

CROSS-NATIONAL MAIL SURVEYS:

WHY DO RESPONSE RATES DIFFER BETWEEN COUNTRIES?

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the results of a cross-national industrial mail survey in 22 countries. Response rates are shown to vary considerably across countries and several explanations for these differences in response rates are put forward and tested. Our results show that, when compared to non-respondents, respondents are geographically and culturally closer to the Netherlands (the country from which the questionnaires were sent), are more internationally oriented, work in smaller subsidiaries and in companies not listed on the Global Fortune 500 and come from countries with a lower level of power distance. In addition, there is some indication that English language capacity might be a factor influencing response rates as well. Based on these results, various recommendations for improving response rates in cross-national mail surveys are put forward.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization of the world economy means that knowledge of the international market becomes increasingly important for both researchers and practitioners in the field of marketing. To date, however, little is known about the cross-cultural validity of marketing theories and models. More cross-national research is necessary to alleviate this problem and mail surveys are the only feasible data collection method for research in more than a few countries. Methodological problems in international or cross-cultural research have recently attracted the attention of quite a number of researchers who have provided comprehensive overviews of issues to be considered. [1, 24, 29; 44, 47, 49, 52, 53, 54, 57, 60]. The more practical and mundane issues - such as the choice of incentives to increase response rates or the response rates to expect from different countries - are discussed in only a handful of articles that give fragmented information about a very limited number of countries (see the literature review for a discussion of these studies). Two recent articles in this journal [20, 34] came to the same conclusion and recommended an increased focus on research concerning cross-national industrial mail surveys.

In contrast to the paucity of articles on cross-national mail surveys, there is a overwhelming number of publications available on the response rate effect of every imaginable aspect of mail surveys in a *domestic* setting: number of questions, questionnaire length, the colour of the questionnaire, user friendly questionnaire formats, ticking versus circling answers, the name of the researcher (native or non-native American), anonymity, deadlines, type of outgoing postage, type of return envelope, pre-contacts, follow-ups, offer of results, personalization, topic interest, auspices of the survey, numerous types of incentives, colour of the signature on the cover letter, response rates of left- or right-handed respondents, use of handwritten post-scripts and many, many more. A substantial number of review articles on factors affecting response rates to mail surveys together cover hundreds of articles [12, 21, 28; 32, 34, 42, 71]. The contrast between the maturity of this field of research in a domestic setting and the virtual absence of articles in an international setting is striking. This article therefore aims to fill part of this gap by describing the results of a large-scale cross-national mail survey. Its main purpose is to illustrate differences in response rates between countries and to discuss the possible reasons for these differences. We will first discuss the sparse literature that *is* available about cross-national industrial mail surveys.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cross-national mail surveys aiming at an industrial population generate very low response rates. If questionnaires are not either preceded or followed by telephone contact, response rates typically vary between 6% and 16% [14, 17, 23, 33, 35, 59, 70]. Although reminders usually increase response rates a recent survey [38] received only 8.8% response with two mailings.

Low response rates form a serious threat for any researcher, since disappointing response rates might lead to samples that are too small to draw *any* conclusions from. In some cases, the researcher might even need to collect data using other research methods *after* having completed a time and cost-intensive mail survey. In an international context, however, there are virtually no alternatives to mail surveys if more than a couple of countries are included. Generating reasonable response rates should therefore be one of the researcher's top priorities. Very few studies have investigated response rates in cross-national industrial

mail surveys. A literature review in international business/management and marketing journals revealed only five studies that focused on response rates and/or incentives in an international context.

