Building brand narratives with hashtags on Twitter: a cognitive-pragmatic analysis on the emergence of a new advertising subgenre

Abstract.-

This paper investigates the use of hashtags in the building of brand narratives (i.e. the open-ended, unfolding and participative depiction of a company's core ideology and beliefs). A collection of over 700 hashtags involved in the creation of the advertising narratives of the 2017 four leading soft drink brands (i.e. *Coca-Cola*, *Pepsi*, *RedBull*, *Nescafé*) has been analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively to unveil their functions and formal characteristics, as well as the cognitive processes that underlie their interpretation, and operate in the framing and dissemination of brand narratives. Ultimately, by categorizing and explaining the roles of hashtags in the construction of a brand narrative, and the potential correlations between their formal and functional traits and their retweeting rate and digital lifespan, this paper shapes a preliminary description of the characteristics of the subgenre of hashtag-based brand narratives and spells out some of the factors that should be considered in the choice of hashtags for advertising purposes.

1. Introduction

The present study investigates the use of hashtags on the social network site Twitter in relation to the building of the brand narratives of four leading soft drink trademarks (i.e. *Coca-Cola*, *Pepsi*, *RedBull* and *Nescafé*). More specifically, it aims at unveiling the linguistic, functional, and cognitive underpinnings of this specific subgenre within the advertising discourse.

Twitter is a dominant player in the current scenario of social networking and microblogging services, with over 330 million monthly active users at the end of 2017 and an average of over 123 tweets posted monthly by brand profiles alone.[1]

Hashtags are links generated by users. They are made up of a string of characters (i.e. acronyms, words, concatenated phrases, full sentences) with no spaces between them, and prefixed by a hash symbol (#), from which they take their denomination (e.g. #MLB, #Halloween, #ShareaCoke). If a hashtag is included in a tweet, the latter is automatically added to an open-ended global conversation made up of all the tweets containing the same hashtag. Hashtags have, therefore, two primary functions: (1) they classify tweets thematically, and (2) they share individual tweets by individual users with a global audience interested in a specific topic. Current sociolinguistic analyses of tweets written by individual users have shown that hashtags display a varied range of additional uses, including those of expressing feelings and emotions, making reflexive meta-commentaries, playing games, etc. (Huang, Thornton & Efthimiadis 2010; Wikström 2014).

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[1] Data taken from https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/ [Accessed, February 21st, 2018]

Twitter also provides an important channel for brands to build and communicate their core values and identity, creating viral brand narratives which are retweeted by consumers to their own networks in a sort of electronic word of mouth campaign. The hashtags that characterize and unify these brand narratives have not been created by individual twitter users. They are, or should ideally be, the output of planned marketing campaigns developed by branding professionals. No specific attention has been paid, however, to these hashtags in the official twitter accounts of commercial brands from the perspective of their cognitive and pragmatic characteristics. Since the main aim of commercial companies is to publicize and sell their products, we hypothesize that hashtags used in their twitter accounts will display specific traits both in terms of their functions and communicative aims, on the one hand, and of their formal configurations, on the other. Some of these commercial tweets go viral, while others do not. In this paper, we analyze the tweets posted in 2017 by four leading global brands in the beverage industry to examine the cognitive, pragmatic and linguistic features of hashtags that correlate with a higher rate of retweeting of the brand message and a longer lifespan of the hashtag itself. Therefore, this paper has two main objectives. The first one is to describe the formal, functional, and cognitive features of hashtags within the subgenre of brand narratives. The second objective is to correlate those formal and functional features of hashtags with their retweet rates and their persistence of use over time, with a view to provide a portrait of the use of hashtags in the building of the brand narratives corresponding to those brands with a higher market value.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 offers a review of previous literature on the language and cognition of hashtags and brand narratives, and outlines the research objectives. Section 3 spells out the main pragmatic and cognitive theoretical tools used in the analysis. Section 4 describes the corpus of data and the methodological steps taken in

the study. Section 5 presents the results of the corpus analysis, including the description of the functions and formal configurations of the hashtags used in the twitter accounts of the four commercial brands under analysis, the discussion of their specific cognitive-pragmatic traits, and the results of correlating those features with the rates of retweeting and the digital lifespan of the hashtags, as well as with the market value of the corresponding commercial brands.

2. Previous literature and specific research objectives

 "Twitter provides an important channel for brands to seed electronic word of mouth (eWOM) by followers retweeting brand messages" (Soboleva, Burton & Khan 2015). According to eMarketer (2015), brands spent around $35 billion on social media advertising in 2017, which amounts to 16% of their total digital expenditure. However, consumer engagement with tweets varies considerably, with some leading brands displaying considerably low retweet rates (Soboleva et al. 2015). Research aimed at exploring the idiosyncrasies of the subgenre of brand narratives expressed via hashtags and at establishing a theoretical framework for how brands can maximize this functionality is scarce. An exception is Soboleva, Burton & Khan's (2017) study on the interactive, textual and visual features in tweets that correlate with the frequency of retweeting brand messages. These authors include the use of hashtags among the factors (e.g. use of pictures, videos, URL links, etc.) that influence consumers' engagement with the brand and facilitate retweeting of a message. In fact, Kerns (2014) estimates that the inclusion of a hashtag in a tweet may increase the retweet rate by 46%. Despite this, the language of Twitter, in general, and hashtags, in particular, have received comparatively

little attention in contrast to other forms of online communication (e.g. text-messages, emails, or blogging). Most of these studies take a sociolinguistics perspective on the language used on Twitter with a view to investigate social issues, such as the building of interpersonal relationships and communities (Zappavigna 2012; Seargeant & Tagg 2014).

Specific research on linguistic and communicative aspects of hashtags is even more limited. Our literature review on this topic has retrieved the studies by Huang, Thornton and Efthimiadis (2010) and Wikström (2014), who carry out large-scale data analysis and corpus-based explorations of the communicative functions of hashtags. These authors conclude that, beyond their default taxonomic nature, hashtags also perform several other communicative functions, including those of structuring information, playing games (e.g. micro-memes), and engaging in reflexive meta-commentaries. Much in the same vein, Zappavigna (2015) has shown that hashtags enact three communicative functions: marking experiential topics, enacting interpersonal relationships, and organizing text. Hashtags have also been found to have a *conversational quality* (Huang et al. 2010), which according to Page (2012) is limited to the discourse of celebrities and corporations on Twitter. From a relevance-theoretical perspective, Scott (2015) argues that hashtags also contribute to relevance, allowing users to provide additional contextual information in an economical and stylistically unobtrusive way to guide the reader's inferential processes.

Regarding the linguistic side of commercial hashtags in particular, earlier research is scant and fragmentary. Soboleva et al. (2017) considered the use of the word 'please' and of 'retweet requests' to conclude that only the latter had a consistent and positive effect on the frequency of retweeting. Nevertheless, no specific and comprehensive study has been performed on the cognitive, pragmatic and linguistic features of hashtags in commercial tweets. Such study seems relevant to both linguists interested in genre issues,

and marketing specialists looking for a better understanding of those cognitive, pragmatic, and linguistic features of hashtags which (1) contribute to the successful building of a brand narrative, and (2) encourage retweeting and, hence, the dissemination of the brand message.

