



# REIGNITING THE AXE EFFECT

*Experimental Research on Tagline Impact*



**PRESENTED BY:**

Abhinav B, Aditiya R, Adoksh S, Adyasha T, Haider E, Sofia R

# AXEgnda



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- Experimental Elements, Findings & Confounding Variables
- Managerial Implications
- Limitations

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**...Gives You Wings**



**Think Different**



**Just Do It**



**Open Happiness / Taste the Feeling**



**I'm Lovin' It**

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Including a tagline ('Just Do It') with a brand increases the likelihood of memory-based choice for that brand (Lee, 2002).

Memory-based choice occurs when a person must first recall the set of options available before making a choice (Lynch & Srull, 1982). The effect on memory-based choice occurs because visual exposure to elements which are conceptually related to the brand (Action - 'Do it') assists in the encoding of the brand ('Nike') and can cue a person to subsequently recall the brand from memory ('Just Do It'— Nike) and include it in the consideration set (Nedungadi, 1990)

In terms of stimulus- based choice, where options are present in the environment and a consumer must use recognition memory as the basis for the choice (Lynch & Srull, 1982),

# Executive Summary

## Objective

Understand how new messaging can enhance Axe's brand perception among Gen Z & early Millennials

Tested 3 new taglines against the existing one:

1. **Axe The Ex** (Reinvention, transformation, breaking free)
2. **You've Evolved, So Have We** (Modern masculinity, confidence)
3. **The Bro Code** (Brotherhood, camaraderie, loyalty)

## Experimental Design

### Primary Hypothesis:

New Tagline Preference Affects Brand Perception



# Executive Summary

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## Key findings & Managerial implications

- Takeaway for Axe: A tagline is an important tool, but a broader strategic approach that aligns with evolving consumer expectations will maximize impact.
- Brand perception strongly correlates with purchase intent—a key opportunity.
- Competitor evaluations remained largely unchanged across journeys.
- Axe must reposition to emphasize authentic transformation and modern masculinity, prioritizing emotional connections and differentiation to foster deeper brand loyalty.
- While no tagline significantly outperformed the control, trends emerged.

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# Introduction

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## PROBLEM

- Axe has been in decline for years, facing multiple challenges
- So, how do we reposition Axe for today's consumers?

## MDS

- Evolution of Grooming & Self-Care Trends.
- Product Perception Problem
- Distribution Challenges
- Strong Competitor Moves (Old Spice..)

## KEY POINTS

To regain market share, Axe must reposition itself with a fresh, sophisticated, and culturally relevant narrative - one that balances modern masculinity with premium appeal.

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# Tagline Testing Visuals

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# Competitor Tagline Visuals

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LONG LASTING  
PROTECTION YOU  
CAN TRUST



Feel Like A Man,  
Smell Like A  
Champion



Calming, hardworking  
deodorant. Simple.



# Control vs Experimental Groups

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# Methodology

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01

Brainstorming & Tagline Selection: Focused on themes Gen Z & Millennials resonate with.

02

Survey Design: Experimental setup with randomized tagline exposure.

03

Data Collection: 149 respondents evaluated Axe & competitors based on different journeys.

04

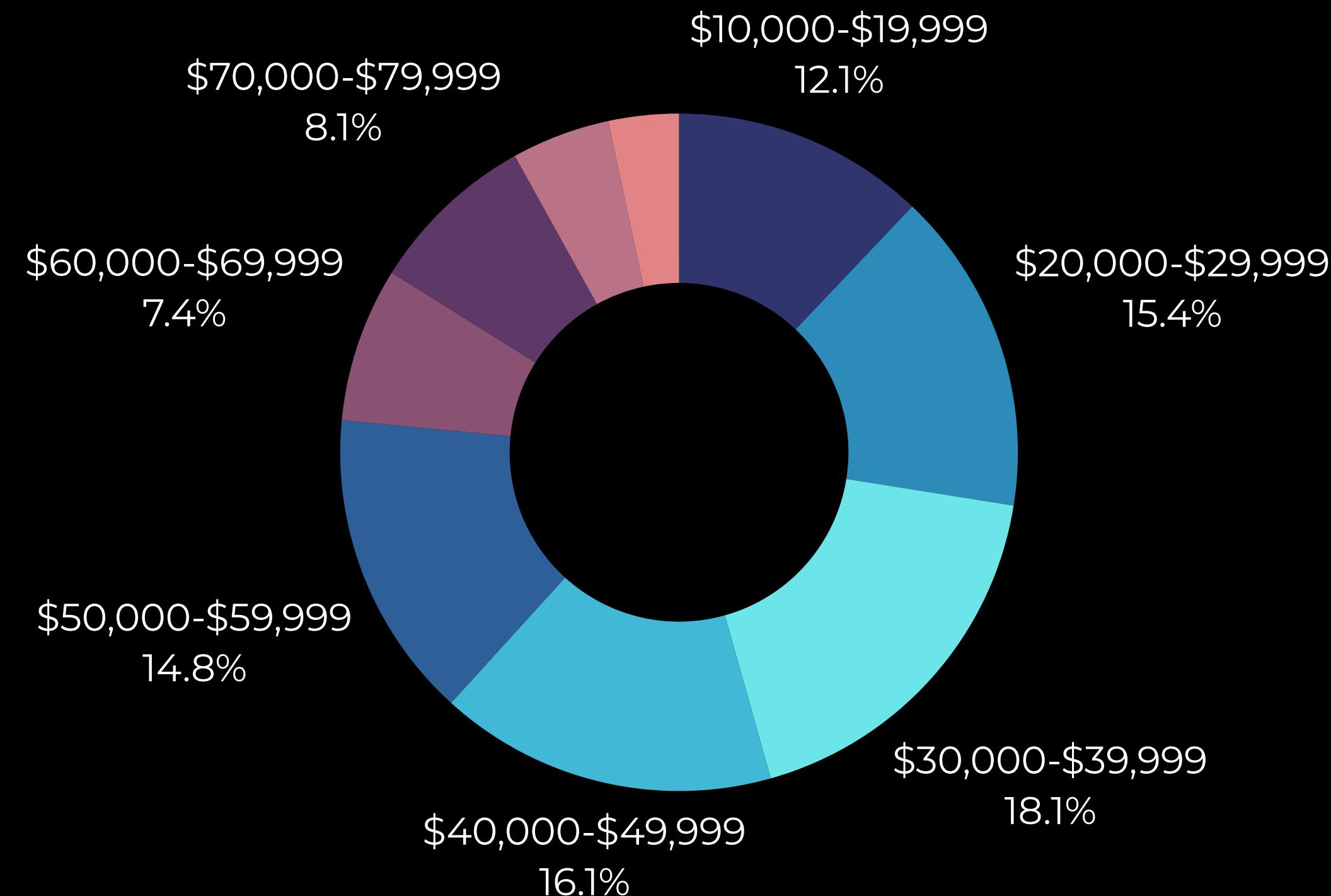
Data Analysis: Conducted ANOVA, regression, and post-hoc tests to assess significance.

