

Development of the Social Network Usage in Germany since 2012 –

Year 2013: Facebook continues to grow, Google+ doubles, Twitter loses market share

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Introduction and Methodology

Social networks have attracted an impressive number of users over the last years: The big incumbent Facebook reached the first 100 Million users in August 2008 and is expected to have about 1 Billion users in 2013. Twitter is said to have 200 Million active users as of 2013 and 917 Mio users as of January 2014 (Wikipedia 2014). According to reports by Google, the proprietary Google+ reached 100 Million active users in March 2012, 170 Million users in April 2012 and 250 Million users in June 2012 and about 540 Million active users at the end of 2013.

The number of registered users that social networks use to report is however only a very bad proxy for the activity in social networks as the high number of unused and fake profiles in social networks shows. Furthermore, the definition of “active user” is often kept vague. To examine the social network usage we therefore monitor the TOP15 media websites in Germany and examine the number of Facebook Likes, Twitter Tweets and Google +1 (One-Up) ¹ per article and follow this development over time. The audiences of these sites can recommend certain articles using social media plugins, as depicted in Figure 1. Although we also collect the intra-article-development over time, we only use the maximum number of recommendations per article for the analyses in this report. Recommendations have been found to be of economic importance (Grahl et al. 2014).



Figure 1: Social Media Bar

We started to collect data from the media websites listed in Table I in January 2012 and the collection process is still ongoing. The data will be used for scientific purposes but we believe that some of the more exploratory results are also of general interest.

¹ We use the term “recommendation” for Facebook Likes, Twitter Tweets and Google +1 (One-Ups).

Please note that we have changed the filtering (we have improved the detection of duplicates) and thus the absolute numbers should not be compared to the absolute numbers of previous reports.

| Name | URL |
|--------------|---|
| Bild.de | http://www.bild.de/ |
| bunte | http://www.bunte.de/ |
| Chip | http://www.chip.de/ |
| FAZ | http://www.faz.net/ |
| Focus | http://www.focus.de/ |
| Handelsblatt | http://www.handelsblatt.com/ |
| Heise | http://www.heise.de/ |
| N-TV | http://www.n-tv.de/ |
| Spiegel | http://www.spiegel.de/ |
| Sport1 | http://www.sport1.de/ |
| Stern | http://www.stern.de/ |
| Süddeutsche | http://www.sueddeutsche.de/ |
| Tagesschau | http://www.tagesschau.de/ |
| Welt | http://www.welt.de/ |
| Zeit | http://www.zeit.de/ |

Table 1: Indexed Websites

Results

Overall we collected information on over 464k articles in 2013. The articles on the TOP15 media in Germany generated 33.5 Mio Likes, 4.9 Mio Tweets, and 1.1 Mio One-Ups in 2013. Overall we collected over 39.5 Million recommendations. The main fraction was generated by Facebook (84.8%, 2012: 79.8%), followed by Twitter (12.4%, 2012: 18.7%) and Google+ (2.8%, 2012: 1.5%). Twitter seems recently to lose momentum in this application area. Google+ in contrast again nearly doubled its reach. Figure 2 illustrates the total number of recommendations on the three networks.

