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Studying Global News: Methodological Issues

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The increasing globalization of communication and journalism has created new opportunities to extend research on the creation and consumption of news. Models that were formerly focused on a single nation can now be extended to include multiple countries, cultures, and publics. But this opportunity is also accompanied by a host of challenges requiring researchers to consider multiple languages, cultures, sampling techniques, and data collection tools in order to reflect today's global news environment.

For much of the 20th century, scholars were concerned about media imperialism and the flow of news from first-world information rich nations to developing nations around the world (Boyd-Barrett, 2015). The rise of mobile broadband networks and adoption of smartphones in every country suggests a global democratization of information (Chadha and Kavoori, 2000, 2015). The adoption of market-driven models of media programming and consumption underscore the need for research on modern views of news values and media consumption.

But not only must scholars re-think their theoretical perspectives on news and consumption. The methods of data collection have also changed dramatically with the rise of global broadband Internet. Notions of sampling, recruiting, and participation have had to be re-evaluated. Previously scholars focused on probability sampling techniques in order to infer some degree of generalizability about the results. But the rise of mobile phone adoption coincides with fewer land lines and permanent reachable numbers. Ubiquitous telemarketing and polling have also influenced respondent burnout. The decline of telephone surveys reflects the trend with paper and pencil mail surveys, which now seem a quaint artifact of an earlier age.

In recent years there have been a marked rise in Internet data collection businesses. Qualtrics, Mechanical Turk, and others provide databases of survey respondents for a unit price. There is currently no one global leader in this area, and some countries can only be reached by one particular (home-grown or government approved) platform.

Related to this development, the global rise of the Internet has forced scholars to re-evaluate the utility and the viability of online non-probability samples. In the 21st century, using lists of online voluntary respondents has become more acceptable. The offering of incentives and rewards are common and must now be examined to see which are most effective. These trends present scholars with the opportunity to re-examine data collection across countries, cultures, and languages. As McLuhan's Global Village takes form (1964), how can we best study and evaluate areas of consensus in the midst of such diversity?

This paper reports on the processes, challenges, and results of a study of news consumers in 16 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States. This study employed a 10-minute, online survey measuring media consumption, news topic preference, news values and demographic information. The results of the primary study will be reported in later papers; the purpose of this analysis is to address the issues and challenges in conducting cross-national research, including language

and idiom, sampling issues, data collection procedures, incentives, and time. The analysis begins with a brief overview of methodology, followed by discussion of each of these issues.

Methodology

The survey project began as a study of news consumers in ten countries using a sample provided by a global research firm. That sample included approximately 20,000 individuals with email addresses in more than 100 countries. But only nine countries had numbers of sufficient size to include more than 200 usable subjects, which was determined to be the minimum number needed per country. In order to test the effectiveness of incentives vs. no incentives, two 100-person samples were selected from each country (except for the 10th country, which had only 168 persons, split into two 84-person samples). One sample was recruited to participate using an un-incentivized appeal, and the second was recruited using an incentivized appeal (five, \$100 gift cards were awarded at random to respondents who opted in to the incentive reward). For those countries with more than 200 persons in the database, two independent samples of 200 were selected at random (using the random number generator within Excel) from the database from those countries represented by 400 or more members. Countries with fewer than 400 members in the database had those members divided equally between the first two data collection methods.

The un-incentivized appeal asked respondents in an email to click a link to answer questions about news in their country. The second method used an incentivized appeal, offering the chance to receive one of five \$100 Visa gift cards which would be given in a random drawing at the conclusion of the study. MailChimp software was used to generate all emails because that software generates unique emails for each prospective respondent. Those solicited via email received three follow-up emails reminding them to complete the survey.

Initial response rates were low enough (about 10%) that researchers realized there was a need to acquire additional respondents. Feedback from initial results presented at the 2016 World Journalism Education Conference (Grant et al., 2016) suggested that the researchers' goal of 50 respondents per country was too modest to allow comparisons across countries. These factors prompted the research team to add a third data collection technique using Amazon's Mechanical Turk tool to produce completed surveys from a convenience sample of up to 50 respondents in each country.

Following data collection, data files were then reviewed to remove responses that were out of range for individual variables and those responses with questionable validity (those that appeared to be "straight-lined" or "speeding" through the survey).

The survey was created with the 1World online survey tool. For the first two data collection waves, MailChimp was used to send individualized and personalized emails to each prospective respondent. The same tool was used to send reminder emails three, six and nine days after the initial invitation. All such emails identified the universities sponsoring the study and contained a link to the online survey on the 1World website.

