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Measuring Success:

The Importance of Retweets as Exposure and Replies as Relationships for Companies in the Digital Age

Introduction

It goes without saying that creating and sustaining exposure of their respective brands, products, and good works significantly contributes to the short-term and long-term successes of a given company. This has only grown in importance in the age of social media, in which companies use numerous platforms to integrate themselves into the lives of consumers and to promote their products in relation to said consumers' needs, values, and trends, among other factors. Commercialism has never been so personalised. While many strategies exist to fulfil audience interaction, such as amassing followers and communicating with them directly, having users share a company's product is, more often than not, a sign of success, as said product is reaching a myriad of networks and markets just by online groundswell. Twitter's retweet function is arguably the most successful, famous, and innovative tool for companies to have their products spread throughout the platform, and, in turn, various online communities. Aside from garnering and fostering thousands of loyal followers, what, then, is the key—if there is one at all—to writing a tweet that ensures retweets? How do companies attain numerical social media success? This report examines retweet frequencies to posts published by the respective Pepsi and Coca-Cola Twitter accounts, replies made by the companies, and the information both brands produce to enact what is essentially free promotion and exposure.

Method

The range of data collected included the 3000 most recent tweets (as of May 28, 2017) published by Pepsi (@pepsi) and the 3000 most recent tweets (as of May 28, 2017) published by Coca-Cola (@CocaCola). Analysing the most recent tweets allows for data that is current and provides for an interesting angle when considering how each account responded to contemporary events (if they did) and what each account posted on notable holidays, such as Mother's Day, in this case, that occurred during the timespan of the sample. Replies were included in both samples because of their importance in cultivating a healthy server-client relationship, of which brand satisfaction and loyalty increases. Notable factors that were taken into consideration when obtaining data included the numbers of Pepsi's and Coca-Cola's tweets, friends, followers, likes, and lists. While these numbers gave greater context and understanding to the results gathered in each sample, they do not provide the same direct relevance as retweets and replies do for this particular analysis and, consequently, would not be examined any further. Graphs and tables were used to map the results, providing a succinct, accurate, and accessible presentation of findings that hold within them meanings and patterns better suited to being found, comprehended, and fully appreciated when displayed in visual representations such as the ones included below.

Results

Upon organising and assessing the gathered data, the respective strategies implemented by Pepsi and Coca-Cola became clear. Across the 3000 Pepsi tweets that were analysed, 2481 of them were replies, accounting for 82.6% of the sample. Coca-Cola, on the other hand, replied 2968 times—98.9% of the 3000-tweets sample. The 2481 replies that Pepsi tweeted amassed 3167 retweets, whereas Coca-Cola's 2968 replies managed 982 retweets. Interestingly, 17 of Pepsi's tweets in the set were directed at popular accounts as though they were replies, but

included full stops directly before the handles (see Appendix A) so as to stop it from being an actual reply, thereby ensuring a wider audience sees the tweet, as replies can only be seen by the few who follow both accounts.

From this, we can conclude that Pepsi intends to grow their brand by tweeting more to the public with general announcements, while Coca-Cola’s strategy involves fostering a loyal fanbase by acknowledging them directly through the reply function. In terms of exposure amassed by retweets, Pepsi dominates, which is due in large part to their decision to tweet wide about major events and topics—such as sports (NBA), television (*Empire*), and award ceremonies (VMAs)—instead of narrow.

	Pepsi (@pepsi)	Coca-Cola (@CocaCola)
<u>Tweets</u>		
Count:	3000	3000
<u>Retweet Data in/of Above</u>		
Sum:	138,415	8005
Mean:	46.1	2.6
Median:	0	0
Mode:	0	0

Fig. 1: Table demonstrating retweets amassed by Pepsi and Coca-Cola in sample.