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# Demographic Insights

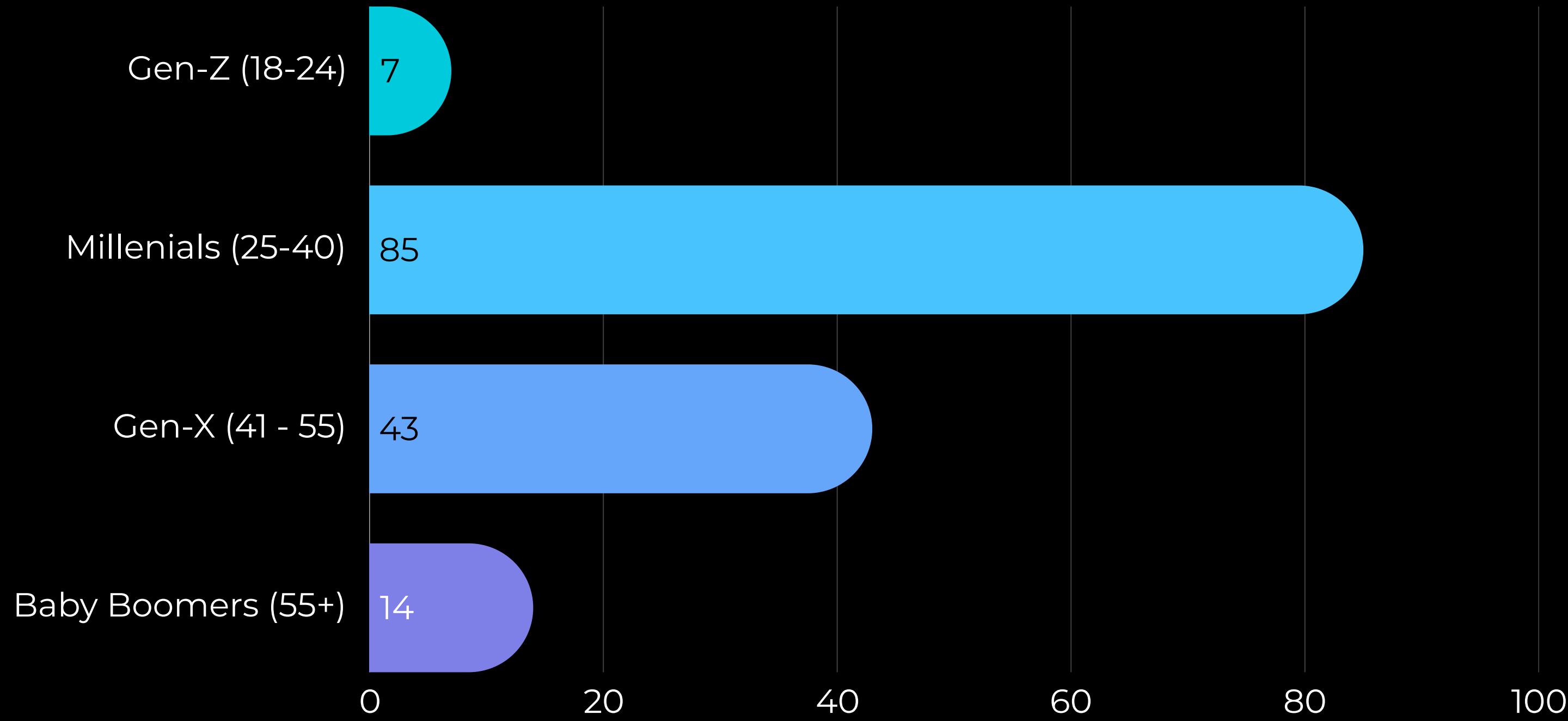


# Breakdown of Survey Participants by Personal Income



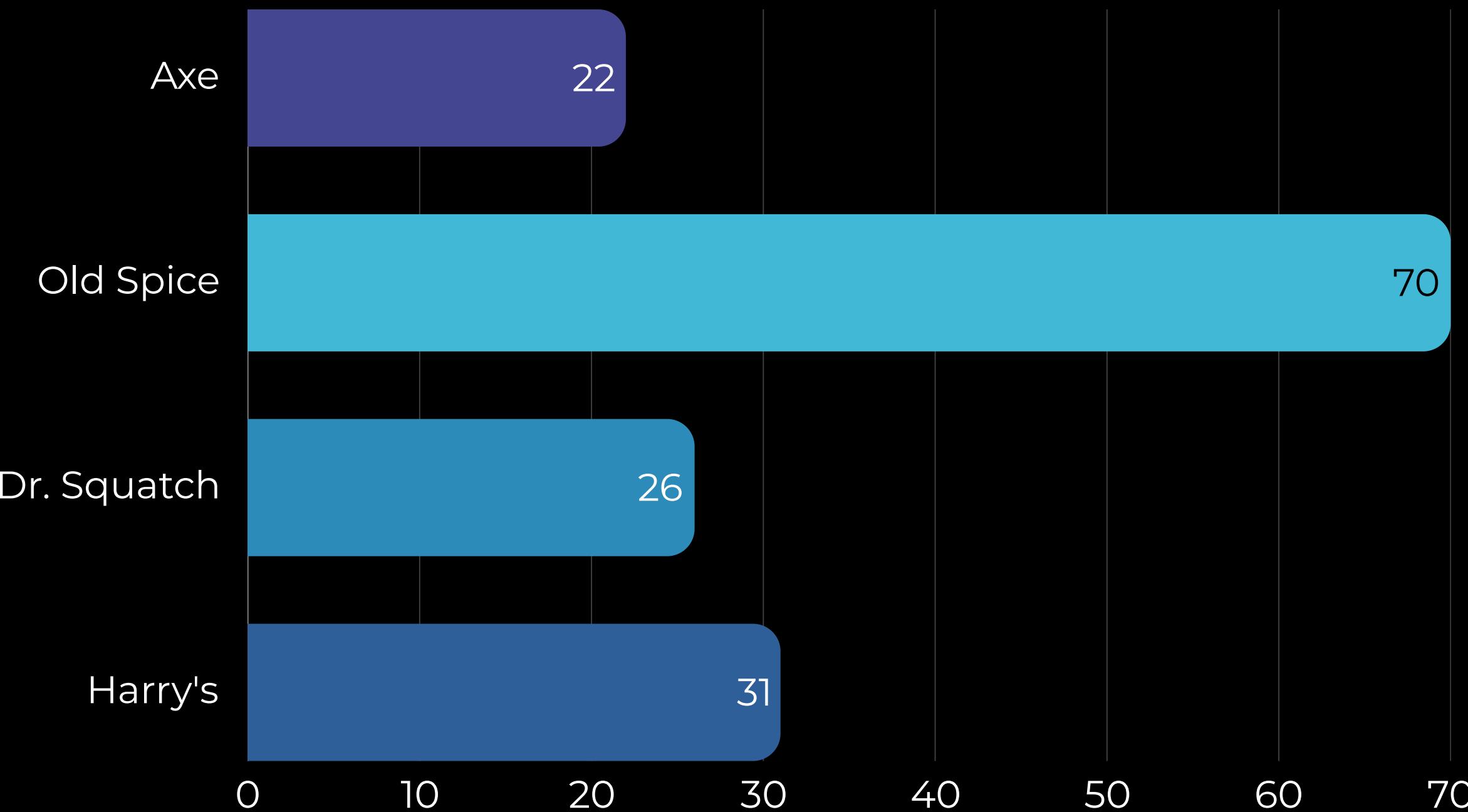
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# Generational Breakdown of Survey Participants



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# Brand Comparison Ranking



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# WORD CLOUD

# “The bro code”

# “You’ve Evolved, So Have We

“Axe the Ex”

