



# TROPENTAG 2021

## CONFERENCE REPORT

HOHENHEIM, GERMANY



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## Executive Summary

Tropentag is an interdisciplinary conference on tropical and subtropical agriculture research, natural resource management, and rural development annually hosted by various European universities. In 2021, Tropentag was organised by the University of Hohenheim, Germany, in cooperation with the University of Kassel and Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague.

Six student reporters with diverse academic and personal backgrounds, all enrolled in European University study programs (M.Sc or PhD) were tasked to cover the conference. Of these, 2 were former student reporters. Unlike previous editions, Tropentag 2021 was a first-of-its-kind hybrid conference with most of the activities being attended online via the Whova digital conferencing platform and only a few plenary sessions held Live in Hohenheim. As such, there were less student reporters this year - 6 instead of the usual 12 - with a more dynamic role while covering a virtual conference.

During the 2021 Tropentag reporting, key digital platforms such as the Tropentag blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr and Youtube were mediums used to report. LinkedIn was added as the student reporters agreed that it was an increasingly relevant platform to reach interested career professionals of all ages. The student reporters decided to use Google Drive as a central collaboration tool to share content and information across the 3 different locations.

A 4-day virtual training workshop was held for the student reporters before the conference. The students were taught by a media professional about the practice of journalism, as well as prepared for the coming tasks by deciding on a workflow and which platforms to cover. Since there were less student reporters this year, and since the majority of the program was conducted virtually and streamed on the Whova app and Youtube by the technical team, the student reporters decided to reduce the number of blog posts and place more focus on social media as a way to connect the virtual audience and general public to the event highlights in real time. During the Tropentag 2021, 9 blog entries were published on the Tropentag blog. These were accompanied with 122 photos from the respective Flickr account. Facebook posts generated 20 new page likes and 238 page visits, generating increased engagement through clicks and likes, comments and shares. In total there were 60 tweets with #Tropentag2021 on Twitter. The tweets from Tropentag account were 33 with 11,300 impressions, 5134 profile visits and 43 new followers up to the end of September 2021. The newly created LinkedIn account gained 61 new followers and 75 unique visits in the month of the event. 16 posts on Instagram gained 39 new followers and reached 4,082 unique accounts within the month of September. 5 videos were posted on the Tropentag YouTube channel and were viewed 300 times in total.

The following report provides details of both the activities of the Student Reporters during the workshops and conference, followed by a detailed look at the measures of interaction on Social Media.

# 1. Introduction

The theme for Tropentag 2021 was “Towards shifting paradigms in agriculture for a healthy and sustainable future” and covered thematic sessions ranging through the entire agricultural, biological, and international development sectors. The diversity of the student reporters’ backgrounds reflected this broad range, and each was able to cover the topics they found most interesting or of which they were most knowledgeable. Tropentag was also an opportunity to learn more about a discipline that the student reporters were maybe weaker in.

Each reporting department (LinkedIn, photography, etc) was headed by the student most familiar with that platform or tools needed to do a good job. The online nature of the conference made social media both more important and also more difficult to effectively cover.

## 2. Workshops

Unlike the previous year’s preparatory workshops, the workshop sessions this year were held completely online as Zoom sessions and were given a window of four days alternatively.

**DAY 1:** The first day started with a casual introduction round of all the participants. ATSAF Chair, [Folkard Asch](#) introduced this year's theme "Paradigm shifts" and made a call to action about the importance of involving younger generations in leading the conversations around development-oriented research. In addition, as opposed to last years' conferences, it was recommended to mention or highlight the donors at least once. A short ice-breaking activity was conducted to have a reporting mock-up experience and get to know each other. First impressions of the tasks needed to be done were taken into consideration and a small introduction of the techniques/software needed to be used were introduced.

**DAY 2:** The second day started with the introduction of Journalism/media and its purpose for society by a German Freelance journalist [Ralph Dickerhof](#) whose suggestions for writing Blog posts were really a helping hand. Among some of the tools introduced included the conference platform, WHOVA APP and PADLET, to share and discuss ideas among ourselves.

**DAY 3:** On the second last day, Tasks/ roles were divided among the participants according to their interests/ expertise and singularly discussed all the events in detail. In addition, we discussed relevant communication channels to use during the conference (e.g., Blog site, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Flickr).

**DAY 4:** On the last day of training, we had the official introduction to the conference-platform WHOVA from [Eric](#) (Kassel engine room team). Expectations of student reporters from the Tropentag 2021 conference were discussed on the last day, and a feedback round was carried out about the workshop training.

