

**Where do they get their “news”?
Preference for right-wing populist parties
and online news consumption in Germany**

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Background

- More and more people get their news online
- Self-reports of media use have several flaws (Araujo, Wonneberger, Neijens & Vreese, 2017; Guess, 2015; Prior, 2009; Scharrow, 2016), among them recall bias and social desirability bias
- “Digital trace data” used in computational social science lack individual-level information
- Combining survey & digital trace data can address some of the limitations of both data types (Stier, Breuer, Siegers & Thorson, 2019)

Party identification & media use

- *Selective exposure* can be driven by party identification (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2017)
- Party supporters evaluate media more negatively if party elites criticize them (Baum & Gussin, 2008; Ladd, 2011; Smith, 2010)
- Supporters of the German right-wing populist party AfD show lower levels of *trust in the media* (Schindler et al., 2018; Schultz, Jakob, Ziegele, Quiring & Schemer, 2017; Ziegele et al., 2018)

Research question

Do supporters of right-wing populist parties differ from supporters of other parties with regard to their online news consumption?

Web tracking data

- Browsing behavior of participants of a non-probabilistic online access panel of a market research company (*respondi*)
- Data from June 2018 to May 2019
 - $\approx N = 2000$ participants per month
 - ≈ 94 million website visits in total
 - domain-level URLs
- Manual coding of top 5.000 visited domains as *quality print outlets*, *tabloid press*, commercial broadcasting, *public broadcasting*, digital-born media, and *hyperpartisan media*

Survey data

- Online survey with $N = 1347$ complete responses
 - Data collected in July & August 2018
 - $\approx 48\%$ of the sample was female, age range: 16 to 70 ($M = 44.66$, $SD = 13.2$)
- Most survey items taken/adapted from *GLES*, *ALLBUS*, and *Reuters Digital News Report*

Sample

Statistic	Sample Rel. Freq. (%)	Microcensus 2017 Rel. Freq. (%)
<i>Age in years</i>		
.. 16-29	17.28	17.68
.. 30-44	26.92	20.16
.. 45-59	41.11	28.20
.. 60 and older	14.66	33.96
<i>Gender</i>		
.. male	51.89	48.74
.. female	48.11	51.26
<i>Education</i>		
.. low	20.75	37.74
.. intermediate	36.20	30.36
.. high	43.04	31.90
<i>Region of residence</i>		
.. West Germany	76.40	79.31
.. East Germany	23.60	20.69

Variables

- *Dependent variable*
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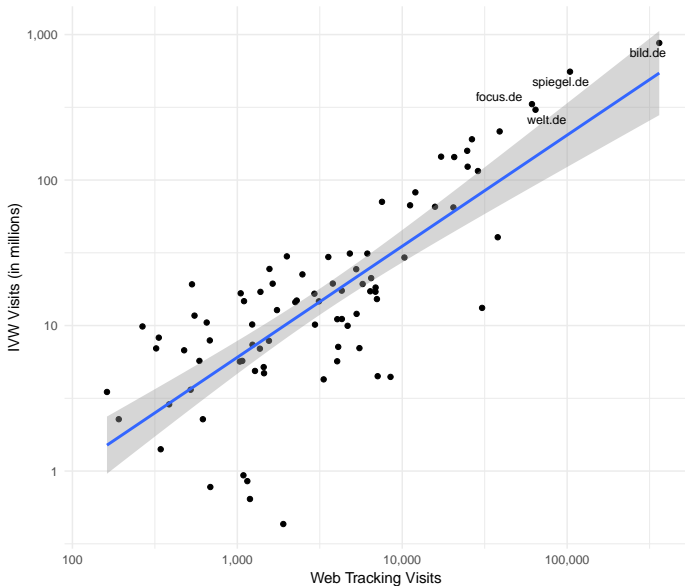
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 - Distribution of variable is skewed → negative binomial regression models
- *Independent variable*
 - Party identification
- *Control variables*
 - Populist attitudes
 - Political ideology (left-right)
 - Trust in media
 - Total number of website visits (logged)
 - Sociodemographics (gender, age, education, income)

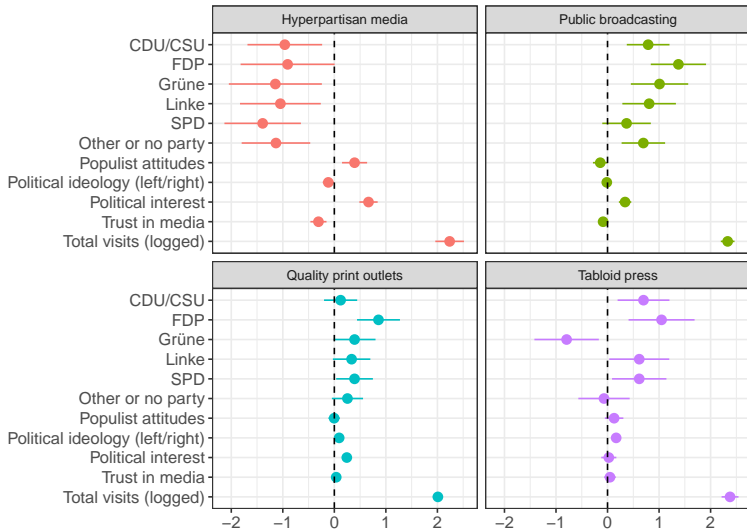
Most visited news domains

Domain	Sessions
bild.de	513,434
zdf.de	151,890
spiegel.de	149,309
welt.de	93,384
focus.de	90,920
ardmediathek.de	68,061
n-tv.de	58,528
express.de	55,875
news-und-nachrichten.de	54,785
stern.de	50,917
mz-web.de	43,411
daserste.de	39,850

Web tracking data



Regression results



Summary

- Supporters of the German right-wing populist party AfD consume fewer public broadcasting and more hyperpartisan news
- Value of observational tracking data (questions on news avoidance might be affected by social desirability bias in survey items on media use)

Outlook

- AfD supporters: Social media as more important news sources? → further exploration of web tracking data
- AfD supporters: Are party cues or source cues (mistrust in the media) the main cause? → survey experiment
- Map news domains on ideological spectrum (left-right)
- Comparisons between countries

Thank you for your attention!

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