Instagram Hashtag Strategy

EVINEX

Creating an Instagram hashtag strategy for your brand is crucial.

If you use the right hashtags, your posts will reach more people. Yet, this is not at all an easy task!

Coming up with appropriate hashtags means choosing those you can compete for. They shouldn't be too big nor too small, or they won't give you enough reach. Want to know how to succeed? This Instagram Hashtag Strategy Guide has everything you need to know to grow your Instagram account. I'll focus on the latest actionable tactics so that you can do your best and beat your competitors.

Let's get started!

WHAT IS A HASHTAG

A hashtag consists of the hash symbol # together with words, numbers, or emojis, such as #love or #NoFilter. Hashtags will help you make your Instagram content more discoverable so that you can grow your account by reaching more people.

Hashtags are crucial to organize content about a specific event, a topic, or a theme. Bear in mind you should not use punctuation, spaces, or special characters in your hashtags.

Besides, hashtags are clickable. Thus, if you click on them, you'll be shown all posts tagged with this hashtag. It's key your hashtags are readable and relevant for your post so that they can expand your reach.

WHY INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS ARE SO IMPORTANT

There are many reasons why you should use hashtags on Instagram: they are an opportunity to grow your brand awareness, they will help you to increase engagement and reach, they can add context to your Instagram posts, etc.

But, above all, the main reason why you must use Instagram hashtags is that they will help your target audience to find you. In other words, Instagram hashtags are the best way to get discovered by new audience groups.

This matters since it means not only more followers and engagement for your Instagram account, but it will also help you to get more potential customers for your business.
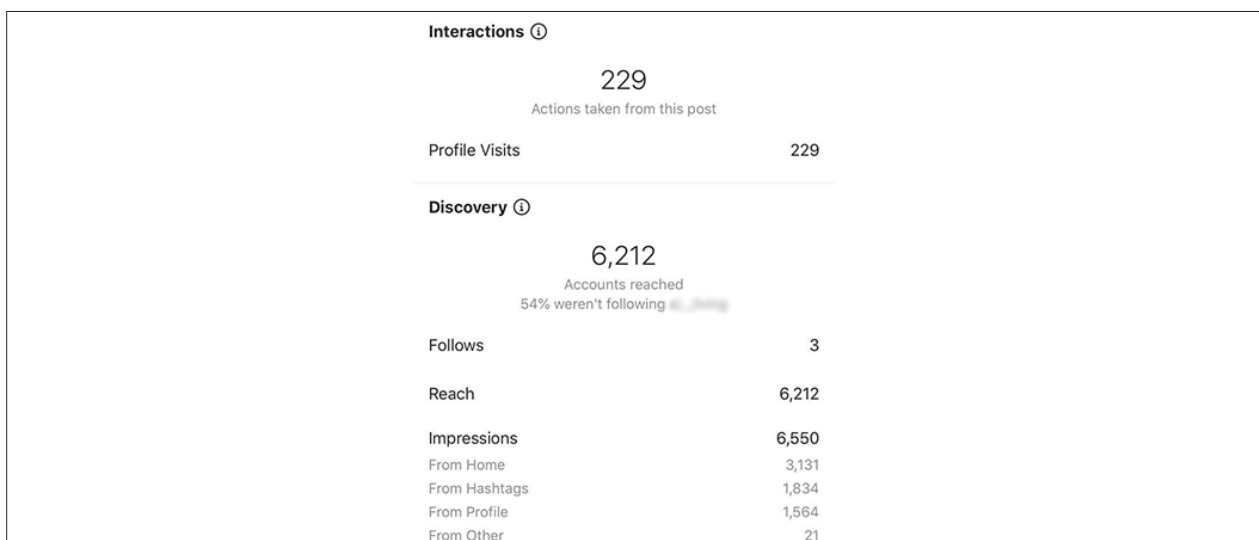
Source: Instagram

Make sure your Instagram account is public, or else your posts won't be visible on the corresponding Instagram hashtag page. The same is true for your stories. If you use a hashtag in your story, the latter might appear on the Instagram hashtag page.

What's more, using hashtags is important since Instagram users can follow particular hashtags. So, even if they may not follow your page yet, they can discover you because of a hashtag.

WHY HASHTAG TOPIC RELEVANCE MATTERS ON INSTAGRAM

Using relevant hashtags in your Instagram posts and stories is more important than ever. Instagram's algorithm favors the use of relevant hashtags. So, you must keep your hashtags as closely aligned to your content as possible.

Besides, as Instagram users can follow hashtags, it's detrimental that your hashtags match the content you post. This way, your content might appear on the feeds of users that follow a particular hashtag that you've used.
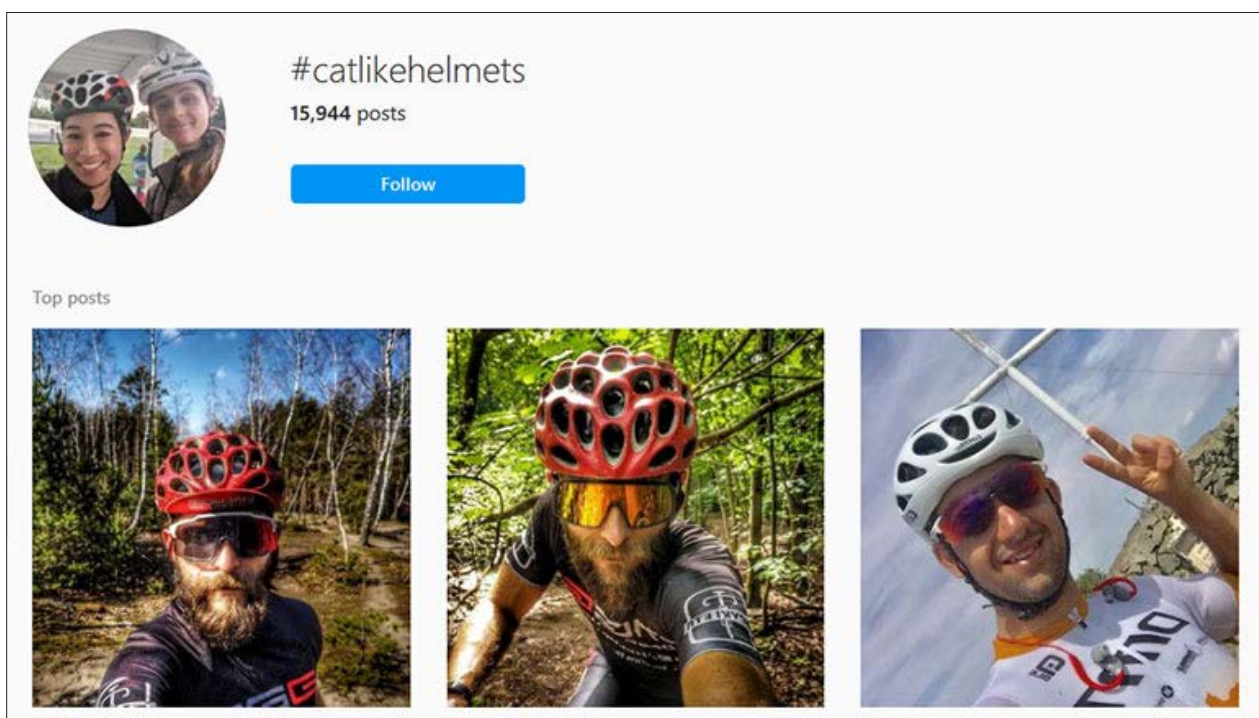

Source: Instagram

Not to mention that Instagram users can mark the option "don't show for this hashtag" if your content is not as exciting and relevant as they expect it to be. If you have too many of your hashtagged posts marked, it can negatively affect your account and your future posts' visibility.

TYPES OF HASHTAGS

There are lots of kinds of hashtags. Understanding them and their matching audiences is critical to establishing an effective hashtag strategy.

Here is a list of hashtag types and their main characteristics:

Branded hashtags.

Source: Instagram

A branded hashtag refers to a tag that you can use to support your business. What's more, branded hashtags are exclusive and unique to each brand. You can use your company name, product name, or campaign name to create your branded hashtag. Branded hashtags are vital to collect user-generated content. It would be wise you follow your branded hashtag and encourage your followers to use it.

Examples of branded hashtags are #weareallbirds by Allbirds, #EsteeWishlist by Estee Lauder, #WeddingPhotMag by Wedding Photo Magazine, etc.

Campaign hashtags.
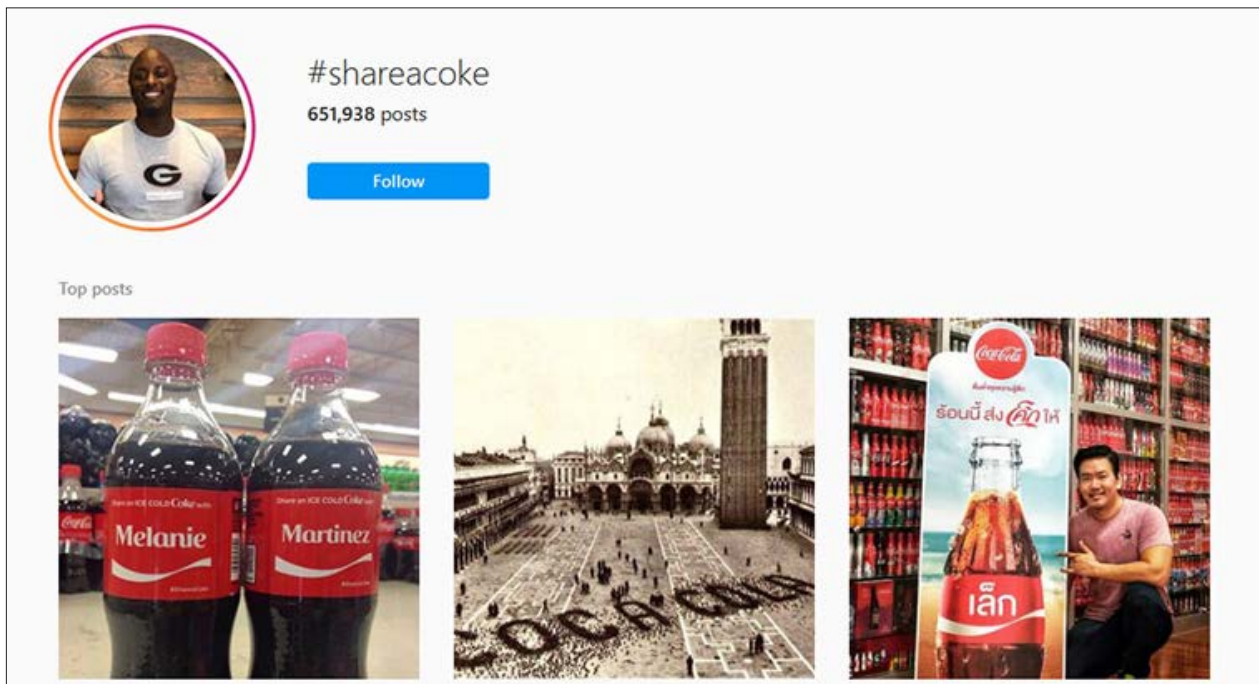
Source: Instagram

A campaign hashtag is a hashtag that only lasts for a short period of time. A campaign hashtag only survives for a couple of days or weeks. Campaign hashtags are linked to product launches; that's why they endure for such a short period of time.

