

THE EPIC STORY OF # HASHTAG

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1. ABSTRACT

There was symbol which was present on my old landline phone which used to make me think of its uselessness at that time, I never new this symbol is going to be the face of a generation of social media marketing through which the world will go crazy about it. Hashtag, # as it is known, has transformed the world of marketing and now I feel that I don't have any words to explain its colossal importance in today's social media world. The hashtag has brought more than just attention; it has given a way to identify people who are actually engaged with someone's story and brand. Hashtags have become more than just a simple way to categorize posts or add a narrative to the story behind. This article aims at discussing the evolution of HASHTAG as well as to explain the use and importance of hashtag in today's scenario and also enlightens the ways to use hashtags effectively.

KEYWORDS:

Hashtag, Social media, Instagram, Twitter, Marketing, Social Campaigns.

2. INTRODUCTION

This is the era of social networks that includes Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and many more. In the last few years, their popularity has grown so much that people from all spheres use them, including bollywood celebrities, sports stars, famous musicians, politicians, and writers, who choose social networks as their primary means of communication.

Twitter enables its users to connect to thousands, or even millions of people at a global level, by using short messages with up to 140 characters, increasing the limit to 10,000 characters in the near future, which would change the way of communication on the social network. Even the government machinery has given its very importance to Twitter as we can hear about many issues getting sorted out because of it. Note worthily Indian railways, the foreign ministry, the prime minister office, etc. is using the means to listen to specific problems and Twitter has been proved as a vital means of sorting out various issues on time. Oprah Winfrey, US President Barack Obama, and Arnold Schwarzenegger were the first celebrities who started using Twitter for sending quick messages and connecting with their audience. Twitter is supported by the world famous singers, actors and presidents, and it has not only become a particular spot for finding information, but also a popular culture phenomenon of with 284 million active users, and 500 million posts a day.

This pop-culture adoption of hashtags helped push hashtags into other social networks. Instagram adopted hashtags on January 27, 2011 and Facebook finally adopted hashtags on June 12, 2013. Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, foreign minister Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, celebrities like Amitabh bachchan, Rishi Kapoor and Virender sehwag are notably active users of Twitter. It was twitter which gave birth to the storm of HASHTAG #. People active on social media are totally aware of the importance of hashtag. The right choice of the hashtag can make the post an instant hit, now a day's various searches, media campaigns, political campaigns and social campaigns are based on this very symbol.

3. EVOLUTION OF # HASHTAG

Twitter gave birth to the first hashtag ten years back. That time no one ever expect that it would become such a ubiquitous part of our daily conversations. The hashtag has magically ingrained itself in our culture over the past decade. And today it's hard to imagine a time when we didn't use tagging systems to unify our social media worlds.

Ten years back the internet's most exciting moments, the birth of the hashtag was caught on record, when developer Chris Messina, then a product designer at Google, tweeted out the idea to stick a pound sign (#, or "hash" in Brit-speak) in front of a word on August 23, 2007. After a decade, Twitter users alone generate 125 million hashtags a day, not counting similar hashtags on Instagram, Tumblr, Facebook, and other social media sites.

Hashtags have become part of everyday communication, perhaps this is more common for millennial and the youth. The saying "hashtag awkward" or "hashtag winning" in regular speech isn't that unusual anymore. Although some people believe that this is harming the English language, while others believe that adopting the hashtag in speech is simply yet another evolution of spoken language.

It is not any more limited to Twitter. The hashtag started on Twitter with a 2007 tweet from Chris Messina, but today other social networks have also adopted them. Instagram caught on to the trend four years later in 2011, and both Facebook and Google+ implemented the hashtag in 2013. Other social networks including Flickr, Tumblr, and Pinterest began supporting the hashtag on their websites around the same time, making it a constant presence across all social networks.

Hashtags are also helpful in forming communities or bring communities together. Many national movements were built on hashtags, like #BlackLivesMatter or #YesAllWomen. Even less important issues like sports events or TV shows use hashtags to bring the fans together online for a community celebration or discussion.