### 3. Tropentag 2021: Media Coverage

#### a. Blogging

In the past, the blogging aspect took centre stage for Tropentag student reporters. Due to the hybrid nature of the Tropentag 2021 conference, social media became more popular as a way of connecting the speakers and attendees from all over the globe. The blog also had stepped away from the limelight due to lack of email responses from speakers. The hybrid nature of 2021's conference meant student reporters could not corner speakers and scientists for interviews the way students in the years 2019 and previous could. With an email response rate of only 30%, the bloggers had little to work with regarding highlighting specific research projects. The lack of in-person events also meant that many presentations had technical errors and limited photo opportunities. The 2021 bloggers had to rely more on royalty-free stock photos to make up for the lack of in-person meetings and presentations, in order to avoid a boring slideshow of PowerPoint slides.

#### b. Photography

"We take photos as a return ticket to a moment otherwise gone". (Thurmes, K ). The essential part of any event captures the movements as a remembrance to it. In this year's Tropentag conference, the on-site visuals to be captured were limited in number due to its hybrid nature. However, some of the on-Screen shots were taken, saved and shared among the participants and community from all over the world.

Unlike previous years, the photography team was the only student reporter responsible for capturing, saving, editing, watermarking, transferring between devices, sharing among other reporters for social media and at the end uploading them at Flickr. The devices used for photography this time were own mobile phones/notebooks for screen capturing, thus maintaining the code of conduct/Ethics of work.

#### Challenges & Recommendations

- Communication among the other student reporter's was a work in itself as we were placed at 3 different locations working remotely at this year's conference.
- Each among us worked as a whole team, including taking photos of the events happening at other locations simultaneously.
- Photography has its essence of having candid moments of people meeting, greeting and laughing at the same time with each other. Unfortunately, no such thing happened this year, creating a feeling of pettiness itself to the photographer.
- Focusing every single moment in workshops, seminars, recorded sessions, presentations and live sessions was indeed stressful for a single person to work on.

Organising a conference with approximately 800-900 participants with multiple sessions running simultaneously online was no less than a wonder. Challenges, however, are overcome by putting little more effort into each matter. The challenges mentioned above in photography were due to the conference's pandemic and hybrid nature. But the last point can be covered by having more support in each section for the upcoming conferences. General problems like lightning, posture, hardware and stage setting were not problematic/applicable during this year's conference.

#### Analytics

Below is the table showing some of the analytics in photography for this year's Tropentag conference.

Date	14.09.2021	15.09.2021	16.09.2021	17.09.2021	Total
Pictures Generated	25	93	84	48	<b>250</b>
Pictures Uploaded (after WM)	08	53	51	10	<b>122</b>

**Table 1: Photographs analytics at the Tropentag 2021**

### c. Interviews

#### i. Video Interviews

As opposed to previous years, student reporters had a chance to reach out to keynote speakers in advance to schedule interviews before the Conference took place (for an analytics overview, see table 2). The main goal was to generate brief content about the keynote's topics. At the end of the interviews, all interviewees were asked the same question, "What does Tropentag 2021 mean to you" to merge their responses and broadcast them on the last day of the conference. Videos were edited as soon as they were produced and published in Tropentag's youtube channel, LinkedIn, and embedded in the Blogs (previous coordination with the Blogging team is necessary).

#### Recommendations:

- Make previous research on the keynote's profile and topic of research to be able to generate questions that are engaging for them.
- If recording in person, it is advisable to work in teams of 2, for carrying equipment, set-up support, etc. In addition, a prior material-check (a day before) should be conducted to ensure a smooth interview recording. Materials needed were previously discussed and booked through ATSAF (Video recorder, tripod, memory cards, etc.) and a background poster (optional).
- If conducting the interview online, make sure the screen recording method used produces high quality videos.
- Although interviews might run longer, it is not suggested that they should be more than 2 min.
- Make an effort to include the theme of the conference in the questions asked.