In order to fill the gaps observed in the previous literature review, the specific research objectives that will guide the present investigation are the following:

1. Provide a description of the communicative functions enacted by the hashtags used in the commercial tweets under analysis.

2. Provide a description of the linguistic constructions adopted by the hashtags used in the commercial tweets under analysis

3. Provide a description of the cognitive operations at work in the understanding of hashtags in relation to the target brands and the building of their brand narratives.

4. Compare the brand narratives of the four commercial brands under scrutiny with a view to revealing regularities in the use of constructions and cognitive operations in the building of the brand narratives through the use of hashtags, thus attempting a preliminary description of the characteristics of this subgenre.

5. Examine the correlation between the linguistic and functional nature of hashtags and their rate of retweeting and digital lifespan, on the one hand, and the market value of the corresponding commercial brand, on the other, with a view to offer a portrait of the most successful hashtag-based brand narratives.

3. Theoretical framework

The most recent approaches to genre go beyond its conception as a 'kind' of discourse sharing similarities in content and form to investigate the grounding of these similarities in regularities in human spheres of activity (Freedman & Medway 1994:1). This change of perspective turns genre into a social practice, much in the same vein as Miller's (1984) notion of genre as a typified response to a typified situational need. One such genre is that of brand narratives, which can be defined as the cultural narration associated with a trademark (Hirschman 2010; Woodside 2010). Through advertising and marketing, certain meanings and concepts are attached to the brands, which thus may be turned into ideological careers and storytellers (Cayla & Arnould 2008; Dalli & Romani 2012). Simon's (2009) provocatively entitled book "Everything but the coffee" analyses the highly representative case of Starbuck's brand narrative. As the author explains, the success of Starbucks is mostly built on the political, social and emotional ideology stemming from its brand narrative, to the point that the product itself becomes almost marginal in the story.

Within the genre of brand narratives, this paper focuses on one specific subtype, namely, those brand narratives built upon the use of hashtags in social media such as Twitter. As shall be made apparent in Section 5 and following Steen's (2011) and Stukken, Spooren & Steen's (2016) definition of genre as a cognitive construct, the type of brand narrative under consideration can be considered the output of a complex knowledge schema with fixed formal and functional characteristics, which exploits a limited set of cognitive operations to help marketing professionals convey a consistent and pervasive brand identity.

Understanding the subgenre of hashtag-based social media brand narratives as a social and cognitive construct, this paper attempts to develop a model of analysis that

incorporates formal, pragmatic and cognitive elements underlying the comprehension and production of this genre. To this end, it draws on theoretical tools provided by cognitive linguistics, including the notions of framing, cognitive operations, and conceptual metonymy:

Framing

Fillmore (1977) coined the notion of frame to refer to the encyclopedic knowledge associated with a specific concept. The word *restaurant*, for instance, evokes a wealth of other related concepts such as the objects and the people that can prototypically be found in this location (e.g. tablecloths, chairs, waiters, customers, cooks, etc.) and the actions that are stereotypically performed in this setting (e.g. cooking, ordering, serving, eating, paying the bill, etc.). It is further argued that it is difficult to understand the meaning of one of the elements or actions that take place in a restaurant without knowledge of the rest of the elements within the frame. A frame is, therefore, a structured, culture-dependent, open-ended representation of a concept which can be enriched throughout time. With slight variations in meaning, frames have also been referred to in the literature as scripts, scenarios, scenes, cultural models, cognitive models, idealized cognitive models, domains, and schemas, among others. In advertising, framing a brand correctly is an essential part of its marketing, since the choice of frames may lead to diverse conceptualizations of the product which may be more or less felicitous. The power of frames in the building of brand identity and brand narratives needs to be considered in combination with the use of a particular type of cognitive operation, namely, conceptual metonymy (see below), since the use of a single word in connection to a brand may metonymically evoke a whole frame, with all the potentially positive or negative inferences that may derive from it in relation to the brand.

Cognitive operations

Among the collection of cognitive operations identified in the literature (i.e. metaphor, metonymy, cuing, parametrizing, abstracting, mitigation, etc.; see Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera (2014) for a detailed classification), the analysis of commercial hashtags in this paper will specially benefit from those of *conceptual metonymy* and *cueing*, which are defined in turn below.

Conceptual metonymy

Conceptual metonymy is a type of 'stands for' relation, which, as argued in Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera (2014: 92) involves two distinct types of cognitive operations: *reduction*, when the whole stands for one of its elements, thus increasing the conceptual prominence of the former (e.g. *Wall Street is in panic*, where *Wall Street* stands for the executives working in that financial district of New York) and *expansion*, when one element of a conceptual domain stands for the whole domain and consequently broadens the amount of conceptual information associated with that initial point of access (e.g. *The ham sandwich left without paying*, where ham sandwich stands for the broader domain of *customer*).

Cueing

Cueing is defined by Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera (2014: 86) as a basic formal cognitive operation that provides "access to the most relevant aspects of a concept on the basis of textual information." Thus, in Fauconnier & Turner (1996) well-known examples, *shark-safe beach* and *dolphin-safe* tuna, *beach* and *tuna* cue the correct paraphrases 'a beach

that is safe (from sharks)' and 'tuna fish that has been harvested without hurting any dolphin', respectively.

4. Corpus and methodology

The commercial brands for the analysis where chosen from the annual report on the leading most valuable soft drink brands worldwide in 2017 carried out by *Statista: The Statistics Portal* (http://www.statista.com). We chose four products belonging to the same category of soft drink brands in order to allow comparison of how different brands within the same convenience good category (i.e. those products which customers buy often and without much thought or planning) make use of hashtags in the building of their brand narratives, and to measure the effectiveness of the different strategies used by them.[2]

Some of the chosen brands had more than one Twitter handle, so the central organizational one (and in the absence of an obvious central handle, the one with the largest number of followers) was chosen for analysis. Table 1 includes a list of all brands and their respective Twitter handles:

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[2] The Statista data showed Lipton as the fourth brand in the ranking of market values. Since this brand commercializes a varied array of infusion drinks, it was decided to choose the fifth brand in the statistics (i.e. Nescafé) instead, which represents a more discrete target product.

BRANDS	Twitter handle
Coca-Cola	@CocaCola
Pepsi	@pepsi
RedBull	@redbull
Nescafé	@NESCAFE

