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**Virgin Trains’ Azuma inspires new trend for hipster trainspotter**

* *New type of* ‘geek chic’ *train fan revealed as the vintage hobby is rediscovered by the cool kids*
* *With barely one year before the new Azuma trains come into service, millennials’ interest surges with posts up 200 per cent on #Trainporn and* #train\_nerds
* *Experts say emerging trend is driven by their passion for photography, high-speed travel and smart technology*

New findings revealed by Virgin Trains have unveiled trainspotting as the latest emerging hipster trend, as millennials with a thirst for photography, high-speed travel and fast-moving technology declare their love for trains online like never before.

With barely one year to go until the launch of the new high-tech Virgin trains, interest from millennials shows no signs of slowing down as Azuma continues to spark spikes in conversations on social media. Since announcing the new fleet last year, the train operator has seen three clear peaks in engagement from fans, including Azuma’s inaugural test run to Scotland in August.

Social media analytics platform Talkwalker has also identified more millennial Instagrammers documenting train travel than ever before. #Trainporn and #train\_nerds saw a year on year increase in posts of over 200 per cent between January and September 2016-2017, while on #ukrailscene, posts increased by 615 per cent for the same period, with 76 per cent of these posts made by the under 35s.

To delve further into this emerging trend, Virgin Trains worked with subculture expert and author of Style Tribes, Caroline Young, to identify the top next-generation train lovers taking over social media – millennials with a thirst for ‘real’ experiences, photography and a love of technology.

Caroline commented: “This new type of train fan is an avid social media user who seeks unique adventures and experiences that will help them connect with, and impress, thousands of other users. Not only is there a certain ‘geek chic’ attached to the concept of trainspotting, but the journey becomes part of the travel experience as people enjoy the chance to observe scenery, read, listen to music, and even write. Technology is key to their lives, and we know they’re snapping and sharing their real-life experiences more than ever before.”

Caroline continues: “The new Azuma fleet will be giving this new wave of trainspotter something they’ve been excited to see for years – a totally revolutionised fleet of trains equipped with the perfect mix of speed, advanced technology and sleek design that we know the modern rail fan craves.”

The top next generation train fans, as identified by Caroline Young, are:

1. [@AllTheStations](http://www.youtube.com/allthestations). With a social media presence of over 50,000 followers – this young couple charted to fame earlier this year when they challenged themselves to visit all 2,563 stations in Great Britain, capturing a digital documentary as they went – all fuelled by a crowdfunding project
2. [@kings\_transports](https://www.instagram.com/kings_transports/). Dramatic backdrops and a feel of adventure, Marzia and Cekotto have amassed 73,700 followers from around the world
3. [@version3point1](https://www.instagram.com/version3point1/). Branded as a ‘train whisperer’, Scotland-based Anne’s page is filled with beautiful photography on sweeping coastlines and her rail travel
4. [@cpsedmonds](https://www.instagram.com/cpsedmonds/). Sharing ‘train stuff’ and beautiful black and white architectural shots

Hipster couple, Vicki and Geoff of All The Stations blog, and number one on Caroline’s list, are typical of the next generation train fan. When they visited every national railway station in Great Britain, they regularly posted video content of their coast-to-coast adventure, which took three months to complete and was closely followed by their online millennial audience.

Vicki, who has already visited the Darlington factory where Azuma will be built, said: “We’ve loved the response to our videos, which have now reached more than six million views, as it really shows that there is a growing interest in railways and train travel, and many are younger enthusiasts who, like us, are keen to have an adventure and explore the country by rail.”

Aileen Jordan, Director of Azuma at Virgin Trains on the east coast, said: “We’re really excited to see trainspotting transcend generations and become as popular amongst hipsters as it is with regular fans. Azuma has been sparking conversations on social media since we unveiled the train last year, and we’re delighted it is inspiring a younger train enthusiast. We’re looking forward to exciting even more fans when our trains hit the tracks in a barely a year’s time, and move us into the next era of high-speed passenger train travel.”

Set to revolutionise journeys on the East Coast, Virgin Trains’ Azuma will transform the UK rail industry when the new fleet comes into service from December 2018 – 65 trains will provide an extra 12,200 seats and increase capacity into Kings Cross by 28 per cent during peak time. Azuma will slice 22 minutes off East Coast journeys, making London to Edinburgh in just four hours, and London to Leeds in two hours, the norm throughout the day.

Each Azuma train will come complete with distinct new interiors, ergonomically designed seats, enhanced leg room, faster and free\* Wi-Fi, power sockets for every seat, more overhead luggage space, a state-of-the-art seat reservation system, and superior catering throughout.

**ENDS**

For more information contact Kaper PR:

Dana Leigh dana@kaper.uk.com / 020 3301 2210

Roop Perdesi Roop@kaper.uk.com / 020 3301 2024
virgintrainsEC@kaper.uk.com/ 020 3301 2086

\*For customers who book via our website

**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the East Coast and West Coast inter-city routes under the Virgin Trains brand. Together, they are on track to revolutionise rail travel across the UK. The combined network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, York and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains as one of the top long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

On the East Coast route, £140m is being invested to create a more personalised travel experience. We have already invested over £40m in our existing fleet, including £21m refurbishing the interiors and £16m towards improving the engines of our trains. Customers can now benefit from 42 additional services between Edinburgh and London every week, and an extra 22 Saturday services between Leeds and London – a total of 1.74 million additional seats since May 2016. 2018 will see the introduction of completely new Azuma trains being built in the UK by Hitachi.

The West Coast route has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Visit the Virgin Trains Media Room - [virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk/about/media-room) - for the latest news, images and videos. Subscribe [here](http://www.mynewsdesk.com/follow/47939) for regular news from Virgin Trains.

Press Office: 0845 000 3333.

**About Talkwalker**

Talkwalker is one of the world’s leading [social media analytics companies](https://www.talkwalker.com/social-media-analytics). Its cutting-edge technology provides businesses with actionable social media insights through real-time social listening and advanced [social media analytics](http://www.talkwalker.com/en/social-media-intelligence/social-media-analytics/).

Talkwalker helps marketers to prove the value of their social efforts and enhances the speed and accuracy of business decision-making.

Talkwalker’s state of the art social media analytics platform monitors and analyzes online conversations on social networks, news websites, blogs, forums and more, in over 187 languages. Its servers process 500 million posts from 150 million websites every day. The Talkwalker platform is used by over 700 clients around the world, including Microsoft, HPE, Benetton and communications specialists such as Edelman, Peppercomm, Publicis, Ogilvy, and Weber Shandwick.