



SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING 101

A GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA SEARCH QUERIES

SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING RESOURCES FOR OCEAN COMMUNICATORS

A GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA SEARCH QUERIES

This guide is part of a library of resources created for the Advancing Strategic Ocean Communication Project, led by Communications Inc. in partnership with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK Branch, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and UNESCO Ocean, to support ocean communicators with social media listening.

This guide to social media search queries covers:

- What are social media search queries?
- Boolean queries 101
- Search queries across various social media platforms
- Boolean queries resources
- Queries on social media listening tools
- Queries and artificial intelligence

SOCIAL MEDIA SEARCH QUERIES

WHAT IS A SOCIAL MEDIA SEARCH QUERY?

A social media search query is a combination of keywords, phrases, hashtags and names used to search for and monitor online conversations across social platforms that are relevant to that specific topic, brand, event or issue.

In its most basic form, a query can be a single word or name that can be researched on various social media platforms to retrieve related posts.

Example: UNOC

Acronyms, homonyms, misspelling and foreign language words often result in ambiguity and irrelevant results. More advanced queries, known as **Boolean queries**, retrieve content relevant to the monitored topic identifying more specific and “clean” results and filtering out unrelated posts. These include words called operators, such as AND, OR, NOT or parentheses, to combine or exclude keywords and refine searches.

Example: (UNOC AND (Ocean OR Conference)) OR “United Nations Ocean Conference”

BOOLEAN QUERIES 101

These are the most common and useful operators used to build Boolean search queries:

AND

The operator AND searches for social media content that features the listed keywords in conjunction with each other.

- Example: Ocean AND Climate

OR

The operator OR searches for posts that mention either keywords.

- Example: Ocean OR Coral

NOT

The operator NOT searches for posts that include the first word but excludes those where the second also features.

- Example: Ocean NOT Coral

QUOTATION MARKS

Quotation marks search for multiple keywords as exact phrases. Without the marks, the words would be searched in any order or combination.

- Example: "United Nations Ocean Conference"

PARENTHESES

Parentheses allow to group terms together in different combinations.

- Example: Ocean AND (Coral OR Reef)

ASTERISK

The * is a wildcard and searches for words with the same root and different endings.

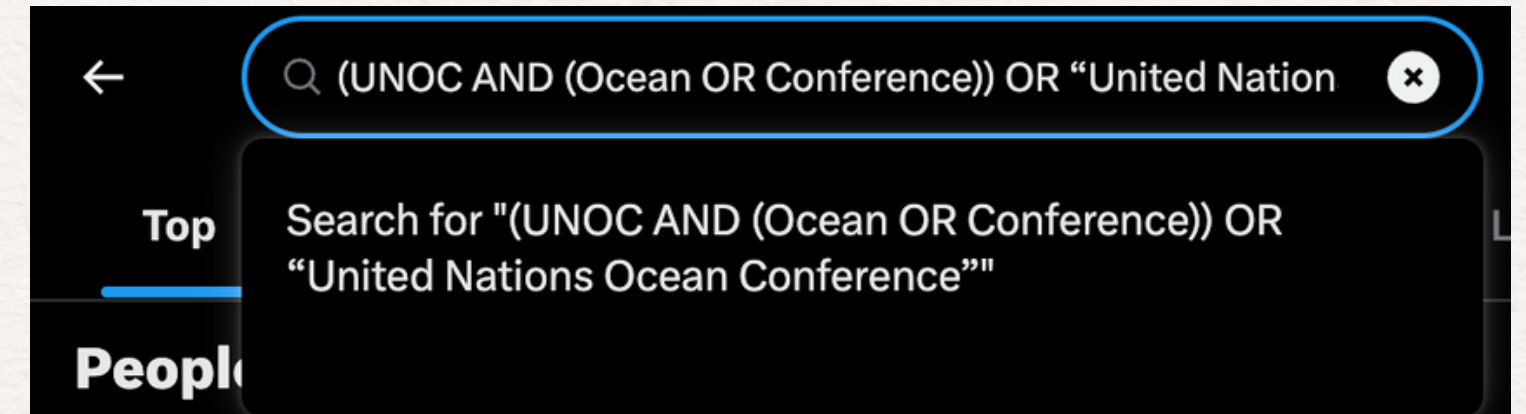
- Example: Fish* will search for Fish, fishes, fishing, fisheries...

