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#Hashtag: A Special Feature to Organize and Classify Unstructured Information in Social Media

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Abstract: *A web based tools that allow people or companies or organizations to create, organize and share information, documents and picture/videos in virtual communities and network is called as social media. It can also be said as medium of communication like a newspaper or a radio. The facebook, twitter, Google+, Pinterest etc. are some of the absolute examples of social media. It is becoming a serious part of life as the social sites and applications are increasing. One of the most unique yet understudied feature available on social media platforms is the hashtag (#hashtag). Hashtags is a short combination of words or phrases that follow a hash sign (#), such as #India, #CricketWorldCup etc. Hashtags can help categorize or organize information, increase engagement, attract followers to a certain topic or area. The purpose of this paper is to highlights various aspects of hashtag and its uses in social media.*

Keywords: *Virtual communities, Hashtag, Social sites, Social media, India*

Introduction

In today's W3 world, we communicate using different devices and apps i.e. applications via social network. Can we classify all those social media's posts, conversations going on, about a similar context in W3 environment? Answer is yes, #Hashtags play a crucial role and helps us to categorize various topics by nature, objective and similarity.

Hashtags are a social media marketer's best friend. They can multiply the reach of social media updates. Used correctly, hashtags will amplify your message like nothing else on social media can do. Everyone have to do is apply the right ones at the right times, with a proper way.

Many websites, social platforms allow us to use hashtags for various purposes. The primary function of the hashtag was to classify the posts or conversation on the same topic, but it has quickly evolved from its main function and now part time serves multiple objectives, such as; Sentiment analysis, Direct conversion with an institution or a brand, Demonstrate agreement on certain issues etc. This study tries to highlights various aspects of hashtag and its uses in Facebook.

Objectives

Objectives of this study are as follows:

- i) To find out the overview of #Hashtag and its applications in social media.
- ii) To know the proper uses of #Hashtag for information organization.
- iii) To find out how it helps to get results against a keyword search.

What is Hashtag?

A hashtag word or phrase preceded by (#) sign. The purpose of using a hashtag is to create a conversation or topic that is easy to follow, search, and share. Hashtags are used across social media and photo-sharing apps. To find a conversation or similar posts with a particular hashtag, simply search it on the web or the site/app you are using.

“A hashtag is a type of tag used to describe topics on social networking websites, most notably Twitter. Hashtags, like all tags, are a type of metadata (data about data). Twitter has popularized the use of the term hashtag, though there are some other social networks that use it. On Twitter, Hashtags give other users and indication what a particular tweet is about. Hashtags are indicated as such because they are prefixed with the pound symbol (#).” (Techopedia, n.d.)

Which Social Media Platforms Work with Hashtags?

Now every major social media platform except LinkedIn uses hashtags in different way.

Twitter:

Twitter is hashtag central. Tweets with hashtags receive 2x more engagement than those without hashtags.

Facebook:

Facebook was slow to adopt hashtags. They weren't incorporated on the largest social network until 2013. Even today, hashtag use on Facebook is relatively low.

LinkedIn:

Hashtags don't work at all on LinkedIn.

Instagram:

Instagram almost beats out Twitter for hashtag use. It's not uncommon to see ten or more hashtags attached to an image.

Google+:

Google+ may add hashtags for you via its “auto-hashtags” feature. Sometimes that's a convenience, sometimes not. Google+ also lets you add hashtags to your comments, as well as your posts.

Pinterest:

Hashtags work best in Pinterest when used in pin descriptions. Hashtags are clickable on Pinterest, and once you click a hashtag in a pin you'll be brought to a whole page of pins that Pinterest thinks are related to that hashtag.

Tumblr:

Tumblr's hashtags can have a space between words. So a hashtag like "#internet marketing" will work on Tumblr.

YouTube:

Hashtags aren't too big a deal on YouTube, but you'll see them. Most hashtags are found in the comments.

Vine:

Like YouTube, there's an opportunity here; not many people are using hashtags on their Vine videos.

Flickr:

Flickr gives you search by hashtag, and like YouTube results not with good precisions.

