Insights*

*Go with the flow

Back to the video* →

Transcript of the guideline's voiceover

How to enjoy this interactive text?

Click on black words and sentences to deepen the topic quoted in the video

"Everyday, the world changes, people protest in the streets as well as on social media, and <u>hashtag hijacking</u> has become one of their strongest <u>weapons</u>. But how can we make it even better? How can we choose the most efficient hashtag?

It's easy to say that on Twitter, hashtags are the real protagonists. They are tags for the topic of conversation, and finding the most efficient one is crucial to participate in the discussion. And here's when the <u>trending section</u> comes in handy: a selection of the most popular hashtags at any specific time, depending on the number of tweets and the level of engagement.

When something remarkable happens, however, people may use different hashtags to discuss the same topic and the various tags may become more or less popular, according to the way users mention them in their posts.

For example, in the case of the White Lives Matter movement boycott, many hashtags were used, but eventually, only one proved to be the most efficient. Then, the real question is: how did the activists know which one to use?

Let's take a step back. Despite social distancing, in 2020 people still protested in the streets and, this spring, one hopeful message raised above all: that <u>Black Lives Matter</u>.

Find out what's behind
"Go with the flow".

This community needed people to listen, and to support them, social media did the opposite of what they usually do: they blacked out, in sign of respect.

However, not everyone was glad to stay silent. White supremacists decided to challenge the BLM movement, flooding Twitter with white posts, using different hashtags to state that White Lives matter as well.

But their action did not go unnoticed. An army of kpop fans decided to boycott these hashtags, filling their feeds with unrelated contents. In particular, they favored the# whitelivesmatter hashtag, the most popular one among all.

Thanks to massive participation in the hijacking, this hashtag trended on Twitter, turning into yet another element of protest for the black lives matter movement. It went from an individual choice to a powerful collective action!

The fans used footage from kpop concerts, better known as fancams, to flood Twitter feeds, but humor also had a big part in the hijacking. Someone also carried out a critical commentary of the event, but eventually all the posts aimed to disrupt the original message.

At the end of June, over 90.000 posts with the hashtag WhiteLivesMatter were uploaded on Twitter, and the majority was hijacked. The protest was surely a success.

Remember, the tips are *our* suggestions to hijack, flawlessly.

So, let's go back to our question. How can we find the most efficient hashtag? How did the kpop stans manage to reach such a big success? The key is "going with the flow!". Follow the most popular hashtags and take part in the collective action!

And to make sure you are up to the task, there are a few tips that may help you.

First of all, you should stay updated on the trending hashtags: usually the most important topics are those that people are already talking about. Second, you can use Google Trends or other online tools to monitor the hashtags, and investigate which ones are rising in popularity.

And finally, you should check out the hashtags' feed: taking a look at the top posts not only helps you to track the level of engagement, but also to determine the tone of the posts and the community involved in the topic.

We think you're ready! But remember, this is just one guideline: move the dot around to explore all the content in the page, or check out the rest of the website to find out more.

Go ahead to find out all the research that helped us to design this video

→

What does hashtag hijacking mean?

From the clicked words "*hashtag hijacking*"

Extract from

Austin Lucinda, Jin Yan,
*Social Media and
Crisis Communication,*
New York, Routledge, 2017

tinyurl.com/y4vmntrs

"An attention grabbing and dramatic moniker, which has quickly become a favorite of the news media, the term hashtag hijacking tipically refers to a situation in which a hashtag (#), a tool widely used for designating and organizing online conversations on social media sites, becomes commandeered by others in the community and is then instead used to mock, satirize, or negatively critique the original hashtag sponsor. The popular social media platform Twitter is most closely associated with the use of hashtags, but most online communities today commonly use the content-oganizing method.

[...] The first widely publicized example came in January of 2012, when the global fast-food giant McDonald's launched a promotional campaign on Twitter using the hashtag #McDStories, with the intent of inspiring costumers and fans of the brand to post cheerful anecdotes about personal experiences at the restaurant and positive memories associated with the food. In an effort to increase awareness of the campaign, McDonald's paid Twitter to boost visibility of the hashtag through its "promoted trends" offering, in which the social network gives visual prominence on users' screens to a limited number of corporate-sponsored hashtags.

