

Coping with Altimetrics' Heterogeneity

A Survey on Social Media Platforms' Usage Purposes and Target Groups for Researchers

Steffen Lemke and Isabella Peters

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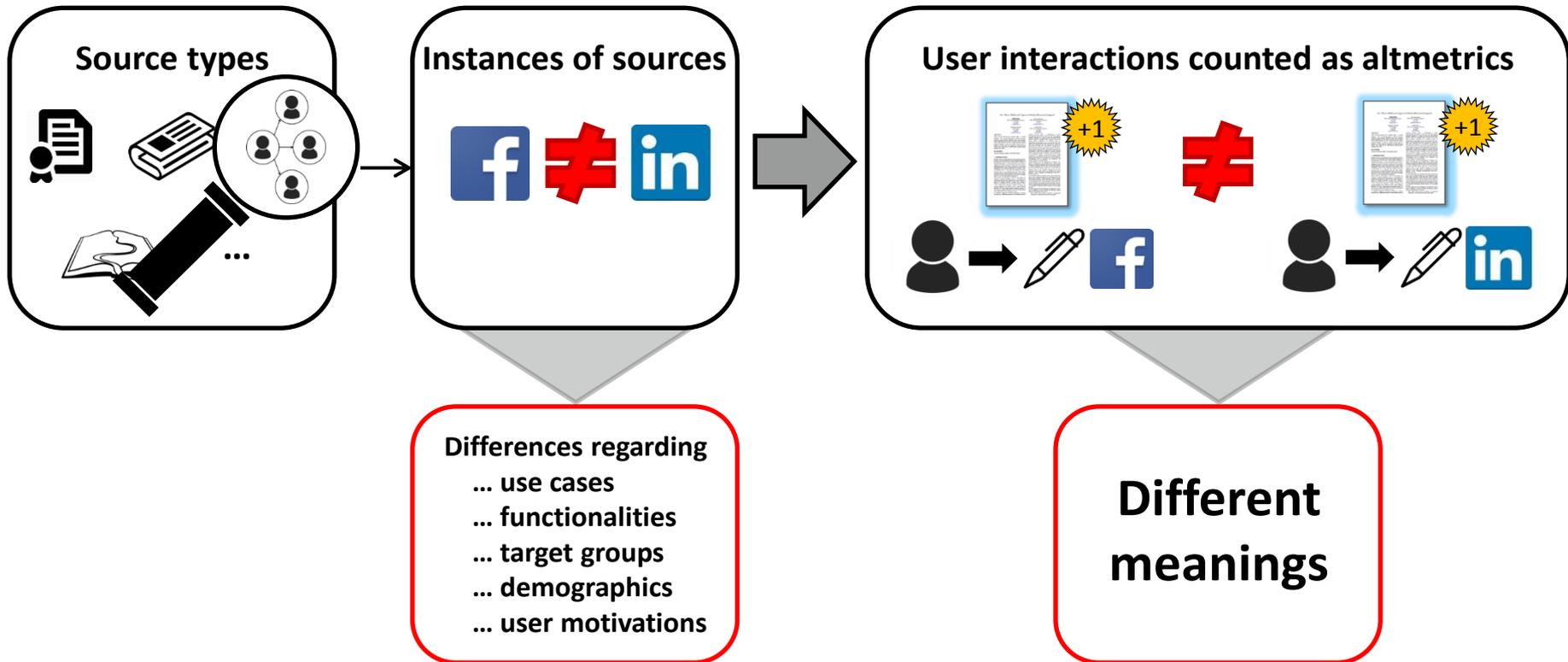
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These slides can be found on <https://zenodo.org/record/3381492>