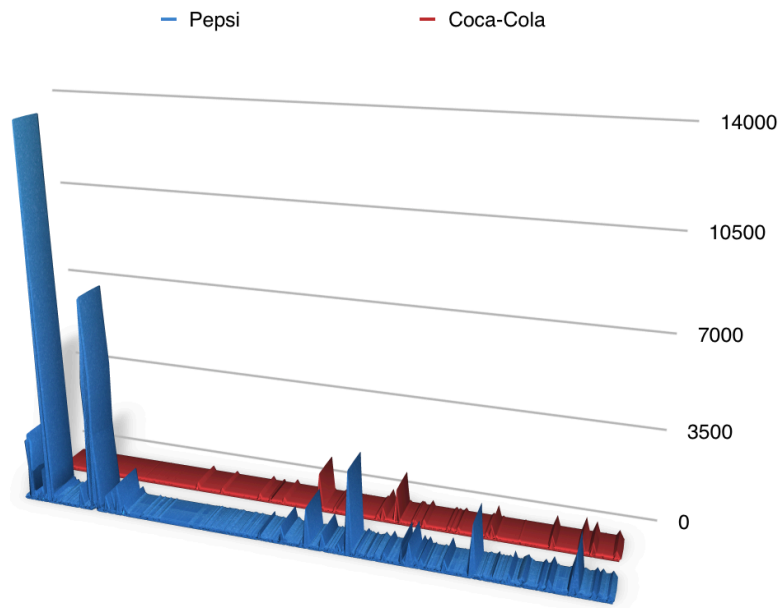


Fig. 2: Graph demonstrating span of both samples and amount of retweets each tweet received. Pepsi's April 5 tweet (see below) saw a spike in retweets,

cumulating nearly 14,000 retweets.



Fig. 3. Pepsi's apology for their Kendall Jenner commercial.

Discussion

Though it is clear that those behind the respective Twitter accounts of Pepsi and Coca-Cola are utilising different strategies for what is inherently the same purpose—beating their rival—

who is succeeding? Coca-Cola's frequent and personable replies to clients go a long way towards fostering an amicable seller-buyer relationship. The light-hearted back-and-forth between Coca-Cola and users can be considered something of a personable dynamic, one in which the conglomerate assumes the role of a friend to the ordinary person. They are, in effect, playing something of a long-game: instead of posting large statements directed at most everyone but arguably received by most no-one, they acknowledge the individual, whether or not said individual actually tagged @CocaCola in their initial tweet, by responding to them with a helpful or cheerful reply. Taking the time with the individual in the present sees Coca-Cola foster a healthy and loyal relationship for the future (see Appendix B). Better yet, if their reply to a user is retweeted by the user or any other user not affiliated with Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola is seen and promoted, without financial expense, as accessible, relatable, and any other trait that is valued for being one that, so to speak, looks out- and makes time for the little guy. However, in terms of exposure, Pepsi is beating Coca-Cola at its own game.

While they don't reply as often as Coca-Cola, when Pepsi does respond to users, they do (in the sample, at least) gain more retweets on their replies than their counterparts, as evidenced earlier. As well as this, Pepsi exercises Twitter as their megaphone to online communities. This, by and large, allows for a greater number of users to retweet their posts, which, in effect, promotes them and their products as popular, notable, contemporary, important, and worthy of attention, with markets both familiar and unfamiliar with their model becoming aware of them.

Many factors, such as the number of followers and the true intention of the retweeting user (e.g. sarcasm and hypocrisy), contribute to retweet tendencies and are worthy of further consideration in an expanded report, as does the type of exposure and who sees the retweets (Pepsi loyalists retweeting to Pepsi loyalists strengthen their community but don't grow it).

Of the data assembled here, it could be suggested that Pepsi is just ahead of Coca-Cola when it comes to winning the Twitter battle, as Pepsi not only attains wider exposure through the dominant amount of retweets they amass, but the fact that *their* replies—a tool utilised by Coca-Cola—gain more retweets than their rival's.

References

CocaCola. (2017, May). <https://twitter.com/CocaCola>

Pepsi. (2017, May). <https://twitter.com/pepsi>

RicardoCanales. (2017, May 26). I buy a #coke fr a vending machime just abt daily and I NEVER get a bottle with Ricardo on it! Por que' Coca Cola...por que?!?!? <https://twitter.com/RicardoCanales/status/868041027512410113>

Appendix A



Fig. 1: Pepsi's tweet regarding Lukas Graham. The period before "@LukasGraham" signifies it as a standard tweet rather than a reply.

This is also an example of Pepsi tweeting wide: they include in their 140 characters popular musician Lukas Graham's handle, the Video Music Awards' hashtag, and #TheSoundDrop, the hashtag to Pepsi's own, new music platform. The timing of the tweet is pertinent, too: they are tweeting about a massive event in American, world, and music culture—the VMAs—the day of the event. This surely increased the company's exposure, as users who perused #VMAs tweets saw Pepsi's brand and products.

Appendix B



Fig. 1: @CocaCola helpfully replies to user @RicardoCanales regarding a product.