

Why We #Hashtag: Motivations Associated with Posting Brand Hashtags on Social Media

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Abstract

Hashtags (#) have received a great deal of attention from academia and industry as an effective digital tool for engaging social media users and facilitating electronic word-of-mouth for brands. We delved into motivations concerning people's brand-related hashtag-posting behavior on social media. The findings revealed three motivations for posting brand-related hashtags on social media: social acceptance, brand altruism, and incentive seeking. Additionally, we examined the relationships between motivations and brand relationship variables. The results showed that social acceptance and brand-related altruism predicted all of the five relationship variables (i.e., brand attitude, brand trust, brand affective and calculative commitment and brand loyalty), while incentive-seeking predicted brand calculative commitment and brand loyalty. The findings of the study provide some meaningful insights into the development of brand communication strategies and help marketers capitalize on social media platforms to achieve higher user involvement.

Keywords: *Hashtags, Brand Hashtags, Social media, Brand Relationships*

1. INTRODUCTION

Major social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have adopted the use of hashtags to help categorize and organize information on their social media platforms. Twitter was the first social network to officially use hashtags in July 2009, followed by Google+ and Instagram in 2011, and Facebook in June 2013 [1]. In a tweet post, words or phrases are tagged by preceding them with a hash signal “#” to indicate a particular subject or topic. By applying the “hypertext transfer protocol” technique on the Web, hashtags also allow users to link various types of content under a single topic [2]. Thus, hashtags keep the conversation going and connect social media users who have similar interests.

With the growing popularity and use of hashtags on social media, hashtags have become a popular marketing tool that companies and brands can use to increase brand awareness and preference. It is a phenomenon that is ubiquitous in advertising, with the core message showing up at the end of the ad, with fans and followers encouraged to search related hashtags on social media. Marketers are making every effort to engage people in brand-related conversation on social media and to increase the effectiveness of their

campaigns across platforms. For instance, the luxury retailer Coach encouraged social media users to take and submit photos of their Coach shoes using the #CoachFromAbove hashtag and share them on Instagram. By posting brand hashtags on social media, people showcase the products, identify themselves with the brand, describe how the brand plays a role in their life, and share their unique and personal stories with the brand. In light of the phenomenal success of hashtag campaigns, the hashtag phenomenon illustrates how a seemingly small act could actually create a stir with far-reaching implications by capitalizing on activity within a social network and how the posting of hashtags on social networking sites (SNSs) enhances the impact of a campaign (e.g., #IceBucketChallenge).

Thus, hashtags can be a powerful way to raise awareness of brands and cultivate relationships with social media users. Therefore, it is critical for brands to better understand the use of hashtags on social media and to delve into people's hashtag-posting behaviors with regard to brands. To this end, the purpose of the study is (1) to explore people's motivations for posting brand-related hashtags on social media and (2) determine how and which motivations may affect relationship outcomes. The current study examines which motivations are powerful predictors of brand relationship variables—brand attitude, brand trust, brand commitment, and brand loyalty.

This study has significant implications for scholars and practitioners. Despite the existing studies on motivations for engaging in a brand community on social media or motivations for the placement of user-generated content online, there is little research on hashtag-posting with regard to brands. Therefore, this study actually adds value to this specific area by examining a wide range of possible social media users' motivations. In addition, practitioners or marketers may gain a better understanding of people's underlying psychological motivations when they choose to become part of a brand's marketing activity on social media. The findings of the study could provide some meaningful insights into the development of brand communication strategies and help marketers capitalize on social media platforms to achieve higher user involvement.

2. BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Characteristics of Hashtags

A hashtag is “a unique tagging format with a prefix symbol (#) that associates a user-defined tag with tweet content” [3]. This definition highlights the tagging function of a hashtag. Through “tagging,” hashtags are used to organize and annotate content and information within personal social networks. Hashtags enable the social media users to self-categorize their posts and information through the searchable hashtag feature [4].

Hashtags allow individuals to keep track of the updates on a specific topic. If a user intends to receive information about a certain event, he or she would just click on a hyperlinked hashtag and then would be directed to the relevant commentary pool. Related tweets using a specific hashtag are aggregated and displayed in real-time [5]. This allows the user to find the recently updated array of posts, as well as learn who is talking about the topic. People utilize the related hashtags in their posts on social media to contribute to conversations around a particular topic or influential event. In addition, hashtags play a role as a “social bookmark” or “topical marker” [6] by spreading information around a particular community and thus serving as the “symbol of a community” [7,8].

