Online Communities

Success Factors

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Overview

- Communities
  - Definition and types
  - Application domains
  - Success factors
- Empirical Studies.
  - Method
  - Results
- Conclusions
- Current work

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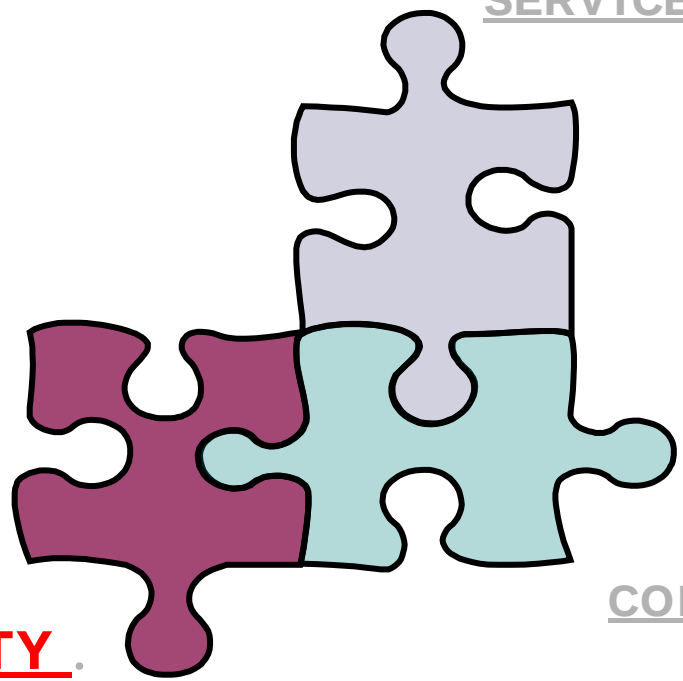
Definition

- Web 2.0



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Definition

- Online Communities
  - Group.
  - Common.
  - Online media

- Rheingold 1994
- Chang, Kannan & Whinston 1999
- Hagel & Armstrong 1997
- Romm, Pliskin & Clarke 1997
- Erickson 1997
- Schubert & Ginsburg 2000
- Lechner & Schmid 2000
- Figallo 1998
- Schubert 1999
- Weiber & Meyer 2000
- Lohse 2002
- Markus 2002
- Fernback & Thomson 1995

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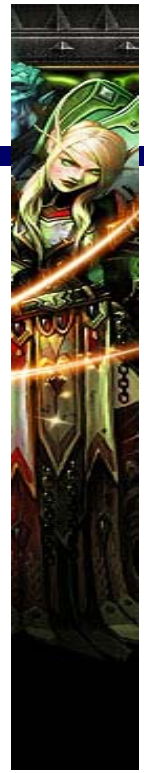
Types



- Types
  - Communities of Practice
  - Communities of Interest
  - Communities of Phantasy
  - Communities of Knowledge
  - Communities of Transactions
- Dimensions
  - commercial/non-commercial
  - open/closed
  - organisational/private

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Application domains

- Relevance in various contexts
  - Private issues/spare time
  - Education: life long learning, advanced training…
  - Business: project work, innovation. …

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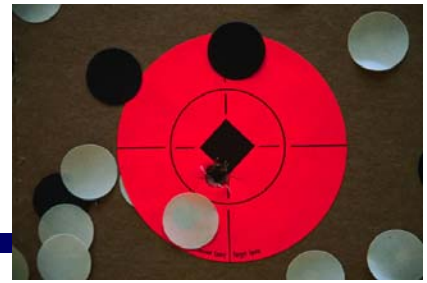
Success Factors



- Community Focus
  - Focus on a topic.
  - Shared understanding
  - Clear goal

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Success Factors

- Community Building
  - Marketing: Attraction of users.
  - Critical mass of users
  - Inclusion of experts
  - Community controlling regarding satisfaction

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Success Factors

- Member Retention
  - Generation of added value.
  - Incentives.
  - Member orientation: meeting needs, interests and expectations

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Success Factors

- Interaction/Networking.
  - Involving members
  - Enabling and supporting interaction, online and offline
  - Atmosphere of trust, openess and mutuality
  - Active moderation
  - Rules of behaviour

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Success Factors

- Content/Services
  - Provide initial content and/or services
  - Up-to-date and high quality content
  - Quality Management
  - Sensitive data management

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Success Factors

- Technology
  - Environment: simple navigation, clarity, stucture
  - Stability and reaction time.

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Empirical Study

Method

- Analysing user behaviour and identifying community success factors

- Four online questionnaires
  - 2 with focus on special community, 2 general
  - Posted in 17 communities
  - 450 respondents

