Coordination mechanisms employed by crowdworkers using AMT

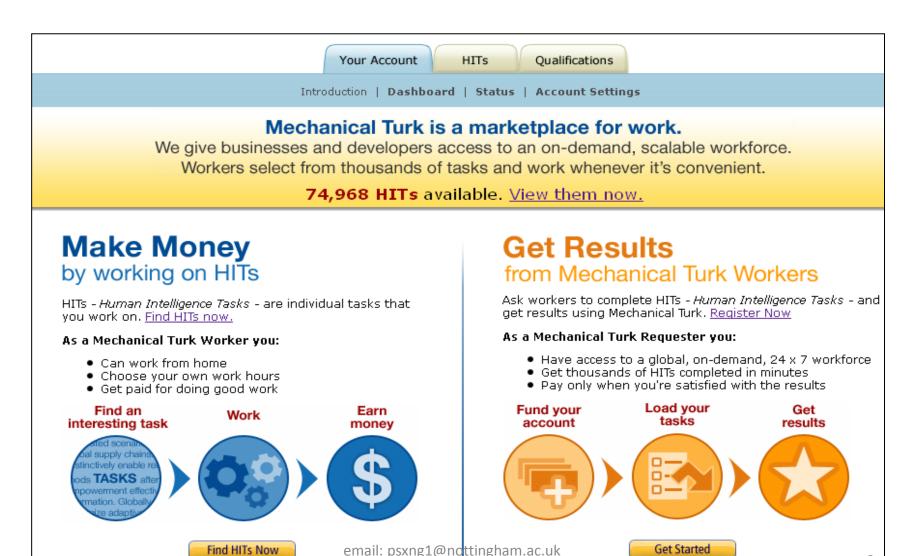
Digital Labor and Data Science October 2016

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Primary interest: MTurk



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Quantitative work

- Best source: Panos Ipeirotis, blog: <u>http://www.behind-the-enemy-lines.com/</u>
- Difallah et.al 2015 & Berg, ILO, 2016
- 2010: US 46.8, India 34.0, Other 19.2 Gender breakdown, education, incomes
- Now? Numbers are dwindling %-wise
 Demographics http://www.mturk-tracker.com/#/general
- 80% of tasks done by 20% most active 3-8.5 k active users Fort et al. Goldmine or Coalmine



Qualitative Work

- Ipeirotis, Kittur, Bernstein, Bederson, Quinn
- Irani, Silberman and co
 - Haikus, Turkers Bill of Rights
 - Turkopticon sharing ratings
 - Dynamo helping organisation/advocacy
- Key Problems
 - Unfair rejection, slow payment, low pay, lack of communication, threat of suspension, requester scams, badly designed tasks, information asymmetry, lack/imbalance of power, lack of search tools/user configuration



Our Research interest

- So how do we design to support crowdworkers?
 - Better information
 - Better tools: search, interfaces, organisation, productivity
 - Positive market manipulation
 - How does/should this work across borders?
- Within our disciplines HCI, CSCW there is a long history of designing for the users and to empower the users: Information, advocacy and design



How did we conduct research?

- Ethnographic Studies of Turkers in their respective homes and places of work in India by Neha Gupta, UoN
- Study involved Interviews (skype, phone and in-person), walkthroughs, observations, data capture through audio / video / screen recordings
- Virtual ethnography of online forums like mturkforum and Turker Nation by Dr. Dave Martin (late), XRCE
- Study involved deep reading of threads, collection of key threads/ posts, recurrent themes, exemplars



Workers are Not alone!