One of the purposes for marketers' brand marketing communication activities is to convince and influence people's perceptions in favor of their brands. Hashtags help identify the social media influencers in social media environments with the help of hashtag analytics and tracking tools providing accurate and timely statistics. Social media influencers are a new type of independent third party endorser who influences audience attitudes, and marketers can more accurately target these active hashtag posters who may serve as opinion leaders in the social network. Opinion leaders are those who transmit brand information and plays a critical

role in influencing opinions on social media and initiating and facilitating electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication [9]. Thus, getting a better understanding of hashtag posters is becoming quite a popular topic in academic circles as well as among practitioners using social media.

2.2 Motivations for Posting Brand Hashtags on Social Media

Individual users are a powerful force for changing the pace of information dissemination on social media [10]. In addition, a large number of effective marketing strategies are derived from the online brand-related pool of commentary [11]. However, it is challenging for online community providers to encourage the participation and involvement of their users [12]. Thus, it is of great importance to understand what drives social media users to generate brand-related hashtags as part of brand-related content on social media.

Brand-related hashtags are understood as a form of user-generated content (UGC). In addition, hashtag-posting behavior and user engagement in virtual brand communities share certain characteristics in that people get involved in brand-related activity. From a theoretical point of view, the user-gratification approach explains how media users actively select media and media content to fulfill their needs and expectations [13]. Since there is no research focused on motivations underlying brand-related hashtag behaviors on social media, the present study examines a variety of motivations derived from the prior literature on user-gratification approach [13], UGC [14-16], and virtual brand community [17]. These motivations include entertainment [17, 18], self-expression [18,19], and social belongingness [20]. While social media behaviors such as liking or sharing others' article or posts as well as posting personal opinions are a reflection of one's self-identity, it is of great importance for a person's social impression (how others perceive them) corresponds to self-identity (how person perceive themselves). Thus, people are seeking ways to express themselves and let others get to know the "real me" or "true me" and still simultaneously create a positive social impression [21, 22]. Social behaviors, such as comments, likes, shares, and replies, form a circle of interpersonal interaction, they form a circle of interpersonal interaction. Due to the hyperlinked and searchable features, using hashtags on specific topics or events—including brand-related ones— helps construct a virtual community connecting users with similar interests and postings.

Furthermore, economic incentives or compensation play a significant role in getting social media users involved with the brand campaigns or activities [23]. By posting contents on social media along with a brand hashtag, some users might be looking for monetary rewards, discounts, or an "admission ticket" to enter a brand-related contest. On the other hand, people share brand information to satisfy the need to express their love, caring, and friendship. In such situations, the exchanged information serves as a "gift" to someone with whom they are familiar, and no economic compensation is expected. In the social media context, information exchange through eWOM, usually occurs between strangers who share common interests. This occurs particularly with the hashtag content individuals post on social media, since it could reach a larger audience through its hyperlinked and searchable functionality. Social media users are willing to contribute to the pool of commentary or knowledge, which to some degree indicates a selfless spirit. Social media users who benefited from other's shared information have the desire to contribute to others in return [24]. Taken all these into consideration, the current study asks the following research question:

RQ1: What are the psychological motives for brand hashtag-posting behavior on social media?

2.3 Brand Relationship

To derive effective marketing strategies and strengthen relationships with social media users over the long term, the research examines the relationship between possible motivations and relationship outcomes. The

present study focus on four aspects of brand relationship variables ranging from attitudinal to behavior outcomes: brand attitude, brand commitment, brand loyalty, and brand trust.

Brand attitude describes an individual's perception of a specific brand [25]. As one of the key components of brand equity, brand attitude has an influence on people's purchasing behavior, such as repeat purchases, brand recommendations intentions, and more [26]. Basically, even the most minimal element employed in advertising or marketing activities could be a stimulus for positive or negative brand attitude. Thus, the present study proposes that a user's high involvement in social media brand activity such as brand hashtag-posting behavior would impact his or her attitude toward a certain brand.

Brand trust is defined as a feeling of security based on consumer perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for their interests and welfare [27]. This definition consists of two distinct dimensions. First, a trustworthy brand has the intention and willingness to satisfy the needs of people and to keep promises. Second, people feel safe and confident about the brand's consistency, reliability and honesty, because they know the brand has the ability to fulfill that intention and has the willingness to do so.