Name	Role	Location	Video link	Views	Average playback time
Ingo Grass	Keynote speaker	In person, Hohenheim	<a href="https://youtu.be/gowBwQ_C8zA">https://youtu.be/gowBwQ_C8zA</a>	44	1:59
Patrick Worms	Keynote speaker	In person,	<a href="https://youtu.be/T4YpFH8WOoY">https://youtu.be/T4YpFH8WOoY</a>	70	1:39

Prof. Dr. Mizeck Chagunda	Tropentag 21 Host	Via Zoom	<a href="https://youtu.be/I8yC5a_qadY">https://youtu.be/I8yC5a_qadY</a>	46	1:18
Folkard Asch	Chairperson, ATSAF	In person, Hohenheim	<a href="https://youtu.be/2Mo4470SL04">https://youtu.be/2Mo4470SL04</a>	30	1:35

**Table 2: Video interview analytics**

## ii. Audio Interviews

Name	Role	Location	Video link	Views	Average playback time
Prof. Bohdan Lojka	Tropentag 2022 organizer	In-person, Prague	<a href="https://youtu.be/Qa1GaVY9s6M">https://youtu.be/Qa1GaVY9s6M</a>	48	5:37

**Table 3: Audio interview analytics**

## d. Videos

The University of Hohenheim was the host institution this year and fortunately the opening/closing broadcasting took place in-person. This offered the opportunity for the student reporters that were based in Stuttgart to take part and capture real footage. The brief occasions where the student reporters could generate video content were the following:

- During the In-person opening ceremony: The attendees were some of the keynote speakers, organizers, and a small audience (up to 10 people).
- During the refreshments break
- During the closing ceremony, only 3 speakers were present, few audience members and the scholarship awardees.

## Challenges & Recommendations

- Before the conference: Perhaps reaching out to audience members from different parts of the world and using merged quotes would have been an engaging way to interact and focus on the theme of the conference.
- During the conference: Screenshots and screen recordings of the workshops and sessions together with some quotes could be a potential source of footage for generating a "Day overview" video during the conference. However, the quality would not be good and previous coordination with the other student reporters would have been necessary to make sure the snapshot contents are diverse and engaging.

- After the conference: thoughts on conference highlights from the audience, organizers, keynote speakers would have been ideal but due to the small student reporters team, this was difficult to organize. We were only able to gather thoughts from Folkard Asch.

Name	Content	Video location
Student reporters intro	During the conference opening remarks made by Folkard Asch regarding the student reporter program, a 2-min video was produced to showcase each of the student reporters and their reporting location.	ATSAF USB
Student reporters wrap-up	Played during the conference closing statements made by Marcus Giese. Included video snapshots, quotes, screenshots, etc.	ATSAF USB

**Table 4: Additional videos produced**

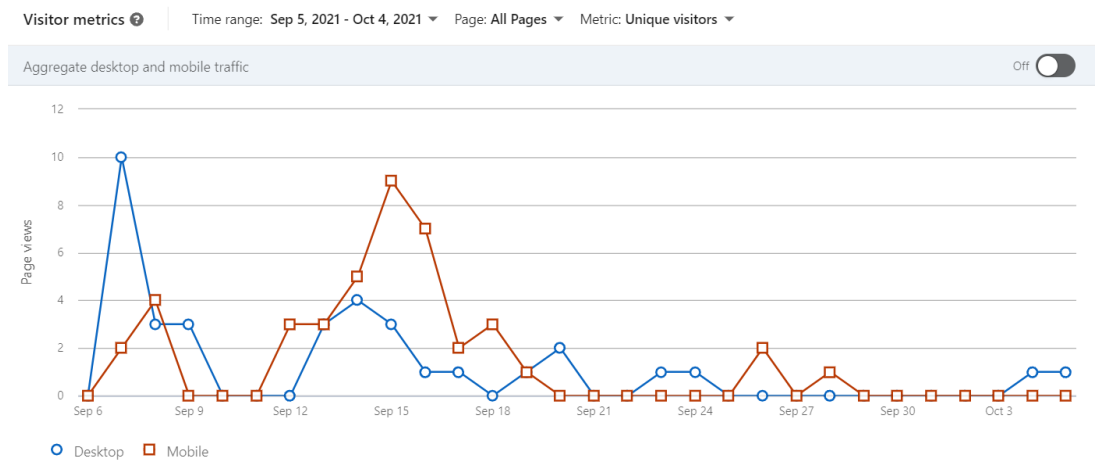
#### e. Social Media

##### i. LinkedIn

LinkedIn joined Tropentag's lineup of social media this year. With 300 million active monthly users, LinkedIn is the most popular professional social media platform. It is an effective way to reach niche industry audiences. Professionals use LinkedIn to network, share their work projects, and find jobs. As a professional development conference, it is imperative that Tropentag maintain a presence on LinkedIn.

The page was started on 6 September 2021, a few weeks before the 2021 conference start date; the following metrics and demographic data were gathered from the Analytics tool available to page administrators.





