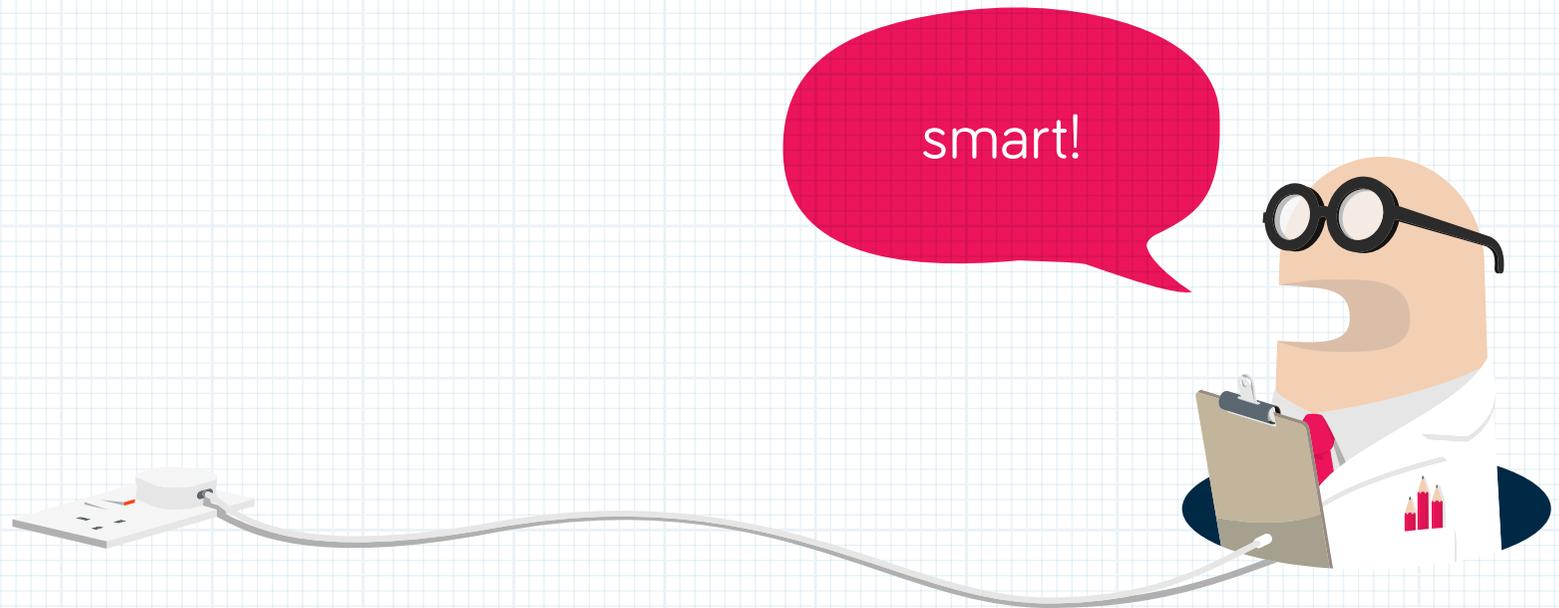


# Brandwatch Report/ Customer Service Index /2012



Customer service on social media.  
92 top brands analysed.

We take a look at **which brands** are executing the **best customer service** on social media and how their reputation is reflected in **conversation** and **sentiment**.



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# Brandwatch Report

## Customer Service Index /2012

### Why read this...

**“ I’m a big fan of Brandwatch, both the product and the way they go about things as a company.**

*I always make sure to read the content they publish as they really know their stuff when it comes to all things social media.*

*Whether it’s analysis of social media data around a particular industry or event or a best-practice guide on how to get the most from social – their material is always full of useful insights, so it’s well worth checking out. ”*

**Rich Kemp**, LateRooms.com

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# Customer Service Index /

## Introduction

Customer service on social media platforms continues to be crucial for brands, to both cultivate a loyal following and as a means of managing reputation by responding to complaints. Both existing and potential customers regularly turn to forum threads, Twitter and Facebook to either contact companies directly or discuss customer service experiences with peers.

Using Brandwatch, our own social media monitoring tool, we dived into this pool of content, extracting information about which brands are tackling their customer service challenges and those that are falling behind.

The **Brandwatch Customer Service Index/ 2012** follows-on from findings unearthed 12 months ago to further analyse not only the current state of this landscape, but also if these brands have improved over the past year.

We selected **92 brands** across a wide range of sectors, consumer bases, company size and traditional online followings and analysed the extent to which customer service drives social media content.

The leading **40** were then scrutinised for the sentiment and type of conversation posted by and about their brands in order to ascertain who were the **'heroes and villains'** of **customer service** in **2012**.

# Customer Service Index /

## Methodology

The leading 40 brands were selected from the shortlist of 92 by the extent to which customer service content about these companies was visible on the social web in the UK from February 1 to May 31 2012. The terms “customer service” OR “cust serv” were sought.

The **sentiment** of online customer service conversation posted about these brands was then manually analysed using samples of discussion randomly selected from across the evaluation period.