SEARCH QUERIES ACROSS PLATFORMS



X SEARCH BAR

X is the only platform that still allows complex searches to filter results and retrieves all related posts. The search bar allows users to search for simple and complex queries. Search queries can be built separately and inserted directly in the search bar.

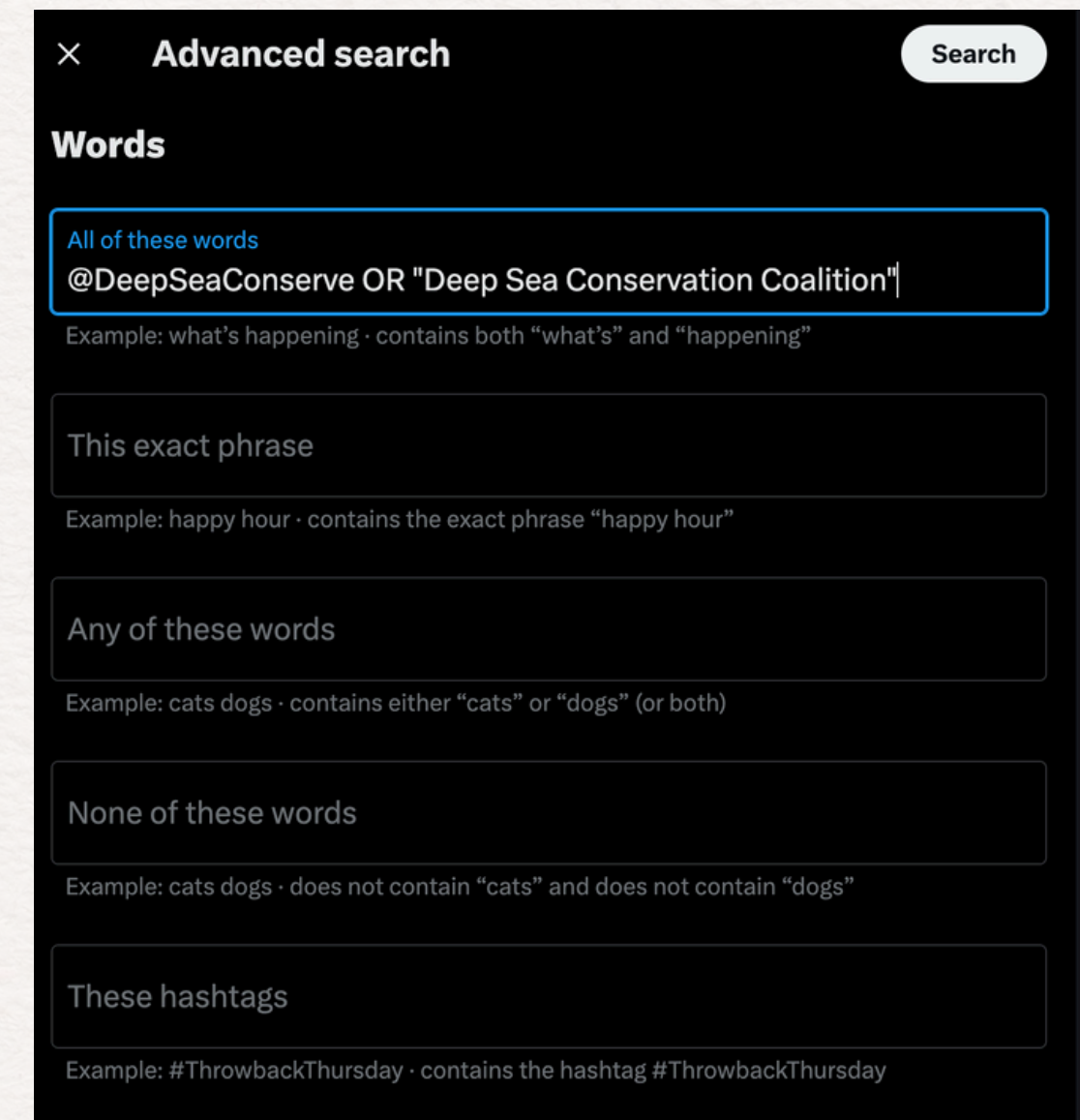


X ADVANCED SEARCH

X is still the only platform having an advanced search functionality that provides the possibility to search across all existing content using keywords, hashtags, handles and filtering the content by dates, languages, engagement and more. No knowledge of Boolean queries is required here as the platform will create them from the requests typed in the various boxes of the form.