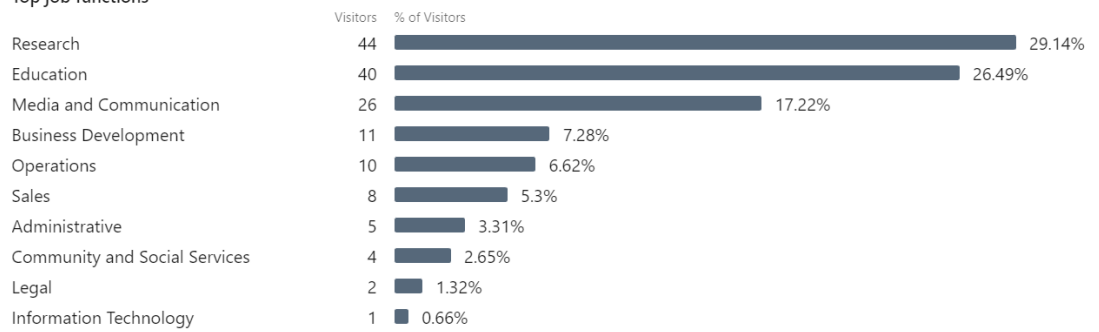
**Figure 1. Visitors metrics on LinkedIn**



**Figure 2. Follower metrics on LinkedIn**

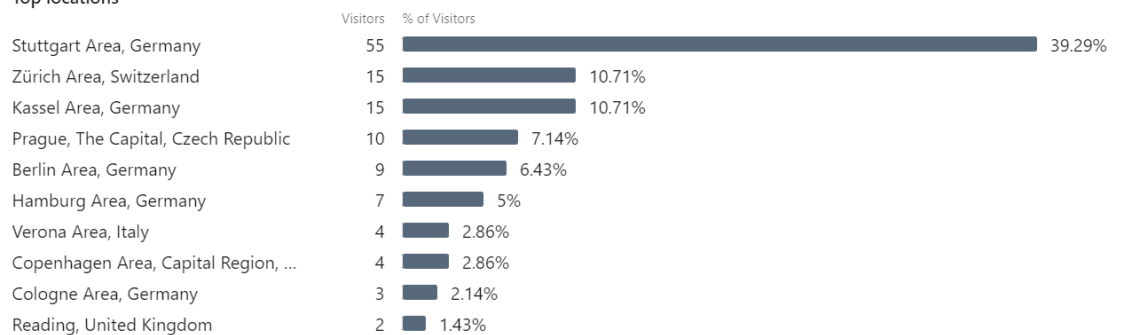
The number of unique visitors and new followers spiked in the page's founding, and then again a spike during the conference. Because Tropentag is an annual event, the same traffic patterns can be expected in the coming years. In order to promote the page all year round, or at least extend the period of time that visits and new follows spike, we recommend posting regularly, about monthly. When the next year's conference opens submissions open, then the posts can be more frequent. LinkedIn allows pages to publish text posts, videos, photos, polls, and external article links, so there are many options for content. Visitor demographics allow administrators to know what kind of professionals are visiting their page.

## Top job functions



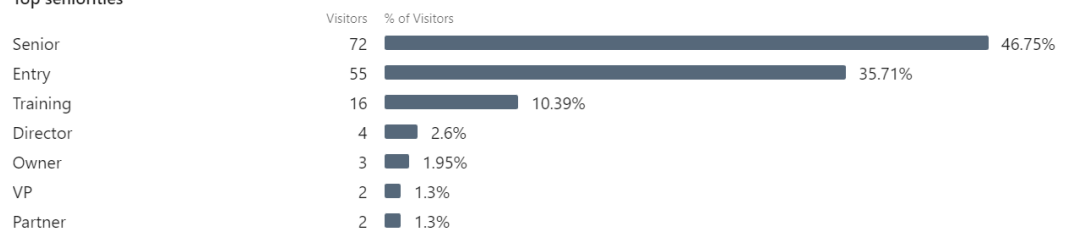
**Figure 3. Visitor demographics for top job function on LinkedIn**

