

# The Only Way To Grow Your Brand

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It is quite reasonable for a marketing manager to wonder about avenues to increase sales. Is it possible to get our existing customers to buy more or do we really need more customers?

This question is answered by a landmark discovery about buying behaviour that is called the 'double jeopardy' phenomenon. Double jeopardy is a simple fact that all marketing managers need to know. Put simply, it tells us that the big difference between small and large brands is that large brands have lots more customers.

In the 1930s, William McPhee discovered that radio DJs and comic strips that were more popular, had lots more listeners (or readers, for comic books) and that these listeners listened to them for a little longer each day (1). McPhee thought that it was odd that less popular DJs should 'suffer' in two ways – not only did they have fewer listeners but those listeners didn't listen to them for so long – so he called the pattern 'double jeopardy'.

Since then the double jeopardy pattern has been observed for brands across thousands of product categories, for services and stores, across countries (Europe, USA, Australasia) and time (2).

Most marketers who hear about the double jeopardy pattern take it to mean that bigger brands (those with more market share) win twice – they have more customers, who are also more loyal, that is, they buy more often. This is technically true, but it is misleading.

The real practical implication of double jeopardy is that competitive brands hardly differ in their loyalty levels, whereas there are large differences in the size of their customer bases. This is a surprise to many, especially those who believe their old textbooks. Marketing mythology generally promotes the idea that loyalty levels can vary enormously between brands, and that different marketing strategies can bring about different levels of loyalty. But the reality (as double jeopardy reveals) is that brands vary little in their loyalty and what small variation there is, is largely a function of brand size. So different marketing strategies can do little to affect the overall loyalty of a customer base. This does not mean that marketing cannot affect loyalty: it can, but the effect will never be large.

What marketing strategies can potentially do is affect the number of customers a brand has. Marketing strategies can hold, win or lose customers. This is the main difference between large and small marketshare brands – big brands have lots more customers.

[Table 1](#) shows some brand performance data for some USA instant coffee sales over 48 weeks (3). Maxwell House has twice the purchases per 100 households of Nescafé and five times that of Maxim. This purchase share difference is caused by the fact that the big brand has lots more customers, Maxwell House has twice the market penetration of Nescafé and four times that of Maxim. Maxwell House also enjoys more purchase frequency but not much more – its customers buy it 3.6 times on average during the period whereas Nescafé's customers buy it almost as often

(2.9 times). Maxwell House has four times the penetration of Maxim but only 10% more buying frequency.

So the brands do differ in their loyalty levels, but not much. Their differences in market share are mainly due to differences in market penetration – the big brands are big because many more shoppers buy them.

So to return to the original question: how can we grow our brand? Is it possible to get our existing customers to buy our brand more often or do we need more customers? The double jeopardy discovery tells us the answer. If we want to be a bigger brand then we need lots more customers.

This fact of marketing life has all sorts of implications for how we set our marketing objectives and formulate strategy. Those of us who dismissed mass marketing as being old-fashioned might have to think again.

## FOOTNOTES

1. W N McPhee: 'Formal Theories of Mass Behaviour'. New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.
2. A Ehrenberg, S C Gerald, J Goodhardt and T P Barwise: 'Double Jeopardy Revisited'. Journal of Marketing 54, July 1990.
3. R East: 'Regularities in buying behaviour'. Cassell Education Ltd, London, 1990.



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## NOTES & EXHIBITS

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## TABLE 1: BRAND PENETRATION VS. PURCHASE FREQUENCY FOR COFFEE SALES

<b>Brand of coffee</b>	<b>Purchases per 100 households</b>	<b>Penetration</b>	<b>Purchase frequency</b>
Maxwell House	86	24	3.6
Sanka	69	21	3.2
Tester's Coffee	62	22	2.8
High Point	57	22	2.6
Folgers	49	18	2.7
Nescafé	38	13	2.9
Brim	18	9	2.0
Maxim	16	6	2.6

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