Examples of campaign hashtags are #ShareACoke by Coca-Cola, #WorthSaying by L'Oréal, #LetsDoLunch by Domino's, etc.
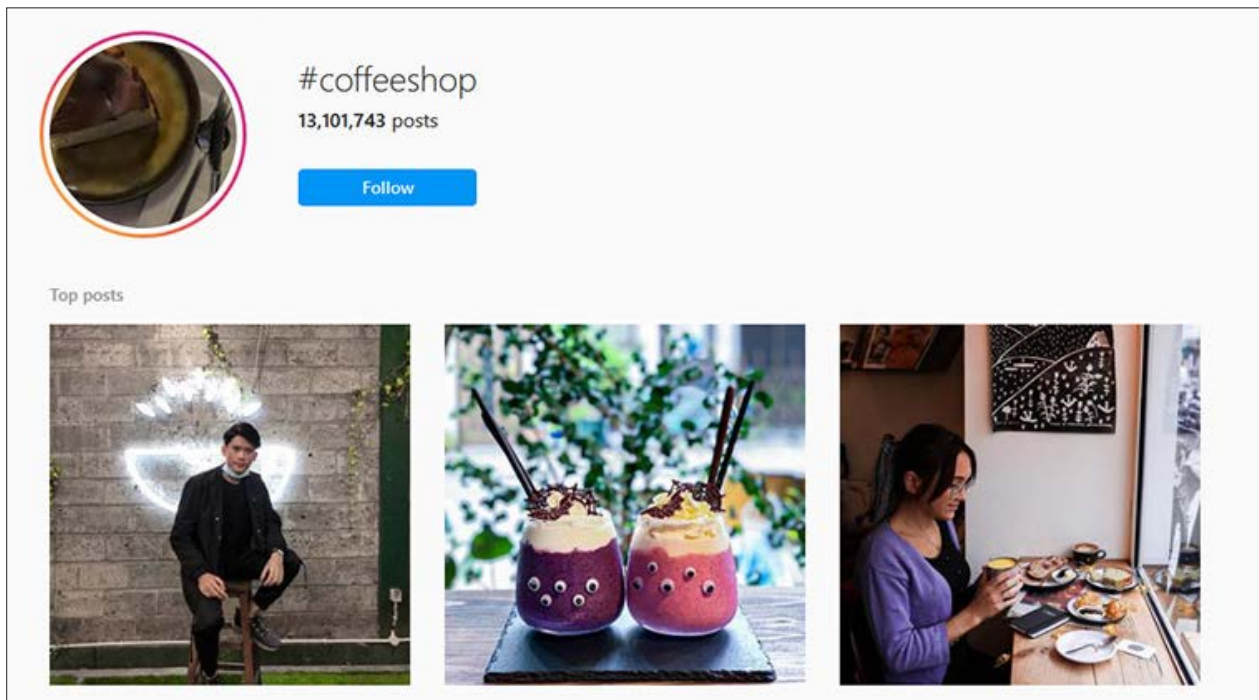
Niche hashtags.
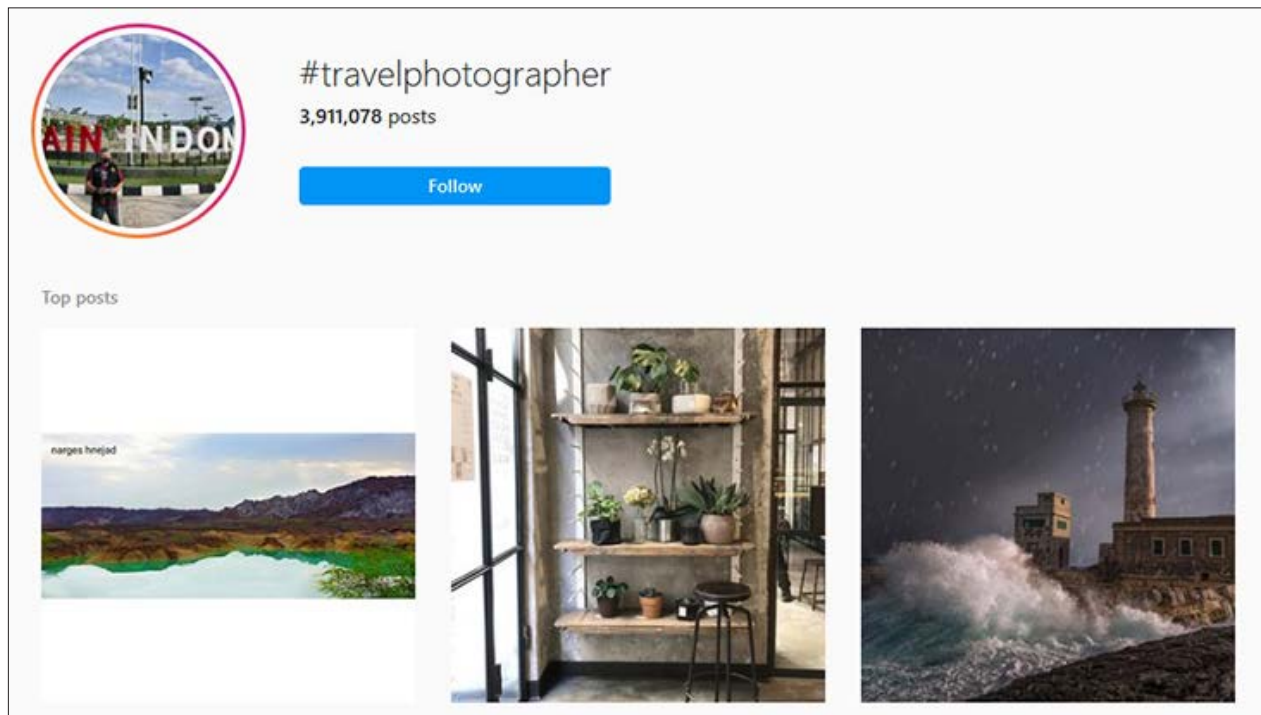
Source: Instagram

A niche hashtag is specific to the target audience you aim at reaching. Not surprisingly, niche hashtags are quite a lot specific. You can use them to tell others what do you do within your industry.

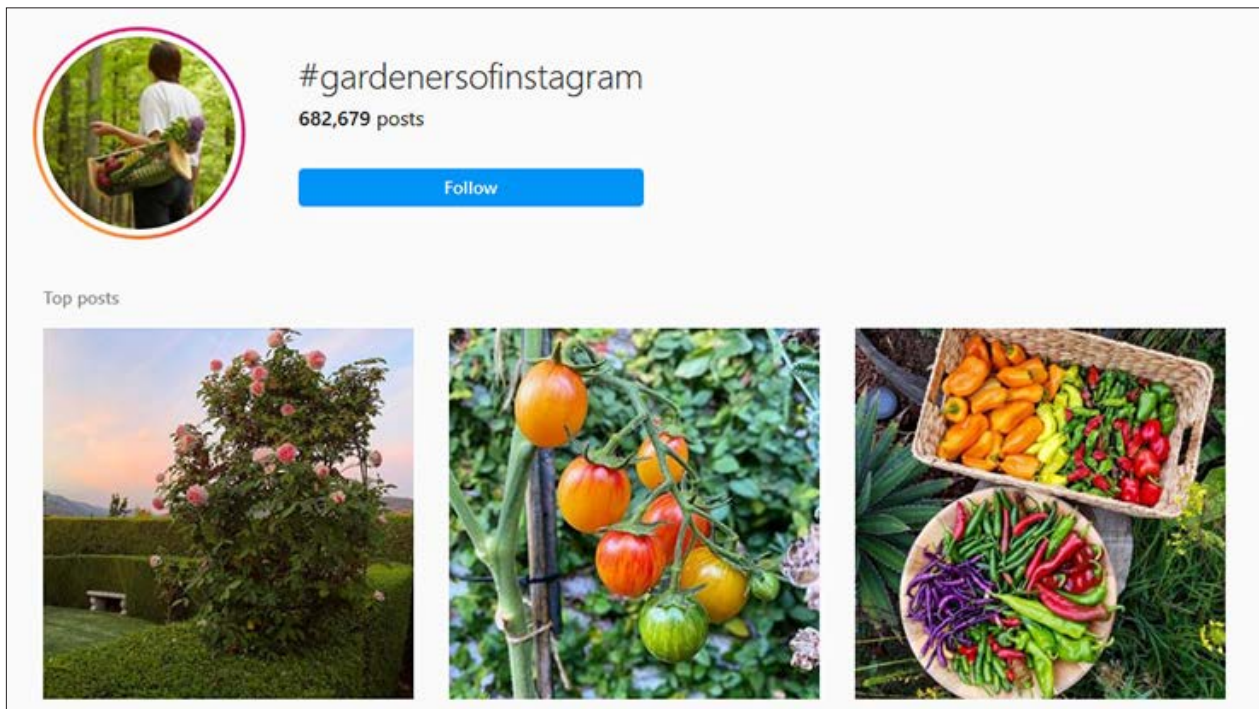Examples of niche hashtags are #foodblogger, #engeneeringlife, #travelphotographer, etc.

Product/service hashtags.

Source: Instagram

A product or service hashtag is used to describe the product or service in question, such as #handbag, #sweater, #coffeeshop, etc.

Community hashtags.

Source: Instagram

A community hashtag refers to a specific hashtag you can use to attract a particular community. Instagram is famous for its communities or tribes. This type of hashtag is used to connect with other Instagramers who are interested in the same topic.

Examples of community hashtags are #gardenersofinstagram, #photographersofinstagram, #bakersofinstagram, etc.

Event/seasonal hashtags.
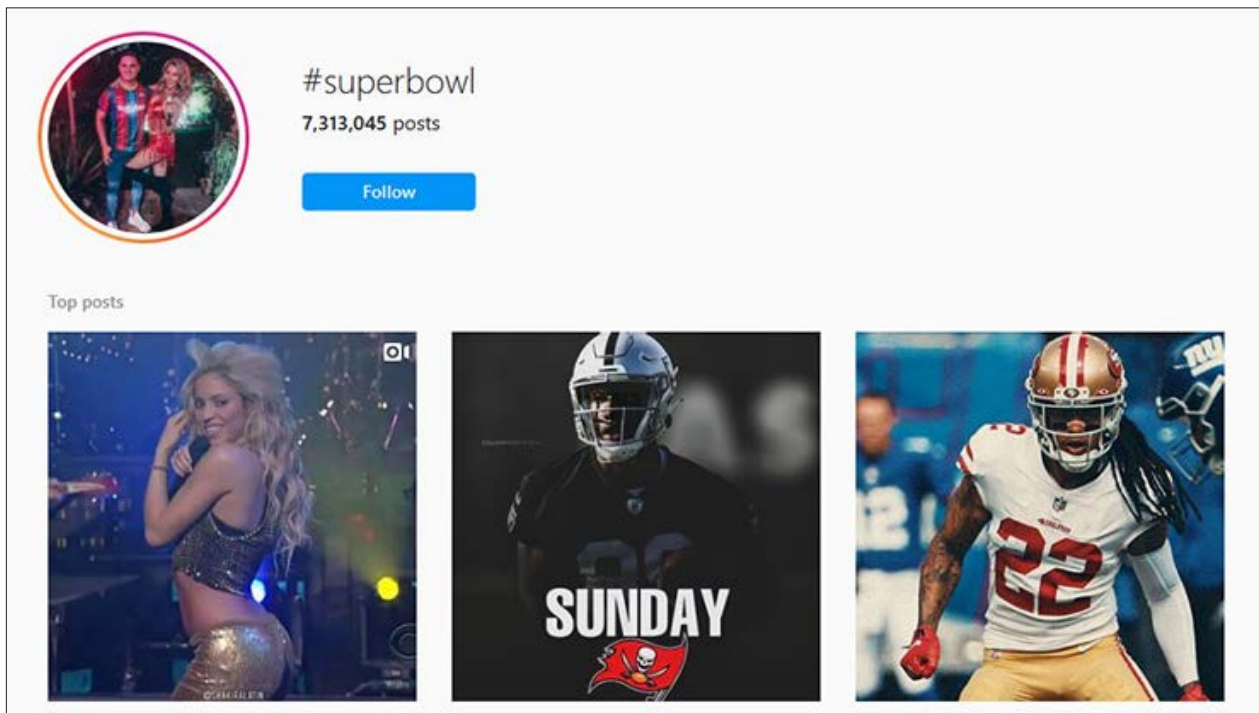
Source: Instagram

An event or seasonal hashtag refers to a hashtag that you only use for a particular event or during a specific season. There are lots of events happening out there. Thus, if you use a hashtag to promote them, you'll get more exposure.