Keown [36] showed that response rates in Japan were nearly two times as high as in Hong Kong for a similar (business) population. In addition, respondents in the two countries differed in their response to incentives. Including a one dollar incentive doubled the response rate in Japan, but resulted in a zero response rate in Hong Kong. Ayal & Hornik [4] found foreign surveys to generate higher responses than domestic surveys. However, this result was only significant for the consumer sample and not for the sample of managers. Although, as expected by the authors, the response rate in the US was higher than in Israel, this result was again only significant in the consumer sample. For a sample of business people in Great Britain and the USA, Jobber & Saunders [35] found the opposite result: domestic surveys generated higher response rates than foreign surveys. Contrary to the authors' expectations, no significant differences were found in response rates between the two countries. Dawson & Dickinson [17] showed that a commemorative stamp significantly increased response rates in both the UK and Germany. Without the stamp incentive, response rates in Canada and the US were higher than in the UK and Germany. With the stamp incentive, response rates were highest in Japan. Jobber, Mirza, & Wee [33] tested the effect of both enclosed (a bookmark) and promised (offer of results) incentives. Conforming to the literature on domestic mail surveys, enclosed incentives were more effective in increasing response rates than promised incentives. Response rates did not differ significantly between the three receiving countries: Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Since so few articles systematically compare response rates between countries, we searched the last 18 volumes (1980-1997) of three mainstream international business journals *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Management International Review* and *International Business Review* and five marketing journals *Industrial Marketing Management*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *International Marketing Review*, *Journal of Marketing* and *European Journal of Marketing* for articles that mentioned differences in response rates in cross-national mail surveys, even though the article's main focus was on other issues. Even this procedure, however, did not result in an overwhelming amount of information, since most articles about mail surveys were either purely domestic (i.e. American in most cases), were sent to one foreign country only, used substantially different treatments for different countries or did not report differences in response rates. Surprisingly, a substantial number of articles did not even mention response rates at all and only reported the number of questionnaires returned. Even so, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the articles found in this process, the articles discussed before and some selective other, mainly older, articles. In these conclusions, we focus on the countries that are included in our own survey:

- Response rates in Japan are higher than response rates in the US [16, 18, 31, 38, 40; 63, 66, 67]. Response rates in the US are higher than response rates in Japan [15]. In all studies, questionnaires were mailed from the U.S.
- Response rates in the US are higher than response rates in European countries [5, 9, 10, 14, 17, 31, 38, 41, 46, 55, 66]. In all studies, questionnaires were mailed from the U.S.
- Response rates in Japan are higher than response rates in European countries [17, 31, 38, 39, 66]. In all studies, questionnaires were mailed from the U.S.
- Response rates in Hong Kong are the lowest in the survey [14, 25, 36]. In all studies, questionnaires were mailed from the U.S.
- Response rates in Norway are higher than response rates in France. Questionnaires were mailed from Finland [6].
- Response rates in the Netherlands are higher than response rates in Belgium [43]. Response rates in the Netherlands are higher than response rates in eight other European countries [8]. In both studies, questionnaires were mailed from the Netherlands. Response rates in the Netherlands are higher than response rates in the U.K. and Belgium [62]. Questionnaires were mailed from the U.S.
- Response rates in the UK are higher than response rates in Germany. Questionnaires were mailed from the UK [7].
- Domestic surveys generate higher responses than foreign surveys [32, 64].

Although these studies do show a rather consistent picture, especially concerning response rates in the U.S., Japan and Europe, in most studies questionnaires were mailed from the U.S. We might therefore not

be able to generalize the results to other countries. The next section describes a study that involved a cross-national mail survey with questionnaires sent from a small European country.

METHODS AND RESULTS

The cross-national mail survey described below was conducted as part of the author's doctoral research, which focused on control mechanisms in multinational companies. The empirical part involved mailing questionnaires to CEOs and Human Resource Managers at the headquarters of 122 multinationals and to the managing directors of 1650 subsidiaries of these multinationals in 22 different countries. Questionnaires were mailed from Maastricht University, the Netherlands in two batches: one in October 1995 and one in January 1996. Reminders to the first batch were sent in January 1996, about three months after the original mailing. Reminders to the second batch were sent in March 1996, about six weeks after the original mailing. Questionnaires were printed on a pale yellow paper and cover letters were mail merged for an individualized appeal. The questionnaire was six pages long and contained 56, mostly closed-ended questions (a copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendix). Incentives to increase response rates included an offer of the results, an international committee of recommendation, a scanned photograph of the researcher and a tea bag attached to the letter, next to a PS: "Why don't you take a short break, have a nice cup of tea and fill out the questionnaire right now, it will only take 10-15 minutes". In the reminder, we elaborated on this theme by including instant coffee for the addressees that did not like tea (see 26 and 27 for a more extensive description of the mailing procedures and incentives).

