



From Consumer Needs to Corporate Success: Insights from a Survey on Product Perception

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to investigate South Punjab, Pakistan, consumers' mindsets and perspectives about consumer behavior, product quality, and business strategies. A total of 57 respondents took part in the survey, which consisted of an extensive list of questions on a nine-point Likert scale to assess consumers' perceptions and decisions. The findings reveal respondents' diverse perspectives on what a basic human need is, the extent to which the consumer should decide on what a product and a service is, the quality of goods and services, and the appropriate business strategy. Though there is agreement on some pertinent tendencies, such as the paramount importance of customer satisfaction for the effective performance of organizations, views about particular brands are substantially divided by factors of individual inclinations. This way, the findings of this research represent highly beneficial insights for the businesses operating in this realm to establish what the consumers within it actually want. This knowledge can be crucial for them, allowing them to shape their strategies more based on the specifics of their consumers.



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1. Introduction

Consumer behavior is defined as an activity or behavior, including the factors that influence the action, and is related to efforts to obtain items that suit their needs (Toha & Supriyanto, 2023). Consumer behavior is an activity directed directly at obtaining, consuming and using products and services. This activity includes the processes of obtaining, consuming, and making decisions before and after using products and services (Elov, Kholboyeva, & Pirmamatova, 2024). Consumer behaviour greatly impacts company strategy and often defines the market success of goods and brands. Companies need to know customers' preferences, opinions, and attitudes to develop an efficient marketing strategy and enhance customer satisfaction. However, consumer behaviour may vary from country to country and even from region to region. For instance, people's attitudes toward some products in southern Punjab, Pakistan, are influenced by culture, economy, and society, and companies should research to learn more about this aspect of consumer behaviour in the region.

This study is important for understanding consumer behaviour within southern Punjab, Pakistan, as this knowledge is lacking. Firms operating in the region can greatly benefit from the insights provided as they include consumer perceptions of product quality, brand image, and business approaches (Ramaswamy & DeClerck, 2018). Consequently, these appearances can facilitate the implementation and performance of marketing

techniques, product development initiatives, and intrapersonal decision-making aspects in a company, allowing it better to satisfy the needs and wants of southern Punjab consumers.

Even though there is research on consumer behaviour in Pakistan, specific research on the women of southern Punjab is still lacking. This research is aimed at reducing this gap by going over the consumer views and attitudes in this region, thus providing valuable information for the firms operating there. Besides, in the past, researchers might have been more focused on urban regions or nationwide samples which were not representative of customers' unique features and preferences in southern Punjab.

The study aims to accomplish the following research objectives:

1. To explore the consumer perceptions of the essential human needs and the main consumption patterns.
2. The goal is to analyze the consumer views on Unilever products' quality and their brand image.
3. The main purpose is to examine the consumer view on corporate strategy, especially the consumer level of participation in the decision-making and the effect of social responsibility activities on the market share.

This research will provide brief strategic advice to companies operating in southern Punjab using the information that has been gathered.

The main goal of the research is to explore the views and opinions of consumers living in the southern part of Punjab, Pakistan. The survey comprises nine Likert-scale questions based on different aspects of consumer behaviour, product perception, and corporate tactics. The data gathering and evaluation process is limited in the cases of the feedback obtained from only 67 consumers who live in southern Punjab.

2. Literature Review

Most of the previous research was focused on the question of how cultural, social, and economic factors were behind the customer's choices and opinions in Pakistan. The studies have also proven that customer participation in the decision-making process and the social responsibility initiatives of the companies have a great impact on the way people perceive the brands and, hence, their market share. Nevertheless, going through recent studies that deal with consumer behaviour in southern Punjab is not easy; hence, further research in this field is necessary.

Waqas, Hamzah, and Salleh (2021) studied the customer experience studies. They stressed the importance of the customers attributing meanings to the way they would experience the situations. This study suggests that the way customers think and evaluate their experiences and the importance they attach to them might greatly affect their behaviour. This data may be a turning point for these companies to predict client decisions and tailor their services to match the needs of their customers.