Table 1. Twitter handles for the commercial brands under analysis

All brand tweets were collected manually from the selected Twitter handles for a one-year period from January 1st, 2017 to December 31st, 2017. Only original tweets were recorded. Retweets from other users or brands and replies to other tweets were excluded. The final corpus contained 643 tweets, 303 hashtag types, and 767 hashtag tokens. Figure 1 summarizes the number of tweets, hashtags (types and tokens), and hashtags per tweet posted by each brand under analysis:
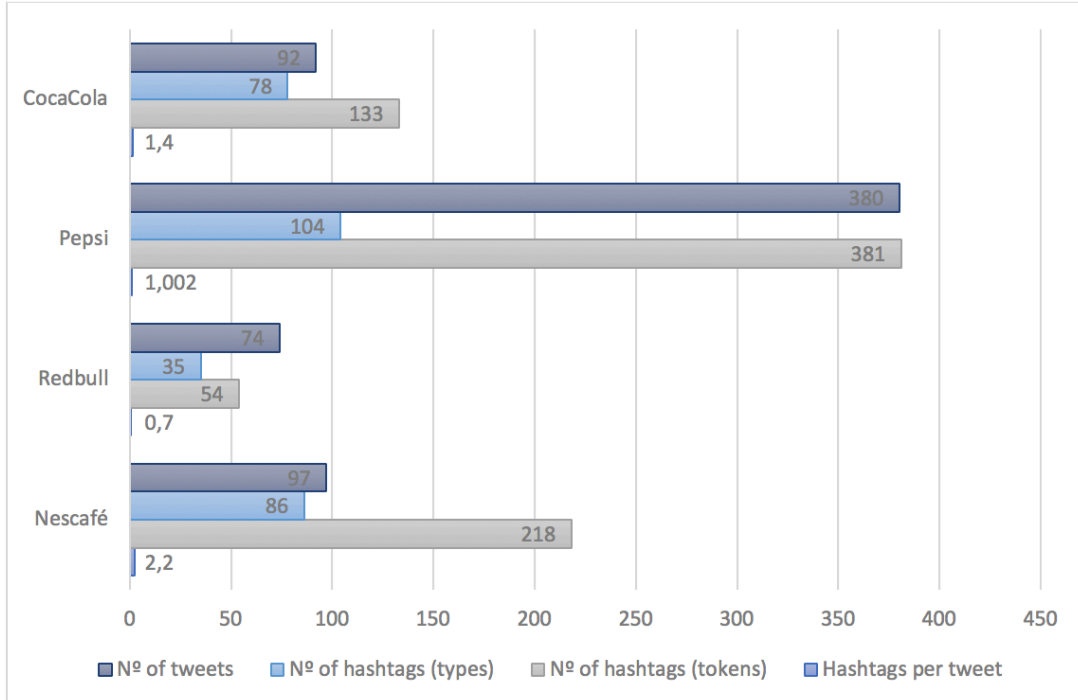

Figure 1. Number of tweets, hashtags (types and tokens), and hashtags per tweet.

As can be observed, despite some differences in the amount of types and token of hashtags used by each brand, the average number of hashtags per tweet ranges from 2,2 hashtags per tweet exhibited by Nescafé to the 0,7 hashtags per tweet displayed by RedBull.

As shown in Table 2, the number of hashtags per tweet does not seem to correlate with the market value of the soft drink brands. Nescafé, which doubles the rest of the brands in the number of hashtags per tweet, is the brand with the lowest market value in the ranking compiled by Statista for the year 2017.

Brand value ranking (in million US Dollars)		N° of hashtags per tweet
1. Coca-Cola	66.489	1. Nescafé [2,2]
2. RedBull	11.567	2. Coca-Cola [1,4]
3. Pepsi	10.638	3. Pepsi [1,002]
4. Nescafé	6.303	4. RedBull [0,7]

Table 2. Comparison of market value rankings and number of hashtags per tweet [3]

The potential correlation between the market value of a brand and its use of hashtags needs to be assessed in relation to other factors. Granted that hashtags are just one ingredient in the marketing narrative of a brand, it should be possible to at least measure their relevance in the degree of interaction that they arise with the potential audience of a brand. In order to do so, Sections 5.1 and 5.2 offer a thorough portrait of the functional (communicative functions), formal (constructional), cognitive, and semantic

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[3] The data on the market value ranking of the brands has been compiled by Internet statistics portal *Statista* [https://www.statista.com/statistics/273063/leading-15-most-valuable-global-soft-drink-brands-based-on-brand-value/] [Accessed, February 21st, 2018]

characteristics of the hashtags found in our corpus. In Section 5.3, these features are correlated with those hashtags that have received the highest number of retweeting for each of the brands and as well as with those displaying a longer lifespan. This correlation yields two distinct types of hashtags as regards their overall function in the brand narrative (i.e. *frame-building* vs. *dissemination* hashtags). Section 5.3. futher offers a data-grounded account of how the most successful brand narratives, as measured by the market value of their corresponding brands, display a combination of both hashtag types.

5. Analysis

5.1. Communicative functions and associated constructions of commercial hashtags

Hashtags in our corpus can be divided into two main categories: a group of independent hashtags, which appear either at the beginning or, most frequently, at the end of the tweet (example 1), and a group of dependent hashtags, which are integrated into the main clause or clauses of the tweet (example 2):

(1) [Coca-Cola] Hey, Louisiana – thanks for the hospitality, awesome shoot, and delicious food! #ShareaCoke #ServeWithACoke

(2) [Pepsi] It is almost #Thanksgiving -do you know what your @NFL favorites are looking forward to eating the most?

As shown in Table 3, the frequency of occurrence of within-clause and independent hashtags varies greatly across different brands.

	WITHIN-CLAUSE HASHTAGS		INDEPENDENT HASHTAGS	
	Types	**Tokens**	**Types**	**Tokens**
Coca-Cola	20	39	58	94
Pepsi	74	301	30	80
RedBull	20	23	15	31
Nescafé	4	9	88	209
TOTAL	**118**	**368**	**191**	**418**

Table 3. Frequency of occurrence of within-clause vs. independent hashtags

The functions carried out by the hashtags in both groups also differ. Let us first deal with independent hashtags like those in example 1. These hashtags have an illocutionary force of their own, which may be the same or different from the one displayed by the rest of the text in the tweet.
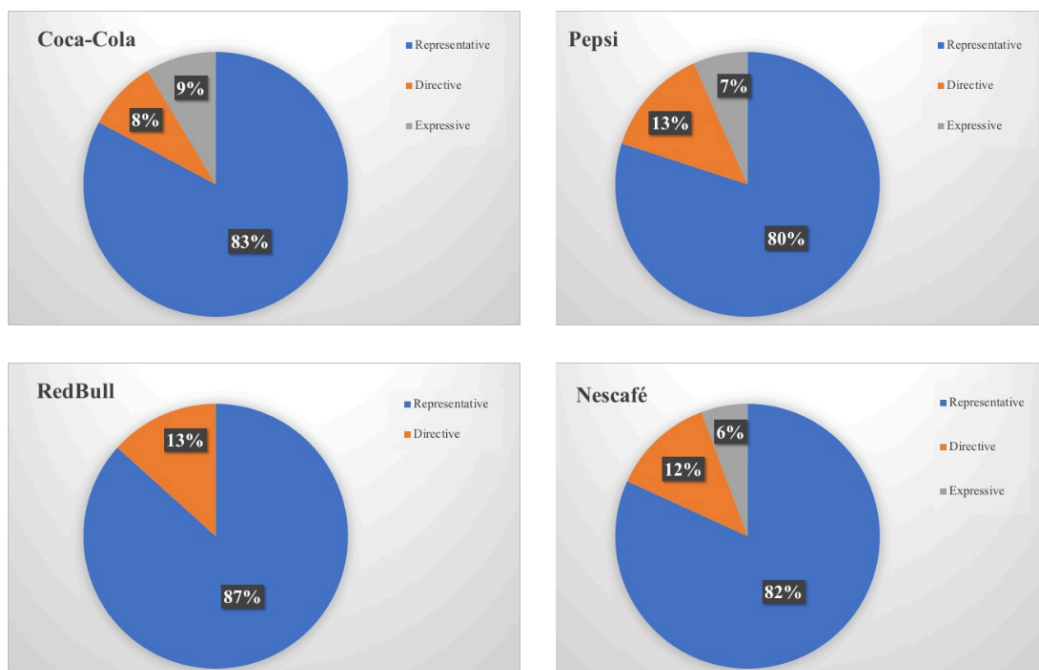

