

Twitter banks on sport fans' passion

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Theo Luke, Twitter's sports partnership director for Europe and the Middle East, told Leaders Week in London that sport is a major driver of activity on the social networking site.

Last year, when British voters chose to leave the European Union and

Donald Trump swept to the US presidency, "in the United Kingdom sport was the biggest topic of conversation," Luke said on Monday.

"Indeed, twice as many used Twitter for that than either Brexit and Donald Trump being elected (for example the night Leicester City won the Premier League title saw 360,000 tweets and England being knocked out of Euro 2016 generated 331,000)."

Luke said Twitter has around 15 million users in Britain and one in two of those who say they like sport are passionate about it.

"This corresponds with a study by Loughborough University that looked at [sports fans](#) and what platforms they used. They found that the more passionate you were about a team the more likely you were to use Twitter because we are the home of real-time information."

Twitter sees a surge in users on matchdays, according to Luke. A panel of "Twitter insiders" with software on their phones enables the site to monitor the apps the users are interacting with.

"What you find as you get closer to a live game is our usage spikes as people want to interact with the live experience," said Luke.

"The space we operate in and pound for pound where we are doing really well in is the live environment and that is why live clips and live videos make so much sense to us."

'End of Twitter'

Twitter has taken steps to keep up with the demand from fans, even though it faces a challenge to compete with rivals with deeper pockets—Amazon outbid it to acquire NFL streaming rights this year.

"We acquired Periscope as an app for consumer experience and last year (signed) a deal with the NFL for 10 Thursday games," said Luke.

"We worked with the NFL to package up the live experience and lots of clips to take us out to sponsors. We didn't win the next round for this season. Our friends at Amazon won it for a five-fold mark-up."

In Britain football is a major driver of activity on Twitter and the company teamed up with Sky on transfer deadline day.

Luke, who has also worked at YouTube, said Twitter had defied the doomsayers who predicted that it was falling behind newer, flashier online rivals.

"Eighteen months ago we were being faced with headlines like 'End of Twitter' and 'Losing customers and stocks falling'. It was not a pleasant place to be.

"We faced challenges such as an abuse problem which took a long time to solve but we are overcoming them and now seeing emphatic results shown by users coming back to the platform."

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