

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

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## 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

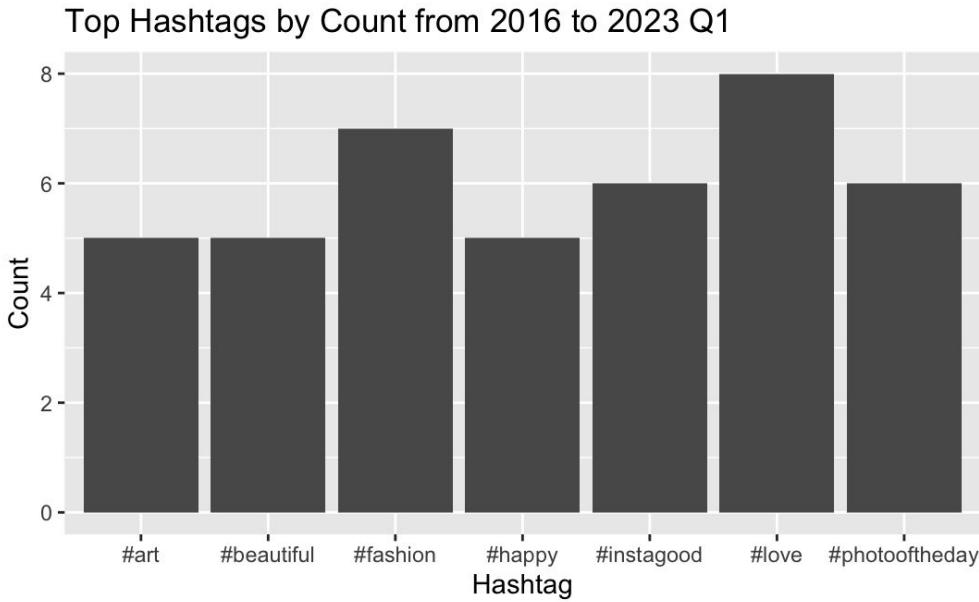


# Limitations

- ❖ 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

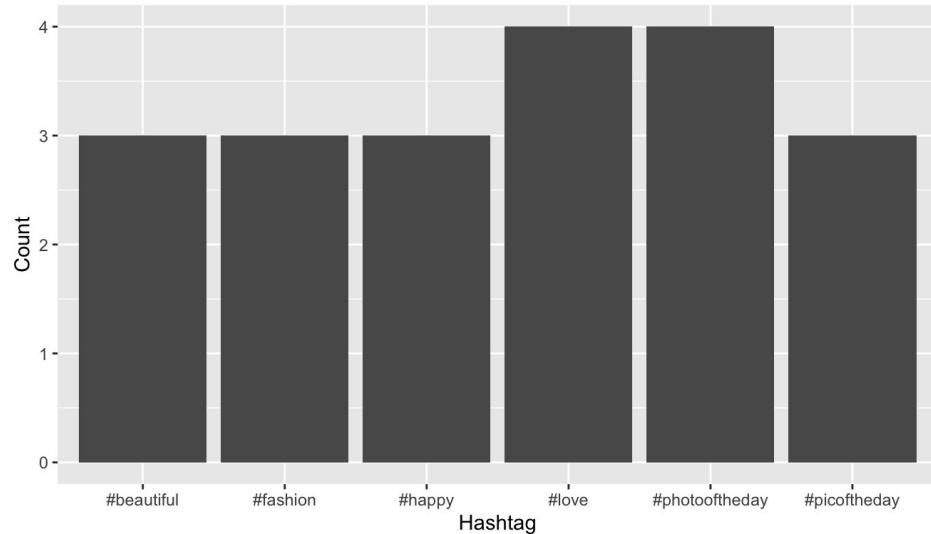


Feedback

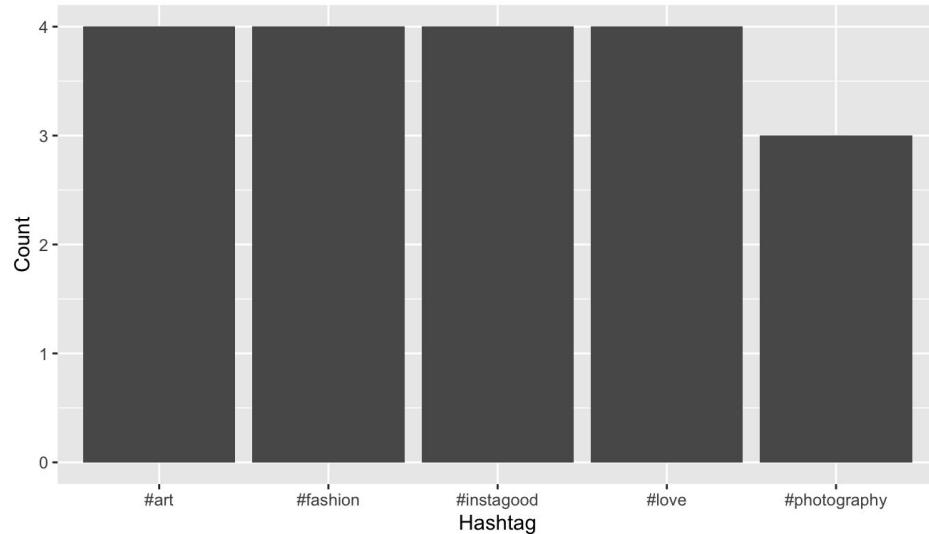
# Findings and Highlights #2

	Before COVID-19	After COVID-19
#happy	one of the most popular hashtags	relatively less popular
#art	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
- ❖ 2021-2013 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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