Within a matter of hours of launching the promotion, McDonald's "pulled" formal sponsorship of the Twitter campaign due to the prevalence of overtly negative, sarcastic, and inappropriate responses tweeted by the platform's users incorporating the hashtag. Despite, or perhaps because of, the company's quick decision to cancel the campaign, major news organizations capitalized on the

opportunity to cover the emabarassing event for one of the world's most well-known and iconic brands, with many articles including examples of particularly harsh or humorous individual tweets ("One time I walked into McDonalds and I could smell Type 2 diabetes floating in the air and I threw up. #McDStories").

[...] The coordinated hashtag hijack has become a viable and effective strategic tool used by individuals and activist groups to publicly shame companies, to pressure organizations to action, and to help get their own messages amplified and heard by the general public."

Why did we define this tool a "weapon"?

From the clicked word "*weapons*"

For further information
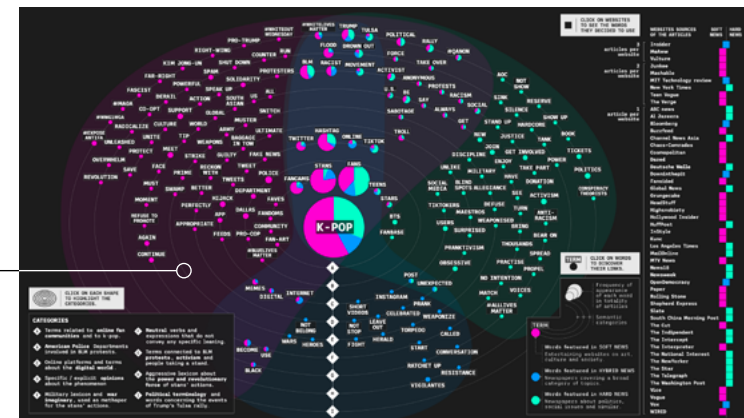
Dataset that gathers articles' titles talking about the phenomenon

tinyurl.com/5ywk8wy8

The phenomenon of digital activism through hashtag hijacking did not go unnoticed: the main online news websites covered their actions with critique pieces, describing these groups as a force of social and political action, and acknowledging their power given by internet used as a weapon.

This particular term, with others related to a military language, have been used to describe these collective actions in online media. Hard news generally prefer more neutral and broad terms, as opposed to soft news, which instead use a more powerful and aggressive lexicon.

Our website "Stan wars: the rise of a new army" investigates the various facets of language used by the media to describe the communities' behaviour.

One of the findings from
the interactive data visualization
on the website linked below
about how news media
talked of this phenomenon

https://dd16-group2.github.io/the-hijackers-guide/

How does Twitter algorithm determine the trending section? What can you do?

From the clicked words "*trending section*"

Extract from

Nemeth Cole,
How the Twitter algorithm works in 2020,
SproutSocial, Feb 2020

tinyurl.com/y2kl99mh

"The biggest recent change to the algorithm happened in 2017 with the introduction of the relevance model, and replacing "While You Were Away" with "In Case You Missed It". [....] When you're following hundreds, or even thousands, of Twitter accounts, it becomes impossible to catch up on all the posts you might have missed after being offline for a period of time.

A Twitter blog post from 2017 helps highlight a few other things to keep in mind when planning your content for Twitter:

- Recency: how recently a Tweet was published;
- Engagement: has to do with how many retweets, clicks, favorites and impressions a Tweet has received;
- Rich Media: the type of media you include in your Tweet, such as images, videos and GIFs;
- Activity: refers to how active a user is. For example, how long its been since the user was last on the site, how many followers they have and how much they use the platform."

Sehl Katie,
How the Twitter Algorithm Works in 2020 and How to Make it Work for You.
Hootsuite, May 2020

tinyurl.com/4ef7g79z

"10 Tips to increase the organic reach of your Tweets:

- Maintain an active Twitter presence: the more often people engage, the more likely Twitter's algorithm is to share your tweets with them in the future;

- Tweet at the right time: the 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. EST window tends to be best.

- Add tags purposefully: keep an eye on trending hashtags. Or even better, plan ahead with top hashtag and keyword forecasts on the Twitter blog. But don't overdo it. Twitter recommends using no more than two hashtags per tweet.

- Use photos, videos, GIFs: a boost in engagement can boost your tweet's ranking with the Twitter algorithm. And it's well known that tweets with photos, videos, and GIFs tend to get more attention.

- Encourage followers to engage: when it comes to soliciting engagement on Twitter, it's simple. Ask and you shall receive. Ask a question. Ask for feedback.

