Ehrenberg-Bass Institute Working Paper
Forthcoming in the *Australasian Marketing Journal*

"Ageism Kills Brands"

Authors:

Dr Zachary William Anesbury - University of New South Wales
Prof Steven Bellman - Ehrenberg-Bass Institute
Dr Carl Driesener - Ehrenberg-Bass Institute
Dr Bill Page - Ehrenberg-Bass Institute
Prof Byron Sharp - Ehrenberg-Bass Institute

Corresponding Author :
Dr Zachary William Anesbury - info@marketingscience.info

University of South Australia | Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science

Ageism kills brands

- Understand the relationship between buyer age and new-to-market, growing, stable, declining, and dead sub-brands.
- There are risks when excluding any age group from marketing activities.
- While new-to-market sub-brands appeal more to younger category buyers, failing to recruit all category buyers appears to result in sub-brand death.
- Healthy brands appeal to all age cohorts that match their category.

Highlights

- Understand the relationship between buyer age and new-to-market, growing, stable, declining, and dead sub-brands.
- There are risks when excluding any age group from marketing activities.
- While new-to-market sub-brands appeal more to younger category buyers, failing to recruit all category buyers appears to result in sub-brand death.
- Healthy brands appeal to all age cohorts that match their category.

Ageism kills brands

Abstract

Market share growth requires building mental and physical availability among all category buyers. However, if younger category buyers are more likely to purchase new-to-market products, then perhaps younger buyers are, relatively speaking, more important for growth. This research investigates the relationship between category buyer age, brand buyer age, and brand failure. When sub-brand buyer age is younger than category-buyer age, the sub-brand is likely to be (a) new-to-market, or (b) growing in market share. Older-than-category sub-brand-buyer age is likely for sub-brands that are (a) declining, or (b) dead. Results from 17 years (1998-2014) of UK household panel data, including 5,913 sub-brands from 101 categories, show that age skews were uncommon (only 18% of sub-brands), and secondly, that growing, stable and declining sub-brands appealed equally to all ages. Finally, we identified that new launches and dead brands tend to skew to younger consumers, suggesting that new launches need to appeal to all ages to avoid failure.

Keywords: consumer age, segmentation, panel data, market share, growth and decline

1. Introduction

Brands grow, the evidence suggests, by increasing their penetration among *all category buyers* (Dawes, 2016a; Romaniuk, Dawes and Nenycz-Thiel, 2014; Nenycz-Thiel, Dawes and Romaniuk, 2018). Brands decline, fundamentally, from a failure to acquire new category buyers (Riebe *et al.*, 2014), or light category buyers (Dawes, 2020), another possible driver of the decline is under-performance in acquiring *younger category buyers* (Anderson and Sharp, 2010). The present study examines the contention that the fundamental driver of market share decline is a failure to capture younger category buyers by identifying the buyer age profiles of new-to-market, growing, stable, declining, or "dead" sub-brands (where "dead" means the sub-brand brand has exited the market for more than 12 months). New sub-brands are more common than entirely new brands, so examining sub-brands opens up more cases to examine, and makes it more likely to find an age effect, as existing brands may use sub-brands to appeal to different age groups.

This study focuses on buyers who are relatively younger or older compared to the category average, rather than absolute age because in an empirical generalisation across many categories needs to account for the average age of category buyers. The mean (average) age of category buyers can vary widely in absolute terms so relying on absolute age is not useful. For example, the average age of buyers who buy cola tends to be lower in absolute years than the average age of those who buy arthritis medication (D'Amico, 2007). In previous studies, the term "*younger*" meant university-aged students (Brennan, Dahl and Eagle, 2010) or buyers under 50 years of age (Simcock, Sudbury and Wright, 2006); while "*older*" meant buyers over 55 (Ford, Trott and Simms, 2016; Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990) or an even older group at least 65 years of age (East, Uncles and Lomax, 2013).

In contrast, "*young"* meant 18 to 25 (Winchester, Hall and Binney, 2014; Fry, 2011; Barrie, Jones and Wiese, 2011; Yap *et al.*, 2014) and 18 to 35 year-old group (Moodie and Ford, 2011). In this study, the terms *younger category buyers* and *older category buyers* refer to age relative to the category, while the terms *young buyers* and *old buyers* are for an absolute age.

This study builds on existing knowledge relating to younger category buyers disproportionately buying new-to-market brands, and so new-to-market and growing brands skew towards younger category buyers; while young (absolute age) consumers have larger repertoire sizes and are less behaviourally loyal.

First, the evidence that new-to-market brands will attract a disproportionate amount of younger category buyers comes from a study showing behavioural differences between younger and older category buyers. So younger category buyers are more likely to buy new-to-market brands (Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent, 2010).

Second, other studies outline how age affects repeat-purchase behaviour. Compared with older category buyers, younger category buyers have slightly larger repertoire sizes (i.e., they purchase more brands on average) (Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990; D'Amico, 2007). Younger category buyers are less behaviourally loyal to goods purchased frequently (East *et al.*, 1995; McGoldrick and Andre, 1997; East *et al.*, 2000), or infrequently (Maddox *et al.*, 1978; Cattin and Punj, 1983; Lapersonne, Laurent and Le Goff, 1995; Homburg and Giering, 2001; Lambert-Pandraud, Laurent and Lapersonne, 2005).

