



Coding Brands on Twitter: How are Message Choice and Interactivity Associated With Consumers' Brand Loyalty?

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Abstract

Prior research shows that companies who exhibit perceptions of expense (putting time and effort into communicating with their consumers), and high levels of caring (about consumers' well-being) through the use of dialogue with consumers on Twitter, fulfill the needs and desires of their consumers; this in turn, increases brand loyalty, brand attitudes, and purchase intention among consumers (Collander, Dahlen, & Modig, 2015). While use of social media to connect with consumers has been studied, little is known about the content of those messages and how it correlates with brand loyalty. Our research aims to identify how brands use Twitter to strengthen brand loyalty through the use of interactivity and strategic messages. We analyzed what types of language and communication stimulate brand loyalty on Twitter. We used Goffman's *framing theory* to identify the motivations that two major companies have in choosing the language they put forth to their audiences. Framing theory states that companies present information to their consumers in a strategic manner in order to influence them to process the given message in the company's desired fashion (Goffman, 1974). Results of the study increased understanding of the role that message choice has in building consumer brand loyalty.

Methods

A thematic analysis was conducted by coding tweets of two brands on Twitter. Coca-Cola and Pepsi were chosen because they are successful, well-known, and competitive brands. Research showed that both companies have a large social media presence and consumer following. The time period of March 15, 2017-March 31, 2017 was chosen because March Madness and Spring Break were taking place. Original tweets were pulled from Twitter during the two-week period and were transcribed. Each tweet was broken down into separate thought units (Fereday, 2006). Numerous thought unit categories were created by our team of researchers. A constant comparison method was used that eventually collapsed the data into six distinct categories/themes. Thought units were then placed into the six respective categories.

Results

- *RQ1*: How do companies use strategic messaging and inclusive language on twitter in their efforts to maintain brand identification and brand loyalty?
- Pepsi's most common themes were community building, contextualizing, call-to-action, and providing access. Coca-Cola's most common themes were emotion giving, community building, and contextualizing.
- Both companies showed contextualizing and community building as common themes in connecting with consumers. Their messages are geared towards inclusivity and staying relevant to current events, strategies that promote brand identification, which in turn encourages brand loyalty.
- They differed in their other common themes. Pepsi focused more on call-to-action and providing access, themes more heavily focused on maintaining brand loyalty. Coca-Cola focused more on emotion giving, being more focused on maintaining brand identification.
- Coca-Cola focused on messages that attempt to relate and connect to consumers. Pepsi focused more on expanding its market onto other platforms, such as celebrity endorsements, merchandise, promotions, and other social media accounts.
- Results showed that Coca-Cola spent more time during the two-week period catering to consumer complaints and Pepsi spent more time tweeting during the two-week period.
 - Pepsi had 14 tweets, 60 thought units, and 26 consumer complaint-based interactions.
 - Coca-Cola had 9 tweets, 37 thought units, and 127 consumer complaint-based interactions.

Thematic Analysis Categories

Category/Theme	Definition	Example
Contextualizing:	thought units that explain the meaning around people, things, or events within the tweet	
Community building:	thought units that communicate a language of inclusivity, cohesiveness and humanization towards consumers	
Call-to-action:	thought units that motivate consumers to interact with a certain aspect related to their particular brand	
Emotion giving:	thought units that are intended to draw a certain emotional reaction out of consumers (excitement, happiness, sadness, etc.)	
Providing access:	thought units that lead consumers to further interactive platforms related to the company	
Celebrity endorsement:	thought units that use public figures as a way to advertise their brand and relate to specific consumers	

Chart 1: Theme Frequencies, Coca-Cola.