Figure 2. Illocutionary constructions of independent hashtags in the corpus

For all four brands under analysis, over 80% of the independent hashtags included in their tweets enact representative speech acts (see Figure 2). By way of illustration consider the following examples:

(3) [Coca-Cola] Grab a Coke and go toward zza light 🍕✨ #NationalPizzaDay

(4) [Nescafé] Enjoy the flavour of the beautiful remote places that are home to our NESCAFÉ coffee beans. #itallstarts

(5) [RedBull] Cheers to wings! Have you tried the new Red Bull Editions Sugarfree? Same wings, no sugar. #givesyouwings

As regards their formal side, these representative illocutionary constructions display a characteristic linguistic form made up of a noun phrase (with varying degrees of complexity), which metonymically stands for a full proposition, as in (3) (i.e. #NationalPizzaDay > Today it is National Pizza Day). In a few cases, such as examples (4) and (5), the representative function is linguistically realized by means of a declarative sentence, whose subject may be omitted, as in (5).

These hashtags are often used to indicate the semantic domain of the post. Searle (1976: 11) defined representative illocutionary acts as those whose point or purpose is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. This topic-marking functionality is ultimately connected to the representative function of language (i.e. its role in allowing speakers to build and communicate representations of reality). Although this representative function will be dealt with in more detail in section 5.2 in relation to the building of brand narratives, it should be noted that topic marking is also linked to at least two other functions:

-to add additional contextual information so as to guide consumers towards the successful interpretation of the intended meaning despite the "infinitely ambiguous audience [and the] undefined context" that characterizes communication in Twitter (Wesch 2009: 23).

-to increase the searchability and reach potential of the tweet, since this type of topic-markers function primarily as metadata tags facilitating (1) the retrieval of the post from the Twitter site, and (2) its inclusion in threads of conversations held by tweeters interested in that topic (Soboleva et al. 2017).

While the representative function and the aforementioned related topic-marking functionalities are some of the principal functions of independent commercial hashtags, roughly 20% of them serve no obvious representative, classificatory or retrieval of content purpose, but nonetheless they contribute to the building of the brand narrative and to encourage interaction with and engagement of potential consumers. These hashtags fulfill an interpersonal function as defined by Halliday:

> …the mediator of role, including all that may be understood by the expression of our own personalities and personal feelings on the one hand, and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication situation on the other hand (Halliday 1973: 66).

Halliday's interpersonal metafunction encompasses several speech act categories. Making use of Searle's (1976) specific terminology, our corpus yields instances of directive, expressive and commissive illocutions.

Directive speech acts are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something (Searle 1976: 11). Depending on the power of the speaker and the beneficiary, and the cost of the requested action, among other factors, the force of the directive act may vary,

thus giving rise to an array of illocutionary acts (i.e. orders, requests, suggestions, pieces of advice, etc.). In our corpus of commercial hashtags, most instances of directive speech acts correspond to suggestions and pieces of advice. See examples (6) and (7) by way of illustration:

(6) [Coca-Cola] Pineapple? Pepperoni? No matter how you slice it, 🍕 tastes better with a coke. #ServeWithACoke

(7) [Pepsi] When you invite your friends over and turn your home into an epic #NFLPlayoffs tailgate! #BreakOutThePepsi

In the context under consideration (i.e. Twitter marketing campaign), the speaker (i.e. commercial brand) cannot exert an imposing power on the addressee (i.e. consumer), which rules out the use of directives such as orders. As it is only to be expected in the context of advertising, the requested action is presented as beneficial to the addressee, which also makes speech acts like threats, for instance, very unlikely. Suggesting and advising, however, fulfil an engaging function which promotes positive interaction with consumers. By using hashtags enacting these illocutionary acts, commercial brands present themselves as the allies of consumers suggesting them positive paths of action which may lead to rewarding experiences. In addition, a clear call to action, such as the imperatives in the hashtags under scrutiny, has also been found effective in attracting attention and leading consumers to act on a specific request (see Amstrong 2010).

The recurrent linguistic realization procedure of those hashtags with a directive illocutionary force in or corpus is that of an unmitigated plain imperative sentence. This syntactic form, characterized by its brevity, suits well the nature of tweets and their inherent space limitations (i.e. max. 280 characters). The lack of mitigation or other types

of politeness realization procedures often found in connection to directive acts is only to be expected in a context (i.e. commercial marketing) in which the entity issuing the message (i.e. the commercial brand) has no power to impose on the addressee (i.e. consumer), and in which, the suggested action is presented as beneficial to the latter. This context automatically rules out a commanding interpretation of the imperatives and leads consumers to understand them as unimposing pieces of advice or suggestions even in the absence of explicit markers of politeness and/or mitigating devices of the directive force of the acts. Calls to action of this type represent an advertising technique for increasing customer response that has been used for more than a century (see Soboleva et al. 2017).

As can be observed in Figure 2, three of the brands under consideration (i.e. Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Nescafé) also display a small number of independent hashtags with an expressive illocutionary force. Expressive acts, according to Searle's (1976: 12) definition, "express the mental state of the speaker about an event presumed to be true […and] allow speakers to express their feelings about themselves or about the world." Carretero, Maíz-Arévalo & Martínez (2015: 187) distinguish between self-centred and other-centered expressives. The first group pertains to the speaker / writer's feelings and the second focuses on the addressee's feelings. Self-centred expressives comprise likings and concerns. The category of other-oriented expressives includes apologies, congratulations, compliments, greetings, wishes, and thanks. Our corpus includes a few instances of other-oriented expressives in the form of independent hashtags, including wishes and greetings:

(8) [Coca-Cola] To all the moms out there: THANK YOU. #HappyMothersDay #ShareaCoke

(9) [Nescafé] Add a coffee twist to your banana smoothie. Stay tuned to book your spot at our #InternationalCoffeeDay workshops #GoodMorningWorld

As illustrated by the above examples, the linguistic side of the expressive constructions found in our data is largely formulaic, displaying fixed expressions for wishes and greetings.

The collection of independent hashtags in our corpus of analysis does not yield any occurrences of commissive speech acts (i.e. promises), those whose illocutionary point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action (Searle 1976:11), or declarations (e.g. acts of nominating, appointing, baptizing, etc.), whose successful performance brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality and guarantees that the propositional content corresponds to the world (Searle 1976: 13).

Independent hashtags in the commercial tweets of the brands under consideration, therefore, enact mainly representative speech acts (roughly 80%), and to a lesser extent directive and expressive illocutionary forces (20%). More specifically, they are used to (1) establish and highlight the semantic domain at work for a specific tweet, (2) as calls for action (suggestions and pieces of advice) that are beneficial to the consumer, and to a lesser degree to (3) engage with or express concern about the consumers' feelings by means of wishes, and greetings.

