

The Role of Hashtags in Modern Social Strategy

[Stauffer](#) has been playing around with increasing our social media impact lately. You may have even seen a post or two of ours on [LinkedIn](#). In our weekly talks about engagement and conversions, we have asked ourselves: Do hashtags matter anymore?

Don't get us wrong, we use them; we understand why they make sense, but when I ask my friends if they use hashtags to find things, I get various answers. Some say they use them, some say they don't, but no one I spoke with said they use hashtags daily in their social media habits.

I remember back in the 90s, at the beginning of the dot-com boom, it would be a real barnburner of a joke to use "www.INSERT PUNCH LINE HERE.com" as the entire premise of a cheap laugh. In the mid-aughts, I remember the same humor resurrecting itself for a social media age: "hashtag joke," "hashtag funny." That was a good time. Remember that?

But aside from the novelty of cheap jokes, as a marketer, do hashtags have use in contemporary social media strategy?

THE PLATFORM-DEPENDENT NATURE OF HASHTAGS

There is a varying significance of hashtags across social media platforms. Some platforms have a tremendous need for hashtags regarding end-user function and actual back-end sorting. Teams should know how each site uses hashtags and whether or not they play an essential role in their social media needs. Here is a simple breakdown of how each social media site uses hashtags and how much time you should spend on crafting hashtags for those sites:

Instagram:

- **Relevance:** Extremely relevant. Instagram is known for its heavy reliance on hashtags, and they play a crucial role in content discoverability.
- **Usage:** The Discover page of Instagram could very well be considered the front page of people's lives. Users often include multiple relevant hashtags in their captions or comments. Instagram's search and explore features allow users to discover content by searching for or clicking hashtags.

Twitter/X:

- **Relevance:** Highly relevant. Twitter pretty much invented modern hashtags as a simple way to categorize users' tweets and participate in trending discussions.
- **Usage:** Users add hashtags to their tweets to join conversations, express opinions, or follow trends. Clicking on a hashtag takes users to a timeline of tweets using the same hashtag. Monitoring hashtags on Twitter can be a job in itself for the most diligent of social media teams.

Facebook:

- Relevance: Moderately relevant. While not as hashtag-centric as Instagram or Twitter, hashtags are still used on Facebook. However, Facebook in 2023 isn't really known to hold the most tech-savvy user bases.
- Usage: Users can add hashtags to their posts to make them discoverable to a broader audience. Clicking on a hashtag leads to a feed of posts containing that hashtag. It should also be noted that regarding the individual user, Facebook accounts tend to be private, thus limiting the functionality of hashtags on the whole.

LinkedIn:

- Relevance: Moderately relevant. LinkedIn is a professional network, so hashtag usage differs from more casual platforms.
- Usage: Users include hashtags in their posts, mainly for industry-related topics, conferences, or events. Hashtags help professionals discover relevant content and discussions. LinkedIn users tend to "scroll" more than "surf." However, Stauffer's in-house best practice is using hashtags on LinkedIn.

TikTok:

- Relevance: Very relevant. TikTok relies on hashtags for content categorization and discoverability. Monitoring hashtag trends on TikTok is vital to brands looking to stay hip, relevant, and up-to-date with the latest online trends and memes (which change alarmingly fast).
- Usage: Creators add relevant hashtags to describe their videos, making it easier for users to find content that matches their interests. Clicking on a hashtag displays related videos.

Pinterest:

- Relevance: Highly relevant. Pinterest uses hashtags to organize and search for content. As a staple for many design jobs, sorting by hashtag is a valuable tool for Pinterest users.
- Usage: Users include hashtags in pin descriptions to categorize and discover related pins. Clicking on a hashtag displays pins containing that hashtag.

YouTube:

- Relevance: Relevant-ish. YouTube uses hashtags to categorize videos.
- Usage: Creators include hashtags in video descriptions or comments. Clicking on a hashtag leads to a search for videos with the same hashtag, but not really something in common practice with end users.

Snapchat:

- Relevance: Fairly irrelevant. While Snapchat doesn't rely heavily on hashtags, they can still be used.
- Usage: Users can add hashtags to their stories, allowing others to swipe up and view public stories with the same hashtag. Similar to the private nature of Facebook, the privacy of Snapchat may be a limiting factor in outreach for hashtags.

Whether end-users use them or not, hashtags remain relevant on the most prominent social media platforms, with varying degrees of emphasis. They are mainly used for content

categorization, discoverability, and participation in trending discussions. The effectiveness of hashtags depends on how well they are chosen and integrated into posts to match the platform's culture and user behavior.

ENHANCING DISCOVERABILITY WITH HASHTAGS

For platforms like Instagram and Twitter/X, hashtags are essential in a marketer's never ending quest to increase their content's discoverability. Part of that process involves monitoring and using trending hashtags to gain visibility. Trending hashtags are often time-sensitive, and joining in on those conversations with clever and salient messaging will increase followers and likes for all your content. Choosing which hashtags to join in on and which to start on your own should be a brainstorming session between a wide swath of your team; social media takes in the entire society, and context cues behind specific trends may only be understood by a niche group of people, so work to avoid the pitfall of coming across as tone-deaf and unhip on your platform.

Understanding how hashtags work on each platform can streamline your workflow and yield more creative content. By assessing how and when to use and implement your hashtags, businesses will also find new ways to engage with their audiences. Stauffer recommends the usage of hashtags thoughtfully but also strategically, and we encourage you to deploy the things you learned here today and apply them to your content strategy.

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