldwork. Thus in RE, unlike traditional ethnography where all observations are recorded, only data or observations relevant to research questions are collected. For example, Baines and Cunningham (2013) collected data on work relations in the non-profit sector in four countries. This kind of narrow focus provides the opportunity to conduct a directed data collection (Kluwin et al. 2004).

A key strategy in RE is the researcher’s familiarity with the context and participants before he or she goes into the field for the data collection. This can be achieved by having pre-interviews, regular emails, or telephone conversations. These activities are equivalent to the face-to-face socialisation phase in traditional ethnography (Baines & Cunningham 2013).
The data collection in RE ranges from a few weeks to a maximum of three months (Handwerker 2001; Reeves et al. 2013). However, to compensate for the limited fieldwork, rapid ethnographers use multiple, parallel data collection methods, referred to as time deepening strategies (Millen 2000). Some typical data collection techniques in RE are participant observations, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and so forth (Millen 2000). As Millen (2000) explains, the objective of having multiple methods is to ‘make the most of the field time’. In addition, these multiple methods can be used to triangulate data and increase the validity and integrity (Baines & Cunningham 2013).

Another strategy in RE is utilising multiple observers, preferably one key informant or a field guide from the locality itself (Baines & Cunningham 2013; Millen 2000). This ‘insider’ contributes to the study by being familiar with practices, while the ‘outsider’ is able to question most of the pre-conceived notions and practices (Baines & Cunningham 2013). These multiple viewpoints provide a rich representation of the same event (Millen 2000). These multiple observers can also be considered as a time deepening strategy for maximising the use of time.

RE is widely used in research domains such as human-computer interactions and computing (Hughes et al. 1994; Millen 2000), health sciences (Kristiansen 2011; Mullaney et al. 2012) and education (Kluwin et al. 2004). There have also been studies using RE in international volunteering (Baines & Cunningham 2013), lesbian sexual culture (Wilson 2009), and urban computing (Kukka et al. 2014). Furthermore, researchers such as Agafonoff (2006) and Goffin et al. (2012) argue for the validity of RE in commercial market research. All these research studies suggest that a number of research issues can be answered using RE without the constraint of too little time being spent in the field.

Rapid ethnography is not as widely used as ethnography in the field of entrepreneurship. Although the reason is unknown, it may be due to difficulties in designing research as some entrepreneurship issues require longitudinal studies throughout the business cycle or horizontal studies across nations, different types of entrepreneurs and firms. However, authors such as Davidsson (2004) and Neergaard and Ulhoi (2007) call for methodological diversity in the field of entrepreneurship, so that the same issue can be viewed from multiple viewpoints. They argue that this would contribute to methodological and conceptual plurality leading to the growth of the scholarly field of entrepreneurship.
4.0) The Research- Effectual Approach to Entrepreneurial Expertise

This section provides a brief overview of my research and explains reasons for selecting RE as a major research technique. This section provides a foundation for the rest of the paper.

My doctorate research (ongoing) is focused on studying the entrepreneurial decision-making logic of micro level entrepreneurs who access microfinance services in Sri Lanka. Two main entrepreneurship theories form the foundation of this research: effectuation and causation (Sarasvathy 2001). Effectuation explains entrepreneurial activity through means-driven reasoning as opposed to goals-driven reasoning (which is termed causation) (Sarasvathy 2001). That is, at each step in starting and developing the business, the entrepreneur uses the means at his or her disposal (effectuation) rather than setting a goal and trying to reach it (causation). However, entrepreneurial, microfinance clients are usually constrained by resources and they rely on social ties to overcome resource constraints. It is unknown whether and how these factors may affect effectuation (or causation) thinking. In addition, micro-lending models rely on group-based mechanisms associated with peer pressure, peer monitoring and door-to-door collections which can affect the decisions. Hence, my study required capturing, beyond entrepreneurial decisions and the logic behind business actions, other mediating factors such as contextual and cultural practices, micro-lending group interactions, and institutional interventions. Thus, ethnography or a related technique seemed to be the ideal choice as it fulfilled the requirements of my research.

However as the study is a part of a graduate program and is subject to limitations in time and budget, I was unable to apply the traditional form of ethnography which anthropologists and sociologists usually use. In addition, ethnography seems to generate rich narratives that might not be relevant to this specific research area. Furthermore, I was already familiar with the microfinance sector as I was employed in the organisation selected for the data collection. Given these research objectives, constraints and my prior familiarity with the context, I selected rapid ethnography as part of the research technique.