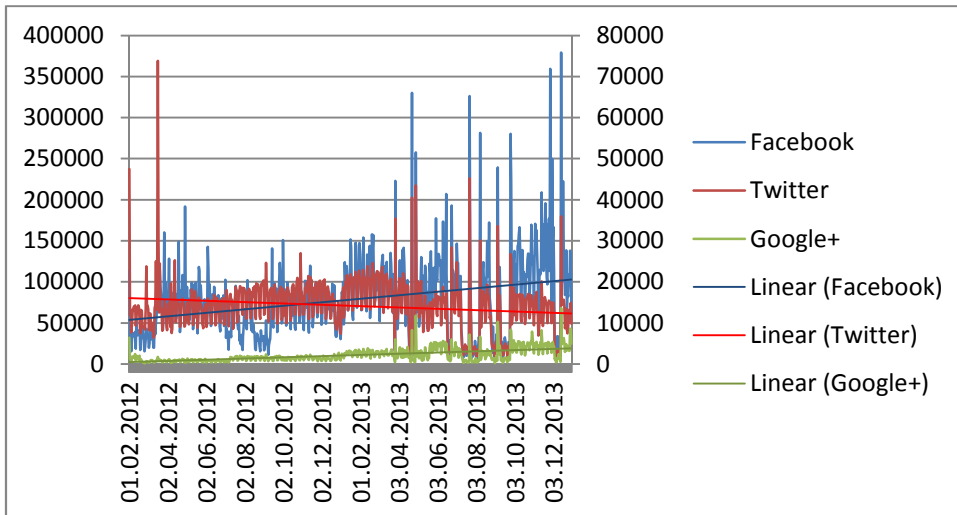


Figure 2: Number of Likes, Tweets and One-Ups (Twitter and Google+ on secondary scale) per Day

The fraction of articles that receive at least one Like, Tweet, or One-Up is slightly increasing for all three networks. More than 80% of all articles in the TOP15 media receive Facebook Likes or are tweeted. The fraction of articles that are discussed on Google+ is significantly lower but reaches now approx. 40%. Figure 3 illustrates the share of articles that receive at least one recommendation.

The total number of recommendations is still substantially lower for Twitter than for Facebook. Articles received on average 72.3 (up from 35.5 in 2012) Likes on Facebook, generated 10.7 (up from 8.8 in 2012) Tweets and received on average 2.4 (up from 0.7 in 2012) One-Ups. Facebook has obviously gained some more interest in 2013 while Twitter begins to grow slower and even starts to lose market share. Google+ significantly increased the number of One-Ups and as we expected Google+ attacks Twitter with its functionality and target group.

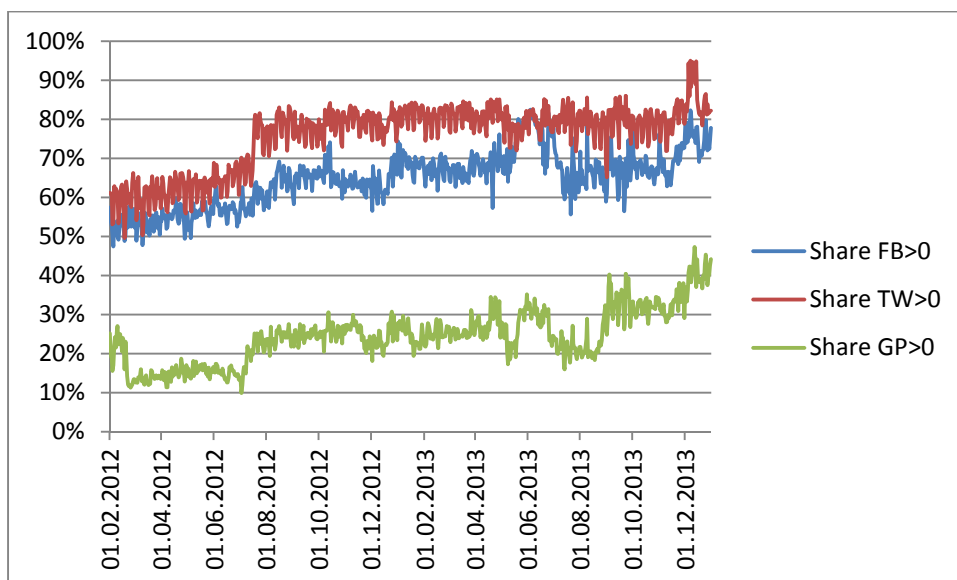


Figure 3: Fraction of Articles that receive more than 0 Likes, Tweets, One-Ups

With respect to the media website that received the recommendation, *Spiegel Online* still dominates the German market with over 10 Million recommendations followed by *Bild.de* with 6.3 Million recommendations. Top mover is *Zeit.de* climbing from rank 8 to rank 3. For all media in the Top 10 we see an increase in the absolute number of recommendations. Only *Bild.de* loses with respect to the absolute number of recommendations which might be caused by the new monetization approach that restricts the access to *Bild* content. Table 2 summarizes the Top 10.