Ben Youssef, Leicht, Pellicelli, and Kitchen (2018); Cui and Wu (2018), in a very detailed way, analyzed the empirical studies of customer participation in innovation that were increasing day by day. Their collection of the present literature provides a sound outline for future study in this domain. The research emphasizes the importance of customer participation in innovation, which means that the organizations that involve the customers in their innovation processes are the most likely to be the ones that have a competitive advantage.

Gerpott (2022) studied the competition pricing strategies in online markets. They emphasized the role of pricing strategies in the practical aspect. The research shows that organizations that are involved in online markets have to adopt competitive pricing strategies to stay as competitive as possible and also to be in a financial position. Besides, it underlines the fact that companies must be continuously on the lookout and change their pricing policies according to market trends.

The website The Big Marketing. com published a "Unilever Marketing Strategy 2024: A case study " case study in 2024 is a rephrase of the given sentence. This case study studied the successful marketing strategy of Unilever, which was based on trust, transparency, and responsible behaviours. The case study shows that Unilever's success is the result of its commitment to creating trust with the customers, being transparent in its operations and adhering to responsible practices.

The piece "The Strategy Story" (2021) looked at the way Unilever's marketing strategy was a combination of global strategies and local community engagement. Thus, consumers who are attracted to well-known brands can get Unilever products. Through this method, Unilever can make use of its worldwide network and, at the same time, be able to deal with the local market's needs and demands that are different from each other.

These studies, of course, give the exact knowledge of the corporate strategy, such as customer experience, customer participation in innovation, competitive pricing and effective marketing methods. The text contains ideas on the importance of understanding the client's perceptions, the customer's involvement in innovation, competitive pricing methods, and successful marketing techniques that can be used to achieve the company's success. Through these observations, the possible application of the implications will be revealed and will also be the direction for future investigations in these fields.

2.1 Unilever's 4Ps of Marketing

Unilever's worldwide advertising strategy is designed to be flexible to local habits and also to the conditions of product distribution. The company's marketing mix is a combination of different techniques aimed at capturing and engaging the target audience. Indeed, Unilever, a major player in the retail sector, is not the only company which has the same difficulties as the other companies around the world.

2.2.1. Products (Product Mix)

The change of Unilever into a consumer goods manufacturer has resulted in the creation of a broad-gathering of over 400 brands. The company provides different types of goods and services in its product range, including Refreshing Foods (for example, drinks and ice cream), Home Care, and Personal Care.

Unilever's food portfolio is composed of internationally famous mustards, and panini spreads and Knorr stock and sauces. Besides, the company has a multitude of frozen treats, including Heart ice cream and Brock Bond tea. Unilever produces household cleaning products like surf laundry detergent, sun dishwasher detergent, and personal care items such as close-up mouthwash, Ritz lotions, and Dove soap and shampoo. The large variety of goods that Unilever offers indicates that its marketing strategy is very diversified and has spread to many subcategories through mergers and acquisitions.

2.2.2. Prices

To be specific, Unilever has a vast array of products and uses competitive pricing strategies that are made for different market segments. Market conditions are the factors that affect price decisions, target customer groups and product locations. Unilever uses diverse pricing strategies, which encompass the strategies of command pricing, premium pricing for exclusive segments, and batch product pricing, which have been discussed.

The market-driven pricing strategies are the ones which are based on the changes in prices in reaction to the competitive dynamics, whereas the premium pricing is the one which makes the customers buy the product because of the perception of quality and prestige, which are the brands of the product like Dove. Besides, Unilever occasionally bundles its products and thus offers them to customers at a lower price. Hence, the value proposition is improved, and consequently, the sales are increased. The pricing methods of the company go along with its huge variety of products and the needs of its prospective customers. Thus, it can be competitive and profitable in the market.