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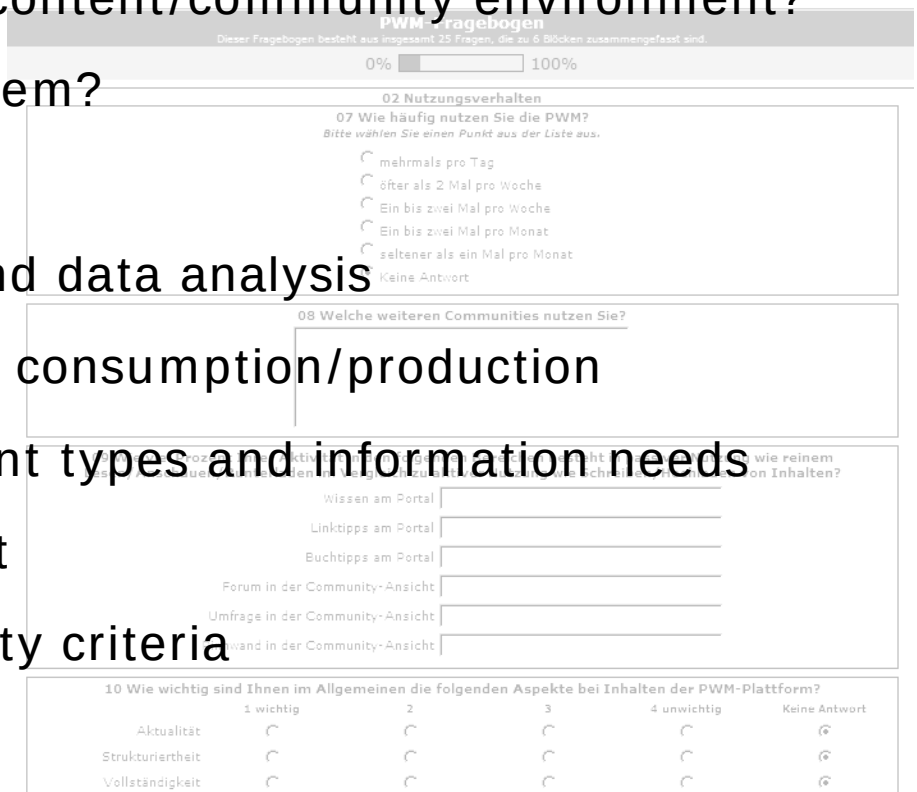
Empirical Study

Method

Empirical Study

Method

- How do users utilise a content/community environment?
- What is important to them?
- Online questionnaire and data analysis
  - Intensity of content consumption/production
  - Preference of content types and information needs
  - Motivation and trust
  - Importance of quality criteria



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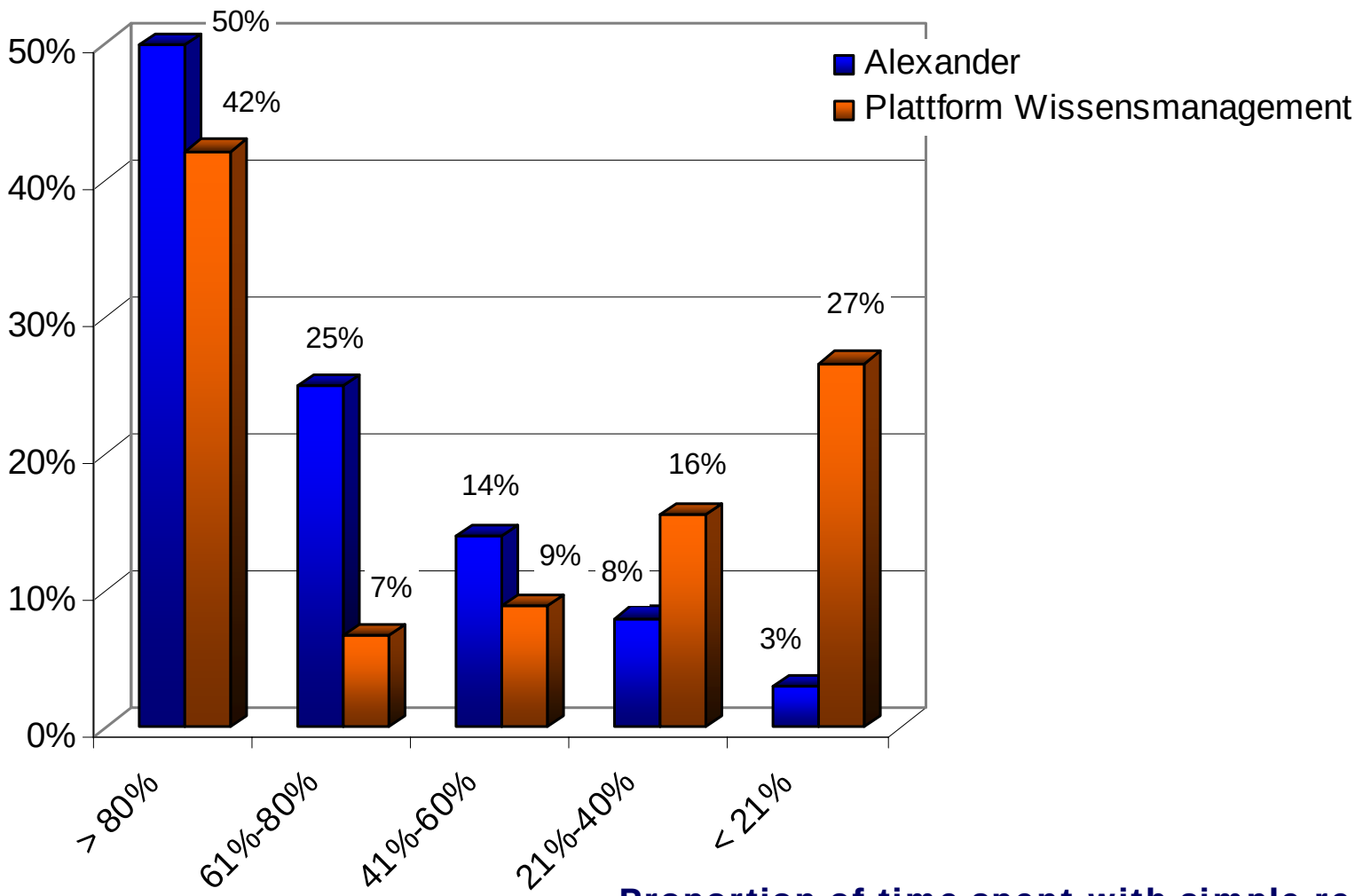
Empirical Study