Brands were awarded a **score** that accounted for both visibility of customer service content as well as the tone of posts. Visibility is measured as a proportion of the brand’s online posts as a measure of dedication to the issue, rather than company size.

These **40 brands** were subsequently ranked, with the highest scores denoting the most successful. A score **greater than zero** pertains to overall **positive** customer service

conversation posted about the brand. A score **below zero** naturally indicates an overall **negative** slant towards the brand.

For the analysts among us, the score represents the proportional visibility of net positive customer service chat about the brand online. For example, **John Lewis** was awarded a score of **42**, meaning that positive-minus-negative customer service chat constituted **0.42%** of all **John Lewis** posts online.

Although the methodology used by the **Brandwatch Customer Service Index 2012** is marginally different from that employed last year, there is still value in contrasting results on a superficial level.

# Customer Service Index /

## Summary

Of the 40 brands analysed in the Brandwatch Customer Service Index 2012, only three were the subject of more positive discussion about customer service-oriented issues than negative; John Lewis, Waitrose and B&Q.

More than half (**52%**) of all content across the **40** brands was **negative in tone**, a rise of four percentage points since 2011.

**John Lewis** was by far the most positively addressed brand in the study, with a net **positive score** of **57%** in the four month period.

Three of the five **worst perceived brands** in the study were telecoms providers; **Virgin Media, Vodafone** and **TalkTalk**.

Brands in the **retail sector** were by far the **best performers** in the four-month evaluation period, with utilities, technology and telecoms providers very poorly addressed.

Social media users were more likely to take to the **web** to **voice general discontent** of a brand's customer service than for any other reason, corresponding to the **negative perception** of the survey as a whole. This was particularly prevalent in the **utilities sector**.

# Customer Service Index / Summary /cont...

**Only three  
brands scored  
positively overall  
in 2012**

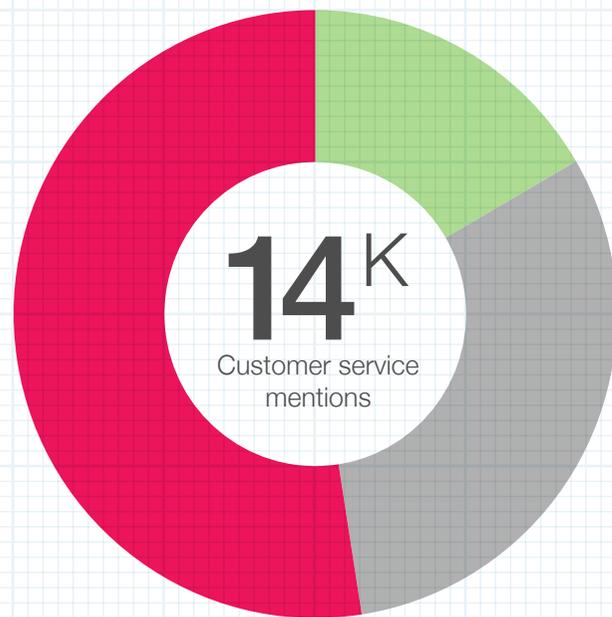
**Negative content  
grew by 4  
percentage points  
since 2011**

**Retail brands  
were by far the  
most likely to be  
well received**

# Customer Service Index /

## Key findings

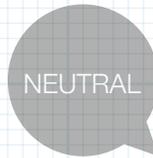
Online customer service conversation about the leading 40 brands declined in tone year-on-year.



POSITIVE

17%

**Up** by 1 percentage point from 2011



NEUTRAL

31%

**Down** by 5 percentage points from 2011



NEGATIVE

52%

**Up** by 4 percentage points from 2011

**This is further confirmation that consumers are turning more and more to the web to discuss problems about this topic, rather than to praise brands.**

Although we need not interpret this finding as necessarily indicative of falling customer service standards, this does not make response tactics any less important.

# Customer Service Index /

## Key findings /cont...

**John Lewis customer service conversation was far superior in sentiment to any other brand in the study.**

Rank	Brand	Net Sentiment Score	Score
1	John Lewis	57%	42
2	Waitrose	15%	3
3	B&Q	3%	1
4	American Express	-2%	0
5	Groupon	-3%	0

Waitrose, also part of The John Lewis Partnership, was second in the study, proving that the group's customer service strategy as a whole is on a higher plane than both direct and indirect competitors.



**Forum/** Amazon.co.uk

Also had delivery issues with the machine and **Amazon UK** customer service are really poorly trained. Got the replacement machine from **John Lewis** without problems.



**Twitter/** @fayebarker

**@johnlewisretail**  
Brilliant customer service in Kingston today. Faulty toy, no receipt, no quibbles.  
Thanks from me and happy toddler

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# Customer Service Index /

Key findings /cont...

**TalkTalk was by far the most negatively discussed brand in the evaluation period.**

Rank	Brand	Net Sentiment Score	Score
36	Virgin Media	-59%	-37
37	British Airways	-62%	-37
38	Vodafone	-65%	-39
39	Santander	-78%	-66
40	TalkTalk	-74%	-119

**Three telecoms providers made up the lowest five ranked brands in the CSI 2012.**

Interestingly, **TalkTalk's** members forum acts to concentrate a significant proportion of consumer complaints to one location.



