

# Social Media at Deutscher Wetterdienst (DWD)

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## Introduction

Social media complement and increasingly determine the public discourse. By March 2010, 30 million Germans were already members of internet communities. Maintaining contact with friends and families, the exchange of common interests and experiences, and the opportunity to find new friends are the main reasons for the membership of users in these communities. Seven social media sites were among the twenty most visited websites in Germany (YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Twitter, Blogger, Xing). The VZ network alone had almost 17 million users, and Facebook had over 11 million in Germany. Although Twitter has so far only 350,000 German-speaking active accounts, it continues to receive high media attention. Among Twitter users an above average number of opinion leaders were present.

All this, along with the pressure to respond in crisis situations, urged the German Weather Service (DWD) to enter the field of modern social media in 2011.

## Top Story of the Day

In the broadest sense, the first step of our social media is the newsletter "Top Story of the Day" (Fig. 1), which was launched by DWD in



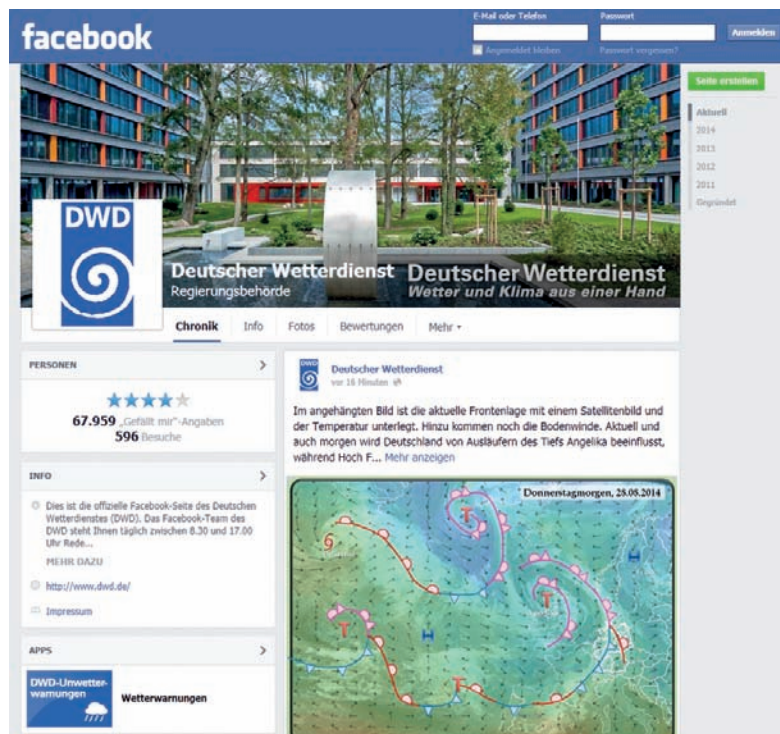
▲ Figure 1: Example for "Top Story of the Day"

1994 and is published by the media group of the central forecasting office. This is published daily and is text-based. It contains interesting meteorological topics or explanations, mostly influenced by current events. Its targets are journalists, press agencies and the interested public. The newsletter is distributed every day by email to about 1800 customers. Since it has also been placed on the website of the German Weather Service, it has achieved significantly higher distribution and readership.

## Facebook

With the appearance of modern means of communication such as smartphones, the advent of new media phenomena such as "shitstorms" as well as severe weather events, the German Weather Service decided to play a bigger part in the social media sector.

Thus DWD started its Facebook page (Fig. 2) on the web in March 2011.



▲ Figure 2: DWD on Facebook

The aim is to position the German Weather Service in social media, to attract the press to its web pages, to interact with the public and have a better means of reaction during crises.

The Facebook page is monitored daily and supplied with interesting topics from the media department of the central forecasting office during normal office hours (0700-1700). During a crisis event the Public Relations department of the Meteorological Service monitors activities on Facebook continuously and can respond immediately. By the end of 2014 the website had about 69 000 followers.

## Twitter

Another important social media tool is Twitter. Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages. The German Weather Service has participated in this service since 2011. The aim is to position the public weather service in social



▲ Figure 3: Twitter\_presse



▲ Figure 4: Twitter\_agrar

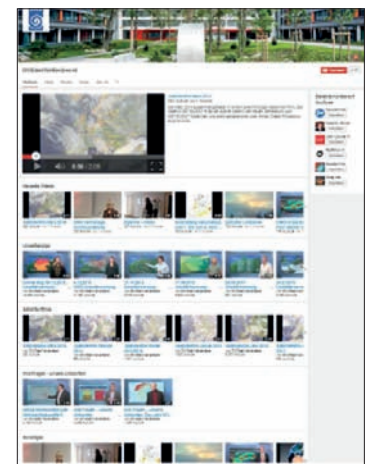
media, but here 2 separate sectors are served: firstly the press and secondly other special users such as the agricultural sector. This is done by means of Twitter\_press (Fig. 3) as well as by Twitter\_agrar (Fig. 4). Twitter\_press is served by the PR department and has about 4700 followers while Twitter\_agrar is supplied by the agrometeorological department and has about 220 followers.