The success of the data collection efforts in the initial ten countries led the research team to consider adding additional countries to the sample including China, France, Germany, Italy, South Africa, and Australia. Initially, Amazon's Mechanical Turk was used to identify and recruit respondents in these countries. However, many of these countries did not have a sufficient user base on Mechanical Turk to

generate 100 responses so alternate companies offering the same service, including ClickWorker and CrowdFlower, were used to recruit respondents.

The English language survey was translated into nine languages (Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Portuguese, Chinese, French, German, Italian, and Standard Arabic) by native speakers of each language. A second translator was then employed to do back-translations of the survey that could be compared to the initial version to ensure accurate translations. All invitation and follow-up messages were similarly back-translated and verified before they were used. The data collection procedure (16 countries with one to three samples each) resulted in approximately 35 separate files. These files were combined into a single file for cleaning and analysis using SPSS v.23. Language and Idiom

The selection of the targeted countries for the global survey was driven by two considerations. One constraint was practical and due to the conditions provided a priori by the sample data base. The second consideration was the representativeness of that nation in terms of population, cultural influence, geopolitical power, and geographical locations. With the survey translated into nine languages, the study was able to reach respondents representing over 60 percent of the global population, and the potential to represent more than 70% of the world population.

As mentioned in the previous section, the translations were undertaken by a native speaker of each language who volunteered for the project. These native speakers were either from the University of South Carolina or San Jose State University. Native speakers are either student or faculty members who have a comparatively higher educational background to ensure the precise translation of some complex vocabularies. However, considering that the survey respondents would vary in terms of their ability to understand academic vocabulary, each of the first version of translation was then reviewed by 1. a professional translator and 2. another native speaker of those languages who is not in academia. This is to ensure that the translation is done to be the most comprehensive: for example, Brazil and France have a different educational system to that in the U.S. and thus the question of “what is your education level?” has to be calibrated between them and the English version. Another example is the differences in abbreviations of international institutions such as the United Nation or the International Monetary Fund, their shortened forms or names are similar but different in Romance and Germanic languages, which will sometimes escape the translator’s notice. The triangulation of different input from the native translator, the professional consultant and the native speaker provided us with a solid collection of surveys in different languages.

When each translation of the survey was completed, it was put into a Microsoft Excel file for later use and extraction. This meant that the translation was still not the final product that was directly employed into the survey field. The next challenge in terms of language was the compatibility of the survey project as a whole for our survey to be constructed and deployed in different languages. This means that apart from creating translations for the survey questionnaire itself, translations were also needed for the invitation letter, the reminder letter, the informed consent, the header and footer of the survey interface, the “thank you” note at the end of the survey, etc. In all, when speaking of the translation, it would be insufficient to think only in terms of “translating the questionnaire,” the translation efforts had to be evenly distributed throughout the *survey experience* that we anticipated each respondent would have.

Fortunately, the survey platform used in the project, 1World Online, is capable of handling multilingual tasks. A choice for region and language was given when each online survey was created, and the 1World

Online platform automatically generated the adequate translations for the header/footer, inter-page buttons, and the ending note (either a thank you note or a rejection note). However, special care has to be given when stark linguistic differences are existent in terms of symbols, tildes and writing style: for example, the simple “copy and paste” action from our Excel file of translations would not suffice for Standard Arabic, which has a opposite writing/reading direction to other languages used in our survey. The questions have to be aligned manually in order to be readable for the respondents.

Sampling

The weaknesses of non-probability samples are well-known. The argument for representativeness is conceptually stronger once a sample exceeds a minimal number. Therefore, obtaining a sufficiently large enough sample in each country was critical and the most difficult aspect of this research project. The genesis of the project was the availability of a list of news consumers representing news consumers in more than ten countries. The number of responses from this data set is reported (along with other data sources) in Table 1. Successful data collection from the first wave opened the possibility of gathering data from additional countries. At this stage it was determined that the value of obtaining data from an additional six countries outweighed the disadvantages of using different means of obtaining a sample.

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

Since the initial database was, for the most part, exhausted in the process of gathering the initial data, the research team determined that Amazon’s Mechanical Turk offered a good option for international data collection. Prospective respondents were offered \$1 each (or the local equivalent) to complete the 10-minute questionnaire. As illustrated in Table 1, the initial sample provided more than 50 respondents in most of the initial 10 countries. However, it was determined that at least 100 respondents would be needed in each country in order to make meaningful comparisons, so additional data sources were needed.