Response rates were calculated by dividing the number of positive responses in both the first mailing and the reminder by the total number of deliverable questionnaires. This formula has become customary in international research, because of the high number of undeliverable questionnaires [17, 33, 35, 36, 48, 59]. The overall response rate of the survey was 20%, which compares favorably with other cross-national mail surveys. Table 1 shows the response rates for the different response categories.

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Although response rates varied slightly across industries, these differences were not significant. Significant overall differences in response rates were found for both the country of location of headquarters (Chi-square 25.334, $p = .001$) and the country of location of subsidiaries (Chi-square 51.545, $p = .000$). Employees from MNCs headquartered in European countries are more likely to respond than employees from either American or Japanese MNCs. Within Europe, the highest response rates can be found for MNCs from the smaller European countries. The same pattern emerges if we look at response rates for the various subsidiary countries. Managing directors from subsidiaries in small European countries, such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries were most likely to respond. Least likely to respond were managing directors from subsidiaries located in (Latin) America and Asia and in the larger European countries. Notable exceptions are Japan and Brazil, that have a relatively high response rate. Since about 40% of the managing directors were expatriates, we also calculated the response rate by nationality. Differences in response rates for different nationalities are even slightly more significant (Chi-square 53.961, $p = .000$) and the pattern identified for subsidiary countries becomes even more pronounced. The relatively high response rate for Japan and Brazil was caused by a high response among expatriates and not by a particularly high level of response from Japanese or Brazilian managing directors, although response rates are still higher than for the other Asian/Latin American countries.

These results largely confirm the findings of previous studies. As in most of the previous studies, response rates are higher in Japan (28.6%) than in either Europe (22.9%) or the U.S. (11.4%). Confirming the three two-country studies described above, response rates in Norway (40.6%) are higher than in France (13.6%), response rates in the UK (18.8%) are higher than in Germany (15.5%) and response rates in the Netherlands (26.6%) are higher than in Belgium (20.3%). Response rates for seven of the eight European countries in our sample that were also included in Brouthers & Dijkstra [8] were lower than for the Netherlands. And response rates for the UK (18.8%) and Belgium (20.3%) were indeed lower than for the Netherlands (26.6%) [62]. In addition, as in the studies referred to above, response rates in Hong Kong are the lowest in the survey. Since we mailed the survey from one country only, we cannot test the

difference in response rates between domestic and foreign surveys. One result from previous studies, however, is clearly contradicted by our findings: response rates in Europe are higher instead of lower than in the U.S. In addition, our study shows differences in response rates between countries that have not been included in cross-national mail surveys before. The next section will therefore explore these differences in response rates in more detail.

ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSE RATES

The previous section showed that there were large differences in response rates for respondents from different countries/nationalities. One reason for a low response rate in some countries might be the distance from the Netherlands, both in a cultural and in a geographical sense. Although Ayal & Hornik [4] suggested that the novelty effect might induce higher response rates for foreign surveys, this is unlikely to be true for managing directors of MNC subsidiaries, who might experience international contacts daily. In this situation, we would expect respondents to be more likely to respond if the source of the questionnaire is not too far removed from their own country, both in a geographical and in a cultural sense. Potential respondents are more likely to trust and relate to people that are not too different from themselves. There is some support for this contention from previous studies. First, domestic surveys tend to get a higher response rate than foreign surveys [35, 64]. Second, response rates in European countries or MNCs are lower than response rates for the US/American MNCs, when questionnaires are sent from the US [5, 14, 17, 31, 38, 41, 46, 55, 60], thus suggesting that geographical/cultural distance leads to a lower response rate. Supporting this contention, questionnaires mailed from the Netherlands/UK resulted in higher response rates for these countries than for the other countries included in the survey [7, 8, 43, 62]. Finally, in a survey where questionnaires were sent from Norway, the response rate for Finland was higher than for France, which is more distant from Norway, both in a geographical and cultural sense. We therefore tested whether the geographical and cultural distance from the Netherlands was smaller for respondents than for non-respondents. Geographical distance was measured as the distance in kilometers between capitals, while cultural distance was measured using Kogut & Singh's [37] formula, which summarizes cultural distance between countries on each of Hofstede's [30] dimensions. Table 2 shows that both geographical distance and cultural distance from the Netherlands are indeed significantly different between respondents and non-respondents and that the difference is in the expected direction, thus confirming our proposition.