As opposed to independent hashtags, those which are found within a clause constitute elements of a broader communicative unit and share the latter's communicative function. Thus, in example 2 above, the hashtag #Thanksgiving is the main argument of an affirmative sentence ("It is almost #Thanksgiving") and thus partakes of its illocutionary force (i.e. representative speech act). Commercial tweets serve a rich array of communicative purposes, many of them stemming from the nature of commercial

interactions. In fact, in addition to the representative illocutionary force illustrated by example 2, tweets may enact several of the other illocutionary forces included in Searle's (1976) classification:

(10) Directive speech acts like suggestions, and pieces of advice: [Pepsi] Find out now in #TheSoundDrop; [Nescafé] Stay tuned to book your spot at our #InternationalCoffeeDay workshops; [Pepsi] If you wanna get MVP, just #GetBuckets.

(11) Expressive speech acts like wishes and congratulations: [Coca-Cola] Happy #ValentinesDay!!; *Congrats #UNC on your 6th NCAA #NationalChampionship!*

(12) Commissive and hybrid speech acts like offers and invitations: [Pepsi]We have 5 replica #Joanne hats #ForTheFans. RT for #Entry …; [Coca-Cola] *Coca-Cola invites you to enjoy a moment of calm amidst all the #MarchMadness*

Although these hashtags are part of tweets which perform the aforementioned speech acts, the hashtags themselves are not responsible for the illocutionary force of the tweet, which emerges from the construction and constructional realization procedures used in each case (i.e. imperative sentences, performative verbs, etc.). In this, within-clause hashtags differ from independent hashtags, which have their own illocutionary force (see discussion of examples (3)-(9) above). What is then the main purpose of using within-clause hashtags? By default, these hashtags perform their two original functions: they categorize the tweets in which they are used, and integrate them in a thread of tweets which appeal to an audience interested in the specific topic that they name. Including hashtags within the tweets' sentences also helps to avoid repetitions and contributes to keeping the message length within the allowed 280 characters.

As will be shown in detail in Section 5.2, beyond their intrinsic illocutionary forces, both independent and within-clause hashtags are also involved in the performance of certain cognitive operations (i.e. domain expansion and reduction, and cueing), which ultimately lead to their use in framing the brand narratives, and in guiding the audience in the interpretation of the tweet.

5.2. Cognitive operations, framing and cueing in the building of brand narratives

As revealed in Section 5.1, hashtags with a representative illocutionary force, those by means of which speakers describe the world around them, are the most frequent in all four brands under analysis. The formal side of those hashtags with a representative force has also been shown to be highly specific, with over 90% of them being made up of a single noun or noun phrase (e.g. #coffeecocktails, #homemade, etc.) and only 10% of them expressing full propositions (e.g. #itallstarts, #givesyouwings, etc.).

This representative illocutionary force is, by default, linked to the original and most straightforward functions of hashtags, namely, to classify the tweet thematically and to make its content searchable. However, many of the examples of hashtags appearing in the tweets included in our corpus do not serve an obvious classificatory or search function. By way of illustration, consider the following examples:

(13) [Pepsi] No cure needed for these summertime blues #PepsiSummer

(14) [Nescafé] How about 'Shipping' coffee to a stranger today? #Summertime

(15) [RedBull] Saddle up 🚴@jessemthomas' exclusive @strava challenge kicks off today. http://win.gs/rbrbike #RedBullReady

The topics of tweets (13) and (14) include a reflection about the need of curing summertime blues and a suggestion to perform the generous action of shipping coffee as a gift to a stranger, respectively. It seems unlikely that readers interested in these topics would search for them using the hashtags #PepsiSummer and #Summertime. Likewise, an audience wanting to find information about Jesse Thomas' triathlon Strava Challenge is not likely to use the #RedBullReady hashtag as a search keyword (example 15).

In other cases, the information offered in the tweet is in fact largely useless for an audience interested in the topics referred to by the hashtags. Thus, in example (16) followers of the All-Star Major League of Soccer will probably find irrelevant that someone is "kickin' it before the match", and similarly, the audience interested in the Super Bowl will find the information contained in the tweet in example (17) about "everyone [needing] a boost before the big game starts" rather insubstantial.

(16) [Coca-Cola] Just kickin' it before tonight's epic match... #MLSAllStars

(17) [Nescafé] Everyone needs a boost before the big game starts #SB51 #itallstarts

As examples (13)-(17) reveal, the hashtags in our corpus do not seem to have been designed to fulfil the original classificatory and search functions reported in the literature. An analysis of the tweets from a cognitive perspective points to a different purpose for the use of hashtags with a representative function. Let us consider the tweet in Figure 3:

Coca-Cola ✓ @CocaCola · 16 Mar 2017
It's time to 🏀. Feeling nervous? Grab a Coke and take a quick break from the
#MarchMadness

Figure 3. Coca-Cola tweet March 16th, 2017

The formal layout of the tweet displays different highlighted typography for two of its elements: the brand name (i.e. Coca-Cola), which is presented in bold characters, and the hashtag (i.e. #MarchMadness), the name of the official twitter handler for the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, which appears in red characters. These distinct fonts signal the special nature of these two elements (i.e. brand name and hashtag) and endow them with a marked pragmatic salience, thus grabbing the readers' attention (Schmid & Günter 2016). In a fast medium, such as Twitter, this helps to point readers towards the gist of the message. In addition, as Van Weelden, Cozijn, Maes & Schilperoord (2010) point out, "perceptual similarity between two objects enhances a conceptual link between the two". The fact that both the brand name and the hashtag are differentiated from the rest of the elements in the tweet by means of the aforementioned text effects leads the audience to establish a conceptual connection between them. Perceptual similarity has been shown to be a prerequisite both for categorization processes (Fenson, Cameron & Kennedy 1988) and for metaphorical projections between domains (Indurkhya & Ojha 2013). These cognitive processes are grounded in our childhood experience of classifying objects and toys that are perceptually similar within the same category (Vosniadou & Ortony 1983; Imai, Gentner & Uchida 1994).

In Figure 3, the brand name Coca-Cola is thus conceptually linked to the notion of 'MarchMadness', which metonymically activates the broader conceptual domain of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. The tweet text in between the brand name and the hashtag is used to clarify and parametrize the conceptual connection between the brand and the conceptual domain activated by the hashtag, thus presenting Coca-Cola as the drink that fits the aforementioned sports context.