Hashtags have also become an alternative news source. Rather than waiting for news to appear online or on TV, the hashtag has emerged the way of following breaking news. For niche news that isn't covered by the big media organizations, a hashtag is often a method of keeping up with that topic. Some schools and teachers are even incorporating hashtags into their curriculum so students can research or follow a subject being covered in class.

Moreover, Hashtag has found a unique space in the dictionary. Merriam Webster added the word in 2014, indicating that it was here to stay for the foreseeable future. The definition, however, only refers to the written (or typed) version of hashtag. The definition reads: "a word or phrase preceded by the symbol # that classifies or categorizes the accompanying text (such as a tweet)."

4. IMPORTANCE IN VARIOUS FIELDS

The importance of hashtag is no more a hidden treasure. It can be listed as below:

4.1 IMPORTANCE IN JOB SEARCH

Presence on Instagram could not only open door to influencer videos and branded content, it may also provide the user a job. While evaluating the eligibility of candidates on social media, companies are moving away from posting offers on job portals and reaching out to referrals to attract talent. Companies and human resource networks are leveraging the platform to get hold of fresher's in creative roles, or for social media management. Fresh out of college millennial, who post selfies and videos on the platform could be notified of job vacancies as well, all with hashtag #firms such as floating canvas company, epsilon and instamojo are now hiring through

the platform. Globally larger companies such as Schneider electric, Starbucks and Verizon use Instagram to post job ads. Besides, the trend is now prevalent in Indian startups.

Searching for talent through Instagram or hashtags # reduces hiring costs by 15-25% and it works best for entry level jobs and for interns. Human resource managers can search potential candidates with an inclination towards the skills required among users active on different social networks. This can be identified by right mix of searchable hashtags#. The reach is better and filtered if human resource post job vacancies on Instagram page and promote it to a targeted audience again through right mix of hashtags#.

The social media platforms also provide scope for visually appealing content. Companies can post about the job vacancies through puzzles or videos to entice employees. Besides direct recruitment notices as regular posts and videos on work culture can be used. Fintech startup Instamojo for instance has its Instagram account dedicated to showcasing how the company is employee friendly and they blend their posts with hashtags like #stressmanagement #happyfamily #workculture #workorplay.

Some prevalent hashtags for the search of job are:

#hiring #jobsearch #jobopening #jobposting #employment #opportunity #joblisting #recruiting #career #resume #hireme

According to the type of job

#freelance #internship #part-time #consulting #fulltime #homebusiness #dreamjob #consultant

According to the industry

#seo #itjobs #legal #finance #telecom #salesjob #lawyer #accounting #webdesign #contnetwritng #fitness #fashiondesign

According to the trend

#jobopening #marketingjobs #graduatejobs #hiring #tweetmyjobs #oppurtunity #hireme #mba #linkedin #profile #cv #needajob #earningmoney

4.2 IMPORTANCE IN FOLLOWING LIVE OR TRENDING EVENTS

The importance of social media as a broadcaster during live events has increased a lot. The ability to follow live events more or less in real time via social media feeds has depleted the necessity of a TV.

Having a TV or access to a live stream is more required, multitasking is a trend these days. People tend to follow social feeds to stay updated on live events and important cricket matches, Hashtags' utility in uniting the world around live events via social media is well known. Two years back, for example, in a world that felt increasingly divided politically, the most popular hashtag had nothing to do with politics: It was #Rio2016, the universal hashtag for the Summer Olympics. And while live-tweeting reactions to televised events has become a huge part of the TV-watching experience, the hashtag also allowed those without TVs to follow along at home without feeling like they missed much.