The increased significance of trust in an online context has aroused scholars' attention. Information dissemination is one of the value creation mechanisms which reinforces trust [28]. Individuals pass along information about the product or brand by posting brand-related hashtags. In addition, established brand community on social media and user engagement interact with brand trust [29]. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that social media users' brand hashtag-posting will have an impact on brand trust.

Brand commitment consists of two distinct types: affective commitment and calculative commitment [30]. *Affective commitment* indicates a sense of belonging and involvement with the brand marketing activity [31]. It reflects a person's intention to maintain the relationship with the brand. Strong affective commitment is extremely valuable and can result in brand loyalty in the form of purchase behavior. On the other hand, as a form of spurious loyalty, people engage in a *calculative commitment* by remaining loyal to a brand, even if it violates their inner wish or desire. In this circumstance, people are less likely to exhibit true loyalty behaviors like recommending the brand to others or repeated purchase of the brand. The reason they do so is because they are afraid of losing some kind of economic or social benefit if they attempt to end this relationship with the brand.

For a long time, building and maintaining *brand loyalty* was one of the key responsibilities and most significant tasks for social media marketers. Over the past years, marketers have actively used social media to maintain a high level of brand loyalty among their targets. In order to have a better understanding of the relationships between brand hashtag-posting motivations and relationships with the brands, the following research question is proposed:

RQ2: How are the motivations related to brand relationship variables (i.e., brand attitude, brand trust, brand commitment, and brand loyalty)?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample and Procedure

To test the proposed research questions and hypotheses, an online survey was conducted on a sample of 457 people (Male: 59%; Female: 41%) who were recruited via the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online-based paid recruiting service, to collect information from diverse populations. Only qualified to take part in the survey was those who had ever posted brand-related hashtags on social media. To ensure the quantification of each participant, some screening questions were included at the beginning of the survey.

3.2 Measures

All of the items were measured using the seven-point Likert scale response format ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “7 = strongly agree” unless otherwise mentioned.

Motivations: To measure why individuals post brand-related hashtags on social media, nineteen relevant motivation items were derived from the prior literature on UGC and social media, user-gratification approach, and virtual brand community. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each item.

Relationship variables: For the measure of *brand attitude*, a semantic differential scale is used with five items: unappealing/ appealing, bad/ good, unpleasant/pleasant, unfavorable/favorable, and unlikable/ likable. *Brand trust* was measured with four items [32] such as “I rely on the brands I include in my hashtags” ($\alpha = .85$). The scale of *brand affective commitment* ($\alpha = .81$) was used with item like “This brand has a great deal of personal meaning for me”. *Brand calculative commitment* ($\alpha = .79$) was measured using two items “I feel forced to remain loyalty to a brand violating my inner wish or desire” and “I am afraid of losing some kind of economic or social benefits if I end this relationship with brand” developed in this study based on the definition of brand calculative commitment. The scale of *brand loyalty* ($\alpha = .76$) used in this study [33] includes statements such as “I intend to keep purchasing the brands that I include my hashtags”.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Sample Characteristics

Considering the general usage of social media platforms, Facebook (29%) was the most frequently used platform, followed by Twitter (19%), YouTube (16%), Google+ (12%), Instagram (11%) and Pinterest (6%). In general, the rankings for brand hashtag-posting platforms corresponded with the general usage of the social media platforms. A smartphone was the most commonly used device for respondents to post hashtags (34%), followed by 33 percent of respondents who said they used their laptops to post hashtags. The average frequency of social media postings was “a few times a week.” Respondents average frequency for using hashtags in their posts, fell between “sometimes” and “frequently” ($M = 4.36$). The average number of hashtags that respondents included in one post was 2.79. For brand hashtag-posting, the mean of the frequency was “sometimes” ($M = 3.92$). Considering the frequency of how often respondents engaged in brand hashtag-posting behaviors, “using existing brand-related hashtags in one’s own posts” ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.26$) ranked first, followed by “retweeting others’ brand-related hashtag posts” ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.45$), and “creation of one’s own brand-related hashtags in his/her own posts” ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.57$).