The analysis of Figure 3 reveals what appears to be the main function of hashtags with a representative illocutionary force in commercial tweets: their role as metonymic points

of access to conceptual domains that brand campaigners would like consumers to associate with a particular brand. In this way, hashtags are useful in helping marketing professionals to economically and effectively frame the brand narrative they have designed for the target product. In some cases, such framing involves the conceptual association of the brand with a sports event (e.g. [RedBull] #Dakar2017, [Pepsi] #NBAPlayoffs), an entertainment show (e.g. [RedBull] #Oscars, [Coca-Cola] #TheLastJedi), a social cause (e.g. [Coca-Cola] #Pride2017, [RedBull] #womensday) or a special celebration (e.g. [Nescafé] #stpatricks, [Pepsi] #thangsgiving), in others the purpose is to pair the brand with a specific feeling, emotion or attitude (e.g. [RedBull] #gives you wings>freedom; [Nescafé] #inspiration #love, [Pepsi] #micdrop>triumph), or even an action (e.g. #shareacoke, #servewithacoke) if hashtags with a directive force are involved. By providing a continuous, daily flow of conceptual associations between brands and a well-chosen collection of conceptual domains and scenarios, hashtags included in commercial tweets manage to frame the trademark and to build a consistent brand narrative. Figure 4 summarizes the frames activated by the hashtags used by each of the brands under consideration in their twitter accounts:
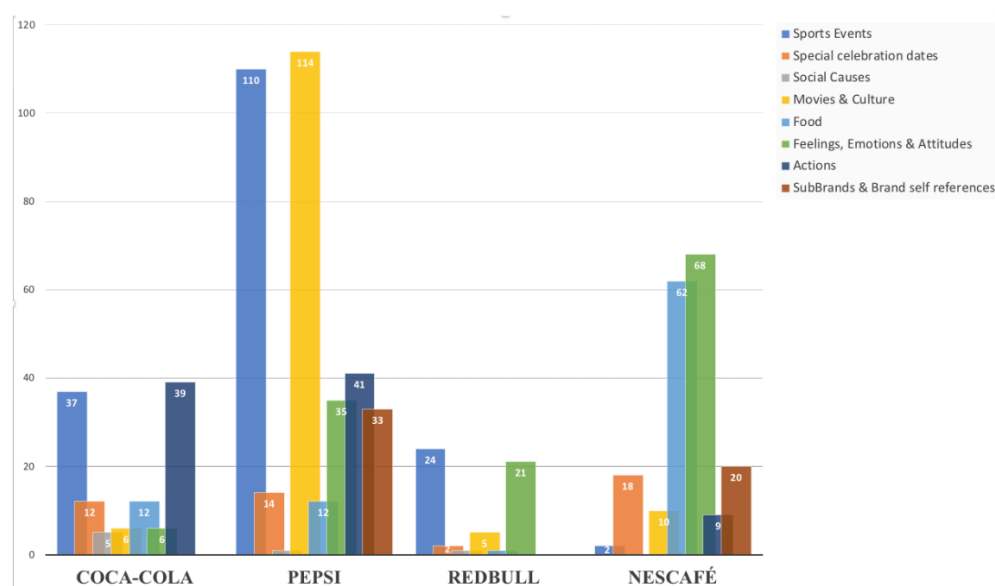
Figure 4. Conceptual frames activated by the hashtags in the corpus of analysis

As can be observed, Coca-Cola's brand narrative relies heavily on the conceptual domains of sport events and actions. In its Twitter account, Coca-Cola is persistently connected, via the aforementioned metonymic use of hashtags, with major sport happenings and competitions like the *FIFA football league* (#FIFA18), the *MLB World Series* (#MLB), *the Open (Golf) championship* (#TheOpen), the tennis *FedEx Cup* (#FedExCup) or the *NCAA Basketball Tournament* (#MarchMadness). To a lesser extent, the domains of special celebration dates and food are also conceptually linked to the brand by the use of hashtags like #ValentinesDay, #July4th, #Halloween, #NationalPizzaDay, #NationalBurritoDay, #NationalHotDogDay, etc. Many of the hashtags referring to sport events, celebration dates and food are used simultaneously to a small number of action hashtags with a directive illocutionary force: #ShareaCoke, #HaveaCoke, #ServeWithaCoke, and #ServeaCoke. The simple but effective brand narrative is thus rounded up: Coca-Cola becomes a ubiquitous element in those sport, celebration and food frames which are referred to by means of hashtags, and additionally, within those frames, the audience is invited to carry out the actions of drinking, sharing and accompanying their food with a coke. The power of framing the product in this way should not be underestimated, since activating a particular frame brings forth a wealth of connotations associated with it. Thus, sport events activate notions of fitness and health. Celebration dates bring to mind festive images of happiness, friendship and love. The food domain prompts positive feelings of basic hedonistic pleasures.

The strategic brand narrative distributed by Pepsi through its twitter account centers prominently around sports events, movies and culture, and to a lesser extent around feelings, emotions, sub-brands and self-brand references, and celebrations and food. All

and all, this is a richer narrative, aimed at a larger, more heterogeneous group of consumers than the one implemented by Coca-Cola. The sport events frames activated by the hashtags in the Pepsi Twitter account include those of American football (#patriots, #NFLPlayoffs), basketball (#NBAPlayoffs), soccer (#UCLFinal), and hockey (#NHLGreatestMoments). Culture and entertainment frames are represented by TV series (#Empire and #uncledrew) and music platforms (#TheSoundDrop), tours (#PepsiCityTour), festivals (#CMAFest) and awards (#VMAs and #CMTAwards), among others. The range of special celebration dates covered by the hashtags in the Pepsi Twitter account comprises over 12 festivities and anniversaries (e.g. #AprilsFools, #CincoDeMayo, #SpringBreak, #PresidentsDay, etc.). Positive feelings and emotions are also activated metonymically through reference to the conceptual domain of summer (e.g. #PepsiSummer), which brings along associations with good weather, outdoor activities, adventures, fun, and Pepsi as a central and refreshing element of the summertime frame. Simultaneously, hashtags activating an action frame, invite consumers to incorporate the product in the aforementioned scenarios (e.g. When you realize this weekend has #NYE2017 and #FootballSunday wrapped into one #BreakOutThePepsi). The brand narrative implemented by Pepsi also includes a significant number of self-reference hashtags about the different sub-brands of the product (#1893PesiCola, #BlackCherry, #CrystalPepsi, #RealSugarBalckCherry).

In contrast to the rest of the brands under analysis, the RedBull brand narrative is pretty simple and straightforward. The hashtags used in its Twitter account align the brand with the domains of sport events and feelings and emotions almost exclusively. The choice of sport events also differs from the other brands in focusing on more adventurous and extreme sports (e.g. rallies (#Dakar2017), sailing (#RedBullYouthAmericasCup), cross-country biking (#FestSeries), parkour (#RedBullArtOfMotion), snow bike series

(#PowerHounds), etc.). The activation of the domain of sports is combined with the specific feeling of freedom, activated via the metonymic interpretation of the recursive hashtag #givesyouwings. The resulting brand narrative is direct, distinct and coherent: RedBull is the drink for adventurous people who like freedom, challenges and offbeat sports.

Finally, Nescafé displays a brand narrative that converges upon the domains of food and feelings, with only a small number of hashtags activating other frames, such as those of special celebration dates (#itschristmastime) and cultural events (#music, #astronomyday), introducing sub-brands or self-references to the brand itself (#NESCAFÉ, #GoldBlend), and calls for actions (#makeawish, #getcreative). The Nescafé Twitter account manages to convey a wide range of positive emotions through the use of hashtags, including feelings of love (#love, #truelove, #summerlove), friendship and solidarity (#coffeeconnections #together), coziness (#hot, #homemade), energy (#MyShot, #boost), encouragement (#getupandgo, #startagain, #wakeup, #makeit), and anticipation and commencement (#itallstarts, #inception, #GoodMorningWorld). Hashtags referring to food are mostly used to highlight the basic ingredient of a Nescafé beverage (i.e. coffee), thus emphasizing its relevance (#coffee, #coffeebeans, #coffeecocktail, #coffeetreat, #coffeekiss, #coffeefun, #coffeeart, #realcoffee, etc.). As a result of this combination of hashtags, consumers are led to establish a conceptual connection between the brand, the product and a blend of positive feelings of welfare, coziness, encouragement, energy, and commencement. The brand narrative is, therefore, clear and perfectly fit to the nature of the target product: a cup of Nescafé offers physical and emotional warmth and welfare, and a boost to start a new activity or simply a new day.