Access advanced search:

<https://x.com/search-advanced>



SEARCH QUERIES ACROSS PLATFORMS



Facebook



Instagram

@
Threads

META SEARCHES

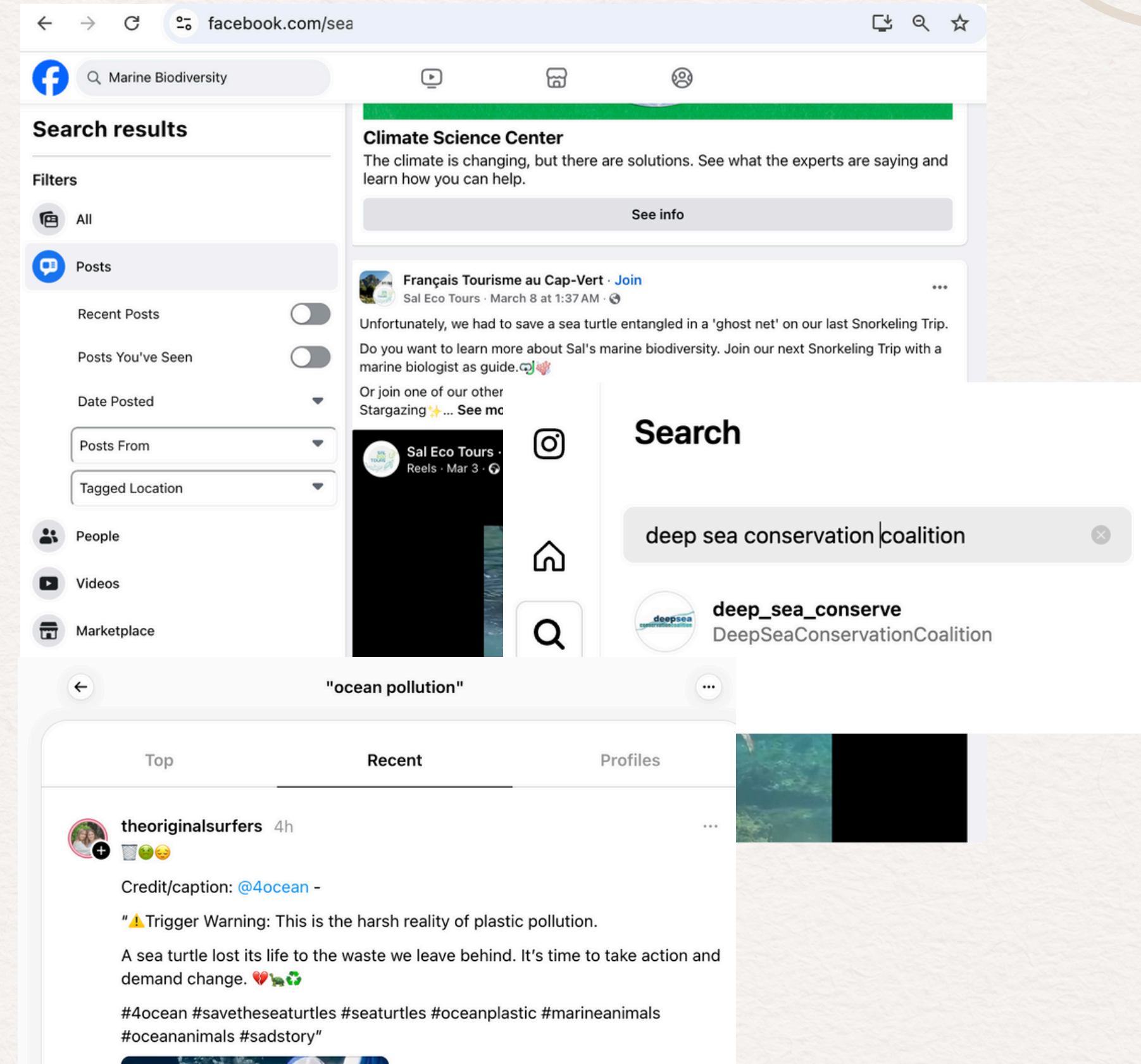
Meta has limited social media searches across all its platforms: Facebook, Instagram and Threads.

Searches can be carried out with simple queries based on keywords, names, hashtags or phrases in quotation marks.

Results will feature a small selection of posts related to that search.