| Rank 2013 (Rank 2012) | Website | Number of Recommendations (2012) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|
| 1 (1) | Spiegel Online | 10,069,041 (7,921,213) |
| 2 (2) | Bild.de | 6,348,766 (6,628,788) |
| 3 (8) | Zeit.de | 4,021,438 (1,066,268) |
| 4 (3) | Welt.de | 3,493,029 (2,685,738) |
| 5 (4) | Focus Online | 3,115,518 (1,792,960) |
| 6 (9) | Stern.de | 2,194,243 (753,589) |
| 7 (5) | faz.net | 2,134,868 (1,449,776) |
| 8 (6) | Sueddeutsche.de | 1,785,050 (1,439,305) |
| 9 (7) | n-tv.de | 1,481,431 (1,073,384) |
| 10 (10) | Handelsblatt | 1,133,391 (732,317) |

Table 2: Top 10 of Media with Respect to Recommendations in Social Networks

We also examined the content of the recommended articles and examined the following resorts: Politics, Business & Economy, Sports, Science and Technology. Tables 3-7 summarize the results.

| Rank 2013 (Rank 2012) | Website | Number of Recommendations |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 (1) | Spiegel Online | 2,971,014 |
| 2 (2) | Welt.de | 1,118,155 |
| 3 (-) | Zeit.de | 886,547 |
| 4 (3) | Focus Online | 873,141 |
| 5 (4) | faz.net | 747,569 |

Table 3: Resort Politics Top 5

| Rank 2013 (Rank 2012) | Website | Number of Recommendations |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 (1) | Spiegel Online | 1,122,563 |
| 2 (2) | Welt.de | 607,962 |
| 3 (3) | faz.net | 530,412 |
| 4 (4) | Focus Online | 498,545 |
| 5 (-) | Zeit.de | 264,789 |

Table 4: Resort Business & Economics Top 5

| Rank 2013 (Rank 2012) | Website | Number of Recommendations |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 (1) | Heise.de | 921,090 |
| 2 (2) | Chip.de | 404,859 |
| 3 (-) | Zeit.de | 308,854 |
| 4 (-) | Stern.de | 237,379 |
| 5 (5) | Spiegel Online | 217,451 |

Table 5: Resort Technology Top 5

| Rank 1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012) | Website | Number of Recommendations |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 (1) | Bild Online | 2,024,052 |
| 2 (2) | Spiegel Online | 504,441 |
| 3 (4) | Focus Online | 411,849 |
| 4 (3) | Welt.de | 220,168 |
| 5 (-) | Zeit.de | 160,021 |

Table 6: Resort Sports Top 5

| Rank 1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012) | Website | Number of Recommendations |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 (1) | Spiegel Online | 623,141 |
| 2 (5) | Zeit.de | 228,128 |

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------|
| 3 (3) | Focus Online | 144,006 |
| 4 (-) | Stern.de | 128,282 |
| 5 (2) | Welt.de | 107,576 |

Table 7: Resort Science Top 5

Figure 4 shows that the usage of networks differs across the media sites. Users on *Spiegel.de* shows a more representative distribution for the sample while for example Bunte.de users use Facebook nearly exclusively. Interestingly, Google+ seems to become more and more the choice of technology affine users (e.g. the readership of Heise.de). Google+ begins to gain ground at the technology sector and already has 16% market share at *Heise.de* (up from 4% in 2012) while Twitter is losing their support from this segment. As predicted, Google+ could become more dangerous for Twitter than for Facebook.