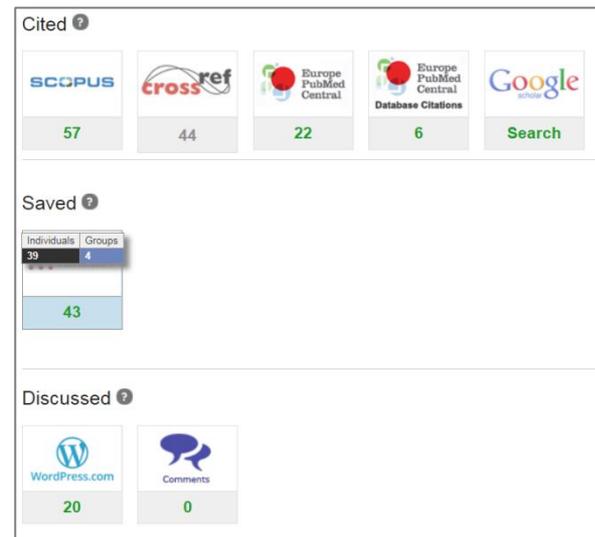
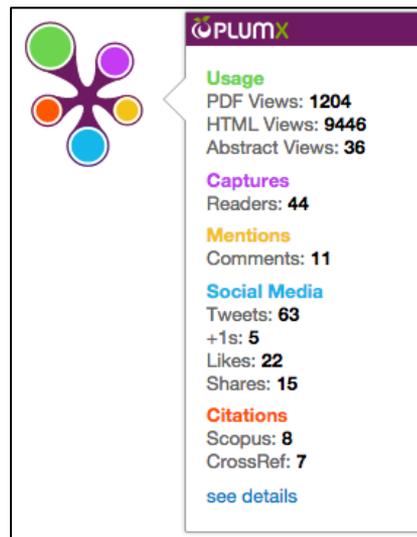
The Problem

Grand challenge for the interpretation of altmetrics: heterogeneity (see also Haustein 2016)



How to deal with this?

- Aggregations of altmetrics from different sources are often desirable, but tend to obscure existing differences between sources
- To reduce such loss of information, evidence-based strategies for meaningful groupings of sources are needed



- For **social media platforms**, we propose to determine similarities based on **usage purposes** they help their users to fulfil and **target groups** users try to reach on them

Our Approach

Survey among researchers regarding **social media platforms they use for work**, **usage purposes platforms fulfil** and **target groups they are trying to reach**.



In preparation of the survey, we had to identify:

- Relevant social media platforms
- Common usage purposes for researchers
- Target groups to reach on social media

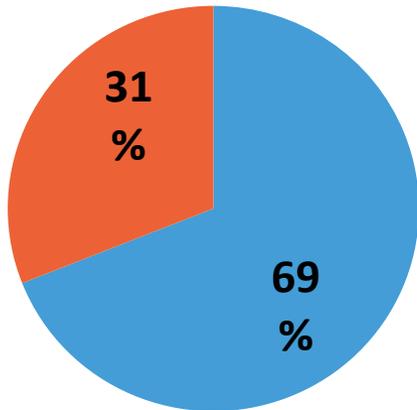
} Previous *metrics survey (2017)
Group interviews w. researchers
Literature review

Focus on **researchers** from the **social sciences and economics**. Distribution mainly via national and international mailing lists.

Survey - Demographics

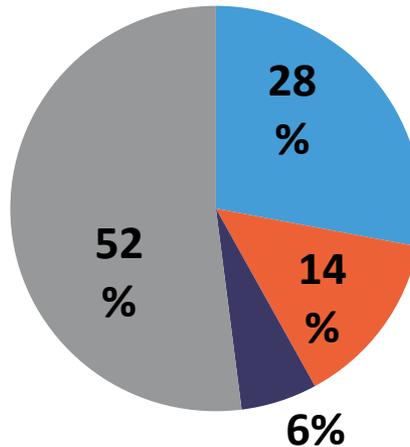
- 1,018 responses (~4% RoR) from 70 countries