Facebook still includes a few filters to order results by 'Recent Posts' or by a certain date.

Advanced queries and full results can only be accessed using a listening tool.



SEARCH QUERIES ACROSS PLATFORMS



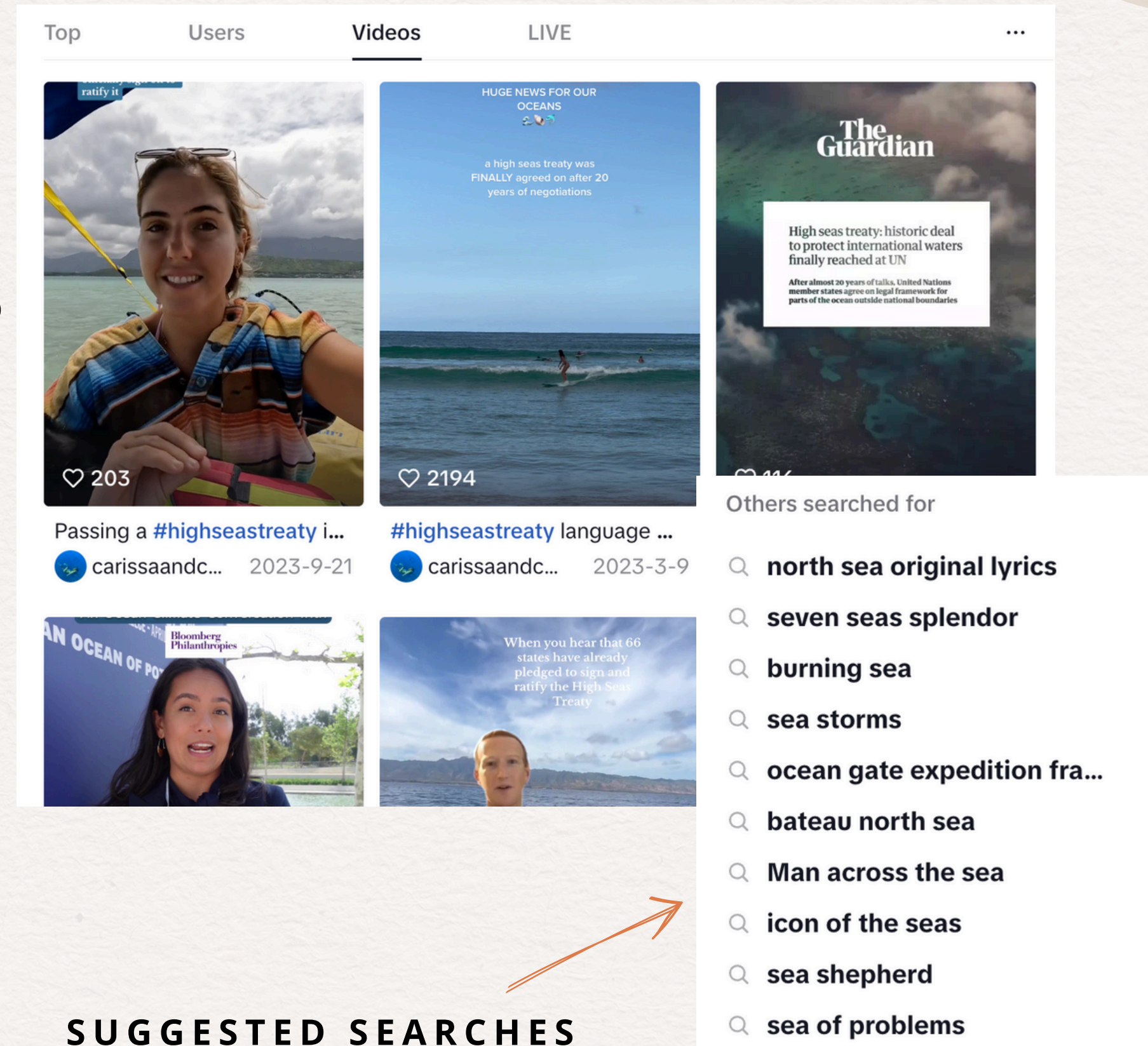
TIKTOK SEARCH BAR

TikTok only allows searches of keywords, hashtags and accounts using simple queries.

The search bar offers suggestions to complete your keywords and the results include searches that other users have performed looking for similar content.