I am having a hell of a time with **Talk Talk**. I keep being passed the buck and am being told conflicting information about leaving **Talk Talk** and the early termination fees.

**Forum/** talktalkmembers.com



**TalkTalk** customer service just read from a script with a flow chart. Not one of them seems to have the ability to deviate from this and actually apply logical diagnosis. It's most likely a fault with their equipment.

**Forum/** sheffieldforum.co.uk

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# Customer Service Index /

## Key findings /cont...

**John Lewis was the only brand that was discussed positively overall among the individual sector winners.**

Sector	Brand	Score	Overall Rank
Retail	John Lewis	42	1
Telecoms	Motorola	-3	7
Transport	Virgin Atlantic	-5	10
Financial services	American Express	0	5
Logistics	Royal Mail	-12	19
Technology	Hewlett Packard	-5	11
Utilities	British Gas*	-34	24

\* British Gas was the only utilities provider among the 40 analysed brands. Despite this, the company can still be held to represent the sector as a whole for the purposes of this study.

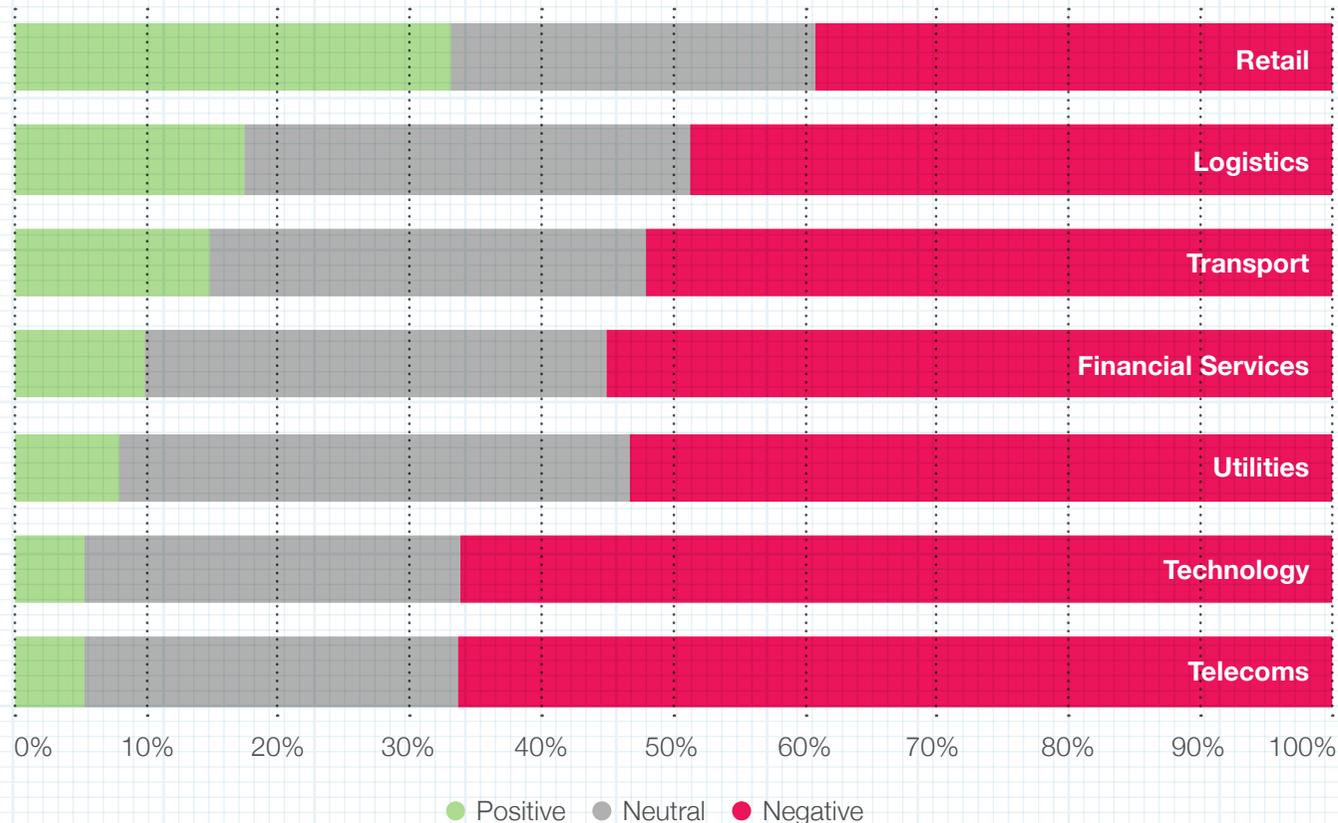
**Of the brands in the CSI 2012, the 40 selected for further analysis broke down nicely into seven sectors.**

As we'll see on the subsequent slide, retail brands in general were well perceived more often on social media platforms than those in other industries.

