

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Title	Social media use amongst taxi and private hire (TPH) drivers and customers	
Objective	Assess the use of social media amongst TPH drivers and operators, and customers	
Date	November 2011	Agency: SPA Future Thinking
Methodology	Web-based desk research (Facebook, Twitter, blogs etc)	

Abstract

To support Transport for London's (TfL's) communications with the TPH trade, desk research was undertaken to assess the extent and nature of social media use amongst drivers and operators. While it appears that the private hire trade generally only use Facebook and Twitter as advertising platforms, there is a small group of taxi drivers (up to 1,000, or 1 in 25) who are active on social media using various sites for a wide range of interactions. Mobile Apps which allow taxis and minicabs to be booked are proliferating and, while it may be too early to tell which will prevail, it seems likely that the market will grow.

Key findings

Up to around 1,000 taxi drivers (equating to up to 1 in 25) are active on social media, generating content around trade matters, social concerns and general chit chat. Taxi drivers use a wide variety of social media platforms including Twitter, forums and discussion boards. The most commonly discussed topic is perceived problems with the regulation of the private hire trade.

There is less obvious content generated by private hire drivers or operators, although many companies use Twitter to advertise their services and Addison Lee has a Twitter feed.

The Apps market appears to be growing in importance with a proliferation of Apps being developed – taxi and private hire have distinct Apps, due to the rivalry between the two groups. It is probably too early to say which if any will come to dominate, however the newly launched Hailo App seems to have widespread support from the taxi trade and, for private hire, Addison Lee have their own App (which is not used by all of their staff).

Customers generate a relatively small amount of content on the topic of TPH on social media, with the majority coming through Twitter and concerning individual experiences and opinions of taxis and minicabs. There are also some discussion forums about using TPH in London, reclaiming lost property and travelling safely at night.

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