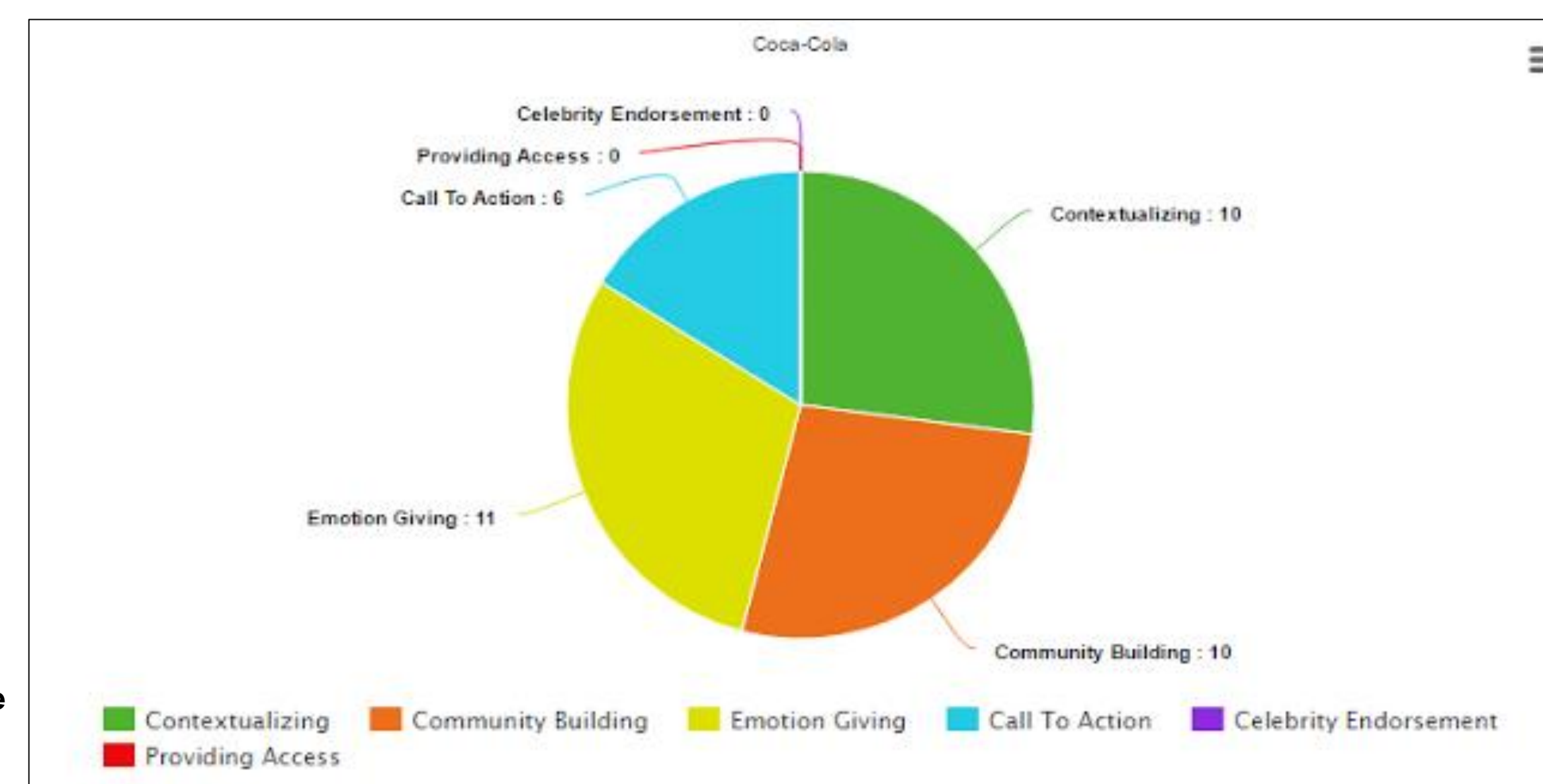


Chart 2: Theme Frequencies, Pepsi.