Third, Anderson and Sharp (2010) found that the customer profiles of new-to-market and growing brands skew towards younger category buyers while declining brands skew towards older category buyers. However, this prior research did not examine dead brands (those known to have exited the market).

To increase understanding of the relationship between buyer age and the growth and decline of sub-brands, this study analyses almost 6,000 sub-brands from over 100 supermarket product categories, such as mouthwashes, teas, and yogurts. The results of this study offer:

- an extension of previous research into buyer age profiles of new-to-market, growing and declining *brands* to *sub-brands* and additional consumer goods categories; and
- the first empirical evidence of the buyer age profiles of dead sub-brands. Previous research only examined declining brands and brands in-market at the time of the study.

Dead sub-brands are especially important to examine given the large portion of new-to-market products failures. In an examination of seven empirical studies spanning three countries, failure rates were between 33% and 55% (Cierpicki, Wright and Sharp, 2000). Similarly, an examination of 13 empirical studies finds that new product failure rates were around 40%, ranging from 25% to 55% (Castellion and Markham, 2013). Further analysis of 111,128 new SKUs in 37 categories found that 29% failed by the end of the first year (Wilbur and Farris, 2014). New product failure rates may be lower than typically assumed, but are still substantial, and one reason for their demise may be a failure to attract younger category buyers.

The current study analyses sub-brands instead of brands. For example, it treats 'Pantene Smooth+Sleek', 'Pantene Smooth+Sleek 2in1', and 'Pantene Volume+Body 2in1' separately as 'sub-brands' rather than analysing all 'Pantene shampoos & conditioners' as an aggregate brand. Sub-brands are often functionally different from the recognisable parent brand and therefore cover the market with appropriate varieties (Dawes, 2017). Sub-brands (e.g., diet vs premium varieties) often compete in different sub-categories to fulfil different needs. Further, as most new-to-market products are incremental variants (e.g., offering a fat-free or sugar-reduced version of an existing brand) in the supermarket sector, the analysis of sub-brands is useful for this research. It can be the case that a sub-brand is growing while the parent brand as a whole is declining or vice versa. Sub-brands have been defined and analysed in previous studies of instant coffees (Keng *et al.*, 1998; Keng and Ehrenberg, 1984), retail fuels (Wright, Sharp and Sharp, 1998), department stores (Sharp and Sharp, 1997) and motor vehicles (Ehrenberg and Bound, 1999; Ehrenberg and Pouilleau, 1992).

2. Research Background and Research Question Development

2.1 Younger Category Buyers Buy New-to-Market Brands

Of all the age segments, younger category buyers appear to be more likely to buy recently launched brands. Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent (2010), for example, found that younger category buyers (in this case, younger women) tended to buy recently launched perfume brands. Older category buyers preferred brands that had been on the market longer. These results were limited to a single category, country, and period, but the authors also reported on three unpublished studies that provided corroboration. In one, only 50% of younger category buyers bought established car brands, compared with 75% of older category buyers. According to the second study, well-established radio stations had twice the percentage share among older category buyers than among younger category buyers. In the third unpublished study, perfumes launched five decades earlier had a three-fold higher share of older category buyers compared with younger category buyers. While these categories are unrelated to supermarket categories, they represent the extent of the previously published findings. The consistent conclusion, then, is that younger category buyers tend to favour new-to-market brands, at least in durables and media consumption.

2.2 Young Consumers Have Larger Repertoire Sizes and are Less Loyal

One way in which younger category buyers and older category buyers differ in their buying behaviour is in the average number of brands they buy within a given category. One study reported that younger category buyers have more extensive brand repertoires than older category buyers (Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990). This work was based on seven supermarket categories but used a simple dichotomous absolute measure of age, as either above or below the average age. One study, using six age groups, suggested that the number of brands used declines linearly with age (D'Amico, 2007), but the slope of this change was not steep. The youngest group in the study used an average of 1.32 brands over six months and the oldest 1.24 (6% fewer). Moreover, categories such as contact lenses, medicated skin ointments, and pain-relieving rubs and liquids showed the opposite pattern. Older category buyers ordinarily used more brands, mainly when they were the heaviest buyers of a category. These findings suggest that it is essential to take into account the average age of category buyers when examining the relationship between age and buying behaviour.

More extensive repertoires may suggest lower behavioural loyalty towards brands or heavier buying of the whole category, which may be the case for many younger category buyers of frequently bought goods. In a supermarket category, middle-aged category buyers are the most behaviourally loyal (East *et al.*, 1995; McGoldrick and Andre, 1997) attributable to their life stage (with regards to family status) more so than their actual age. Older category buyers might be even more behaviourally loyal but have less money to act on their loyalty as the proportion of their income spent at the supermarket decreases with age (East *et al.*, 2000).