2.2.3.Place

The large number of Unilever products indicates that it is the best in the consumer products industry. This is the component of marketing that specifies the physical places where customers can get the company's products. Unilever products are provided through various channels, such as major merchants, kiosks, department stores, and online platforms. Walmart is one of the big retail companies, and it is important in the selling of Unilever products. Besides, the contracts that Unilever has with brands, such as Ben & Jerry's, have helped to increase its market territory. The strategy of Unilever in creating new and better products and extending its reach is closely related to its marketing plan. Thus, consumers can easily get their products.

2.2.4.Promotion

In the exceedingly competitive electronics market, Unilever employs active promotional methods to advertise its products to the targeted consumers properly. The promotional mix is a combination of many advertising methods, such as Primary Advertising, Advertising Campaigns, Public Relations Initiatives, and Direct Marketing.

Unilever basically uses television and internet advertising to promote its products. The corporation uses promotional sales techniques such as discounts and bundled merchandise to motivate customers to buy. Besides, Unilever makes use of collaborations and events to increase brand awareness and inspire participation. Even though Unilever uses many promotional methods, advertising is still the basic part of changing consumers' opinions and getting them to buy its products.

3. Data and Methodology

3.1. The Structure of the Survey Questionnaire

The survey was built on nine questions that were meant to get the opinions of 67 consumers. Each question was used to evaluate consumer perceptions and opinions on consumer behaviours, business strategies, and product perceptions. The responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree. "

Table 1
Theme and Questionnaire

Theme			Questions
Consumer Preferences	Behavior	and	We all consume different types of items Eating and living life are the primary needs of human beings. Customers must be part of the decision-making process.
Product Quality	Perception	and	It is fair to say that Unilever's products are outstanding. Dalda is a product of Unilever that is used in almost every home. Lipton tea bag is the best example because it covers the share of offices.
Business Success	Strategies	and	Consumer's needs must be fulfilled to achieve success. Unilever shares can be increased by giving good quality products at fair prices. They can also increase market share through social work and environment-saving activities.

The purpose of the survey was to collect valuable information about consumers' views, preferences, and attitudes concerning consumption products, business plans, and corporate social responsibility. Let us elaborate on each theme and discuss the nine questions included in the questionnaire under these overarching categories: Let us elaborate on each theme and discuss the nine questions included in the questionnaire under these overarching categories:

3.1.1 Consumer Behavior and Preferences

This theme will include themes on consumer habits, needs and participation in the decision-making processes. We all consume different types of items: This question of consumer consumption habits presents the different aspects of products and services that

the consumers engage with, thereby showing the interest in the diversity of the items consumed.

Eating and living life are the primary needs of human beings: The given topic probes the essential human needs that lie in the sustenance and basic living that are at the heart of consumer behaviour.

Customers must be part of the decision-making process: This question shows the necessity of consumer participation in the process of business decisions and the consumer-centric approach to product development and strategy, which are the main reasons why consumers should be involved in business decisions.

3.1.2 Product Perception and Quality:

It is all about consumers' view of the specific products, the quality, and the fit for different specifics. It is fair to say that Unilever products are outstanding: In this case, respondents are asked to evaluate the quality and excellence of Unilever products, meaning that the aim is to know how the customers perceive a specific brand's products.

Dalda is the product of Unilever and can be found in every home. The question, hence, concentrates on product penetration and usage patterns to get a better understanding of the consumers' awareness and preferences for a particular product.

Lipton tea bag is the best example because it covers the share of offices: It delves into the public's opinion of a particular product's appropriateness for certain market segments, thus revealing the way the consumers perceive the products in the specific contexts of usage.

3.1.3 Business Strategies and Success:

This theme concerns the strategies for business success that can be applied in this field, including meeting consumer needs, increasing market share, and social responsibility initiatives. Consumer needs must be fulfilled to achieve success: The statement underscores the vitality of the consumer's demand for business success and stresses the consumer-oriented approach to meeting those demands to achieve the organization's objectives. Unilever shares can be increased by providing good quality products at fair prices: This question deals with the ways of boosting market share, being about the part of product quality and pricing that leads to the choice of the customer and the loyalty to the brand. Besides, they can also raise the market share through social activities and environment-friendly projects. The article examines the possible consequences of corporate social responsibility initiatives on market share and consumer perceptions, which shows the general extension of business practices related to sustainability.