Examples of event or seasonal hashtags are #SuperBowl, #nationalcatday, #nationaldonutday, etc.
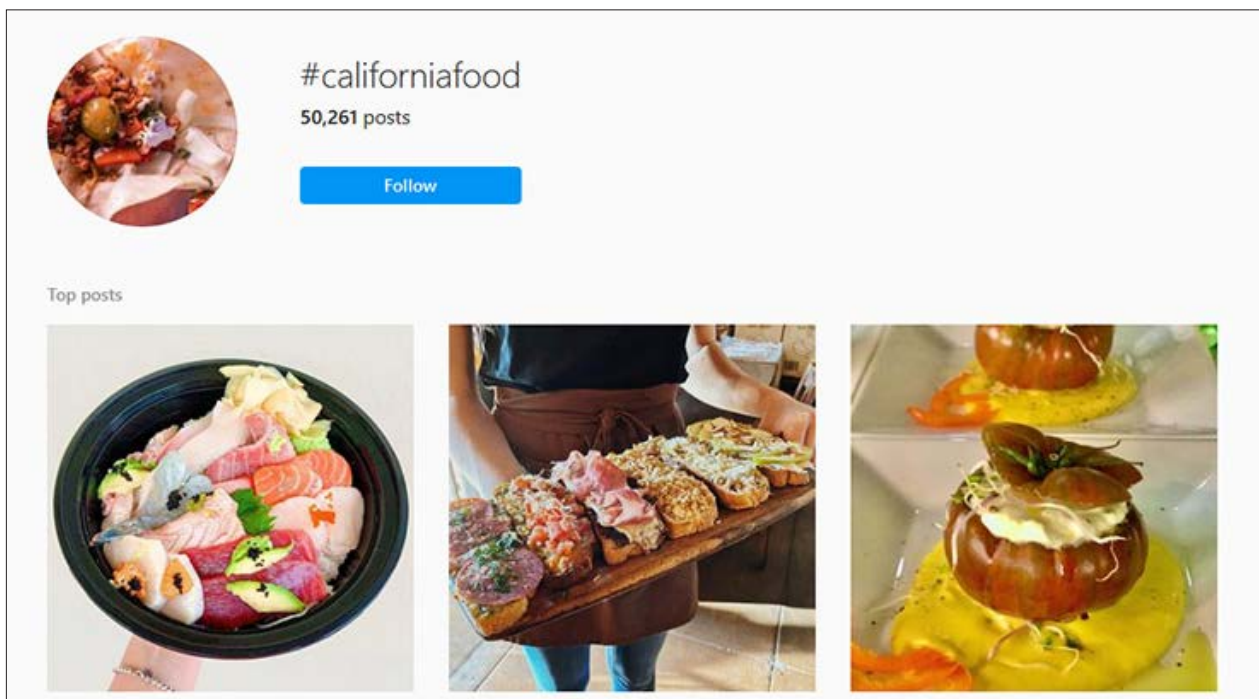
Daily hashtags.
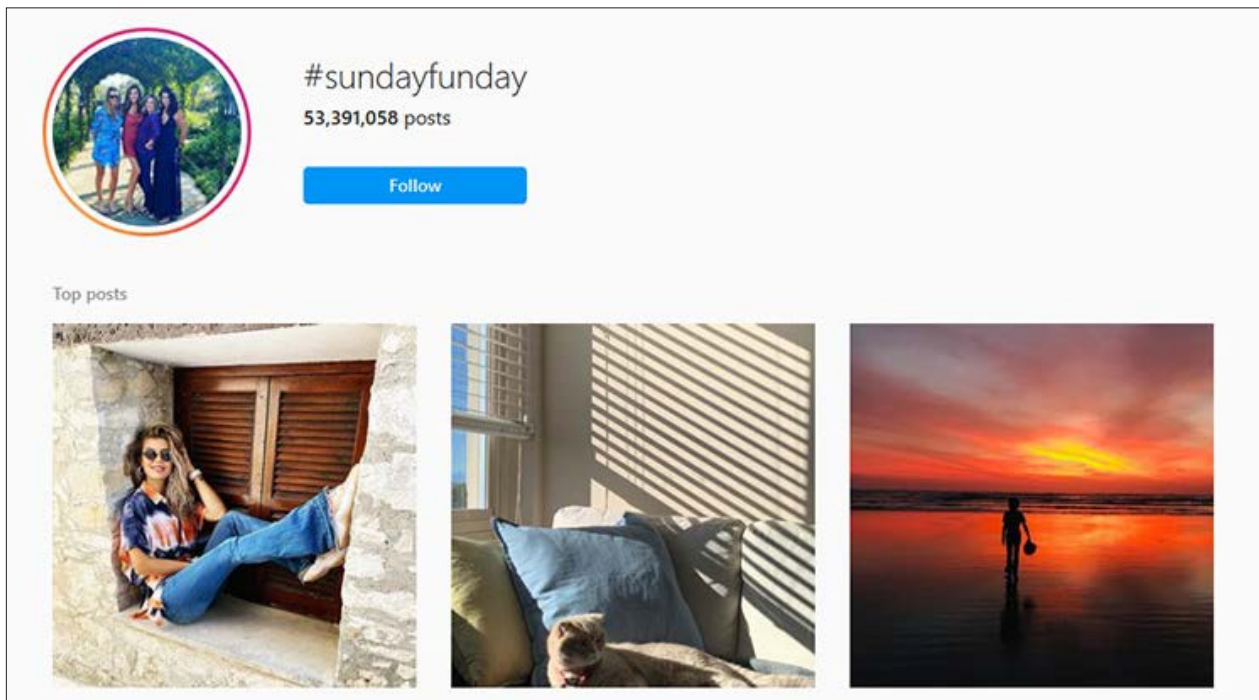
Source: Instagram

A daily hashtag is a hashtag that you can use on a particular day of the week. For instance, #tuesdaytip, #SundayFunday, #MondayBlues, etc.
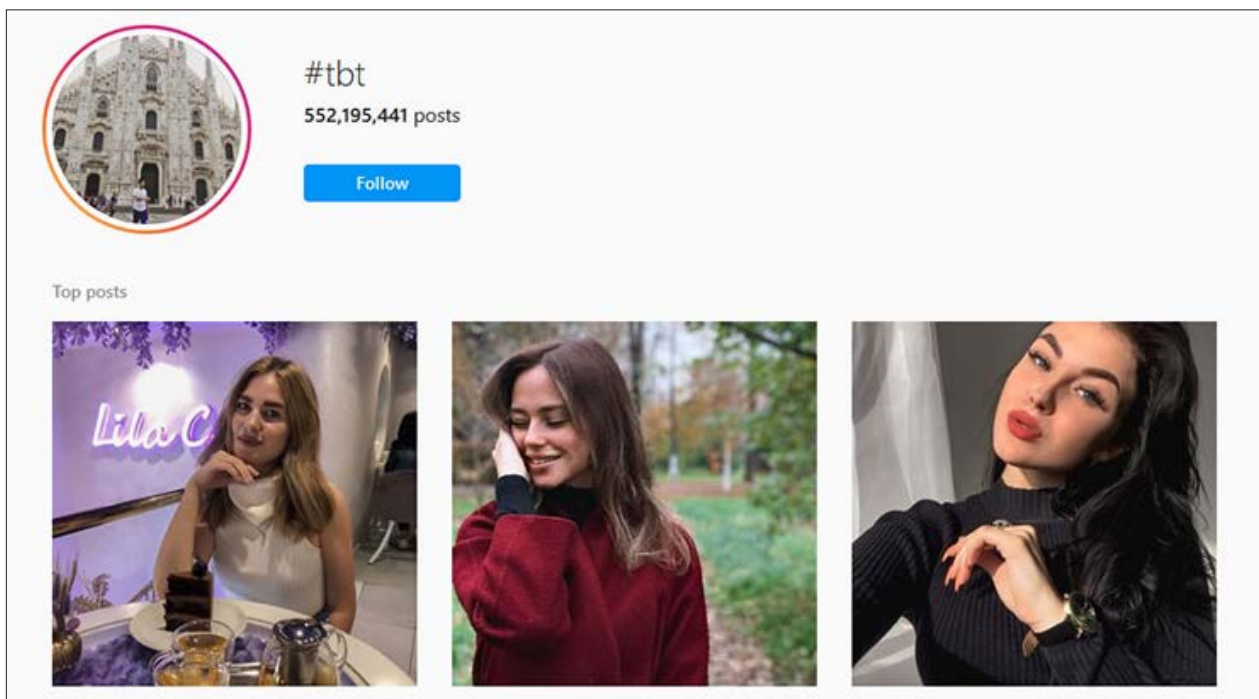
Location hashtags.

Source: Instagram

A location hashtag is the one you use in your stories or posts to refer to your location. For example #californiafood, #londoneats, #newyorkcity, etc.
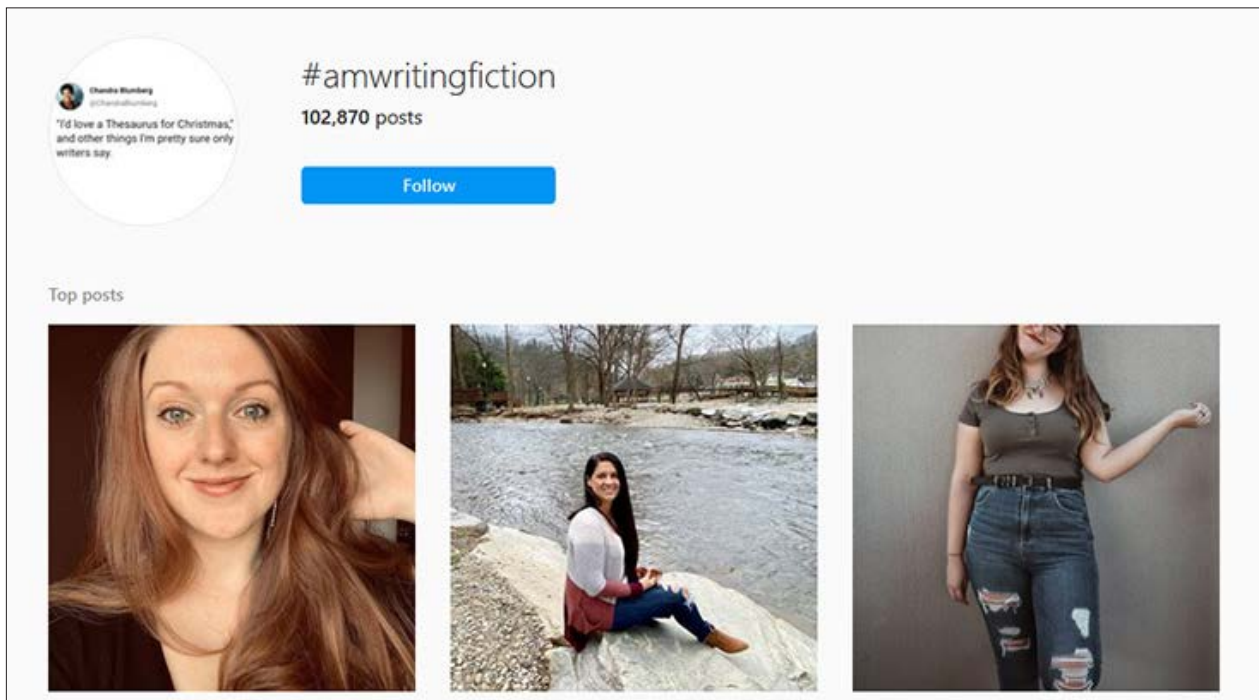
Acronym hashtags.

Source: Instagram

Acronym hashtags are pretty well-known all around the world. There are typical examples such as #TBT (Throwback Thursday), #FBF (Flashback Friday), #ootd (outfit of the day), etc.

Phrase hashtags.

Source: Instagram

Phrase hashtags, as the name suggests, are hashtags that contain a phrase. People use them to connect with more specific Instagram communities. Phrase hashtags might combine a community with a niche or product hashtag or any other phrase you can think of.

Examples of phrase hashtags are #becreative, #shewhowanders, #amwritingfiction, etc.

Emoji hashtags.
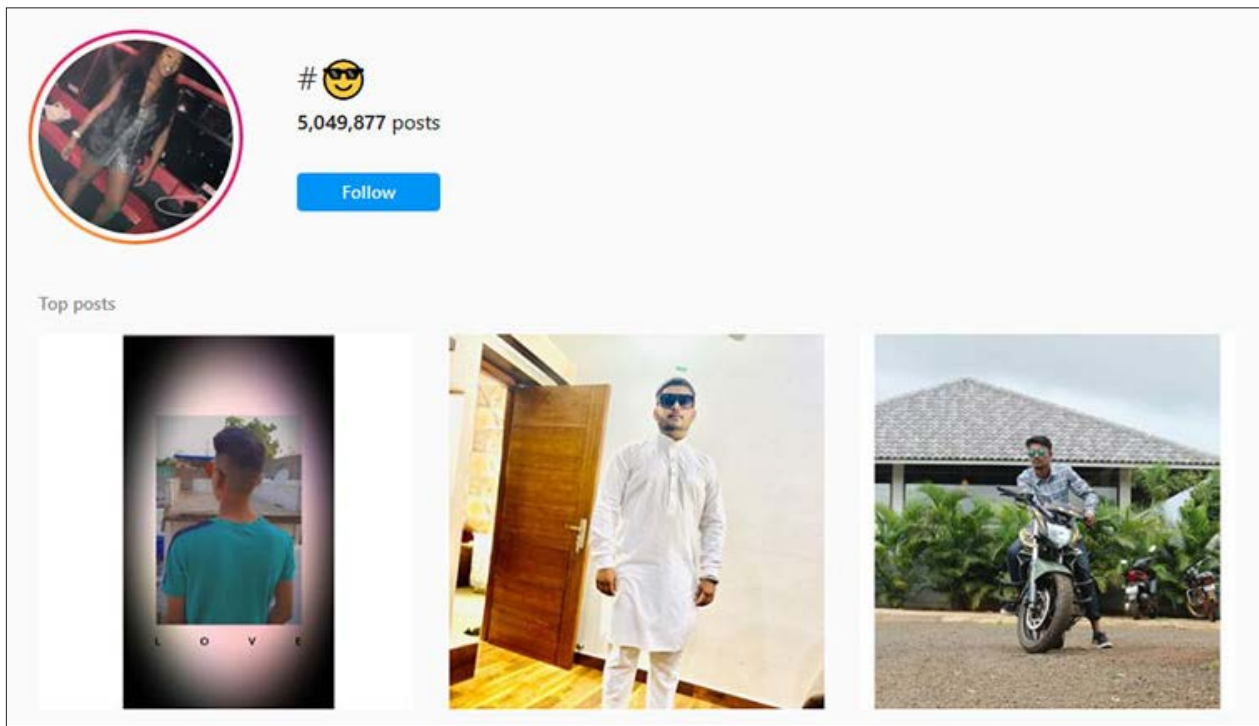
Source: Instagram

Emoji hashtags are hashtags that include emojis like #😋 or #😎, etc.

RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF HASHTAGS

As you may well already know, you are allowed to use up to 30 hashtags in your Instagram posts and up to 10 in your stories. But, should you use them all?

There's no right answer to this question. It depends on your brand and whether you're able or not to find enough hashtags that are a perfect match for your story or post. You may well succeed using a few hashtags, but you can also succeed using lots of hashtags.

So, what should you do? Experimentation is fundamental. Yet, you won't get penalized for including many hashtags, without exceeding the limit, in your posts. And, the more hashtags you use, the more chances you have to reach new audiences and grow your account.

However, you must ensure that the hashtags you use are relevant for your story or post. Don't use hashtags for the sake of using them. Include hashtags because they're the best way to get discovered by Instagram users.

You must use the number of hashtags that is right for your brand and your audience. The amount of followers matters as regards how many hashtags you should use. Some experts say it's better to use the maximum number of hashtags, but others say it's better to keep it simple and use from 5 to 10.

What's more, you don't need to use exactly the same number of hashtags in all your Instagram posts. There would be times when you'll be able to find only a few relevant hashtags, while you may come across with lots of them occasionally.