4.2 Motivations for Brand Hashtag-Posting Behavior

To answer RQ1, a principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted on a sample of 457 to determine the underlying structure of motivations for brand-related hashtag-posting behavior. The criteria used to evaluate this principal component analysis were eigenvalue (greater than 1.0), variance explained by each component, loading score for each factor ($\geq |0.40|$) and also the meaningfulness of each dimension. Three items were deleted since they had high loadings on more than two components. After removing those items, the PCA was rerun with 14 items. At last, we obtained a meaningful and interpretable three-component solution for brand hashtag-posting motivations. These three components explained 66.51% of the total variance.

As shown in the Table 1, the first component labeled “social acceptance” included six items. This component consisted of 40.6% of the variance. The second component was named as “brand-related altruism”, consisted of five items and accounted for 18.04% of the variance after rotation. The third component,

“incentive seeking” with three items accounted for 7.86% of the variance. Specific motivation items and factor loadings were reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Motivations for brand hashtag-posting behavior on social media (EFA; $n = 457$)

	1	2	3
Social Acceptance ($\alpha = .88$)			
Because I have a strong need to belong	.766	.091	.331
Because I want to be part of a community	.761	.351	.052
To express who I want to be	.741	.238	.218
Because I want other people to “like” my posts	.731	.151	.303
To express myself creatively	.728	.288	.007
Because using brand-related hashtags make me feel join a group with same interest	.711	.353	.100
Brand-related Altruism ($\alpha = .83$)			
To document personal experiences about the brands	.172	.773	-.132
Because I want to contribute to a pool of information about the brands	.248	.735	.095
Because I want to help other consumers	.256	.727	.196
To reflect on my feelings and experiences about the brands	.176	.726	-.165
Because I want to support good brands	.238	.713	.075
Incentive Seeking ($\alpha = .85$)			
Because I can get rewards	.177	-.072	.889
To make money	.105	.053	.839
Because incentives are offered for posting them	.282	.012	.823
Eigenvalue	5.685	2.526	1.100
% of variance	40.604	18.043	7.858
Cumulative %	40.604	58.647	66.505

4.3 Relationship between Motivations and Relationship Variables

To test the relationship between motivations and brand relationship outcome variables (RQ2), a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. The three identified motivation factors were regressed on brand attitude, brand trust, brand affective and calculative commitment, and brand loyalty. Regarding brand attitude, both social acceptance ($\beta = .18, p < .001$) and brand-related altruism motivation ($\beta = .35, p < .001$) had significant positive influence on brand attitude. However, incentive seeking motivation ($\beta = -.09, p = .07$) did not exert any significant influence on brand attitude. Similarly, social acceptance ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) and brand-related altruism motivation ($\beta = .52, p < .001$) had significant positive influence on brand trust. However,

incentive-seeking motivation ($\beta = .07, p = .11$) appeared not to be significant. Brand related altruism motivation had the most predictive power for brand attitude ($\beta = .351, p < .001$) and brand trust ($\beta = .52, p < .001$). The results showed a similar pattern for brand affective commitment. That is, social acceptance ($\beta = .50, p < .001$) and brand-related altruism motivation ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) had the predictive power, while incentive seeking motivation ($\beta = .07, p = .76$) did not have significant influence on brand affective commitment. For the brand affective commitment, social acceptance ($\beta = .50, p < .001$) was the strong predictor among all of the three motivation variables.

Regarding brand calculative commitment, social acceptance ($\beta = .39, p < .001$) and incentive-seeking motivation ($\beta = .52, p < .001$) had significant positive influence. Incentive seeking motivation had the most predictive power for brand calculative commitment ($\beta = .52, p < .001$). In addition, brand-related altruism motivation ($\beta = -.161, p < .001$) was found to negatively influence brand calculative commitment. All three motivation factors —social acceptance ($\beta = .18, p < .001$), brand-related altruism ($\beta = .42, p < .001$), and incentive seeking motivation ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) — had significant positive influence on brand loyalty. Brand-related altruism motivation ($\beta = .42, p < .001$) was the strong predictor among all of the three motivation variables. The results of the multiple regression analyses for relationship between motivations and brand relationship variables were summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2. Multiple regression analyses for relationship between motivations and brand relationship variables

