Development of the Social Network Usage in Germany in 2012

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Introduction and Methodology

The big incumbent Facebook reached the first 100 Million users in August 2008 and is expected to reach 1 Billion users in 2012. Twitter is said to have 500 Million active users as of 2012. 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.

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. Further 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 (PlusOnes) [1] per article and follow this development over time. 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.

We started to collect data from the following media websites 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.

Key	Name	URL
bild	Bild.de	http://www.bild.de/
bunte	bunte	http://www.bunte.de/
chip	Chip	http://www.chip.de/
faz	FAZ	http://www.faz.net/
focus	Focus	http://www.focus.de/
handelsblatt	Handelsblatt	http://www.handelsblatt.com/
heise	Heise	http://www.heise.de/
ntv	N-TV	http://www.n-tv.de/
spiegel	Spiegel	http://www.spiegel.de/
sport1	Sport1	http://www.sport1.de/

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[1] We use the term "recommendation" for Facebook Likes, Twitter Tweets and Google +1 (PlusOnes).

stern	Stern	http://www.stern.de/
sueddeutsche	Süddeutsche	http://www.sueddeutsche.de/
tagesschau	Tagesschau	http://www.tagesschau.de/
welt	Welt	http://www.welt.de/
zeit	Zeit	http://www.zeit.de/

Table 1: Indexed Websites

Results

Overall we collected information on over 592k articles in 2012. The articles on the TOP15 media in Germany generated 5 Mio Tweets, 21.3 Mio Likes and 407k PlusOnes in 2012. Overall we gathered over 26.7 Million recommendations. The main fraction was generated by Facebook (79.8%), followed by Twitter (18.7%) and Google+ (1.5%). Google+ is still of minor importance in Germany when we look at the usage for recommending media content. Facebook is still the incumbent but the number of tweets compared to Facebook Likes is already impressive.

Compared to the first half of 2012, the market share of Twitter increased from 17.0% to 20.2% while the market share of Facebook went down from 81.9% to 78% in the second half of 2012. Google+ increased its market share from 1.1% (first half 2012) to 1.8% (second half 2012). Figure 1 illustrates the total number of recommendations on the three networks.
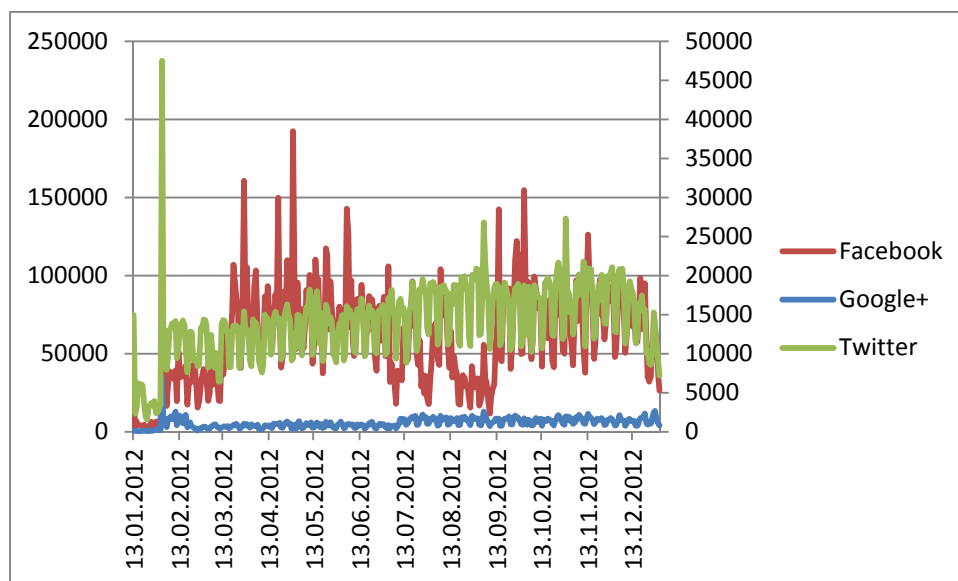

Figure 1: Number of Likes, Tweets and PlusOnes (Twitter and Google+ on secondary scale) per Day

The recommendations follow a long tail distribution: The top 10% of recommended articles yield 78% of all recommendations while 31.1% of all articles do not receive a single recommendation in any of the three networks.

