

Eurostar Case Study

Social media analysis of Eurostar over Christmas 2011

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Introduction

Eurostar is a very popular mode of transport in the month leading up to Christmas, as the usual business travellers are joined by tourists and shoppers heading to the Christmas markets and attractions of mainland Europe, as well as a large number of people travelling to be with family over Christmas.

After being heavily criticised in 2009 for failing to keep passengers informed of weather disruption, Eurostar began to make serious inroads into social media, setting up a Twitter page (@Eurostar) and Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/eurostar>) to communicate with their customers.

The following is an analysis of the opinions and sentiment of people discussing Eurostar on social media over the Christmas period (28th November to 28th December). It will look at the quantity of online chatter and which channels are being used for discussion, as well as assessing what is actually being said.

A key focus will be to identify how the opinions expressed and subjects being talked about change throughout the Christmas period, and how this data can inform the company's future operations and communication strategy.

Platform Distribution

The first step in any social media monitoring exercise is to identify the platforms on which your brand or keyword are being discussed. It is important that you know where most of the online conversation is happening, so that you can focus your listening and engagement efforts accordingly.

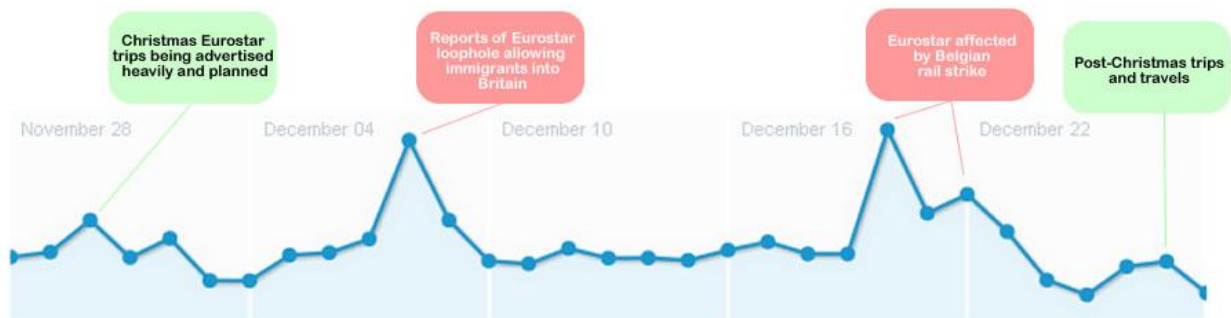
Share of Voice



The overwhelming majority of mentions of the Eurostar come from Twitter, with a far smaller number of mentions on Facebook, blogs and news sites. It therefore makes sense to focus on Twitter for this study, in order to make use of the largest body of data.

Close Analysis

Daily Mentions



The following is a breakdown of the most lively issues and opinions being discussed on a week-by-week basis in December. The key points are given as a bullet list, with representative social media posts used to show how they are being talked about.

Week 1: Nov 28th – Dec 4th

- Excitement and enthusiasm about Christmas Eurostar trips
- High level of interest in Eurostar-related travel offers and promotions
- Several complaints and problems relating to online ticket booking



MiTH

We're back. I love the Eurostar. What a comfortable trip!

3 weeks, 4 days ago on Twitter



Kelseybaybee

On the eurostar with the momma, off to france shopping. See u tomorrow night england #happytweet

3 weeks, 5 days ago on Twitter



Janni1982

@Neil_ah that's bad. Hmmmm.... Doesn't Eurostar have some special weekend offers?

3 weeks, 4 days ago on Twitter



Stephen Bell

Still trying to make Eurostar booking. They keep advertising places as available then once we get thru the booking they say "not available".

3 weeks, 4 days ago on Twitter

Week 2: Dec 5th – Dec 11th

- Lots of reports and comment about Eurostar 'Lille Loophole' allowing immigrants into UK - potential bad PR.
- Complaints about delays and extended journey times
- Lots of comments from travellers about their relaxing, enjoyable Eurostar experiences



Deb Little

Positive ▾

@chrisbellingham Not jetting, going on eurostar, 1st class, should be good, get nice meal & champers! x

3 weeks, 3 days ago on Twitter



Our Lady's Preston

Positive ▾

Just getting off Eurostar. Back in UK. Great trip - lots of shopping done. Mrs Crossley has two extra holdalls full of gifts!!

3 weeks, 3 days ago on Twitter



Neil Rowberry

Negative ▾

<http://t.co/rWx0wowQ> Eurostar loophole exposed: Illegal immigrants use ticket ruse to sneak into Britain #MailOnline

2 weeks, 6 days ago on Twitter



British National Party


Negative ▾

By Jennifer Matthys - As if it's not easy enough already to "sneak" into our already overcrowded country, it has emerged that a shocking loophole exists, and has been known about by the authorities, since ... [See all content](#)

2 weeks, 4 days ago on Facebook


Week 3: Dec 12th – Dec 18th


- Major delays due to technical issues – concerned and irate travellers
- Positive reactions to travel experience and ticket booking



Karen Melchior ♥ Positive ▾


Enjoyed reading @eurostar's in train magazine: Metropolitan. Good tips for Paris, Brussels and London. Will try those for London when back.