## Top locations



**Figure 4. Visitor demographics for top locations on LinkedIn**

## Top seniorities

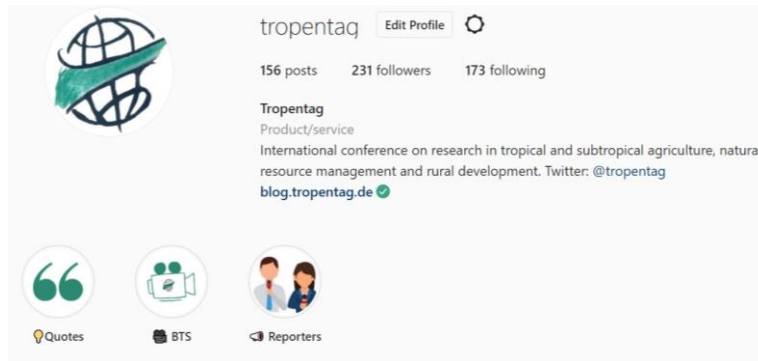


**Figure 5. Visitor demographics for top seniorities on LinkedIn**

Predictably, most Tropentag visitors were in the research and education sectors and from Stuttgart. As the conference moves to its various locations each year, the visitor demographics may change to reflect the new host cities. While LinkedIn provides options to advertise pages across the platform to targeted demographics, we do not recommend using advertising. Tropentag is an established conference and will gain followers as long as it advertises internally to speakers and attendees before, during, and after the conference. Scientists need to self-promote, and LinkedIn provides that opportunity; Tropentag needs only to be available for tagging in posts. LinkedIn may be the lowest-maintenance social media page available to businesses and conferences.

## ii. Instagram

Instagram is among the social media platforms that currently has more than 1 billion users, mostly being youth from 13 to 44 years. The platform allows sharing posts as pictures, videos and reels. Moreover, they have story sessions (Fig. 8) where users can share the moments for 24 hours and thereafter may opt to pin as the highlights on their profiles. The current account preview (Fig. 6) shows that the account has 231 followers. In total there were 16 posts on Instagram, gained 39 new followers and reached about 4,082 user active accounts within the month of September 2021.



Username: @tropentag  
Hashtag: #Tropentag2021  
Total posts with hashtag: 60 posts  
New followers: 167  
Number of posts: 16  
• 12 pictures  
• 3 videos  
• 1 reel  
Number of stories: 14

Figure 6. Current Tropentag Instagram account preview

The statistics show that each post reached more than 100 active user accounts during the conference. For example,

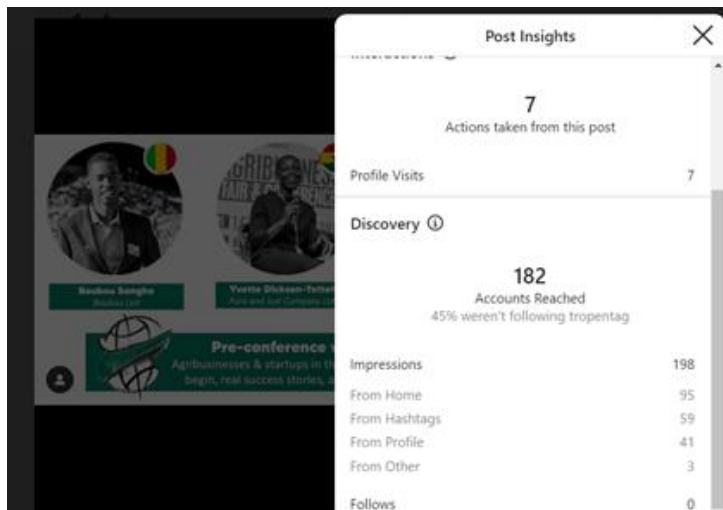


Figure 7 shows that 182 accounts were reached by just one post, whereby about 45% were not following the Tropentag account. Moreover, there were about 198 impressions from the post; 95 were obtained from the home preview, 59 from the hashtag, 41 from profile visit, and 3 from other means.

Figure 7. Tropentag

Instagram account post insights

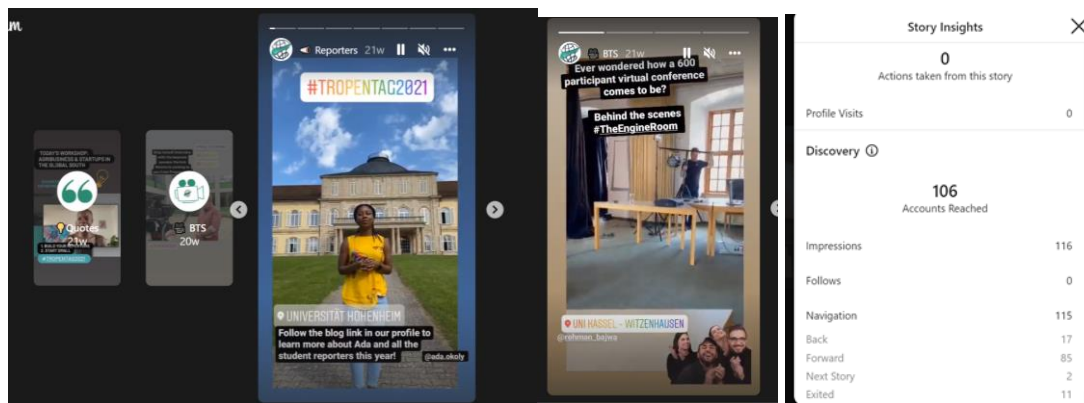


Figure 8. Preview of the Tropentag stories on Instagram account

## Recommendations

There is active engagement with the audience during the conference. However, the engagement drops after the conference. Therefore, it is recommended to continue to interact to make the Tropentag account active all the year around.