- Try a Twitter Poll: another thing you can ask for: votes. Polls are a quick and easy way to ask for input on something.

- Consider a Twitter thread: threads are simply fun to unravel. The format offers [...] several opportunities for followers to engage.

- Join relevant trends and topics: be a part of the conversation on Twitter. Look for trends and topics that your brand can contribute to—or better yet, lead.

- Repackage top content: don't simply Retweet or copy your top performing content. Find creative ways to repackage and re-share what works. Leave enough time and contrast from the original so as not to appear spammy.

- Apply insights from Twitter Analytics: when it comes to algorithms, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Use Twitter Analytics to track what works and what doesn't."

What is BLM movement? How social media is shaping civil rights movements?

From the clicked words "*Black Lives Matter*"

Extract from

About Black Lives Matter
Official Site BLM, 2013

blacklivesmatter.com/

"#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives."

Black Lives Matter
Wikipedia, 2020

tinyurl.com/2vwqjg3q

"The movement returned to national headlines and gained further international attention during the global George Floyd protests in 2020 following the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. An estimated 15 million to 26 million people participated in the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, making it one of the largest movements in the country's history.

The movement comprises many views and a broad array of demands but they center on criminal justice reform."

Lavietes Matt,
How Social Media Is Shaping Civil Rights Movements,
Resource, Jun 2017

tinyurl.com/4gkdjp7o

"On a greater scheme, social media has been used as a weapon to spread causes for social struggles of freedom, justice, and equality. Civil rights movements have capitalized social media's influence, making cause's values and ideas unavoidable to everyday users. In recent years, movements including the Women's March, Black Lives Matter, and the Human Rights Campaign have all been leaders in multiplying supporters through social networking."

9

Granillo Gabriel,
*The Role of Social Media
in Social Movements*,
Monthly Portland, Oct 2020

tinyurl.com/7l65r34f

"There are a few ways to think about the impact of social media with regard to social movements. The "slacktivism" is one, where users circulate information and resources through likes, shares, and retweets. Though it's been disregarded as noncommittal, feel-good politics, there is some evidence that suggests this form of activism can actually help.

[...] A study by the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication pointed to two significant groups in social protests: a core group and a periphery group. The core group are the users on the street, actively protesting and spreading their message, and the periphery are low-commitment participants, echoing and sharing that message through various social media.

[...] For Kelsy Kretschmer, an associate professor of sociology at Oregon State University, [...] information is most mobilizing when it's coming from acquaintances or a stranger with a common communal background as opposed to a friend, family member, or loved one. "If you see a lot of people online on your social media feed showing up for a protest, you are also more likely to show up for a protest because you feel like this is what your network is doing, and that can be really valuable," Kretschmer says.

"George Floyd's death matters to more people because there was footage of it happening. And it's much different than reading an account in a newspaper," she says. " [...] That changes how many people are willing to participate."

What does "to *black out* social media feeds" mean?

From the clicked words "*blacked out*"

For further information

Ahlgrim Callie,
Here's everything you need to know about Blackout Tuesday and #TheShowMustBePaused initiatives
Insider, Jun 2020

tinyurl.com/y29cz5mw

As mentiond before, social media allowed the spread of the Black Lives Matter movement's cause all over the world, amplyfing black people voices. They made it unavoidable to take sides for everyday users worldwide.

One of the methods by which the online population of social media has sided in favor of the BLM movement was to black out the feeds: Instagram has been filled with total black squares with the hashtag #blackouttuesday.

The initiative was launched by two African Americana women who work in music marketing, Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang, under the hashtag #theshowmustbepaused. The protest was directed mainly to the music industry that in recent years has profited mainly from African-American artists. This initiative was immediately joined by artists like Rihanna, Quincy Jones, Yoko Ono, Rolling Stones, spreading well beyond the music, under the banner #blackouttuesday, posting the black square.

However, with the increase of the number of participants who wished to show support for wider causes of racial injustice, confusion has also grown. Many of them associated the black post with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, effectively interrupting the flow of information related to the movement that bears the same name. Many users, who did not know the movement, thought the operation was launched by white supremacists to block the internet media "tam-tam".

Who are White Supremacists?

From the clicked words "*white supremacists*"

Extract from

Jenkins John Philip,
White Supremacy,
Britannica, 2020

tinyurl.com/y9xz2oya

For further information

*White supremacisists,
A curated collection of links,*
The Marshal Project

tinyurl.com/y6ptlczl

"White supremacy, beliefs and ideas purporting natural superiority of the lighter-skinned, or "white," human races over other racial groups. In contemporary usage, the term white supremacist has been used to describe some groups espousing ultranationalist, racist, or fascist doctrines. White supremacist groups often have relied on violence to achieve their goals.