Instead of obsessing yourself trying to find out the right number of hashtags, you should experiment and check what works best for your brand and the content you post. This will give you an idea of what works best for your audience.

KEEP IN MIND WHAT IS THE BEST TIMING FOR YOU TO POST

The timing of your posts will make it or break it as regards your Instagram posts. Since every brand has a unique audience and your followers may well live in different time zones, you must identify what's your best time to post your content on Instagram.

Posting at optimal times will not only help you to reach more followers, but you'll also get more engagement for your posts. This means that you need to find out your personalized best time to post based on when most of your followers are active on Instagram.

Source: Later.com

Whether you like it or not, Instagram gives priority to new content. Thus, if you want your content to appear on people's feeds, you must post when most of them are using the Instagram app.

There are some best optimal posting times and days to post. According to Later, they are the following:

- Sunday: 7 am, 8 am, and 4 pm EST.
- Monday: 6 am, 10 am, and 10 pm EST.
- Tuesday: 2 am, 4 am, and 9 am EST.
- Wednesday: 7 am, 8 am, and 11 pm EST.
- Thursday: 9 am, 12 pm, and 7 pm EST.
- Friday: 5 am, 1 pm, and 3 pm EST.
- Saturday: 11 am, 7 pm, and 8 pm EST.

Still, this is just a general guideline. If you want to succeed, you must experiment and find your own personalized optimal times. But how?

Here are some essential steps you can follow:

- Test the timing of your posts to find out at what time your posts generate more engagement.
- Check Instagram insights to discover when your followers are online based on their time zone.
- Don't be afraid to experiment with different posting times to determine what works best for you.
- Make sure you post for your most active time zone, in case you have more than one.
- Try not to post during work hours.
- Publish your strong posts during weekdays.
- Take into account the industry you're in to decide when to post.

WHERE TO PLACE HASHTAGS

Whether you should place your Instagram hashtags on your captions or hide them in the first comment is open to debate. There are advocates of both practices who are convinced their option is the best.

What's more, some claim that the best option is to use some hashtags in your caption and some in your post's first comment. How do you know what option is best?

As it happens with the right number of hashtags, where to place them depends on your company and your target audience. The Instagram algorithm will discover your hashtags anyway.
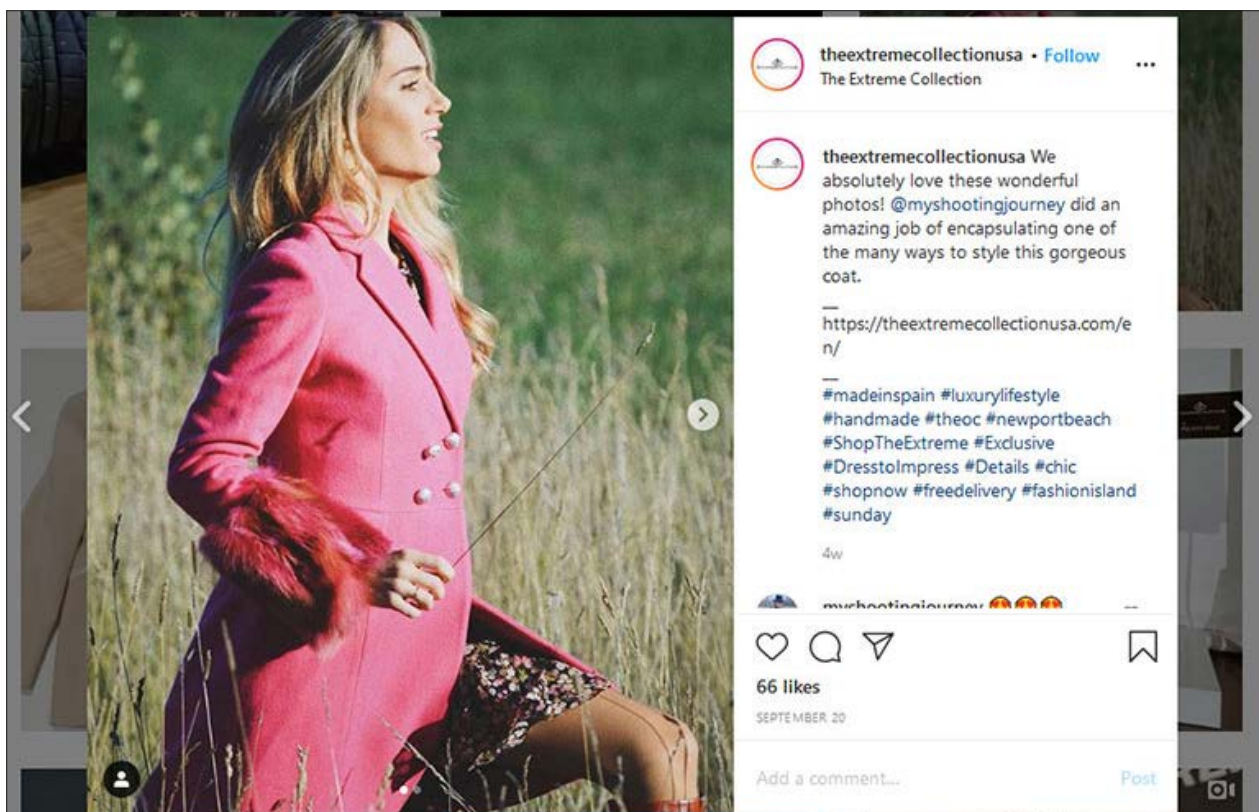
Source: Instagram

There is an interesting recent study by Socialinsider and Quuu that has found that profiles with less than 100,000 followers do better when they place their hashtags on the captions.

However, Instagram business accounts with more than 100,000 followers get better reach rates if they place hashtags on their posts' comments. This study also found that 87% of brands prefer to use hashtags on their captions.

On top of that, you can also use hashtags on your Instagram stories employing a hashtag sticker or using the text tool and the # symbol.

Anyway, you may want to hide hashtags on your Instagram posts and stories. You can easily do so if you write your hashtags in the first comment since, as soon as you get more comments, the first one won't be visible.

Another way to hide hashtags in your captions is to enter a punctuation mark such as a period, a bullet, or a dash at least three times. This way, you'll separate your caption's content from your caption's hashtags.

The last option to hide your hashtags is in your stories. The best way is to make them relatively small and put a sticker or GIF overtop. Another way is to change their color to make them less visible.

HOW TO FIND THE BEST HASHTAGS FOR YOUR INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

Everybody seems to agree that you should use hashtags on Instagram since they're undoubtedly powerful. Hashtags help brands to increase their reach, engagement, and sales. But how do you know what hashtags to use?

Follow the strategy below, and you'll be able to grow your account and beat your competitors:

The first thing you must do is perform hashtags research. Not surprisingly, you must find hashtags that are specific to your page, content, and niche. However, these hashtags will probably be too competitive.

You must be thinking, well, let's choose low competition hashtags as with these, it is easier to rank. But, the truth is that it won't necessarily have to be the case. So, you might end up feeling disappointed too.

Source: Top-Hashtags.com

What you must do is go to your Instagram account and have a look at the engagement velocity of hashtags before you select them. Competition matters, yet engagement velocity matters too.

You must be wondering how can you calculate engagement velocity. It's easier than it seems. You just have to look at the top nine posts for a hashtag and then count how many likes they all received and divide this number by nine.

Then, you do the same with comments. And this will give you the average of the top nine posts. Understanding how to get this number is critical since the engagement velocity will help you determine if you have an opportunity to rank for a specific hashtag or not.

In other words, above the velocity means you have chances to rank for that hashtag. Once you've done this with several hashtags, you'll be able to create lists. It's more than advisable that you document the whole process.
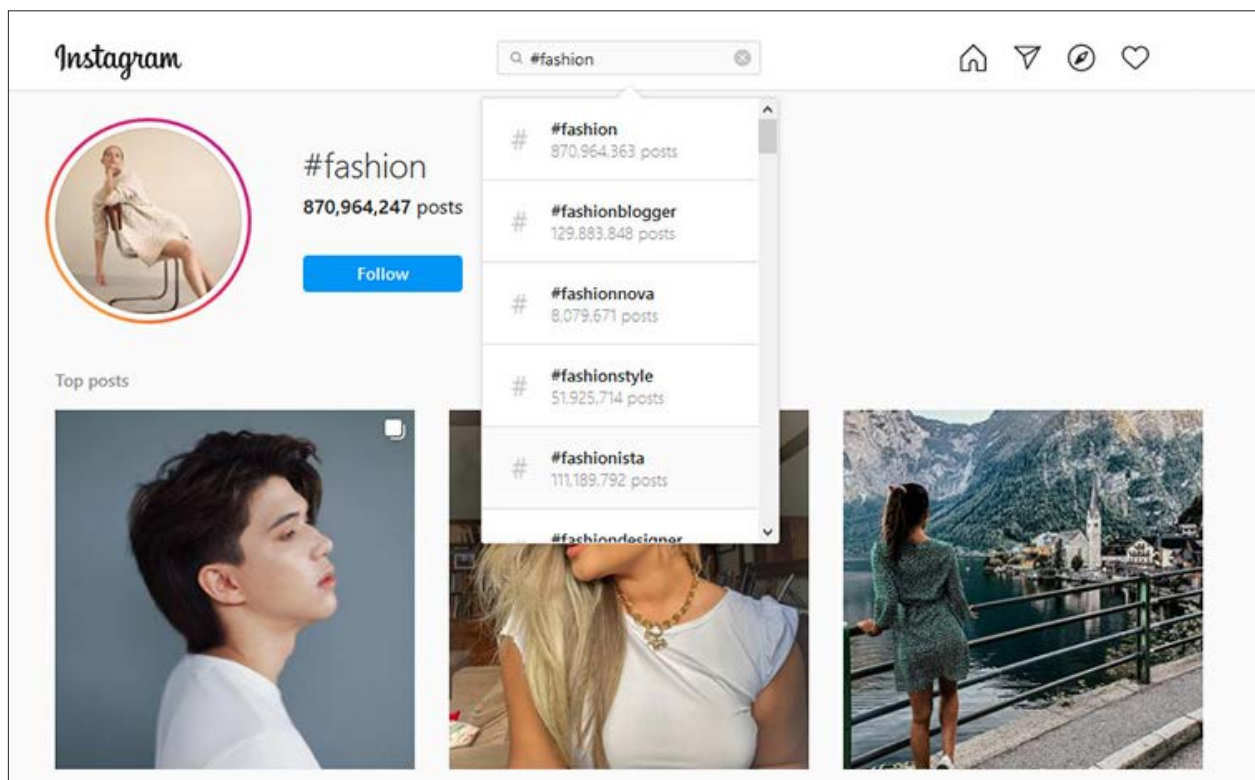
Source: Instagram

A great way to discover hashtags is by checking Instagram's related hashtags. You just have to think of a hashtag that is great for your niche and then look for similar or related hashtags.

Unsurprisingly, then you should do the maths and check the engagement velocity for each related hashtag. Still, there are other aspects you must consider to pick a hashtag. Your hashtags need to be specific to the content of your posts.

Instagram is empowered with some kind of artificial intelligence that lets it know whether your hashtags are related to the image or video they go with. This means that if hashtags do not fit your image/video, they won't rank.

Anyway, as regards competition, you must make sure your hashtags choice is a combination of easy, medium, and challenging, but achievable hashtags. We advise you to pick from five to seven hashtags for each of the categories I mentioned before.

You can use up to 30 hashtags, ten in each category if you are able to come up with so many that are relevant for your post. Yet, sometimes, less is more, and not necessarily using the 30 means you're going to succeed.

49 hashtags stored				Need help? L
Smart		**Cars** ☆		Copy Collection ···
⏱ Recently Ranked	1			
▮▮ Top Performing	9	Hashtag	Competition Score	Potential Reach	DAPC
Favourites		#luxurycars	Q ···		6.4k
No favourites added yet		#fastcar	Q ···		1.1k
All		#sportscars	Q ···		1.8k
📁 Cars	13	#instacars	Q ···		5.4k
📁 Diversity	0	#racecar	Q ···		4.1k
📁 Lifestyle	31	#car	Q ···		33.1k
📁 Previously used	5	#driving	Q ···		1.4k
		#carlife	Q ···		1.3k

Source: Flick.tech

You must experiment as much as possible until you discover what works best for your brand. This will help you to find followers that are keen on your page. And, these followers will help you grow your account organically.

Here are some useful tips:

- Carry out hashtag research (specific to your page, content, niche). You should research your audience, competitors, and industry leaders.
- Analyze hashtag competition and check out your average engagement velocity.
- Look at the top nine posts for each hashtag.
- Choose hashtags according to:
  - The type of content you want to post.
  - Av. number of likes and comments (top 9).
  - Achievable hashtags (similar to your own av. number of likes and comments).
- Create hashtag collections/lists by topic.
- Group your hashtags by low-mid-high difficulty.
- Monitor your best performing hashtags over time.
- As your average number of likes and comments grows, start aiming for more competitive hashtags and update your lists.
- Monitor and test new hashtags:
  - Continuously add new competitive hashtags.
  - Don't completely discard hashtags that you don't rank for as you could start ranking once your av. likes grow.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST HASHTAGS USING FLICK

Flick is an Instagram hashtag research tool that speeds up and simplifies the process of searching for relevant hashtags to use on Instagram. It isn't a free tool, though it offers a free week trial. Unbelievable as it may seem, through testing and experimentation, Flick can make a tremendous difference and help you to grow your Instagram account. It'll help you to increase your reach and boost the number of your followers. What are you waiting for to give it a try?