### iii. Twitter

Twitter is among the global social media platforms used by many reputable leaders worldwide. Currently, it has more than 290.5 million active users, more than 55% of users being youth aged between 18 and 34 years old. The platform allows sharing posts as pictures and videos. In figure 10, it shows that there were 60 tweets with #Tropentag2021 on Twitter platform; 33 were tweets from Tropentag account.



Username: @tropentag  
Hashtag: #Tropentag2021  
Total tweets with hashtag: 60 posts  
New followers in September 2021: 43  
Number of tweets: 33

Twitter account view

Figure 9. The current Tropentag

## SEP 2021 SUMMARY

Tweets  
**33**

Tweet impressions  
**11.3K**

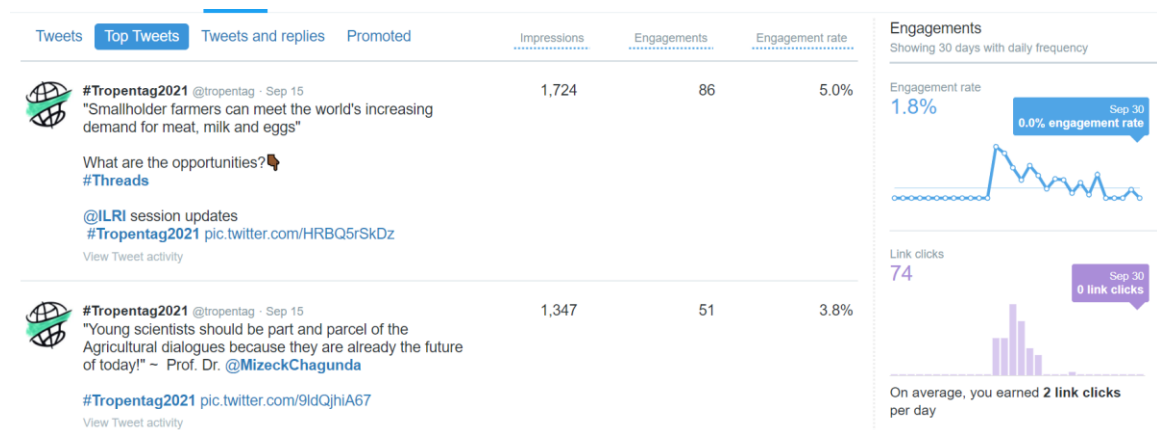
Profile visits  
**5,134**

Mentions  
**85**

New followers  
**43**

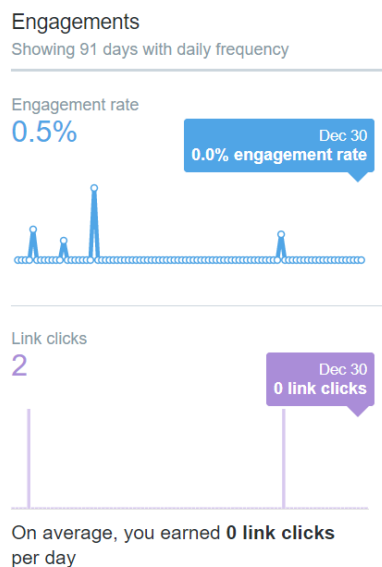
Generally, the Tropentag account gained 11,300 impressions, 5134 profile visits and 43 new followers up to the end of September 2021.