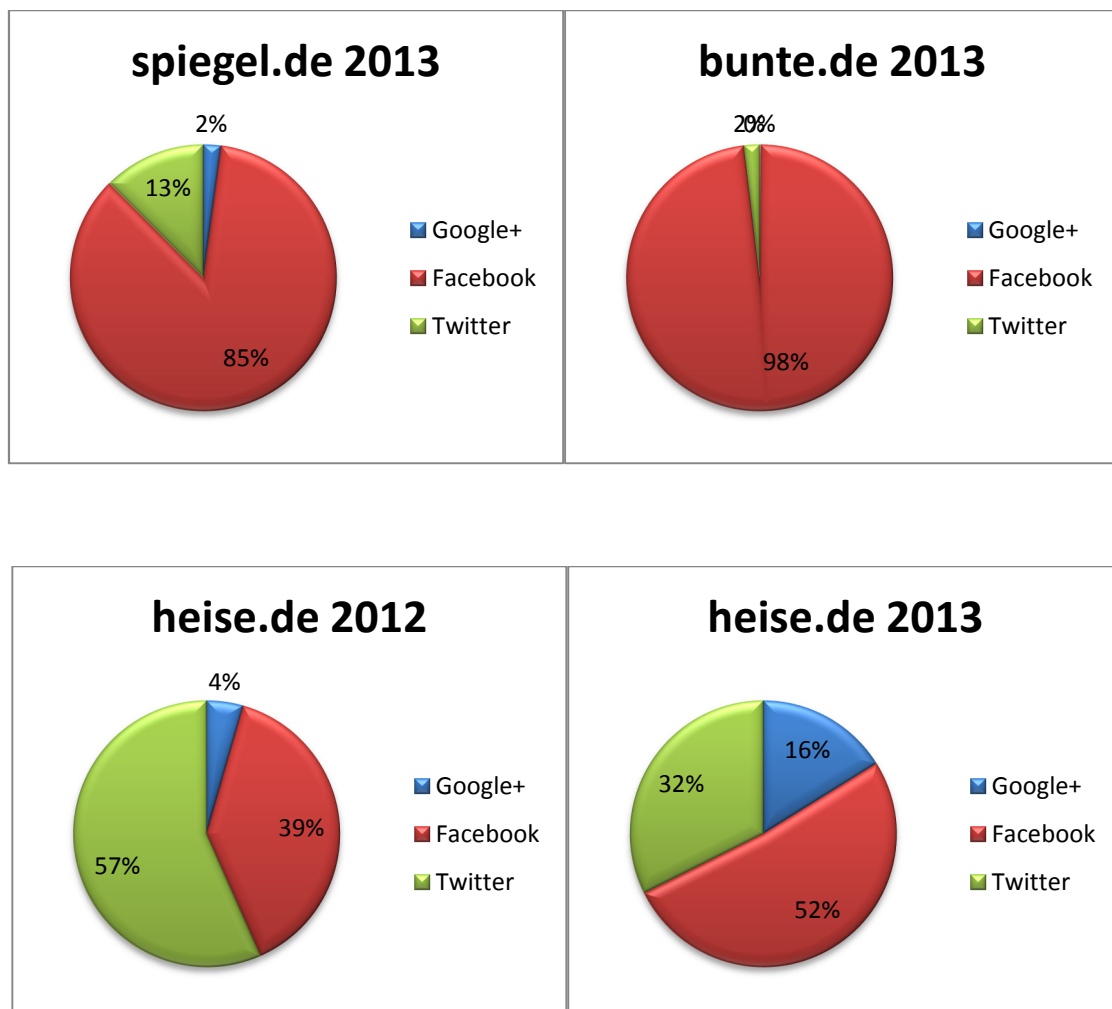


Figure 4: Usage of Social Networks per Media

Most Recommended Articles in 2013

The article with the most recommendations on social networks in 2013 was published by Zeit and covers the opening of Germany's first Marihuana shop in Berlin. It is followed by a report on a photography project where a widower and his daughter reproduce the wedding photos. On Twitter we see more political discussions whereas Google+ focuses on tech articles. We also see that the top articles on Google+ are now more often shared than the top articles that get tweeted.