Younger category buyers are also less loyal to brands of infrequently bought goods, such as cars. Older category buyers consider fewer cars or dealerships and increase their repeat-purchasing of brands (Maddox *et al.*, 1978). In one study, those who considered only a single car dealership were more likely to be older category buyers (Cattin and Punj, 1983). In another study, previous car owners, who tended to be older category buyers, had limited consideration sets and were more likely to repeat-purchase their current car brand (Lapersonne, Laurent and Le Goff, 1995). Older category buyers of new cars were more loyal than younger category buyers (Homburg and Giering, 2001). Also, new car buyers who were older category buyers, repeat-purchased a brand more frequently, considered fewer brands, fewer dealers, and fewer models (Lambert-Pandraud, Laurent and Lapersonne, 2005). This lack of current search is attributable to older buyers' previous experience with car buying over their lifetime (Homburg and Giering, 2001).

The pattern is clear: as age increases, buyers consider fewer options and repeat-purchase more often from those options. While the evidence for this relationship is evident for infrequently bought goods, the evidence from supermarket goods research suggests that the relationship between age and repeat-purchasing varies depending on the category. Hence there is a need for extending the previous research into age and brand buying of infrequently purchased goods to supermarket goods, to investigate whether new-to-market and growing brands' profiles skew towards younger category buyers and declining brands skew towards older category buyers.

2.3 New-to-Market and Growing Brands Skew Towards Younger Category Buyers

Research has compared the demographics of new-to-market and established *brands*. Two-thirds of all brands showed skewed age distributions relative to the average of all brands for the category. Of these, seven in ten new-to-market brands and one in two growing brands skewed towards younger category buyers (Sharp and Anderson, 2008). The opposite was the case for declining brands, which skewed towards older category buyers (Anderson and Sharp, 2010). This finding suggests that younger category buyers are easier for new-to-market and growing brands to acquire. Potential explanations were that younger category buyers had had less time to develop brand loyalties within the given categories (Anderson and Sharp, 2010), or they are more inquisitive, innovative, and interested in variety as they are learning about the categories (Wood, 2004). The results for declining brands suggested these brands failed to grow because they did not attract enough additional younger category buyers to replace lost category buyers.

Table 1 outlines the effect of age on buying behaviour, and the present study aims to replicate and extend, to sub-brands, prior work for new-to-market, growing, and declining brands (Anderson and Sharp, 2010). We also report new findings on the relationship for dead sub-brands. A dead sub-brand had a penetration ≥1% in the first year but zero penetration in the third year, and had, therefore, exited the market.

<Insert Table 1 about here>

Previous literature shows that market shares are generally stable. An analysis of over 400 diverse markets including cereal, holiday reservations, private aeroplanes, and furniture, between 1975 and 1994, finds that 78% of the cases are stationary (Dekimpe and Hanssens, 1995). A more recent examination of 140 brands in 18 consumer goods categories for a continuous panel between 1999 and 2005 finds that 75% of the brands were stable (i.e., market share moving less than three percentage points) (Graham, 2009). The most extensive research between 2008 and 2012, in terms of brands, examined 639 brands across 28 categories including food, personal care, home care, and pet food, finding 86% of brands were stable (Trinh and Anesbury, 2015). While the benchmark for stability is typically three percentage points (Graham, 2009; Trinh and Anesbury, 2015), these two studies analysed brands, which would have larger market shares than sub-brands, and therefore more mathematically more likely to move by more percentage points. Because sub-brands are unlikely to move this much, in absolute percentage terms, the present research opted for one percentage point as the window for market-shard stability. Two initial research questions are:

RQ1. What proportion of sub-brands have stable market share over three years?

RQ2. Are younger category buyers overrepresented (i.e., indexes over 150) in the age profiles of sub-brands that are (a) new-to-market, or (b) growing in market share?

As noted earlier, Anderson and Sharp (2010) analysed new-to-market, growing, and declining brands, but not dead sub-brands. The extension to dead brands is crucial, especially concerning buyers' age. While deleting sub-brands is far more common, deleting brands themselves from a company's portfolio almost rarely occurs (Shah, Laverie and Davis, 2017), and can occur for many reasons, none of which may relate to consumer profiles (Shah, 2017). For example, none of the seven reasons advanced to explain why Starbucks was unsuccessful in Australia, focusing on the impact of consumers' age (Patterson, Scott and Uncles, 2010). Anecdotal evidence also suggests brands decline and die if they move away from their target markets (Thomas and Kohli, 2009) and that resurrected dead brands (i.e., dead brands re-entering the market) appeal to young consumers (Gilal *et al.*, 2020a).

Further, the brand deletion takes 2-3 years to implement (Shah, Laverie and Davis, 2017), and therefore the lack of marketing resources for recruiting new buyers may result in a consumer profile that skews towards existing buyers (and even more so for long term buyers), who are therefore older category buyers. Alternatively, a failure to include older category buyers if a new-to-market brand does not receive enough resources to appeal to all age groups. Emphasising the importance of younger category buyers, additional literature on brand resurrection has overwhelmingly focused on the role that young consumers play (Davari, Iyer and Guzmán, 2017; Gilal *et al.*, 2020b). Therefore, this study's third and final research question is:

RQ3. Are older category buyers overrepresented (i.e., indexes over 150) in the age profiles of sub-brands that are (a) declining in market share, or (b) dead (having exited the market)?