The fraction of articles that receive more than 0 Likes, Tweets, PlusOnes increased for all three networks in 2012. More than 50% 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 and jumped from 10% in the first half of the year to 20% in the second half of 2012. Interestingly there are now more articles tweeted than liked on Facebook (see Figure 2).

However, the total number of recommendation is still substantially lower for Twitter than for Facebook. Articles received on average 35.5 Likes on Facebook, generated 8.8 Tweets and received on average 0.7 PlusOnes. However there is a clear growth in this area for Twitter and Google+ while the average number of Likes on Facebook per articles stagnates.
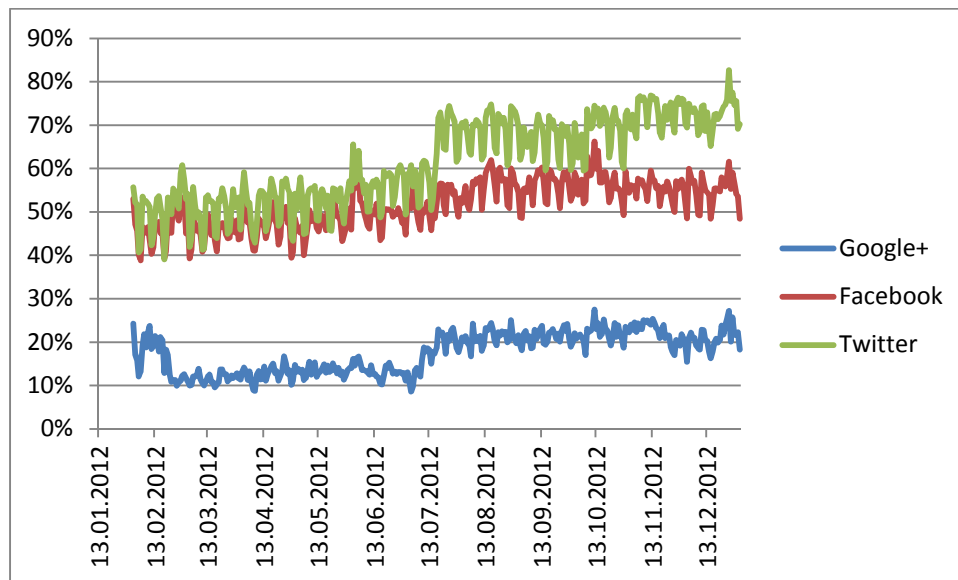

Figure 2: Fraction of Articles that receive more than 0 Likes, Tweets, PlusOnes

With respect to the media website that generated the recommendation, *Spiegel Online* dominates with 7.9 Million recommendations followed by *Bild.de* with 6.6 Million recommendations. Table 2 summarizes the Top 10.

Rank	Website	Number of Recommendations
1	Spiegel Online	7,921,213
2	Bild.de	6,628,788
3	Welt.de	2,685,738
4	Focus Online	1,792,960
5	faz.net	1,449,776
6	Sueddeutsche.de	1,439,305
7	n-tv.de	1,073,384
8	zeit.de	1,066,268
9	Stern.de	753,589

| 10 | Handelsblatt | 732,317 |

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

We also looked at 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	Website	Number of Recommendations
1	Spiegel Online	2.087.280
2	Welt.de	789.675
3	Focus Online	437.587
4	faz.net	401.900
5	n-tv.de	369.663

Table 3: Resort Politics Top 5

Rank	Website	Number of Recommendations
1	Spiegel Online	922.862
2	Welt.de	456.864
3	faz.net	369.433
4	Focus Online	302.896
5	n-tv.de	154.046

Table 4: Resort Business & Economics Top 5

Rank	Website	Number of Recommendations
1	Heise.de	662.570
2	Chip.de	301.945
3	Focus Online	152.623
4	Bild.de	137.323
5	Spiegel Online	125.384

Table 5: Resort Technology Top 5

Rank	Website	Number of Recommendations
1	Bild.de	1.311.509
2	Spiegel Online	506.190
3	Welt.de	214.201
4	Focus Online	213.054
5	faz.net	113.237