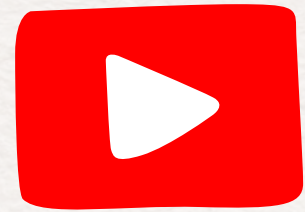
Watch out as sometimes your typed keywords will change to something random!

Advanced queries and full results can only be access using a listening tool.

A screenshot of the TikTok search interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Top', 'Users', 'Videos', and 'LIVE'. The 'Videos' tab is selected. Below the tabs, there are four video thumbnails. The first video shows a woman in a life vest with the caption 'Passing a #highseastreaty i...' and 203 likes. The second video shows a person surfing with the caption '#highseastreaty language ...' and 2194 likes. The third video shows a woman speaking with the caption 'AN OCEAN OF PO...' and 10 likes. The fourth video shows a person's face with the caption 'When you hear that 66 states have already pledged to sign and ratify the High Seas Treaty' and 10 likes. To the right of the video grid, there is a section titled 'Others searched for' with a list of search suggestions: 'north sea original lyrics', 'seven seas splendor', 'burning sea', 'sea storms', 'ocean gate expedition fra...', 'bateau north sea', 'Man across the sea', 'icon of the seas', 'sea shepherd', and 'sea of problems'. An orange arrow points from the bottom right of the video grid towards the 'SUGGESTED SEARCHES' text at the bottom of the slide.

