

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

Maryam Mehrazar<sup>1</sup>, Hadas Shema<sup>1</sup>, Steffen Lemke<sup>1</sup>, Isabella Peters<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ZBW - Leibniz Information Centre for Economics, Kiel/Hamburg, Germany

<sup>2</sup>University of Kiel, Germany

## 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%).



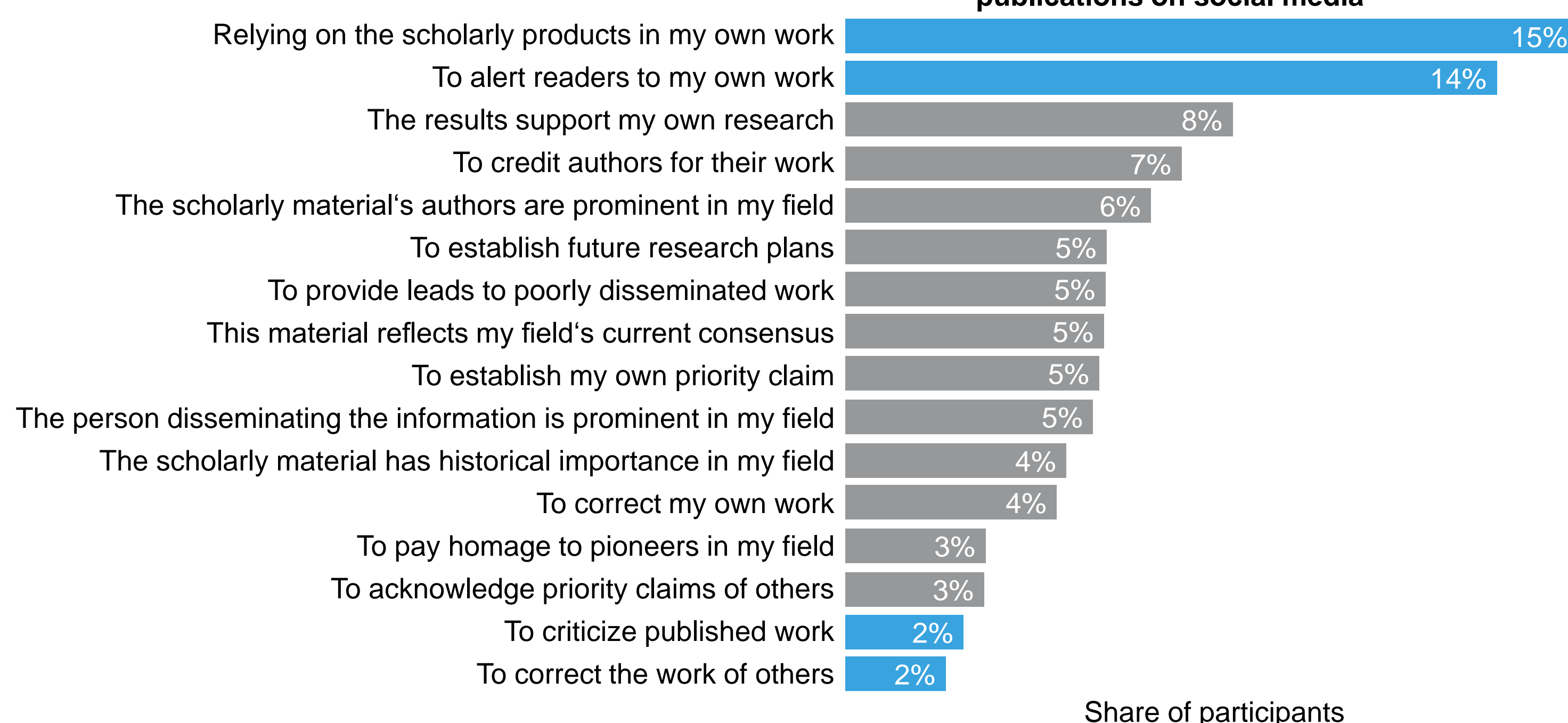
### Main question

*"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, comment, bookmark, upload) with scholarly materials using the following channels."*