	Brand attitude ($\alpha = .94$; $M = 5.91$; $SD = 1.03$)				Brand trust ($\alpha = .85$; $M = 5.33$; $SD = 1.00$)				Brand affective commitment ($\alpha = .81$; $M = 5.02$; $SD = 1.19$)			
	β	t	R^2	F	β	t	R^2	F	β	t	R^2	F
	.217*** 42.10				.395*** 99.36				.499*** 151.44			
Social acceptance ($M = 4.77$; $SD = 1.24$)	.182	3.277***			.15	3.07**			.499	11.229***		
Brand-related altruism ($M = 5.32$; $SD = .95$)	.351	6.909***			.52	11.63***			.300	7.380***		
Incentive seeking ($M = 3.65$; $SD = 1.68$)	-.085	-1.821			.07	1.63			-.011	-.300		

	Brand calculative commitment ($\alpha = .79$; $M = 3.70$; $SD = 1.67$)				Brand loyalty ($\alpha = .76$; $M = 5.09$; $SD = 1.14$)			
	β	t	R^2	F	β	t	R^2	F
	.529*** 170.74				.325*** 73.33			

Social acceptance (<i>M</i> = 4.77; <i>SD</i> = 1.24)	.388	9.011***	.179	3.467***
Brand-related altruism (<i>M</i> = 5.32; <i>SD</i> = .95)	-.161	-4.085***	.419	8.892***
Incentive seeking (<i>M</i> = 3.65; <i>SD</i> = 1.68)	.518	14.369***	.110	2.559*

* Significant at .05; ** Significant at .01; *** Significant at .001; Mean and standard deviation values are reported.

5. DISCUSSION

While studies do exist on people's motivations for engaging in a brand community or posting user-generated branded content on SNSs, little research exists on hashtagging with regard to brands. The present study examines a variety of people's brand hashtag-posting behaviors to better understand the psychology underlying the use of hashtags in social media environments.

For the general brand hashtag-posting behavior, this study identified three major motivations: social acceptance, brand related altruism, and incentive seeking. A primary motivation for general brand-related hashtag-posting behavior turned out to be social acceptance. The user not only has a need to express his/her inner self and let other know what h/she considers "the real me", but also how he or she desires to socialize and be accepted by the community [34]. Individuals as human beings have the need to maintain frequent, affectively pleasant or positive interaction with others. Through the brand-related hashtags, people express their inner selves by writing their feelings about the brand on their social network. They feel a kind of social belonging through getting "likes" and replying to others. The social acceptance motivation emphasizes the searchable characteristics of hashtags which enhances the influence of one's post via the hyperlinked functionality of the hashtag. Through using hashtags, it increases the possibility of one's post being searched or reached by other social media users or community members.

Interestingly, social acceptance motivation predicted all brand relationship variables – brand attitude, brand trust, brand affective commitment, brand calculative commitment and also brand loyalty. This finding suggested that social acceptance is a crucial component for building and maintaining a strong relationship with social media users. Hashtag campaigns developed by marketers should let users feel this campaign is a reflection of their inner thoughts, identifies with their real selves, and at the same time feel that sharing this hashtag content will garner more acceptance from a large number of social media users.

Brand-related altruism motivation ranked as the second major motivation for general brand-related hashtag-posting behavior. A number of users were willing to contribute more brand-related information, when they feel they benefit from information shared by others. The findings showed that brand-related altruism motivation had significant positive influence on brand attitude, brand trust, brand affective commitment and brand loyalty. However, brand-related altruism motivation negatively influenced brand calculative commitment. As discussed earlier, brand calculative commitment is quite different from brand affective commitment, since people with a high level of brand calculative commitment remain loyal to a brand not because they have a strong positive attitude towards the brand, but because of the existing economic or social benefits. Because brand altruism behaviors occur as a gift to others, with no economic compensation expected, it seems logical that brand-related altruism motivation predicted brand calculative commitment in a negative way.

The third motivation was incentive seeking motivation. Indeed, various kinds of incentives such as special offers, discounts, or gifts had been frequently used in campaign-related hashtags. It was a common for marketers to ask social media users to post brand-related hashtags as a necessary requirement to enter a contest or get a reward. Interestingly, the results showed that incentive-seeking motivation had positively significant influence on brand calculative commitment and brand loyalty, but not on brand attitude, brand trust or brand affective commitment. Since the existence of economic compensation was the key reason for these people to maintain brand calculative commitment, it was not surprising that incentive-seeking motivation predicted brand calculative commitment. It might seem unexpected that incentive-seeking motivation was positively related to brand loyalty at first glance. However, if brand loyalty here simply referred to the fact that people maintain their purchase behaviors, it may not necessarily reflect a person's affective emotions towards the brand. The findings suggested that incentives could motivate people to continue their purchase decision, forming a kind of "brand loyalty". However, the relatively low percentage of incentive seeking motivation indicated that people were less likely to be driven by these brand-offered incentives when it comes to posting hashtags on social media, implying other different types of hashtag strategies should be considered to attract a larger number of social media users.