Types of Hashtag

There are no such particular types of hashtag. One can use it according to their own purposes. According to their uses, various type of hashtags are as follows:

Business hashtag– eg **#engineering**; Brand hashtags – eg **#Adidas**; Campaign (Charity campaign or competition) hashtag eg **#Savewater**; Topic/interests/hobbies hashtag eg **#yoga**; Event hashtag eg **#kolkataFilmFestival**; News hashtag eg **#abpnews**; Special day hashtag eg **#NationalBookDay**; Location hashtags eg **#Jadavpur** etc.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Facebook Hashtags:

Advantages

- ✓ It helps to organize the similar kind of information or documents by post or uploading under a specific heading or class.
- ✓ One can use facebook hashtags to advertise his/her facebook post for more publicity.
- ✓ It helps in promoting products on facebook.
- ✓ If any user using hashtags publicly, then it will increase his/her access worldwide.
- ✓ It helps in categorizing users updates.

Disadvantages

- ✓ It may exploits user's privacy if he/she using hashtags in wrongly manner.
- ✓ It may be the security threat for user's facebook profile.

- ✓ It will display particular user's profile publicly anywhere in front of other users of any country.
- ✓ It may sometimes convert user's personal matters into public matter.

Do & Don't

Do:

- ✓ Use hashtags that are easy to remember.
- ✓ Consider context.
- ✓ Capitalize the first letter of multi-word hashtags to make them easier to read.
- ✓ Choose hashtags that are easy to spell.
- ✓ Keep hashtags short. Some experts recommend hashtags be kept to six characters or less.

Don't:

- ✓ Don't use spaces in hashtags (most of the social site users use it with unnecessary space like # Cricket).
- ✓ Don't use special characters or punctuation (&, %,!) in hashtags.
- ✓ Don't use only numbers.
- ✓ Don't use a hashtag within a hashtag.

Examples

Uses of #Hashtag in Facebook for organization of information about similar topic:

Following examples (screenshots) shows the use of #Hashtag via keyword search and retrieved results. Following figure-1 shows a keyword search named '#JUDLIS' (abbreviated form of Jadavpur University Department of Library and Information Science) in Facebook search area.

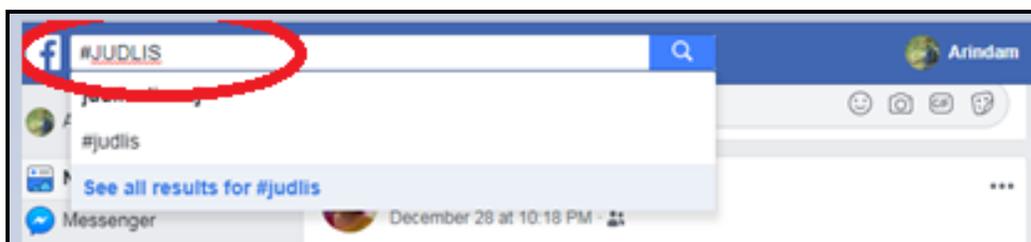


Figure-1: Search in Facebook via #JUDLIS hashtag.

After search retrieved results are depicted through following figures. Results shows that, all information or posts regarding JUDLIS are appeared in newer to older publication date.

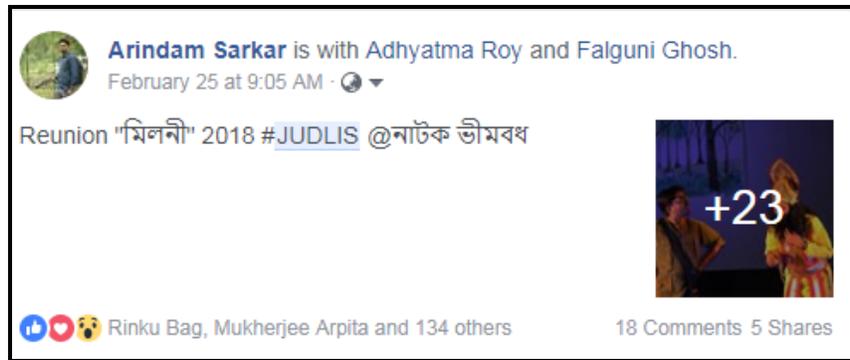


Figure 2a: Search result posted in Feb 25



Figure 2b: Search result posted in Feb 24

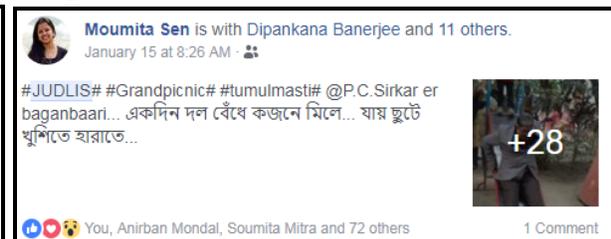


Figure 2c: Search result posted in Jan 15

Same as above another keyword search in Facebook termed **#knowledgeorganization** or **#knowledge_organization** shows the following results.

