

Development of the Social Network Usage in Germany since 2012 –

Year 2014: The Winner Takes It All: Facebook Reaches Market Share of over 90%

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A Study by the Chair of Privacy and Data Security, TU Dresden and the Chair of Electronic Markets, TU Darmstadt

--- Version 03.02.2015 ---

Cite as: Schiller et al. (2015): Development of the Social Network Usage in Germany since 2012, Working Paper TU Darmstadt.

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 1.32 Billion users in 2014 . Twitter is said to have 284 Million active users as of 2014 (Wikipedia 2015). According to reports by Google, Google+ reached 100 Million active users in March 2012, 170 Million users in April 2012 and 250 Million users in June 2012 and converged to about 540 Million active users since 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 / PlusOnes)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).

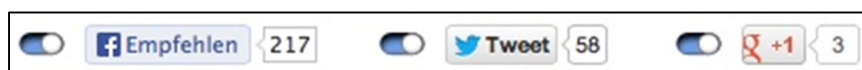


Figure 1: Social Media Bar

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 are 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 476k articles in 2014 which is +2.5% more than in 2013. The articles on the TOP15 media in Germany generated 75.4 Mio Likes, 5.7 Mio Tweets, and 1.9 Mio One-Ups in 2014. Overall we collected over 83 Million recommendations. The main fraction was generated by Facebook with a market share of over 90% (2014: 90.8%, 2013: 84.8%, 2012: 79.8%), followed by Twitter (2014: 6.9%, 2013: 12.4%, 2012: 18.7%) and Google+ (2014: 2.6%, 2013: 2.8%, 2012: 1.5%). Again, Twitter seems to be the loser in the news sharing while Facebook increased its market share. The market share of Google+ stayed nearly constant. Figure 2 illustrates the total number of recommendations on the three networks.

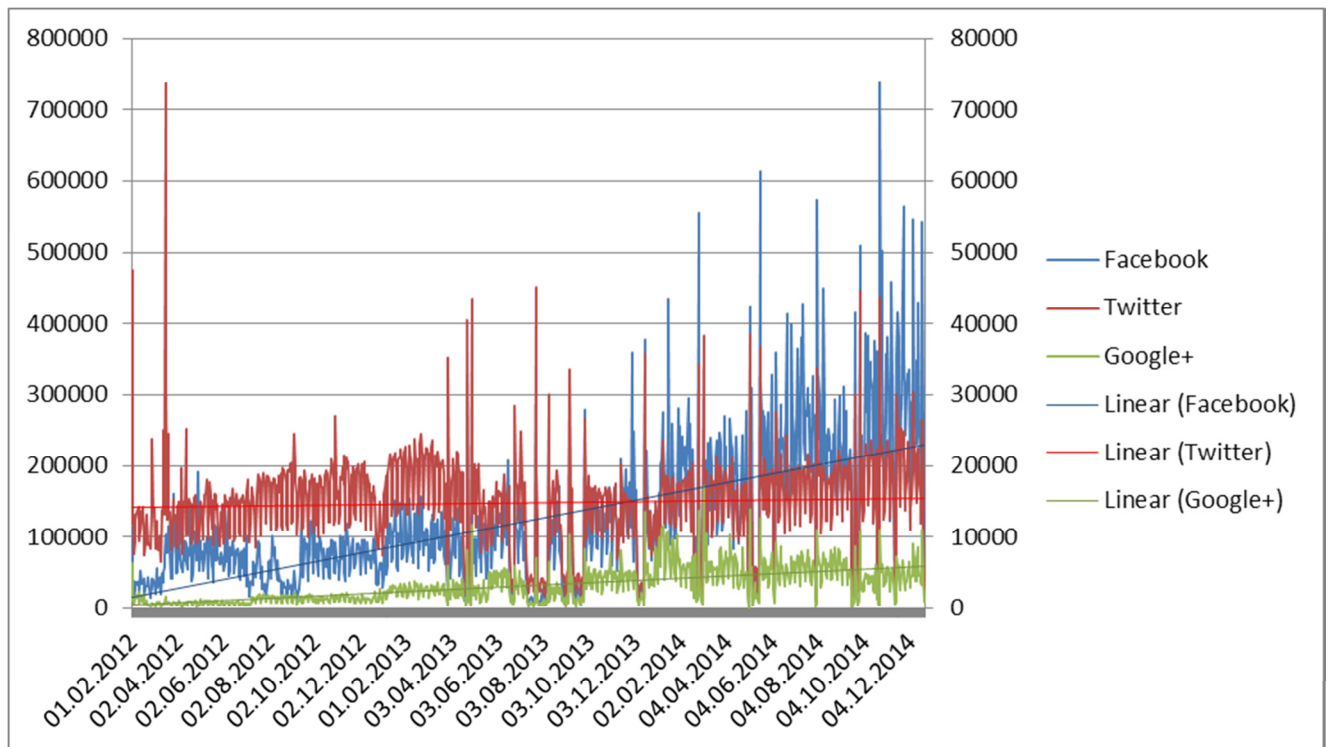


Figure 2: Number of Likes, Tweets and One-Ups (Twitter and Google+ on secondary scale) per Day

The fraction of articles that receive at least one Like, Tweet, or One-Up is slightly increasing for all three networks. About 71.2% of all articles in the TOP15 media receive Facebook Likes while about 78.6% are at least tweeted once. This indicates that news sharing on Twitter follows more a long-tail distribution while mainstream topics are discussed on Facebook. The fraction of articles that are discussed on Google+ is significantly lower and reaches 35.5%. Figure 3 illustrates the share of articles that receive at least one recommendation.

The total number of recommendations has increased by +110% in 2014 when compared to 2013. Articles received on average 158.4 (2013: 72.3, 2012: 35.5) Likes on Facebook, generated 12.0 (2013: 10.7, 2012: 8.8) Tweets and received on average 3.9 (2013: 2.4, 2012: 0.7) One-Ups. Facebook is growing stronger than any of the other two networks which might ultimately lead to a winner-takes-it-all-market in this area. Google+ significantly increased the number of One-Ups and is growing faster than Twitter. We expect Google+ to attack Twitter with its functionality and target group.

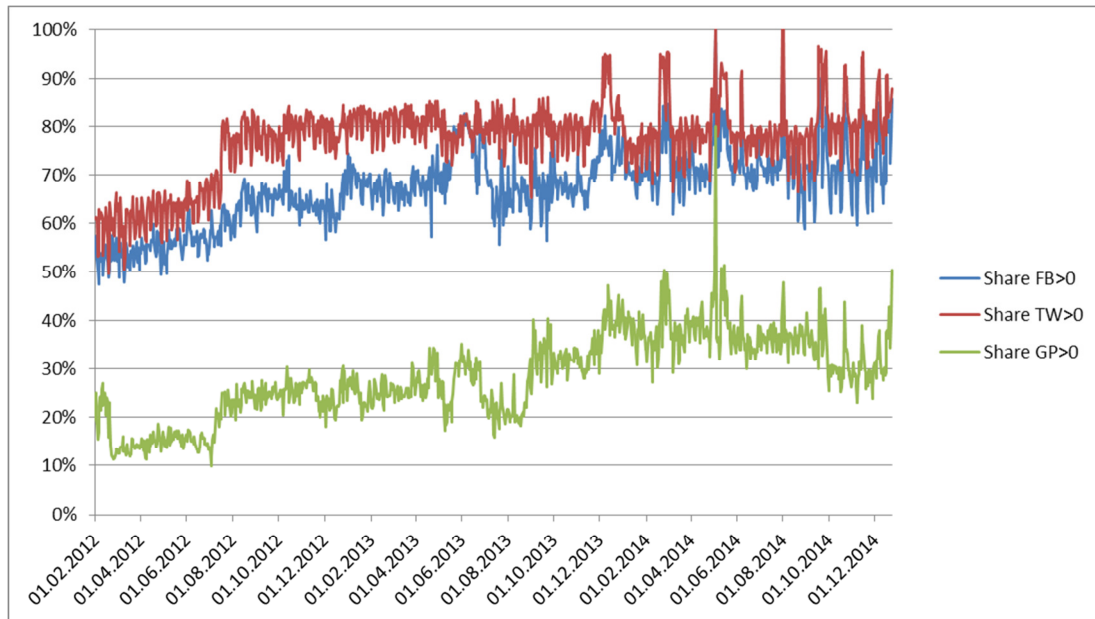


Figure 3: Fraction of Articles that receive more than 0 Likes, Tweets, One-Ups

With respect to the media website that received the recommendation, Bild.de has taken over the first rank among German Top media with respect to sharing with over 19 Mio. recommendations. *Spiegel Online* follows on rank 2 with about 17 Mio. recommendations. Sport1.de made it to the Top10 the first time while handelsblatt.de ranked on the 11th rank. Like in 2013 we observe for all media in the Top 10 an increase in the absolute number of recommendations in the year 2014. Table 2 summarizes the Top 10.

Rank 2014 (Rank 2013)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (2)	Bild.de	19,311,282
2 (1)	Spiegel Online	16,985,815
3 (3)	Zeit.de	8,654,220
4 (5)	Focus Online	8,126,229
5 (4)	Welt.de	7,613,674
6 (6)	Stern.de	6,407,103
7 (7)	faz.net	4,703,755
8 (9)	n-tv.de	3,405,025
9 (8)	Sueddeutsche.de	2,507,173
10 (-)	Sport1.de	2,185,069

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 2014 (Rank 2013)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Spiegel Online	5,439,519
2 (2)	Welt.de	2,320,327
3 (4)	Focus Online	1,907,914
4 (3)	Zeit.de	1,766,843
5 (5)	faz.net	1,608,558

Table 3: Resort Politics Top 5

Rank 2014 (Rank 2013)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Spiegel Online	1,777,120
2 (2)	Welt.de	1,259,815
3 (5)	Focus Online	1,195,452
4 (3)	faz.net	998,719
5 (5)	Zeit.de	655,483

Table 4: Resort Business & Economics Top 5

Rank 2014 (Rank 2013)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Heise.de	930,952
2 (-)	Bild.de	789,751
3 (4)	Stern.de	658,701
4 (2)	Chip.de	519,510
5 (-)	Focus Online	473,317

Table 5: Resort Technology Top 5

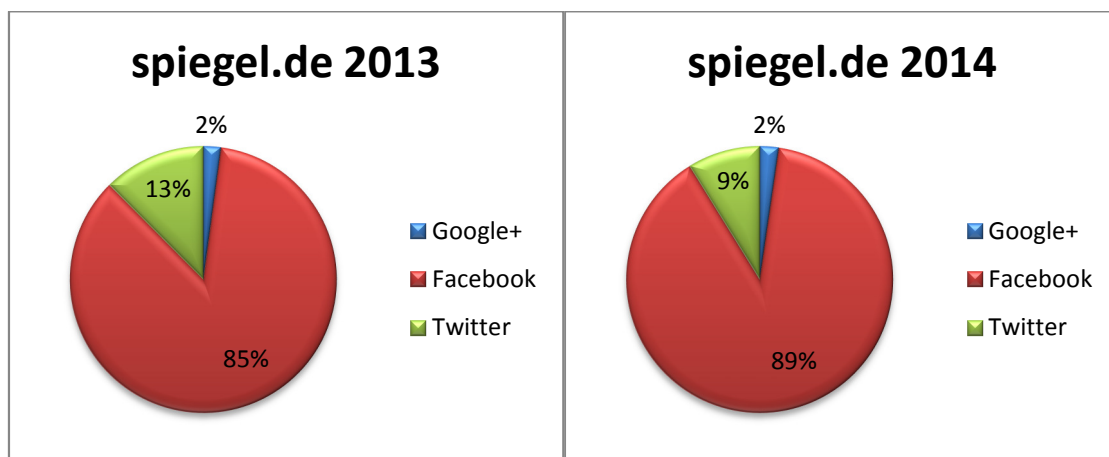
Rank 2014 (Rank 2013)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Bild Online	5,073,114
2 (2)	Spiegel Online	908,967
3 (3)	Focus Online	882,142
4 (4)	Welt.de	699,608
5 (5)	Zeit.de	483,565

Table 6: Resort Sports Top 5

Rank 2014 (Rank 2013)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Spiegel Online	1,059,428
2 (2)	Zeit.de	522,226
3 (3)	Focus Online	469,673
4 (4)	Stern.de	234,550
5 (5)	Welt.de	203,618

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. As already reported last year, 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 19% 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.



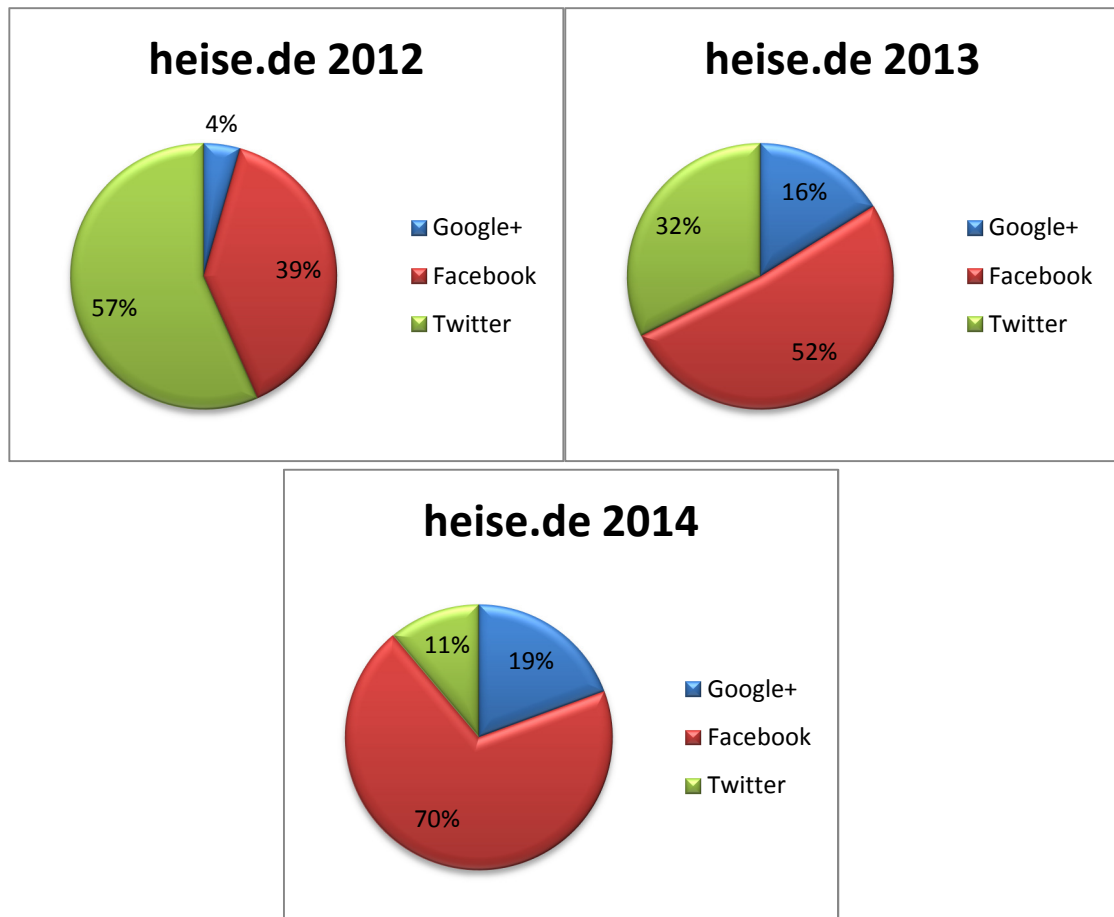


Figure 4: Usage of Social Networks per Media

Most Recommended Articles in 2014

The article with the most recommendations on social networks in 2014 was published by Stern and presents a video of a young poetry slammer. It is followed by a report on the jail environment of a young criminal. In 2014 many reports on acts of violence made it to the Top 10. 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	Website	Article	Number of Likes
1	Stern.de	Slammerin Julia Engelmann: Dieses Video könnte Ihr Leben ändern	288,092
2	Bild.de	Sanel M. (18) hat Tugces Leben auf dem Gewissen: So lebt der Koma-Schläger im Jugendknast	157,722
3	Süddeutsche	Primark-Kunden finden eingenähte Hilferufe in Kleidung	126,961
4	Welt.de	Lasst eure Kinder nicht Bayern-Fans werden!	120,681

5	Stern.de	Nach dem Tod ihres Vaters: Bruder schenkt Braut einen ganz besonderen Hochzeitstanz	116,732
6	Stern.de	Tödliche Schüsse bei Supermarkt-Überfall: Junger Kunde bezahlt Zivilcourage mit seinem Leben	95,065
7	Spiegel.de	Siegestrunkene Nationalspieler: Götze, Klose und Co. verhöhnen die Argentinier	87,941
8	Bild.de	Facebook-Fahndung! - Wer hat meinen Sohn so zugerichtet?	87,800
9	Zeit.de	Generation Y: Wir sind jung ...	85,409
10	Bild.de	11-jähriger Sohn missbraucht: Wütender Vater verprügelt Kinderschänder	84,849

Table 8: Top10 articles shared on Facebook

Rank	Website	Article	Number of Tweets
1	Spiegel.de	Indonesien: Wahlkampf in Himmlers SS-Uniform	7,100
2	Süddeutsche	Gülen verurteilt "Hexenjagd" in der Türkei	5,010
3	Zeit.de	Thomas Hitzlsperger bekennt sich zu seiner Homosexualität	4,628
4	Bild.de	Michael Schumacher nach Lausanne (Schweiz) verlegt: Schumi ist wach!	3,664
5	Spiegel.de	Bayer-Verhütungsmittel: Sterilisation mit Nebenwirkungen	2,383
6	Spiegel.de	Türkei: Stiftung von Erdogans Sohn erhielt riesige Millionenspende	2,029
7	Spiegel.de	Pilotprojekt: Niederlande bauen ersten Solarradweg der Welt	1,935
8	Zeit.de	Ukraine-Krise: "Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!"	1,670
9	Zeit.de	Flüchtlinge: Deutschland tut weh	1,664
10	Zeit.de	Mauerfall: Das geteilte Land	1,613

Table 9: Top10 articles shared on Twitter

Rank	Website	Article	Number of +1
1	Bild.de	Bodypainting-Magie: Model wird zum Paradiesvogel: Guck mal, ich bin ein Mensch!	2,827
2	Heise.de	Verschlüsselnde WhatsApp-Alternative Threema: So funktioniert der Wechsel	2,348
3	Spiegel.de	Riskante Gasförderung: Gabriel plant Fracking unter Auflagen	1,712
4	Bild.de	Foto an 1414 schicken!: So gehen wir zum Karneval	1,419
5	Chip.de	YouTube: Neue GEMA-Sperrtafeln nach Gerichtsurteil	1,387
6	Bild.de	Herzzerreissende Servietten-Botschaft: Witwer (65) rührt die ganze Welt	1,197
7	Zeit.de	Ukraine-Krise: "Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!"	1,192
8	Bild.de	Empfang des DFB-Teams im Live-Ticker: Unsere WM-Helden feiern den Titel	1,087
8	Heise.de	Kommentar: Smartphones zerstören dein Leben! Echt jetzt?	1,087
10	Bild.de	Nach Wohnungsbrand: Hier reanimiert die Feuerwehr eine Katze	1,082

Table 10: Top10 articles shared on 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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