Mturk Sampling

The first sampling in Mturk was done in May, 2016 with the goal of collecting 50 additional responses from Brazil, Canada, Chile, India, Mexico, Peru, Russia, UK, Ukraine and the US. Previous literatures provided us with a basic understanding of the possible densities of Mturkers in each region/nation: we anticipated fast collection in US, India, UK, but were unsure about the availability of Mturkers and the speed of data collection in all other regions: generally, Russia, Ukraine and the Latin America. To do this, we created 10 separate 7-day (10-day auto-approval) batches in Mturk with the corresponding specifications in location for each country, we added 50 HITs for each batch and required them to be done by “master workers” who have approval rates over 95%. As it turned out, we successfully obtained data from US, India and UK within 1 day of the publication of those batches on Mturk. And we also found that data collection was fast in Canada, which took 2 days to complete.

Since the decision was made to increase our sample size for each existing countries in our pool, and also to add additional countries such as Italy, Germany and Australia, we used Mturk as a part of our final sample for these countries. The availability of Mturkers in US, UK, Canada, India remained to be strong; responses from Italy also proved to be sufficient. But the responses from Germany and Australia were not satisfactory, yielding only 26 and 15 responses respectively.

CrowdFlower Sampling:

Looking at the low responses from a series of countries which Mturk seems to be powerless to reach, we started asking the question: are there any equivalents of Mturk in other regions/nations that would provide us with an economic and time-saving way to collect online survey response? Our findings answered to this question positively. Before actually making investments into other crowdsourcing platforms, our consultation with the literature was the primary source of our belief that these platforms would help us to get reliable and quality data (Behrend, Sharek & Meade, 2011; Allahbakhsh, Benatallah, Ignjatovic, Motahari-Nezhad, Bertino & Dustdar, 2013; Kaufmann, Schulze & Veit, 2011). Studies in a number of social science disciplines have been mentioning the popularity of CrowdFlower as a micro-job platform in the Common Wealth (De Winter, Kyriakidis, Dodou, & Happee, 2015). Thus we launched a survey task in CrowdFlower asking for 100 tasks on the job. The CrowdFlower successfully gave us 100 responses from Australia within 5 days of the launch of our task. However, despite the fact that Australian online workers are more available on CrowdFlower and the response time was short, the collected data were inferior in terms of response quality (in terms of completion rate and accuracy in responses). This will be further discussed in the Data Collection section.

Clickworkers Sampling:

As mentioned before, Italy, Germany and France were added to increase the geographical and geopolitical representativeness. However, Mturk did not provide a sufficient pool of respondents in Europe. Considering that Clickworkers has been used in crowdsourcing sampling in Europe in other disciplines and its reliability was convincing (Peer, Samat, Brandimarte & Acquisti, 2015). We reached out to the Clickworkers' team asking for detailed demographics of their pool of workers, which satisfied our sampling goals: Clickworkers is a German Crowdsourcing company and has at least over 1000 active workers from these three countries respectively. After launching our tasks on the platform, we successfully got what we asked for: 100 from France, 80 from Germany and 50 from Italy. More importantly, Clickworkers does not only operate in Europe, but also in South Africa where they have around 100 active workers (Personal Communication), and these 100 active workers yielded 83 valid responses. The data we collected on Clickworkers is at the same time superior than the answers we had from CrowdFlowers in terms of response quality.

Sojump Sampling:

Sampling in China was the next challenge, however, with the abundance of studies on Chinese media users even in the field of journalism and mass communication alone, we have been able to find information about crowdsourcing in China. The most frequently used two platforms are Sojump and Wenjuan (Chen, Cheng, & Urpelainen, 2016; Shi, Jiang, Hu, Gong, & Li, 2015; SUN, ZHAO, & ZHU, 2015). While our primary consideration here is not to make a comparison between the two, we decided to choose the more economical one since the two seem to yield a similar number of peer-reviewed articles (actually, Wenjuan used to be asking for a similar price but has raised the bar recently). Thus, we chose Sojump to be our primary sampling partner and with the same cost per person we were able to collect 200 responses from China. We also found some of the negative characteristics of using online crowdsourcing sampling in China: first, crowdsourcing platforms are using semi-automatic, which means they are more similar to a service provider than a market provider. (similar differences are in the

Western World, such as the Amazon Mturk, Crowdfunder, Clickworkers in contrast to companies like Luth, Samasource, etc.); Secondly, questionnaire screening is more strict in Chinese Crowdsourcing companies must follow to a stricter legislation, requiring the current research team to provide Chinese ID and other credentials for Sojump to hold as record in association to the usage of the service. Thirdly, service providers, such as Sojump, are typically against the utilization of external links, which means the questionnaire had to be designed using their own system, not the 1World Online tool. This is the only exception where we could not use 1World Online as our collection tool. After all, the demographics of the Chinese sample seems to be satisfactory: although we are seeing a high proportion of the respondents coming from Shanghai and Canton, nearly all the provinces in China were covered. And the quality of the Chinese responses was satisfactory, too.

