

#Hashtags

AT A HIGH LEVEL, HASHTAGS ARE WORDS OR CONNECTED PHRASES THAT ARE MADE CLICKABLE WHEN THEY ARE PRECEDED BY THE POUND SIGN '#'. FROM A FUNCTIONALITY STANDPOINT, WHEN CLICKED THEY LEAD TO AN AGGREGATED RESULTS PAGE OF THE SAME HASHTAG WORD OR PHRASE. IN THAT REGARD, THEY ACT ESSENTIALLY AS "TAGS" - WHICH HAVE BEEN USED ON BLOGS AS A WAY TO GROUP SIMILAR CONTENT FOR MANY YEARS. THE KEY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO IS ULTIMATELY THAT HASHTAGS NOT ONLY GROUP YOUR OWN CONTENT, BUT OTHERS AS WELL.

USING THE HASHTAG AS A BRANDED CALL-TO-ACTION IN MEDIA AND FOR SPECIFIC CAMPAIGNS ENCOURAGES USERS TO GROUP CONVERSATIONS FOR THAT BRAND USING THAT SPECIFIC HASHTAG. THOUGH PREVALENT ACROSS MOST SOCIAL PLATFORMS, THE HASHTAG ORIGINATED AND IS MOST FREQUENTLY USED ON TWITTER.



PLACE IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA MIX

As mentioned, though Twitter was the originator, most of the other social platforms have noticed the potential of this tactic and have adapted to using the hashtag.

Today you will find them used on:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Google+
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Vine

Though the functionality exists on many platforms outside Twitter, the usage and best practices vary by platform. For Facebook specifically, though the platform adopted [hashtags](#), the use has not gained much traction to date. [Edgerank Checker](#) has reported posts with hashtags had less viral reach (.80%) than posts without hashtags (1.30%). It is important to note that not all social platforms are geared to hashtags. Facebook in particular has privacy constraints, which could block users from viewing content under a hashtag.

#Hashtags

USAGE OF HASHTAGS

Below are some common uses for hashtags amongst brands and users alike.

- Organize content & track discussion topics – User & Brand
- Discover new accounts and pick up followers – User & Brand
- Increase engagement, sharing and reach - User & Brand
- Convey humor or sarcasm for novel purposes – User & Brand
- Research competition and brand sentiment - Brand
- Implement and track contests and promotions - Brand
- Streamline communication around real-time events – User & Brand

Communication around emergency efforts:

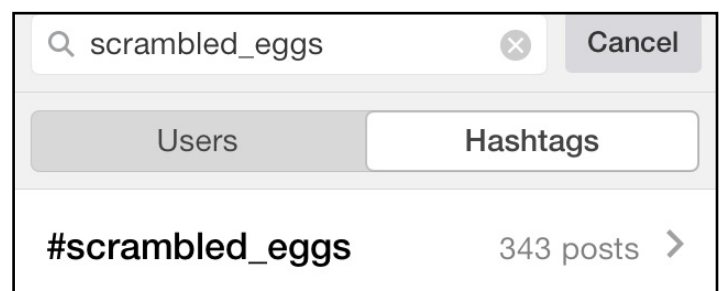
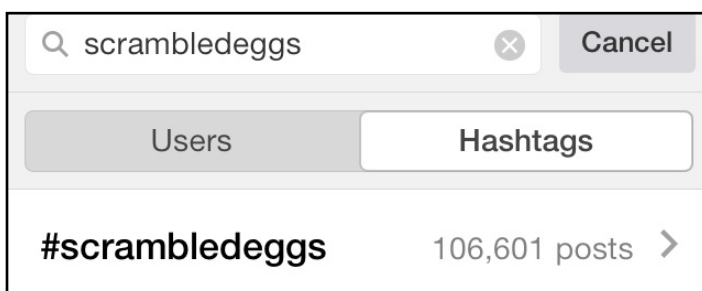


BEST PRACTICES

When thinking about hashtags, consider the audience, the message being conveyed and where the hashtag will be used. When adapting existing hashtags for branded content, be sure they are concise and specific to the topic of the post. When creating hashtags for campaigns, make sure they are brief, custom, memorable and branded.

- Do:**
Group together if multiple words
Yes: #truestory
Use uppercase letters if you want to emphasize separate words (will not alter search results)
Yes: #TrueStory
- Don't:**
Include spaces between multiple words
No: #true story
Include underscores, punctuation (commas, periods, apostrophes, exclamation points, asterisks, question marks, ampersands)
No: #truestory!, #true?story #true&story

While underscores are the only unit of punctuation compatible with hashtags, it is recommended against using them since users don't naturally incorporate them.



