

How the hashtag trend changes tv



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The coffee machine In the office used to be the place where people gathered to talk about the TV shows they had watched the night before. Nowadays watching television Isn't Just about enjoying your favorite program on the sofa. 95% of the public social conversation around Film and Television happens on Twitter and other social networks. People exchange with other fans and viewers, share their opinions and engage with each other via Twitter, Mainstream, Faceable and co.

Studies have shown that especially the younger audience watches television with two eyes on the screen and a third on the smartened or computer. This " second-screen-trend" has started a new movement of advertising, targeting specifically this younger audiences and open up a whole new market of advertising on Television. Many brands have already connected their Twitter accounts with TV advertising, using washrags. This leads us to the question: How does the washrag-trend change marketing and advertising In the TV and Media landscape?

In this essay I will discuss the use of washrags as a marketing tool In the film and television Industry and how this new trend might Impact on my futurecareer goalsas a writer In the television Industry. One might catch himself asking, " What an earth is a washrag? ". The washrag symbol (#) is mainly found on social networks like Twitter, Mainstream and Pinsetters and quite recently Faceable joined the circle of washrag users. A washrag symbol is used to unite specific tweets, photos, posts etc. About particular topics.

It's a way of organizing or grouping those posts. Washrags can help users on Twitter and Mainstream to find topics that are similar to their own posts or

interests. However, the Washrag is also a very economical but effective marketing tool. The marketers of big firms and companies can track the washrag routine of social network users and create trends to boost their own companies. The washrag makes it possible for them to research popular trends on Twitter and how many messages were sent regarding a specific washrag within a particular time frame.

It can also be used to boost your visibility on social networks. If enough individuals promote a washrag it will "trend" and attract more social network users. Ever since 2010 the most popular washrags at any given moment have been displayed on the front page of Twitter as "Trending Topics". Simply put, washrags are a great way to organize Tweets, posts and photos but it is also a very beneficial way of advertising a company, show or new products.

Furthermore, television networks have been quick to notice the power of the washrag by displaying it in the bottom corner of the screen during a show or putting it in the end of a commercial. These types of washrags are called "branded washrags" as opposed to "organic washrags" which are started by fans or non-professional twitter users. Branded washrags can, for instance, serve as a tool of creating hype around an upcoming episode of a TV show, event or film and stir up a conversation between fans. Then, the washrag is usually the name of the program or the topic that is discussed.

It seems as if the washrag had been around forever, however Twitter joined the clan quite recently in 2013. But even though the Washrag is a fairly new trend it has already completely changed the way TV shows and Films are

advertised. Only a couple of years ago, a new show or a new movie would be mainly promoted by the star of the film, by attending red carpet events or making an appearance on a popular talk show to spread the word about their newest movie. Professionally made posters and trailers could be seen on television or your local bus stop.

Whilst those techniques are still used, the posters or the trailers would now feature a little washrag symbol in the corner. Of course, a famous actor can still promote a new movie, but generally speaking, the marketing nowadays happens on Twitter and social networks, where fans are spreading the word of a new film or TV show by using the washrag. This has opened up a way to connect Television and social media and overall, the way of advertising has become much more interactive, meaning the audience plays a key role in the process.

This is clearly visible in interactive shows, such as talk shows, live sport events or big gala events like the Golden globes or the Academy Awards. Here, the washrag is not only an active way of engaging the viewers but also a possibility to ask questions and get in touch with the makers or stars of the show. Some shows, such as "Project Runway", even give each contestant their own washrag for voting purposes. Likewise, the BBC family drama "Pretty Little Liars" gives a good example of the interactive usage of washrags between fans and the cast and rioters of the show.

This might be partly due to the young age of the target audience, who are in their teens and mostly communicate with their friends via Facebook and Twitter. The series revolves around the mystery of a girl's disappearance and

when asked, the series creator / show runner I. Marlene King hints at future story developments based on which the audience can attempt to solve the mystery. These are just some of many shows that are successfully using the washrag for marketing purposes.

For professionals working in marketing this means, in order to build a brand they will even have to create a campaign specific washrag in order to attract people on twitter to talk about their product, raise awareness and engage the target audience, as well as following current washrag trends in order to make their content relevant to trending topics. While the star of the show or film still plays an important role in the promotion process, the real marketing happens through the fans and social network users.

The physical advertisement, such as posters has to a big part been replaced with the much more economical and at least as efficient advertisement through social networks, using washrags. This means the target audience who is spreading the word of a new show, movie or product all over the World Wide Web, became a key role in modern advertising. Therefore, the audience becomes more and more influential and even manages to reach out to big production companies and media groups. A good example for how powerful the audience's impact really is, is the NBC show "Community" which has been facing a constant threat of cancellation.

In an attempt to save the show, the show runners inserted the washrag "#Accommodativeness" at the end of the season three finale and started a campaign to save the show. The fans picked up the washrag quickly and as NBC noticed the trending washrag and how much attention the show had

been given, influential the users of social networks are if it comes to marketing, but also that washrags can be an inexpensive or even free marketing tool. This leads me to my next point. How much does the washrag trend and the second - screen - trend influence me as an independent filmmaker and writer and how can I use the trend to my advantage?

As an independent filmmaker it would be hard to run a professionally organized campaign in order to promote a new project, since there is usually no budget for advertising placements on television, posters or even professionally designed campaigns. For me, social media represents a free or affordable alternative to promote my projects. The washrag is a no budget film- marketing tool that can boost my appearance on the Internet. The more creative the washrag, the more successful the self-initiated campaign can be. Many " No Names" on Twitter have more followers than some celebrities.

This proves that social media platforms such as Twitter are a great way to market your brand, film or product. Furthermore, from a writer's point of view, who would ideally like to work in television, it is always useful to keep an eye on marketing trends while writing an episode. This way, the writer can already think of " washables puns" in the show or tastiness that could be used for washrag advertising, such as #Accommodativeness in Community, or even specifically create washrags for fans to interact in the Twitter community, much like in the example of Pretty Little Liars.

However, all good things aside, the washrag trend also has its downside and using a washrag campaign for promotion purposes can potentially be a risky business. While it is fairly safe to say that a successful washrag campaign

has the potential to raise awareness and increase online conversations, it can certainly be hard to predict the outcome. Once the washrag is out there, the marketers have no control over it and the development that the campaign might take is completely in the hands of the social media users. Some brands had to learn this lesson the hard way.

When McDonald's introduced their washrag campaign "#Mysteries" in 2008, the campaign quickly developed a life of its own and the designed washrag was used by Twitter users to tell their negative stories about the fast food chain. My personal favorite example of "how washrags can go wrong" is the "#Undersecretaries" washrag campaign which was created to mourn the death of Margaret Thatcher. Instead of reading the washrag "Undersecretaries" users read it as "#Undersecretaries" and as a result accidentally mourned for the wrong lady.

Status updates such as "R. L. P Cheer. At least now we'll find out about life after love. #Undersecretaries" amused the online community for days, but had very little to do with the actual events. In conclusion it can be said, that the development of the washrag trend within the past seven years of its first appearance on Twitter, clearly demonstrates the importance of collaboration between social networks and the television and film industry in order to successfully market a new film or TV show.

The washrag trend has completely transformed the way of advertising in the TV and media landscape and given the audience a much bigger role in the advertising process. Moreover, it gives small companies or independent artists like me an opportunity to market themselves and create an online

appearance to raise awareness to their films or handled carefully. In other words, marketers need to think about how washrags can be incorporated into their media campaigns without losing the control over the narrative.