The thematic divisions of the questions make it easier to see the general themes that are being dealt with in the questionnaire and the specific aspects of consumer behaviour, product perception and business strategy that are being covered by each of the questions in the categories.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to examine the distribution of the responses and to reveal consumer perception and the attitudes of consumers towards the various aspects of consumer behaviour, product perception, and business strategies.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the distribution of responses across the Likert scale, the findings of the survey questions under the three themes provided are interpreted below.

4.1 Consumer Behavior and Preferences

This theme focuses on understanding consumer habits, needs, and their involvement in decision-making processes.

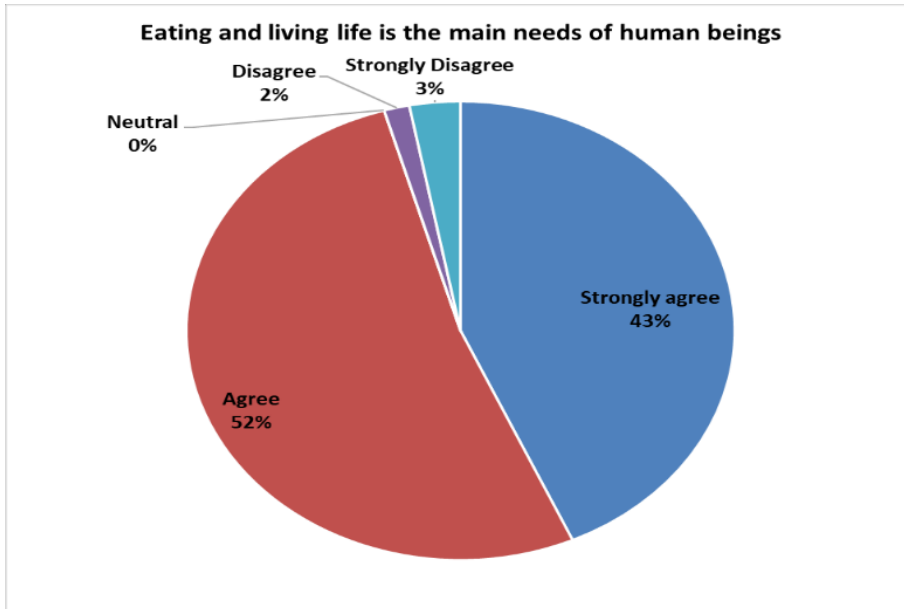


Figure 1: Eating and Living Life

Eating and living life are the primary needs of human beings: The majority of respondents (95.5%) either strongly agree or agree with this statement, indicating a consensus on the fundamental importance of sustenance and basic living needs.