Microworkers Sampling:

Microworkers was the last crowdsourcing platform we used, and the reason is primarily due to the lack of South African respondents on Mturk (we received 23 responses in a 5 day period, which is similar to first batches for Brazil and Mexico). However, the second batch for South Africa did not generate a sufficient number of response. Considering Mturk's new policy in 2012 which prohibited user registration outside the US, concern over whether the South African sample was exhausted on Mturk promoted us to turn to Microworkers and Clickworkers. While Clickworkers was discussed above, we asked for 50 responses from Microworkers and got 33 valid responses in two weeks. This suggested a much less South African community on Microworkers than that on Clickworkers. Beside this, no attempts of sampling other countries' respondents were made on Microworkers, thus our knowledge about this platform is limited to the South African sample.

Data Collection Issues

The research team encountered a number of obstacles in the collection of the data.

Preventing Duplicated Responses

Since our data collection was done mainly in the virtual markets we mentioned above, one of the challenges the team has faced is the overlap of users on different platforms. Due to the anonymous and quasi-omnipresent nature of the Internet, it is easy for an experienced online worker to register accounts for all the above-mentioned crowdsourcing communities. The team endeavored to avoid duplicated respondents by relying on the IP filter that 1World Online provides, which prevents someone with the same computer and IP address from completing more than one survey. To do this, the team produced a minimum amount of survey links necessitated by the study. In this way, Mturkers would find it unworthy to participate in the two batches repeatedly (unless the Mturker deems the cost of finding a VPN connection or moving to different IP address is less than the incentive we provided, assuming they are rational actors). In a similar manner, when a same person has accounts on different crowdsourcing platforms, he/she would be disqualified if his/her IP address was already on record.

However, one limitation that we could not overcome is that different crowdsourcing platforms have different verification methods (which will be discussed in the next sub-heading), thus we could only create the minimum amount of survey links for different platforms and group similar platforms together. For example, CrowdFlowers and Clickworkers have different verification methods (a code

provided at the last page of the survey), but they are compatible in a way that two different systems of verification can be added into the same survey link. However, Mturk has to rely on a random number generator to verify survey completion and that function is not compatible with CrowdFlowers due to its webpage functionality. Thus, the current study could only try to avoid duplication, but could not suggest that it has been absolutely eliminated. The good news, beside this, is that we largely relied on the same crowdsourcing market for a single country. Only for South Africa and Italy we tried to collect data from multiple sources on an equivalent basis (which means that the sample can be considered a “creole sample,” bringing together multiple sampling techniques to create the blend of data *without having a primary sampling method*). The details on the sample can be seen in table 2.

Quality Control

The first part of the process is known as screening, which, in the case of German company Clickworkers, will have the administrators of the website check the “job” for you to look for any loop holes whereby workers could escape the validation process and provide empty jobs. In the case of the Chinese platform Sojump, however, the screening process exists but focuses more on controlling the survey conductors rather than the workers/respondents: ID and other credentials from the survey creator are needed if any vocabulary related to politics or “sensitive” content is present in the survey. After all, these two platforms are the only ones that will screen the questionnaire, although with probably different motivations.

Beyond that, all crowdsourcing platforms use a certain validation method to ensure the completion of the survey or to let the researchers have the power to decide whether to approve the response, or, on some platforms, “jobs”. In the case of Clickworkers and Microworkers, a validation code is pre-entered to the website and also shown at the last page of the survey so the workers can finish the task and enter the validation code into the website. If the two codes match, the incentives will be distributed automatically. Microworkers is more flexible in terms of how you want the code. You can choose to manually approve tasks like on Mturk, and can even ask the workers to upload “evidence” for validation.