5.0) Use of RE in this research

Applying rapid ethnography requires adhering to a number of key principles to minimise data quality issues due to the short field data collection. This section explains the strategies, my reflections and the potential of RE in future research. For clarity, these strategies are presented according to three main phases: a) the preparation phase, b) the socialisation phase, and c) the data collection phase.
The strategies discussed here provide a foundation to collect data ‘rapidly’ but without ‘raiding’; hence, some of these practices can be applied into other disciplines.

5.1) Preparation phase

My experience highlights that preparation is essential in collecting quality ethnographic data as highlighted by Handwerker (2001). These include: a) having a clear research focus, b) developing data collection formats, c) studying the available background information, and d) obtaining ethical approval for the research.

First, having a clear research focus is vital for the success of RE (Handwerker 2001). This can be ensured by reviewing literature to focus the research, identify gaps and research questions. Although specific research questions might change slightly during the data collection, having a clear focus assists researchers in concentrating their efforts. However, this does not mean that other interesting and relevant events and practices are completely ignored in data collection. These events can be noted down in field notes for studying further. These may create additional, interesting research questions that can be answered at a later stage, after the main research has been completed.

Second, developing data collection guides in the preparation stage also helps in narrowing down the study area. However, as Handwerker (2001) and Millen (2000) emphasise, multiple data collection methods are required in RE to compensate for the limited data collection time in the field. Thus, I used a number of data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and a survey. I also asked microfinance clients to complete a daily activity journal. All these data collection formats and guides were developed during the preparation stage to suit each of the specific data requirements.

The preparation stage also included getting formal approval from the selected microfinance organisation to conduct the research. This is obtaining access from the formal ‘gate keeper’. In this research, the approval was mainly required to interact with staff, review documents, and interview, observe and hold discussions with entrepreneurs who borrow from the organisation. Thus, I approached the chairperson of the organisation with a formal request letter. Approval was promptly granted, maybe because of my former employment with the organisation. However, even if the researcher is totally unknown to data collection participants, introductions from a person/organisation that entrepreneurs/organisations know and trust helps in getting access from gatekeepers.
In addition, having an active research profile and research interests in the same domain may expedite getting access. In my case, I had a background in microfinance and had some experience in entrepreneurship. This kind of profile and visibility creates the feeling that participants themselves might learn something new from the process, especially if the data collection is conducted in an organisational setting and the particular organisation is open to learning. In addition, some organisations as a policy assist research studies as these institutions then get widely known among academic and practitioner communities. Organisations with this kind of progressive thinking usually provide approval and access for research quickly.

One other recommendation by Handwerker (2001) is to study relevant publically available background information. Thus, I reviewed the website, annual reports, videos and various other publications about the organisation. These publications had case studies on different entrepreneurs. These publically available data assist in studying and understanding the role of the organisation and its performance. These helped in familiarising and updating myself on the entrepreneurial environment, organisational activities and impact. In addition, being familiar with significant milestones of the organisation using websites and annual reports helped me to carry out day-to-day discussions with the staff. Furthermore, as researchers cannot collect and record all the key events and data in a very short period of time, this background information may help to identify crucial time periods where a number of activities are happening. Hence, these can be used by ethnographers to plan their field visits.

Finally, at the preparation stage, I obtained the approval of the university ethics committee for the data collection. This approval process compelled me to think about ethical issues related to participants at the entrepreneur’s level and within the organisation. This is also a vital prerequisite of rapid ethnographic data collection just as in ethnography (Crang & Cook 2007; O'Reilly 2012). Obtaining ethical approval is a learning process that helps the researcher to self-evaluate his or her role and responsibilities with respect to participants, the supporting organisation, the academic institution and the wider community. Observing and collecting data about other people’s lives and decisions is always challenging as there are issues associated with privacy and confidentiality. Crang and Cook (2007) mention that some ethnographic researchers have come across extremely private and sometimes damaging information, and they have had to decide whether and how to report these. Anticipating different scenarios and addressing these ethical issues makes researchers fully aware of their own role and responsibilities.
In addition, I had to carefully analyse my previous job roles and responsibilities in the organisation, especially whether there were – or had been – any dependency relationships or power imbalances that could affect the data collection. However, as I had not been directly involved with clients and had not made decisions that affected them, I did not have any dependency relationship with entrepreneurs. In fact my situation could be considered uniquely advantageous because it combined the possibility of collecting quality data with sufficient detachment to allow me to observe new trends and patterns.

5.2) Socialisation phase

Ethnography and rapid ethnography differs mainly in face-to-face socialisation process and time spent in familiarising with participants. Unlike traditional ethnography, in RE, the socialisation process begins when the first contacts are made with the organisation and participants. Researchers such as Baines and Cunningham (2013) used non-traditional socialisation strategies, such as modern communications of emails, voice and video calls to establish prior linkage with participants. These replace the traditional face-to-face socialisation, that is meeting participants face-to-face without the aid of modern telecommunications, and rapport building process.