3. Data and Method

3.1 Data

This research uses panel data, supplied by Kantar, a major market research firm, to examine the relationship between category buyers' age and new-to-market, growing, stable, declining, and dead sub-brands. The data cover the buying behaviour of a demographically and geographically representative sample of the United Kingdom (Kantar, 2015). Specifically, in line with previous studies (Anesbury, Nguyen and Bogomolova, 2018) the data were obtained from 5,913 sub-brands in 101 consumer goods categories covering four different three-year periods: 1998–2000, 2008–2010, 2010–2012, and 2012 to 2014. Adhering to previous conventions of consumer behaviour research (Trinh, Anesbury and Driesener, 2017; Scriven *et al.*, 2017), the data cover many categories, across many years, in line with this study's aim of finding generalisable patterns. A timeframe of 12 months accounts for seasonality. If categories experience higher sales during a particular season (e.g., Christmas or Easter), a six-month period will miss the majority of these sales.

3.2 Method

In defining the sample, the impact of small sample sizes was reduced by excluding all sub-brands that had less than 1% penetration. This approach was consistent with previous brand performance studies (Pare and Dawes, 2007; Stocchi, Nenycz-Thiel and Driesener, 2011). From the raw purchase data for every three years, sub-brands were classified as either new-to-market, growing, stable, declining, or dead as follows. A stable sub-brand's market share did not change by more than *one percentage point* over the three-year analysis period.

A sub-brand that sold zero units in the first year of a three-year period but achieved a market share of at least 1% in the third year was considered new-to-market. A sub-brand that had a market share of at least 1% in the first year but zero in the third year was considered dead (Hanby, 1999; Thomas and Kohli, 2009). Growth and decline classifications were by changes in the market share. Only sub-brands that grew by more than one percentage point were classified as 'growing'. Sub-brands with a decline of more than one percentage point were 'declining.'

The aggregate data provided by Kantar had pre-defined age categories of unequal size. Consequently, two age brackets (younger category buyers, and older category buyers) were created and standardized via weighting so that all age brackets were of equal size (i.e., 50% of consumers "younger," 50% "older," for each category). Individual sub-brands could skew, relative to the category, towards younger category buyers, older category buyers, or have no age skew. An index to 100 (no difference) allows comparisons of each sub-brand's age profile with the category average.

This study adopts a managerial relevance level of ±50% (indices ≥150 for either younger or older buyers) as indicating a substantial age difference, that is, one that would likely to be managerially important or actionable (Kennedy, Scriven and Nenycz-Thiel, 2014). Sub-brand classification began by determining if either the younger or older category buyer indexes for each sub-brand were above 150. If not, the sub-brand had no skew. Using this index, 19% of sub-brands displayed an age-based skew. While this is not in line with the 66% of *brands* from the previous investigation involving new-to-market, growing, and declining brands (Anderson and Sharp, 2010), that prior study did not indicate its approach to age classifications, so it is hard to identify why that might be. It is in line, however, with previous research showing brand age deviations seldom exist (Hammond, Ehrenberg and Goodhardt, 1996; Uncles *et al.*, 2012). If the younger category buyer index is larger than 150, then the sub-brand is classified as skewing towards younger category buyers. If the older-category buyer index is larger than 150, then the sub-brand is classified as skewing towards older category buyers. If none of those is true, then the sub-brand is classified as having no skew.

For each sub-brand, the age profile was obtained by dividing each of the two age groups by the total number of category users and then multiplying this figure by 100 (to calculate a percentage). To index sub-brand age profiles against the category, the sub-brand age-group percentages were divided by the corresponding category average percentages. For example, within each category, 50% of category buyers were "younger," and 50% were "older," so if a sub-brand's profile was 75% younger buyers, the sub-brand's index for younger category buyers would be 150, and thus considered to be skewing towards younger category buyers (+50). Including only positive skews, and ignoring negative skews, makes our research questions more conservative by focusing on skews towards and not away from different age groups (defined in relation to average category buyer age). The results report only skews toward, rather than away from, an age group, and through sampling error the positive skew for a sub-brand may be less substantial than the unreported negative skew.

Systematically the same procedure was repeated for 5,913 sub-brands in 101 consumer goods categories. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the results in order of sub-brand growth trajectory (i.e., new-to-market, growing, stable, declining, and dead) and age group (i.e., skewed towards younger category buyers, and older category buyers).

4. Results

The first research question investigated the stability of sub-brands over three years. Previous studies examining *brands*, using a *three percentage point* growth or decline window, have found stability for 75-86% of brands (Graham, 2009; Trinh and Anesbury, 2015). The present research, examining *sub-brands*, and using a *one percentage point* window, finds stability for 63% of sub-brands, a very consistent result.

The second research question asked if younger category buyers overrepresent in the age profiles of sub-brands that are (a) new-to-market, or (b) growing in market share. Research question three asked if older category buyers overrepresent in the age profiles of sub-brands that are (a) declining in market share or (b) dead.

<Insert Table 2 about here>

<Insert Table 3 about here>

Of the 167 new-to-market sub-brands that did skew, 74% skewed towards younger category buyers, and 26% towards older category buyers. For growing sub-brands, 40% skewed towards younger category buyers, and 60% towards older category buyers (see Table 2). Further, of the 612 sub-brands that skewed toward younger category buyers, 20% were new-to-market, 4% were growing, 57% were stable, 8% were declining, and 12% were dead (see Table 3). The evidence in Table 2 and Table 3 suggests that younger category buyers are more likely to purchase new-to-market sub-brands, but not growing sub-brands.

