

# Engaging on Instagram to Grow: The Role of Hashtags

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# Engaging on Instagram to Grow: The Role of Hashtags

## **Abstract**

Photo-sharing social network, Instagram, has become a popular social media marketing channel. Hashtags are commonly used in Instagram posts, which enable unconnected users to discover the posts through common interests. Diverse hashtag behaviors are observed, among which some are descriptive to the content category, some signal certain virtual community, and some are branding the profile itself. In this paper, we investigate how different hashtags influence the likes, comments, and new follower acquisition that Instagram posts/profiles receive. We analyzed 1,406 Instagram posts collected over a three-month period from 12 Instagram profiles. The results show that different characteristics of the hashtags lead to different levels of reach and targeting; a careful selection of hashtags carrying the right characteristics could enhance post engagement. Our results offer important insights for social media marketers, especially those who seek to create awareness through Instagram in organic approach. The results also suggest new research directions.

**Keywords:** *Social media marketing; Hashtag; Instagram*

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media