

Governance and Management Review (GMR)

Volume 6, No. 1, Jan-Jun 2021

EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHY ON QUALITY PERCEPTION OF FMCG CUSTOMERS

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Abstract

The study is about the effect of demography on perceived quality in the customers of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). Quantitative research methodology has been used for testing hypotheses and achieving research objectives. This research has significance because of its theoretical and practical contribution. The study population was adult population of Pakistan. Sample size was 466 respondents from Lahore. Data was collected through developed questionnaire by the technique of stratified random sampling. Descriptive statistics and Inferential statistics have been applied for analyzing the data through SPSS. Research findings include that all demographic factors i.e. gender, age and income do not affect the perceived quality of FMCG customers. This research has contributed in the knowledge base by informing the literature of demographic profile of FMCG customers and perceived quality and their relationship.

Keywords: Age, Demography, Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Gender, Income, Quality Perception

Introduction

FMCG is a vast sector, both in terms of its target audience as well as sales volume. According to Gómez-Suárez et al. (2017) the relationship of a customer with a product is very important. Marketers pay close attention to the relationship building of customers with their brands. Every customer has a different set of needs based on demography. Customers select brands according to their needs which satisfy them the most. The brand which tends to satisfy a particular customer need develops its love in the hearts of its customers.

Furthermore, there are normally two types of sectors in a market i.e. manufacturing sector and service sector. It is major practice in the service sector, to provide customized services to its customers who mean that every customer receives the services according to their particular needs and wants. While on the other side, manufacturing sector, normally deals with standardized products which means that same products are produced for all types of customers. Both of these sectors not only operate at local level but also at international level. To operate internationally, international marketing efforts are required by them. World is a global village, to keep fast track with this current era, marketing activities must be agile enough to influence the quality perception regarding the exported products and services. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is affected by the agility of the international marketing (Li et al., 2019).

Similarly, the perception of quality can be associated with product, service or an organization, which is dependent upon the philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM). Its principles are necessary for successful implementation of TQM in any organization (Mosadeghrad, 2014). Moreover, the basic aim of TQM philosophy is to ensure the products or services' quality which are presented by a company. Stakeholders of the company are all those who are affected by the operations of company. Those can be external or internal. But in majority of the cases, stakeholder is taken as a synonym to Customers. Partnership or involvement of customers in business increases their interest and loyalty to the product. TQM is a viewpoint which is of no use until unless it is properly implemented in any industry. In real scenarios, it is never easy to implement TQM because of many practical reasons. One such reason is resistance to change. People do not accept change easily. They always have strong resistance for change. This is true for both employees of company and customers as well. In order to stay abreast of current changes in business environment, flexibility for change adoption is necessary. Hierarchy, typical organizational structure and politics are some major reasons which do not let quality management (QM) programs to fully implement in an organization (Malik et al., 2018).

Lastly, customer is core focus of QM philosophy. Customer is reason of doing any business. All profits are earned by satisfying customers. If customers' needs are not fulfilled, they become dissatisfied. On the other side, if customer needs are fulfilled and the product is beyond their expectation level, customer becomes delighted. Innovation of a product is influenced by resources of quality management. Innovation of a product is very much dependent upon the resources of QM (Miranda Silva et al., 2014). Precisely, according to the study of Zhang et al. (2014), adaptations of quality management according to one's own organizational culture are required for its positive impact on performance. Those organizations which are interested in boosting their performance consider QM as a best solution in the world which influences the production and operations management and process management as well. The research has provided a new look to the innovation and investigation process for the flow management. On the other side, quality management may also result into losses because many organizations forget to contextualize quality management in specific situations. This approach is very useful for bigger firms which have many strategic business units because every strategic business unit has different context to operate and perform.

Objectives

The research aim is to check the influence of demography on perceived quality of FMCG customers. Following are developed objectives for this study:

Effect of Demography on Quality perception

- i) To identify the influence of gender on FMCG customers perceived quality.
- ii) To identify the influence of age on FMCG customers perceived quality.
- iii) To identify the influence of income on FMCG customers perceived quality.