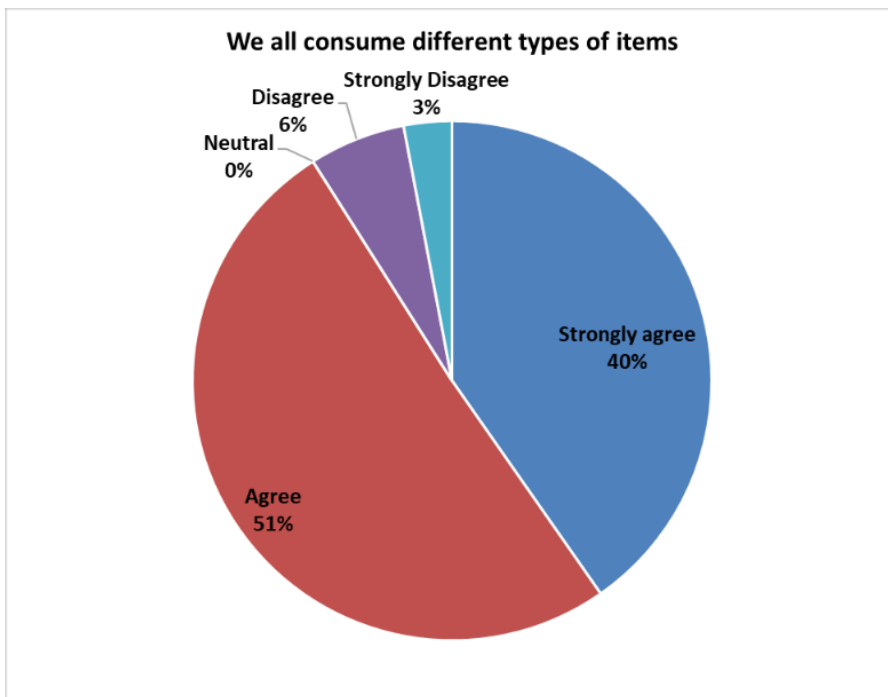


Figure 2: Cosume Different Types of Items

We all consume different types of items: Similarly, a significant majority (90.3%) either strongly agree or agree that consumers engage with various products, highlighting the diversity in consumer consumption habits.

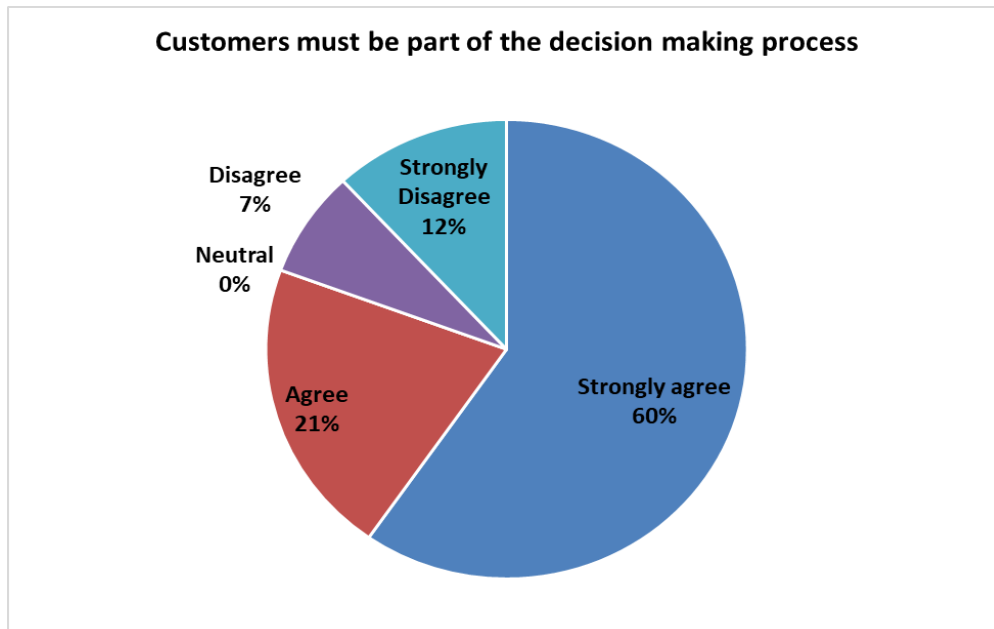


Figure 3: Consume Part of Decision-Making Process

Customers must be part of the decision-making process: Most respondents (80.6%) strongly agree that customers should be involved in decision-making processes, suggesting a preference for consumer empowerment and participation in shaping business strategies.

4.2. Product Perception and Quality

This theme explores consumers' perceptions of product quality, brand excellence, and suitability for different contexts.



Figure 4: Unilever Products Outstanding

It is fair to say that Unilever products are outstanding: Responses to this question are varied, with 46.2% either neutral, disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing with the statement, indicating mixed perceptions of Unilever products' excellence.

