

Instagram and Society: Do the hashtags reflect people's awareness on current affairs?

3036106044 Lau Hong Yi



Why this topic?

- ❖ More and more press use Instagram as a tool for distributing news (e.g. SCMP, BBC News).
- ❖ Gen Z heavily rely on Instagram to receive news.

Would this affect the usage of Instagram hashtags so that it reflects people's awareness on current affairs?



Existing Works

Ichau et al. (2019)

	Instagram	Twitter
Purpose of hashtag	image caption	part of the main content

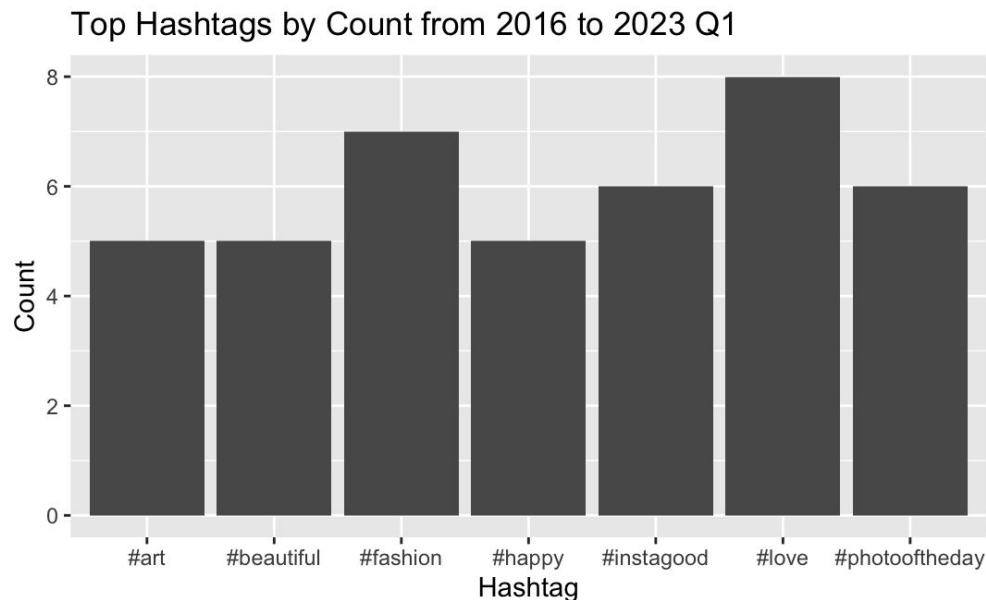


Limitations

- ❖ Limited access to Instagram's data
- ❖ Used second-hand data, subject to **credibility** and **accuracy**
- ❖ Only picked top 10 hashtags from 2016 to 2023
→ provide a brief overview before and after the outbreak of COVID-19

Findings and Highlights #1

- ❖ No matter before or after the COVID-19, the most popular hashtags tend to be positive and aesthetically pleasing.
- ❖ **#love** ranked at the top all the time.
- ❖ People often choose to showcase the positive aspects of their lives while concealing their difficulties.



It's a way of tagging posts by area/state/city. **#photooftheday** – Instagram hosts a “photo of the day” contest that carries this hashtag. Apply this tag to enter the contest, or search for it to scroll through the entries. #iphonography – This tag is used to signify shots taken on an iPhone. Dec 13, 2012



PR Daily

<https://www.prdaily.com> › a-cheat-sheet-for-instagram-h... ⋮

A cheat sheet for Instagram hashtags - PR Daily

Visit Instagram. **#instagood** is a widely used hashtag which you should only use on your very best photos. In short, it signifies that the user is especially proud of the photo.