Significance

Most of the quality related literature is about the service sector. However, to the researcher's best knowledge, there are very few studies about manufacturing sector which are about the effect of demographic variables on perceived quality with particular reference to individual customers in context to FMCG manufacturing sector. This is perhaps one of the most recent concepts emerging throughout the world. This study will benefit manufacturers in designing strategies about the FMCG according to the findings of this research for earning profits and satisfying their customers.

Literature Review

First of all, extant literature has been discussed regarding FMCG highlighting its importance. Moving on to quality perception, detailed literature has been consulted by the researcher. Then, a generic review of the literature regarding the effect of demographic variables on quality perception has been done by the researcher which has been discussed in detail with regards to gender, age and income.

Fast Moving Consumer Goods

There are many brands of FMCG in Pakistan. Some of them are local while others are international. However, unbranded FMCG also exists in Pakistan. Fast moving consumer goods are available directly at companies as well as from various wholesalers and retailers. Customers do not have same perception about all kind of FMCG. It shows that fast moving consumer goods influence the customers' quality perception in Pakistan. There are some such goods which positively influence customers' quality perception while there are some other ones which negatively affect customers' quality perception. Overall, a direct relationship exists between FMCG and quality perception of the customers (Quintal & Phau, 2013). According to van der Laan and Aurisicchio (2019), fast-moving consumer goods, consist of both edible and non-edible product, there is a great danger for both types of products to become obsolete. Edible FMCG is eatable and perishable which means that the food items have a specific life span after which they deteriorate. Similarly, the non-edible FMCG have an expiry date which means that they have a particular shelf-life after which they become either useless or harmful to use. This is the reason to give rise to the need of recycling of the fast-moving consumer goods in order to use them again without wasting much of the actual product. For example, the plastic bottles of the expired shampoos can be recycled or used again to fill the freshly produced shampoo in that bottle.

According to Pourhejazy et al. (2019), in FMCG sector, introduction of a novel product after every while is inevitable for its success in the market. Product life cycle consists of normally four stages. At first stage product is brought in market. In second stage, product moves towards growth in the market. In third stage, the product reaches to the maturity level. While in the fourth stage, it may decline in the market. Product decline or deletion of some products is necessary for the introduction of novel products in market. Declining products normally have very low sales and are a burden on the company. This is the reason to implant a new product in place of old product. So, the firms dealing in FMCG sector must give due attention to this decision in order to maximize their profits.

Moreover, Klein and Schmitz (2016) studied that shopping pattern for FMCG is different from other products and services in market for consumers. There are many ways of

selling FMCG. It can be bought directly from company, or from a wholesale or from a retailer. It can both be branded product or an unbranded product. These days' people tend to visit superstores and marts for the purchase of FMCG. This has become a fashion and trend because of increased marketing activities and campaigns by the companies on social and print media. Even people visit such stores for window shopping and end up buying unnecessary items due to psychological impact of the presentation and array of the products in such super markets, hyper markets and stores giving discounts. So, the overall shopping intention and perception varies from customer to customer.

Furthermore, brand loyalty is very much important. This is the reason for having a proper Customer relationship management (CRM) in the organizations for prevent switching to the other brands and maintaining and retaining their customers. In addition to this, the loss of the profit by such turned down customer may influence the overall performance of the company to a greater deal. So, it is very important to attract and retain the potential and existing customers in order to earn profits. There are various types of customers ranging from those who buy the products occasionally to those who buy frequently from a particular brand (Buckinx & Van den Poel, 2005).

Lastly, Kuzmina et al. (2019) studied that the economy of the whole world keeps on changing. Many countries of the world are in line of becoming economic super powers. In this race of economy, it is necessary to analyze the future of FMCG sector. FMCG sector must think about moving from supermarkets to the next level.

Quality Perception

According to Besterfield (2011), quality perception is a customer's view about a product whether it meets or exceeds quality expectations. A customer is the reason to do any business for earning profits. Quality in all types of relationships matters a lot. In the study of Su et al. (2014), it has been stated that achieving a status is one thing, retaining the same is another thing, it requires continuous effort. To excel in such status requires a lot of hard work and continuous improvement. Same is true for the performance of quality. There are various examples in the past, in which a company which used to be the quality leader of the market is no longer even recognized. Even currently there are many organizations that are in race of achieving quality but once it is achieved, they will lose interest in that and eventually miss that. The reason behind such attitude is human nature which normally does not value the blessings after achieving them and then the things are taken back. So, there is a dire need for organizations to sustain their quality by performing better than its competitors. Otherwise, they will wipe out of the market. Consistency is required in every field of life. With consistency quality level can be maintained and excelled. Flexibility, learning and self-evaluation help in maintaining quality of an organization. Among these factors, learning helps improve the quality to the higher levels while rest two factors i.e. flexibility and self-evaluation help maintain the particular level of performance of the quality in organization which eventually gives a competitive advantage to the company compared to the rest of its competitors in the market.