* If using an existing hashtag, remain consistent with how it's already formatted

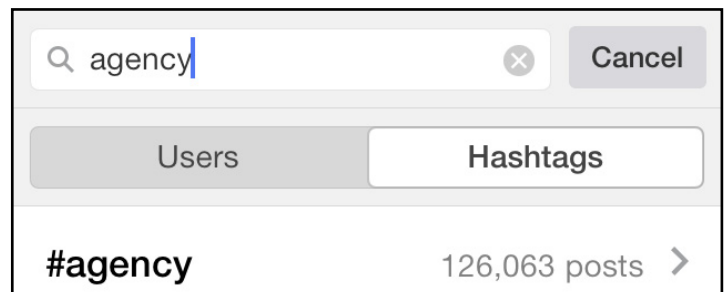
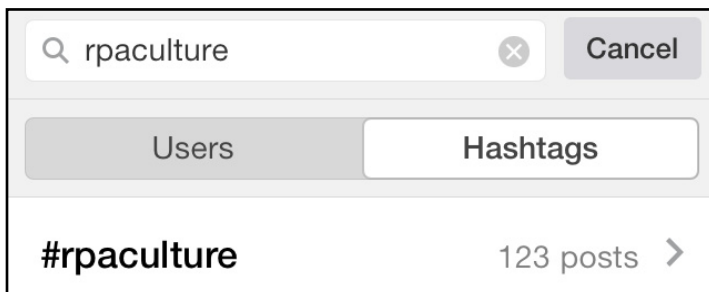
#Hashtags

MISTAKES TO AVOID

While there aren't concrete rules on how to use hashtags, it is best practice to avoid the following:

1. Too broad

- Broad hashtags may be overshadowed by a large population of users competing for exposure. The more vague the term used, the more difficult it will be to track brand related conversations.



Ex: Olay's #nofilter promotion asked users to use the hashtag in their tweets, although, #nofilter is one of the most used hashtags, making it hard to identify brand specific conversations.

2. Too detailed

- Long combinations of words, character count, or words combined with complex number sequences may be hard for the user to recall
- Slang terms only recognized by a specific audience may limit potential exposure and use of the hashtag

3. Too many

- Hashtags should be used tastefully and only when relevant to the content posted



| Platform | Recommended Hashtag Count |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| Facebook | 1 |
| Twitter | 1 - 2 |
| Instagram | < 10 |
| Pinterest | < 3 |
| Vine | < 10 |
| Google+ | 1 |

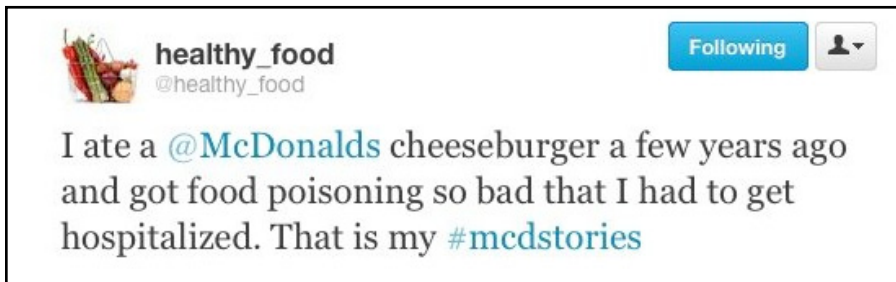
#Hashtags

4. Other considerations

- Monitor campaign driven hashtags to avoid being highjacked

Highjacking – Sometimes when a hashtag begins to trend or is promoted, it isn't used in the original poster's intended context

Ex: #McDStories – Branded McDonalds hashtag turned into an outlet to post negative McDonald's experiences



- Be conscious of possible alternative meanings to your chosen hashtag - err on the side of caution

Ex: #WTF – “Wednesday, Thursday, Friday” or “What The F*ck”

- Coincidence or carelessness of posting during disasters may lead to viewers taking offense

Ex: #Fab15Toys – Kmart used the promotional hashtag in a tweet about a national tragedy



SUCCESS MEASUREMENT & TRACKING

In addition to physically grouping conversation within the platforms, campaign hashtags are also quite useful in identifying and tracking conversation around specific campaigns.

When tracking the success of a particular hashtag, some KPIs include:

- How many are exposed to the hashtag (Impressions/Reach)
- Interaction with the content of posts/tweets utilizing hashtag (Engagements)
- Popularity of hashtag (Trending)
- Who uses the hashtag (Influencers)

Some platforms offer tools to explore, measure and track hashtags natively. If not natively, many third party tools have been created to do just that. However, it is important to note there are some limitations to what information can be accessed depending on what social media platform you are analyzing.