Table 6: Resort Sports Top 5

Rank	Website	Number of Recommendations
1	Spiegel Online	560.551
2	Welt.de	97.387
3	Focus Online	84.772
4	n-tv.de	57.339
5	Zeit.de	54.516

Table 7: Resort Science Top 5

Figure 3 shows that the usage of networks differs across the media sites. Users on *Bild.de* use Facebook Likes nearly exclusively while *Spiegel.de* shows a more representative distribution for the sample. *Handelsblatt.com*, a website focusing on news from business and economy shows a higher share of Twitter usage. This also holds for *Heise.de*, a specialist for topics in the area of technology, where we can also see a higher usage of Google+. These differences could be caused by different users' characteristics which we will be in the focus of our future scientific analyses.
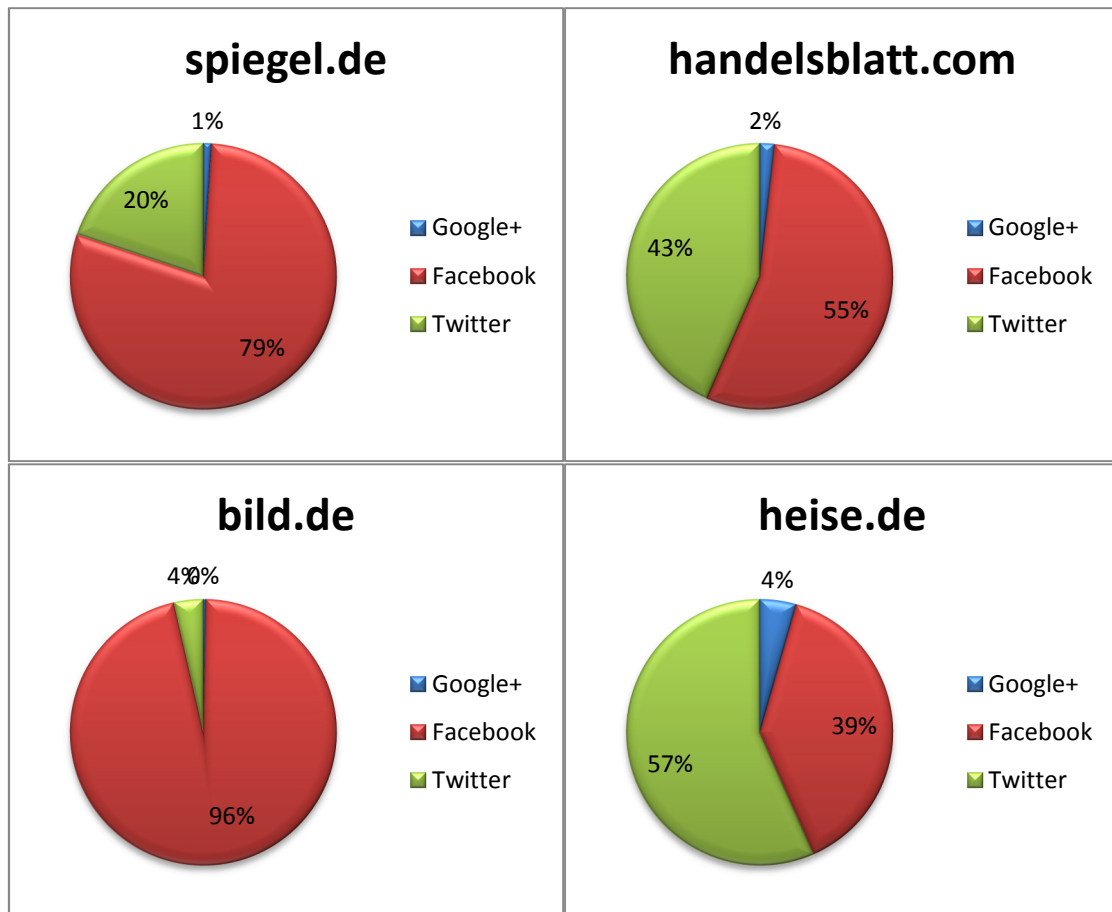
Figure 3: Usage of Social Networks per Media

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 operators keep reporting.

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