Of the declining sub-brands that skewed, 48% skewed towards younger category buyers, and 52% skewed towards older category buyers. Of the dead sub-brands that skewed, 76% skewed towards younger category buyers, and 24% towards older category buyers (see Table 2). The evidence in Table 2 and Table 3 suggests that older category buyers do not overrepresent in the age profiles declining of sub-brands. For dead sub-brands, younger category buyers overrepresented.

5. Discussion, and Implications

This research, which investigated the relationship between category buyer age, brand buyer age, and brand failure, by analysing almost 6,000 sub-brands from over 100 consumer goods categories, provides four novel findings:

1. Three in every five sub-brands' market shares vary within one percentage point over three years,
2. New-to-market sub-brands' buyer profiles are three times more likely to skew towards younger than older category buyers,
3. Neither growing nor declining sub-brands appeal disproportionately to either younger or older category buyers, and lastly, and perhaps most importantly,
4. Before being removed from the market, dead sub-brands were more than three times as likely to skew towards younger category buyers than older.

The current research provides the following theoretical and managerial implications.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

5.1.1 Markets are Stable, Even at a Sub-Brand Level

The first finding shows that most sub-brands have stable market shares—even with a low criterion for brand growth (1% for sub-brands, rather than 3% for brands). The results of this research expand the previous research on market stability (Dekimpe and Hanssens, 1995; Graham, 2009; Trinh and Anesbury, 2015) suggesting that most category buyers' buying propensities are also stable.

5.1.2 Younger Consumers are More Likely to Buy New-to-Market Brands

Although the results show that the vast majority of sub-brands do not skew towards either younger or older category buyers, the second finding is that new-to-market sub-brands are three times more likely to skew towards younger than older category buyers. This finding supports previous research showing that younger category buyers are disproportionately represented in consumer profiles for new-to-market brands (Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent, 2010; Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990; D'Amico, 2007). This finding is also consistent with younger category buyers displaying lower levels of behavioural loyalty (East *et al.*, 1995; McGoldrick and Andre, 1997; East *et al.*, 2000; Maddox *et al.*, 1978; Cattin and Punj, 1983; Lapersonne, Laurent and Le Goff, 1995; Homburg and Giering, 2001; Lambert-Pandraud, Laurent and Lapersonne, 2005), being more likely to engage in variety-seeking behaviour (Maddox *et al.*, 1978; Gruca, 1989; Cole and Balasubramanian, 1993; Schaninger and Sciglimpaglia, 1981), and tending to have broader repertoires that include new-to-market brands (Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990; D'Amico, 2007; Lapersonne, Laurent and Le Goff, 1995).

5.1.3 Growing and Declining Brands Reflect Category Age Profiles

The third research finding is that neither growing nor declining sub-brands appeal disproportionately to either younger or older category buyers. Growing sub-brands appeal to both age segments (although slightly more likely older), as do declining sub-brands (without skewing), with older and younger defined in relation to average category buyer age. Thus, beyond the launch phase where younger category buyers over-represent in the buyer base, subsequent growth or decline is not associated with age-related skews. These sub-brands' profiles are consistent with the category profile.

5.1.4 Skewing Towards Younger Consumers is Dangerous for Brands That Are Not New-to-the-Market.

This study's last and perhaps most important finding is that dead sub-brands were more than three times as likely to skew towards younger category buyers, before being removed from the market. While, on launch, a skew to younger category buyers is typical, this skew's persistence is a sign of increasing probability of future deletion. This research contributes to other research on new product failures (Cierpicki, Wright and Sharp, 2000; Castellion and Markham, 2013; Wilbur and Farris, 2014) by providing the first empirical evidence that sub-brands that fail to be bought by all category buyers risk deletion.

5.2 Managerial Implications

5.2.1 Marketers Should Set Realistic Growth Objectives

Practically, this research shows that marketers should have realistic expectations when it comes not only to brand growth (Graham, 2009; Trinh and Anesbury, 2015), but now to sub-brand growth as well. When setting medium-term (i.e., 3-year) objectives for their brands, marketers should aim for overall brand growth below three percentage points, and sub-brand growth below one percentage point. This research shows that growth outside of these benchmarks is the exception, not the norm. Simultaneously, it is equally unlikely that brand decline will exceed these benchmarks—although complacency should be avoided, as a marketer's role is to run hard to stand still.

5.2.2 Consumer Profiles Strategies Must Target All Category Buyers

Notably, the results of this study suggest that user profile analysis can be a useful diagnostic tool. Marketers should consider any skew away from all category buyers as a sign that a sub-brand's destiny is to fail, especially if the sub-brand skews toward younger category buyers (beyond launch). This result suggests that an ongoing allocation of funds towards attracting new category buyers to prevent sub-brand death may be necessary to increase the likelihood that the new sub-brand will persist in the market. These empirical results again highlight the importance, to brand buying, of all category age groups; and, therefore, deploying resources to attract all category buyers to try the brand, and then to reinforce their habitual buying behaviour, is crucial. Habitual behaviour is hard to change and resists short-term interventions like price promotions (Scriven *et al.*, 2017).

