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**Social Media –
A challenge for the Agri-Food-Industry**

Dr. Maike Kayser, Rhena Kröger, Prof. Dr. Ludwig Theuvsen

**Georg-August-University Goettingen
Departement of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development
Economics of Agribusiness
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 5, 37073 Goettingen, Germany
Phone: +49 (0) 551 39 13868
Mail: rkroege@uni-goettingen.de**

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Maike Kayser
Rhena Kröger
Ludwig Theuvsen

Contact:

Dr. Maike Kayser, Rhena Kröger, Prof. Dr. Ludwig Theuvsen

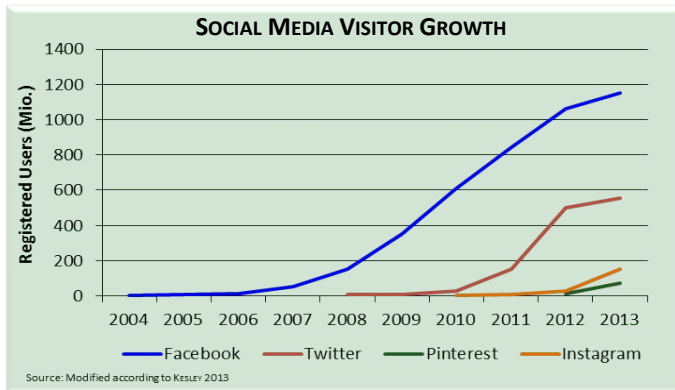
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Social Media - A Challenge for the Agri-Food-Industry

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Social Media is not only important in people's private area – also in corporate practice. It is an essential part in modern communication. For the agri-food-industry this results in a variety of challenges and opportunities.

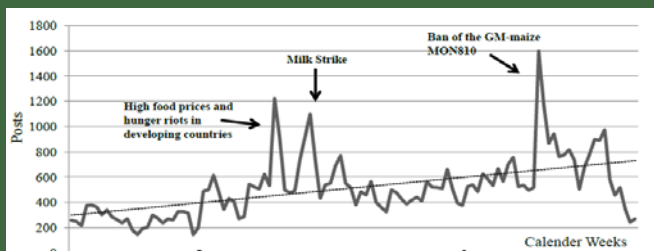
CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- There is no distinction of consumers and producers - „Producersage“ - based on „production“ und „usage“ (BRUNS 2007, UITZ 2013)
- Social media is a major challenge for a lot of companies
 - Because of the high transparency and the rapid and open communication the use of social media is often considered as a risk factor (AFC 2012)
 - Users of the new web-based media have the opportunity to create and publish their own content - this dynamic and participative structure complicates the clarity of the public discourse
 - The possibility to influence opinions is more difficult compared to sender-centric communication (GERHARDS et al. 2008)
- Simultaneously, the use of social media provide new opportunities for companies
 - Social Media allows contemporary insights into new topics that would be more difficult to handle in the future (BÖHM et al. 2010a)
 - Social Media has a positive influence on the interaction with customers, the company or brand awareness and sales (CONRAD CAINE 2012; UITZ 2012)
 - The use of social media in the field of human resource management offers great opportunities for the recruitment of qualified staff (BITKOM 2012)
 - The greatest benefit is to extend the influence on company's stakeholders, an improved business development, a higher customer loyalty and communication as well as customer 's satisfaction (KASKE et al. 2012)

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE AGRI-FOOD-INDUSTRY

- A successful implementation of new media in the communication policy is not trivial for companies in agribusiness– because there is a low web affinity (THEUVSEN 2005)
- In times of high criticism of the agribusiness industry a social media oriented strategy is inevitable – only an intensive dialogue with the public allows the agri-fod-industry a sustainable extraction of closeness and trust (SCHATTKE und PFRIM 2010)
- Structural transformation of the media towards a dialogic participatory communication requires a certain loss of control but the power of a “gatekeeper” of classical transmitter-oriented communication is reduced. Hence, topics which are not selected by journalists can be published. This allows the industry to place and distribute their own topics to the public (GERHARDS et al. 1998, KAYSER 2010, PLEIL 2010, SCHATTKE und PFRIM 2010)
- The measurement of the return of social media is difficult and can hardly be presented monetarily (CONRAD CAINE 2012)
- However, the importance of social media will increase in the future – especially in the context of social change – and companies will be more interested to invest (BITKOM 2012, CONRAD CAINE 2012)

COURSE OF COMMUNICATION ABOUT FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ISSUES IN GERMAN SPEAKING DISCUSSION FORUMS



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