Baby Names in the US

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Abstract

Analysis of past and current trends in baby names in the US and factors that influenced choices over time.

Keywords: Baby Names

1. Introduction

This analysis focuses on baby name trends, how they persist over time and which factors are influencing parents decision in naming their children across the past decades.

2. Data

The data used for this analysis is mainly a list of baby names form 1910 to 2014. Moreover, for the factor analysis, a closer look was taken into data on HBO titles and charts.

3. Analysis

Firstly, this report tried to determine how well popular names persist into the future using the Spearman rank correlation. More specifically,the Spearman rank correlation of the top 25 boys' and girls' names for each year with the subsequent three years was calculated and then plotted in 3.1 below.

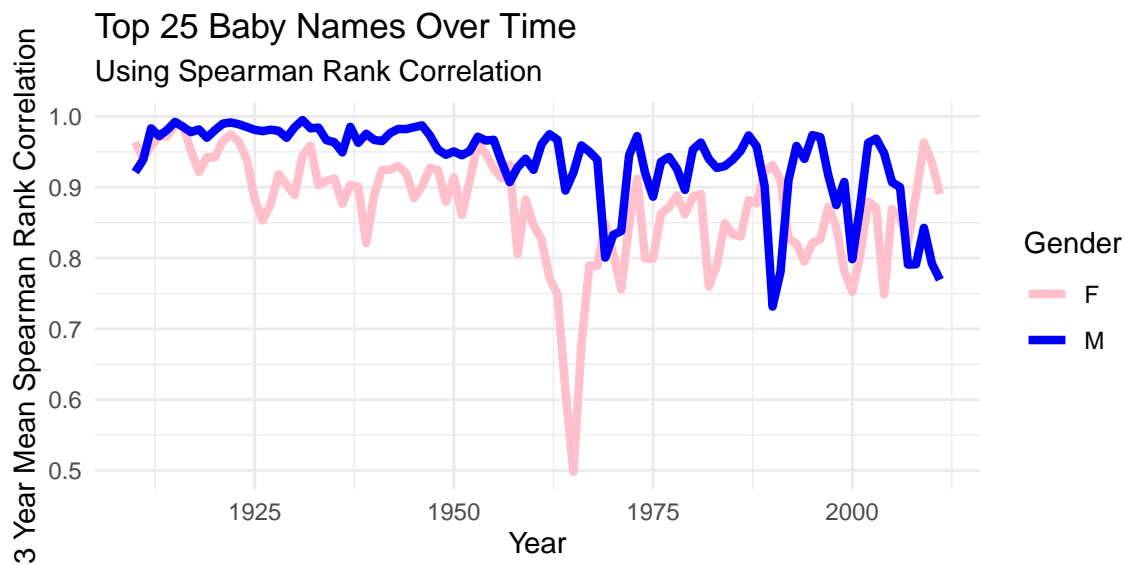*Email address:* 28776534@sun.ac.za (Anna Mayer)

Figure 3.1: Persistence of Baby Names over Time

Note that the scale on the y-axis ranges from 0.5 to 1.

Especially in the 1960s, female names do not seem to be correlated. However, until 1950, there seems to be a correlation for both male and female baby names. In general, there seems to be a slight downward trend, meaning that past 3 years baby names do not seem to be as positively correlated as in the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the coefficient is still relatively high for both genders. One can conclude from this graph, that popular baby names still persist until today, although there is a small downward trend. As mentioned, the reason for this is that the average correlation coefficient (averaged for following 3 years) is still high even after 1990 for both genders. Given the long-term trend, one can expect this persistence with a potentially continuing very small downward trend for the future.

In a next step, this report focuses on factors influencing the choice of baby names. For this, please find below the year-on-year percentage change for the three names Krystle, Khaleesi and Neymar:
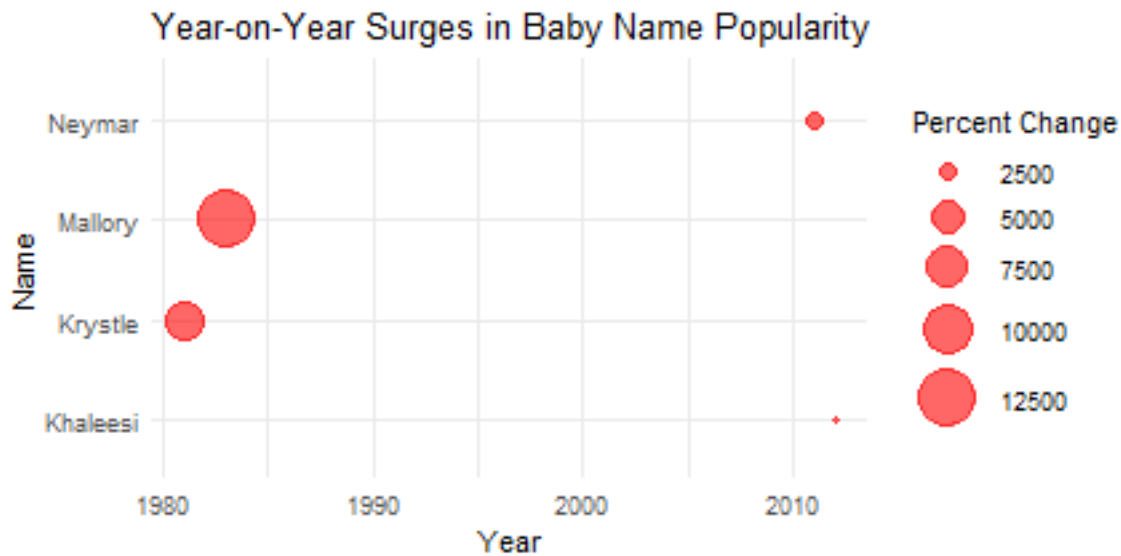
Figure 3.2: Surges in Baby Names

Interestingly, in 2012, there was an increase of 2010 % of the name Khaleesi (from 5 to 110). This is most likely related to Game of Thrones (which was according to the HBO_Titles data set released in 2011). Game of Thrones, with an audience popularity score of 492.101 became very famous very quickly and probably influenced the naming decisions of many parents. Moreover, looking at the surges data, one can see that in 2011, the name Neymar experienced an increase of 2700%, which might be related to Neymar's starting his professional soccer career back in 2009 (Caioli (2017)).In 1981, Krystle got a spike with 6816 %. This is most likely related to Krystle Carrington, a fictional character from the 1980s American TV series Dynasty. Also Mallory experienced a strong increase in the 1983 which is probably related to the sitcom Family Ties and one of the main characters names Mallory Keaton in 1982.

From this, one can see, that different factors influence baby names, from soccer players to sitcoms to movies or tv-shows.

4. Conclusion

There is persistence over time in baby names, which could be clearly seen in 3.1.Therefore, sticking to classical popular baby names like Mary, James, Lisa, etc. might be a good idea for toys. However, there are also factors that lead to spikes in the appearance of more unusual baby names such as Khaleesi, Krystle, Neymar etc. This could be taken into account. Current, popular TV shows, soccer players etc. influence the choice of parents with respect to naming their babies and therefore could also serve as good names for toys. However, this comes with the cost of changing toys names once in

a while, as trends are changing with new tv shows and people becoming famous.

For further research on traditional, persisting names, one could have a closer look into bible names data, for example using Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary. Since religion probably still influence the decision of many parents in naming their children. A list and analysis can be provided on request from me.

References

Caioli, L. 2017. *Neymar–2018 updated edition: The unstoppable rise of barcelona's brazilian superstar.* Icon Books.