In this research, there were two main groups of participants with whom I engaged as the data collection was focused at both the organisation and client levels. At the organisational level, socialising with staff, in order to obtain information, was relatively easy as I was a former employee. Thus, before the data collection, I sent emails and messages to former colleagues. They were interested in supporting the study and were asking details on their roles and responsibilities. This allowed me to clarify any doubts, and therefore, facilitated my communication process and re-familiarisation. These techniques lay down the basic foundation required to conduct a quick and quality RE.

Using modern communications methods such as email, Facebook, chat, LinkedIn and video calls helps to connect researchers with participants. They create a very effective form of socialisation without the researcher physically being present at the participants’ location. Even if researchers do not personally know participants, it is always recommended to have some form of communication before actually going to the data collection location. These strategies make the initial face-to-face socialisation process quite short, effective and sometimes even redundant. For example, staff members to whom I had not been introduced knew me and the roles and responsibilities I had carried out for the organisation during my tenure.
However, becoming familiar with entrepreneurs, who were the main participants in this research, was not easy because the data collection locations were very remote and people had limited access to modern telecommunications. In these remote locations, where none of the modern communication strategies work, it is useful to link with a local researcher/organisation that has access to the research site. This assists in building rapport where the time needed to socialise is considerably reduced. In addition, I relied on organisational contacts to inform entrepreneurs about the research before visiting selected sites. These contacts in the organisation worked as field guides who had access to a broad range of people and activities (Millen 2000). They also provided details on information rich interviewees for the qualitative data collection. This is vital in RE as the actual time spent in the field is quite limited and the researcher has to use all avenues available to familiarise himself with the context and participants.

Initial socialisation and rapport building also assist in getting the approval from informal gatekeepers. For example, in this research before any interview or discussion, I attended cluster meetings and asked the field staff members to introduce me. This increased the trust and acceptance. Hence, even though individual entrepreneurs did not know me, introductions from field level staff members whom they knew and trust bridged that gap and provided access from informal gatekeepers.

5.3) Data collection phase

Crang and Cook (2007), O'Reilly (2012) and other scholars mention that ethnography is an iterative process and researchers need to do some preliminary reflection and analysis in the field. The same can be applied even to RE where there should be some time for processing and doing a preliminary analysis on-site. The data collection of this study was done in 30 days. Of these 20 days were spent in branch locations doing the following: meeting branch staff, conducting interviews and group discussions, observing cluster meetings and administering the survey. The remaining 10 days were spent in the head office of the organisation before and after branch visits. These gaps provide opportunities for construction of reflexivity, as in ethnography, because the researcher cannot be ‘free’ from the existing culture, context and the discourse (Watson 2011). If there is a team of researchers, it is always advisable to have a team meeting regularly. Thus, the reflective-iterative process can occur during these meetings as well.

Handwerker (2001) and Millen (2000) emphasise that time deepening strategies (that is multiple and parallel data collection methods) is vital in collecting quality data. This research had interviews,
group discussions, observations, document reviews, client daily activity diaries and a survey. At the institutional level, there were observations, documents reviews, and unstructured discussions. Multiple methods assist in obtaining different perspectives for the same scenario and compensate the limited time in the field level. However, these data collection methods should not be limited to traditional methods such as sitting in an office or a business place for observations as I did on certain occasions. Audio or video recordings are extremely useful for capturing data (Agafonoff 2006) in situations like this without the researcher being physically at the location.

As suggested by Millen (2000) having a field guide reduces the time required to identify informants. These field guides might be staff of the particular organisation or community members; they are people who have access to a significant amount of information and have experienced number of field activities. In this research branch level, staff members supported me by providing insider information; thus, they acted as field guides. These guides can even assist researchers in preparing activity schedules as they have a clear understanding about the locality. If it is a remote location these field guides can provide information on travelling, the time required and other logistical matters as well.

The fact that I can speak one of the local languages was a critical factor in the interactions. This allowed me to clarify, observe entrepreneurs and the functioning of peer groups, and even listen to informal discussions of the staff and client groups without much effort and without external translators. The challenge here was that, I need to be constantly vigilant when collecting data as I was quite familiar with the context and the language. Gordon and Levin (2007) and Spradley (1979) termed this as ‘explicit awareness’. This means that ethnographers need to be attentive to notice everyday events rather than considering them as given. Especially when collecting data in a familiar setting, as in this research, explicit awareness is crucial, as there is a tendency to take some of the everyday operational practices as given. Being self-aware and questioning oneself and the practices and procedures continuously helps to mitigate this.