# Customer Service Index /

## Key findings /cont...

**Brands in the retail sector were clearly more highly regarded by social media users discussing customer service.**



Whilst technology and telecoms providers were the poorest perceived overall.

**Telecoms brand operate in an industry where consumers largely only take to social media in the event of a problem, rather to praise the brand concerned.**

This is also the case with utilities, potentially because the brands may not be as 'fashionable'.

# Customer Service Index /

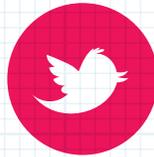
## Types of customer service posts/



### Direct assistance request/

I called **Waitrose** and waited while the customer service agent checked their database... She told me that if there isn't enough info on the website on any product I can always call up and ask about it.

**Forum/** forums.moneysavingexpert.com



### General discontent/

**@Swealo** I'm always amazed **@BritishGas** have any customers. They have awful customer service. Tried them once never again!

**Twitter/** @tikiroom78



### Possible assistance request/

...the letter I have been sent from **Royal Mail** has 2 telephone numbers on it..1 is for 'General Customer Services' and the other is for 'Deaf People' to ring ?!

**Facebook/** Lee Geere



### General praise/

The **@johnlewisretail** Partnership customer service truly is unbeatable in the UK.

**Twitter/** @barmyarmyuk

Customer service posts were categorised by the type of conversation posted by consumers about the respective brands.

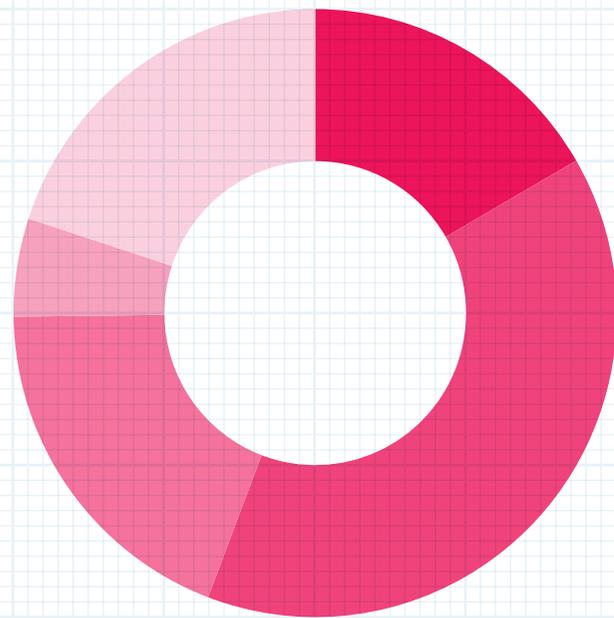
These types of discussion are charted across the leading brands on the following pages.

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# Customer Service Index /

## Types of customer service posts/ cont...

**Social media users are more likely to post discontent about the customer service of a brand than other thoughts.**



- **17%**  
Direct assistance request
- **39%**  
General discontent
- **19%**  
General Praise
- **5%**  
Possible request for assistance
- **20%**  
Other

**This explains the overall negative trend.**

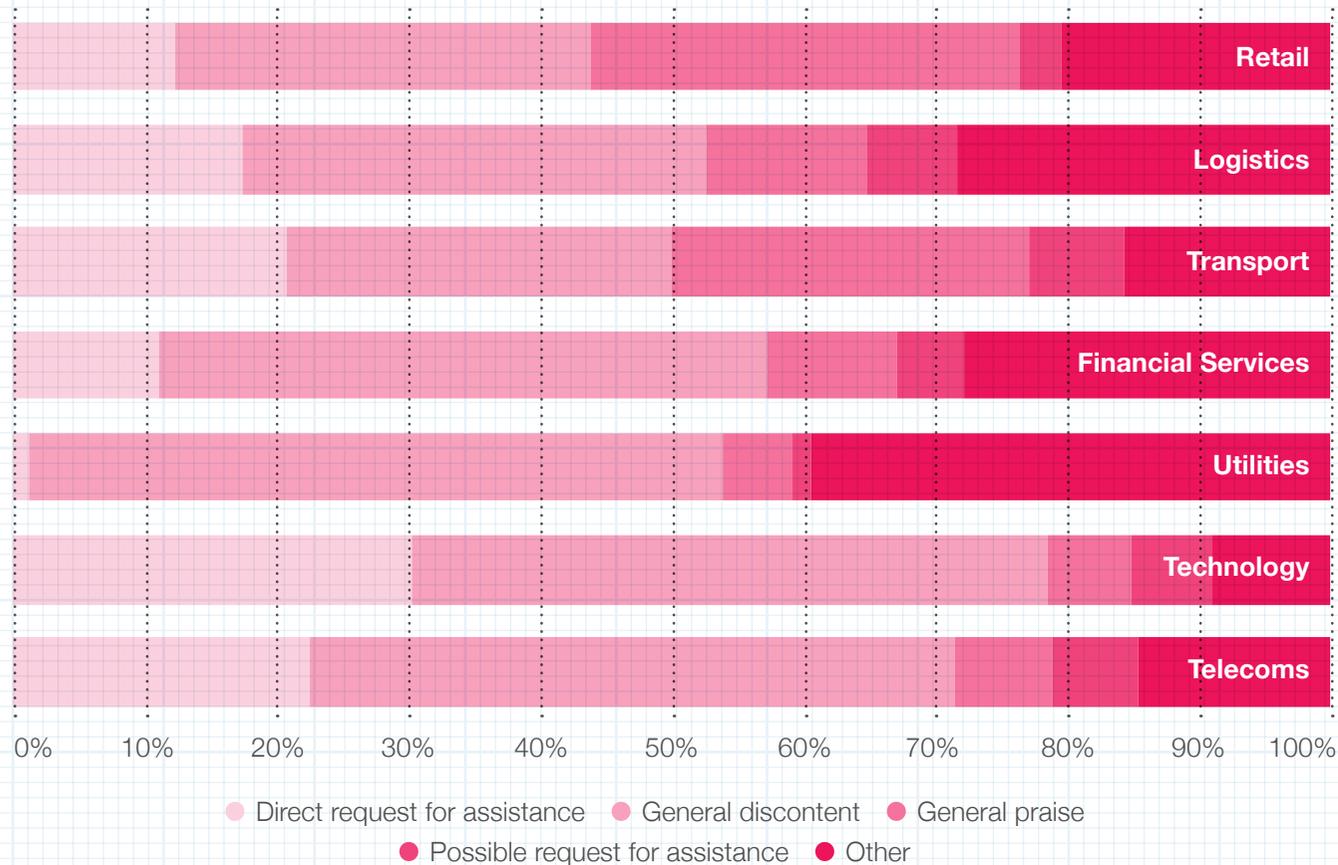
Given that consumers are much less likely to voice praise of a brand, companies that buck this trend must be considered to have performed particularly well on social media.