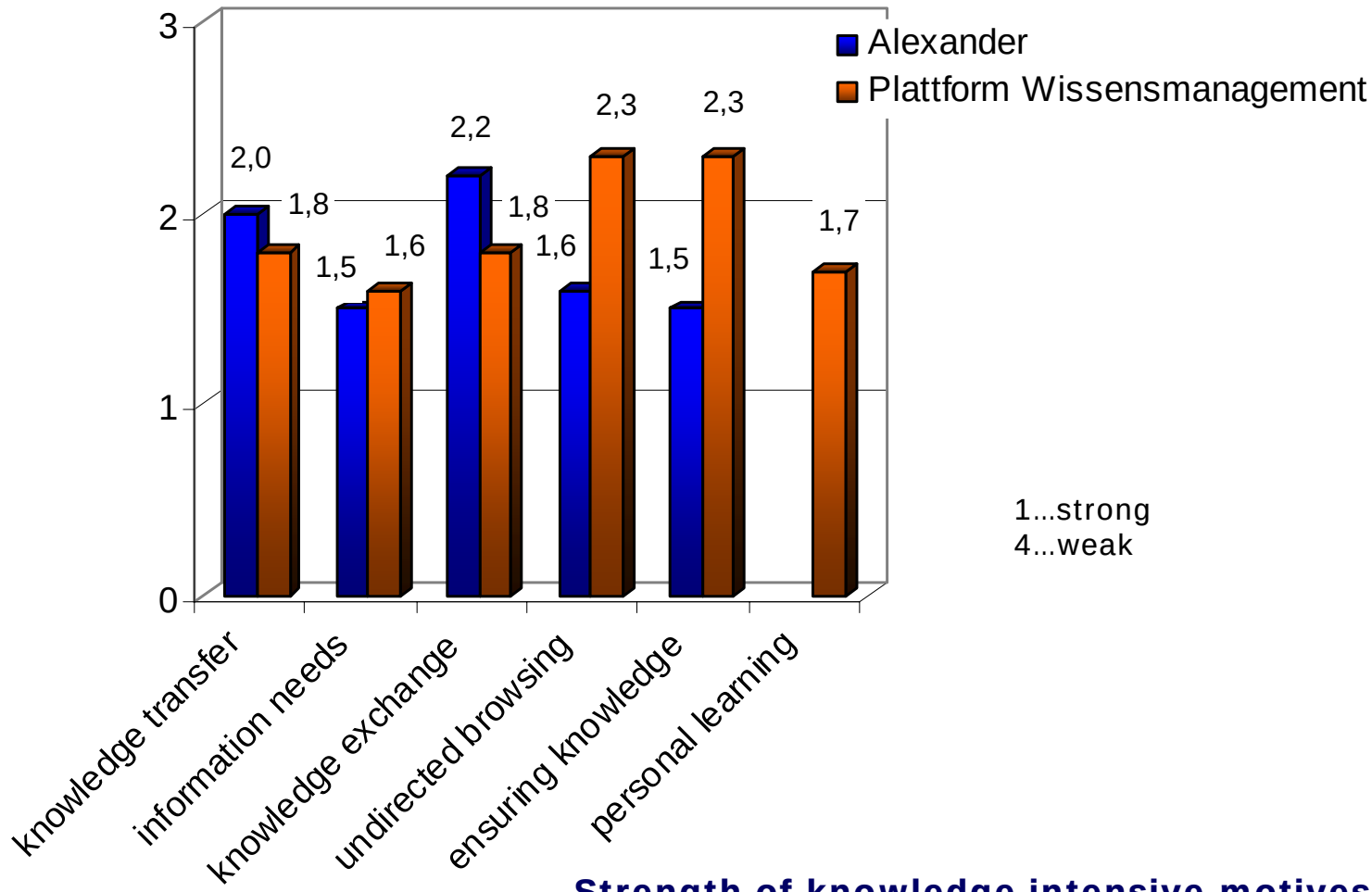
Results



Proportion of time spent with simple reading

Empirical Study

Results

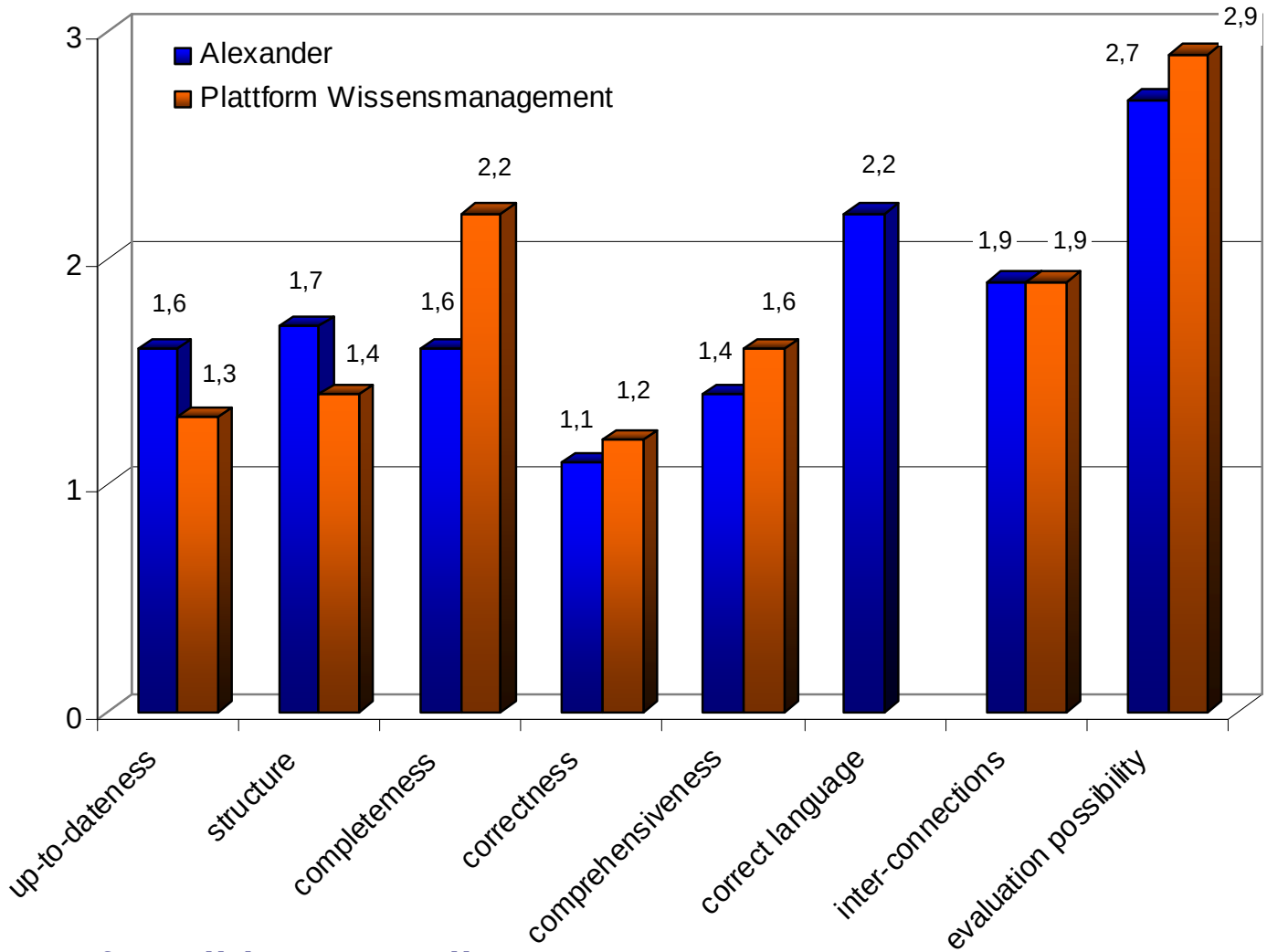


1...strong
4...weak

Strength of knowledge intensive motives

Empirical Study

Results

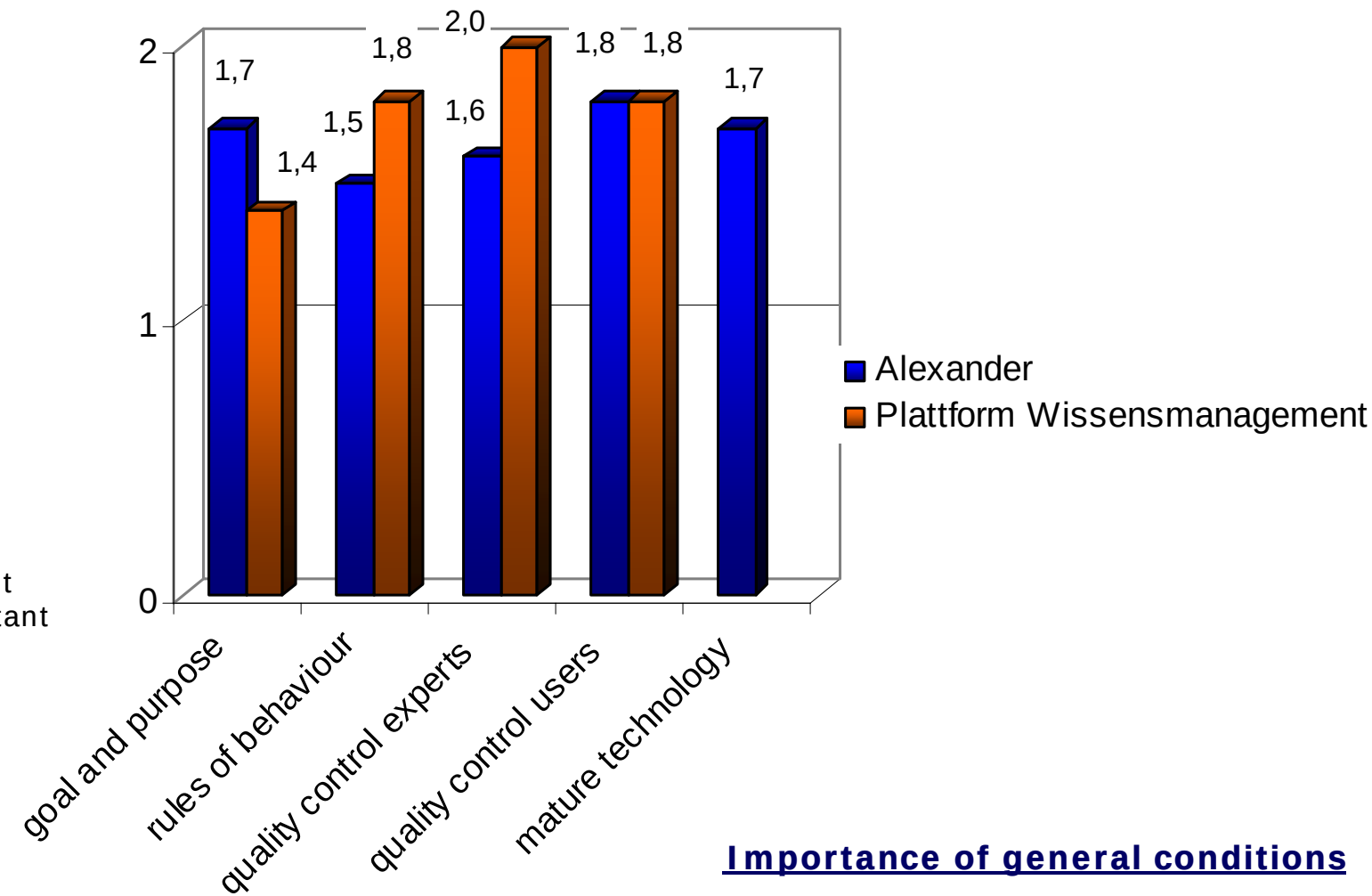


1...important
4...unimportant