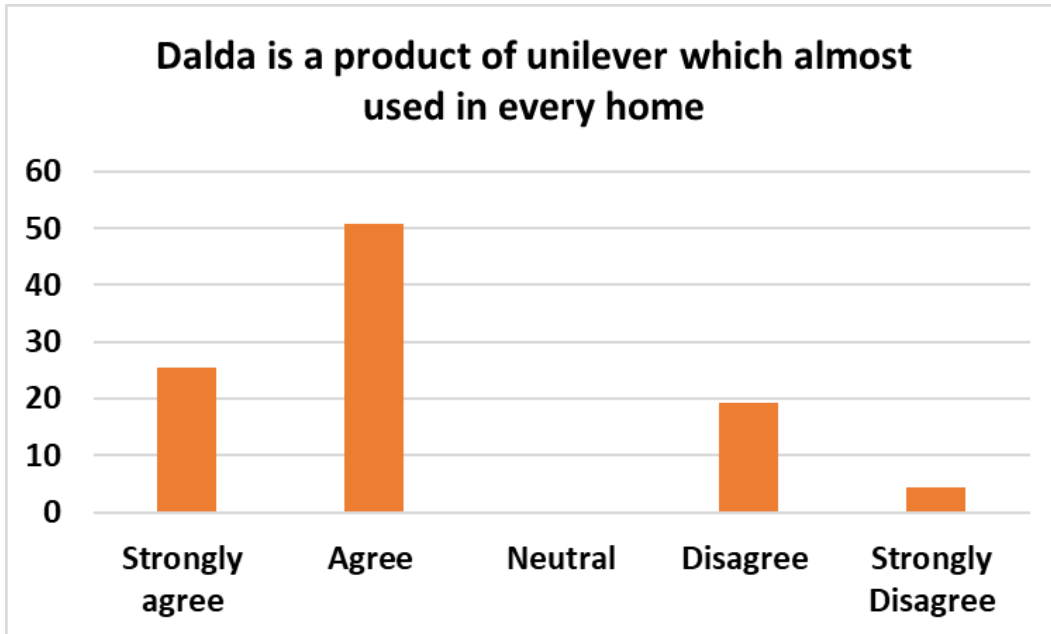


Figure 5: Dalda Products Used in Home

Dalda is a product of Unilever, which is almost used in every home: While half of the respondents (76.1%) agree or strongly agree with this statement, a notable portion (23.9%) either disagree or are neutral, suggesting varying awareness and usage patterns of Dalda among consumers.

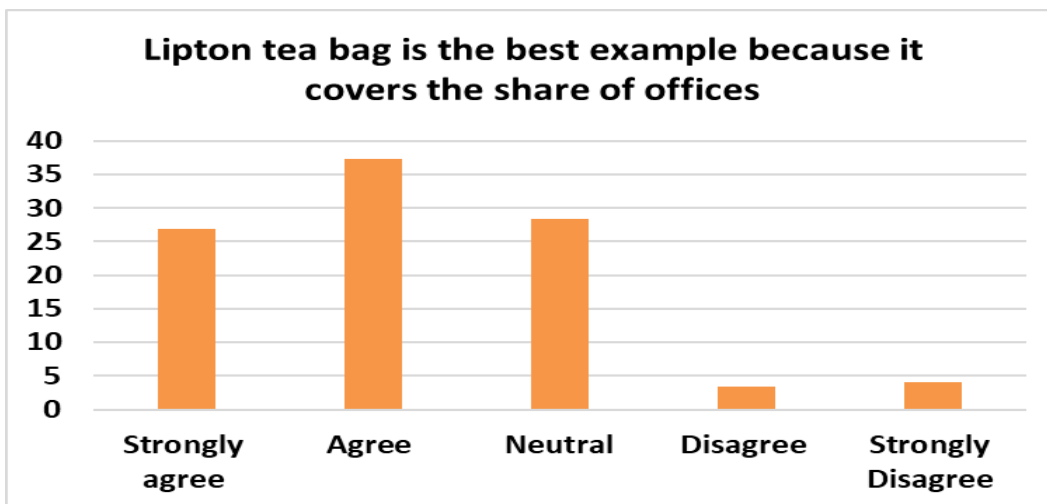


Figure 6: Lipton Tea Share

Lipton tea bag is the best example because it covers the share of offices: Responses to this question are also mixed, with 64.2% either neutral, disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing with the statement, indicating differing views on the suitability of Lipton tea bags for office settings.

