



## TWITTER HASHTAGS FOR TCG

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### Abstract

Twitter hashtags are very important for marketing. Brands often use hashtags to facilitate consumer conversations. The current study compares the locations and words associated with tweets about top trading card games. Various ideas are discussed about reasons for similarities and differences in these results primarily focusing on marketing strategies of the companies associated with the trading card games.

### Background

Social media advertising has changed the way brands promote their products. Since there is some debate about the effectiveness of brand advertising through ads, some brands have changed their marketing strategy to become part of a conversation instead of an ad (Pikas & Sorrentino, 2014). Twitter promotes on-topic conversation through hashtags (How to Use Hashtags”, n.d.). Hashtags are used to let users easily follow topics or keywords (How to Use Hashtags”, n.d.). Brand managers can use hashtags frequently to generate brand awareness, remind customers of the brand, and many other forms of positive communication with customers (Greenwald, 2019).

Trading card games (TCG), sometimes called collectible card games, produce a large market with most games having a physical and a digital version of the card game. These games primarily rely on brand recognition with digital card games alone being a \$1.5 billion business in 2018, and the business is expected to surpass \$2 billion in 2020 (Newman, 2018). This paper will focus on the four top TCGs: Hearthstone, Magic: the Gathering, Pokemon TCG, and Yu-Gi-Oh!. Each of these games has its own hashtags that are the primary focus of conversations. After reviewing popular hashtags associated with the games in January 2020, analytics from two hashtags from each game were produced. For Hearthstone, #Hearthstone and #DescentofDragons were used; #Hearthstone is the primarily used general hashtag while #DescentofDragons is the hashtag used to discuss the latest expansion. For Magic: the Gathering, #mtg, and #MTGTheros were used; #mtg is the primarily used general hashtag while #MTGTheros is the hashtag used to discuss the latest expansion. For Yu-Gi-Oh!, #YuGiOh and #SpeedDuel were used; #YuGiOh is the primarily used general hashtag while #SpeedDuel is the hashtag used to discuss the latest expansions. For Pokemon, #PokemonTCG and #PlayPokemon were used; it should be noted that #PlayPokemon is a hashtag that includes non-TCG video games. Unlike Hearthstone, Yu-Gi-Oh!, and Magic: the Gathering, there is no official Pokemon Twitter account for Pokemon TCG since the primary account used for Pokemon TCG also focuses on other Pokemon video games. Interestingly, Pokemon TCG does not focus on advertising the latest expansion with a hashtag as the other TCGs do.

### Research Question

Will each of the four major TCGs deploy similar marketing strategies by focusing on directing conversation about new products through twitter to maintain dominance in the TCG field while maintaining a worldwide presence?

### Methods

NVivo, along with NCapture, was used to retrieve data from tweets with specific hashtags. The NCapture was performed on 3 January 2020 for each of the eight hashtags associated with the TCGs (#Hearthstone – 2659 tweets, #DescentofDragons – 308 tweets, #mtg – 11362 tweets, #MTGTheros – 5565 tweets, #PlayPokemon – 606 tweets, #PokemonTCG – 930 tweets, #YuGiOh – 13594 tweets, #SpeedDuel – 18 tweets) in the past two weeks.

A word frequency query in Nvivo was generated for exact matches and generalizations for the dataset containing all tweets from all TCGs used. The non-words, words used in hashtags, and other words specific to the TCG or TCG products were removed from both frequency analyses. This was repeated for each card game individually by using the two hashtags associated with the TCG. Lastly, a location map of tweets from users with location-enabled devices was generated for each of the general TCG hashtags (#Hearthstone, #mtg, #PokemonTCG, #YuGiOh) to visualize where users were tweeting from about the TCGs.

