

Development of the Social Network Usage in Germany since 2012

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--- Version 24.07.2013 ---

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 500 Million active users as of 2012 and 1.6 Billion users as of July 2013. 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 500 Million users at the end of 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. 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. 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. Figure 1 depicts a commonly used social media plugin.



Figure 1: Social Media Bar

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.

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/

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

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 280k articles in the first half of 2013 (cut-off day: 16 June 2013). The articles on the TOP15 media in Germany generated 16.4 Mio Likes, 2.8 Mio Tweets, and 493k One-Ups in the first half of 2013. Overall we collected over 19.8 Million recommendations. The main fraction was generated by Facebook (82.8%), followed by Twitter (14.1%) and Google+ (2.5%). 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.

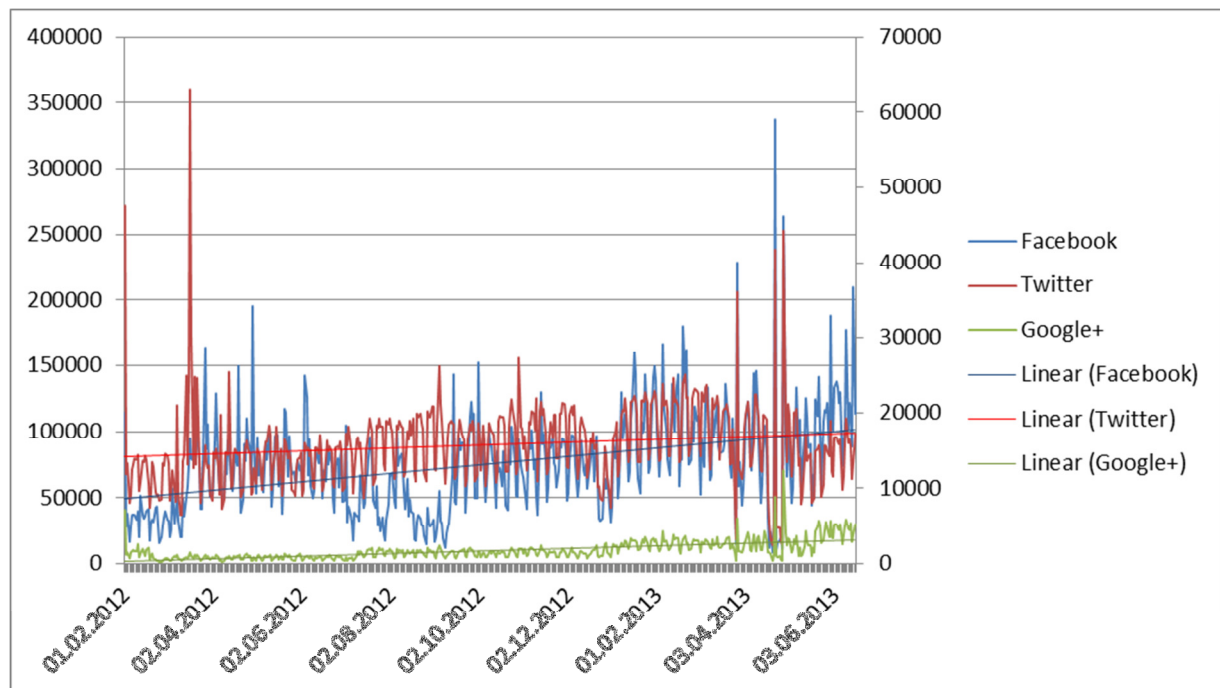


Figure 2: Number of Likes, Tweets and One-Ups (Twitter and Google+ on secondary scale) per Day

The fraction of articles that receive at least one Like, Tweet, +1 is increasing for all three networks. More than 70% 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 now reaches about 30%. Google+ is

thus still a niche social network in Germany that mostly deals with articles from the tech area. 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 58.7 (up from 35.5 in 2012) Likes on Facebook, generated 10.1 (up from 8.8 in 2012) Tweets and received on average 1.8 (up from 0.7 in 2012) One-Ups. Facebook has obviously gained some more interest in the first half of 2013 while Twitter begins to grow slower. Google+ again doubles the number of One-Ups but is still on quite a low absolute level.