Furthermore, Yee and San (2011) said that these days it is very difficult to survive in the market because of fierce competition among the firms dealing in similar kind of business. So, there is a dire need to comprehend the customers' perspectives for capturing value from them by influencing their perception regarding value provided by the firm, product quality and risk level involved in purchasing from that particular firm. When a firm gains a deep insight into such perception of the customer, it becomes able to grab their attention and can

attract and lure them into their business. In that case, the companies become able to influence their buying decision can snatch the major portion their spending onto the firm's products. These all variables have a positive relationship among them as well as the strength of their relationship is very strong. So, it is very important for the marketers and managers to look into the details of these perceptions regarding quality, value and risk and must take advantage of these by enhancing the behavior of the customers towards the purchase of their products resulting into increasing the market share of the companies.

Moreover, according to Khalil (2021), quality perception of customers is influenced by price, placement and promotion of FMCG. According to Anselmsson and Bondesson (2015), all business strategies are based on the mind set and perceptions of their customers and target market. These perceptions of the customers are normally about the satisfaction of the customers, preferences of the products and likeness of the brands. These preferences affect the company in future which means that the firms' performance is dependent upon the perceptions. Furthermore Hossain et al., (2020) say that quality plays an important role in research which is an objective view regarding the perception of the quality about a particular product in the minds of the customers. These views eventually effect the buying behaviours of customers which affect the performance of an organization in the long run. However, the personality of the consumers, environment and the culture of the society in which that particular firm is operating also affect the quality perception.

Effect of Demographic Variables on Quality Perception

Demography is study of population in terms of different factors i.e. age, gender, income level, geographic locations etc. Demographically, quality perception varies from person to person. So, the attitudes and perceptions of customer do vary with demographic factors. It shows that quality perception of a male is different from female. Similarly, the quality perception may change with age. Moreover, people having different income level have different perception (Tomasevic et al., 2018). According to Banterle and Cavaliere (2014), not all people in a society are conscious about nutrition. They are also concerned about the quality of the food as well as get affected by the marketing of such product. While there are some other people who are not concerned about the marketing or quality of the product. So, the results regarding quality perception and these weak or strong relationships vary among people with different demographic profile. In the study of Chen and Chen (2014), it has been found that female clients have direct positive relationship with quality perception. Similarly, highly educated clients have direct positive relationship with quality perception too in hotel industry. So, the hotel managers need to focus on CRM for the improvement in their quality perception. Based on previous literature, following hypothesis has been developed:

H₁: Quality Perception varies with Gender.

Moreover, quality perception regarding healthcare facility is very important for the near and dear ones of the patient for the proper treatment. In this study, such perception regarding quality of burn care for children's parents is assessed. Others factors were also evaluated. The results showed that parents were highly satisfied with the quality of care provide by such healthcare centers with regard to attitudes of the staff members, processing and medical treatment. However, quality of care was not related with demographic factor of age of parents in this particular study. Quality perception was also related to the stress and depression because of burns in younger children especially in girl child which shows its dependency on psychological factors as well. So, the medical staff must be more attentive towards the worries of girl child's parents in this regard (Willebrand et al., 2018). Following hypothesis has been formed in this scenario:

H₂: Quality Perception varies with Age.

Lastly, price discounts must be given to the FMCG customers for boosting sale of that FMCG which is branded, so that, that customer can switch from traditional unbranded FMCG to the branded one. It shows that the income affects the quality perception of customers (Bogomolova et al., 2019). Moreover, income of a respondent influences the trust on a product's quality. If income of a person is high, WOM positively affects the intent to purchase. Similarly, if income is low, the trust level or quality perception of customer is negatively affected, resulting in the reduced intention to purchase that product by the particular customers (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). According to Dellana and Kros (2014), there are diverse forms of industries extending from Automobile to fast moving consumer goods. Every industry serves a different class. It could be a higher, middle or lower class. Such class distinctions are based on monetary social statuses. Upper class normally prefers high quality product or service and opposite is true for lower class. In this background, following hypothesis has been developed:

H₃: Quality Perception varies with Income.