4.3. Business Strategies and Success

This theme focuses on strategies for business success, including meeting consumer needs, enhancing market share, and engaging in social responsibility initiatives.

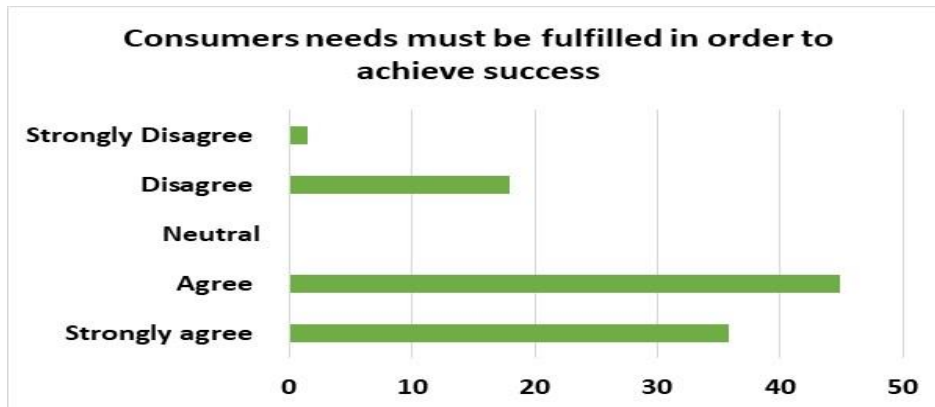


Figure 7: Consumer Needs

Consumer's need must be fulfilled to achieve success: While a significant majority (80.6%) agree or strongly agree with this statement, a notable portion (19.4%) either disagree or are neutral, suggesting differing perspectives on the relationship between consumer satisfaction and business success.

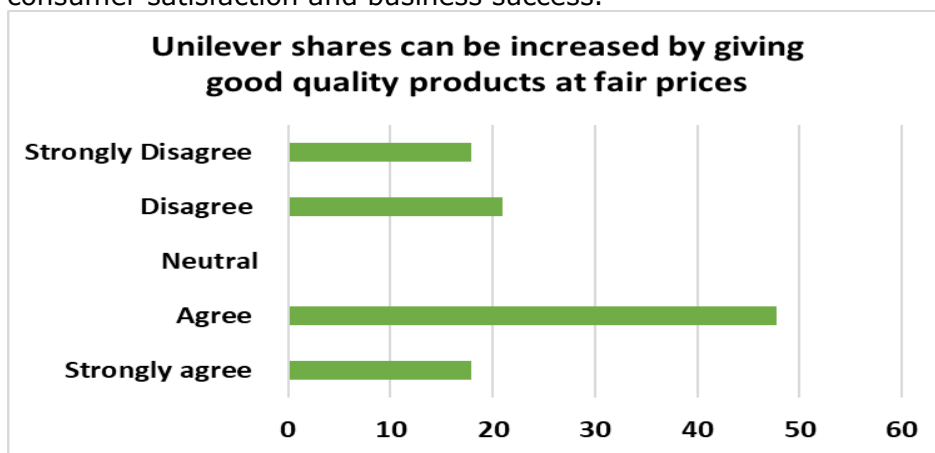


Figure 8: Unilever Share

Unilever shares can be increased by giving good quality products at fair prices: Responses to this question are varied, with 65.7% either neutral, disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing with the statement, indicating mixed views on the effectiveness of this strategy in increasing Unilever's market share.