 2 weeks, 3 days ago on Twitter



Stephany van W. ♥ Positive ▾


Bought eurostar tickets in their mobile site. The great to see they got it right! @eurostar


 2 weeks, 3 days ago on Twitter



Plunkett McGreevy ⚠ Negative ▾


@MrsBYork problems with tunnel, all Eurostar & tunnel services suspended

 1 week, 3 days ago on Twitter



Darren James ⚠ Negative ▾

1 hour 30 minute delay on the Eurostar, then a 45 minute horrendous drive home. Nice way to wrap up the weekend.

 2 weeks, 3 days ago on Facebook

Week 4: Dec 19th – Dec 25th

- Announcement of major Belgian rail strike – confusion and speculation on how this will affect Eurostar
- Mixed, but mostly positive reaction to Eurostar’s customer service and handling of the strike
- Appreciative reaction to festive efforts made by Eurostar staff



R Ray Wang

⚠ Negative ▾

One reason to dislike public transport - when transit unions strike you are left powerless. #brussels #eurostar #freedom #carguy

🕒 6 days, 19 hours ago on Twitter



andrea cook

👍 Neutral ▾

@Eurostar I was due to travel today to london from brussels and am booked 4 tomorrow. Is my ticket ok for train from Holland to brussels?

🕒 6 days, 13 hours ago on Twitter



Vyveanna N'Hafiza

👍 Neutral ▾

@Eurostar hi is the Brussels to London train on this Saturday affected by any chance? Thanks

🕒 6 days, 14 hours ago on Twitter



Sweena

♥ Positive ▾

Been upgraded to Business Premier. Back to looking forward to Christmas. Huzzah #eurostar for rectifying the problem!

🕒 6 days, 22 hours ago on Twitter



Sophie Rivet

♥ Positive ▾

The **Eurostar** staff singing "we wish you a merry Christmas" in the mic when approaching Paris, perfect :)

🕒 5 days, 19 hours ago on Twitter

Week 5: Dec 26th – Dec 28th

- People returning to work after Christmas
- Holidaymakers starting to plan their 2012 breaks



Ben Fox

👍 Neutral ▾

This time tomorrow I'll be winging my way to Brussels on the Eurostar. So much easier than flying, from check-in to boarding in 10 mins.

🕒 6 hours, 9 minutes ago on Twitter



lucy cater

♥ Positive ▾

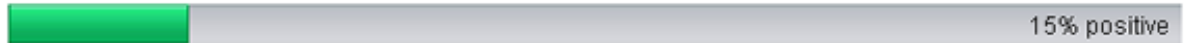
Looking at tickets for the #EuroStar to Paris and there's some good deals depending on when you go.... exciting stuff.

🕒 18 hours, 41 minutes ago on Twitter

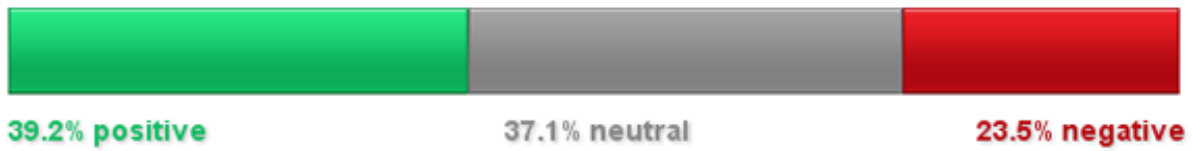
Sentiment

AVERAGE SENTIMENT

 Slightly **POSITIVE**



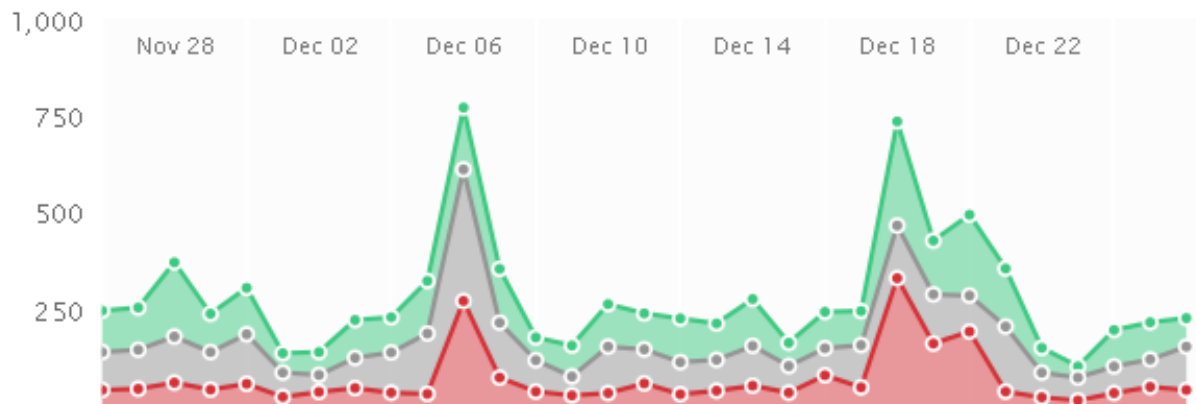
SENTIMENT BREAK-DOWN



Sentiment denotes whether each conversation in which the Eurostar was mentioned was positive, neutral or negative in tone. As a simple example, "I love Eurostar" is considered positive towards Eurostar whereas "I booked a seat on Eurostar yesterday" is neutral. We use one of the most powerful fully automated sentiment engines on the market.