MakeUseOf

<https://www.makeuseof.com> › Social Media ⋮

Some Popular But Confusing Instagram Hashtags, Explained



About featured snippets

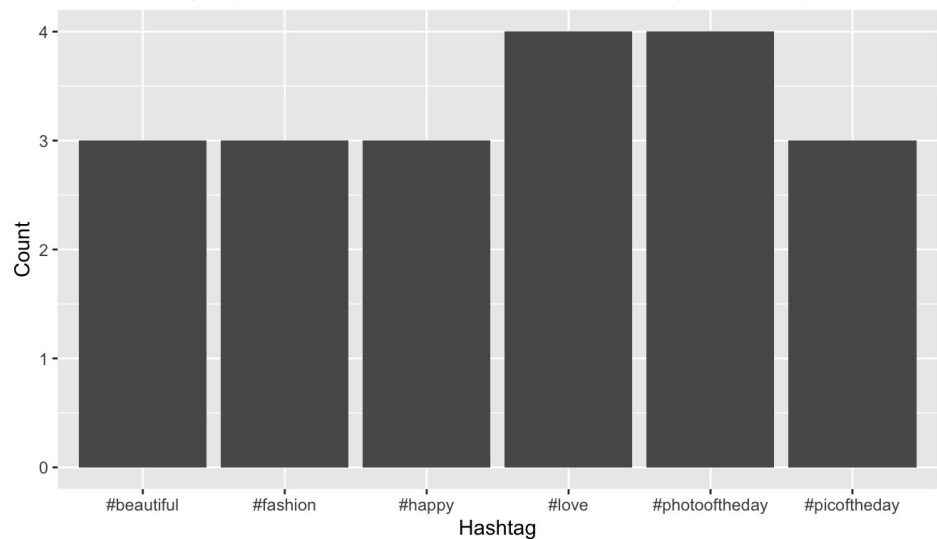


Feedback

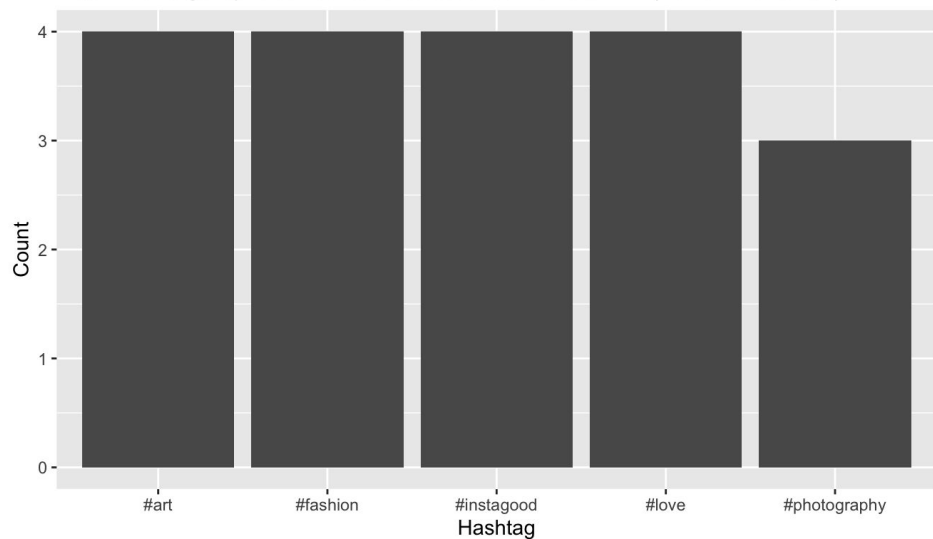
Findings and Highlights #2

	Before COVID-19	After COVID-19
<i>#happy</i>	one of the most popular hashtags	relatively less popular
<i>#art</i>	only appeared once in 2017	occurred every year from 2020 to 2023

Top Hashtags by Count before the Outbreak of COVID (2016-2019)



Top Hashtags by Count after the Outbreak of COVID (2020 - 2023 Q1)



Findings and Highlights #2

❖ *#happy*

- COVID-19 negatively affects people's happiness.

❖ *#art*

- Quarantine → people stayed at home
- Art: a form of meditation + entertainment

Findings and Highlights #3

- ❖ Trend (2021 vs 2022):
 - Highly overlapping with the rankings included
 - Top 4 remains the same!
 - Most likely because of lockdowns and social distancing measures for COVID-19
- ❖ **#follow** in 2022 <---> **#picoftheday** in 2021

2022
<chr>

2021
<chr>

#love

#love

#instagood

#instagood

#fashion

#fashion

#photooftheday

#photooftheday

#art

#beautiful

#beautiful

#art

#photography

#photography

#follow



#happy

#happy



#picoftheday

#cute

#cute

Findings and Highlights #4

Before the Outbreak of COVID-19

- ❖ 2017: *#nature #travel*
- ❖ 2019: *#fitness*

After the Outbreak of COVID-19

- ❖ 2020: *#covid*
 - Reflecting the public's heightened awareness and concerns about the pandemic
- ❖ 2021-2023 Q1: No hashtags were related to health and fitness or outdoor activities.

➔ Unexpected finding

- ◆ The pandemic has left a lasting impact on people's interests and online behavior, possibly due to persistent fears and caution.

Findings and Highlights #5

- ❖ 2023 Q1: *#interiordesign #design #homedecor #realestate*
 - a trend towards **increased interest** in home improvement and real estate.
- ❖ **Possible reasons:**
 - the pandemic leading people to **spend more time at home** and the **rise in remote work**
 - a shift in **priorities and values** towards creating comfortable and aesthetically pleasing living spaces.



Conclusion

- ❖ **Instagram hashtags may not reflect the real world,** but provide insights into people's behavior and interests on the platform.
- ❖ **The COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our lives,** both in-person and online, and this is reflected in social media trends.



Possible Future Works

- ❖ *#Insta*- are prevalent (Dorsch, 2018), especially in 2018
 - Why?
- ❖ In conclusion, **further research is needed** to better understand the underlying reasons behind these trends and how they relate to the broader social and cultural context.

2018

<chr>

#love

#photooftheday

#picoftheday

#bestoftheday

#instagood

#instamood

#instastyle

#instadaily

#igers

#instagramers

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