

## Contests and Collaborations: Hashtags Activism and Connective Innovation

Emma Stendahl, Postdoctoral Researcher  
[emma.stendahl@ucd.ie](mailto:emma.stendahl@ucd.ie) @Emmastendahl



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### Background of the study

- This study focuses on the intersection of hashtag activism and user entrepreneurship and explores the frictions that may be in play when conflictual and consensual processes interact.
- The strategic use of hashtags on Twitter (hashtag activism) has increasingly been observed in recent social movements. Media studies have examined hashtags' role in contentious and expressive actions, and the diffusion of hashtags in mobilizing supporters (Bennett & Segerberg 2012; Lotan et al., 2011, Yang, 2016).
- In management research, scholars have connected collective action and institutional or organizational innovation (e.g., Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006; Rao, 2009; von Hippel & Von Krogh, 2003). However, this literature has not yet considered digital forms of collective action. In particular, we know little about whether the use of hashtags motivates innovation and particularly user-driven innovation or entrepreneurship as a response to perceived injustices, concerns and resistance in society.



# #hashtag

### Research questions and aim

The aim of this study is to advance our understanding of the relationship between hashtag activism, user entrepreneurship and what we call 'connective innovation'

This study seeks to answer the following research questions: *What role does the hashtag play in fostering user entrepreneurship? How do firms become engaged in this hashtag-driven entrepreneurship?*

### Methodology

#### Research design

- The empirical study is based on qualitative data from a single case study.
- #WeAreNotWaiting is used as an illustrative case. Through this hashtag, type-1 diabetes (T1D) patients, caregivers, patient entrepreneurs and T1D activists come together to 'hack their own data' and develop new technology for improved diabetes care.
- The #WeAreNotWaiting community reverse-engineer existing medical devices and collectively develop platforms and apps and cloud-based solutions to better suit personal medical needs and improve quality of life.

### Data collection

- Twitter data containing the hashtag #WeAreNotWaiting (10.3k tweets)
- Observations at public events i.e. T1D conferences and workshops in Europe and the U.S.
- Interviews with patient entrepreneurs, diabetes activists, device manufacturers, and regulatory authorities in Europe and U.S.
- Archival material – regulatory documents, patent filings



### Preliminary findings: Connective Innovation

- This paper offers unique insights into the constructive tensions embedded in hashtag activism that engages user entrepreneurship.
- Our findings suggest that the hashtag #WeAreNotWaiting holds two opposite modes of interactions: *contests* (rebellious against authority and refusing to accept the market's status quo) and *consensus* (collaborative exploitation of open data to collectively develop open source diabetes devices).
- By thinking through a new form of user-driven innovation which we call 'connective innovation', this study offers contributions to literatures on hashtag activism and user entrepreneurship.

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