The sentiment meter shows that the biggest proportion of opinions being expressed about Eurostar online in the run-up to Christmas are positive ones, with 39.2% of posts identified as positive, against 23.5% negative ones.

DAILY SENTIMENT BREAKDOWN



The daily sentiment breakdown graph shows the number of positive, neutral and negative mentions each day.

What the graph suggests is that even when Eurostar is experiencing problems and suffering from bad publicity (e.g. the Belgian strike and the 'Lille loophole'), the volume of negative posts remains broadly in proportion to the overall volume of posts. This would indicate that Eurostar has an effective customer relations strategy that is able to contain and minimise the harm to the brand caused by these issues before they get too out of hand. It also suggests that there are a significant number of important 'brand advocates' for Eurostar who are willing to stand up for the company online against would-be detractors.

Location



TOP COUNTRIES

United Kingdom	38 %
France	13 %
United States	12 %
Belgium	11 %
Canada	6 %
Italy	3 %
Netherlands	1 %

TOP LANGUAGES

English	77 %
French	9 %
Dutch	3 %
Italian	2 %
Spanish	1 %

The location heat map represents countries where people talked about Eurostar during the Christmas period, and their respective share of the conversation. The location of an individual is determined using mostly Twitter and Facebook data and other location data where available. The parts of the world with the darkest red are the ones in which the most mentions of Eurostar have been recorded.

The country with by far the biggest share of mentions is the UK, unsurprisingly followed by France with the second biggest share. Interestingly, a significant number of mentions came from Americans, giving the United States the third biggest share ahead of Belgium and several other European nations.

Recommendations

The following are five key recommendations for Eurostar based on the data collected in this study.

1) Make Twitter the Priority

The data shows the vast majority of mentions of Eurostar come from Twitter, and it is critical that Eurostar continue to engage and invest heavily in this medium in the future. The typical Eurostar passenger is likely to be worldly, cosmopolitan and tech-savvy – a profile that fits closely to that of the average Twitter user.

The great advantage of Twitter is that it allows you to post news, special offers and other interesting things to a large audience instantaneously, as well as communicate with individual customers on a one-to-one basis.

Eurostar is already using Twitter well, but one issue raised by the study is that having multiple Eurostar twitter accounts (@Eurostar, @EurostarUK, @eurostarcomms) can be confusing to some users. The ideal solution would be to either restrict the number of accounts or give them much more clearly defined roles (one for promotions, one for customer service etc.)

Interestingly, our sentiment data and close analysis of the social media traffic indicates that unavoidable problems like strikes do not necessarily damage the brand's reputation. They do cause a lot of anxiety and confusion though, and worried passengers inevitably turn to social media in search of information. It is therefore vital that Eurostar take full advantage of Twitter's potential as a customer service tool to inform, reassure and assist their passengers in the face of unexpected challenges.

2) Focus Christmas Marketing on Late November/Early December

Christmas is an important period for Eurostar, and the data suggests that the majority of people plan their trips at the end of November and start of December. Interest in special offers and deals peaked during this period, and there was a lot of chatter from people either planning or thinking about using the Eurostar.

In the week leading up to Christmas, a number of people were impressed by little festive touches on the Eurostar, such as staff singing a Christmas carol to passengers through the tannoy system. Such small things cost little or nothing, but the data shows they can make a big impression on Christmas travellers.

3) Monitor Social Media Space for Potential PR Problems

The storm over the so-called 'Lille loophole' demonstrates how in the modern age bad publicity can spread extremely fast via social media. Eurostar is a high profile brand, and needs its PR team to be alert to such dangers, particularly when they concern politically sensitive issues like immigration.

4) Capitalise on the 'Eurostar Experience'

One of the most widely shared sentiments identified in the study was the association of the Eurostar with a high level of comfort and convenience. The smart, friendly staff, the availability of good food and champagne, and even the in-train magazine were all mentioned as elements that made Eurostar feel a bit special and out of the ordinary.

Several posts juxtaposed Eurostar with air travel, praising the quick, hassle-free check-in procedures and relative comfort of the Eurostar as big advantages over flying. The 'Eurostar experience' itself seems to be a big selling point for travellers (particularly those using it for the first time), and this is something that Eurostar could look to exploit in future marketing campaigns.

5) Think Global

The location data showed that 12% of mentions of the Eurostar were by Americans, which suggests that there is a massive potential market to be exploited in the United States. Millions of American tourists head to Europe every year, and having flown all the way across the Atlantic it makes sense they might want to visit several countries on their trip.

Eurostar has long been a household name in Europe, so raising its profile in America could be a fantastic way to attract additional passengers. Once again, emphasising the 'Eurostar Experience' could be important here, especially considering train travel in the United States is a relatively uncommon mode of transport.

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