**Customers, crises and communication on Twitter.**

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Anyone who has ever contacted an airline or train operating company about lost luggage, delays or cancellations will know that making a phone call requires high levels of patience as it usually entails precious time spent waiting on hold. Their websites, on the other hand, are often a maze of subpages and hyperlinks that call for advanced navigation skills when trying to find specific information. It is thus not surprising that passengers increasingly accept companies’ offer of getting in touch with them on Twitter, especially in the event of crisis.

This talk presents the findings of two case studies on the topic of crisis communication on Twitter. It is based on two customised corpora of tweets that customers directed at British companies as well as their social media managers’ replies. The first case study takes a closer look at Southern Rail, a British company operating trains in the South of England that was repeatedly subject to industrial action in 2016 and 2017. The analysis investigates how this crisis, leading to trains being cancelled or delayed, was discussed on Twitter. This includes a discussion of the hashtag #southernfail and its collocational context to show which types of language use it entails in customers’ tweets. The second case study focuses onthe interactions evolving on Twitter due to an IT systems outage that the airline British Airways experienced in May 2017 and that led to cancellations and delays of its normal service provision for several days. The aim of this talk is to show how customers addressed these incidents, which threatened the companies’ reputation as reliable train and air travel providers, and how the companies responded in order to maintain their legitimacy in the face of crisis.