**Figure 10. Twitter account insights in September 2021**



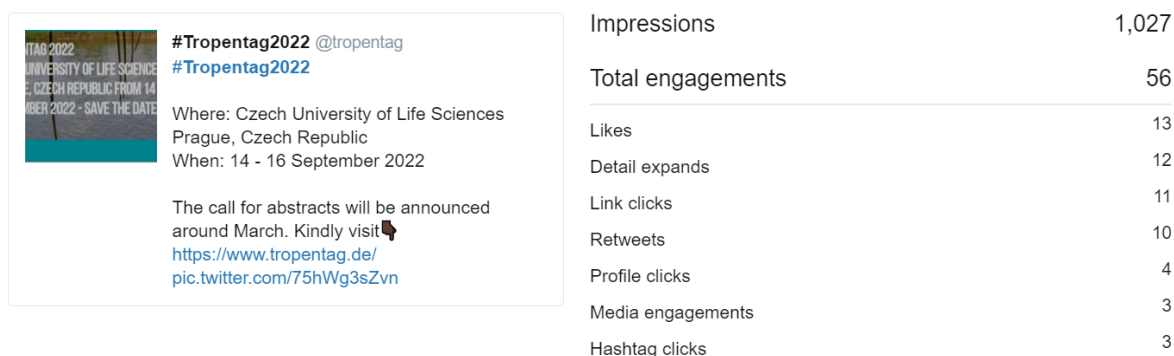
**Figure 11. Top tweets insights in September 2021**

## Post-conference Twitter account review



Post conference analysis shows that there was a drop of engagement of the Twitter account (Fig. 12) from October to December, 2021. However, the engagement rate was increasing in February 2022 (Fig. 1) after tweeting about to get prepared for Tropentag 2022. The tweet gained about 1027 impressions with 11 link clicks for the Tropentag website..

**Figure 12. The status of the Twitter account after conference**



**Figure 13. The status of the Twitter account in February 2022**

### Recommendations

There is active engagement with the audience during the conference. However, the engagement drops after the conference. Therefore, it is recommended to continue to interact with the audience on Twitter to make the Tropentag account alive even after the conference.

### Facebook

The conference page on Facebook ([Tropentag Conference](#)) was used to publish the reporters' outputs as well as to highlight the live events of the conference. Eighteen posts and dozens of stories were published, including videos, photos, quotes, and links to other social media platforms such as Youtube and Soundcloud. We observed that the reach to the audience on Facebook was less than the reach on Twitter and Instagram. This is possibly due to the Facebook algorithm, which considers the Facebook page as a business page while the account on Instagram is considered as a personal account. Linking the Instagram account to the Facebook page was a good idea that saved effort and time, where every post on Instagram can be automatically published on Facebook. Hashtags such as #tropentag2021 were always used in the published posts. Future Student Reporters can consider tagging the conference participants since it could bring more engagement and shares.

### Soundcloud

In addition to LinkedIn, Tropentag joined a new social media platform which is Soundcloud ([Tropentag Conference](#)). Soundcloud is the world's largest online community of artists, bands, and audio creators. The aim of creating an account on this platform is to share future audio content of the conference such as audio interviews and broadcasts. As a free user on a basic plan, we can upload up to 3 hours of audio; this means around 36 interviews with 5 minutes average for each. One audio interview was published this year and we reached 56 plays which are good for a starting account. Future Student Reporters can consider assigning the audio content responsibility to one of the team members who has basic knowledge of broadcast and audio editing.

## Flickr

Flickr platform is essentially used for uploading the pictures after being watermarked for the general public to have access through. Tropentag has had its presence on Flickr since the last 11 years and posts photos in the account. Luckily this year, the Watermarking of photos was quite time saving after buying the premium package of the software [Visual watermark](#). This was really helpful as it's primarily used for watermarking and one can watermark the photos in a bulk amount. Thanks to the ATSAF e. V. team for having it this time.

During and after the conference, we could already be able to see the impact of our work as some of the watermarked photos were shared either directly from Flickr or after downloading on different social media platforms. In spite of that, the after effects on Flickr were quite amazing which led to the increased number of viewers on the uploaded photos.

Unfortunately, due to some technical restrictions, we weren't able to show the actual conference day statistics as Flickr does not record the history on its platform, even in the PRO version. Therefore, the after conference analytics are given below to have an idea of the viewers.