In terms of brand-related hashtag-posting on social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were recognized as the most frequently used platforms. Interestingly, the usage of Instagram for brand hashtag-posting was found to be greater than the general usage of Instagram. Instagram was one of the top three platforms that introduced hashtag function into their operations. As an image and video oriented platform, hashtags aid the process of content discovery and optimization, which to some degree explains greater Instagram hashtag density. When it comes to the selection of a social media platform for a hashtag campaign, a brand should consider both the popularity level of that platform and the density of brand-related hashtag-posting. Considering the devices used for posting hashtags, it is imperative for marketers to make sure hashtag campaign materials are also compatible with different kinds of mobile devices.

Marketers use hashtags to classify and organize the theme of brand posts, as well as to link them to other related contents. Social media users like Twitter because it allows them to instantly keep up with data in a very timely fashion. If a brand is able to throw itself into a discussion and post content around some "hot" and timely topics, the brand may have a chance to receive considerable attention, not only from brand followers or fans, but also from larger audiences who might be potential consumers. At the same time, if a brand social media manager is able to monitor what the industry and major competitors are talking about in regard to a particular hot hashtag, it could benefit a brand, if the manager is able to react rapidly and appropriately, according to the circumstances.

Given the finding that users tended to utilize existing brand-related hashtags rather than creating their own. It reminded brands to create their own business-specific conversation, making it easy for users to borrow these hashtags in their own posts. A hashtag can be a great opportunity for a brand to start a conversation about a certain brand event. Before launching an event, such as a campaign, contest or promotion, marketers could come up with a unique hashtag corresponding to this event. When people include this hashtag in their posts on social media, that whole process ends up marketing the brand. Since the purpose of using a hashtag is to invite more current or potential social media users to join the discussion about the brand, hashtags used for brand-related events should be easy to remember, easy to spell, simple, concise, and most importantly, consistent across multiple channels or media. A complicated or prolix hashtag will decrease a person's motivation to engage. One of the best ways to garner more user-generated content and call for a specific action (e.g., positive brand eWOM) is to make the brand-related hashtags customizable for a personal user experience, which influences user satisfaction and positive behavior [35]. In

terms of the effectiveness of a hashtag campaign, hashtag tracking websites will help marketers to better understand what people are saying about their brand hashtags, and how the hashtags are actually performing within a social network. By providing real-time statistics and analysis, they allow the effectiveness of the hashtag campaign to be measured.

5.1 Limitations and Further Research

The implications drawn from this research should be considered in light of several constraints. First, First, in terms of brand hashtag-posting behaviors, this study only examined the motivation for posting brand-related hashtags. Given a variety of hashtag functions on SNSs, future research could further delve into other types of social media activities associated with brand hashtag-posting behaviors, such as retweeting and creating brand hashtags. It would be important for researchers to replicate the findings of the study by including qualitative evidence for the importance of hashtag marketing on SNSs. It would therefore be useful to examine further how social media users' motivations change over time and across brands associated with brand hashtag-posting. Future researchers could conduct a series of experiments that show clearer causal relationships between motivations and brand hashtag behaviors. Second, this study examined hashtag behaviors on social media with regard to brands in general, not toward a particular brand.

5.2 Conclusion

We examined a variety of hashtag-posting behaviors as they pertain to brands. Its aim was to come to a better understanding of the psychology underlying the use of hashtags where social media users have control over content they intend to consume and share. As the use of SNSs by brands continues to increase rapidly, much remains to be understood about social media users' uses of brand-related hashtags. The findings of the study provide a better understanding of people's hashtag-posting behaviors related to brands and offers some practical insights into how marketers should utilize, as they try to promote their brands, hashtags on social media so as to better connect with target audiences. Hashtags can be a powerful way to raise awareness of brands by connecting users who have similar interests and keep the conversation going about the brands. Therefore, it is critical for brands to understand brand hashtag posters as being important opinion leaders on SNSs and delve into their brand hashtag behaviors. This study highlights the value of understanding social media users' motivations, and the findings suggest that this is a promising research area worth further investigation.

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