In some cases, the framing and brand narrative building function of hashtags just described, prompted by a metonymic activation of different conceptual domains, co-exist with the workings of other cognitive operations fulfilling a different role. One such cognitive operation is that of cueing, which, as its name indicates, provides the audience with cues as to what further cognitive operations are necessary in the interpretation process (Ruiz de Mendoza & Santibáñez 2003). The tweet in Figure 5 exemplifies this:

Figure 5. Nescafé tweet December 24th, 2017

The information provided by the hashtags (i.e. #santaclaus #itschristmastime #christmascoffee #coffeeforsanta) cues the metonymic interpretation of "ho-t" (in the tweet text) as both the temperature of the coffee and the typical Santa's laughter. In fact, the text of the tweet (i.e. *Ho-t! Ho-t! Ho-t!*) would not make sense at all in the absence of the hashtags activating the 'coffee' and 'Christmas' frames.

Interestingly enough, some hashtags do not seem involved in the framing and brand narrative building function described at the beginning of this section at all, but they still serve a cueing function. Consider the following tweet by Coca-Cola:

Figure 6. Coca-Cola tweet April 29th, 2017

In Figure 6 the tweet metonymically activates the before (i.e. *tsssssss* = sparkling sound of a Coca-Cola being poured into a glass), during (i.e. *gulp* = swallowing sound), and after (i.e. *Ahhhhh... = feeling of satisfaction) components of a scenario in which a person is drinking a Coca-Cola. The hashtag at the end of the tweet (i.e. #CocaColaLife) does not introduce an additional conceptual domain different from that of the brand. It may, therefore, seem repetitive and unnecessary at first sight, and in any case, it does not contribute any additional information to the building of the brand narrative. However, it does perform a relevant cognitive function in cueing the interpretation of tweet: drinking a coke results in a particular type of life, a life as satisfactory as the one depicted in the previous scenario.

5.3. Effectiveness of hashtags: brand identification, retweeting and lifespan

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 have unveiled the formal and functional characteristics, and the cognitive operations underlying the use of hashtags included in commercial tweets. Their central role in the building of brand narratives and in helping consumers to grasp the intended interpretation of the tweet have also been made manifest. For a commercial hashtag to be fully effective, it would ideally have to be (1) easily identified as referring

to a particular brand, (2) have a high rate of retweeting, and (3) be in use for as long as possible, thus persistently propagating the brand identity to a broad audience for a long enough period of time to establish a consistent brand narrative. However, not all hashtags attain the same degree of popularity and success. Some of them go viral, while others are used once and forgotten forever. In this section, we investigate the correlation between the formal and functional features of the commercial hashtags described in Section 5.1 and their effectiveness, measured in terms of their degree of identification with the brand, their rate of retweeting, and their lifespan. In so doing, we expect to provide a profile of the type of hashtags which correlates with a wider propagation in Twitter.

Retweeting has been reported to be a reliable measure of the success of a tweet message and Soboleva et al. (2017) include the use of hashtags among the factors (e.g. use of links, videos, pictures, etc.) that may be held responsible for the success of a tweet and that facilitate its propagation in the digital world. Retweeting is an easy and common behavior in Twitter. If the hashtag is attractive enough, consumers will include it in the messages they retweet to the contacts in their networks, thus giving way to an effective digital word of mouth effect in the form of retweets that disseminate the brand narrative.

For each of the four brands under consideration, Table 4 captures the first five hashtags with a higher retweeting rate of the tweet in which they were used during the period of time under analysis (i.e. January 1st -December 31st, 2017).

Coca-Cola	Pepsi
1. #CokeSugarZero#Halloween	1. #Forthefans#Entry#HalftimePepsi
2. #SabrinaCokeSweepstakes	2. #1893PepsiCola
3. #WorldSeriesGame7#EarnHistory	3. #CrystalPepsi
4. #Nationalcheeseburgerday	4. #PepsiAllAccessVMAs
5. #ShareaCoke	5. #BreakOutThePepsi
RedBull	**Nescafé**
1. #givesyouwings	1. #merrychristmas
2. #Valentines	2. #itallstarts
3. #Dakar	3. #internationalcoffeeday
4. #Flatbarfrenzy	4. #mugfull
5. #ACL#RedBull	5. #NESCAFÉ#startagain

Table 4. Hashtags included in tweets with the highest retweeting rates

The retweeting rates displayed in Table 4, however, are not only a result of the use of hashtags. Other factors, such as the use of a picture, video, link or text, may have influenced the decision of the audience to retweet the posts in which the hashtags were included. For this reason, it is also necessary to take into account the propagation and lifespan of the use of hashtags, under the rationale that their effectiveness and success is also reflected in their extended use in time and in other digital platforms different from the one where they were first used. Table 5 captures the number of mentions received by the hashtags in Table 4, not only in Twitter, but in several other digital platforms as well (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, blogs, forums, news feeds, YouTube, etc.) during the month of April 2018 (i.e. at least three months after the hashtags under analysis were first analyzed).[4]

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[4] Source of the data in Table 5: http://www.brand24.com. *Brand24* is an online monitoring system for measuring digital mentions of brands, keywords and hashtags, among other brand-related data. It allows for selective searches, including those limited to a fixed period of time, and it offers information about the specific digital platforms where the mentions have appeared.

COCA-COLA		Mentions	PEPSI		Mentions
1.	#ShareaCoke	5631	1.	#CrystalPepsi	27
2.	#Nationalcheeseburgerday	22	2.	#1893PepsiCola	3
3.	#SabrinaCokeSweepstakes	0	3.	#BreakOutThePepsi	3
4.	#WorldSeriesGame7#EarnHistory	0	4.	#Forthefans#Entry#HalftimePepsi	0
5.	#CokeSugarZero#Halloween	0	5.	#PepsiAllAccessVMAs	0
REDBULL		**Mentions**	**NESCAFÉ**		**Mentions**
1.	#Dakar	20	1.	#merrychristmas	183
2.	#givesyouwings	11	2.	#internationalcoffeeday	43
3.	#Valentines	5	3.	#itallstarts	39
4.	#Flatbarfrenzy	2	4.	#mugfull	0
5.	#ACL#RedBull	0	5.	#NESCAFÉ#startagain	0

Table 5. Number of mentions for the hashtags in Table 4 in April 2018.

The data in Table 5 makes manifest which hashtags, out of those with a higher rate of retweeting, display a longer lifespan. At least three months after they were first analyzed, some of them yield few or no occurrences at all (i.e. #SabrinaCokeSweepstake, #PepsiAllAccessVMAs, #ACL#Redbull, etc.). Others, like #Dakar and #NationalCheesebugerDay continue to be used, but since they contain no reference to the brands with which they were used, their effectiveness in propagating the brand narrative is not significant. All in all, this type of hashtags linked to specific events proved useful, as shown in Section 5.2, in framing the brand narrative and aligning the brand with specific events, celebrations, and feelings. However, once those events are over, the hashtags are no longer useful in disseminating the brand message. The fact that the hashtag #merrychristmas keeps being retweeted in the digital platforms after the moment in which it was used to frame the consumption of Nescafé during the Christmas holidays is irrelevant to the propagation of the brand identity and its narrative.