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Higher response rates will be achieved if the potential respondent is interested in the study's subject. We would expect respondents with a more pronounced international orientation to be more interested in an international study of control mechanisms in MNCs. We therefore tested whether respondents had a more pronounced international orientation than non-respondents. Two measures were used to this effect. The first measure was the level of foreign sales as a percentage of total sales for the MNC by which the respondent was employed. The second measure was aimed at a more aggregate level and measured the percentage of the respondent's home country's GNP that was exported. As table 2 shows, for both measures there is a significant difference between respondents and non-respondents in the expected direction, thus confirming our proposition. This result is supported by two other observations from our study. First, third country managing directors (managing directors that have neither the nationality from the host country nor from the parent country) had a very high response rate. Third country nationals are often portrayed as "truly international managers", because of their willingness to relocate internationally. Their high response rate might therefore be caused by their keen interest in international issues. Second, the results from the questionnaires sent to headquarters also indicated a higher level of foreign sales for responding companies. This was true for both the responses from HRM-managers and from CEOs, although the results were only significant in the former case.

A very simple reason for non-response might be that the respondent does not understand the language (English) of the questionnaire. When preparing the survey, we assumed that managing directors of MNC subsidiaries would at least have a passive knowledge of the English language. We might have been

too optimistic in this assumption, however. In addition, even if a potential respondent would have a reasonable knowledge of the English language, responding to an English-language questionnaire would still require a larger effort than to one in his/her native language. This might be a determining factor in deciding not to respond to the questionnaire. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to assess the English language capability of the individual respondents. Many "low response nationals", however, such as Argentinians, Austrians, Brazilians, French, Mexicans and Venezuelans could generally be expected to have a more limited English language capacity than most of the "high response nationals" such as Danes, Dutch, Irish, Fins and Norwegians. On the other hand, the fact that two of the nationalities that had very low response rates, Americans and Singaporeans, have English as their native/official language shows that English language capability is certainly not the only factor influencing response rates.

In our study, we offered potential respondents the opportunity to return a response card indicating that they did not want to participate in the study and asked them to state their reason for not wanting to do so. The large number of questionnaires received was the most prominent reason for not responding. One respondent at headquarters level even indicated that their company received roughly 100 questionnaires *each week*. We might consequently conclude that the larger the number of questionnaires a potential respondent receives, the lower the chance of response to each individual questionnaire. We therefore tested whether respondents in our sample could generally be expected to receive fewer questionnaires than non-respondents. Two measures were used as a proxy for the number of questionnaires received. First, since many researchers focus their attention on MNCs listed on rankings such as the Fortune Global 500, employees in these companies might receive more questionnaires than employees in smaller companies, not listed on such rankings. For each subsidiary, we therefore investigated whether its parent company was listed on the 1994 Fortune Global 500. In addition, larger MNC subsidiaries might receive more questionnaires than smaller subsidiaries, since larger subsidiaries are more likely to be listed on address lists and are more likely to be of interest to researchers. In addition, workload levels and competition might be higher for larger companies, thus providing an additional potential negative impact on response rates. As table 2 shows, subsidiaries from MNCs that are not on the Global Fortune 500 list are significantly more likely to respond than subsidiaries from MNCs that *are* ranked on this list, thus confirming our proposition. The average response rate for the former is 27%, while for the latter it is only 18%. Concerning subsidiary size, respondents do on average head smaller subsidiaries than non-respondents, thus confirming our proposition.