5.2.3 Consumer Profiles can be a Diagnostic Tool for Brand Health

The results of this study allow marketers to use sub-brand profiles to diagnose possible future performance, without implying that sub-brands should do extensive segmentation and targeting based on age profiles. Rarely, when functional differences drive dissimilarities within category buying behaviour, marketers can focus on sub-brand positioning (Dawes, 2016b; Anesbury, Nguyen and Bogomolova, 2018). In the majority of cases, however, sub-brands need to be supported by creating and reinforcing the existing habitual buying behaviour of all category buyers. Exclusively targeting younger category buyers will not save a declining sub-brand; in fact, it may just hasten its demise.

6. Limitations and Future Research

While these results use a multiple sets of data approach, producing a sample of almost 6,000 sub-brands from over 100 product categories, there are still limitations to their generalizability. The data are solely from the United Kingdom. There is no direct evidence that such a pattern would be discernible in other similar countries, let alone in developing countries. A further limitation is that the categories are also principally supermarket goods (i.e., frequently-bought and low-priced). Marketers should, therefore, use caution when considering the implications of these results for durable goods or services. A clear avenue for future research involves gathering data from multiple countries, including emerging markets, and other categories, to determine whether the same pattern holds, while accounting for covariates like country of origin effects (Josiassen, 2010), and consumption occasion influences (Hall and Lockshin, 2000).

Another limitation is that this research uses panel data in which the age of the female head-of-household served as a proxy for the age of the category buyer, even within multi-member households. The use of this proxy may explain why these results are similar to those reported in previous studies, but less pronounced. First, the female head-of-household may not be the primary category buyer. Second, she may make purchases for other household members of varying ages. While it is true that Dawes (2016b) has found the same buyer behaviour patterns in analyses of multi-person and single-person households, future studies of the age profile of sub-brands should focus on single-member households or analyse data for individual-level purchases.

TABLE 1. Effects of age on buying behaviour

Most relevant empirical research studies	Key findings
Young Consumers Buy New-to-Market Brands	
Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent (2010)	Younger category buyers appear to be more likely to buy recently launched brands (i.e., perfume, cars, radio stations).
Young Consumers Have Larger Repertoire Sizes and are Less Loyal	
Uncles and Ehrenberg (1990)	Younger category buyers have more extensive brand repertoires than older category buyers (seven consumer goods categories).
D'Amico (2007)	The reduction in the average number of brands used in a category is linear (i.e., it decreases with age).
East *et al.* (1995) and McGoldrick and Andre (1997)	Middle-aged category buyers are the most behaviourally loyal (one supermarket category).
East *et al.* (2000)	Older category buyers might be even more behaviourally loyal but have less money to act on their loyalty as the proportion of their income spent at the supermarket decreases with age.
Maddox *et al.* (1978)	Older category buyers consider fewer cars or dealerships and increase their repeat-purchasing of brands.
Cattin and Punj (1983)	Those who only considered a single car dealership were more likely to be older category buyers.
Lapersonne, Laurent and Le Goff (1995)	Previous car owners, which tend to be older category buyers, have limited consideration sets and are more likely to repeat-purchase their current car brand.
Homburg and Giering (2001)	Older category buyers of new cars were more loyal than the younger category buyers. These car-buying results from older category buyers' lifetime of category buying experience.
Lambert-Pandraud, Laurent and Lapersonne (2005)	New car buyers who were older category buyers, repeat-purchased a brand more frequently, considered fewer brands, fewer dealers, and fewer models.
New-to-Market and Growing Brands Skew Towards Younger Category Buyers	
Sharp and Anderson (2008)	Two-thirds of all brands showed skewed age distributions relative to the average of all brands for the category. Of these, seven in ten new-to-market brands and one in two growing brands skewed towards younger category buyers.
Anderson and Sharp (2010)	The opposite is the case for declining brands, which skewed towards older category buyers. Younger category buyers have had less time to develop brand loyalties within the given categories.
Wood (2004)	Younger category buyers are inquisitive, innovative, and interested in variety as they learn about the categories.

TABLE 2. Percentage of 1039 Sub-Brands that Skewed Towards an Age Segment

	Percentage of sub-brands that skewed towards…	
Skewed sub-brands	Younger Category Buyers	Older Category Buyers
New-to-market (n=167, 16.1%)	74	26
Growing (n=58. 5.6%)	40	60
Stable (n=622, 59.9%)	56	44
Declining (n=96, 9.2%)	48	52
Dead (n=96, 9.2%)	76	24

Statistically significant chi-squared relationship between age and growth trajectory (p<0.01)

TABLE 3: Percentage of 1039 Age Segments that Skewed Towards a Growth Trajectory

	Percentage of age segments that skewed towards…				
Age segment skews	New-to-market	Growing	Stable	Declining	Dead
Younger category buyers (n=612, 58.9%)	20	4	57	8	12
Older Category Buyers (n=427 41.1%)	10	8	64	12	5

Statistically significant chi-squared relationship between age and growth trajectory (p<0.01)

The University of _______________________ thanks Kantar World Panel for providing data to enable this research.

References

Anderson, K., Sharp, B., (2010). Do growing brands win younger consumers? *International Journal of Market Research,* 52 (4), 433-442.