Interestingly enough, the data in Table 5 also includes a small number of hashtags whose lifespan extends beyond the period of time under analysis (i.e. January-December 2017) and which are either lexically or conceptually linked to the brands, hence being

functional in keeping part of the brand message in circulation. This is the case with hashtags like #ShareaCoke, #CrystalPepsi, #givesyouwings, and #itallstarts. #ShareaCoke and #CrystalPepsi are overtly linked to the brands by including their names. #givesyouwings and #itallstarts are the taglines and mottos of their respective brands and are, therefore, conceptually associated with them.

Drawing from the information in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, and the more specific data about the success rate of hashtags in terms of retweeting and lifespan in Tables 4 and 5, it is possible to distinguish two main types of hashtags in relation to the functions they fulfill in commercial tweets:

1. *Frame building hashtags* which contribute to establishing associations between the product and a set of conceptual domains, thus setting up a brand narrative that defines and distinguishes the trademark from its competitors. As shown in Section 5.1 hashtags in this category usually display a representative function and are formally made up of a noun phrase, with varying degrees of complexity, which serves as point of access to the domains that branding professionals wish to associate with the product. Frame building hashtags have a short lifespan. As is only to be expected, their retweeting rate decreases when the event they refer to comes to an end. Thus, the #WorldSeriesGame7#EarnHistory hashtag used by Coca-Cola did not received any digital mentions in April 2018 after the sport event itself was over. They need to be constantly replaced by new hashtags naming other up-to-date events that are compatible with the brand narrative, thus keeping it alive.

2. *Dissemination hashtags*, which contribute to the propagation of the brand. These hashtags have either a directive (e.g. #ShareaCoke) or a representative function

(#givesyouwings). Directive hashtags, displaying an imperative form, engage consumers by encouraging them to courses of action that have a positive axiology and which are perceived as desirable and/or beneficial (e.g. #ShareaCoke, #BreakOutThePepsi, #startagain, etc.). Representative hashtags within this category of *dissemination hashtags* do not refer to conceptual domains different from the brand, as was the case with *frame building hashtags*, but rather they focus on conveying positive properties and potential beneficial effects of the target product. #gives you wings presents the consumption of RedBull as a source of freedom and energy, and #itallstarts by Nescafé links the use of coffee to the positive feeling of anticipation of a fresh beginning. They relate metonymically to the brand, usually in an EFFECT FOR CAUSE relationship. Representative hashtags of this type take the characteristic form of a declarative sentence. Dissemination hashtags have a longer lifespan than frame-building hashtags, and they are useful in promoting a more permanent brand identification, thus endowing trademarks with a unique and distinctive character.

The correct combination of these two types of commercial hashtags may be one key ingredient in the development of effective brand narratives in Twitter. In Table 2, it became manifest that it is not the quantity of hashtags used in a commercial Twitter account that correlates with the highest market values of the soft drink brands. Nescafé had the larger number of hashtags per tweet in our corpus, but the other three brands (i.e. Coca-Cola, Pepsi and RedBull) all rated higher in the market value ranking for the year 2017 (see Table 3). In fact, Coca-Cola stood out with a market value six times higher than the rest of the brands.

If we compare this to the data in Table 5, we observe that it is precisely Coca-Cola that has managed to keep its *dissemination hashtag* (i.e. #ShareaCoke) active for a longer period of time, with over 5000 mentions in April 2018. The dissemination hashtags by the other three brands received a significantly smaller number of mentions (i.e. Pepsi (#BreakOutThePepsi-3mentions), RedBull (#givesyouwings-11mentions), Nescafé (#itallstarts-39mentions)). Previous studies simplistically correlated the effectiveness of commercial hashtags with their rate of retweeting (Kerns 2014). As has been shown in this section, however, the effectiveness of a commercial brand narrative seems to be the output of a more complex process which involves the use of a careful choice of *frame building hashtags* and one or more powerful and persistent *dissemination hashtags*. This combination results in a richer conceptual depiction of the brand, as well as in a more permanent brand identification effect. While it should be acknowledged that other factors related to the user and the situation may also affect the retweeting rate and the digital lifespan of a hashtag, the data in our study shows that those hashtags that perform framing and dissemination roles, and that contribute to singling out the nature of the product and keeping it alive for prolonged periods of time, have very specific formal, functional, and cognitive characteristics. Therefore, the associated higher rates of retweeting and the longer digital lifespan of this specific tweets may be considered an epiphenomenon of, among other factors, the specific linguistic/conceptual nature of this type of combined hashtag-based brand narratives.

6. Conclusions

The implications of the results reported in Section 5 can be summarized as follows. For researchers interested in genre issues, we have offered a fine-grained depiction of the cognitive, pragmatic, and linguistic nature of commercial hashtags and their roles in the building of brand narratives on Twitter. Consistent with the needs witnessed in previous research on genre studies, this paper sets up the basis for a cognitive-pragmatic framework for the description of hashtag-based brand narratives in social media. It has been shown that this particular subgenre can be characterized not only by its use of a limited number of illocutionary constructions, with particular formal configurations, and fulfilling a specific set of functions, but also in relation to the cognitive operations (i.e. metonymy, cueing) and models of knowledge organization (i.e. framing) involved in the creation of the brand narratives. Although this study has restricted its scope to one element of tweets (i.e. hashtags) for the sake of exhaustiveness, a similar approach could be used for the analysis of the cognitive, pragmatic and linguistic features of commercial Twitter posts as a whole.

For marketers and branding specialists, we have made manifest the usefulness of hashtags in framing and building a digital brand narrative and the pragmatic and cognitive mechanisms underlying this construction. Consumer involvement has already been shown to have a significant effect on retweeting and propagation of the brand values and identity (Kerns 2014; Soboleva et al. 2017). This study has unveiled the cognitive, pragmatic, and constructional architecture displayed by those hashtags which correlate with a higher consumer engagement, as measured by the frequency of retweeting and the lifespan of the hashtags in the digital world, hence pointing to at least some of the factors influencing their ability to propagate the brand's message effectively. More specifically, a typology of commercial hashtags (i.e. *frame-building* vs. *dissemination hashtags*) has been offered to guide the marketing specialists in their task of constructing effective and

long-lasting brand narratives on Twitter. All in all, the analysis unveils the effective role of hashtags in the building and dissemination of brand narratives, and their functionality in allowing branding specialists to develop highly specific digital profiles that align their Twitter contents with their core brand values.

This study has limited its scope to brands within the same category of convenience goods (i.e. those products which customers buy often and without much thought or planning). It would be interesting to see if products belonging to other market categories and representing different levels of consumers' involvement (i.e. luxury products, services, etc.) make use of the same or different strategies in the building of their brand narratives. Previous studies have already shown that consumers' involvement with a type of product may influence their response to brand tweets, with high-involvement brands being retweeted significantly more often than those low-involvement brands. Future research could be aimed at exploring whether the nature of the product requires different cognitive and pragmatic strategies in the building of the corresponding brand narratives, and whether consumers' involvement could also be influenced by these and not only by the nature of the product, as previous studies suggest so far.

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