A final reason for non-response might be the sensitivity of the study's subject. A questionnaire dealing with control mechanisms applied by headquarters towards their subsidiaries could make some subsidiary managers hesitant to respond, because of the implicit power element involved in the subject. This hesitation is likely to be stronger for potential respondents coming from countries that score high on Hofstede's power distance index. We therefore assume that for non-respondents the average power distance score will be higher than for respondents. Table 2 shows this is indeed the case: on average respondents have a significantly lower power distance score than non-respondents.

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Overall, the results confirm our propositions as is summarized in Figure 1. Respondents are geographically and culturally closer to the Netherlands, are more internationally oriented, work in smaller subsidiaries and in companies not listed on the Global Fortune 500 and come from countries with a lower level of power distance. In addition, there is some indication that English language capacity might be a factor influencing response rates as well. However, since most previous studies focused on American or Japanese companies only, our results might be biased by the large proportion of European companies in our sample. We therefore split the sample in European and non-European MNCs and performed the same tests. Because of the smaller sample sizes, results are generally less significant and most variables are indeed more significant for European MNCs than for American/Japanese MNCs. For many variables, however, our tests indicate significant differences for both European and American/Japanese MNCs. The level of foreign sales as a measure of international orientation does not differ significant between respondents and non-respondents for American/Japanese MNCs, however. In addition, the two measures of "questionnaire frequency" do not differ significantly between respondents and non-respondents in American/Japanese MNCs. All results are in the expected direction, however.

As can be seen in Table 1, managing directors from Latin American subsidiaries had very low response rates. One very mundane reason for this lower response rate might be a lower reliability of postal services in these countries. Since these countries are culturally and geographically distant from the Netherlands, score low on international orientation and high on power distance, our results with regard to these variables might be caused by the underlying variable: reliability in postal services. To investigate this possibility, we ran the same tests excluding Latin American subsidiaries. As Table 2 shows, however, differences are just as significant as before.

Relatedly, very low response rates are found in South East Asian countries. Even domestic studies in these countries usually generate low response rates. Ng & Chui [50] report an 11% response rate in Hong Kong, while Chew & Teo [11] and Shaw et al. [58] achieved 14% and 15% respectively for Singapore. Wang, Wee & Koh [69] mention a typical response rate of 10-15% for Singapore (and China). Singhapakdi, Vitell & Leelakulthanik [61] realized a 16.3% response rate in Thailand and indicate this is high compared to other studies in the same country. Mirza, Bartels & Hiley [45] had a 10% response rate for Taiwanese MNCs (compared to 18% and 28% respectively for American and European MNCs and 44% for Japanese MNCs). Informal communications with local researchers suggested a hectic business life, a distrust to mail surveys in general and a fear of competitive intelligence under the guise of academic research as major reasons for this low response rate in South East Asian countries. A low response rate is also found for American subsidiaries. This means that there are very few non-European countries with a high response rate. The fact whether subsidiaries are located outside or inside Europe might consequently explain much of the differences in response rates. We therefore reran the tests including only European subsidiaries. As we can see in Table 2, however, all variables maintain their significant explanatory power. We can therefore conclude that the variables discussed above seem to be able to differentiate between respondents and non-respondents in a variety of samples.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our results show that, when compared to non-respondents, respondents are geographically and culturally closer to the Netherlands, are more internationally oriented, work in smaller subsidiaries and in companies not listed on the Global Fortune 500 and come from countries with a lower level of power distance. In addition, there is some indication that English language capacity might be a factor influencing response rates as well. Based on these results, we can make various recommendations for improving response rates in cross-national mail surveys.