Conceptual Model

On the basis of study objectives, literature review and dual process theory, following conceptual model is developed by the researcher. The dependent variable is quality perception while three independent demographic variables are gender, age and income.

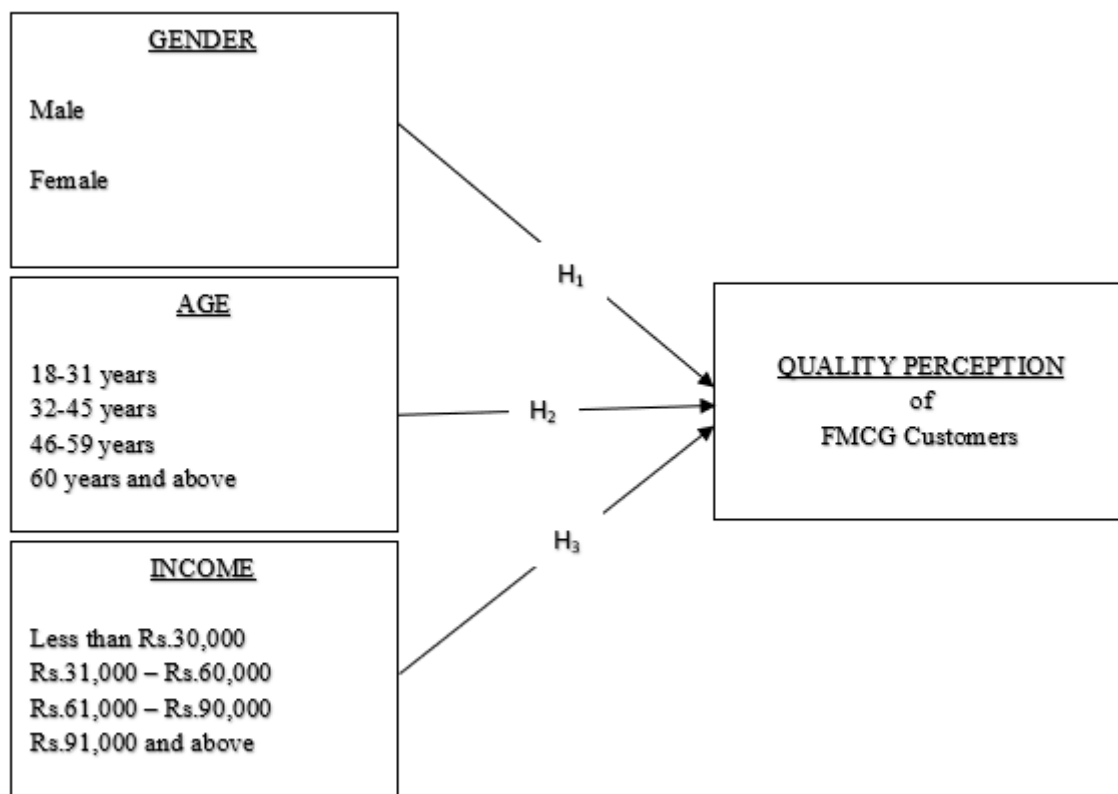


Figure 1: Conceptual Model: Demographic factors and Quality Perception

Dual process theory explains that the thoughts are aroused in any person in two different ways. One way is implicit which is an automatic process which runs unconsciously

in an individual through which the perception is developed. The other way through which the perception is developed is explicit which is in control of a person and it is a conscious process (Gronchi & Giovannelli, 2018). The individual uses true reasoning during explicit process (James, 1890). Similarly, according to Over (2020), cognition is dependent upon two opposite types of processing as mentioned earlier. So, this conceptual model is explained by perception and effect of various indicators of demography on quality perception through dual process theory.

Research Methodology

This research study is based on quantitative research strategy along with survey research design.

