Why do researchers from Economics and Social Sciences cite online? Insights from an exploratory survey

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1 Research Question

Work-related usage of social media has become daily routine for many researchers. Their online interactions with scientific products – most typically research articles – can be measured as altmetrics or usage metrics, which are used more and more commonly as impact indicators. However, we have little knowledge about these interactions’ meaning and whether their motivations resemble those for citing. We therefore set out to answer the question:

What are researchers’ motivations to interact with scholarly material on social media?

2 Method

Online survey with 13 questions on researchers’ social media usage and ways of interacting with scientific products on 18 different social media platforms:

Distributed via mailing lists between July and September 2018.

3 Results

Survey demographics

- Participants: 1,088 researchers from 55 countries; most commonly from Germany (33%), the USA (14%), and the UK (5%).
- Gender: about two thirds male (68%), one third female (32%) participants.
- Disciplines: emphasis on Economics (71%) and Social Sciences (19%).

Researchers’ motivations for interacting with scholarly products on social media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>Share of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relying on the scholarly products in my own work</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The results support my own research</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To alert readers to my own work</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To alert others to my own work</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To credit authors for their work</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scholarly material’s authors are prominent in my field</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To establish future research plans</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide leads to poorly disseminated work</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This material reflects my field’s current consensus</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To establish my own priority claims</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person disseminating the information is prominent in my field</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scholarly material has historical importance in my field</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To correct my own work</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To correct the work of others</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pay homage to pioneers in my field</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acknowledge priority claims of others</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To criticize published work</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Motivations were based on common motives of citation.

Main question

“Scholarly materials, such as articles and data sets, are often uploaded, discussed, shared and so forth on social media. Please choose your motivations when interacting (i.e. post, like, share, bookmark, upload) with scholarly materials using the following channels.”

4 Conclusions

- The most common motivations for interacting with scholarly products on social media are the reliance on those products in my own work, as well as alerting potential readers to my own work.
- In line with findings for traditional citations (Bormann & Daniel, 2008), criticizing and correcting the works found on social media are rarely the determining motivations behind interactions.
- Different platforms solve different needs:

Reliance in own work

Alerting readers

References


Acknowledgments

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