Follow the steps below:
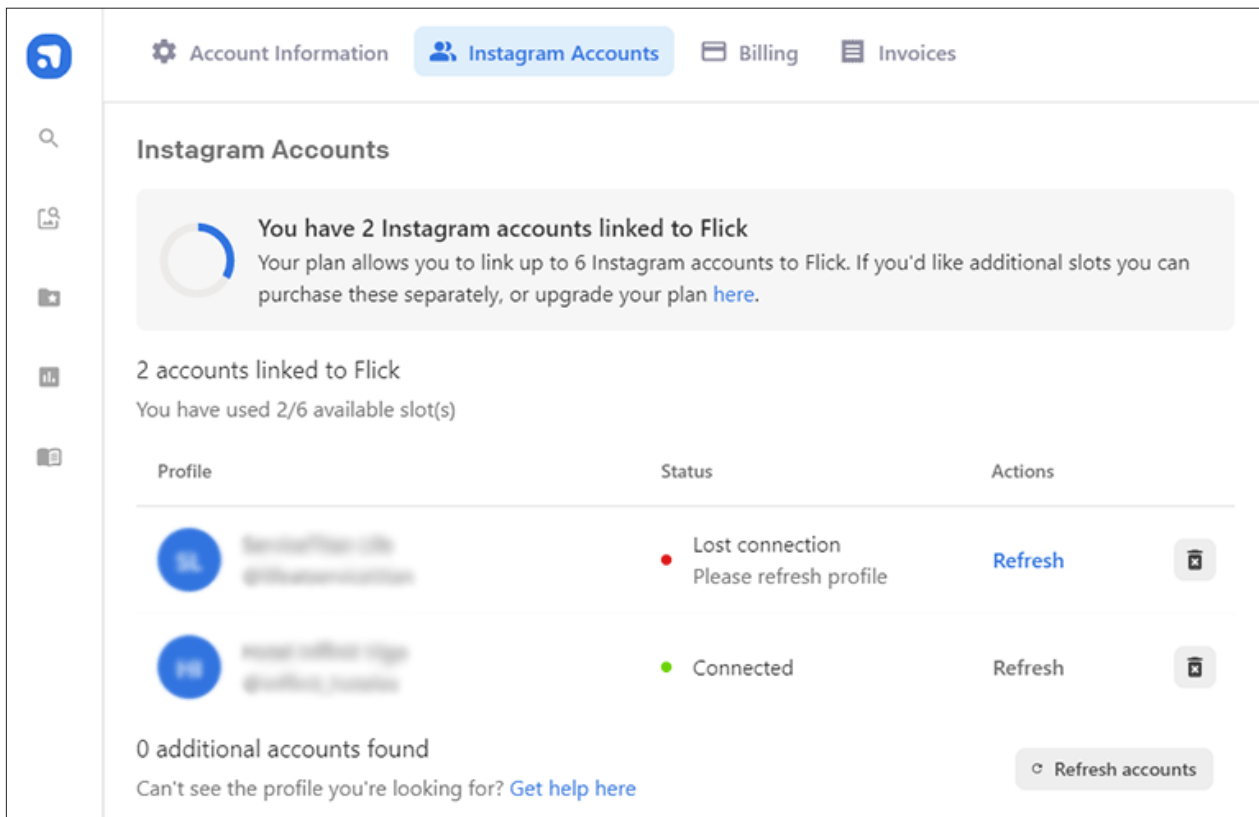
1. Create your Flick account.
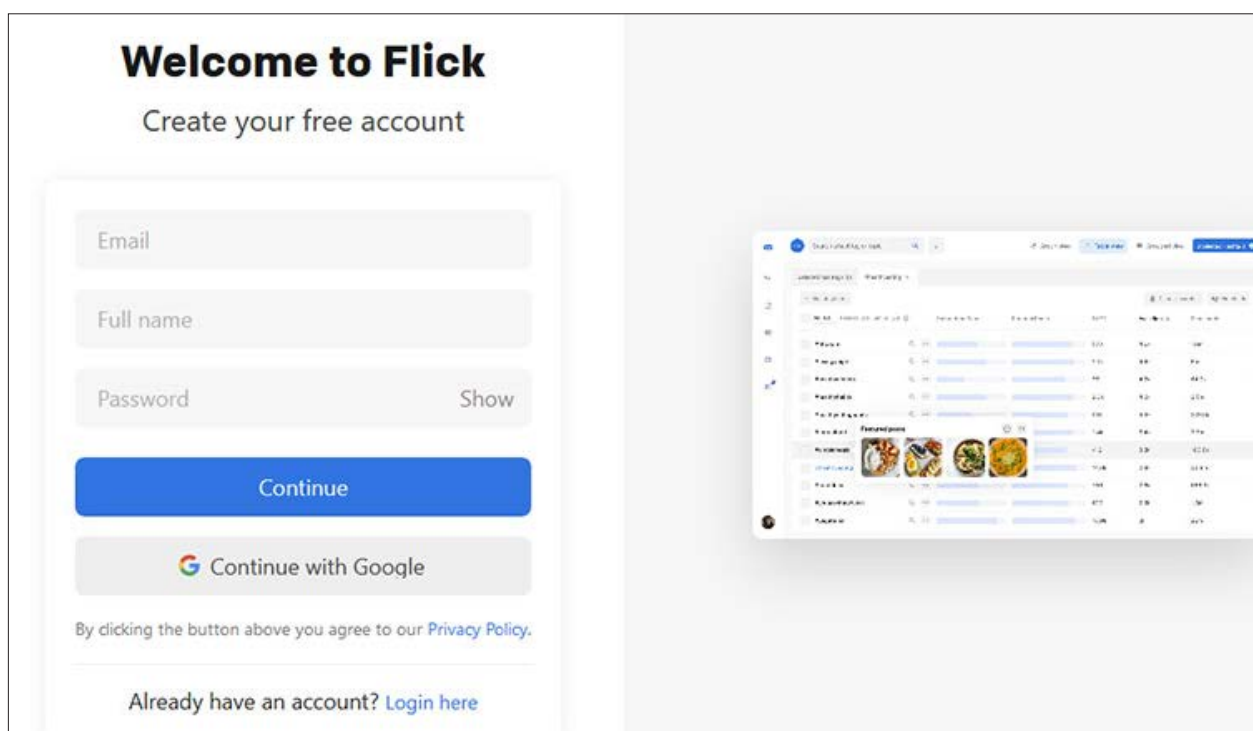
Source: Flick.tech

The first thing you must do is create a Flick account. Since there is a free week trial, you'll have the chance to decide whether you like the app or not before you have to pay for it. However, some features, such as Flick's analytics, may not be available until you upgrade your account.

2. Connect your Instagram profile.

Source: Flick.tech

If you connect your Instagram profile to the dashboard, Flick will be able to suggest filters. Otherwise, you'll have to set them yourself. You can easily do it if you go to account settings. You can link more than one Instagram account if you happen to own more than one.

3. Activate suggested filters or set your hashtag filters.
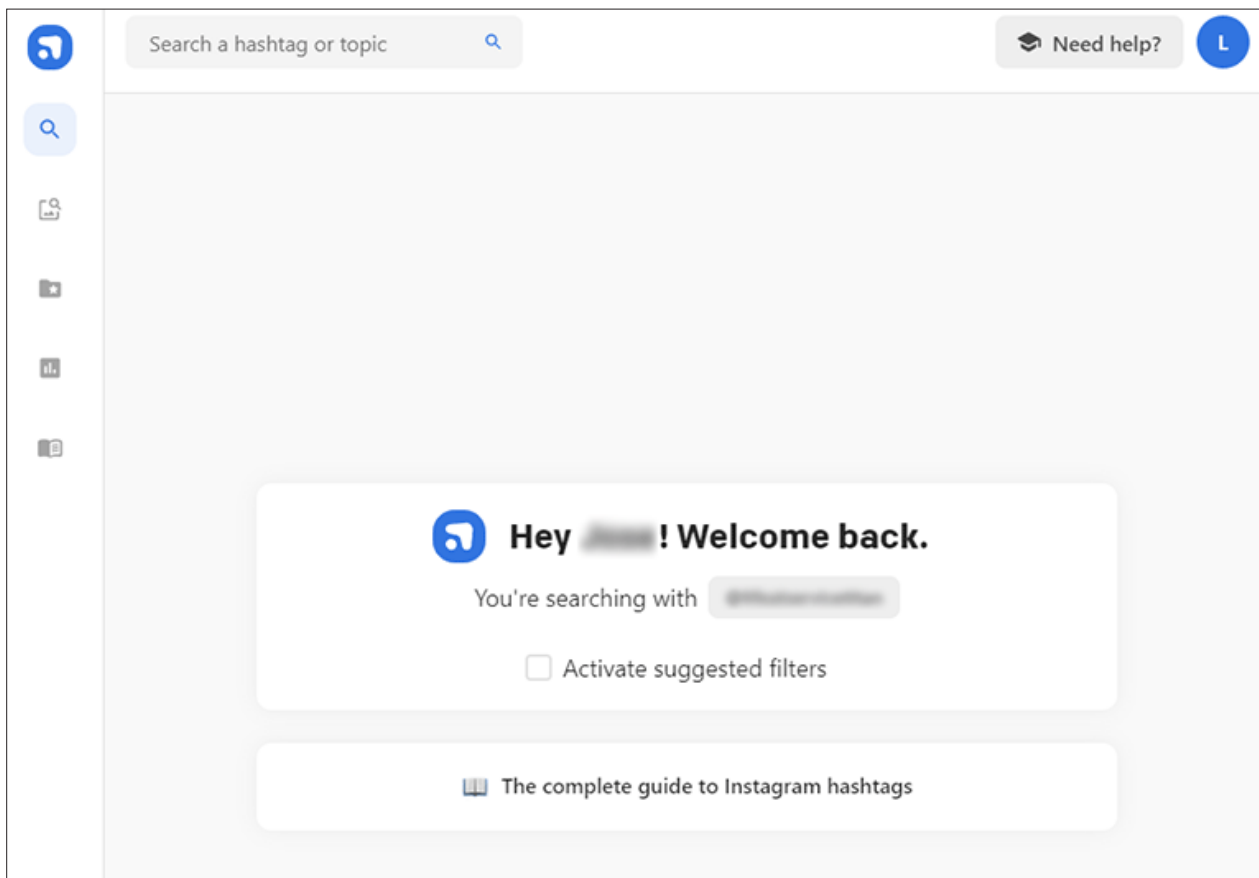
Source: Flick.tech

You can either activate Flick's suggested filters or set them yourself. The second option will help you to look for hashtags that meet specific requirements. Yet, if you make a mistake here, you'll find it hard to come up with relevant hashtags. So, if you're struggling with this, just let Flick do the maths for you.

4. Write a keyword related to your niche, content, or profile.
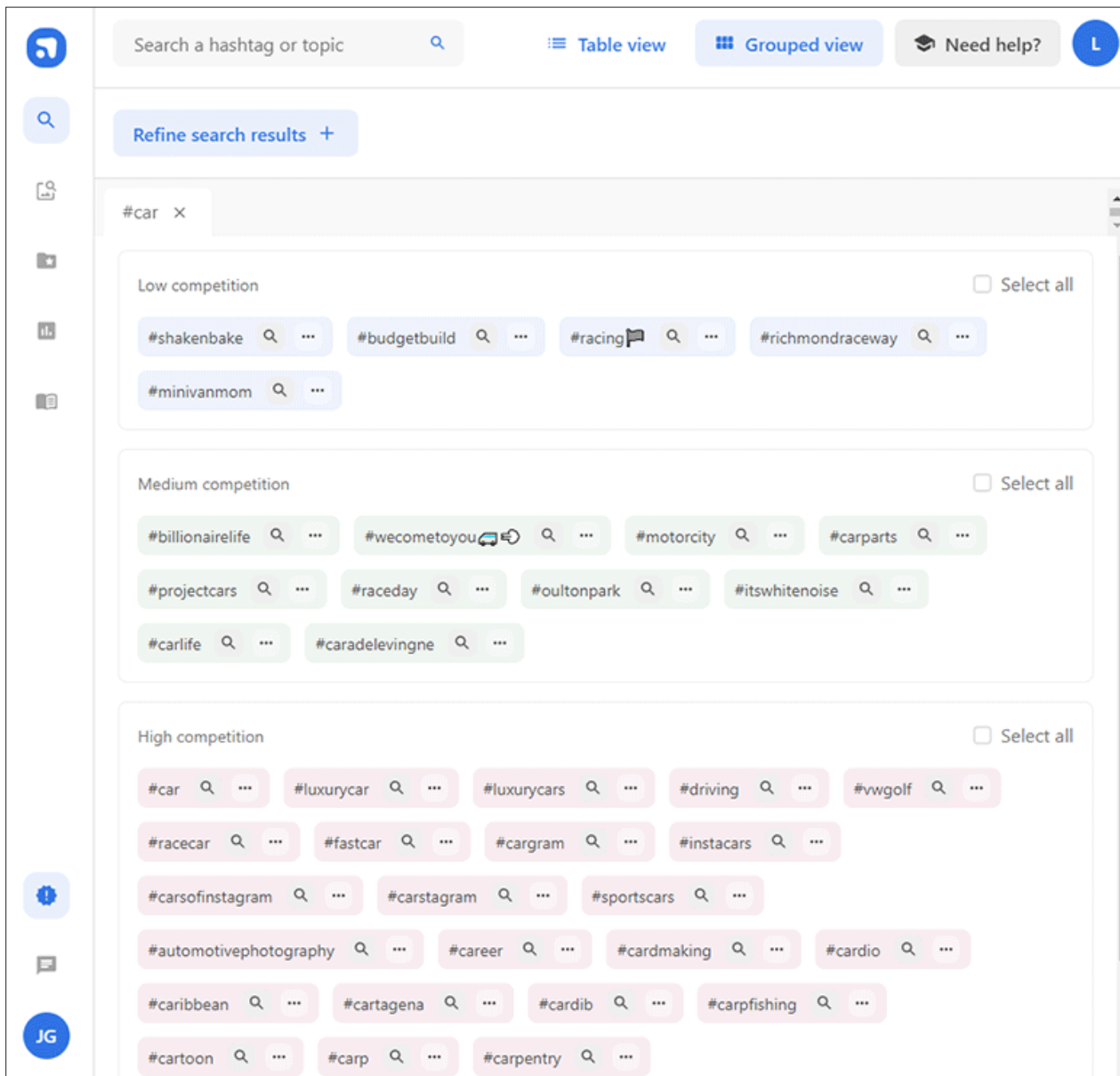
Source: Flick.tech

Now, you're ready to start the search process. Go to the search bar and type a keyword related to your niche, content, or profile. This will allow Flick to provide you with relevant hashtags.