Sampling and Population

Pakistan is a populous country consisting of 207,774,520 people. Moreover, Lahore being capital city of Punjab province consists of 11,126,285 people (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Sample consists of FMCG customers from Lahore. Sampling strategy being followed was stratified random sampling from different demographic profile of such customers. As a rule of thumb, the sample size of thirty to five hundred is adequate for quantitative study (Roscoe, 1975). So, sample size selected by the researcher for this study was 466 respondents.

Variables, Measures and Analysis

Survey research is normally conducted through questionnaire. In this study the research instrument is a questionnaire which is to some extent adapted from the study of Garvin (1987). The agreement and disagreement of the respondents belonging to different demographic profile has been analyzed using five-point Likert scale. Moreover, SPSS has been used for descriptive statistics of sample characteristics. For testing hypotheses, t-test has been used along with one-way ANOVA.

Data Analysis and Findings

First of all, sample composition has been analyzed in which the demographic factors have been depicted using bar charts. In the end, bivariate analysis is performed by using t-test and one-way ANOVA for comparing dependent variable in accordance with the aforementioned independent variables.

Sample Characteristics

In majority of cases, descriptive statistics are portrayed through either tables or diagrams. In this case, bar charts have been used to highlight the results.

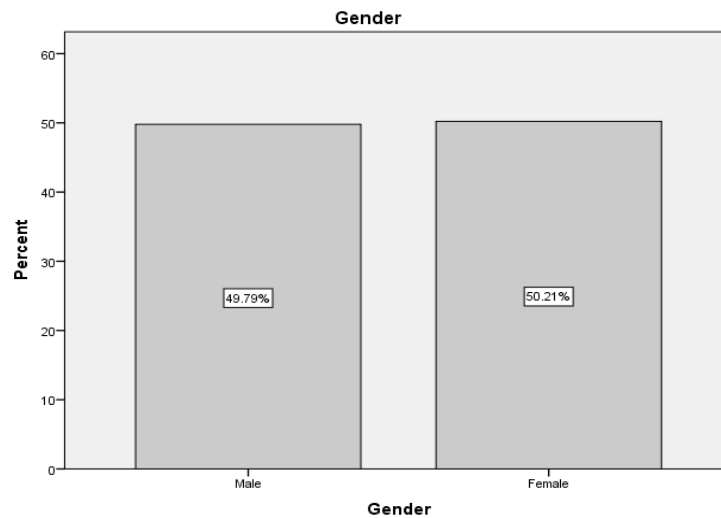


Figure 2: Gender

Figure 2 displays number of male and female respondents. 49.79% respondents are males and 50.21% are females which according to Pakistan's official data, seem to be a true representation of the population. Only a slight difference in number of respondents exists in terms of two more females than male respondents which is almost negligible difference.

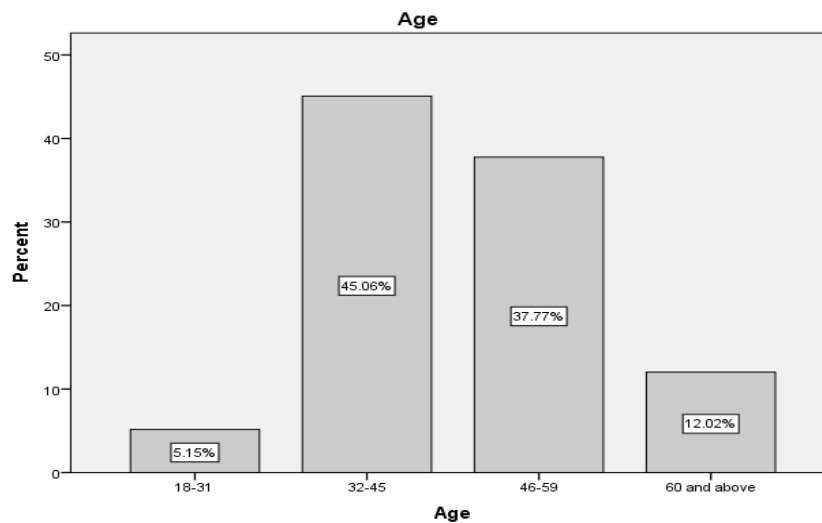


Figure 3: Age

Figure 3 shows that 5.15% respondent's falls in 18-31 age category. 45.06% respondents fall in age category of 32-45. 37.77% respondents fall in age category of 46-59 and lastly, 12.02% respondents fall in age category of 60 and above.

