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Bring them aboard: rewarding participation in technology-mediated citizen science projects

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Abstract

Citizen science involves the general public in research activities that are conducted in collaboration with professional scientists. In these projects, citizens voluntarily contribute to the research aims set forward by the scientists through the collection and analysis of large datasets, without a preliminary technical background required. While advancements in information technology have facilitated the involvement of the general public in citizen science through online platforms, several projects still fail due to limited participation. This paper investigates the feasibility of using selected reward mechanisms to positively influence participation and motivations to contribute in a technology-mediated citizen science project. More specifically, we report the results of an empirical study on the effects of monetary and public online acknowledgement rewards. Survey indices and electroencephalographic measurements are synergistically integrated to offer a comprehensive basis for the analysis of citizens' motivations. Our results suggest that both reward mechanisms could crowd-in participants in technology-mediated citizen science projects. With this study, we seek to lay the foundations for a private-collective research model, where the focus is the intensification of participation in technology-mediated citizen science projects.

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