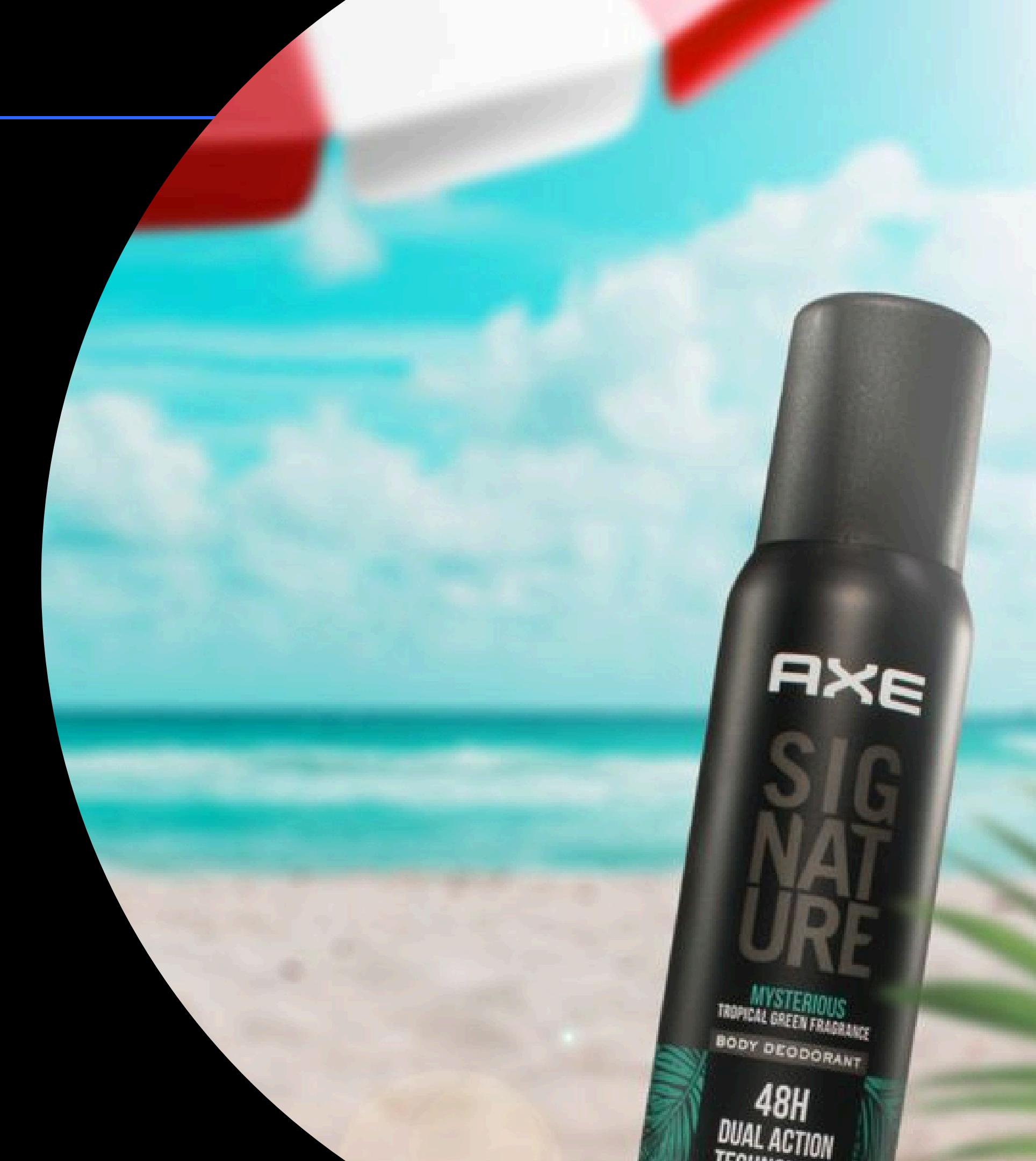
The word cloud is composed of various words in different colors (black, red, blue, green, yellow) arranged in a circular pattern around the central word 'rebranding'. The words include: disgusting, commercials, armpits, hope, imagery, lame, brand, implies, colors, catch, fresh, arm, great, attention, generic, really, cheesy, fun, forgettable, tagline, old, eye-catching, anything, deodorant, simple, trendy, effective, begin, eye, believable, direct, bright, develop, contrasting, good, confusing.

