



A Comprehensive Analysis of Hashtag Usage as A Digital Branding and Customer Engagement

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Abstract – The rapid growth of social media platforms has, kind of, changed the way businesses talk to customers and build their brand identity. In that whole digital marketing space, hashtags have become this solid mechanism for boosting brand visibility, getting more audience interaction, and even making online communities feel more alive. This study looks at how hashtag usage works as a kind of digital branding and customer engagement tool inside the healthy food industry. Here the research tries to understand how strategic hashtag implementation can affect brand awareness, audience interaction, how easy the content is to discover, and whether customers keep coming back. For this, a mixed-method approach is used, meaning social media content analysis, engagement metrics evaluation, and also a check on consumer perception all included. The findings suggest is that branded hashtags, industry-specific ones, and those tied to campaigns do matter, quite a lot. They appear to contribute to higher reach, stronger engagement rates, and better brand recognition overall. The study also shows that when a healthy food brand uses hashtags well, it can connect with health-conscious consumers more effectively. It also helps spread product awareness, and it encourages user-generated content, which feels like free momentum. Overall, the research points out that hashtag strategies shouldn't be treated like something isolated. Instead, they should be integrated into broader digital marketing frameworks if the goal is to maximize customer engagement and gain a competitive edge in the healthy food sector.

Keywords – Hashtags, Digital Branding, Customer Engagement, Social Media Marketing, Healthy Food Industry.

I. INTRODUCTION

The growth of digital communication tools has kind of, reworked marketing methods across different industries. Social media spaces like Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube have turned into must-have instruments for organizations trying to build real ties with customers. Inside these platforms, hashtags work like metadata tags, they classify posts and help people find the content faster, especially for the right audience.

The healthy food business has moved forward a lot, mainly because more consumers are now thinking about nutrition, wellness, and sustainable ways of buying or eating. Since competition is becoming more intense in this field, companies are trying newer digital marketing approaches to stand out, and keep consumers engaged in a more deliberate manner. Hashtags have then become an important piece here because they make ongoing discussions easier, they help lift campaigns, and they reinforce brand identity without too much fuss. a key organization in the healthy food category, leans on social media marketing to share its brand values, and to meet health-focused consumers

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to evaluate the effectiveness of hashtag usage in digital branding and customer engagement.

Data Collection Secondary Data

The study also uses secondary data collected from published journals, research articles, industry reports, company social media pages, digital marketing reports, books, websites, and other online sources related to social media marketing, digital branding, and hashtag marketing.

Research Approach

The study follows an analytical and descriptive approach to evaluate the effectiveness of hashtag usage in digital branding and customer engagement by analyzing consumer responses and supporting secondary information.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling method was adopted for selecting respondents

Scope of Analysis

The study analyzes consumer perceptions regarding hashtag usage, customer engagement, brand visibility, content performance, and digital branding effectiveness based on responses collected from social media users and supporting secondary data.

Statistical Tools Used

1. Percentage Analysis
2. Chi-Square Analysis
3. Correlation Analysis
4. Graphical Interpretation



III. MODELING AND ANALYSIS

Conceptual Framework

The study proposes that effective hashtag usage influences digital branding and customer engagement through the following pathway:

Hashtag Strategy → Content Discoverability → Audience Reach → Engagement → Brand Awareness → Customer Loyalty

Variables Considered

Independent Variables

- Frequency of hashtag usage
- Type of hashtags
- Relevance of hashtags
- Campaign-specific hashtags

Dependent Variables

- Likes
- Shares
- Comments
- Follower Growth
- Brand Recall
- Customer Loyalty

Table 1: Key Factors influencing Social Media Performance Analysis

Metric	Without Strategic Hashtags	With Strategic Hashtags
Average Reach	5200	12,800
Average Likes	320	910
Average Comments	45	165
Average Shares	28	110
Follower Growth (%)	4.5	13.8

Table 2: Hashtag Performance Comparison

Hashtag Type	Average Engagement Rate (%)
Branded Hashtags	8.4
Product Hashtags	7.8
Industry Hashtags	6.9
Campaign Hashtags	10.2
Community Hashtags	9.1

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that hashtag usage significantly enhances digital branding effectiveness and customer engagement within the healthy food industry.

Key Findings

1. Strategic use of relevant and trending hashtags significantly improved the online visibility of increasing content discoverability and expanding audience reach by approximately 146%.
2. Hashtag-based social media posts generated higher levels of customer engagement, including increased likes, comments, shares, and overall interaction compared to posts without hashtags.
3. The implementation of branded hashtags helped create a distinct digital identity for the company, enhancing brand recognition, customer recall, and consistency across social media platforms.
4. Campaign-specific hashtags motivated customers to actively participate by sharing their experiences, reviews, and product-related content, leading to a noticeable increase in user-generated content.
5. Hashtag-driven interactions provided valuable customer insights, enabling the company to better understand consumer preferences, improve communication, and strengthen customer relationship management.
6. Effective hashtag strategies contributed to higher organic traffic, reducing dependence on paid promotions while improving the overall performance of digital marketing campaigns.
7. The consistent use of industry-specific and branded hashtags helped the company connect with a broader target audience interested in healthy food products and sustainable lifestyles.
8. Increased social media exposure through hashtags enhanced brand credibility and supported the company's efforts to build a loyal online community around its products and values.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of hashtag usage as a digital branding and customer engagement tool in the healthy food industry. The findings demonstrate that strategic hashtag implementation significantly improves content visibility, customer interaction, brand awareness, and community engagement.

Branded, campaign-specific, and community-oriented hashtags were found to be particularly effective in driving customer participation and enhancing digital brand presence. The research highlights the importance of integrating hashtag strategies into broader social media marketing initiatives to achieve sustainable competitive advantages.

Organizations operating in the healthy food sector should adopt data-driven hashtag strategies, continuously monitor performance metrics, and align hashtag campaigns with customer interests and industry trends.



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