Importance of conditions regarding content

Empirical Study

Results

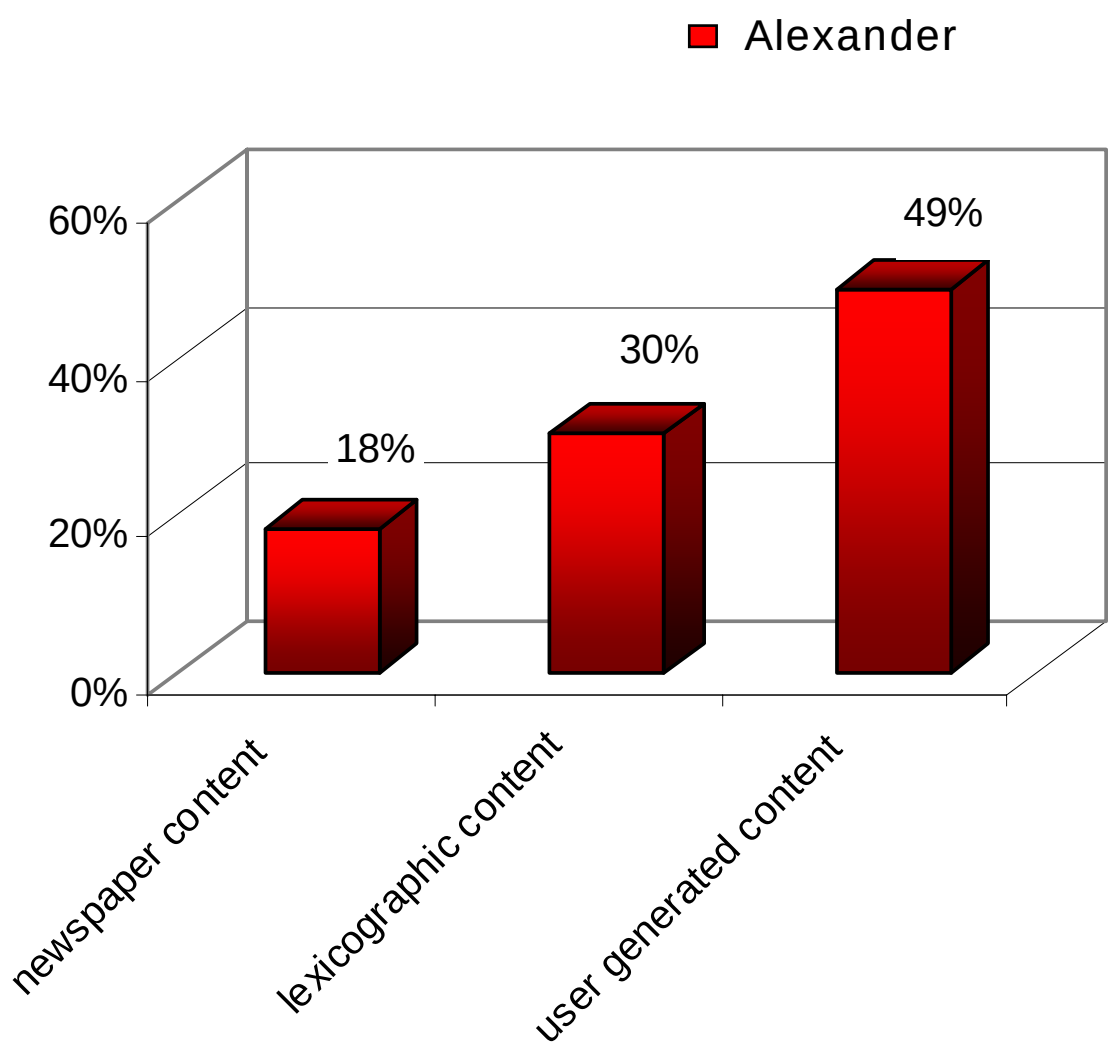


1...important
4...unimportant

Importance of general conditions

Empirical Study

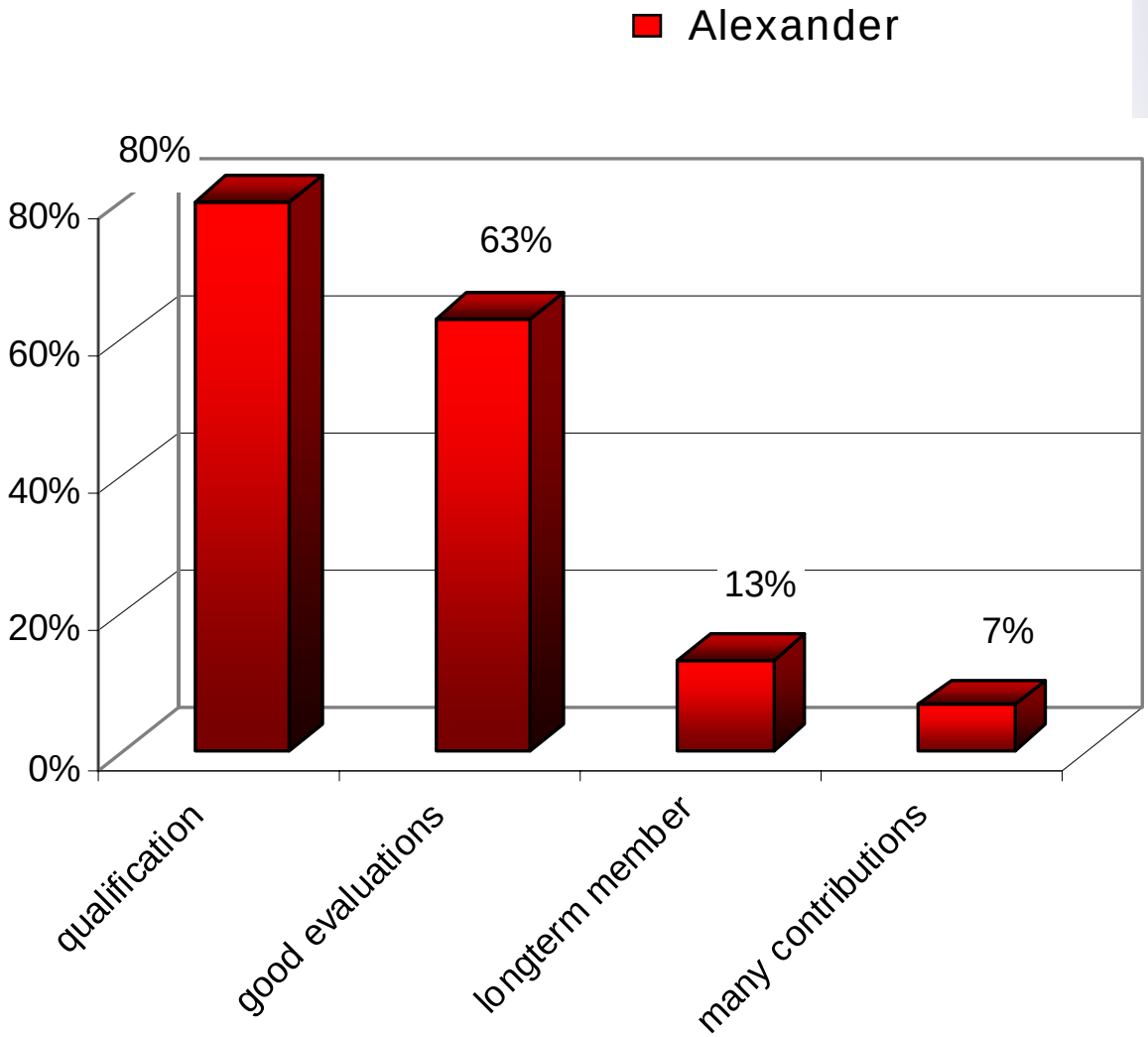
Results



Preference of source

Empirical Study

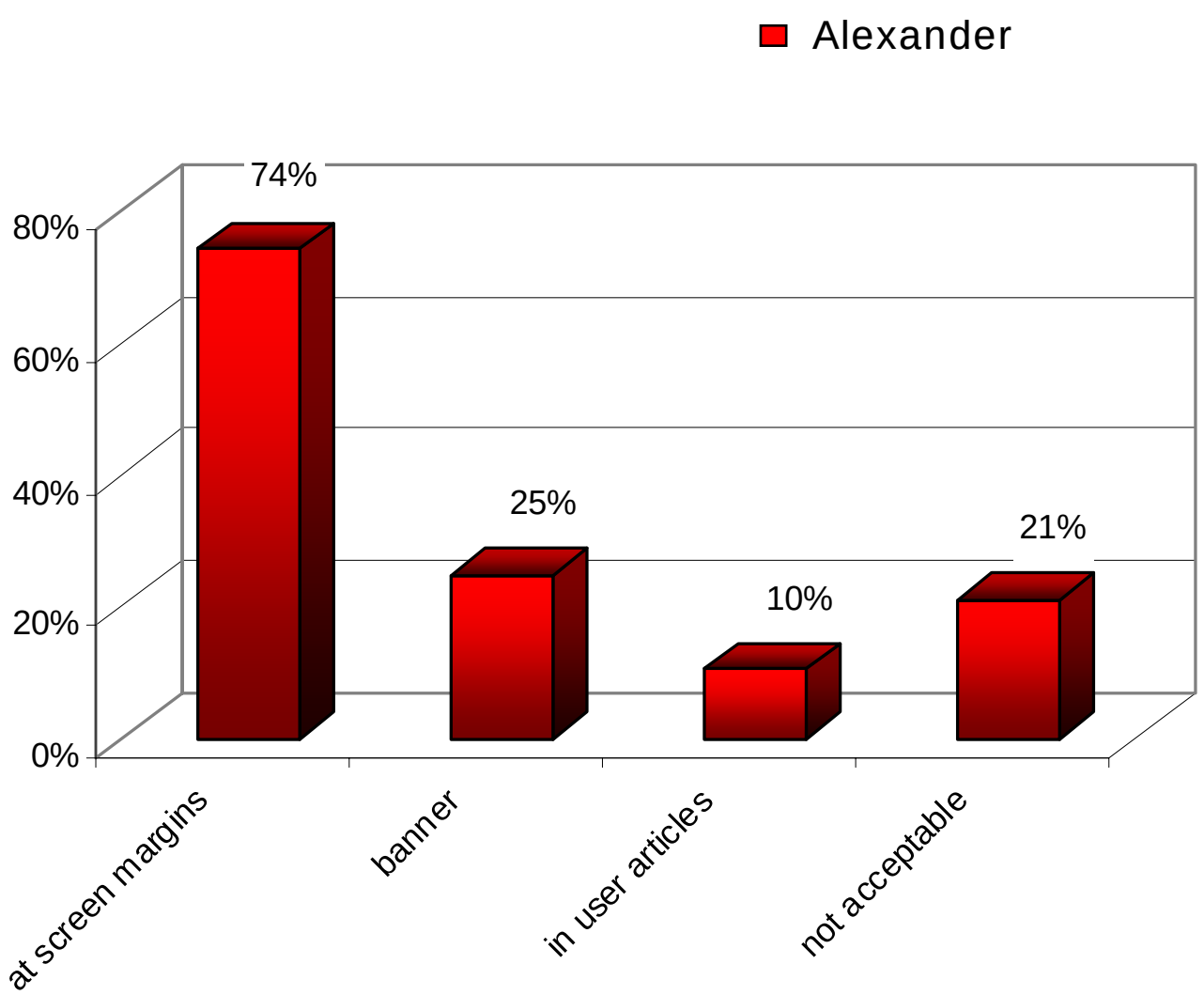