You can either look at the table view or the graph view. If you choose the graph view, limit the number of hashtags so that it doesn't get too messy. Anyway, once you have Flick's hashtag suggestions, you'll be ready to pick hashtags that matter to your Instagram account.

5. Look for 5-7 high competition hashtags.
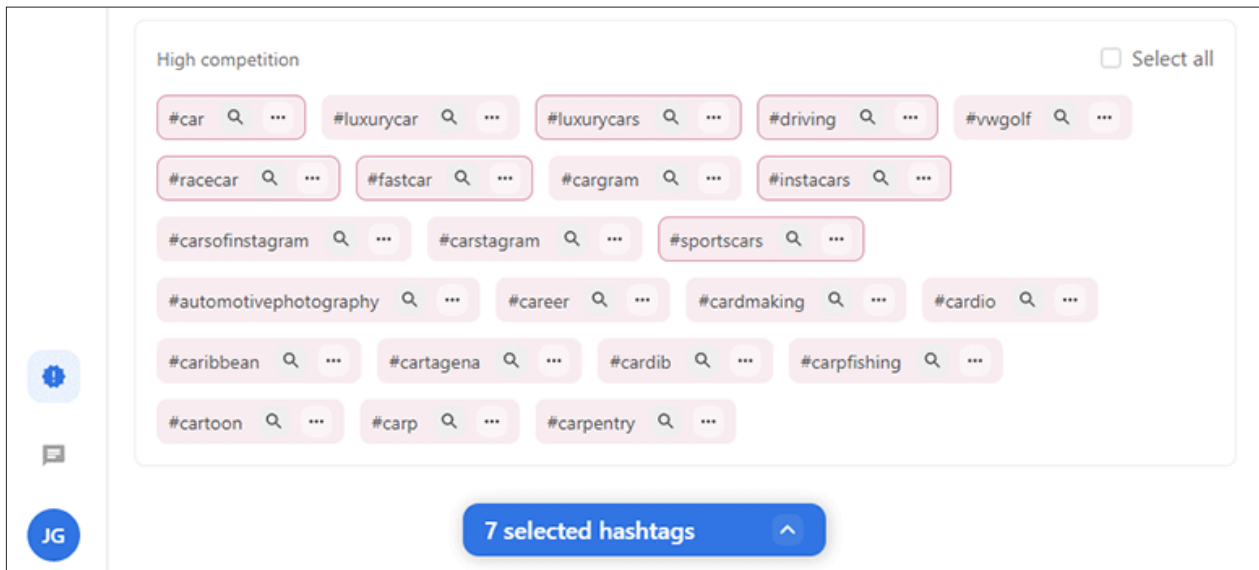
Source: Flick.tech

You'll probably need to go through multiple searches. Once you type your first keyword, it's worth paying attention to the competition score and the engagement velocity. It's easier to pick high competitive hashtags that match your post, but it's more complicated you rank for those.

6. Search for 5-7 medium competition hashtags.
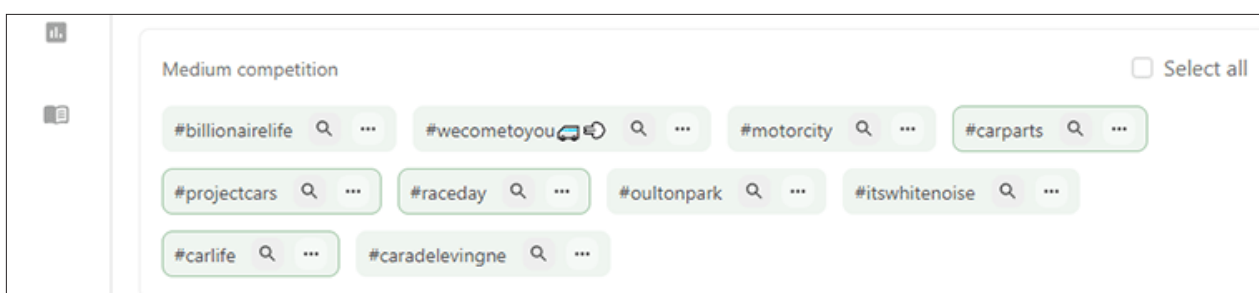
Source: Flick.tech

Once you have selected some high competition hashtags, you must try to find medium competition ones. You might need to change filters to find them. In other words, if you're having problems getting medium and low competition hashtags, check your filters.

7. Hunt for 5-7 low competition hashtags.
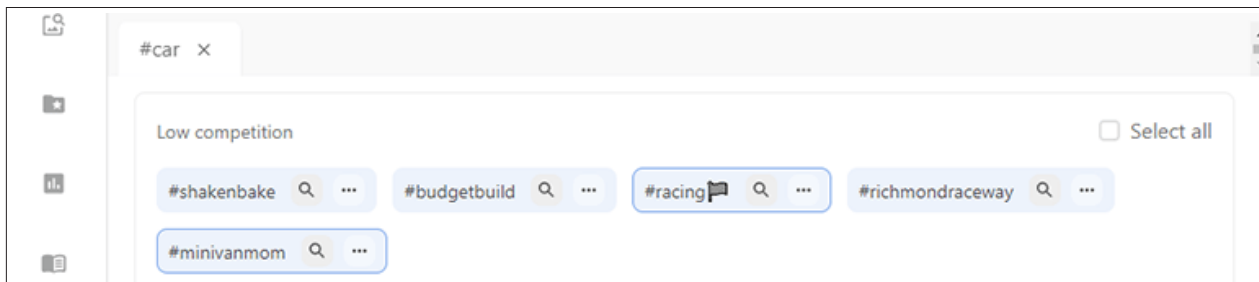
Source: Flick.tech

These hashtags are the ones you're quite sure you have chances to rank for on Instagram. Try to get a bunch of them. The hashtag research process works through phases.

You need low competition hashtags that you think you are going to rank for. Then, you need medium hashtags, you'll probably rank for. And finally, you need to add high competition hashtags, which, if everything goes well, you'll have chances to rank for.

8. Add a few super competitive hashtags.
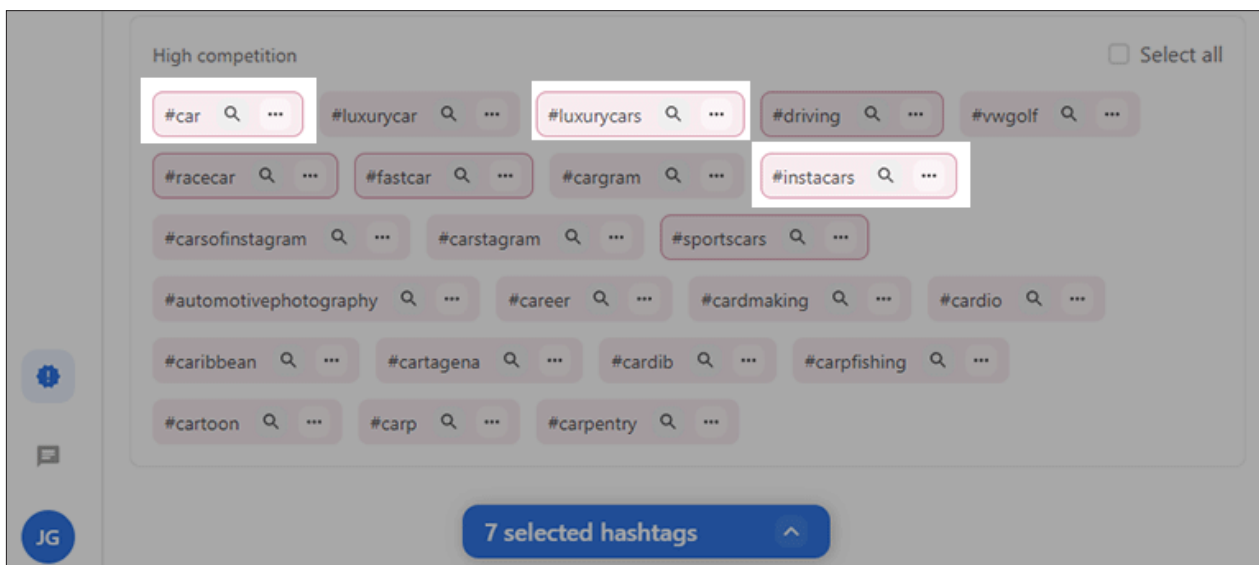
Source: Flick.tech

On top of that, you can add a couple more hashtags to your list that are super competitive. Who knows, you might have the opportunity to rank for those challenging ones too.

9. Save several hashtag collections.

Source: Flick.tech

Not surprisingly, hashtags research needs experimentation to see what works best for your account. Yet, you must save your hashtag collections to use them later. You can have as many collections as you need. You should create at least one for each content type you generally post on Instagram.
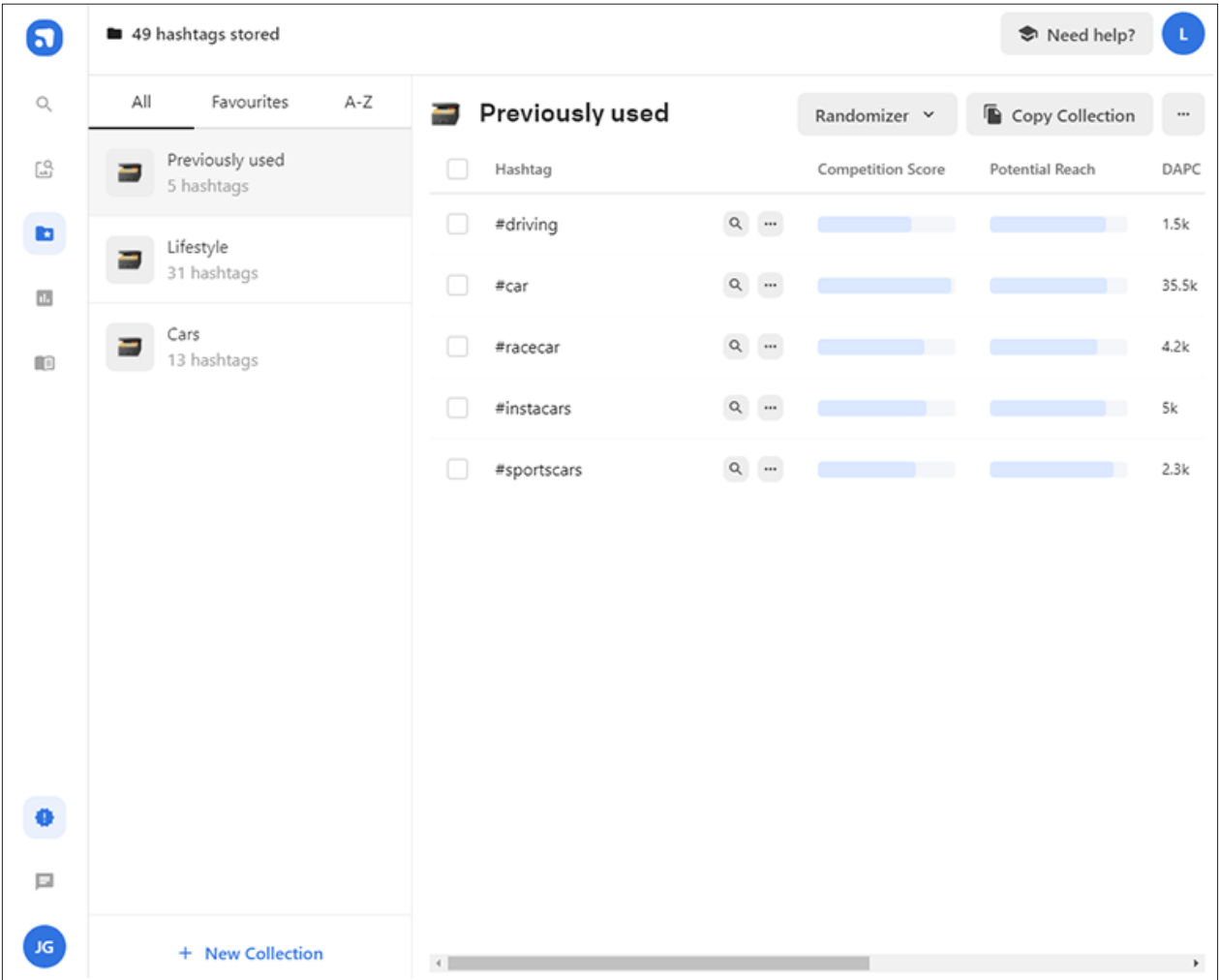
10. Check Flick's analytics.