To overcome cultural and geographical distance, researchers might consider mailing questionnaires from a number of different countries, choosing key locations on the different continents. In order to do so, it would probably necessary to find university partners in the countries chosen. Having local partners could also alleviate a second problem that might be associated with cultural distance: the suitability of incentives. A lower level of trust and comfort with a culturally distant researcher might not be the only reason for the fact that in our survey fewer responses were received from culturally distant countries. Lower response rates might also be caused by an adverse response to incentives that were designed by a researcher with a particular cultural programming (Dutch, Northern European). The photograph clearly identified the researcher as female. Scandinavian respondents might react more favorably to this than Austrian or Japanese respondents. The tea bag incentive might also not have appealed equally to all nationalities. A colleague from Hong Kong suggested that Chinese addressees would perhaps not have returned the questionnaire, because they did not want the researcher to think they simply responded for the tea. She recommended not including any incentives at all for Chinese respondents. This suggestion is supported by Keown's study in which response rates for Hong Kong dropped to zero when a dollar incentive was included. Another colleague suggested that the tea bag incentive would never have worked in Saudi Arabia, since respondents would take it seriously and consider it too meager a compensation for filling out the questionnaire, instead of taking it as the little joke for which it was intended. An example of two opposite, but equally negative responses to the same incentive! Albaum et al. [3] showed that the reasons for responding to surveys might differ between North American, European and Asia-Pacific countries. Consequently, the incentives used might have to be differentiated between countries as well. Discussing potential incentives with foreign partners might prevent costly mistakes and might result in a motivated choice for different incentives for different cultures. Foreign partners might also be able to give advice on the suitability of using mail surveys at all. As discussed above, mail surveys generate very low response

rates in South East Asian countries. A study that used hand-delivered questionnaires in Hong Kong [51] realized an 80% response rate, though admittedly for a combination of business, public service and university respondents. A similar response rate was realized by using the same method in Saudi Arabia [19]. If a reasonable number of respondents are required for these countries, it might be better to select a smaller sample and concentrate all efforts on getting a high response rate from this sample. So cultural sensitivity is not only vital in the area of (human resource) management, strategy, organizational behavior and marketing as claimed by authors such as: Adler [2], Francesco & Gold [22], Hofstede [30], Schneider & Barsoux [56], Trompenaars [65] and Usinier [68], but is also indispensable when doing international research.

Our results also suggest that respondents that come from highly internationalized countries and work for highly international companies might be more likely to respond to cross-national mail surveys. If it does not interfere with the researcher's other objectives, sampling might take this aspect into account. Of course, it might introduce a bias in the results, so that they cannot be generalized to the population of MNCs as a whole. On the other hand, higher response rates might at least facilitate generalization to the group of highly internationalized MNCs.

English language capability might have been a problem for some of our potential respondents. We would therefore suggest that even for surveys in MNCs, questionnaires are translated for some countries. It would not seem necessary to translate questionnaires for the e.g. Scandinavian countries or the Netherlands, but translation into Spanish might have increased our response rates for the four Spanish-speaking countries. Also, even if the respondent is able to answer an English-language questionnaire, the fact that the researcher took the trouble to translate the questionnaire into his/her own language might increase the respondent's feeling that his/her reply is important to the researcher and hence increase response rates.

Our results offer a clear indication that a high incidence of questionnaires reduces the chances of response. If this does not interfere with the researcher's other objectives, sampling MNCs that do not occur on the Fortune 500 list, might improve response rates. Please note that we are not necessarily talking about small companies. The average sales figure for non-Fortune-500 companies in our sample was \$3,677.6 million, while the average number of employees for this group still lies above 16,000. If research objectives necessitate a focus on larger MNCs, due attention to the other factors mentioned in this article might alleviate the response rates problem to some extent. However, since more and more large MNCs seem to have a company policy not to cooperate in mail surveys, a more qualitative research approach focusing on a few large MNCs that *are* willing to collaborate might become a more feasible option. Relatedly, in many countries that showed a high response rate in our survey, case studies and interviews are more common than in for instance the U.S. [13]. In addition, the smaller European countries are less likely to be included into a research design that selects just two or three European countries. In that case, the U.K., France and Germany are usually the preferred candidates. Therefore, to increase response rates researchers might do well to focus on less obvious companies and countries.

Finally, in our study response rates were negatively related to power distance as a cultural dimension. In general, researchers should carefully investigate whether particular issues are sensitive in certain cultures, so that either questionnaires might be adapted or – if feasible in the sampling frame – other countries are included in the research design.