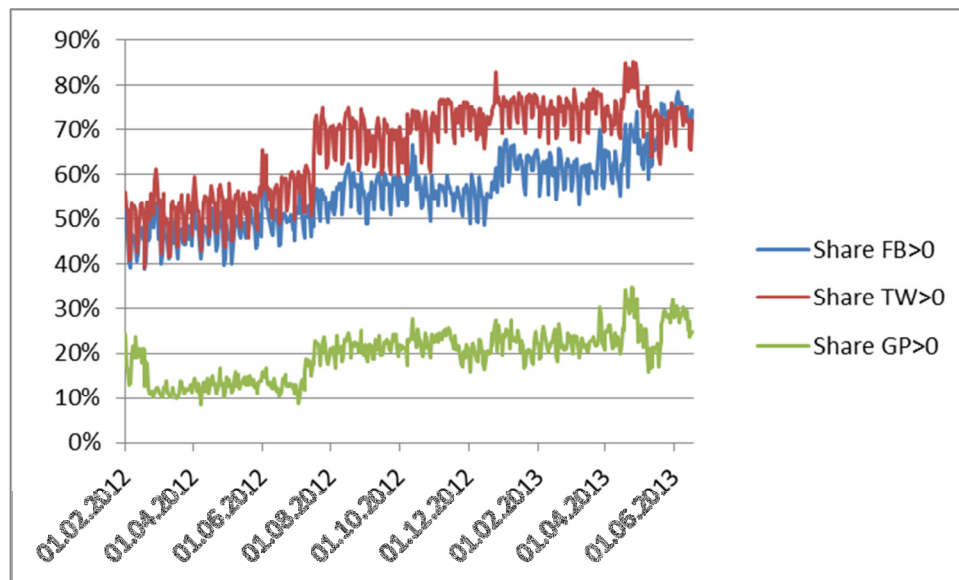


Figure 3: Fraction of Articles that receive more than 0 Likes, Tweets, One-Ups

With respect to the media website that generated the recommendation, *Spiegel Online* still dominates the German market with 5.4 Million recommendations followed by *Bild.de* with 3.8 Million recommendations. Top mover is *Zeit.de* climbing from rank 8 to rank 4. For all media in the Top 10 we see an increase in the absolute number of recommendations. Table 2 summarizes the Top 10.

Rank 1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Spiegel Online	5,376,697
2 (2)	Bild.de	3,800,864
3 (3)	Welt.de	1,659,836
4 (8)	Zeit.de	1,568,648
5 (4)	Focus Online	1,477,274
6 (6)	Sueddeutsche.de	1,159,583
7 (5)	faz.net	1,030,643

8 (9)	Stern.de	819,850
9 (7)	n-tv.de	757,137
10 (10)	Handelsblatt	496,938

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.

Rank1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Spiegel Online	1,508,227
2 (2)	Welt.de	534,119
3 (3)	Focus Online	379,042
4 (-)	Bild Online	375,838
5 (4)	faz.net	357,508

Table 3: Resort Politics Top 5

Rank 1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Spiegel Online	658,510
2 (3)	faz.net	259,117
3 (2)	Welt.de	257,676
4 (4)	Focus Online	238,488
5 (-)	Bild Online	150,475

Table 4: Resort Business & Economics Top 5

Rank 1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Heise.de	435,212
2 (2)	Chip.de	362,804
3 (5)	Spiegel Online	122,988

4 (-)	Zeit.de	122,141
5 (-)	Bild Online	115,110

Table 5: Resort Technology Top 5

Rank 1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Bild Online	1,309,129
2 (2)	Spiegel Online	289,906
3 (4)	Focus Online	172,025
4 (3)	Welt.de	108,472
5 (-)	n-tv	65,956