# Customer Service Index /

## Types of customer service posts/ cont...

Retail and transport brands were the most likely to elicit general praise about customer service.

The chart (left) corresponds fairly accurately to the findings of **page 11**.



# Customer Service Index /

## Twitter & Facebook – Visibility & performance

Brands handling customer service requests online often use Twitter and Facebook as the primary platforms on which to contribute to the overall conversation. The leading five brands were taken aside and analysed on these platforms to gain further insight to customer service methods.

**John Lewis** was by far the most **prolific tweeter** in the four months, posting nearly **50% more** than **B&Q**, the next most regular contributor in the evaluation period.

**John Lewis** was also the **fastest** of the five brands to respond to tweeters that had contacted the brand account previously, with a mean Twitter response time of **3 hours 23 minutes**. This figure was skewed slightly by a handful of threads with significant delays in getting back to tweeters; the median time was a mere **16 minutes**.

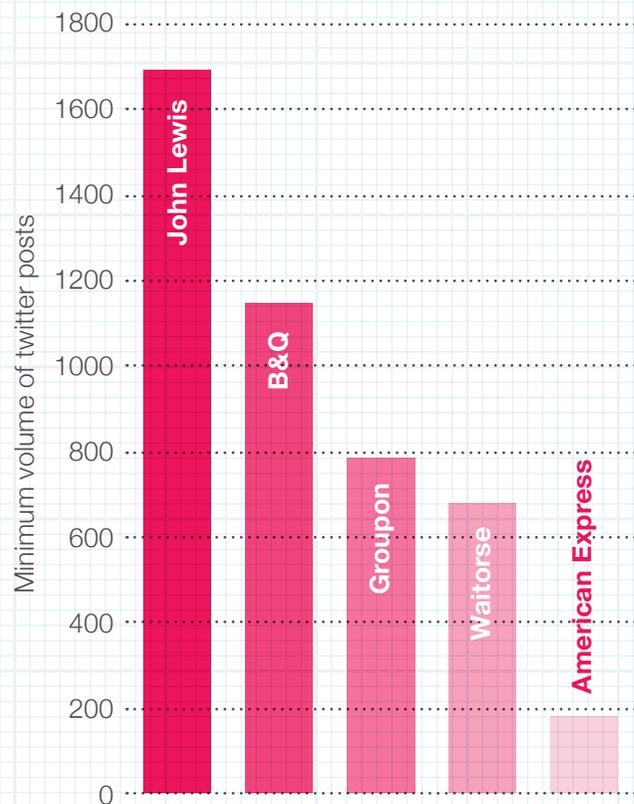
**Groupon** was by some distance the brand most **dedicated to Facebook**, posting more than **twice a day** on average and responding to **88%** of all posts from users.

Interestingly, **John Lewis** and **B&Q** were some distance behind **Groupon** on Facebook, a reverse of the brands' performance on Twitter. This suggests that brands tend to dedicate customer service teams to one or the other of these platforms.

On top of Twitter and Facebook, a range of brands in this study host **member forums** where customers can **compare customer service** experiences, seemingly concentrating **negative chat** in one place.

# Customer Service Index / Twitter & Facebook – Visibility & performance/ cont...

John Lewis was the most prolific brand on Twitter in the evaluation period.