Almost every process from looking for a HIT, to working, sharing its details with friends, getting support from family members while doing work, getting paid, was collaborative



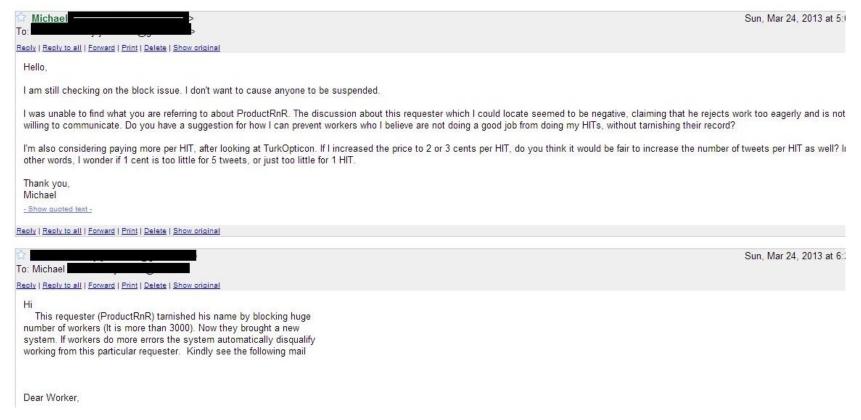
Coordinate – why, how?



Turker-requester coordination

Thank you, I will look into this issue. If that is the case I will reverse the block.

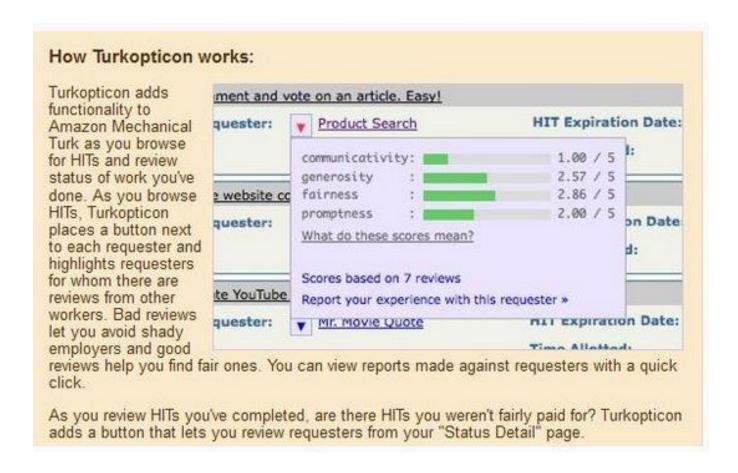
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Source: worker's personal communication



Supporting reputation management



Source: http://mturkforum.com/showthread.php?2163-For-New-Turkers-Introducing-TurkOpticon-A-great-Tool-to-kick-the-bad-requesters



Supporting reputation management

REVIEWING TURKOPTICON INFORMATION



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp7mA7eyYfc



Social and collegial support

- Family and community collaboration: sociality
 - Word of mouth, Facebook groups, forums: finding work, finding a platform.
 - Sharing accounts, training
- Minimum English and some keyboard skills required
 - Lower skilled do simple and intuitive tasks
 - Danger of misunderstandings
- Infrastructure challenges, bricolage and back-ups
 - Juggling, sharing devices



Turkers' coordination

<u>Bala (India)</u>

There are 8-9 friends I know through Facebook who are listed in my phone contacts too, out of which there are 3 close friends from my previous workplace. [..] We mostly call each other and say there is so and so job, have a look, it has location in India so I II open and see if its an easy task or is it really tough. [..] once they say something about a task I wont ask them for details I II have a look myself, they II just tell me the name of the requester.



Turker coordination in generating trust

Rahim (India)

The turkers who are new turkers, they approach me. They are requesting me to give the training that how you are doing the work and everything [..] tell about something any kind of logic, shortcuts.



Some reasons why: Invisible Turkers & their hidden work

AMT as a labour market:

- Easy for requesters to devalue/ignore workers
- Invisibility accentuated by anonymity, distance, digital interaction

The work to make the Turking work:

- Work of searching, learning, optimising, organising. hidden, no monetary compensation
- Discussing best practices with fellow-turkers, supporters & requesters
- Pressure, risk & uncertainty