Mturk, on the other hand, often requires the survey provider to create a code for each respondent so you can track down unqualified responses and reject them. Some of the external survey platforms already developed this function and provided it as an integrated part of the service. The 1World Online platform, despite its many merits, does not have this function. While it is also true for many other survey platforms, the current research solved the problem by embedding html code from a third-party website that leads to a random number generator (henceforth RNG). The RNG can be modified with a number of parameters and is available through websites such as WolframAlpha Widgets. As it is expressed in html language, it can be embedded into any website and allows html source code editing.

Crowdflovers, on the other hand, has a comparatively more complicated mechanism for quality control, the details of setting up a survey quality control in CrowdFlowers can be found at <https://success.crowdfloer.com/hc/en-us/articles/201855969-Guide-To-Running-Surveys>. Without the manual bonus function that is recommended by CrowdFlowers, workers on this platform tend to produce the worst quality data among all platforms because it includes empty responses which means a number of jobs are unusable. Interestingly, although European workers on Clickworkers have the capability to cheat in a similar manner, almost every clickworker turned in the responses honestly. But this was not the case with CrowdFlowers: without the manual bonusing mechanism, 34 out of the 100

requested tasks were empty responses, and they cheated presumably by sharing the validation code (which is static if no RNG is used) among the workers.

Specifications/Requirements

As can be seen in table 3, Mturk was not particularly efficient in Chile, Peru, Russia and Ukraine, yielding only a few responses for each country in a 7-day time span. It performed slightly better in Brazil and Mexico, with 24 responses and 34 responses, respectively. More importantly, we decided to remove the “approval rate-master worker” barrier in our second batches, which allowed any Mturker to participate in our sequent batches.

[Insert Table 3 About Here]

The subsequent batches for Brazil and Mexico helped us complete the quota, and they were completed faster than the first batches. However, no new responses emerged for Chile, Peru, Russia and Ukraine. Since we expect the same situation on other platforms, the project stayed with the lowest approval rate requirement for further data collection.

Incentives

Two types of incentives are used in the current project: a drawing of five \$100 VISA gift card and a smaller incentive of \$1.00 for each respondent on crowdsourcing platforms. VISA and the USD currency was chosen mainly because of its wide acceptability across the globe. The gift card incentive is used in the incentivized sample from the 1World Online database in parallel to another unincentivized sample. As it turned out, for the Canadian and Indian sample, the incentivized sample had a higher response rate, however, for all other countries, the incentivized sample had a lower response rate. (The relationship between incentive and quality/speed of response will be discussed in a future paper.

For the crowdsourcing platforms, although the incentives are similar in terms of amount, there is a change in the data collection speed when the “ease” of getting that incentive is increased: for example, after the first batches in Mturk were sent the project decided to reduce the “auto-approval” time from 10 days to 7 days. This was reduced even further, to 3 days, in the final wave. The “auto-approval” time means if there is no rejection made by the survey publisher, the workers will get the payment automatically and immediately when a predefined number of days elapse.

Another aspect of this is the bonusing system that is available in CrowdFlowers and Microworkers. With the extra bonusing mechanism, the survey publisher can bonus the respondents, as it turned out, such a bonus will help attract more respondents to the survey once the first several workers are given a bonus. And in CrowdFlowers, one can establish a smaller automatic incentive and use the bonus for quality insurance purposes.

Time

With regard to the time of data collection, both the incentivized and the unincentivized survey campaigns launched via Mailchimp were slower than crowdsourcing. It took half a month to complete a full circle of email surveys (including invitation, 1st reminder, 2nd reminder and 3rd reminder letter), but in the US, India and UK, it took only one day to collect 50 responses on Mturk.

As for the European and South African respondents, Clickworkers generated 100 responses from France, 50 from Italy and 80 from Germany within 2 days, and 84 responses from South Africa in 2 weeks. Brazil and Mexico respectively took 14 days for a sufficient number of responses.

Another aspect is the precision of timing. This is particularly important for the email survey campaigns because it is hoped that the respondents would receive the invitation emails and the reminders during the hours of less workload. "While it is hard to predict this for a single respondent, research showed that Mondays and mornings were unsuitable for sending survey invitations.

Recommendations

The experiences reported above suggest a number of recommendations for future research that attempts to gather information from more than half a dozen countries. These recommendations include:

1. Obtaining a sample

Combining sampling methods: In order to carry out a global survey project in an economic manner, relying solely on the crowdsourcing platforms can be somewhat unrealistic. This is because different regions will have different requirements for a crowdsourcing project. Thus, one recommendation is to use a combination of survey sampling methods. As noted above, we are choosing to refer to the mixture of crowdsourcing and email samples as a "creole sample." The utility of applying multiple sampling techniques is illustrated by the results. Without the 1World Online sample, obtaining 100 responses from Russia and Ukraine would be difficult.