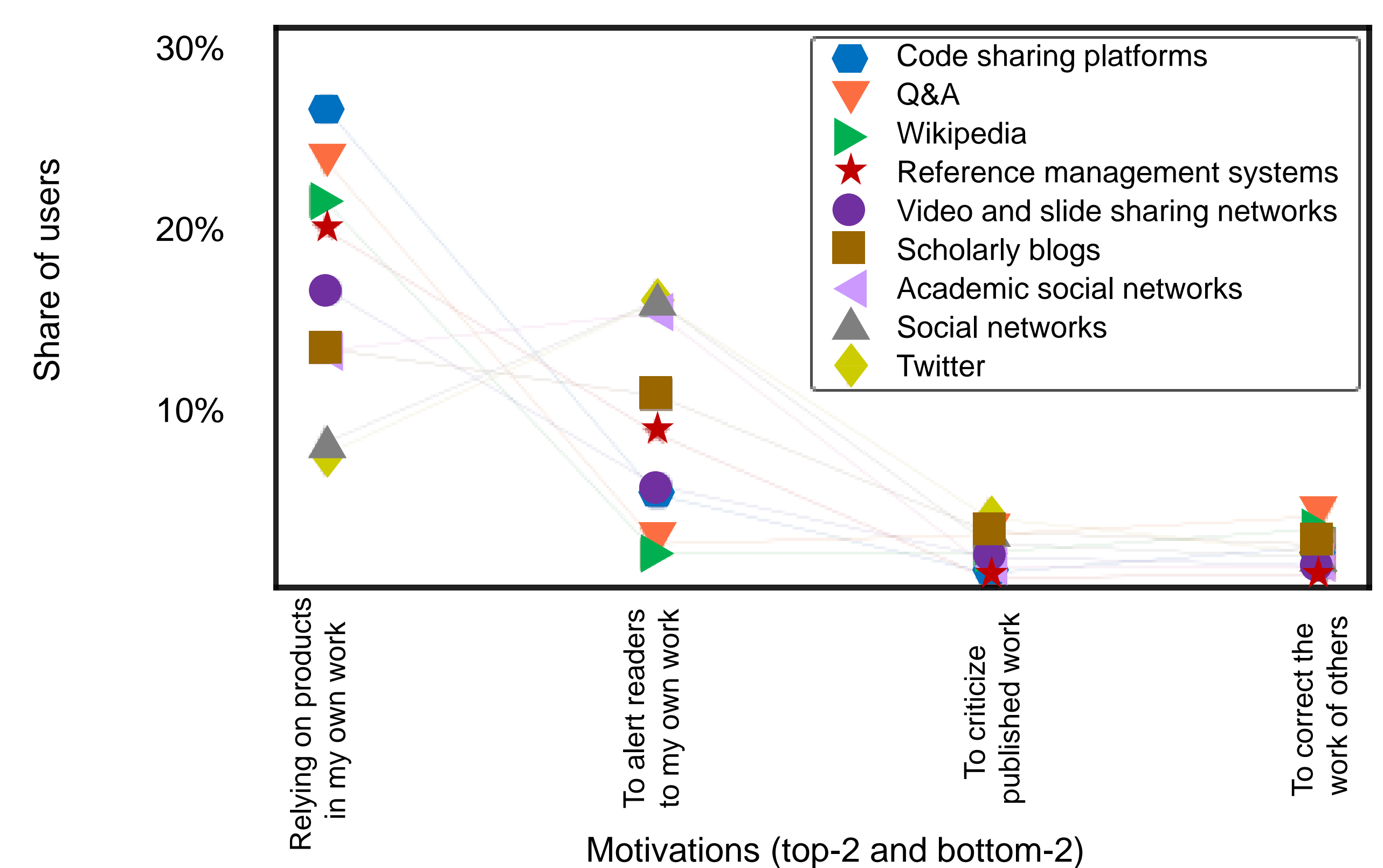
**16 motivations** to select for every platform in a matrix checkbox question. Motivations were based on **common motives of citation**.

### Researchers' motivations for interacting with scholarly products on social media

Likelihood of reasons for interacting with scholarly publications on social media



### Motivations on different platform types



## 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 (Bornmann & Daniel, 2008), **criticizing** and **correcting** the works found on social media are rarely the determining motivations behind interactions.

- Different platforms solve different needs:



## References

- Bornmann, L., & Daniel, H.-D. (2008). What do citation counts measure? A review of studies on citing behavior. *Journal of Documentation*, 64(1), 45-80.
- Brooks, T. A. (1986). Evidence of complex citer motivations. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 37(1), 34-36.
- Cronin, B. (1984). *The Citation Process: The Role and Significance of Citations in Scientific Communication*. London: Taylor Graham.
- Harwood, N. (2009). An interview-based study of the functions of citations in academic writing across two disciplines. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(3), 497-518.

## Acknowledgments

We wish to thank all researchers who helped us by participating in our survey.

This work is part of the DFG-funded research project *\*metrics* (project number: 314727790). Further information on the project can be found on <https://metrics-project.net/>.

### Contact Information:

Address:  
Düsternbrooker Weg 120  
24105 Kiel, Germany



Maryam Mehrazar



Dr. Hadas Shema



Steffen Lemke  
Email: s.lemke@zbw.eu  
Phone: +49-431-8814-648



Prof. Dr. Isabella Peters  
Email: i.peters@zbw.eu  
Phone: +49-431-8814-623