SUGGESTED SEARCHES

SEARCH QUERIES ACROSS PLATFORMS



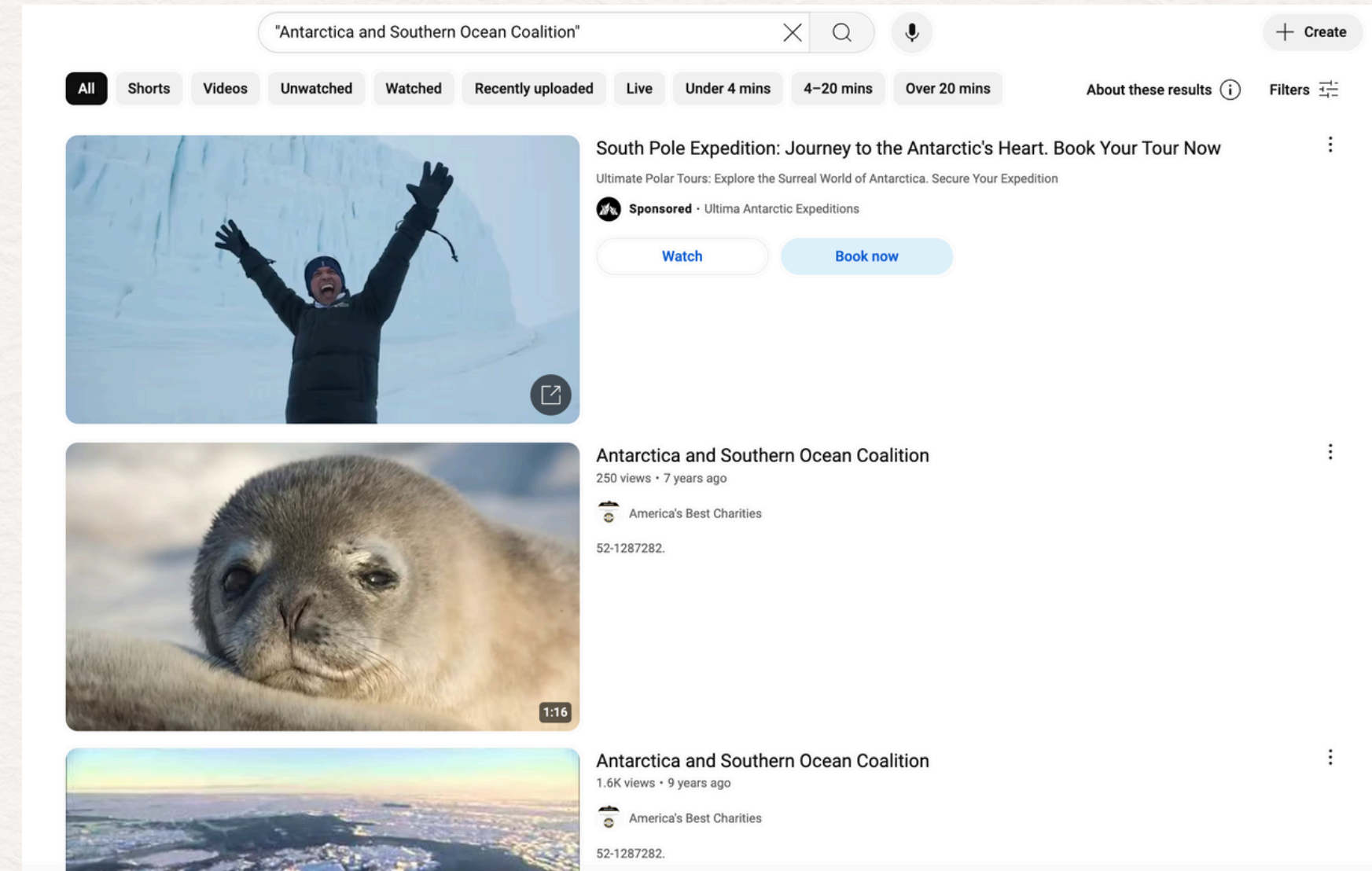
YouTube

YOUTUBE SEARCH BAR

YouTube remains a search engine before it is a social media platform. This means its data and results are fully searchable and queries can be created to input in the search bar.

Comments and transcripts have been made searchable for specific videos, however they do not feature in search results.

To identify keywords and search terms in comments and transcripts a listening tool is required.



