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**Do public persons and organizations know the new meaning of hashtag?**

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# Introduction

Social tagging is a component of Web 2.0 technology whose importance and popularity grows every day (Pan et al, 2016). It is a process of organizing electronic content in which users freely assign arbitrary keywords (i.e., tags) to various online resources based on their personal preferences. As such, tags are naturally more familiar to users than the controlled terms, which makes them easier to use amongst wide masses. With tagging users reflects their opinion about some resource (Mezghani et al, 2017). A popular example of Web 2.0 based application that enables social tagging is Instagram, one of the fastest growing social media. It acts as a virtual photo album, and unlike other social media that are more text-based oriented (e.g., Twitter), Instagram relies completely on images. In addition, it has several features that attract users, the most important of which is a hashtag (#), a function that allows users to tag their photos so that other users can easily find them or locate messages connected to specific content. For example, Hashtags on Instagram were used to determine whether a posting was intended to support or oppose either candidate before and during the 2016 US presidential election (Schmidbauer, Roesch & Stieler, 2017). According to Mlinac (2016) the usage of social networks in the manipulative context is more and more expressed in the political communication, thus contributing to polarisation of society. It represents a useful tool for managing perception in order to influence emotions, motivation, thinking and decisions of an interest-based group. Main focus of the research in this poster is usage of hashtags by Croatian public persons and organizations, namely politicians, NGO and distinguished public institutes and associations.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main use of Instagram hashtags is locating a specific content, but other than that, they can be used in various ways and for a number of purposes, examples of which are indication of group membership, self-expression offering an opinion, emphasizing a point and even self-promotion (Heyd, Puschmann, 2016). The purpose of the research presented in this poster is to explore in which way and for what purpose prominent Croatian public persons and organizations use hashtags on their Instagram posts.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the main purposes for which selected Instagram profiles assign hashtags?
2. What type of content stays “hidden” without hashtags?
3. How can collected hashtags be categorized and analyzed?

**Methodology**

The aim of the research is to identify how Croatian public persons and organizations, which have active Instagram profiles, use hashtags on content they publish by using qualitative analysis. In this research, a convenience sample is used. It is an accidental sample made up of public persons and organizations profiles that were independently found on Instagram. The following profiles are selected (words in brackets are their profile names on Instagram):

1. Europska komisija u Hrvatskoj (ekhrvatska)
2. Vlada Republike Hrvatske (wwwvladahr)
3. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović (predsjednicarh)
4. Hrvatsko narodno kazalište u Zagrebu (croatiannationaltheatre)
5. Ruža Tomašić (ruzatomasic)
6. Hrvatski rukometni savez (hrs\_insta)
7. Lisinski Concert Hall (vatroslavlisinski)
8. Zelena akcija (zelenaakcija)
9. Hrvatski nogometni savez (hns\_cff)
10. Udruga Franak (udrugafranak)

These profiles were chosen to show various aspects of civil, political and cultural life in Croatia. Only criteria for selecting the research sample was active and up-to-date Instagram profile.

The tags will be analyzed during the period of one month and only photos with assigned hashtags will be considered. Every hashtag assigned to photos posted within chosen month will be considered, but only those that are connected with the content and that are not general and generic (for example #repost or #people) will be analyzed. Also, analysis will include how many other profiles use the same hashtag. With this, it will be possible to draw conclusions about impact (or lack thereof) that public persons and hashtags they assign have on society, as well as see if specific hashtags are used only by them or also by other users for content that is not in any way related.

Tag analysis will be performed in a way that the hashtags from the photo will be listed in the table and then they will be classified into categories. This analysis will show us which hashtags are most used by the selected profiles, and which category contains most hashtags. The number of hashtags on photos and likes they collected will also be analyzed to see how popular certain Instagram accounts are and how many people pays attention to the content they publish. This kind of information will give us information about the influence of that association/ person on the public.

**Research Results & Discussion**

In the preliminary research, choosing/finding the sample for this study, Croatian public persons are underrepresented on Instagram. It was hard to find those who are active, up-to-date and frequently use hashtags. It is expected to conclude that politicians do not use as many hashtags as other popular profiles, such as sport or cultural organizations, for reasons yet to be established. Also, it is assumed that the main purpose for using hashtags on the majority of selected profiles is self-promotion in the sense of making published content searchable and available internationally.

**Conclusion**

The main conclusion might be that selected public persons know the meaning of hashtags and the way they are used, but don’t pay too much attention to it. Also, it is assumed that hashtags assigned to content don’t have any major impact on society; rather, public persons give more attention to ordinary content description as a way of influencing the public.

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