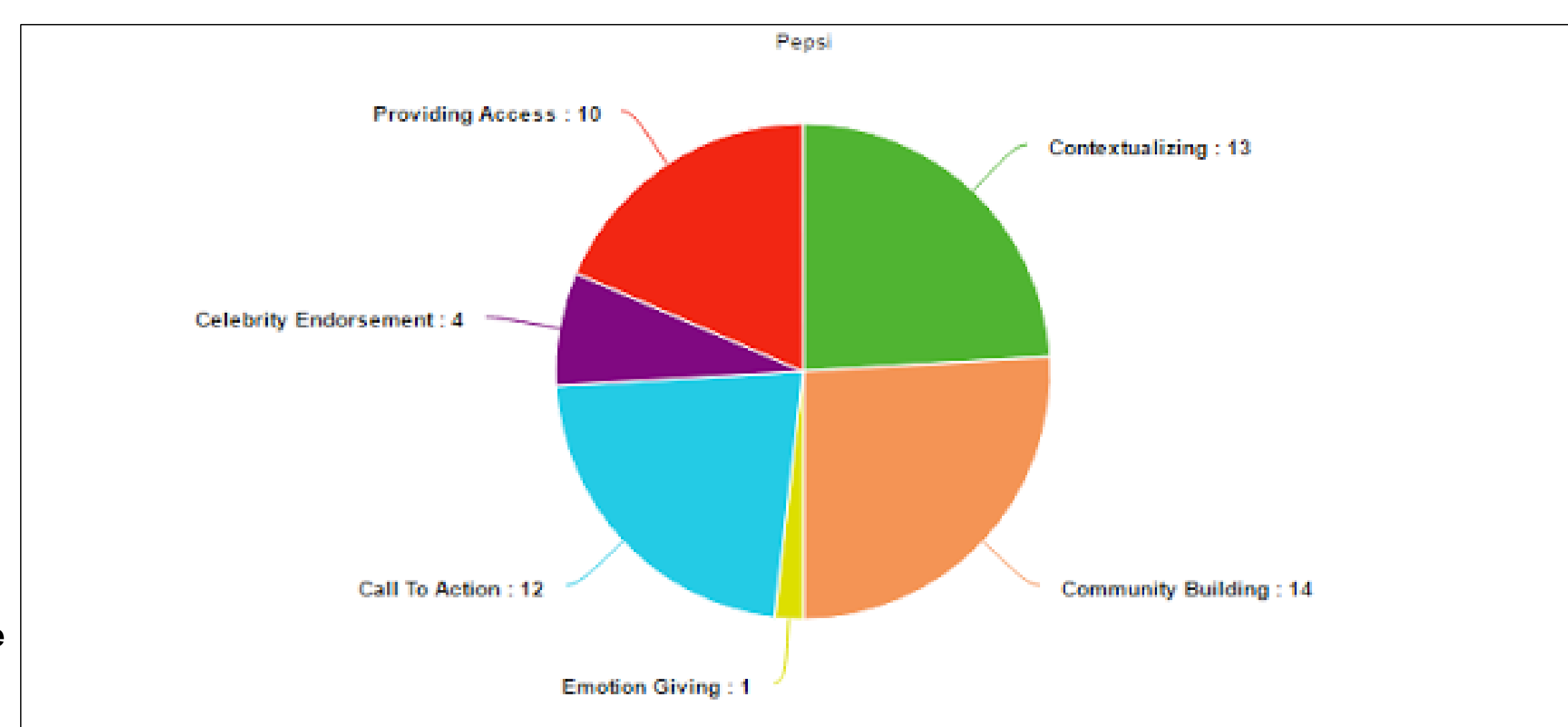
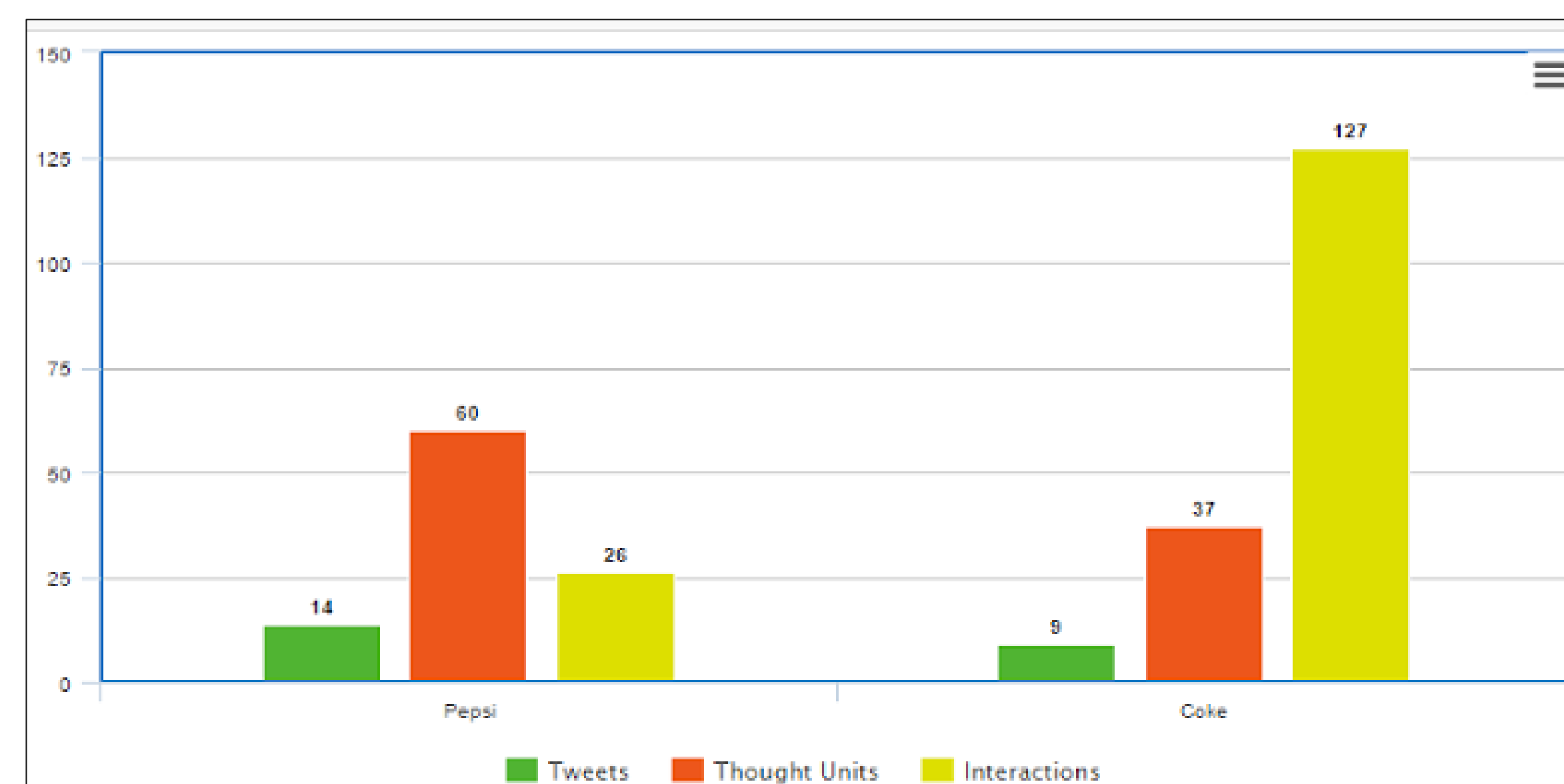


