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User behavior analysis of online meteorological services

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Online services have become an important source for meteorological information. Trends like the rise in mobile internet use and open data policies are creating new opportunities for more tailored and useful services. In order to seize these opportunities and evaluate their significance in resilience and capacity building for individuals and societies, better understanding about their use is necessary. This study analyses the user behavior and trends based on user traffic statistics, a web based survey and an end-user workshop. The studied services are a Finnish weather information web site, two mobile weather applications and a climate information portal, with data from 2009-2015. First results have been published in a report by the Finnish Meteorological Institute. This study complements earlier work with updated data and more in-depth analysis.

The results show that mobile use of both web services and dedicated applications is becoming increasingly popular. Mobility has resulted in differences in how the use is distributed according to the time of day. The relationship between weather and service use is also discussed. The results indicate that the use of online weather services is connected strongly to present weather, as winter temperatures and summer precipitation are correlated with user activity.

Weather and climate services respond to very different needs and the user volume of online climate services is very small scale compared to weather services. The studied climate information portal still manages to attract thousands of users monthly. Although the service offers detailed information on mitigation and adaptation to decision makers, most of the users are interested in general, introductory information about climate and climate change. This indicates that the mere availability of information does not yet result in interest towards decision-relevant mitigation and adaptation information. Whether this is a problem of reach or relevance is an important question for future research.