Anesbury, Z., Nguyen, Y., Bogomolova, S., (2018). Getting a 'sweet' deal: Does healthfulness of a sub-brand influence consumer loyalty? *European Journal of Marketing,* 52 (9-10), 1802-1826.

Barrie, L. R., Jones, S. C., Wiese, E., (2011). "At least I'm not drink-driving": Formative research for a social marketing campaign to reduce drug-driving among young drivers. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 19 (1), 71-75.

Brennan, R., Dahl, S., Eagle, L., (2010). Persuading young consumers to make healthy nutritional decisions. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 26 (7-8), 635-655.

Castellion, G., Markham, S. K., (2013). Perspective: New product failure rates: Influence of argumentum ad populum and self-interest. *Journal of Product Innovation Management,* 30 (5), 976-979.

Cattin, P., Punj, G., (1983). Identifying the characteristics of single retail (dealer) visit new automobile buyers. *Advances in Consumer Research,* 10 (1), 383-388.

Cierpicki, S., Wright, M., Sharp, B., (2000). Managers' knowledge of marketing principles: The case of new product development. *Journal of Empirical Generalisations in Marketing Science,* 5 (3), 771-790.

Cole, C. A., Balasubramanian, S. K., (1993). Age differences in consumers' search for information: Public policy implications. *Journal of Consumer Research,* 20, 157-169.

D'Amico, T., (2007). You can teach an old dog new tricks: Strategies for including older consumers when selecting media vehicles. *Journal of Advertising Research,* 47 (1), 103-112.

Davari, A., Iyer, P., Guzmán, F., (2017). Determinants of brand resurrection movements. *European Journal of Marketing,* 51 (11/12), 1896-1917.

Dawes, J., (2017). Sub-brands: How much substitution occurs between them, and is combined brand penetration lowered as a result? Ehrenberg Bass Institute for Marketing Science, Adelaide.

Dawes, J., (2020). The natural monopoly effect in brand purchasing: Do big brands really appeal to lighter category buyers? *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 1-10.

Dawes, J. G., (2016a). Brand growth in packaged goods markets: Ten cases with common patterns. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour,* 15 (5), 475-489.

Dawes, J. G., (2016b). Testing the robustness of brand partitions identified from purchase duplication analysis. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 32 (7), 695-715.

Dekimpe, M. G., Hanssens, D. M., (1995). Empirical generalizations about market evolution and stationarity. *Marketing Science,* 14 (No. 3, Part 2), G109-G121.

East, R., Hammond, K., Harris, P., Lomax, W., (2000). First-store loyalty and retention. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 16 (4), 307-325.

East, R., Harris, P., Willson, G., Lomax, W., (1995). Loyalty to supermarkets. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*.

East, R., Uncles, M., Lomax, W., (2013). Hear nothing, do nothing: The role of word of mouth in the decision-making of older consumers. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 30 (7/8), 786-801.

Ehrenberg, A., Bound, J., (1999). Customer retention and switching in the car market. 6, Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, Adelaide.

Ehrenberg, A., Pouilleau, B., (1992). The analysis of a contingency table: The pattern of car switching. *Journal of Empirical Generalisations in Marketing Science,* 14, 1-6.

Ford, N., Trott, P., Simms, C., (2016). Exploring the impact of packaging interactions on quality of life among older consumers. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 32 (3-4), 275-312.

Fry, M.-L., (2011). Seeking the pleasure zone: Understanding young adult's intoxication culture. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 19 (1), 65-70.

Gilal, N. G., Gilal, F. G., Zhang, J., Gilal, R. G., Gong, Z., Gilal, W. G., (2020a). The role of endorsers in bringing defunct brands back to life: Theory and evidence. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*.

Gilal, N. G., Zhang, J., Gilal, F. G., Gilal, R. G., (2020b). Bygone days and memories: The effects of nostalgic ads on consumer brand resurrection movements. *Journal of Brand management,* 27 (2), 160-180.

Graham, C. D. A., (2009). What's the point of marketing anyway? The prevalence, temporal extent and implications of long-term market share equilibrium. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 25 (9-10), 867-874.

Gruca, T. S., (1989). Determinants of choice set size: An alternative method for measuring evoked sets. *Advances in Consumer Research,* 16, 515-521.

Hall, J., Lockshin, L., (2000). Using means-end chains for analysing occasions-not buyers. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 8 (1), 45-54.

Hammond, K., Ehrenberg, A., Goodhardt, G. J., (1996). Market segmentation for competitive brands. *European Journal of Marketing,* 30 (12), 39-49.

Hanby, T., (1999). Brands--dead or alive? *International Journal of Market Research,* 41 (1), 7.

Homburg, C., Giering, A., (2001). Personal characteristics as moderators of the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty - an empirical analysis. *Psychology & Marketing,* 18 (1), 43-66.

Josiassen, A., (2010). Young australian consumers and the country-of-origin effect: Investigation of the moderating roles of product involvement and perceived product-origin congruency. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 18 (1), 23-27.

Kantar, (2015). Kantar worldpanel: Consumer panels. Available from: <http://www.kantarworldpanel.com/global/Consumer-Panels>.

Keng, K. A., Ehrenberg, A., (1984). Patterns of store choice. *Journal of Marketing Research,* 21, 399-409.