Prevalent trending event hashtags

#jaipurlitfest, #jlf, #sunonegoa, #indvsaus

4.3 IMPORTANCE IN SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS

Hashtag trends have changed the face of social campaigns. There were times when it use to take months, some time years, to travel a social campaign across the globe like a campaign started in usa may take as year to travel to India and make it a global campaign. But now a days it is a matter of minutes before the hashtag starts trending and it gives ample boost to the campaign as it starts coming in everybody's news feed and people start

relating to it. Foreexample, #metoo campaign which started as sexual harassment acceptance and awareness campaign to give people strength to stand against. It gained such trending in matter of few days that celebrities got attached and it became a big social campaign, the ice bucket challenge #swatchbharat campaign is again a successful social campaign which started trending because of hashtags.

Prevalent social hashtags

#swatchbharat, #MeToo, #NotInMyName, #India, #nirbhya

4.4 IMPORTANCE IN ADVERTISEMENTS

Hashtag's has come as a breakthrough for advertisement. It has brought in a delta change in the advertising world, there has been media campaigns entirely based on a single hashtag and it has broken all records of success in making it trending. one such example is given below and there are numerous others.

Coca-Cola's #ShareACoke

The idea behind the hashtag—cokes with names and titles on them—drove massive numbers of sales, and generated a ton of user-generated content on social media. People were snapping Instagram shots of bottles with their friends' names; I even saw not one, but two pregnancy announcements where the first-time parents had "Mom" and "Dad" cokes in their announcement on Facebook.

The #ShareACoke campaign worked so well because it incorporated both personalization on a mass scale (without actually being personal at all) and a community feel all at once; "share" is in the name after all

Other prevalent hashtags are

#likeagirl #icebucketchallenge #putacanomit #letsdolunch #becreative #justdoit

5. HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY USE HASHTAGS IN MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

5.1 As an Engagement Booster

Posts with at least one relative Instagram hashtag average 12.6% more engagement than posts without a hashtag.

5.2 To Measure the Engagement

Test and measure the engagement of social media audience by trying different hashtags and compare the results and how they respond. Only hashtags that are relevant and trending shall be used.

5.3 Use as a Cross-Channel Identifier

Now that most-modern social media sites have adopted hashtags, marketers can now run cross-channel campaigns with one common identifier. Hashtags like #SOTU (State Of The Union) can be tracked through all forms of social media.

5.4 Initiate Creative Story Telling

One can create its own hashtags and share a story to boost the engagement. but the key to successfully doing so is integrating trending hashtags. Unknown hashtags on their own will not succeed unless the company is as big as Nike or ESPN. It's best to stick with known and trending hashtags.

For example, when Esurance aired their Super Bowl advertisement, they added their very own hashtag that was linked to the topic of the advertisement. The next day, not only did they notice a major growth in their followers, but they could also accurately track the customers who engaged with their brand or story.

5.5 To Identify Results

Interacting with the customers to get results on anything from opinions to followers #hashtag can be used. Popular sports events and reality TV shows have used hashtags as a way of voting. This engagement shows how many people are tuning in and interacting with the brand.

6. HOW TO FOLLOW HASHTAGS ON DIFFERENT PLATFORMS

Most social networks started using hashtags after Twitter first accepted their use, and each social network uses them differently. These rules can help keep honest relative to the platforms marketers are using for the company's social media strategy.

6.1 How to Use Twitter Hashtags

On Twitter, hashtags are used to find conversations to get involved in, or to start one of their own. As long as a profile is public, people can find the posts in which one make use of hashtags.

As we mentioned earlier, Tweets with one hashtag generate the most engagement. But engagement drops when there is use of more than two hashtags. This may be because people assume too many hashtags indicates foul play by bots. Hashtags on Twitter are found by using the search bar, clicking on the hashtag or looking through the trending topics page.

6.2 How to Use Instagram Hashtags

An Instagram hashtag collates all photos with the same hashtag into one stream. The purpose of hashtags for Instagram revolves around discovering content and finding users to follow, exposing you to a larger audience. One study found that posts with at least one hashtag have 12.6% more engagement than those without.

One can discover hashtags by searching for a specific term or clicking on one in a post. Landing on a hashtag page, one will see all the photos with the same hashtag and even see some related hashtags. Start typing the hashtag with the “#” symbol, and Instagram will give you suggestions based on popularity.