### Analysis

After cleaning the data, the top ten exact words used in tweets about all TCGs were: lastdraw, new, 2020, card, year, 2019, check, like, happy, one. The top ten generalized words used in tweets about all TCGs were: lastdraw, 2020, 2019, happy, show, artifact, new, alter, change, preorder. The top ten exact words used in tweets about Hearthstone were: legend, check, list, twitch, reached, new, Fortnite, year, videogames, now. The top ten generalized words used in tweets about Hearthstone were: changes, moves, activate, going, playing, act, community, artifact, reached, makes. The top ten exact words used in tweets about Magic: the Gathering were: new, card, 2020, 2019, news, year, flash, one, card, set. The top ten generalized words used in tweets about Magic: the Gathering were: content, 2020, 2019, preorder, creators, activated, number, artifact, happening, act. The top ten exact words used in tweets about Pokemon TCG were: tweet, video, top, 2020, card, new, year, January, like, team. The top ten generalized words used in tweets about Pokemon TCG were: changes, Youtube, month, 2020, year, going, recording, tcg, happened, take. The top ten exact words used in tweets about Yu-Gi-Oh! were: tcg, lastdraw, new, year, 2020, happy, card, effect, like, Japanese. The top ten generalized words used in tweets about Yu-Gi-Oh! were: tcg, lastdraw, 2020, Japanese, change, monster, 2019, duelists, activate, dragon. After the word frequency query, NVivo was used to generate maps of the locations of users who tweeted about each of the generalized hashtags used, as shown in Figure 1.