| Rank | Article | Website | Number of Likes |
|------|----------------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Zeit.de | Kreuzberg beschließt Deutschlands ersten Marihuana-Laden | 162,664 |
| 2 | Stern.de | Fotoprojekt von Witwer und Tochter: So wie einst mit Mama | 76,880 |
| 3 | Bild Online | Transfer-Hammer! Götze zu Bayern | 68,801 |
| 4 | Spiegel Online | Diese Mercedes-Werbung gefällt Mercedes nicht | 66,556 |
| 5 | Bild Online | Hündin Shila: Ertränkt, weil sie nicht stubenrein war | 62,129 |
| 6 | Bild Online | Paul Walker stirbt bei Autounfall | 53,609 |
| 7 | Zeit.de | Soldaten - Was glaubt ihr eigentlich, wer wir sind? | 50,499 |
| 8 | Welt | Schauspieler Paul Walker bei Autounfall gestorben | 49,933 |
| 9 | n-tv | Die Krawalle in Hamburg und die Rolle der Polizei: Was alles nicht gesagt wird | 45,988 |
| 10 | Zeit.de | Lebensmittelunverträglichkeiten: Bauchgrimmen | 43,124 |

Table 8: Facebook

| Rank | Article | Website | Number of Tweets |
|------|----------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | Bild Online | Transfer-Hammer! - Götze zu Bayern | 1,603 |
| 2 | FAZ | Die Demokratie verteidigen im digitalen Zeitalter: Der Aufruf der Schriftsteller | 1,473 |
| 3 | Heise Online | Vorsicht beim Skypen - Microsoft liest mit | 1,409 |
| 4 | Spiegel Online | S.P.O.N. - Die Mensch-Maschine: Mein Weg zum Ekel | 1,333 |
| 5 | Spiegel Online | Kanzler-Handy im US-Visier? Merkel beschwert sich bei Obama | 1,216 |

| | | | |
|----|----------------|---|-------|
| 6 | n-tv | Die Krawalle in Hamburg und die Rolle der Polizei: Was alles nicht gesagt wird | 1,197 |
| 7 | Spiegel Online | Geheimdokumente: NSA horcht EU-Vertretungen mit Wanzen aus | 1,161 |
| 8 | Spiegel Online | Zweiter Weltkrieg: Japanischer Politiker verteidigt Zwangsprostitution | 1,144 |
| 9 | Spiegel Online | Neue NSA-Dokumente: US-Geheimdienst hörte Zentrale der Vereinten Nationen ab | 1,076 |
| 10 | FAZ | The Internet Ideology - Why We Are Allowed to Hate Silicon Valley | 1,072 |

Table 9: Twitter

| Rank | Article | Website | Number of +1 |
|------|----------------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Chip.de | DSL-Drosselung: Alle Fragen und Antworten | 1,967 |
| 2 | Heise Online | Vorsicht beim Skypen - Microsoft liest mit | 1,943 |
| 3 | Bild Online | Franzosen berichten - Schwerer Ski-Unfall von Schumi | 1,878 |
| 4 | Sueddeutsche | Zu Besuch beim Bodypainter - Mandala aus Nackten | 1,170 |
| 5 | Heise Online | CDU und CSU wollen Internet im NSA-Stil überwachen | 1,055 |
| 6 | Bild Online | Paul Walker stirbt bei Autounfall | 1,033 |
| 7 | Heise Online | Internet, Bildung und Forschung: "Superministerin" Ursula von der Leyen? | 971 |
| 8 | Heise Online | DSL-Drossel: Landgericht Köln untersagt Volumen- Drosselung der Telekom | 914 |
| 9 | Zeit.de | Trusted Computing - Bundesbehörden sehen Risiken beim Einsatz von Windows 8 | 846 |
| 10 | Spiegel Online | Sprachreform an der Uni Leipzig: Guten Tag, Herr Professorin | 802 |

Table 10: Google+

Outlook

These findings are of exploratory character and need to be interpreted carefully. We are continuing the analyses and will keep reporting these figures because we believe the recommendations of media content is a much better proxy for activity in social networks than the plain number of registered users that social network providers keep reporting.

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