There have been multiple studies on the optimal number of hashtags to use on Instagram by a marketer. Since the results tend to vary, there is no universally agreed upon number. Testing it out to see what gets the best results with the audience is only solution. Instagram limits hashtags to 30 per caption or comment should be taken care of.

6.3 How to Use Facebook Hashtags

Unlike Twitter or Instagram where most users' profiles are public, Facebook users have private profiles. Thus, the hashtags most people use on their posts are *not* discoverable to the public and are therefore limited to the people they know. Because of this, most public hashtags belong to influencers or brands.

Here's how to discover hashtags and related content on Facebook:

- Click on a hashtag to see related posts
- Search using the search bar. Hashtags on Facebook previously were not recognized, but now they are.
- Hashtags with 10+ characters receive good engagement.

6.4 How to Use LinkedIn Hashtags

LinkedIn is one of the latest major social networks to experiment with hashtags.

6.5 How to Use Tumblr Hashtags

While creating a post on your Tumblr page, one will see an area at the bottom asking to add "tags." When we start to type a tag for any post, Tumblr will automatically add a hashtag to the front of it.

6.6 How to Use Pinterest Hashtags

The main thing that one needs to bear in mind when creating hashtags on Pinterest is that they're only clickable in a Pin description. Also, hashtags aren't searchable on Pinterest, so you'll need to just search the keyword to find the content.

6.7 How to Use YouTube Hashtags

Hashtag use within YouTube is most prevalent in the comments section. Users can leave comments with hashtags, which will then click through to a page with videos that contain that hashtag in their title. However, it's perhaps more important to implement a keyword strategy since hashtags are not widely adopted by users yet.

6.8 How to Use Kickstarter Hashtags

On Kickstarter, sorting by different hashtags can make it easier for you to find projects that peak your interest or plans for investment.

6.9 Other Social Networks

These aren't the only platforms that use hashtags though. Here are a few other social networks that use hashtags that you may not have thought of:

- Flickr
- GitHub
- Google+

When determining how to use hashtags, make sure to do some platform-specific research to determine if a hashtag strategy is even appropriate.

7. CONCLUSION

Today, the symbol “#” does not only represent a part of the social network language, but it is also a part of everything we consume. Actually, the symbol has even changed the way the society writes and behaves, because grammatically correct forms are no longer necessary. Everything boils down to a possibility to attract as much audience as possible by using the shortened texts.

According to a research by Kissmetric service announced, shorter messages are 25% more interactive. Therefore, in order to send and receive messages, we do not need to use whole sentences, but only images and hashtag symbols, which confirms the visual effect domination. Nowadays even the TV channels use hashtag characters to attract more viewers, widen the audience and distribute information much faster. According to research results on above mentioned analytical website, pictures get 53% more likes and 84% more clicks than exclusively text messages, so the media which are consumed fast have the advantage, and that is an inevitable trend when it comes to brand development and advertising campaigns. Hashtags started as useful and applicable, but evolved so much that now they represent cultural phenomenon and give us the impression of being well-informed.

Regardless of the type of social network, social networking is simply the amplification of emotional reactions to a topic in modern life. If there are no emotions – the communication will not be successful. The hashtag is an essential part of the emotion, because the emotion will not reach wider audience without it, or become the part of the popular contents online. Speed and simplicity are implemented in the new #hashtag culture.

Hashtag has developed from a simple social communication tool into a popular cultural phenomenon in a very short period of time. This trend is only a different way of using the Internet and just another possibility for posting the aimed personal content. It is possible that one day a specific obsession for hashtag as such will disappear, but until then it will continue to grow incredibly fast.

The things that made hashtag the essential part of communication with audience in modern society are number of hashtags, number of social network users, an easy possibility to create contents that the whole world can access, mobile communication, TV shows and advertising campaigns, which also made it even more popular. This proves that a thing which started as entertainment became a part of popular culture of the modern society.

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