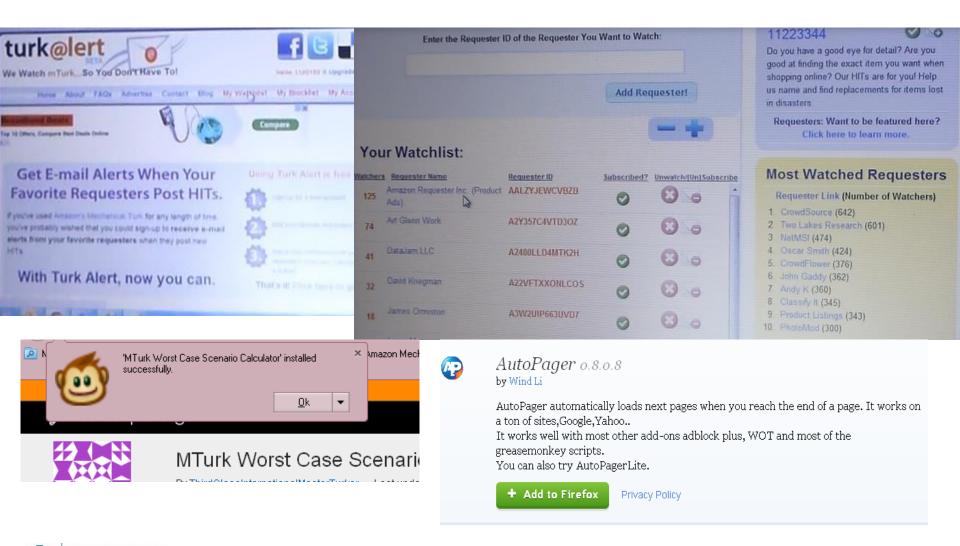


Some reasons why: Design of the platform

- Mturk's set-up promotes rumour, misapprehension, and distrust *but* we see a lot of sharing, altruism and cooperation amongst Turkers through personal networks, forums (TurkerNation, MTurk forum, Reddit, Facebook)
 - Discussion of what tasks are for and how to do them as quickly as possible
 - How much is available, how often and when rhythms and cycles of market
 - How to influence the operation of the market: targeting/ withholding labour
- Experienced Turkers use suites of tools to optimise grabbing and doing tasks
 - Tools that automatically identify and grab tasks
 - Have optimised browsers, shortcuts and so forth through plug-ins etc.
 - The weight of unintegrated tools and the use of scrapers causes crashes or they are frozen out by Amazon so managing the tool-set takes some juggling
 - This adds to market speed and volatility
- Hidden markets and connections managed by the qualification system



Technical support





Experiencing market inequality

Sumita (India)

Sometimes you accept the survey, but inside after you open it says that if you belong to India you cannot do it, but that is very bad—why we cannot do?

Rafiq (India)

I know that U.S people have more maximum number of HITs compared to us. I know that. Second point is, I know that US people has a very good source of earning a lot in surveys rather than us. If we earn \$5 in a day through surveys, the same thing the U.S people can earn \$20-\$30 in a day in surveys [...]. Sometimes we sit idle.



Experiencing market inequality

evelynonline (US)

(Masters qualification) It is a random lottery give away that some of us attained with no clue how. We work for the same money as non-masters, but the requesters pay more to list so in essence, no one really gains anything extra. Every once in a while we have less competition on certain jobs

- Could be perfectly legitimate reasons for restrictions e.g. for particular survey samples
- But opacity of HITs that they find, would like to work on, which show 'You are not qualified to work on this HIT' without further explanation fuels this



Building Turker-Requester Relationships

- U.S. Turkers like anonymity and flexibility, Indian Turkers don't mind anonymity but prize relationship with American requesters
- Turker-Requester Relationships as well as relationships within the worker community
- Turkers want productive relationships with requesters
- They want fair pay for fair work: decent wages, fairness in judging work, timely payment, respect and relationship



Thank you!

Enjoy the papers.

- 1. Martin et al. Turking in a global labour market. 2016
- 2. Gupta et al. Turk-life in India. 2014
- 3. Martin et al. Being a Turker. 2014
- 4. Gupta et al. Understanding Indian crowdworkers. 2014
- 5. Upcoming book chapter 'Understanding The Crowd: ethical and practical matters in the academic use of crowdsourcing', Springer 2017