## “The New Axe Effect”

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# Experimental Elements, Confounding Variables and Findings



## Hypothesis 1: Tagline preference affects brand perception

💡 Does a tagline shift how people see Axe?

### VARIABLES

**Independent Variable (IV):**  
Journey (tagline exposure: Control,  
Bro Code, Axe The Ex, You've Evolved)

**Dependent Variable (DV):**  
Brand Perception (Composite Score:  
Feel, Trust, Cool, Confidence)

### CONTROL GROUP

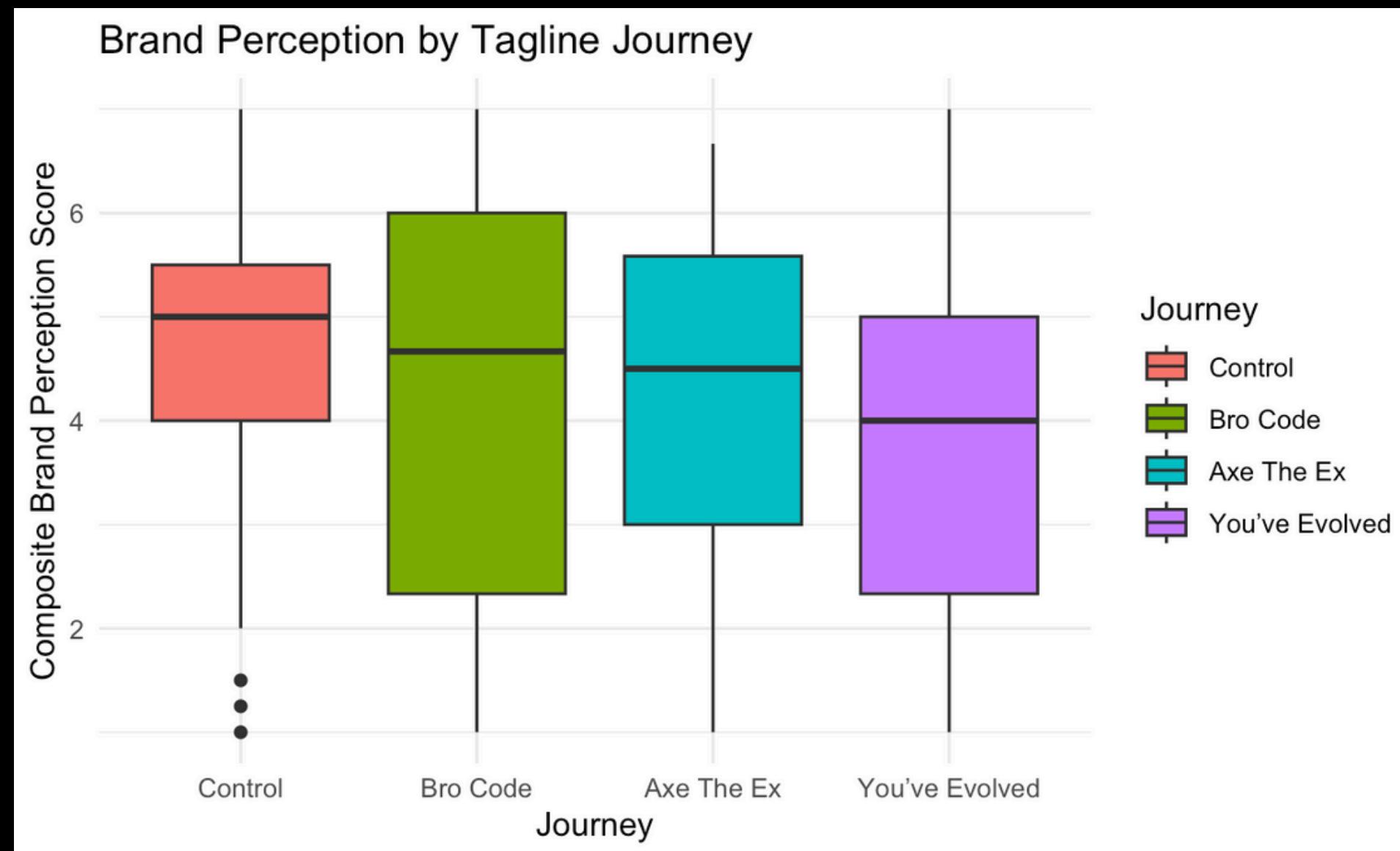
Participants exposed to Axe's  
original tagline ("The New Axe  
Effect").

### EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Group 1: Exposed to "The Bro Code"  
Group 2: Exposed to "Axe The Ex"  
Group 3: Exposed to "You've Evolved,  
So Have We"

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## Hypothesis 1: Tagline preference affects brand perception



### FINDINGS

- ✓ Median brand perception scores are similar across all journeys
- ✓ Changing taglines alone is not enough to shift brand perception

#### Confounding Variables Considered:

Frequency of deodorant use, Personal preference for brand positioning,  
Pre-existing perception of Axe



## Hypothesis 2: New taglines affect competitor evaluations

💡 Does repositioning Axe shift how people see competitors?

### VARIABLES

**Independent Variable IV:**  
Journey (Control, Bro Code, Axe The Ex,  
You've Evolved)

**Dependent Variable DV:**  
Composite Score of Competitor Evaluations  
(Old Spice, Dr. Squatch, Harry's)

### CONTROL GROUP

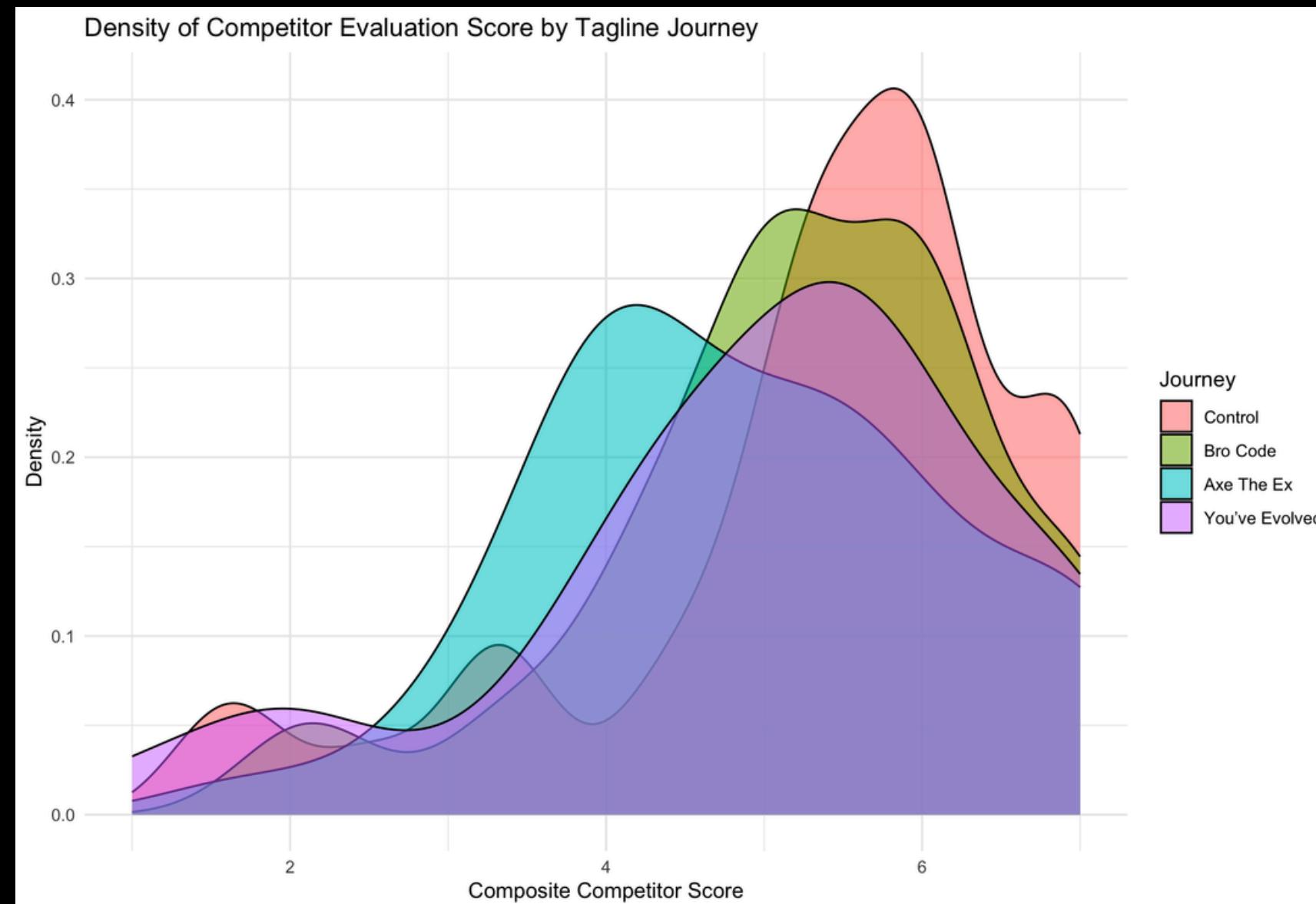
Participants exposed to Axe's  
original tagline ("The New Axe  
Effect").

### EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Group 1: Exposed to "The Bro Code"  
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So Have We"

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## Hypothesis 2: New taglines affect competitor evaluations



### FINDINGS

- ✓ Control (existing tagline) has the highest peak, meaning most people rated competitors similarly under the current branding.
- ✓ Competitor evaluations don't shift drastically based on tagline alone
- ✓ "You've Evolved" caused the most varied response—some people saw competitors more favorably, while others didn't.

**Confounding Variables Considered:** Brand loyalty to competitors, Familiarity with Axe vs. competitors before the study, Personal grooming habits



## Hypothesis 3: Axe's Brand Perception & Competitor Evaluations Have an Inverse Relationship

💡 If someone views Axe more favorably, do they rate competitors lower?

### VARIABLES

**Independent Variable IV:**  
Brand Perception Score for Axe

**Dependent Variable DV:**  
Rank\_Axe (lower = better ranking)

### CONTROL GROUP

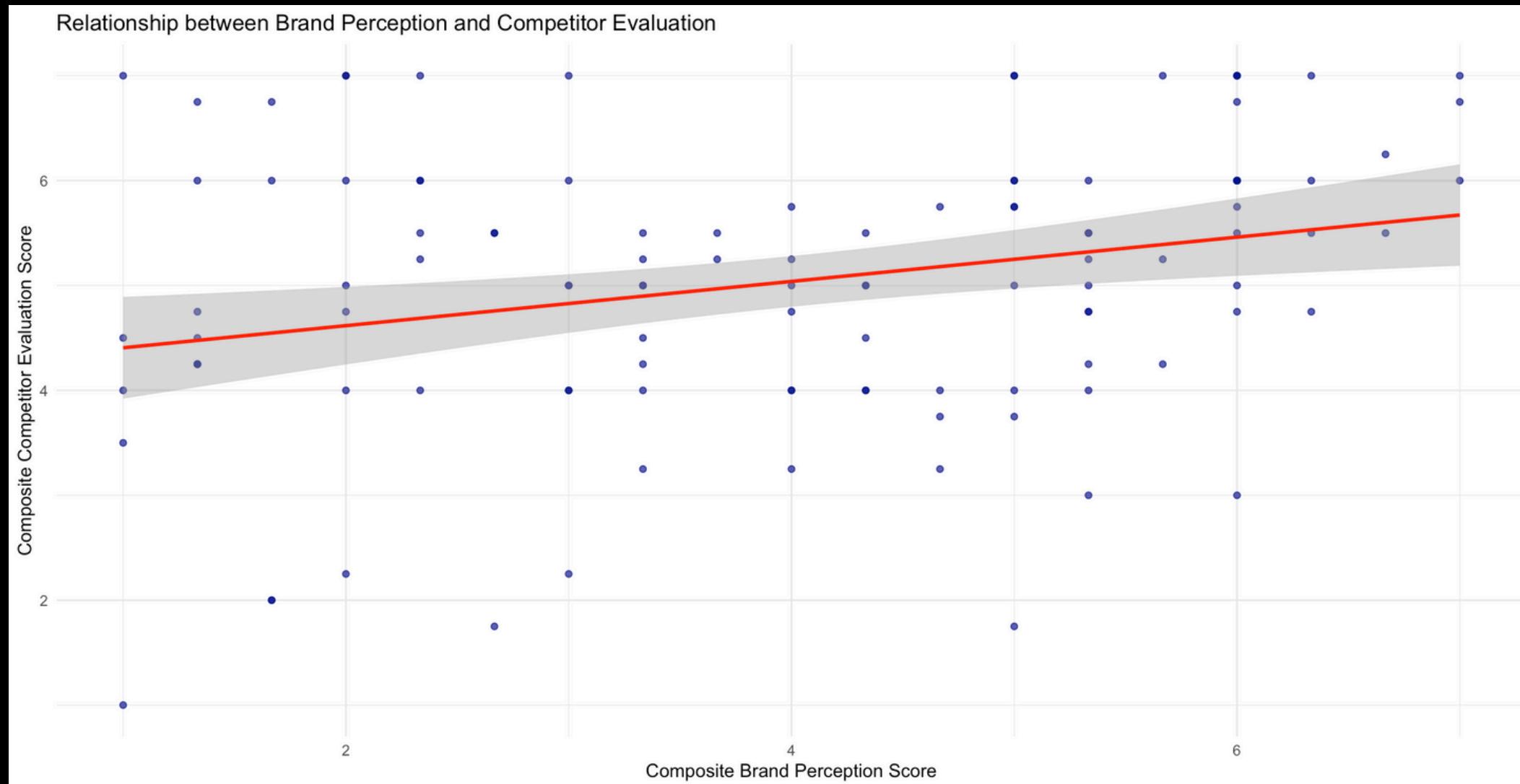
Participants exposed to Axe's original tagline ("The New Axe Effect").

### EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Group 1: Exposed to "The Bro Code"  
Group 2: Exposed to "Axe The Ex"  
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## Hypothesis 3: Axe's Brand Perception & Competitor Evaluations Have an Inverse Relationship



### FINDINGS

- Axe doesn't seem to operate in isolation—improving Axe's brand perception might also improve perceptions of competitors.
- Axe may need stronger differentiation to create a unique, ownable space in the market.