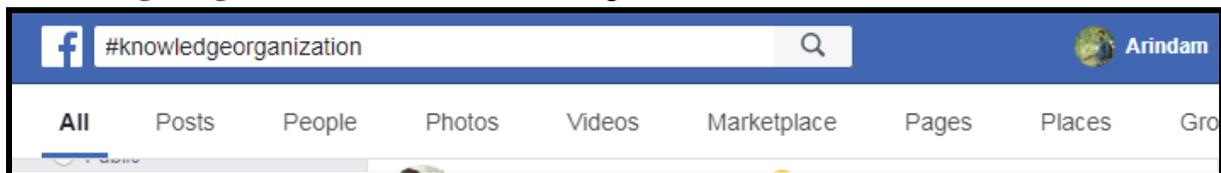


Figure-3: Search in Facebook via **#knowledgeorganization** hashtag.

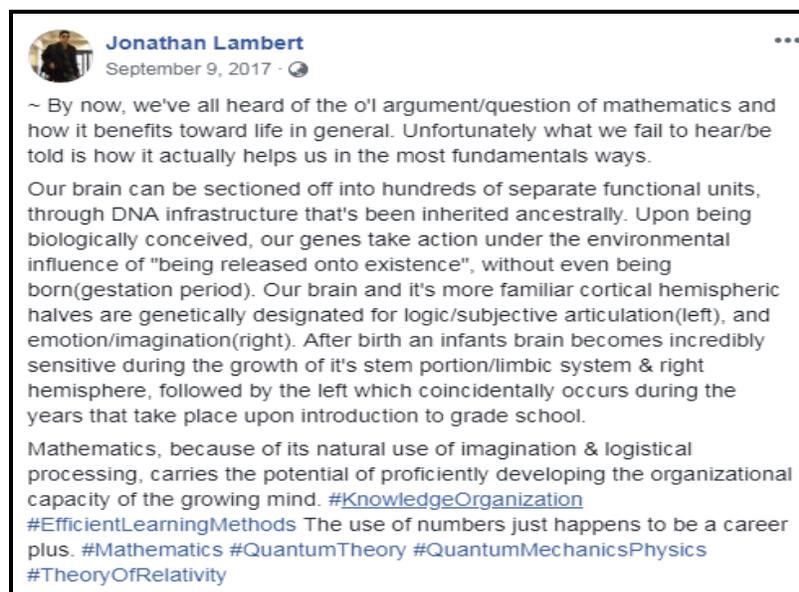


Figure 4a: Search result posted in Sep 9, 2017

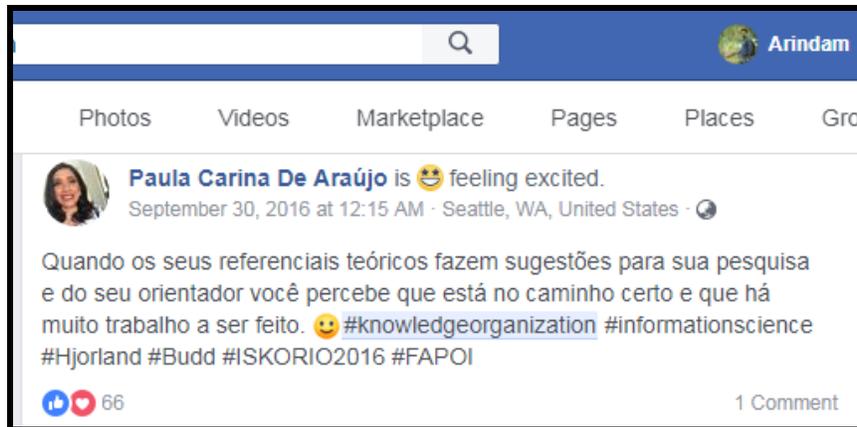


Figure 4b: Search result posted in Sep 30, 2016

Conclusion

Information, posts, and documents optimized with hashtags become more noticeable on social media platforms and search engines. A simple click or search for a hashtag keyword (e.g.: #KnowledgeOrganization) will help users to identify their need regarding a particular topic. So the proper uses of hashtags can be leveraged across social platforms.

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