Twitter/ @m6wxy

#### User Post/

Appalling service I received at the checkout @bandq still grating. Not an hello,goodbye no eye contact. Just talking 2 her friends #b&q



Twitter/ @bandq

#### B&Q Reply/

@MrGaz\_H Hiya, sorry to hear you received bad service, please email at forumfeedback@b-and-q.co.uk with details and I will look into. Sue

B&Q was the second most regular contributor, posting two-thirds of the output of John Lewis.

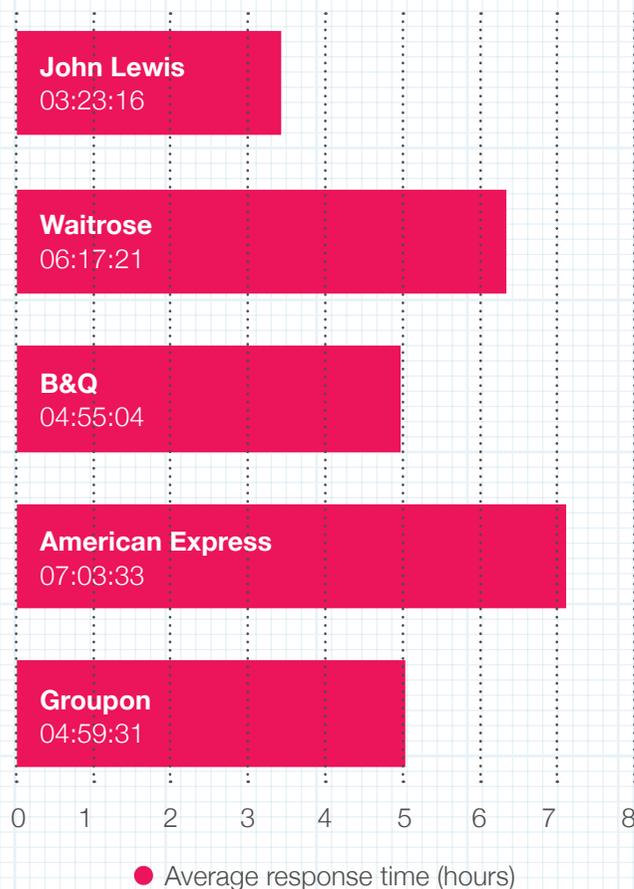
Four of the leading five brands in the **CSI 2012** posted more than **five times a day** on Twitter.

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# Customer Service Index /

## Twitter & Facebook – Visibility & performance/ cont...

**John Lewis was the fastest of the top five brands to respond to tweeters.**



Twitter/ @m6wxy

**User Post/**

**@johnlewisretail**

Hi, online the Barbour Leather Travel Explorer Bag, Brown is out of stock. Does your Solihull store have it in? Thanks



Twitter/ @bandq

**John Lewis Reply/**

5 mins response time

**@WoodhallClare** Hello! Please contact the Solihull branch on 0121 704 1121 and they will be able to check availability for you.

Combined with the findings of the previous page, the positive perception of John Lewis within social media customer service discussion becomes slightly clearer.

The brand posted nearly as often as the most prolific tweeter, whilst responses to consumers are by far the swiftest.

# Customer Service Index /

## Twitter & Facebook – Visibility & performance/ cont...

**Groupon was the leading performer on Facebook of the top-ranked brands, responding to an impressive 88% of posts.**



Interestingly, John Lewis and B&Q, the most prolific tweeters, were significantly behind Groupon in terms of Facebook output.

This suggests that the leading brands in terms of customer service could be choosing one platform on which to devote the majority of resources.

● Percentage of Facebook posts responded to

# Customer Service Index /

## John Lewis snapshot – What is working?

John Lewis on Twitter and Facebook.

An average  
Twitter response  
time of 3hrs 23mins  
(32% faster than  
any other top  
five brand)