**Confounding Variables Considered:** Personal brand affiliations, Consumer bias toward certain brands based on past experiences

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## Hypothesis 4: Age Moderates the Impact of Taglines on Brand Perception

💡 Does the effectiveness of different taglines change depending on the age of the consumer?

### VARIABLES

**Independent Variable IV:**  
Journey (Control, Bro Code, Axe The  
Ex, You've Evolved), Age

**Dependent Variable DV:**  
Brand Composite Brand Perception  
Score (Trust, Coolness, Confidence)

### CONTROL GROUP

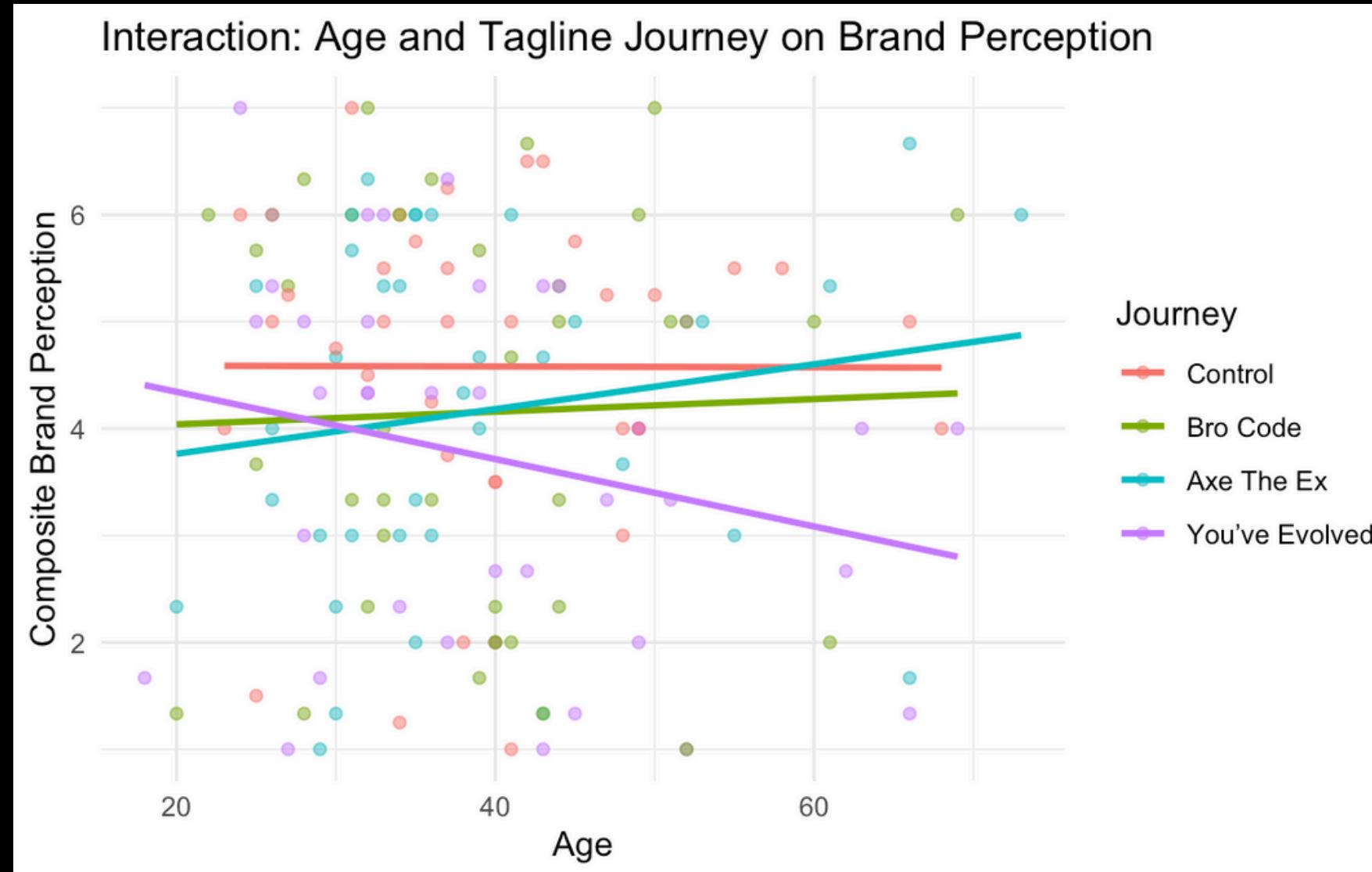
Participants exposed to Axe's  
original tagline ("The New Axe  
Effect").

### EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Group 1: Exposed to "The Bro Code"  
Group 2: Exposed to "Axe The Ex"  
Group 3: Exposed to "You've Evolved,  
So Have We"

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## Hypothesis 4: Age Moderates the Impact of Taglines on Brand Perception



### FINDINGS

- ✓ No statistically significant interaction between Journey and Age on Brand Perception
- ✓ This suggests age does not significantly change how a tagline is received

**Confounding Variables Considered:** Different generational interpretations of masculinity, Varying degrees of brand familiarity based on past marketing exposure, Likelihood of trying new products vs. brand loyalty

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## Hypothesis 5: Tagline Condition Influences Overall Purchase Intent