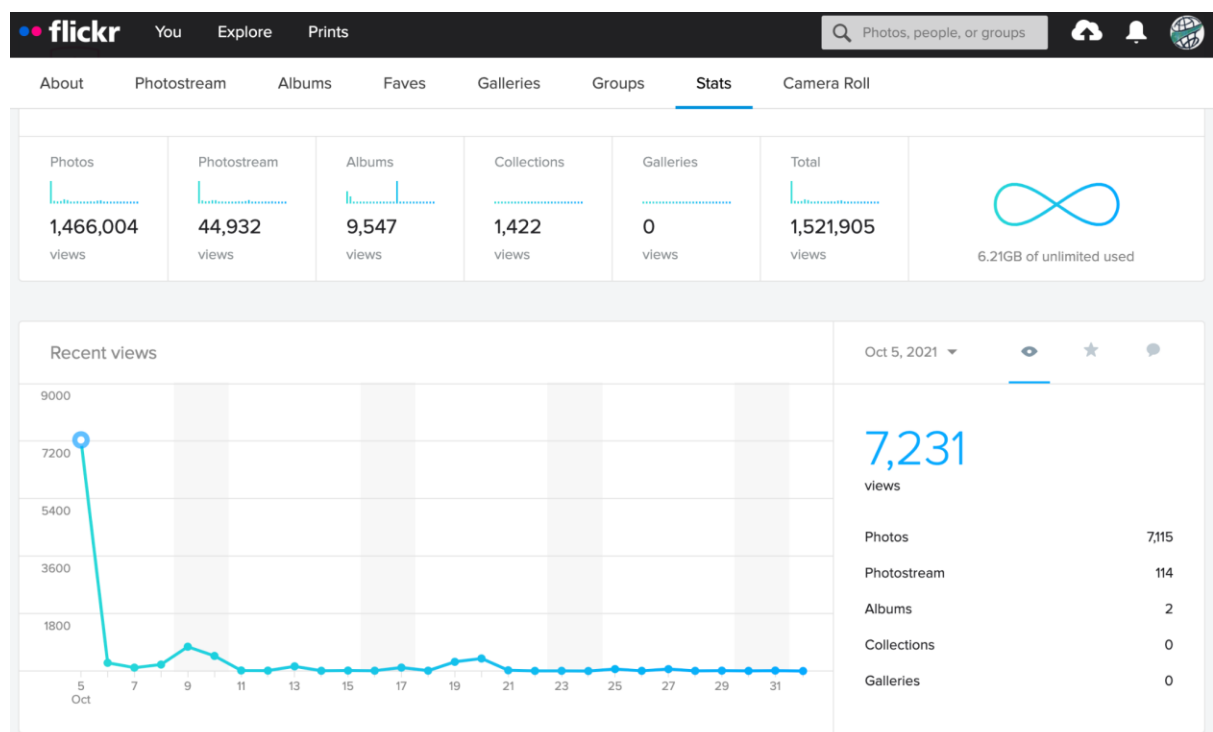


Figure 1: Flickr Viewer statistics





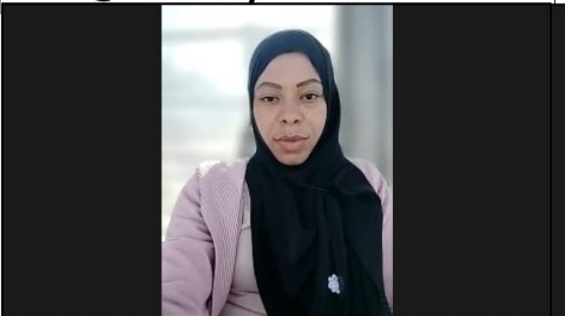
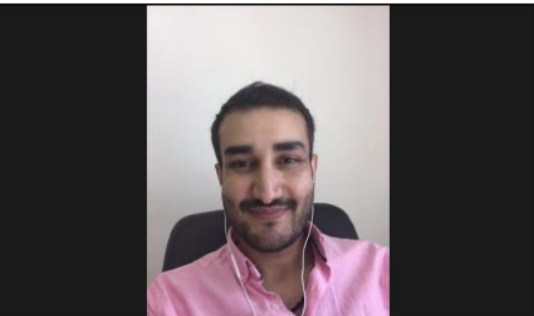
## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Tropentag 2021 had a lot of challenges as a hybrid conference across several platforms. Visual mediums like photography and videography were more difficult to obtain, however, a LinkedIn has been made for upcoming years, and the process of reporting from afar has been improved. So far, the use of instagram and

twitter platforms has the potential to reach out to many young people, who have potential to understand and use scientific knowledge in innovative ways. While we all hope for future conferences to be held in person, the 2020 and 2021 conferences have shown that it is still possible to have an impactful conference digitally.



## Appendix: Meet the Report Team

	
<b>Abdul Rehman (Pakistan)</b> @University of Kassel & University of Applied Sciences Fulda	<b>Ariana Alva (Peru)</b> @University of Hohenheim
	
<b>Adaugo Okoli (Nigeria)</b> @University of Hohenheim	<b>Caroline Beach (U.S.A.)</b> @Czech University of Life Sciences Prague
	
<b>Amina Ahmed (Tanzania)</b> @University of Göttingen	<b>Naji Sulaiman (Syria)</b> @Czech University of Life Sciences Prague