Source: Flick.tech
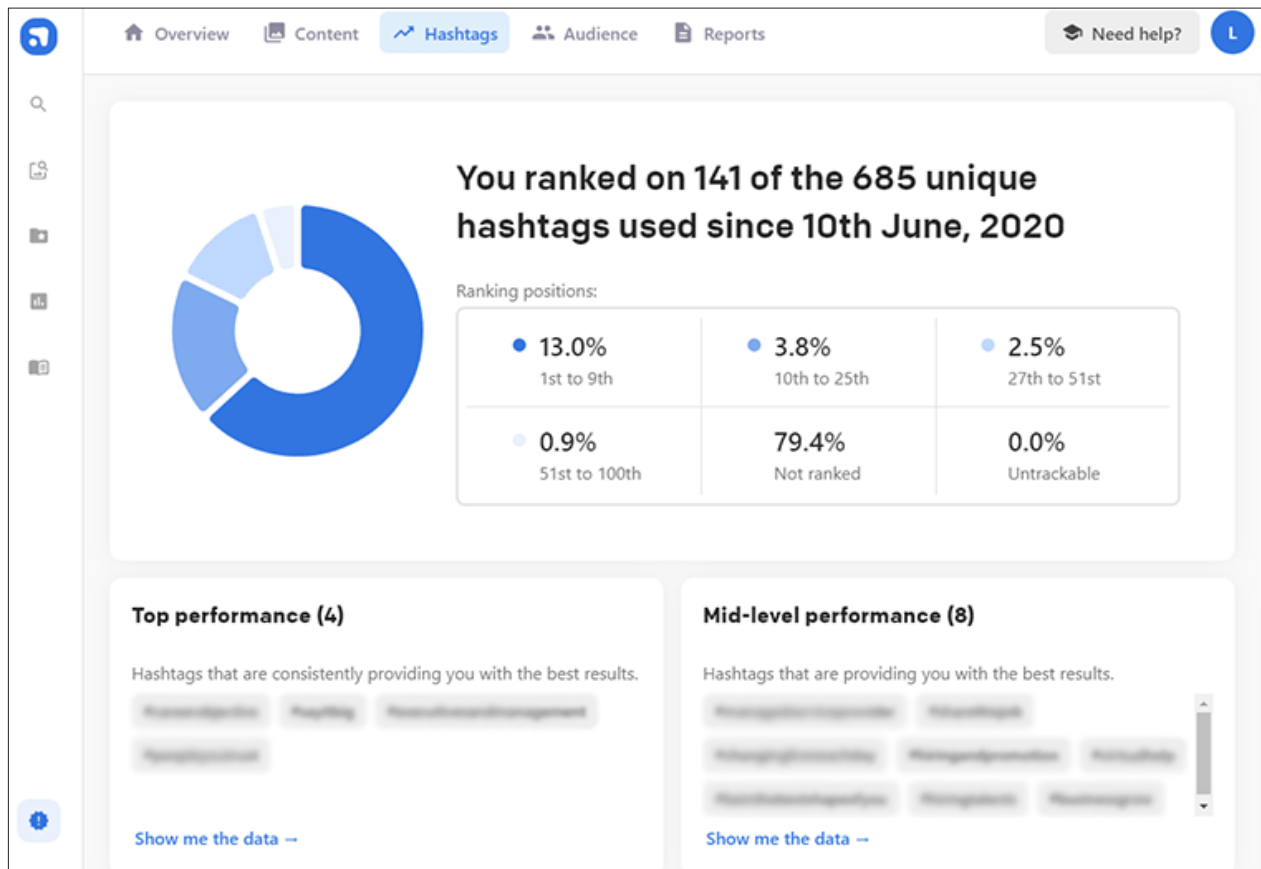
Flick's analytics can provide you lots of useful information. You can see which hashtags did you rank for and which ones you didn't. So, it is advantageous to test your performance. What's more, you can even create collections with those hashtags that work well.

11. Generate a collection with previously used hashtags.

Source: Flick.tech

You must save hashtags that performed well on Instagram. You don't need to use them all in your next posts. You can create a list and segment them for future usage.
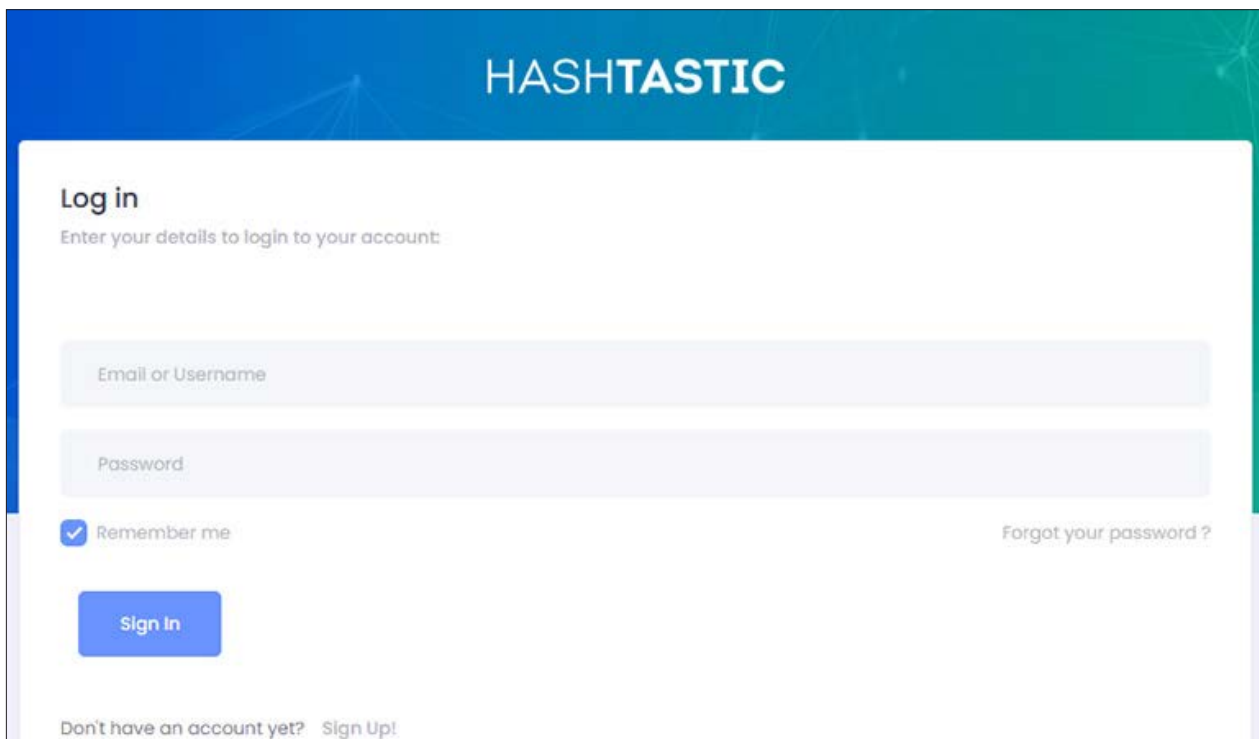
HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST HASHTAGS USING HASHTASTIC

Hashtastic is another hashtag research tool that we also recommend. It is not free either. It works as a powerful hashtag scanner that can help you create a better hashtag strategy so that your content gets seen by a wider audience.

It offers advanced posts insights to test which of your Instagram hashtags are working. It's got analytics to monitor the performance of your hashtags. And it also provides hashtag recommendations.

Follow the steps below to make the most out of Hashtastic:

1. Sign in.

Source: Hashtastic.eu

The first step is to sing in. You can either use the mobile or desktop version. Once you're in the app, you'll be able to choose from a bunch of different options, which I'll explain next.

