Crowdsourced think-aloud studies

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Background

Conducting 'think-aloud' user studies are a useful way to understand users thought processes. However, they typically require being in-person or on zoom, in order to properly record and understand the audio. This makes conducting think-aloud studies tedious and time consuming, and introduces possible bias by having a researcher constantly watching

Thanks to two new tools we recently developed, we can simulate the video and audio recording necessary to conduct think-aloud studies without a researcher present. Which led us to the question, do crowdsourced think-aloud studies produce comparable results to in-person?

User Study

We conducted a user study to compare crowdsourced think-aloud to in-person. We recruited 40 online participants from the US and UK, as well as 11 in-person participants from the University of Utah. We hoped to answer the following questions:

- Will people talk more or less online?
- Will people talk about small details, such as user interface problems, or will they focus on the bigger picture insights they gain?
- Are people more honest online, without having to worry about offending a researcher in the room with them?

Participants completed a series of tasks, ranging from making simple selections in a scatterplot to searching for trends among the survivors of the titanic. All participants were encouraged to talk, and online participants had to have a working microphone to participate in the study.



Interactive Selections in Scatterplots Recording audio