Results



Aspects of trust

Empirical Study

Results

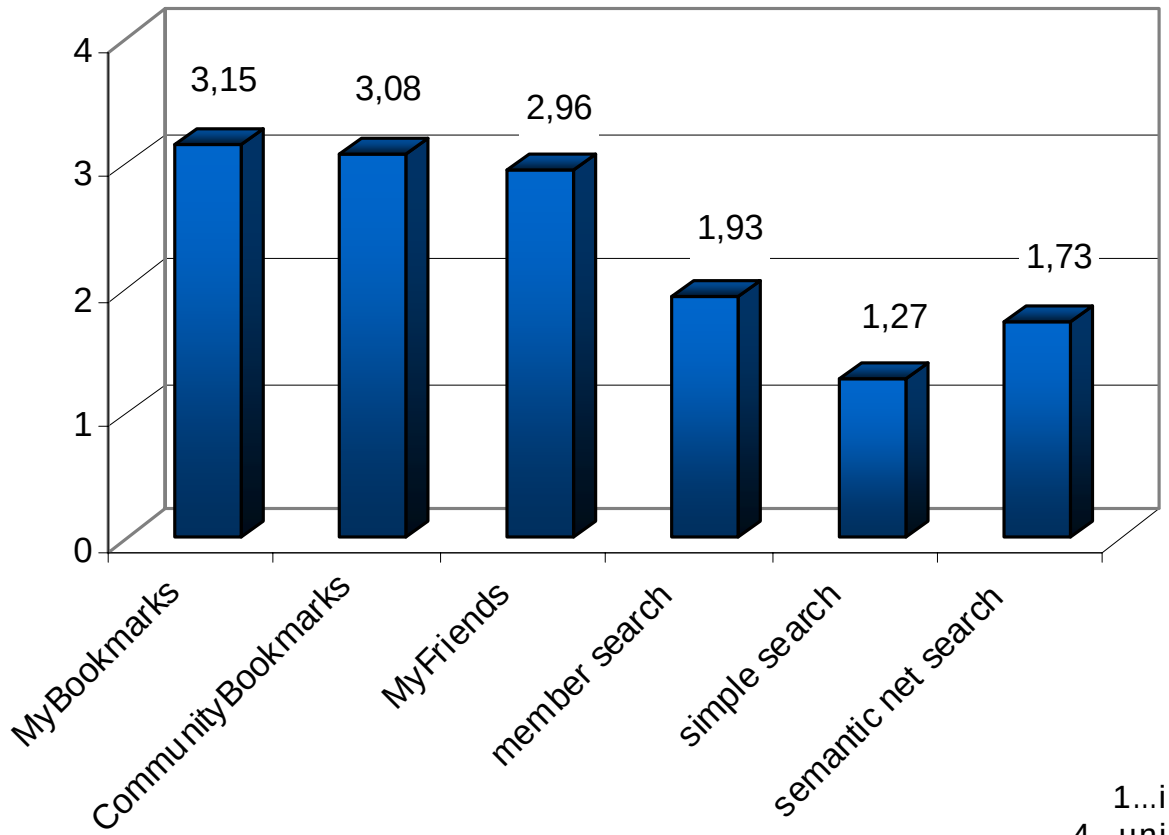


Acceptance of advertisments

Empirical Study

Results

Importance of features



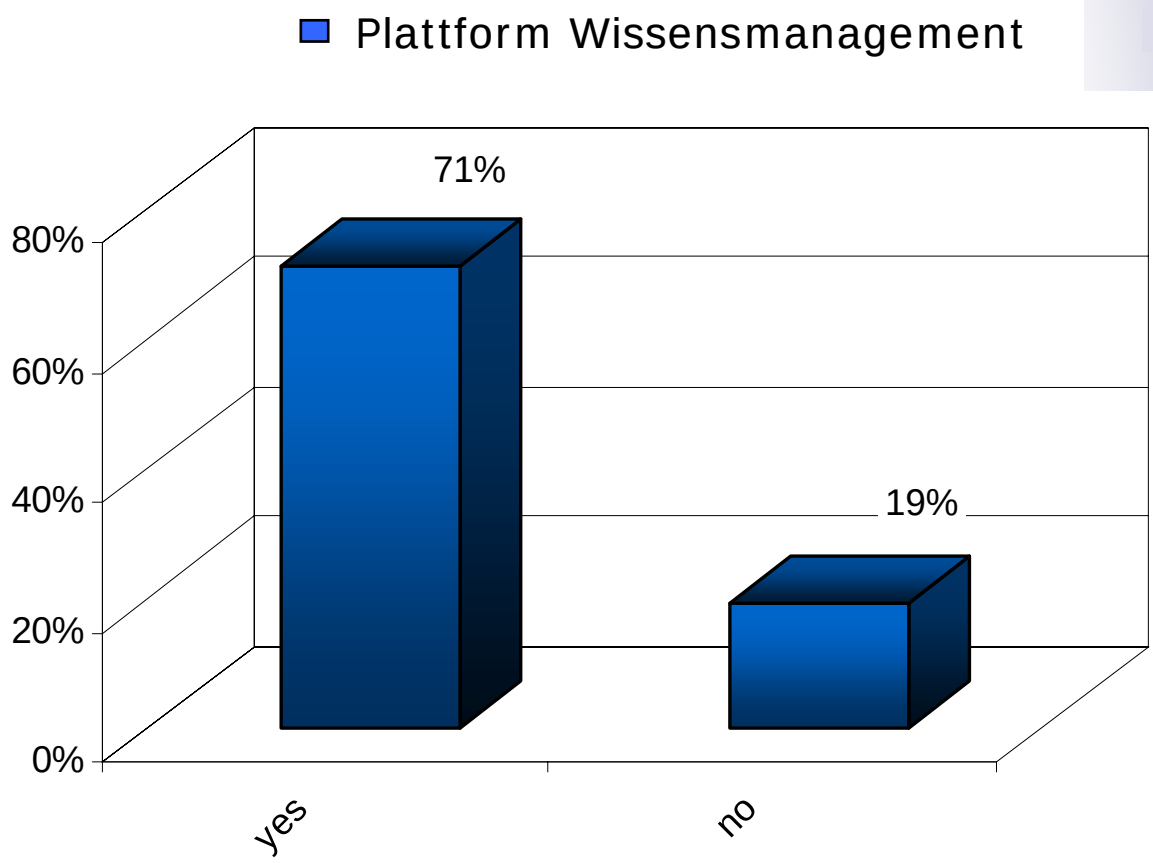
1...important
4...unimportant

Empirical Study

Results

On average 16 members are also personally known.