2. Scan competitive pages.
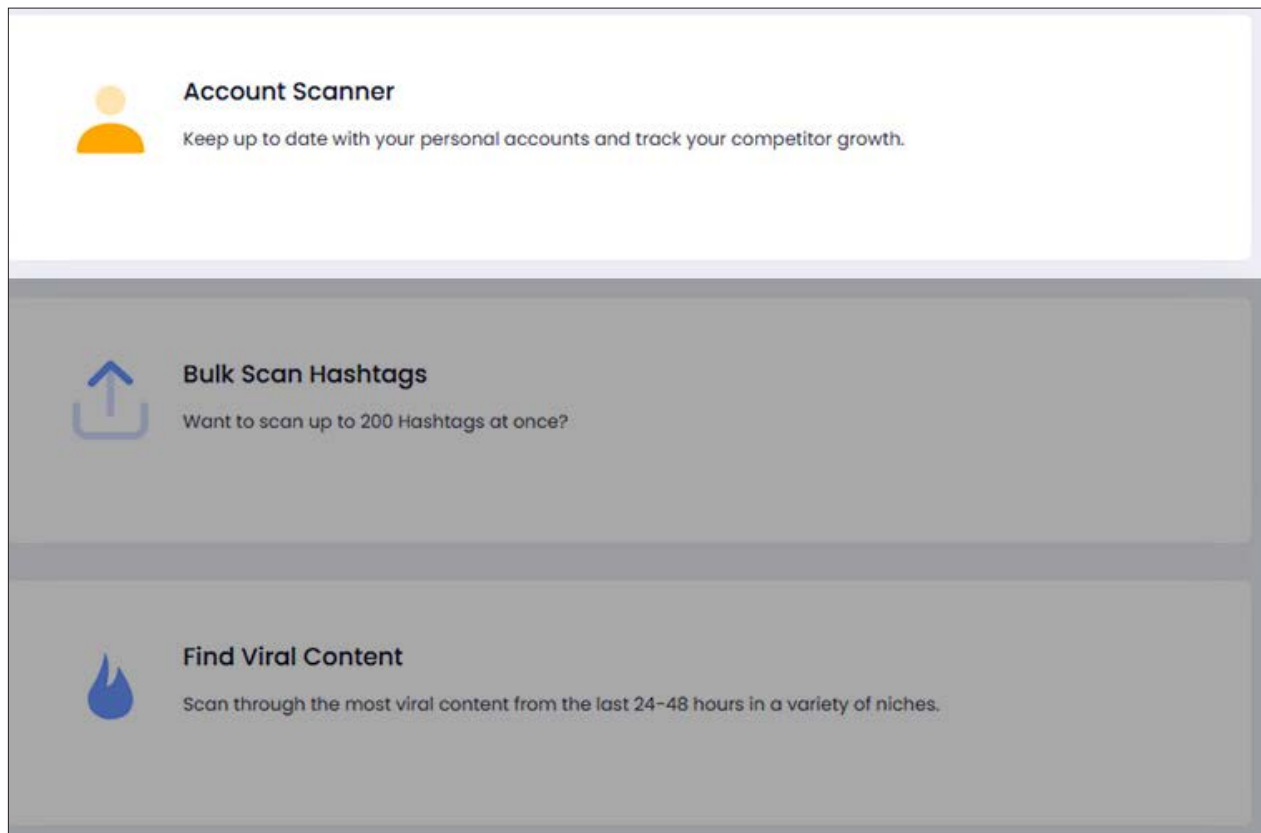
Source: Hashtastic.eu

Hashtastic helps you to scan competitive pages to see what hashtags they use as well as their growth. Not surprisingly, this option is worth checking to see what works for other Instagram pages and beat them.
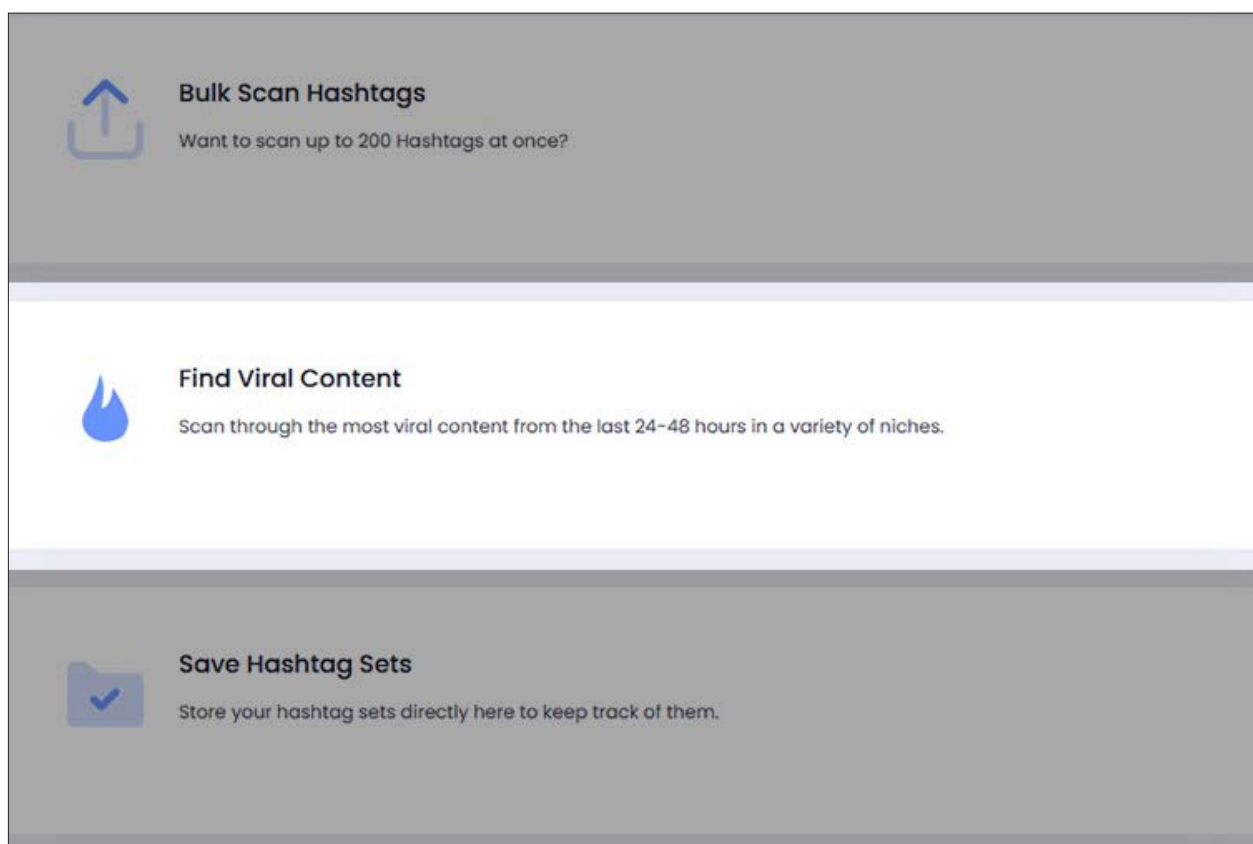
3. Find hashtags.

Source: Hashtastic.eu

This option allows users to write a maximum of three hashtags related to your niche each time you conduct a search. You can also write the number of average likes you have per post.

The last thing you must do before carrying out your hashtags research is to select the search mode. You have several options to choose from, though the best option and most widely recommended is the "total post ladder."

Once you get your list, you must focus on the average number of likes of the top nine to add hashtags to your list together with competitiveness. If a hashtag is too much competitive, Hashtastic will highlight it in red.

You can even analyze each hashtag in depth. However, it's unnecessary since this tool is designed to do all the hard work for you. It offers you a list of recommended hashtags based on your average likes.
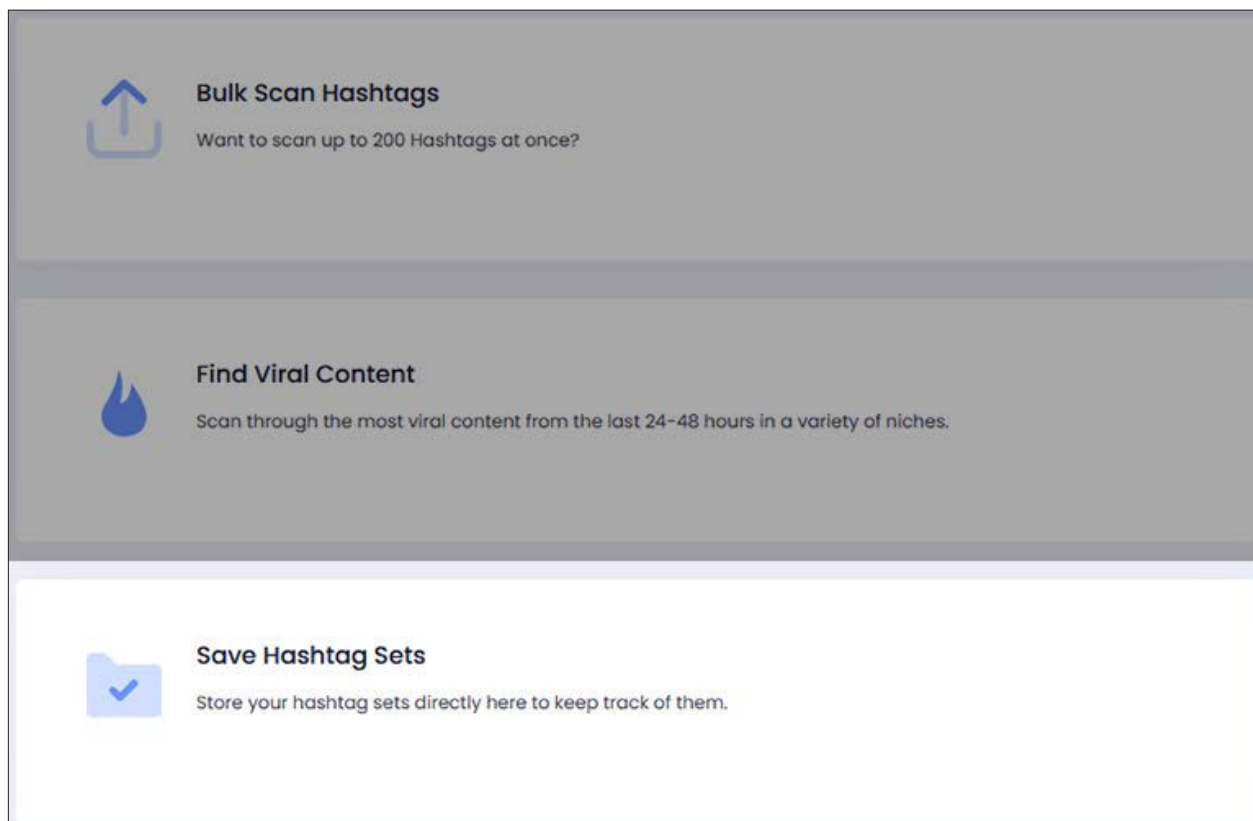
4. Find viral content.

Source: Hashtastic.eu

Hastashtic is perfect for getting ideas based on your niche and checking what's trendy at the moment. It's got an option called "find viral content" that might help you get ideas as to how to write captions, what images and hashtags to use, etc. You can even download, copy, and paste data if you find it useful.

5. Manage hashtags.

Source: Hashtastic.eu

Finally, you must know how to manage your hashtags. Once you've done your hashtag research, you can create hashtag lists. This means you can group all your saved hashtags into different groups for future usage.

Besides, Hashtastic allows you to click and copy, analyze, or shuffle them so that they show up differently.

CAUTION:

Given the fact that Instagram uses artificial intelligence to scan your posts, all your efforts would be for nothing if you were to repeat exactly the same hashtags all the time. Likewise, you must ensure you're not employing banned hashtags.

As you may well already know any of these practices can be at the cost of your account's success. This means that your hashtags choice can't be at random, but you should take your time to decide what hashtags you're going to use in each post.

Avoid repeating the same hashtags.

You shouldn't be using the same bulk of hashtags in all your Instagram posts. Apart from being repetitive and making it difficult for you to reach new audience groups, posting the same hashtags can make your posts look spammy.
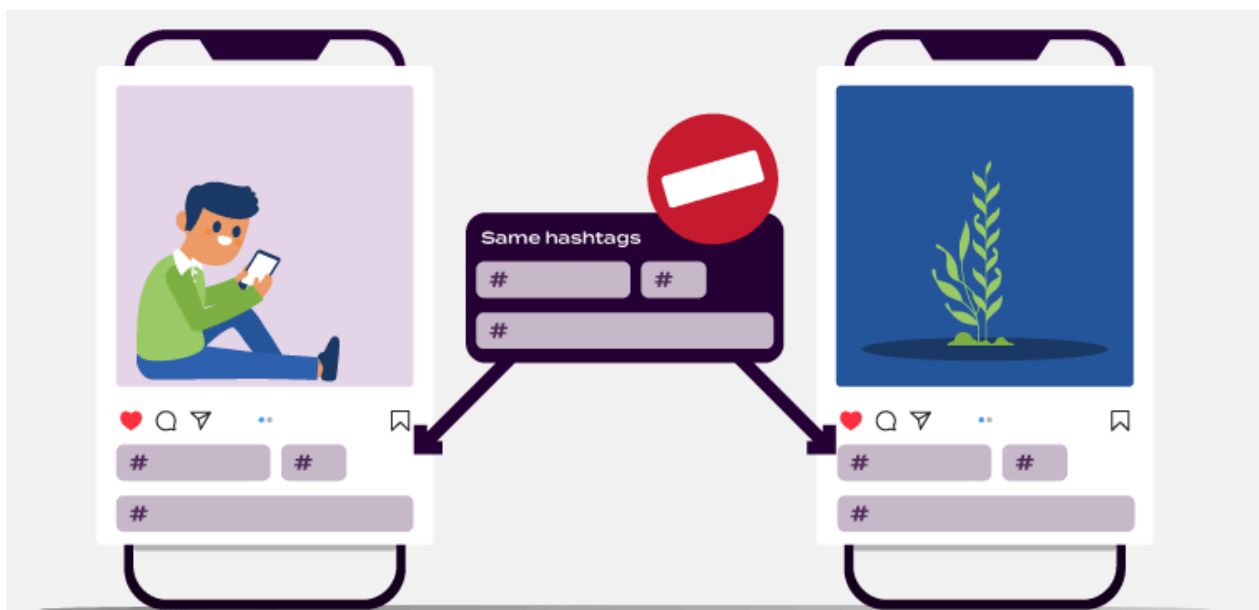
Instagram can now detect your post's content, almost as if it were a person who is looking at them. So, if you use irrelevant and repetitive hashtags that do not match your post's content, Instagram will mark your account as spammy.

I'm not saying you cannot use hashtag lists on your posts. What I'm trying to say is that you shouldn't be using the same list all the time. Besides, apart from switching your hashtags, you should always include at least five hashtags that are specific to your post's content. This way, you'll be safe, and you'll have chances to reach new audience segments.

Stay away from banned hashtags.

It comes as no surprise either that you must stay away from banned hashtags. The use of banned hashtags can hurt your account's engagement since if you accidentally use a banned hashtag, your content will be hidden.

This can negatively affect your strategy as the main reason why most people use hashtags is to increase their reach and engagement. What's more, you can even get your account temporarily or permanently shadowbanned.

Source: iqhashtags.com

Instagram banned hashtags change regularly. You must be wondering, how do I know whether a hashtag is banned? You have to do hashtag research before using them. Go to the search bar, and if the hashtag in question is banned, there would be a message.

Instagram banned hashtags are there for a reason. There exist lots of fake accounts and false activity that annoy Instagram users. So, to protect them, Instagram has banned certain hashtags.

There are two possibilities, Instagram might have received reports from users informing about it or due to Instagram's own investigations. Thus, if you notice your posts do not get the engagement they should, check whether you're accidentally using banned hashtags.

CONCLUSION

Using the right hashtags is critical to reach a large audience and grow your account. Not to mention that Instagram hashtags are essential to increase your account's discoverability.

Yet, under any circumstances should you use hashtags at random. But, you must take your time and select those that are relevant for your posts and stories.

Were you to need help to find hashtags for your account, you should try a hashtags research tool, such as Flick or Hashtastic.
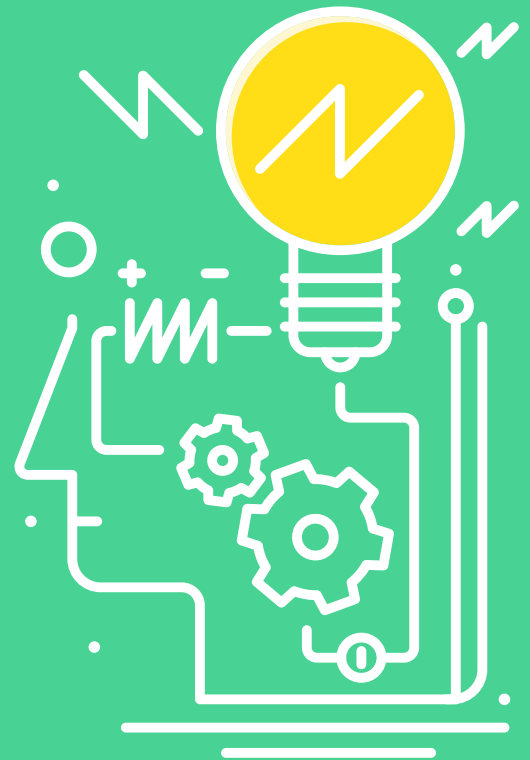
Key takeaways:

- Hashtags help brands to increase their reach, engagement, and sales.
- You must come up with hashtags that are relevant to your posts/stories. But, you need to select those you can compete for, not too big nor too small.
- Post at optimal times to reach a wider audience and boost your posts' engagement.
- It's vital you carry out hashtag research and check out your average engagement velocity.
- It's advisable you build hashtag collections for future usage.
- Try to use low-mid-high difficulty hashtags on Instagram.
- Avoid using repetitive and banned hashtags.

And that's all for my Instagram Hashtag Strategy. I hope you've found it useful.

Follow the advice above, and you'll be able to make the most out of your Instagram account.

THANK YOU! :]