Table 6: Resort Sports Top 5

Rank 1. H. 2013 (Rank 2012)	Website	Number of Recommendations
1 (1)	Spiegel Online	316,557
2 (5)	Zeit.de	88,656
3 (3)	Focus Online	77,142
4 (2)	Welt.de	54,929
5 (4)	n-tv	34,887

Table 7: Resort Science Top 5

Figure 4 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+. Twitter loses market share, e.g. at *Handelsblatt.com*, *Spiegel.de* and *Heise.de* and gains only some market share at *Bild.de* but coming from a very low level in 2012 (4%). Google+ seems to gain ground at the technology sector and already has 10% market share at *Heise.de* (up from 4% in 2012). As predicted, Google+ could become more dangerous for Twitter than for Facebook.

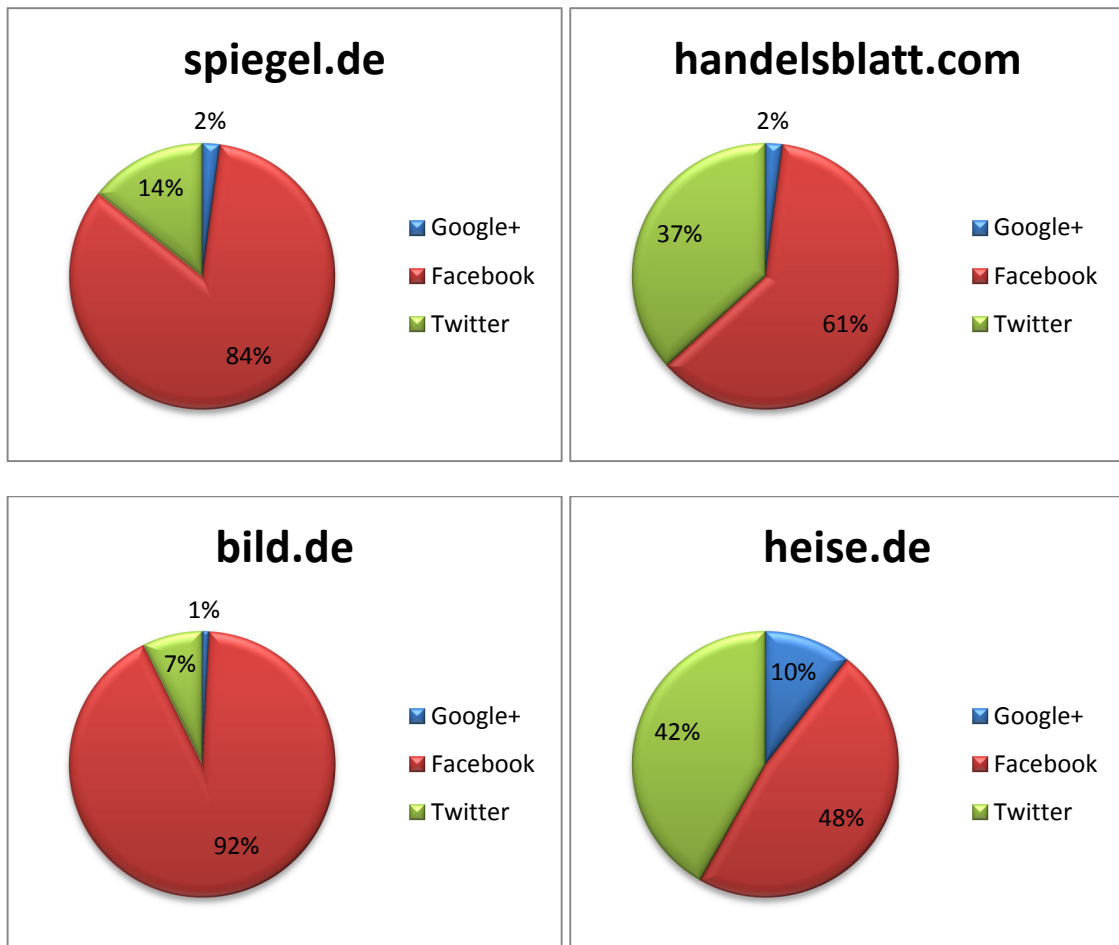


Figure 4: Usage of Social Networks per Media

Most Recommended Articles in First Half 2013

Facebook still dominates this market with a strong community on Bild.de who often share sports articles. It will be interesting how the new revenue model of Bild.de (subscription fee for some articles) will affect the results in the second half of 2013. It is likely that Bild.de will lose reach. The Top10-Articles in the first half 2013 on Twitter are substantially less tweeted than the ones in 2012. The Top10-Articles on Google+ nearly double their reach when compared to 2012. Again, Google+ has a strong momentum in the technology and science domain.

Rank	Article	Website	Number of Likes
1	Bild Online	Transfer-Hammer! - Götze zu Bayern	68,801
2	Bild Online	Hündin Sheila - Ertränkt, weil sie nicht stubenrein war	62,229
3	Spiegel Online	Sprachreform an der Uni Leipzig: Guten Tag, Herr Professorin	36,855
4	Spiegel Online	Gestohlener Leibniz-Keks: Zeitung bekommt Bekennerschreiben vom "Krümelmonster"	35,062
5	Spiegel Online	Warnung aus Brüssel: EU fehlt Geld für	30,992

		Hochwasserhilfe	
6	Welt	Fehlende Anerkennung: Die Bundeswehr, Deutschlands ungeliebte Armee	25,913
7	Bild Online	Neuer Trainer! - Bayern München holt Guardiola	25,596