More than  
1,000 tweets  
in the  
four months

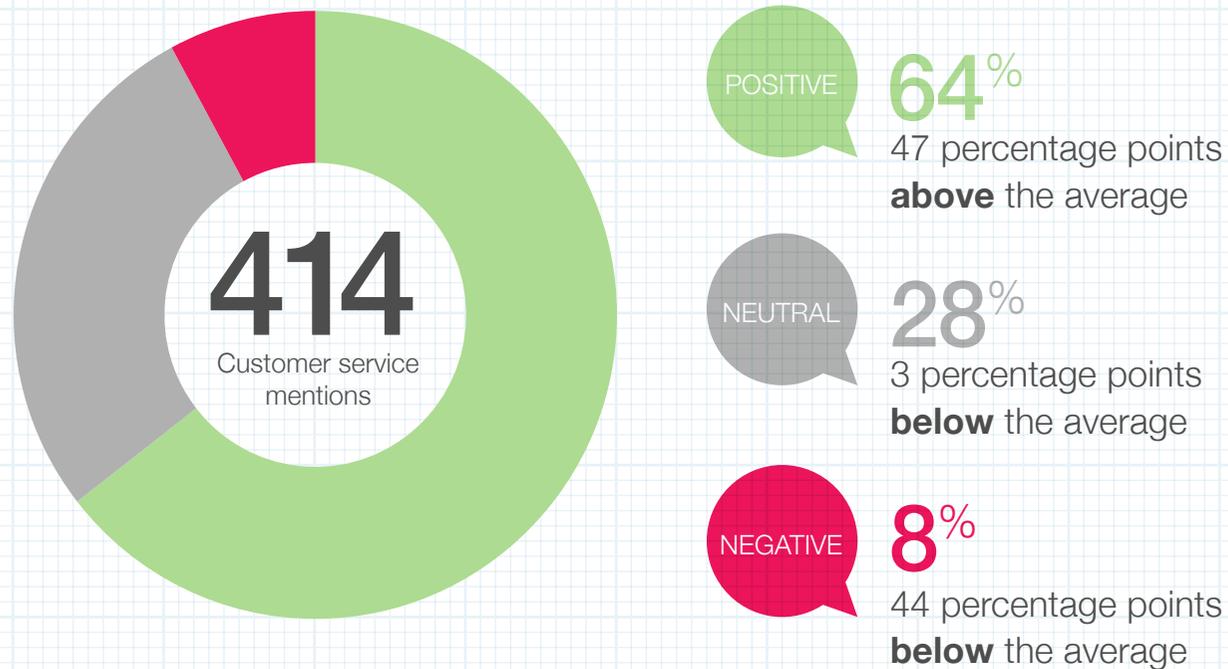
Responded  
to more than a third  
of Facebook  
user posts

82 Facebook  
page posts  
from  
Feb to May

# Customer Service Index /

## John Lewis snapshot – What is working? /cont...

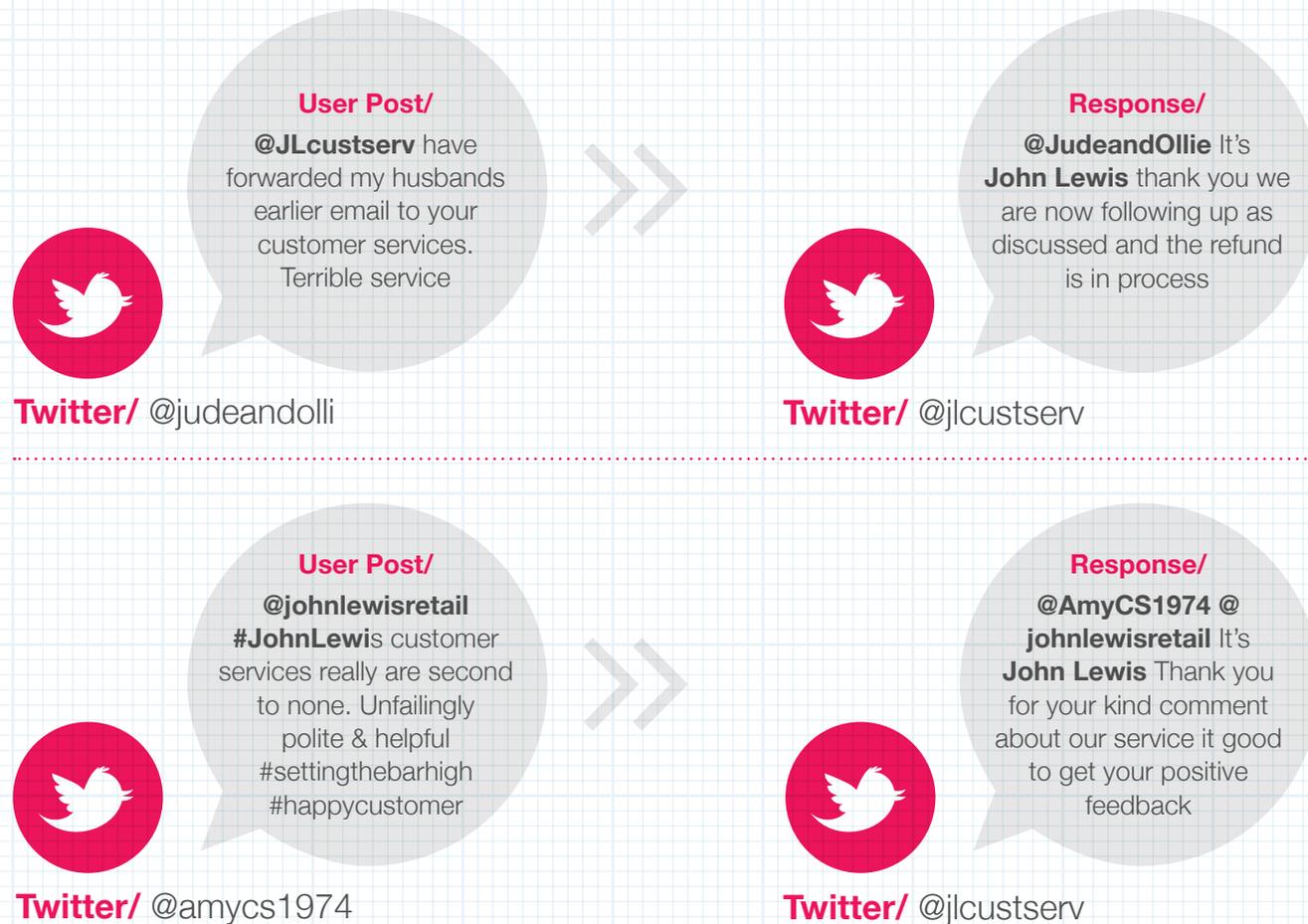
The sentiment of John Lewis customer service mentions was considerably higher across the evaluation period than any other brand in the CSI 2012.