Knowing the context: China has a considerably stricter policy in this case and crowdsourcing websites sometimes don't have an English-speaking customer support. In short, the crowdsourcing methods have a higher requirement for the research team in terms of its understanding of the social context of a particular region and the capability to find the platform in the first place.

Researching and reaching out:

Except for Mturk, all other crowdsourcing platforms are used as new tools for the researcher. This means before actually investing in data collection, research is needed to get a basic understanding of the demographics the workers on the platform, this information can be found in previous studies that have used the same platform. Also, reaching out to the administrators of the platforms is a sound strategy in getting more detailed information such as estimated time of collection and tips on designing the questionnaire to ensure survey quality, because, after all, these administrators know better than anyone about the workers on the platform and their habits in completing online jobs.

2. Translations

Recruiting native speakers: Having native speakers and professional translators on the research team is one of the recommendations in order to facilitate the translation process. However, it is impossible for any one person to be fluent in every language. Thus the more important perspective is to reach out to native speakers of the target languages in the nearby environment. Professional translators and faculty members can be a good resource for networking the jobs in the translator community that he/she is in.

Avoiding excessive localization: The triangulation process is very important for the verification of the comprehensiveness of the translated surveys. That said, the survey has to have a model “dialect” in some cases. For example, English is spoken differently between the US and UK and even across the Commonwealth. Spanish is different between Spain, Mexico, and Chile. The final version of the translation has to be built upon the consideration of maximizing the universal understandability of the survey questions. It would be problematic to use Argentine slang in the Spanish version of the survey simply because one of the examiners suggested doing so.

3. Time:

Preparing for prolongation: The data collection process was initially estimated to be completed within four months. But as the project progressed and the requirements for numbers of responses rose, data collection was necessarily expanded to more than seven months. Our estimation of time needed to collect 100 responses from crowdsourcing platforms is shown in table 4 as a reference for future projects. It would be a good idea to add amortization time if there is a deadline for a global survey project.

[Insert Table 4 About Here]

Accommodating different time zones: When sending out invitations and reminders for an email survey, it is important to remember that the target population may be in a different time zone. Thus, in order to ensure that these invitations and reminders attract the attention of receivers at a suitable time during the day, special care has to be taken for different regions. Also, the daily routines can be different across nations. For example, around the Mediterranean Sea, the warm climate has made it customary to close businesses in mid-afternoon before re-opening long into the night. This means that sending emails to these people at around 2 PM (local time) may probably be distracting and disturbing.

4. Incentives:

Maximizing incentives’ utility: An initial plan to award pre-paid American Express cards for the incentivized method was replaced with a plan to award Visa gift cards when researchers found that Visa gift cards would be more acceptable worldwide.

Different aspects of incentives: It is also important to know that the incentives can not only be considered in terms of number or value, but also with regard to the ease of getting such incentive and the ease of spending it. For example, reducing the auto-approval time on Mturk seems to be an effective way to make the incentive stronger. However, different platforms have different balances between quality and the ease of getting incentives. For example, when the incentives threshold is set too low on CrowdFlowers, the quality of the response deteriorated significantly.

5. Communicating

Testing emails: While we used Mailchimp for automated emails, the automation process is somehow complex for a new user of the Mailchimp service: it would be easy for a new user to make mistakes in terms of setting up automated fields for names and countries. Our suggestion is to always pre-test the emails that are about to be sent and examine the layout and the functionality of the emails.

Responding to inquiries: Since a project like this involves people who speak different languages, it is important to have someone on the team who is able to respond to inquiries in real time using a suitable language. In our case, we received a total of 11 emails and 3 phone calls asking “where can I answer the questionnaire?” or “when will I get my \$100 gift card?” We successfully answered these communications in 4 different languages instantaneously when we received the inquiry. Ensuring two-way communication is not only efficient (in helping us to get 8 solid extra responses), but it is also ethical and responsive.

In spite of the difficulties, it is important to reach out to an international audience when assessing news values and opinions on media use. The internet has blurred the boundaries of media offerings, making it possible for readers in wide reaches of the world to follow news from afar. Yet it remains to be seen how media consumption habits and preferences compare on a global basis. And on a fundamental level, it is important to ascertain how people of various countries and cultures define the basic concept of news.

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