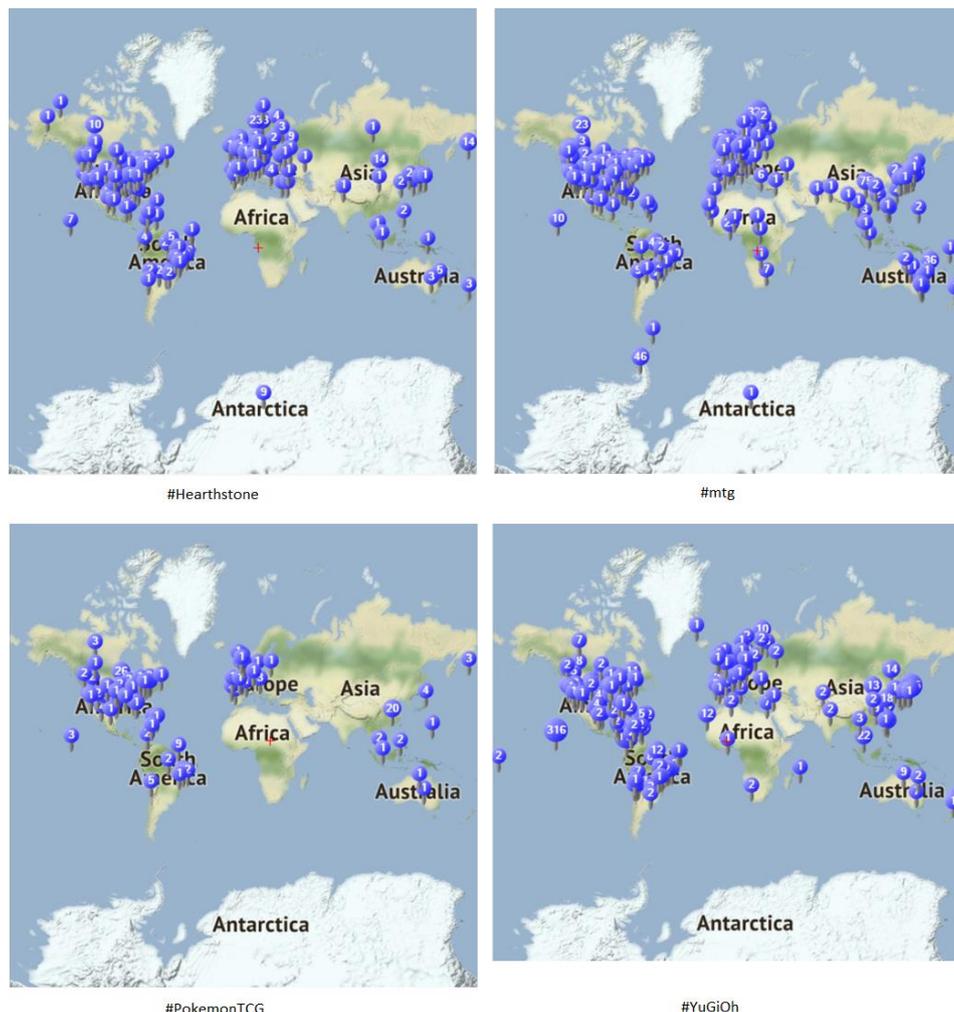


Figure 1. TCG Tweet Locations by Card Game

## Results

Considering the overall number of tweets, there were 16,927 tweets from the two hashtags about Magic: the Gathering, 13,612 tweets from the two hashtags about Yu-Gi-Oh!, 2967 tweets from the two hashtags about Hearthstone, and 1536 from the two hashtags about Pokemon. It should be noted that these numbers do not represent unique individual tweets as there was some overlap in hashtags. Interestingly, Yu-Gi-Oh! had 5236 tweets with the words “lastdraw” which refers to a specific website about the TCG that may have inflated this number. Also of note, #SpeedDuel, although tweeted as a hashtag from the official Yu-Gi-Oh! Twitter account about a new product, only had 18 tweets. In terms of analysis, this hashtag was much lower than the others and arguably could have been omitted and replaced with a different hashtag; however, it was kept in the analysis since it was an official hashtag used by the company to promote a new product which is also the case in Hearthstone and Magic: the Gathering.

Considering the top ten words that appeared when a frequency query was used, there were some interesting findings. Considering top words from the overall exact frequency query, the words new, 2020, 2019, year, and card were not surprising; the analysis was completed by using a snapshot around the change of the year, so many tweets included these words. The words like and happy also appeared quite frequently, suggesting positive views of these brands. In the overall generalized frequency query, artifact appeared; while the generalization tool is not perfect, it did cluster many terms that would be considered common in fantasy games together under the term “artifact,” which helps to explain why this generalized term appeared so frequently. The words alter and change also appeared quite frequently, which could also be associated with the new year or new products. Lastly, another interesting term that appeared quite frequently was preorder. This term suggests that the marketing feature is working if many customers are talking about preordering products. There are many important keywords in the overall analysis that reappear in the individual TCG analyses and imply similarity in brand marketing.

Frequency analyses were repeated for each of the specific card games. Hearthstone provided some unique words such as legend (a ranking used), list (list meaning decklists used in the TCGs), check (meaning to examine), Twitch (a significant video game streaming platform), fortnite (a popular non-TCG video game), community, playing, moves, and other words similar to actually playing the TCG. The frequency analysis of Magic: the Gathering provided some unique words such as flash (a popular game mechanic and name of a competitive deck with other meanings as well), set (expansion sets are commonly referred to as just sets), and content and creators. The frequency analysis of Pokemon TCG provided some unique words such as a tweet, video, and Youtube, which all reference social media. The frequency analysis of Yu-Gi-Oh! provided some unique words such as monster, dragon, and duelist (fantasy-related game references) and Japanese. These words may suggest that some brands are focusing on changing the conversation based on different aspects of the game, such as rankings and other media platforms.

As shown in Figure 1, all the TCGs are successfully maintaining a worldwide presence. When considering hashtags, one brand hashtag for Magic: the Gathering in Japan, #mtgjp, was removed from the top ten words. Yu-Gi-Oh! also had “Japanese” as one of the top words in the analysis. When considering worldwide locations, Hearthstone and Pokemon TCG both had no tweets shown from Africa and a lack of tweets in Asia in comparison to the two other brands. Considering that Hearthstone and Pokemon TCG were the two TCGs with the lowest number of tweets, it could just be a sample size issue. Another possibility for the difference in the global tweeting shown for Hearthstone could be Hearthstone’s lack of a physical card game while the other three games have a physical card game. A possibility for the difference in the global tweeting shown for Pokemon TCG could be the lack of a direct twitter account and lack of focus on upcoming expansions in comparison to the other TCGs.

## Limitations/Future Studies

There are several limitations to the current study. First, since the study was completed in early January, dates heavily impacted the words used; this will most likely not appear at other times of the year, and it may be of interest to obtain another snapshot in the future. Another significant issue is generalization used in the NVivo program. Although the program did well generalizing terms and grouping them together, there is some jargon used in TCGs that is not common to the English language.

One example of where this may have caused discrepancy is the term “flash” appearing for Magic: the Gathering; this word has the primary definitions in the English language, but it also has specific definitions in terms of the game (both a card ability and a popular deck archetype). Lastly, the TCGs were all chosen from the monetarily best performing digital card games, but the tweets focused on both digital and physical cards. Future directions of this work should explore the presence of TCGs on other social media platforms.

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