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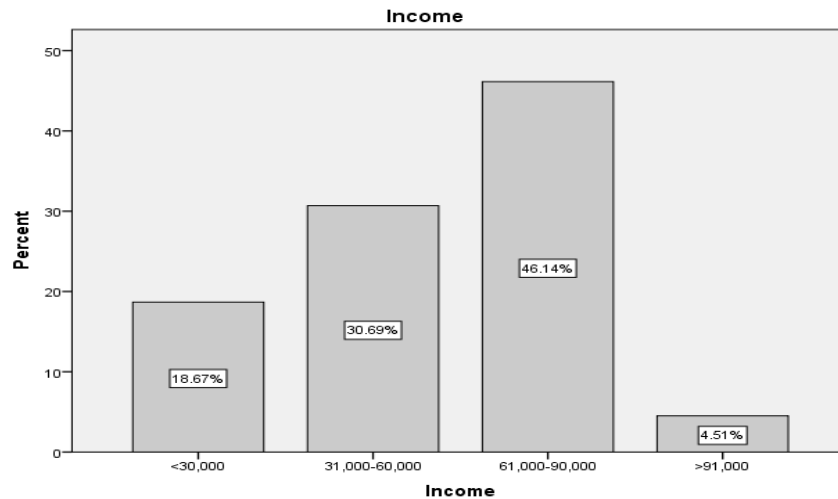


Figure 4: Income

As far as figure 4 is concerned, 18.67% participants are having income of less than 30,000. 30.69% participants were having income between 31,000 and 60,000. 46.14% respondents have income between 61,000 and 90,000 and lastly, 4.51% participants are having income of more than 91,000 or more.

In general, the tilt of respondents seems more towards positive side i.e. Agree. It shows that respondents think that quality perception can play vital role in perception building of the respondents. Relatively less percentage is present on disagree and strongly disagree range of likert scale. Lastly, healthy percentage has also selected the neutral side of the scale.

Hypotheses Testing

In this section, by using inferential statistics namely independent samples t-test and ANOVA, views of respondents are compared. Moreover, researcher has used demographics such as gender, age and income to test the difference of mean with the endogenous variable i.e. quality perception. t-test is used for this purpose in case of gender, whereas one-way ANOVA tests the difference of means for age and income with quality perception.

Independent sample t-test.

First of all, comparison is done about variables that have been used in research, by using t-test. This comparison has been done on the basis of categorical factors that include Quality Perception and Gender.

Table 1

Independent Sample t-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Quality_Perception	Equal variances assumed	.853	.356	-.815	464	.416	-.07392	.09073	-.25221	.10437
	Equal variances not assumed			-.815	461.890	.416	-.07392	.09075	-.25225	.10442

As per aforementioned table 1, t-test tests the difference of mean between gender and quality perception. Before using this test, homogeneity of variance assumption must be fulfilled as its significance value is more than 0.05 i.e. 0.356 it shows that test is good to run. Referring to the main hypothesis (H₁), significance value of 0.416 shows that no significant difference exists in mean values of males and female for quality perception.

one-way ANOVA.

One-way ANOVA “is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent (unrelated) groups” (Laerd, 2019).

Age and quality perception (H₂).

Table 2

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.502	3	462	.059

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As per aforementioned table 2, one-way ANOVA tests the difference of mean between age and quality perception. Before using this test, homogeneity of variance assumption must be fulfilled as its significance value is more than 0.05 i.e. 0.059 it shows that test is good to run.

Table 3

ANOVA (H₂)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.853	3	1.951	2.050	.106
Within Groups	439.733	462	.952		
Total	445.586	465			

As per aforementioned table 3, significance value of 0.106 shows that no significant difference exists in the mean of age values with quality perception (H₂ not supported).

income and quality perception (H₃).

Table 4

Homogeneity of Variance (H₃)

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.726	3	462	.537

As per aforementioned table 4, one-way ANOVA tests the difference of mean between income and quality perception. Before using this test, homogeneity of variance assumption must be fulfilled as its significance value is more than 0.05 i.e. 0.537 it shows that test is good to run.