💡 If people view Axe more favorably, are they more likely to buy

### VARIABLES

**Independent Variable IV:**  
Composite Brand Perception Score

**Dependent Variable DV:**  
Rank Axe (lower = better ranking)

### CONTROL GROUP

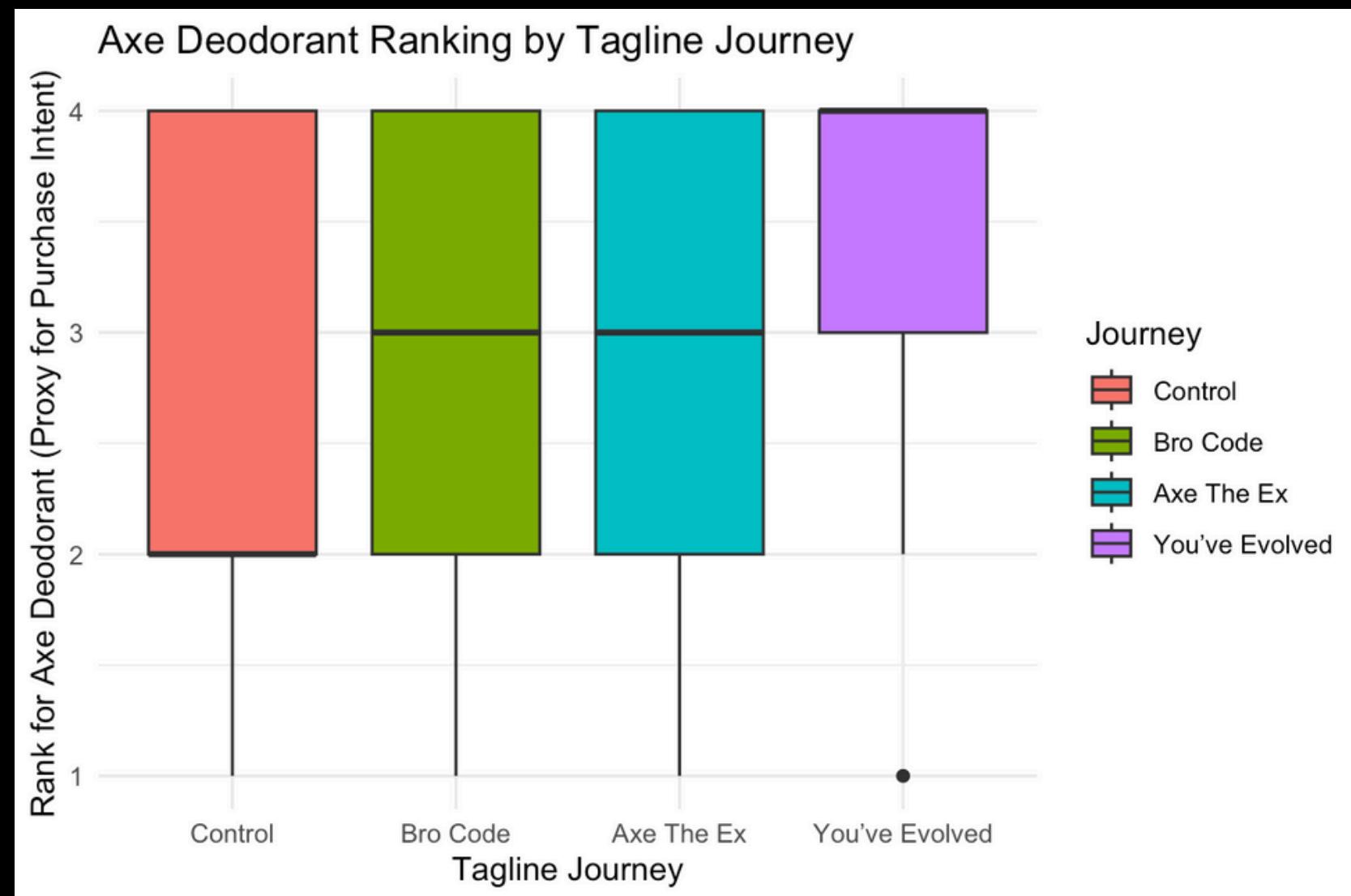
Participants exposed to Axe's original tagline ("The New Axe Effect").

### EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Group 1: Exposed to "The Bro Code"  
Group 2: Exposed to "Axe The Ex"  
Group 3: Exposed to "You've Evolved,  
So Have We"

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## Hypothesis 5: Tagline Condition Influences Overall Purchase Intent



### FINDINGS

- ✓ No tagline significantly outperformed the control.
- ✓ You've Evolved showed a slight upward trend, but not statistically significant at 90% confidence interval

**Confounding Variables Considered:** Prior Axe brand perception, personal grooming habits

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# Limitations

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## Budget Constraints

Limited resources constrained sample diversity, advanced testing (e.g., A/B in real ads), and tracking of post-exposure purchase behavior

## Sample Size Constraints

With 149 respondents, the sample was valid but too small for deep segmentation, limiting geography, Gen Z representation and broader applicability.

## Time Constraints

The short timeframe limited measurement of long-term brand perception shifts, capturing immediate reactions rather than sustained impact.

## Limited Creative Execution

Taglines were tested without visual assets (e.g., ads, influencers), leaving the impact of full creative execution untested in real-world engagement.

## Quality of Respondents

We used a crowdsourcing platform for online research, the participants take surveys to make a quick buck and might not accurately represent our audience.

## Lab vs Field

Real world purchase decisions are driven by factors like emotional state, budget constraints, time, physical setting and other factors that might influence purchase behavior and brand perception.



## Managerial Implications

- Repositioning must emphasize transformation & highlight modern themes of masculinity (think Keanu Reeves), not be limited to just tagline change.
- Emotional Storytelling and brand trust drive purchase intent more.
- Axe must double down on meaningful differentiation (Edgy-ness) and then take on competition.
- An omnichannel marketing strategy is essential for building long-term brand equity.
- Future testing must validate branding impact through real-world behavioral data.
- Messaging alone is insufficient—Axe must align branding with authentic lifestyle shifts.

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# THANK YOU!

The New Axe Effect? It Starts Here