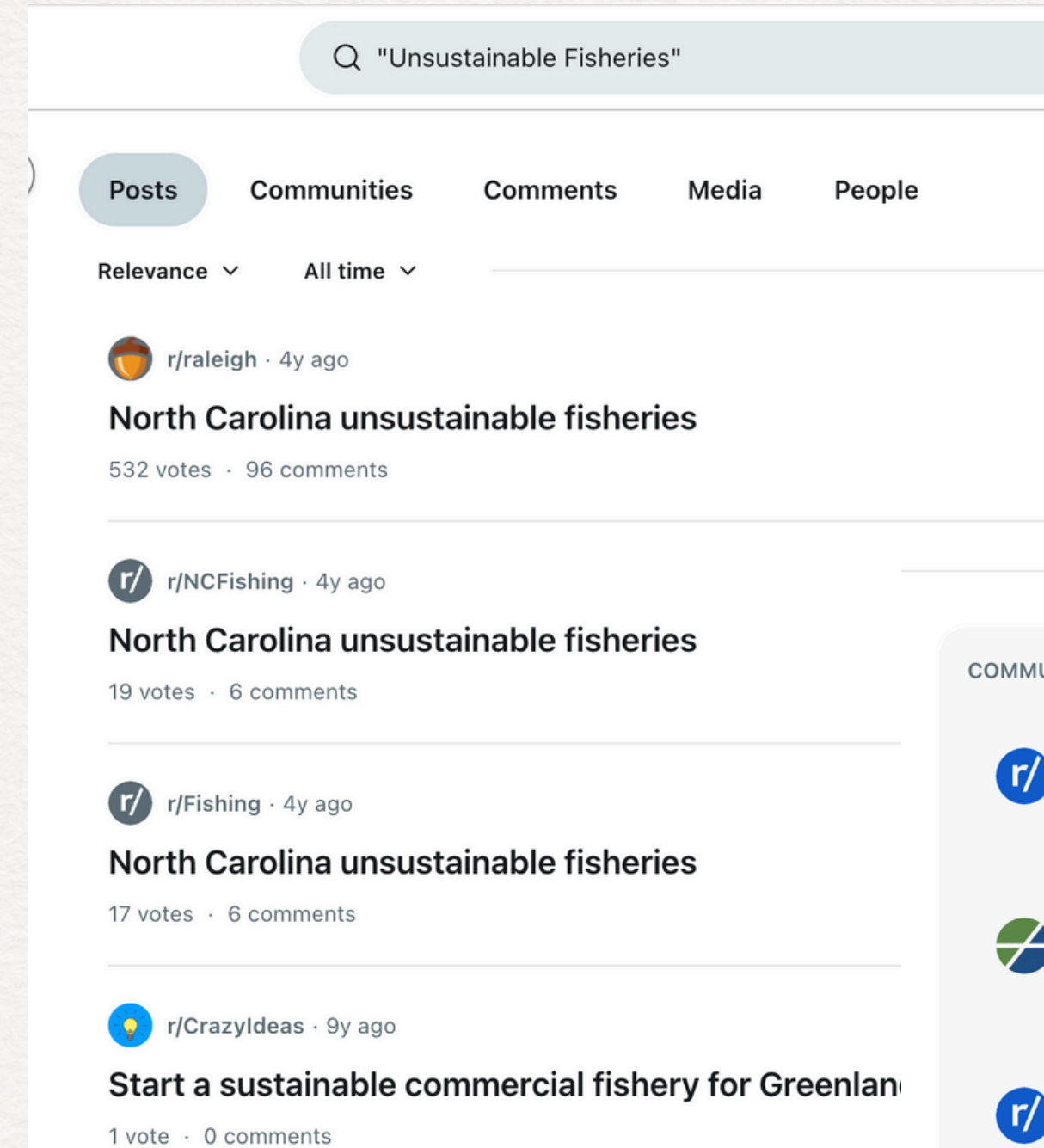
SEARCH QUERIES ACROSS PLATFORMS



REDDIT SEARCH BAR

On reddit, conversations, comments, subreddit communities, media and users and searchable with simple keywords and terms searches or phrases in quotation marks.

More advanced queries can be carried out using a listening tool.



COMMUNITIES

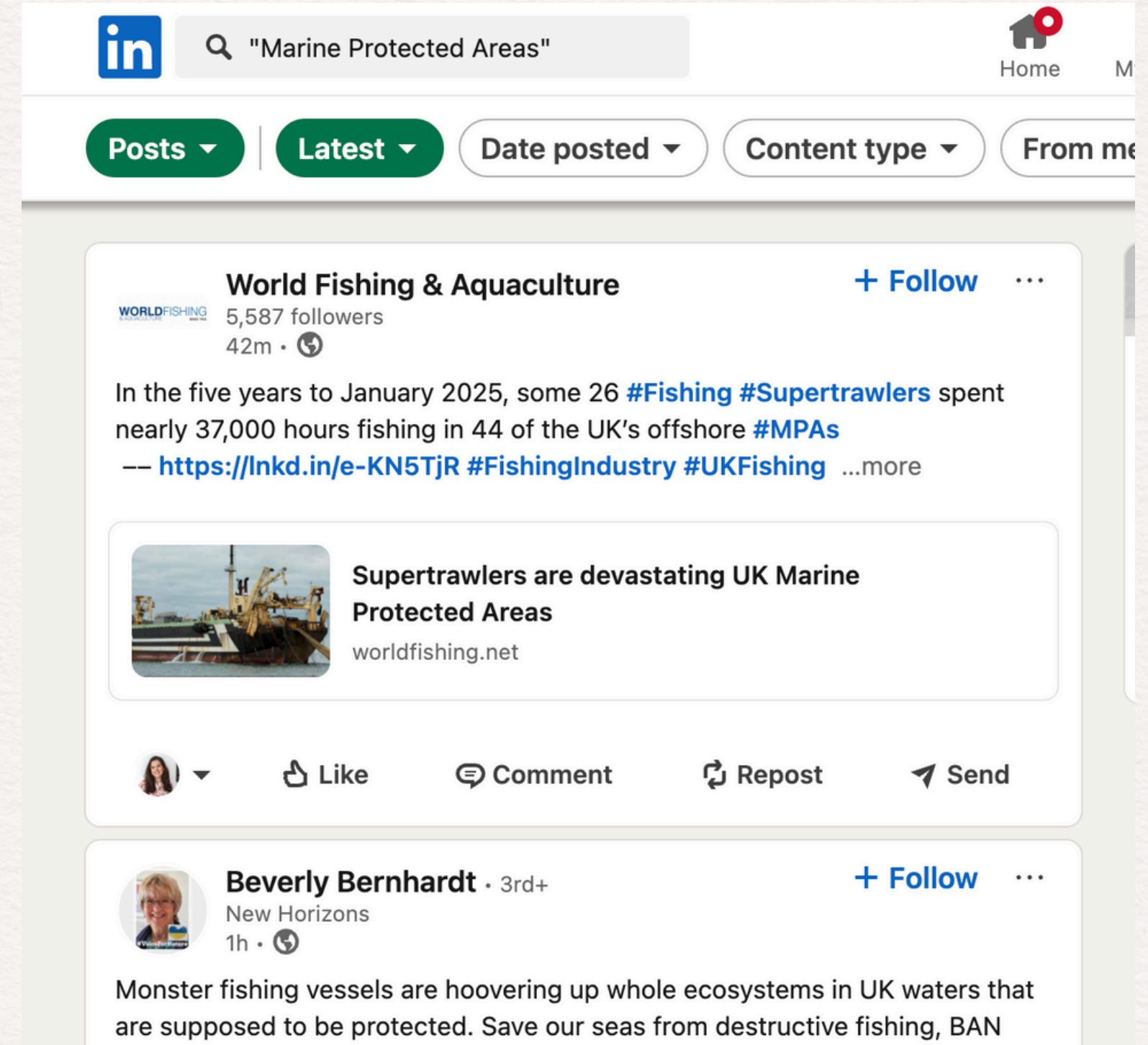
-  **r/sustainability**
Sustainability is the ability of...
874K members · 24 online
-  **r/Fishers**
Fishers is a city located in Fall...
19K members · 6 online
-  **r/fishkeeping**
This is a place where hobbyist...
24K members · 6 online
-  **r/fishtanklive**
forum for S*m H*de's new...
32K members · 17 online