Table 5

ANOVA (H₃)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.332	3	.777	.810	.489
Within Groups	443.255	462	.959		
Total	445.586	465			

As per aforementioned table 5, significance value of 0.489 means that significant difference does not exist in the mean of income and quality perception (H₃ not Supported).

Discussion

In this section, hypotheses have been discussed in the light of research findings and literature review.

First hypothesis (H₁) was Quality Perception varies with Gender has been developed for this research for testing difference of mean of gender with endogenous variable i.e. quality perception by using independent sample t-test. This hypothesis has not been supported because after fulfilling the homogeneity of variance assumption that showed the significance value of 0.356 which was greater than 0.05, the test was run whose significance

value was found to be 0.416. That value showed that there has not been a significant difference in mean of gender values with quality perception resulting into acceptance of null hypothesis i.e. quality perception does not vary with gender. Contrarily, according to Jelčić (2015), gender has an effect on perceived service quality. Moreover, Chen and Chen (2014) stated that females affect quality perception more than males. The difference in research findings and literature show the reason that in FMCG sector both genders do not affect quality perception differently and both behave same towards it because these are just daily use items which are based on day-to-day necessities.

Second hypothesis (H_2) was Quality Perception varies with Age. One-way ANOVA has been used for testing the difference of means for age with quality perception. This hypothesis has also not been supported because after fulfilling the homogeneity of variance assumption that showed the value of 0.059 which was greater than 0.05, the test was run whose significance value appeared to be 0.106. That value showed that there has not been a significant difference in mean of age values with quality perception resulting into acceptance of null hypothesis i.e. quality perception does not vary with age. This finding is similar with the research finding of Jelčić (2015) who concluded that perceived service quality does not vary with age. However, the study of Willebrand et al. (2018) has different findings that the quality perception is affected by age groups. The reason for this difference in literature and this particular research study could have the difference in the sector in which the research has been performed. In FMCG sector, quality perception remains same for all age groups.

Third hypothesis (H_3) was Quality Perception varies with Income. One-way ANOVA has been applied for testing the difference of means for income with quality perception. This hypothesis has also not been supported because after fulfilling the homogeneity of variance assumption that showed the value of 0.537 which was greater than 0.05, the test was run whose significance value appeared to be 0.489. That value showed that there has not been a significant difference in mean of income values with quality perception resulting into acceptance of null hypothesis i.e. quality perception does not vary with income. The finding of this study is different from the study of Dellana and Kros (2014) who conducted research in both service and manufacturing industries and found out that social statuses based on income level affect the perceived product/ service quality. Similarly, Bogomolova et al. (2019) also provided contradictory views. Moreover, Abubakar and Ilkan (2016) conducted a research on increasing income which supports the relationship between WOM and travel intention in medical travelling industry which is about the difference of income and its impact on quality perception. The reason behind such difference is again that basic necessity items are equally required by all human beings despite the difference in age, gender or income in FMCG sector.

Hence, these research results are different from the majority of previous studies. According to Tomasevic et al. (2018) demography and quality perception are related while this particular study by the researcher has opposite findings. Lastly, the research findings of this study are also contrary to the study of Banterle and Cavaliere (2014) who mentioned that quality perception varies with demography.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Fast moving consumer goods have existed since the inception of world. Many changes occurred in their selling pattern from barter system to establishment of superstore markets in various countries (Chaturvedi, 2018). However, this study has checked the impact

of three demographic variables related to FMCG customers on their quality perception. SPSS analysis revealed that demographic factors i.e. gender, age and income level are irrelevant in affecting or shaping quality perception in FMCG which shows people belonging to different demographic profile behave in a similar pattern towards FMCG.

By keeping in view, the context of fast-moving consumer goods sector in Pakistan and on the basis of findings of this study, few recommendations are provided that will help FMCG sector and managers:

- The managers must focus on other aspects of FMCG for improving quality perception which are almost similar for all customers belonging to different demographic profile.
- Furthermore, findings show that the manufacturers can provide similar or standardized fast moving consumer goods for all customers irrespective of their gender, age or income.
- Lastly, more research can be conducted by FMCG firms regarding quality perception in the market for identifying practices of the benchmark firms in the respective industry.

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