In early 2016 the presidential campaign of the real-estate developer Donald J. Trump, the eventual Republican nominee, attracted significant support from white supremacists and so-called white nationalists, who largely disavowed racism but celebrated "white" identity and lamented the alleged erosion of white political and economic power and the decline of white culture in the face of nonwhite immigration and multiculturalism. Other Trump admirers included members of the "alt-right" (alternative right) movement, a loose association of relatively young white supremacists, white nationalists, extreme libertarians, and neo-Nazis."

How did K-Pop culture become so relevant?

From the clicked words "*army of K-pop fans*"

For further information

Lia Savillo,
*Meet the BTS Fans Trying
to Change the World, One Online
Campaign at a Time*
Vice, 2020

https://tinyurl.com/y56prupe

Joe Coscarelli
Why Obsessive K-Pop Fans Are Turning Toward Political Activism
New York Times, 2020

https://tinyurl.com/y823y6xc

In the 80s, Korean music was far from growing: most of the country's culture was in fact highly influenced by creations from the U.S. and Japan. The situation changed when South Korea lifted travel restrictions in 1988: it soon became much simpler for artists to research and take in musical elements from other cultures. This would eventually result in more experimentation in music, paving the way for bands that had "new" sounds to them, like Seo Taiji and Boys, who was responsable for the first spread of K-Pop.

In the 1990s, with the development of idol culture, massive, dedicated fanbases, started to grow. Three music studios (SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment , and JYP Entertainment) rode out this wave and assembled several groups, with diverse male singers (who could also dance). These boybands offered good-looking members, colorful clothes, and funky beats: their success was surely well-crafted. This idol culture spred through the '90s and into the 2000s, and groups (both male and female) created with a similar formula rose in popularity.

In the following years, certain K-pop artists' influence began echoing across the world, with Western fans growing in number. Then, in 2012, one of most important moments in K-pop's history happened: "Gangnam Style", from the South Korean rapper Psy, became viral, becoming the first YouTube video to reach 1 billion views. This managed to launch Western fans into a frenzy looking for more Korean artists.

The evolution of K-pop, however, did not stop there. It peaked with one of the most important music groups in 2020: BTS. They managed to broke records and stereotypes in both their home country and abroad, making huge strides for the K-pop industry as a whole.

What differentiated BTS from many others K-Pop band before them is their choice to sing about more serious matters: societal pressures, mental health, politics, and so much more. These topics managed to resonate with a lot of people, who grew and united under the shared passion for the band. According to Ms. Saeji, a visiting assistant professor of East Asian culture at Indiana University Bloomington, the fact that "*these young, socially progressive, outward-looking people who are really adept at using these online platforms — who are stuck at home and online even more because of Covid-19 — are doing political things is not surprising. These are young people who are completely willing to learn about a new culture to follow their interest in some pop-culture product*".

Moreover, Nicole Santero, a fan and Ph.D. student with a focus on the BTS Army, the BTS fandom, who also runs the data-focused @ResearchBTS account, described K-Pop *stans* (specific term for fans) as "*really passionate people who just fight for what they love. Those characteristics translate well when you look at social issues.*" Thanks to K-pop groups, these people who shared a similar outlook of the world managed to become aware of their collective power and the actual change they can bring to the world, to make it better for their future, as well as for the next generation. As Ms. Saeji said, "*What's really important about this entire thing is that young people are seeing their political power, they are flexing and they are feeling it. And you know what they are going to do next? They are going to vote. These K-pop fans are not feeling cynical right now. They are feeling empowered.*"

Focus on BTS Army

The ARMY, BTS fans, are always ready to put themselves in the game and to support their favorites. They have often carried out battles that did not necessarily concern the world of music.

One In An ARMY is a fan collective comprised of volunteers across the globe. Driven by the idea of using our collective power for global good, they seek out non-profit organizations worldwide and harness the power of ARMY into giving micro-donations over a one month period.

https://www.oneinanarmy.org/

Screenshot from

Google Map presenting all the ARMY Charity Projects from 2015 to 2021

tinyurl.com/y3e6tdu5

Did you find what you were looking for?*

*If you didn't, you can go back to the website to find out more.

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