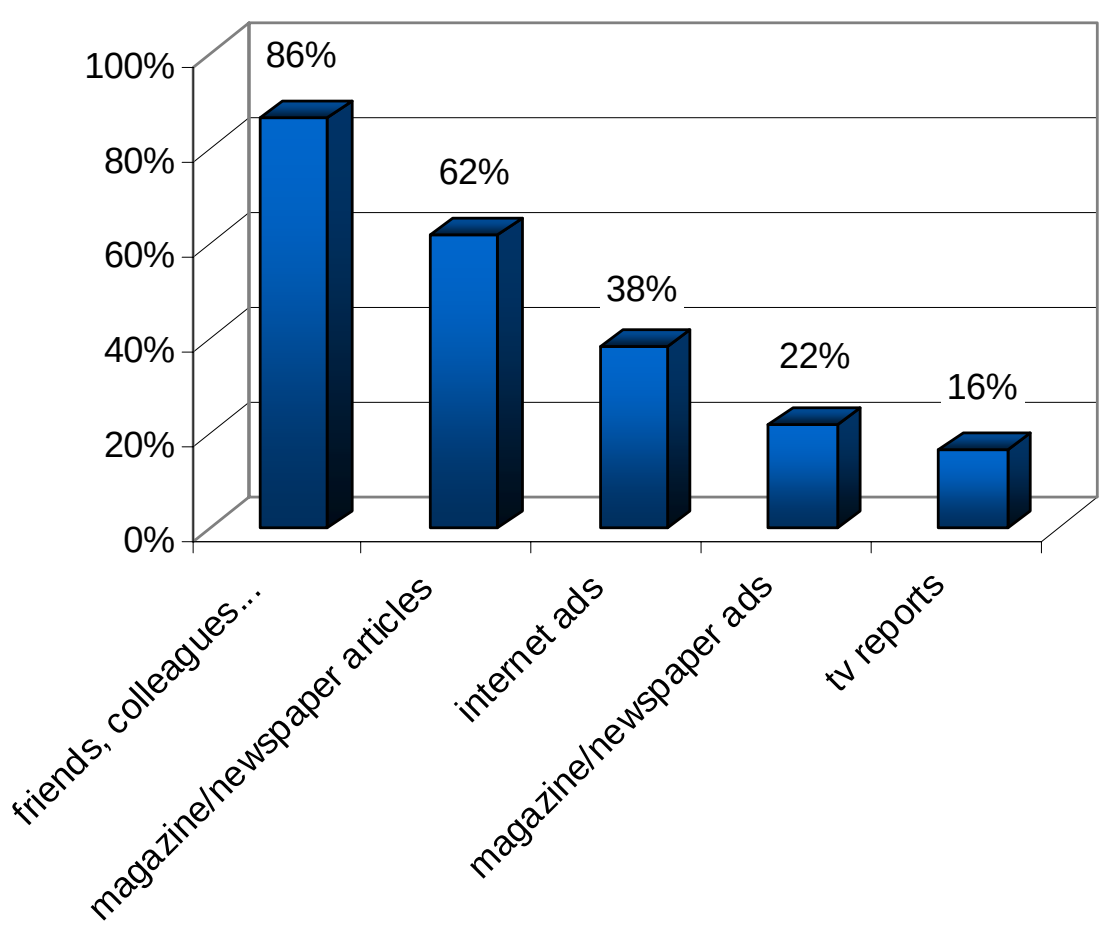
And yes, personal contacts are a reason to stay in the community.



Empirical Study

Results

Importance of marketing channels



Conclusion

- Addressing motives
- Ensuring trust
- Increasing active participation
- Satisfying individual information needs
- Implementing quality control
- Clarifying goals and rules
- Providing good search facilities
- Combining online and offline
- Utilizing users for marketing

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Current work

- Identification of community specific success factors
  - Community of Interest: Stay-Awake, RunnersWorld
  - Community of Phantasy: WoW, …
  - Social Network: StudiVZ, MeinVZ, MySpace
  - Knowledge Community: Wikipedia, YahooClever
- Important features, disturbing factors, motivation…

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Thank you for your attention!

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