# Customer Service Index /

## John Lewis snapshot – What is working? /cont...

### Sample John Lewis exchanges.



The threads singled-out (left) show two exchanges between customers and official John Lewis representatives.

Staff responded to requests of varying severity, even seeking to further enhance consumer loyalty by thanking a complimentary tweeter.

The example overleaf shows how **John Lewis** attempts to **personalise** its dialogue as a means of appearing more empathetic.

# Customer Service Index / John Lewis snapshot – What is working? /cont...

## Sample John Lewis exchanges/ cont...



# Customer Service Index /

## Conclusion/

For two consecutive years, the Brandwatch Customer Service Index has shown a clear trend towards negative posts in this field on social media. Perhaps unsurprisingly, more than half of all customer service content posted by social media users in the UK in the 2012 study was downbeat towards the companies in question and a mere three of the 40 brands analysed showed more upbeat content.

**But should we consider this normal?** If we consider the reasons driving people to social media to discuss brands, it's perhaps understandable that complaints and wider negativity is more prevalent online. In the wider context of our interaction with goods and services providers, bad customer service remains anomalous.

**Despite a range of Twitter users attempting to prove this conclusion wrong, the chances are that consumers rarely turn to the web to convey mundanity – in this case regular, or even good, customer service experiences.**

Although we may understand this to be the case, this should not present a reason for brands to be blasé. Even if the vast space of online consumer discussion is widely negative, this remains damaging for the companies on the end of the stick, potentially damaging footfall and revenue.

Acceptance of this arena should, contrary to relaxation, cajole brands into managing this negativity. Concentrating a social media strategy on building a loyal and vocal fanbase, for example, should help to dilute the importance of downbeat conversation.

**Why wait for complaints to be posted before carrying out great customer service?**

# Customer Service Index /

## Appendix/

The brands in the Brandwatch CSI 2012 (brands analysed further have been emboldened).

<b>American Express</b>	<b>John Lewis</b>	3 Mobile	Ford	PlayStation
<b>Argos</b>	<b>KLM</b>	Aldi	Google	Red Bull
<b>ASOS</b>	<b>Lloyds TSB</b>	Amazon	Guardian	RSPCA
<b>AVG Free</b>	<b>Lush</b>	Apple	Heineken	Sainsburys
<b>B&amp;Q</b>	<b>Motorola</b>	Asda	HTC	Smirnoff
<b>BMI</b>	<b>Natwest</b>	Audi	Innocent	Snickers
<b>British Airways</b>	<b>Primark</b>	Avon	Intel	Sony Electronics
<b>British Gas</b>	<b>Royal Mail</b>	Barclays	Marie Curie	Starbucks
<b>BT</b>	<b>Ryanair</b>	BBC R1	Marks and Spencer	Tesco
<b>Chiltern Railway</b>	<b>Santander</b>	Ben & Jerry's	Marmite	Tetley
<b>DHL</b>	<b>Southern Rail</b>	Blackberry	Mercedes	Walkers
<b>Dixons</b>	<b>T Mobile</b>	BMW	Met office	Xbox
<b>Dominos</b>	<b>Talktalk</b>	Cadbury	Nandos	
<b>EA</b>	<b>Topshop</b>	Cancer Research	National Geographic	
<b>EasyJet</b>	<b>Virgin Atlantic</b>	Capital FM	National Rail	
<b>Giffgaff</b>	<b>Virgin Media</b>	Dell	National Trust	
<b>Groupon</b>	<b>Virgin Trains</b>	Doritos	Nintendo	
<b>Halifax</b>	<b>Vodafone</b>	Estee Lauder	NSPCC	
<b>Hewlett Packard</b>	<b>Waitrose</b>	Famous Daves	Paypal	
<b>HSBC</b>	<b>Zurich</b>	Film 4	Pizza Express	

# Brandwatch Report

## Customer Service Index /2012

### Thank you /

Thanks for reading **Brandwatch's Customer Service Index 2012**. If you'd like to find out more about the methodology behind this report or how we can help you conduct this kind of analysis for your business or clients, please get in touch with our team.

### /about Brandwatch

Brandwatch is one of the world's leading social media monitoring tools, with offices in the UK, US, Germany and Brazil.

Innovative brands and agencies all over the world use Brandwatch for:

**Research** – Understanding the market

**Sales** – Identifying leads

**Customer Service** – Responding and engaging quickly

**Marketing** – Targeting new networks

**Reputation Management** – Limiting negativity and building on positivity

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