SEARCH QUERIES ACROSS PLATFORMS



LINKEDIN FILTERS

LinkedIn has made it possible to analyse specific posts searching for search terms and phrases and then selecting a tab titled Posts to view only posts. These can be organised by Latests post, filtered by a specific timeframe or by media type included in the updates.



BOOLEAN QUERIES RESOURCES

A basic understanding of Boolean queries is enough to retrieve interesting and relevant results from social media searches.

Different platforms and social media listening tools might use slightly different or more advanced operators that allow users to filter results in more specific ways.

Useful filters can include:

- Searching posts by a specific social media account
- Searching posts in a specified timeframe
- Searching posts in a specific language or location

Social media companies and social media listening tool providers offer resources listing all the various operators and showing how to create specific Boolean queries on their platforms.



[X Help Centre - How to use X Advance Search guide](#)

As the only platforms allowing complex Boolean queries, X has a in-depth guide on how to use operators.



[Talkwalker by Hootsuite](#)

- [Boolean Operators](#)
- [Talkwalker Query Syntax](#)

Social media listening tool provider
Talkwalker offers various free guides.

QUERIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING TOOLS

ASK FOR CUSTOMER SUPPORT

If your organisation has a subscription with a social media listening tool provider, don't be afraid to ask support to the customer service team. They will create more complex queries for you in your account from a simple list of keywords, hashtags and search terms.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Providers often have dedicated online courses and webinars for clients that you will be able to access once you have a subscription. This includes updates on the latest changes on social media platforms and searches.

AI QUERY BUILDER

Most providers now have an in-built AI-powered query builder that with simple prompts create complex search queries for you inside the tool.

Topic query * [\(Detailed search syntax\)](#)

"Our Ocean Conference" OR #00C10 OR ((#00C10 OR "Ocean Conference") AND Busan)

AI Query builder

AI-powered feature: results may vary and are still improving. [Your feedback is appreciated!](#)

Select the type of query

☐ Brand

☒ Generic

Enter a broad topic to track mentions and trends. ⓘ

Plastic pollution in oceans

No error in query line

27/50

Add optional context to refine your search ⓘ

Exclude content about plastic straws

36/500

Generate

Conference") AND Busan)

78/4096

Example:
How the AI query builder might look like.

Example:

How a query builder might look like in a social media listening tool.

QUERIES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ChatGPT, Claude AI and various generative AI tools can be used to identify relevant search terms and create search queries.

Example:

Identifying hashtags used in online conversation around deep-sea mining.

Common Hashtags:

Several hashtags have emerged to unify conversations around deep-sea mining:

- **#DSMisNotWorthTheRisk:** Highlighted by The Ocean Foundation, this hashtag emphasizes the financial and environmental risks associated with deep-sea mining. [OCEANFDN.ORG](https://oceanfdn.org)
- **#DSMFlawedFinance:** Used to discuss the economic challenges and potential financial pitfalls of deep-sea mining ventures.
- **#DivestDSM:** Encourages divestment from deep-sea mining projects, promoting investment in sustainable alternatives.

Example:

Ask to create a Boolean query using the identified keywords.

(#DSMisNotWorthTheRisk OR #DSMFlawedFinance OR #DivestDSM OR #DefendTheDeep OR #TheLostCityInYourStyle) AND ("deep-sea mining" OR "ocean conservation" OR "marine environment" OR "protect the ocean" OR "seabed mining" OR "ocean ecosystems")