## YouTube

YouTube is a very important social platform. YouTube is a video portal of Google. Users can view and upload free of charge video clips on this portal. With the installation of a professional television studio in the headquarters of the German Weather Service in Offenbach (Fig. 5) it was possible to



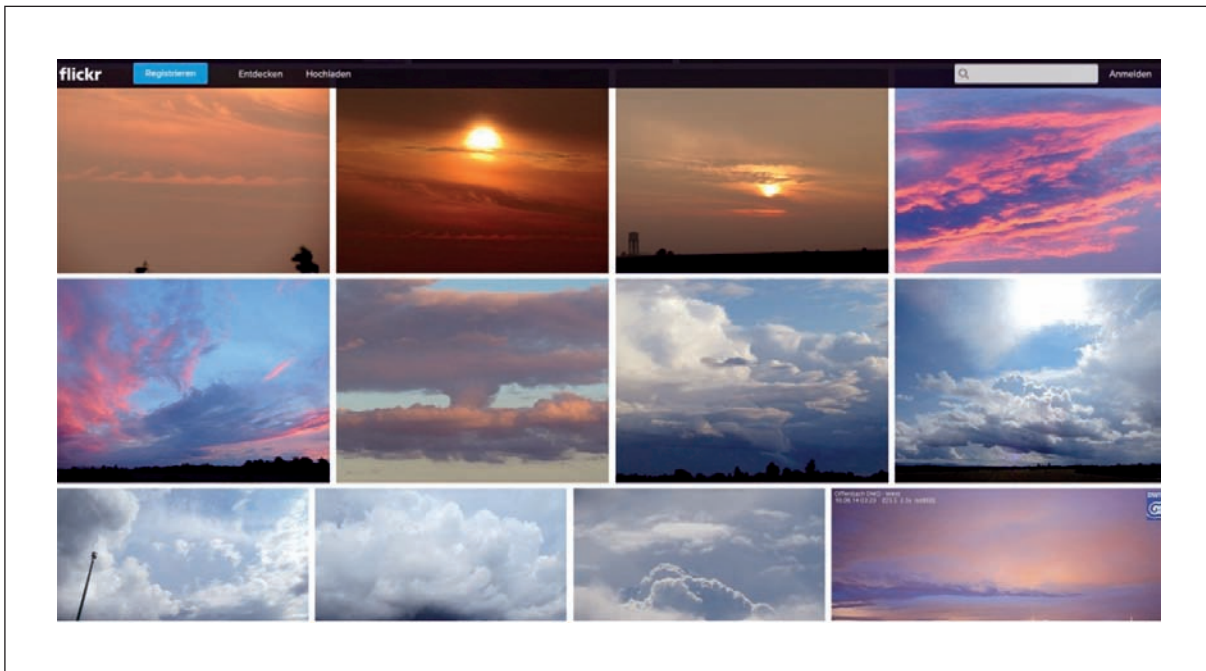
► Figure 5: TV-studio at DWD-Headquarters



► Figure 5: DWD on YouTube

produce video clips that were used for YouTube (Fig. 6) from March 2011 on. The goal was position DWD in social medias and also to be able to communicate professionally with the public in case of severe weather events and crisis situations as well as in-house with its own employees.

Regularly, interesting meteorological topics and stories about DWD are produced and uploaded to YouTube. Every day a moderated weather forecast clip is produced by the media department of the central forecasting office. However, for legal



▲ Figure 7: DWD on Flickr

reasons it is open only to employees on the intranet. Only in the case of severe weather will it be opened to the public. Hereupon the clip will be referenced on DWD's warning page, on Facebook and Twitter. The YouTube clips in a severe weather event are then regularly linked by press agencies or used on television.

Regularly the DWD YouTube page has 5000- 9000 followers daily, during severe weather events even reaching 30000-40000 followers.

## Flickr

Flickr is a commercial web-service portal that allows users to upload digital and digitized pictures with comments and notes to the site and make it available to other users.

DWD's Flickr-site (Fig. 7) is supplied with interesting weather pictures by the PR department and has about 69 000 followers. The aim is also to position the DWD in social media.

## Summary

The DWD is widely represented in the field of social media. This had already started with a daily newsletter with interesting, current meteorological topics in 1994, but later reinforced with Facebook,

Twitter and Flickr at the beginning of 2011. With the installation of a professional television studio in the headquarters of DWD, it was possible to produce video clips for Youtube – demonstrating the idea that 'a picture or a clip says a thousand words'.

The activities focus on:

- Positioning DWD in social media
- Interaction with the public
- Customer service
- Crisis communication

## References

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