8	Spiegel Online	Saatgutkonzern: Monsanto gibt Kampf für Gentechnik in Europa auf	23,132
9	Spiegel Online	Kanzlerin Merkel - Altenpfleger haben einen härteren Job als ich!	21,999
10	Spiegel Online	Political Correctness: Auf dem Weg zur Trottelssprache	20,815

Table 8: Facebook

Rank	Article	Website	Number of Tweets
1	Bild Online	Transfer-Hammer! - Götze zu Bayern	1,603
2	Heise Online	Vorsicht beim Skypen - Microsoft liest mit	1,409
3	Spiegel Online	Zweiter Weltkrieg: Japanischer Politiker verteidigt Zwangsprostitution	1,144
4	Zeit	Todesopfer rechter Gewalt 1990 - 2013	995
5	Spiegel Online	Sprachreform an der Uni Leipzig: Guten Tag, Herr Professorin	929
6	Süddeutsche	Mollath bleibt in der Psychiatrie - Skandalöse Entscheidung	884
7	Spiegel Online	Abschaffung von DSL-Flatrates: Die Telekom erdrosselt das Internet	777
8	Heise Online	In eigener Sache: Der Heise Zeitschriften Verlag und das Leistungsschutzrecht	751
9	Spiegel Online	Brüderle-Debatte: Stopp!	729
10	Spiegel Online	Plagiatsvorwürfe: Uni erkennt Schavan Dokortitel ab - Ministerin kündigt Klage an	722

Table 9: Twitter

Rank	Article	Website	Number of +1
1	Chip.de	DSL-Drosselung: Alle Fragen und Antworten	1967

2	Heise Online	Vorsicht beim Skypen - Microsoft liest mit	1,943
3	Spiegel Online	Sprachreform an der Uni Leipzig: Guten Tag, Herr Professorin	802
4	Welt	15-jähriger Schüler revolutioniert die Krebsmedizin	655
5	Spiegel Online	S.P.O.N. - Die Mensch-Maschine: Google macht die Welt zum Spielfeld	639
6	Welt	Anstößige Begriffe - Apple löscht E-Mails ohne Warnung aus der Cloud	613
7	Bild Online	Zuckerberg laufen die Nutzer weg – Facebook viel zu uncool!	591
8	Heise Online	Roter Alarm für Porno-Trolle	581
9	Welt	Geschwindigkeitsbremse - Telekom will Netz nun doch für alle Kunden drosseln	564
10	Spiegel Online	Abschaffung von DSL-Flatrates: Die Telekom erdrosselt das Internet	553

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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