Chart 3: General Frequencies.



Discussion/Implications

Our prior research showed that there have been various studies that examined different factors that contribute to brand loyalty on social media; however, the actual messages companies send to consumers in an attempt to maintain brand loyalty has not been studied. Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) measured how consumers responded to different brand stimuli and the effect it had on brand satisfaction and brand identity, which lead to brand loyalty. Our study builds on these ideas, but goes further to look at the actual messages that companies sent to their consumers on social media. The goal of the messages sent by Pepsi and Coca-Cola are to both satisfy their consumers and establish a social media community with which consumers can identify. Kwon, Kim, and Yongjun (2014) studied the motivations that consumers had for following a brand on Twitter. These motivations include incentive seeking, information seeking, social interaction seeking, brand usage and likeability. Our research supports this study by pointing out the messages companies use to fulfill these motivations on Twitter. Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) looked at the dialogue companies hold with consumers on Twitter and the effect that that dialogue has on the consumers' feelings towards that brand; when brands engage in dialogue with their consumers, consumers feel valued by that specific brand. Both companies, Coca-Cola and Pepsi, show significant levels of caring and effort to engage in dialogue with their consumers, whether that is through the tweets they send out or the consumer complaint-based interactions they have. Pepsi sends out more initial tweets to expand its market and engage their consumers. Coca-Cola focuses on the interactions aspect to cater to the needs and emotions of its consumers. Lastly, both companies use these themes to portray themselves in a specific and desired fashion to consumers. This idea is supported by Goffman's framing theory. The research we have conducted can be very beneficial for companies to refer to when creating and sending messages to consumers on Twitter as well as other social media sites. Because social media is such an important and continuously growing outlet for companies in communicating with consumers, companies need to understand how to effectively utilize it in order to maintain strong brand loyalty among consumers. Our research can educate companies on the types of language and interaction necessary to successfully frame messages in order to increase and maintain brand identification and loyalty.