There are challenges associated with RE, some of which are similar to ethnography. The main challenge in my case was maintaining the insider and outsider perspective, especially to maintain enough detachment. As I was taking a new role in a familiar setting, it took a conscious effort for me to note down the new things and observations relevant to my research question. Furthermore, the staff of the organisation assumed that I knew about all recent developments and their impact, and they abbreviated and sometimes shortened their explanations. This was challenging, as I had to
continuously repeat that I do not know about those. On the other hand, sometimes the researcher might be too ‘native’. That is, researchers might get used to the environment where they would not realise certain practices are new observations. This might be especially challenging if the researcher is taking a new role in a familiar setting. However, being in a familiar setting has a lot of advantages such as easy access to data, approval from gatekeepers, a short socialisation period, and familiarity with terms and abbreviations. The problem with researchers who are not familiar with the context might be too much detachment. So, balancing the insider and outsider view is challenging.

6.0) Conclusions and implications

This reflection tries to answer two main research questions using my experience in applying RE. The first one is how to conduct rapid ethnography without compromising the data quality. The second one is how to use RE as a research technique in entrepreneurship research.

When answering the first research question, this reflection indicates that rapid ethnography requires detailed planning to be effective in research. In addition, my experience in applying RE highlights three important strategies which are similar to findings of Baines and Cunningham (2013), Handwerker (2001) and Millen (2000) in other scholarly domains: 1) spending a significant time and exploring all the available avenues for information in initial preparations, 2) use of modern communications for initial socialising, and 3) maximising the field data collection by using multiple and parallel techniques. In addition, this reflection highlights some novel, effective RE strategies. One of the effective socialising strategies is to use introductions from someone participants know and trust to introduce researchers. In addition, pre interviews can be conducted using video assisted communication tools as viber, skype, rather than limiting to audio devices. In addition, use of participant diaries is an effective tool to collect data without researcher staying at the field. Furthermore, collaborating with local organisations and researchers, having internal staff members in the research team (insiders) are effective data collection strategies.

The second research question was about the validity of RE as a research tool/technique in entrepreneurship research. In my research, the focus is micro enterprise owners. These entrepreneurs usually conduct a number of activities and tasks. They are scattered around the country, and some might feel that observing or collecting data in this situation is not possible. Nevertheless, this reflection highlights that RE can be used to study research issues concerning micro entrepreneurs by creatively adopting ethnographic principles. For example, emails and other
communications were used in initial rapport building. In addition, video recording can be used to observe activities without the researcher physically going to the field. Furthermore, video conferencing can be used to conduct interviews and discussions. Though, I have not yet been able to draw any conclusions regarding the use of effectuation (or causation) logics in business-decision-making as the data analysis is still on going, these different strategies reiterate that RE can be applied in the entrepreneurship research, if used creatively.

RE is one of the research tools that has high potential in entrepreneurship research given the changes in the entrepreneurial landscape. For example, there are new breeds of entrepreneurs emerging due to globalisation and other technological, economic, social and political developments. Fischer and Reuber (2011) studied how interactions on Twitter might affect entrepreneurs’ effectuation thinking process. Gabrielsson M and Gabrielsson P (2013) and Rialp and Nowiński (2013) studied international new venture creation process. While ethnography was not used in these studies, they nevertheless highlight that today’s physical boundaries of a research context might not be valid in future and point out that the landscape of entrepreneurship research is also changing. In addition individuals, including entrepreneurs, often have an on-line presence. This means entrepreneurship studies will have to incorporate the virtual environment in addition to the physical context when defining the natural setting of respondents. Time and location-bound traditional ethnographic techniques are becoming redundant in these situations, as the rapidly changing entrepreneurship issues need applying these research techniques creatively. The digital ethnographic techniques discussed by Murthy (2013) provide some solutions for adapting ethnographic research to suit these new trends. RE can be one of the options available in the design mix in entrepreneurship research avoiding or reducing the constraints of time, money, physical boundaries or the researcher’s presence.

The purpose of conducting ethnography, including RE, is to collect data in a natural setting without the meanings being imposed externally (Brewer 2000). This fundamental principle of ethnography is not violated in RE where the data can be collected in natural settings. As there are different types and kinds of entrepreneurs, adopting RE to study a specific group may require some modifications to be made to the technique without changing the underlying fundamental principles of ethnography. This is closely associated with the technological advancements in telecommunications which facilitate a cost and time effective rich data collection. All these practices highlight the evolution of ethnographic research towards a new era.
8.0) References:


