

# *Development of the Social Network Usage in Germany since 2012 –*

## *Year 2015: Game Over? Facebook Claims over 94% Market Share in News Sharing*

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--- Version 10.02.2016 ---

*Cite as: Schiller et al. (2016): 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 has about 1.44 Billion registered users as of January 2016. Twitter is said to have 320 Million active users as of January 2016 (Wikipedia 2016). 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 peaked at about 540 Million active users in 2013 while the reported number of active users is about 418 Million users as of December 2015. Furthermore Google unveiled a significant redesign of Google in November 2015 as the service did not fulfill their expectations.

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)<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

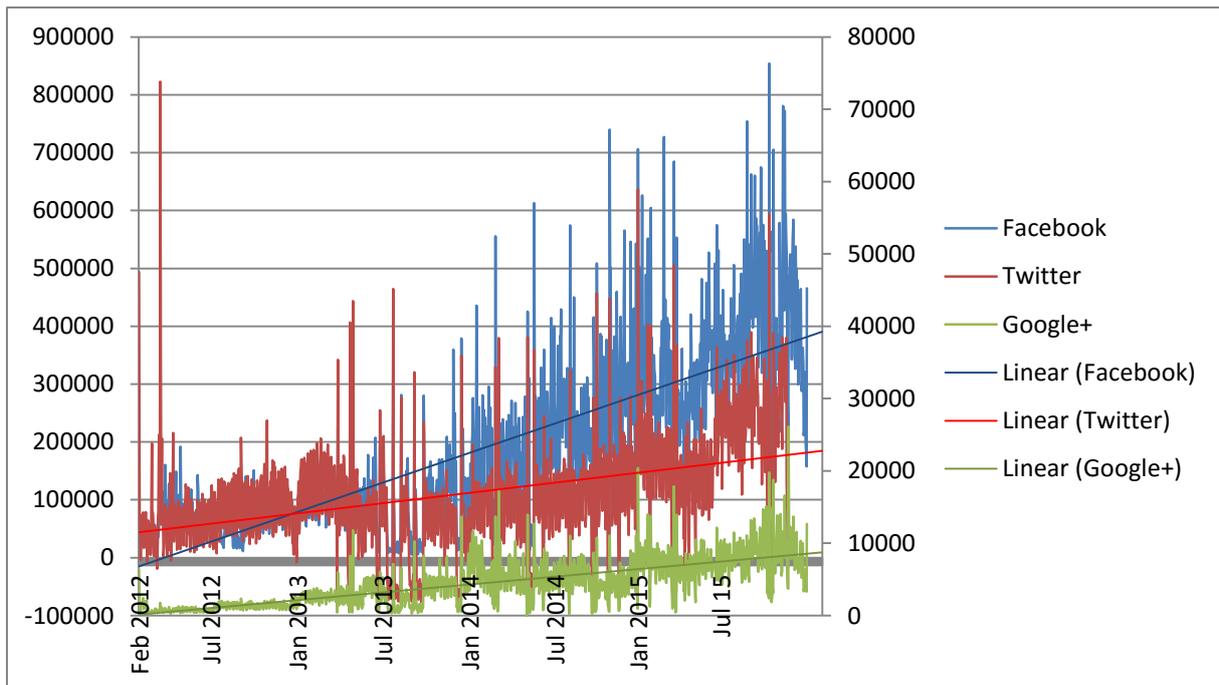
We started to collect data from the media websites listed in Table I in January 2012 and the collection process is still ongoing. The data are used for scientific purposes but we believe that some of the more exploratory results are also of general interest.

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

**Table 1: Indexed Websites**

## Results

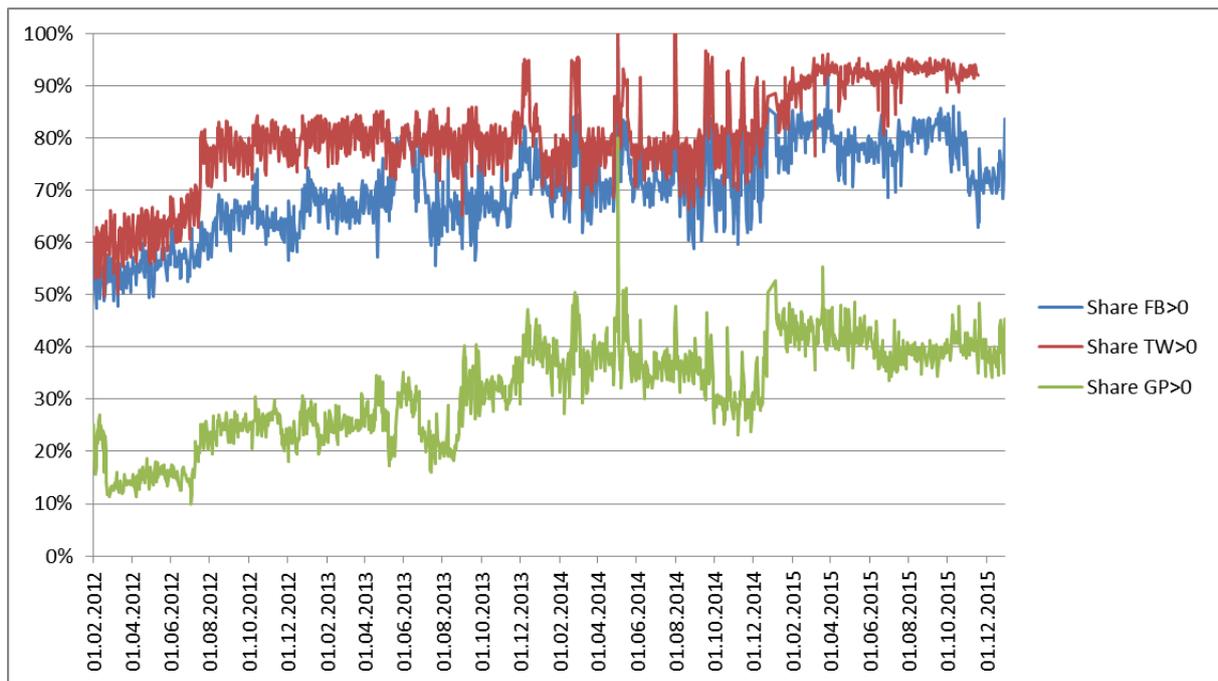
We collected information on over 487 k articles in 2015 which is again about +2.3% more than in 2014. The articles on the TOP15 media in Germany generated 116.7 Mio Likes, 4.3 Mio Tweets, and 2.8 Mio One-Ups in 2015, resulting in over 123 Million recommendations. The main fraction was generated by Facebook with a market share of now over 94% (2014: 90.8%, 2013: 84.8%, 2012: 79.8%), followed by Twitter (2015: 3.5%, 2014: 6.9%, 2013: 12.4%, 2012: 18.7%) and Google+ (2015: 2.3%, 2014: 2.6%, 2013: 2.8%, 2012: 1.5%). Twitter is the only platform that also loses in absolute terms, even if we correct for missing information at the end of the year (extrapolating the development) as Twitter decided to abandon the count information next to the Twitter button on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 (see <https://blog.twitter.com/2015/hard-decisions-for-a-sustainable-platform>). Even if it is correct that this count figure does not truly reflect the impact of content it is not a good sign that this number is going down. The stock market is obviously also not very optimistic about Twitter's development. In the future, however, we will not be able to make any well-grounded statements about news sharing on Twitter anymore. 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. Over 70% of all articles in the TOP15 media receive Facebook Likes while nearly any article is shared on Twitter. However, the Tweet does not often result in a direct measurable echo. 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 40%. Figure 3 illustrates the share of articles that receive at least one recommendation.

The total number of recommendations has increased by +48.2% in 2015 when compared to 2014. This indicates a slower growth than in 2013 but is still impressive. Articles received on average 239.7 (2014: 158.4, 2013: 72.3, 2012: 35.5) Likes on Facebook, generated 8.83 (2014: 12.0, 2013: 10.7, 2012: 8.8) Tweets and received on average 5.75 (2014: 3.9, 2013: 2.4, 2012: 0.7) One-Ups. Facebook is growing stronger than any of the other two networks which is in line with our prediction from earlier years where we predicted a winner-takes-it-all-market in this area (at least for some time). Google+ significantly increased the number of One-Ups and while Twitter loses Tweets. This could be a change in user behavior and indicate that news are more discussed with newly created hashtags but it could also be a bad sign for Twitter and its performance on the German market. As formerly outlined it seems that Google+ (even if it is not that supported anymore by Google) has taken over the second position for example in the area of tech news.



**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 again claims rank 1 with respect to sharing with over 24.4 Mio. recommendations. *Focus Online* made it to rank 2 the first time with 22.1 recommendations while *Spiegel Online* loses again one rank and follows on rank 3 with about 20.1 Mio. recommendations. Handelsblatt entered once again the Top 10 while n-tv made quite a big jump, climbing 3 places. Table 2 summarizes the Top 10.

Rank 2015 (Rank 2014)	Website	Number of Recommendations
<b>1 (1)</b>	Bild.de	24,458,218
<b>2 (4)</b>	Focus Online	22,128,132
<b>3 (2)</b>	Spiegel Online	20,130,998
<b>4 (5)</b>	Welt.de	14,389,119
<b>5 (8)</b>	n-tv.de	9,798,487
<b>6 (3)</b>	Zeit.de	9,580,278
<b>7 (7)</b>	faz.net	7,371,610
<b>8 (9)</b>	Sueddeutsche.de	6,257,745
<b>9 (10)</b>	Sport1.de	3,751,061
<b>10 (-)</b>	Handelsblatt	2,183,274

**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 2015 (Rank 2014)	Website	Number of Recommendations
<b>1 (3)</b>	Focus Online	8,630,825
<b>2 (1)</b>	Spiegel Online	8,067,067
<b>3 (-)</b>	n-tv.de	5,304,631
<b>4 (2)</b>	Welt.de	5,090,469
<b>5 (5)</b>	faz.net	3,404,528

**Table 3: Resort Politics Top 5**

Rank 2015 (Rank 2014)	Website	Number of Recommendations
<b>1 (3)</b>	Focus Online	2,395,450
<b>2 (1)</b>	Spiegel Online	2,042,787
<b>3 (2)</b>	Welt.de	1,922,218
<b>4 (4)</b>	faz.net	1,539,842
<b>5 (-)</b>	n-tv.de	1,056,510

**Table 4: Resort Business & Economics Top 5**

Rank 2015 (Rank 2014)	Website	Number of Recommendations
<b>1 (1)</b>	Heise.de	1,236,674
<b>2 (4)</b>	Chip.de	1,118,873
<b>3 (5)</b>	Focus Online	677,538
<b>4 (4)</b>	Stern.de	668,429
<b>5 (2)</b>	Bild.de	623,624

**Table 5: Resort Technology Top 5**

Rank 2015 (Rank 2014)	Website	Number of Recommendations
<b>1 (-)</b>	Sport1.de	7,292,663
<b>2 (1)</b>	Bild.de	5,612,536
<b>3 (3)</b>	Focus Online	1,123,644
<b>4 (2)</b>	Spiegel Online	1,090,319
<b>5 (4)</b>	Welt.de	883,755

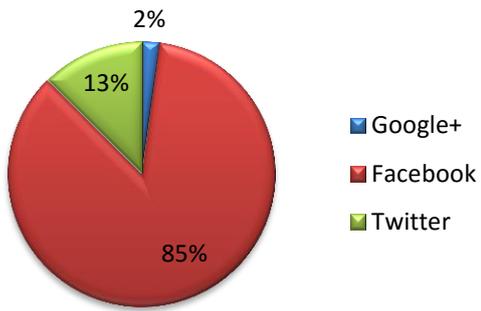
**Table 6: Resort Sports Top 5**

Rank 2015 (Rank 2014)	Website	Number of Recommendations
<b>1 (1)</b>	Spiegel Online	1,074,053
<b>2 (3)</b>	Focus Online	990,625
<b>3 (2)</b>	Zeit.de	461,679
<b>4 (5)</b>	Welt.de	424,409
<b>5 (-)</b>	n-tv.de	397,678

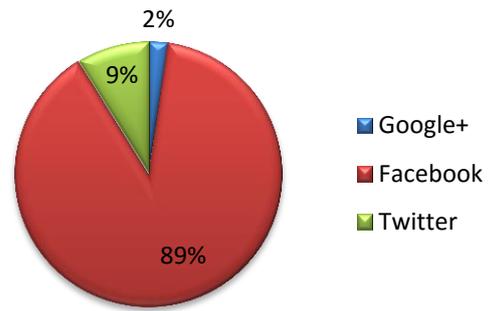
**Table 7: Resort Science Top 5**

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 and it points out that at least among the three examined networks, Facebook increasingly becomes a monopolist. The decline of Twitter – even among the technology affine users – becomes evident when looking at the publisher heise.de.

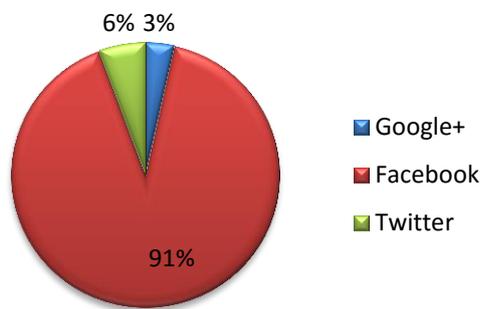
### spiegel.de 2013



### spiegel.de 2014



### spiegel.de 2015



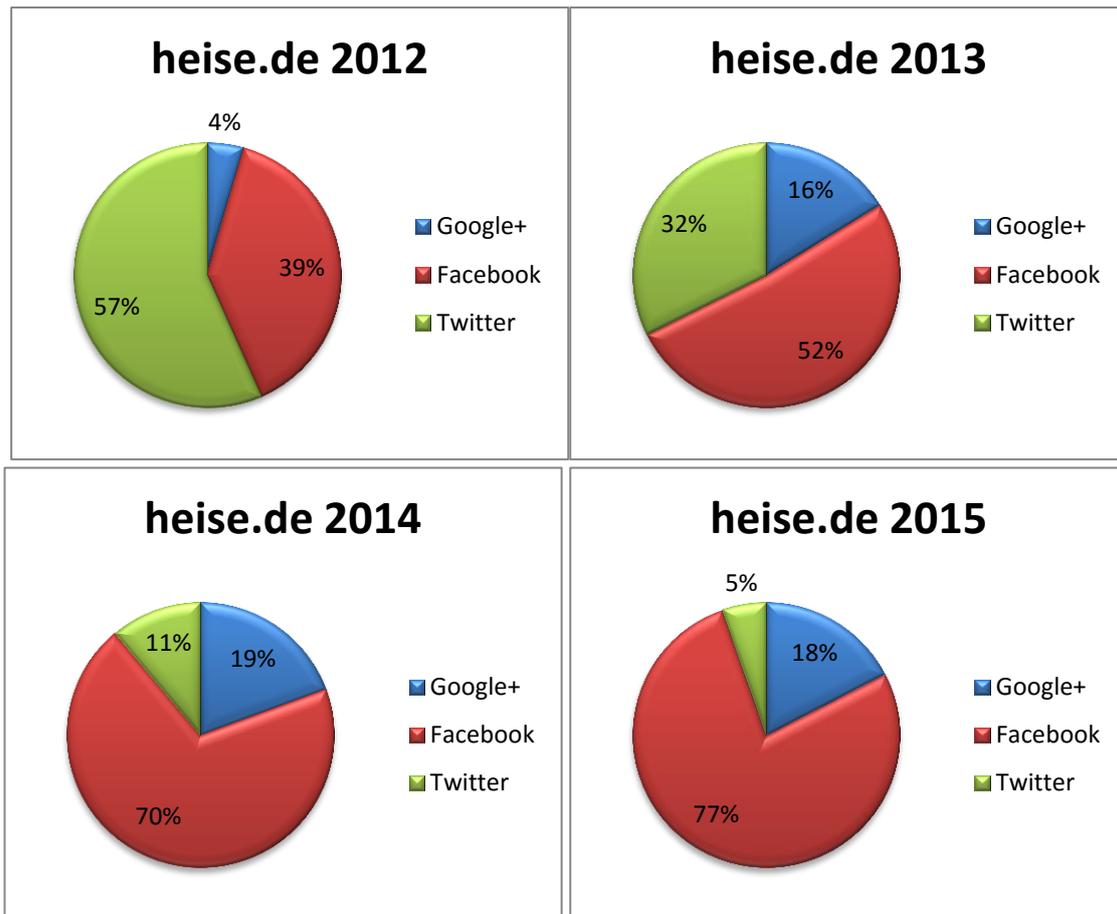


Figure 4: Usage of Social Networks per Media

### Most Recommended Articles in 2015

The article with the most recommendations on social networks in 2015 was again published by Stern and presents an exclusive interview with actor Til Schweiger who is upset about the affair of the Politician Edathy. This article received about 133k Likes and is followed by a report about Volkswagen's problems. 6 out of 10 articles in the Top 10 deal with the refugee crises. Overall the news sharing in 2015 was dominated by negative news.

Rank	Website	Article	Number of Likes
1	Stern.de	Til Schweiger exklusiv im stern: "Herr Edathy, Ihr larmoyantes Verhalten ist zum Kotzen"	133,332
2	n-tv.de	Wem nutzt das Volkswagen-Bashing? - "Mr. Dax": VW-Skandal ist überzogen	112,589
3	Stern.de	Diskussion über 5000 Euro Geldauflage für Edathy - Warum die Einstellung juristisch korrekt ist	105,891
4	Stern.de	Joko und Klaas gegen rechte Hetzer: "Ihr seid die	102,119

		Dummheit. Die Peinlichkeit"	
5	Welt.de	"Wenn es euch hier nicht gefällt, haut doch ab!"	97,421
6	Sueddeutsche	Supermärkte müssen nicht verkaufte Lebensmittel spenden	94,603
7	Welt.de	Migration: Peter Maffay schickt klare Warnung an Flüchtlinge	82,168
8	Faz.net	Umgang mit Flüchtlingen: Es gilt das Grundgesetz	73,043
9	Zeit.de	Sarah Connor: Was ich geben will	70,965
10	Sueddeutsche	Vorurteile: Handys sind für Flüchtlinge kein Luxus	70,878

**Table 8: Top10 articles shared on Facebook**

Rank	Website	Article	Number of Tweets
1	Spiegel.de	Newsblog zu Anschlägen in Paris: Das waren die Nachrichten des Wochenendes	5,086
2	Welt.de	Davutoglu beschwert sich persönlich bei Merkel	4,284
3	Faz.net	Flüchtlingskrise: Die arabische Halbinsel schottet sich ab	3,966
4	Faz.net	Smartphone-Anwendungen: Wie eine App zum Erfolg wird	3,560
5	Spiegel.de	Paris: Explosionen und Schüsse in Paris - viele Tote	3,470
6	Welt.de	Genozid: Merkel nennt Massaker an Armeniern nun doch Völkermord	3,052
7	Spiegel.de	Todesflug MH 17: Wer warum schoss	2,945
8	Spiegel.de	Drohender islamistischer Anschlag in Hannover: Hinweis kam von ausländischem Geheimdienst	2,913
9	Zeit.de	Microsoft: Lohnt sich der Umstieg auf Office 2016?	2,854
10	Zeit.de	Integration: Im Land der Angsthasen	2,798

**Table 9: Top10 articles shared on Twitter**

Rank	Website	Article	Number of +1
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1	Stern.de	"The Fast and the Furious"-Star Vin Diesel: "Es wurde viel geweint am Set"	1,369
2	Welt.de	Migration: Peter Maffay schickt klare Warnung an Flüchtlinge	1,280
3	Chip.de	GEMA-Sperre bei YouTube: Dieser Irrsinn ist nur in Deutschland verfügbar	1,169
4	Spiegel.de	Internet in Deutschland: Sie haben die Zukunft verbockt	1,100
5	Stern.de	CSU-Kritik an Merkel: Seehofer will Flüchtlinge notfalls zum Kanzleramt fahren lassen	1,062
6	Spiegel.de	Ukraine-Verhandlungen in Minsk: Am Ende lacht Putin	923
7	Bild.de	Live-Stream von der DTM auf dem Lausitzring	916
8	Heise.de	Vorwurf Landesverrat: Generalbundesanwalt ermittelt gegen Netzpolitik.org	886
9	Focus.de	Innenministerium warnt Falsche Zeugnisse und Diplome: Flüchtlinge kommen mit gekauften „Antragspaketen“	863
10	Spiegel.de	Bundestagswahl 2017: Kanzlerin Merkel will vierte Amtszeit	855

**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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## References

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