Keng, K. A., Uncles, M., Ehrenberg, A., Barnard, N., (1998). Competitive brand-choice and store-choice among Japanese consumers. *Journal of Product & Brand Management,* 7 (6), 481 - 494.

Kennedy, R., Scriven, J., Nenycz-Thiel, M., (2014). When 'significant' is not significant. *International Journal of Market Research,* 56 (5), 591-607.

Lambert-Pandraud, R., Laurent, G., (2010). Why do older consumers buy older brands? The role of attachment and declining innovativeness. *Journal of Marketing,* 74 (5), 104-121.

Lambert-Pandraud, R., Laurent, G., Lapersonne, E., (2005). Repeat purchasing of new automobiles by older consumers: Empirical evidence and interpretations. *Journal of Marketing,* 69 (April), 97-113.

Lapersonne, E., Laurent, G., Le Goff, J.-J., (1995). Consideration sets of size one: An empirical investigation of automobile purchases. *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* 12, 55-66.

Maddox, R. N., Grønhaug, K., Homans, R. E., May, F. E., (1978). Correlates of information gathering and evoked set size for new automobile purchasers in Norway and the US. *Advances in Consumer Research,* 5 (1), 167-170.

McGoldrick, P. J., Andre, E., (1997). Consumer misbehaviour: Promiscuity or loyalty in grocery shopping. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 4 (2), 73-81.

Moodie, C., Ford, A., (2011). Young adult smokers' perceptions of cigarette pack innovation, pack colour and plain packaging. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 19 (3), 174-180.

Nenycz-Thiel, M., Dawes, J., Romaniuk, J., (2018). Modeling brand market share change in emerging markets. *International Marketing Review*, 1-40.

Pare, V., Dawes, J., (2007 of Conference). Deviations from double jeopardy: How many private label and high-share brands exhibit excess loyalty? ANZMAC, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Patterson, P. G., Scott, J., Uncles, M. D., (2010). How the local competition defeated a global brand: The case of Starbucks. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 18 (1), 41-47.

Riebe, E., Wright, M., Stern, P., Sharp, B., (2014). How to grow a brand: Retain or acquire customers? *Journal of business research,* 67 (5), 990-997.

Romaniuk, J., Dawes, J., Nenycz-Thiel, M., (2014). Generalizations regarding the growth and decline of manufacturer and store brands. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 21 (5), 725-734.

Schaninger, C. M., Sciglimpaglia, D., (1981). The influence of cognitive personality traits and demographics on consumer information acquisition. *Journal of Consumer Research,* 8 (2), 208-216.

Scriven, J., Clemente, M., Dawes John, Trinh, G., Sharp, B., (2017). Buying brands at both regular price and on promotion over time *Australasian Marketing Journal* 25 (4), 252-260.

Shah, P., (2017). Why do firms delete brands? Insights from a qualitative study. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 33 (5-6), 446-463.

Shah, P., Laverie, D. A., Davis, D. F., (2017). Research paper brand deletion. *Journal of Brand Strategy,* 5 (4), 434-452.

Sharp, B., Anderson, K., (2008). Are younger consumers easier to win? Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, Adelaide.

Sharp, B., Sharp, A., (1997). Loyalty programs and their impact on repeat-purchase loyalty patterns. *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* 14 (5), 473-486.

Simcock, P., Sudbury, L., Wright, G., (2006). Age, perceived risk and satisfaction in consumer decision making: A review and extension. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 22 (3-4), 355-377.

Stocchi, L., Nenycz-Thiel, M., Driesener, C., (2011). Private labels and the double jeopardy pattern: A brand equity perspective. Presented at EMAC, Ljubljana.

Thomas, S., Kohli, C., (2009). A brand is forever! A framework for revitalizing declining and dead brands. *Business Horizons,* 52 (4), 377-386.

Trinh, G., Anesbury, Z., Driesener, C., (2017). Has behavioural loyalty to online supermarkets declined? *Australasian Marketing Journal* 25, 1-24.

Trinh, G. T., Anesbury, Z. W., (2015). An investigation of variation in brand growth and decline across categories. *International Journal of Market Research,* 57 (3), 347-356.

Uncles, M., Ehrenberg, A., (1990). Brand choice among older consumers. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 19-22.

Uncles, M., Kennedy, R., Nenycz-Thiel, M., Singh, J., Kwok, S., (2012). In 25 years, across 50 categories, user profiles for directly competing brands seldom differ: Affirming Andrew Ehrenberg's principles. *Journal of Advertising Research,* 52 (2), 252-261.

Wilbur, K., Farris, P., (2014). Distribution and market share. *Journal of Retailing,* 90 (2), 154-167.

Winchester, T. M., Hall, J., Binney, W., (2014). Young adult voting decision-making: Studying the effect of usage from a consumer behaviour perspective. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 22 (2), 144-154.

Wood, L., (2004). Dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour: Consumers in the 18–24 age group. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour,* 4 (1), 9-24.

Wright, M., Sharp, A., Sharp, B., (1998). Are Australasian brands different? *Journal of Brand and Product Management,* 7 (6), 465-480.

Yap, S.-F., Noor, N. A. M., Marshall, R., Liew, K.-H., (2014). Promoting preventive health behaviour among young malaysian consumers: Toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ),* 22 (3), 268-278.