Our study is the first to discuss response rates to industrial mail surveys for more than a couple of countries and we have been able to offer some tentative suggestions to improve response rates. More research into cross-national industrial mail surveys is needed, however, before we can claim any response effects with certainty. In particular, our knowledge would benefit from more cross-national mail survey research originating from countries other than the U.S, since our study shows that some results from American studies might not apply universally. Research in this area would already benefit greatly if two very simple recommendations would be followed. First, researchers should explicitly state the country from which the questionnaires were mailed and the country(ies) the questionnaires were mailed to. Although this might seem a superfluous recommendation, we encountered quite a number of (American) articles that mentioned neither. Second, response rates should be mentioned in each publication and if questionnaires have been mailed to more than one country, response rates should be calculated and reported for each of these countries. If these simple recommendations are followed, our knowledge about response rates in cross-national mail surveys might increase even by studies that do not specifically focus on this topic.

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Table 1: Response rates for different industries, countries and nationalities

Industry	Response rate	Subsidiary country	Response rate	Nationality	Response rate
		Hong Kong	7.1%	Hong Kongnese	0%
Computers	16.2%	US	11.4%	Venezuelan	0%
Electronics	17.1%	Argentina	12.9%	Singaporean	4.8%
Food & Beverages	18.4%	France	13.6%	Mexican	6.5%
Motor vehicles & parts	20.4%	Singapore	13.6%	Argentinean	9.1%
Paper (products)	20.6%	Venezuela	13.8%	Austrian	10.0%
Chemical (products)	21.3%	Mexico	15.2%	American	11.6%
Petroleum (products)	21.4%	Germany	15.5%	French	12.5%
Pharmaceutical	23.8%	Spain	15.9%	German	13.4%
		UK	18.8%	Brazilian	14.3%
Country of location of headquarters	Response rate	Austria	19.0%	Japanese	16.8%
		Belgium	20.3%	Spanish	18.4%
		Sweden	20.4%	Swedish	19.6%
US	14.3%	Brazil	22.1%	Belgian	20.4%
Japan	16.7%	Italy	24.4%	British	22.3%
France	18.6%	Netherlands	26.6%	Italian	25.8%
UK	19.7%	Japan	28.6%	Dutch	27.4%
Germany	21.8%	Switzerland	29.8%	Swiss	27.6%
Finland	24.0%	Ireland	30.6%	Finnish	28.0%
Sweden	24.6%	Finland	32.0%	Irish	32.4%
Switzerland	30.4%	Norway	40.6%	Norwegian	38.7%
Netherlands	31.5%	Denmark	42.1%	Danish	40.6%

Table 2: Test of factors explaining differences in response rates

Variable	Direction of relationship		Overall n = 1477	European MNCs n = 851	American & Japa- nese MNCs n = 626	Non-Latin American subsidiaries n = 1272	European sub- sidiaries n = 979
	Expected	Confirmed?					
Cultural distance between NL and respondent's home country	-	Yes	Z = -5.423***	Z = -3.649***	Z = -2.474**	Z = -4.071***	Z = -2.928**
Geographical distance between NL and respondent's home country	-	Yes	Z = -5.842***	Z = -3.616***	Z = -2.980**	Z = -4.205***	Z = -2.214*
% Foreign sales for MNC as a whole	+	Yes	Z = -4.204***	Z = -2.924**	Z = -1.198 n.s.	Z = -3.043***	Z = -2.597**
Export/GNP respondent's home country	+	Yes	Z = -7.441***	Z = -5.031***	Z = -3.643***	Z = -5.902***	Z = -4.667***
Listed on Fortune 500?	-	Yes	Z = -2.634**	Z = -1.469†	Z = -1.042 n.s.	Z = -2.670**	Z = -2.250*
Number of subsidiary employees	-	Yes	Z = -1.683*	Z = -1.368†	Z = -1.052 n.s.	Z = -2.084*	Z = -1.514†
Power distance of respondent's home country	-	Yes	Z = -7.243***	Z = -4.274***	Z = -4.575***	Z = -5.678***	Z = -4.023***

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, † p < 0.1, all one-tailed

Figure 1 Overview of factors influencing mail survey response rate