Gender



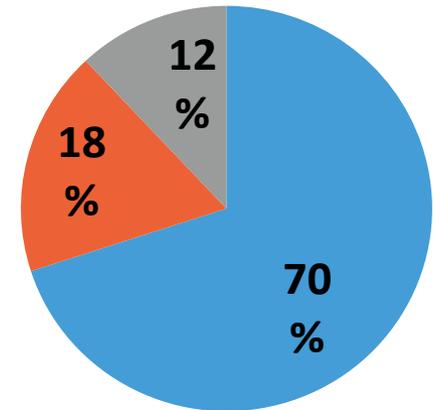
- Male
- Female

Country



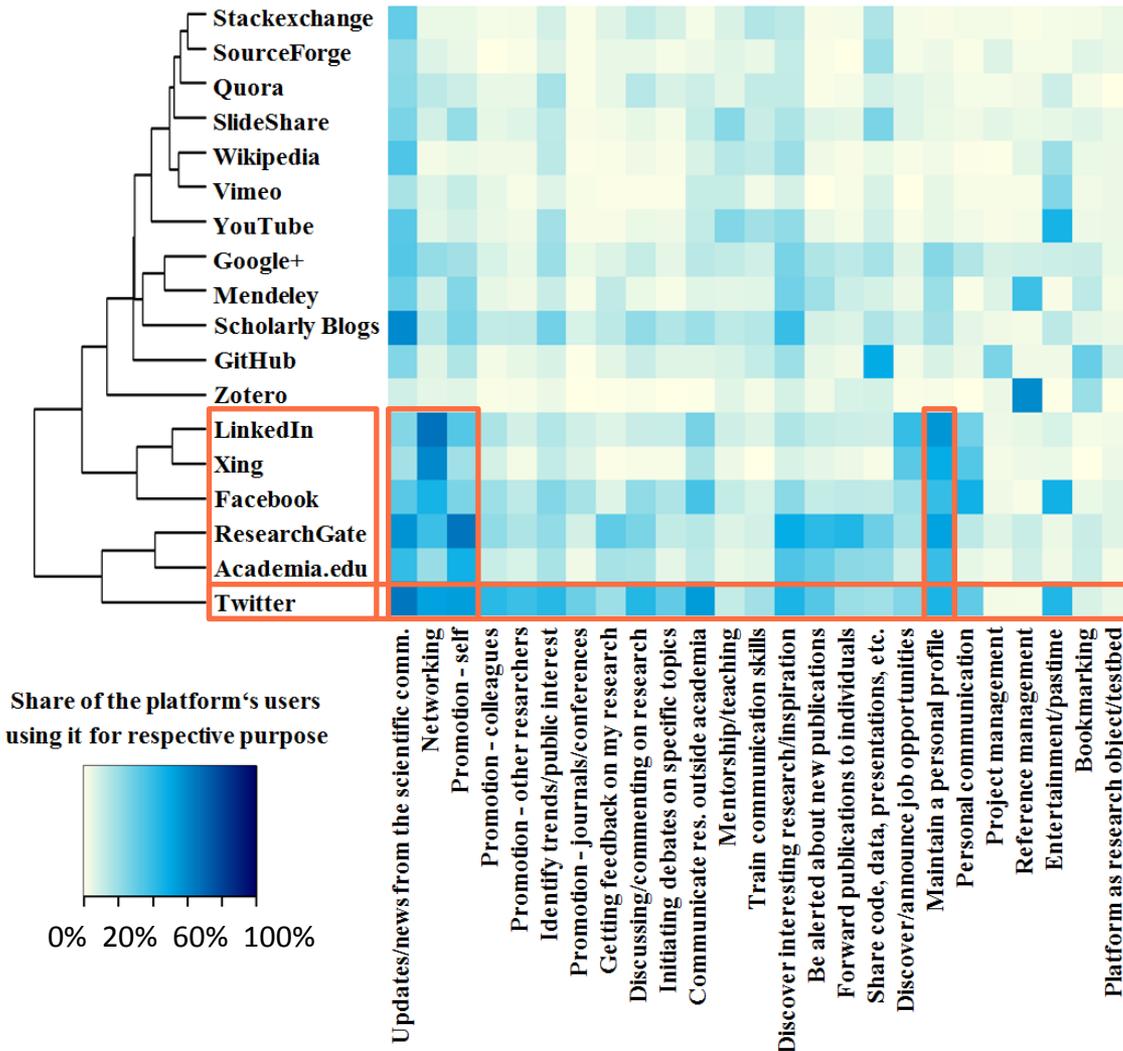
- Germany
- USA
- UK
- Other

Discipline



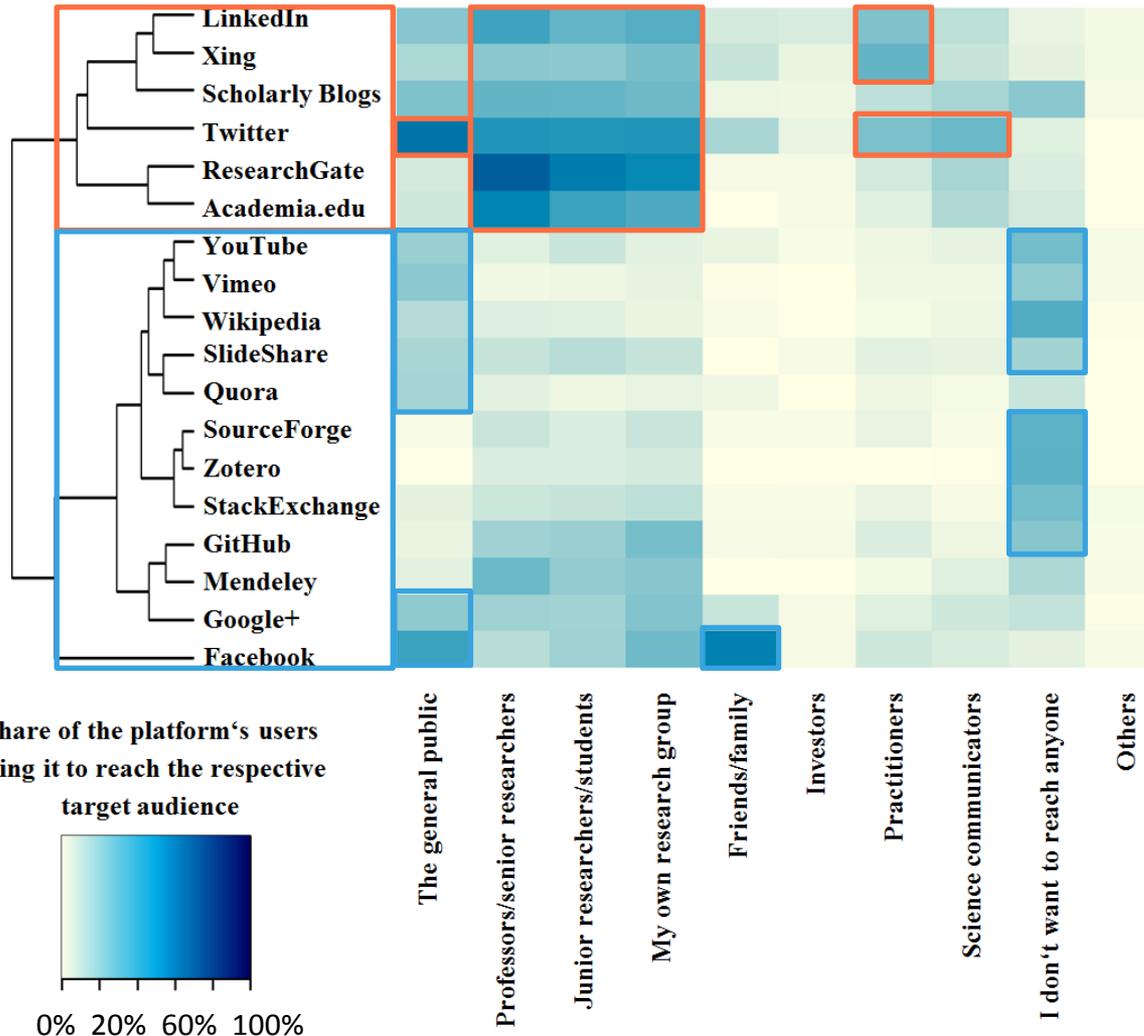
- Economics
- Social Sciences
- Other

Usage Purposes on Platforms



- Similar usage purposes on the six social networks, especially *Networking, Maintaining a personal profile, Receiving updates/news, and self-promotion*
- Other platforms seem more specialized; or their true usage purposed might not have been represented
- *Twitter* seems particularly diverse in its use cases

Target Groups on Platforms



- Rough subdivision into two groups: services used heavily for (professional) outreach versus platforms where this is not the case
- Among the latter are several platforms on which many users do not seek to reach out to anyone; for others there is less focus on professional outreach
- *Facebook* stands out as the platform for communication with friends/family, *Twitter* for communication with the general public

Conclusions

- We observed distinct clusters of platforms that behave similarly regarding communication goals they help researchers to fulfil
 - Step towards a framework guiding users of altmetrics towards their evidence-based aggregation and interpretation
- Findings might also
 - help to characterize scholarly information we can expect to find on different platforms
 - inform theory-building on altmetrics' meaning

Outlook/limitations:

We only looked at

- The *source type* of **social media**,
- The *user group* of **researchers**,
- The *disciplines* **economics** and **social sciences**,
- Similarities in **usage purposes** and **target groups**,

so plenty of opportunities to enrich this work in progress-framework with additional input remain.

Thank you very much!

- Email: s.lemke@zbw.eu
- Twitter: @stl90