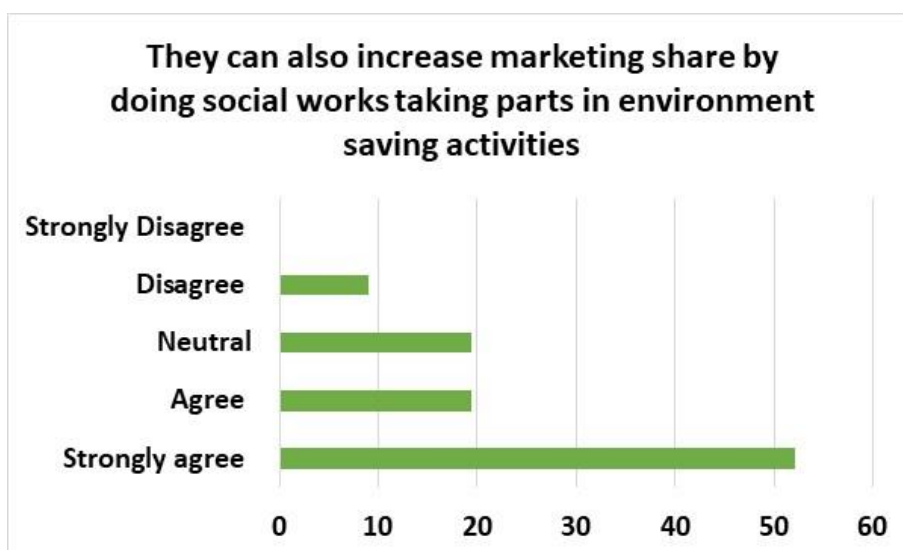


Figure 9: Market Shaer by Doing Social Works

They can also increase market share through social work and environment-saving activities. A significant majority (71.6%) agree or strongly agree with this statement, suggesting a consensus on the potential impact of corporate social responsibility initiatives on increasing market share.

These interpretations provide insights into consumer perceptions and attitudes across different themes, highlighting areas of consensus and points of divergence among respondents.

4.4. Discussion

The survey results show that most respondents agree or strongly agree that "Eating and living life is the main needs of human beings" and "We all consume different types of items". This aligns with the findings of Waqas et al. (2021), emphasizing the role of customer experiences and their interpretations in defining their behaviours. The high agreement with the statement "Customers must be part of the decision-making process" supports Cui and Wu (2018) findings on the importance of customer involvement in innovation. The responses to "Unilever shares can be increased by giving good quality products at fair prices" reflect Theodorakis and Painesis (2022) discussion on the importance of competitive pricing strategies.

The mixed responses to "It is fair to say that Unilever products are outstanding" and the positive responses to "Dalda is a product of Unilever which is almost used in every home" and "Lipton tea bag is the best example because it covers the share of offices" could be seen as reflections of Unilever's marketing strategies discussed in the (The Strategy Story, 2021; TheBigMarketing.com., 2024) sources. The strong agreement with "They can also increase marketing share by doing social works taking part in environment saving activities" aligns with Unilever's emphasis on trust, transparency, and responsible practices.

In conclusion, the survey results provide empirical support for the themes discussed in the cited literature, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing customer needs, involving customers in decision-making processes, adopting competitive pricing strategies, and implementing effective marketing strategies.

5. Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into consumer perceptions and attitudes in southern Punjab, Pakistan. The findings reveal diverse opinions among respondents regarding fundamental human needs, consumer involvement in decision-making, product quality, and the effectiveness of business strategies. While there is consensus on specific aspects, such as the importance of consumer satisfaction for business success, there are also notable differences in perceptions of specific brands and products. These insights can inform marketing strategies, product development initiatives, and corporate decision-making processes for businesses operating in southern Punjab.

Based on the findings of the study, businesses operating in southern Punjab, Pakistan, are recommended to:

1. Tailor marketing strategies to align with consumer preferences and perceptions in the region.
2. Enhance product quality and brand perception through targeted initiatives and communication strategies.
3. Involve consumers in decision-making processes to foster a sense of ownership and loyalty.
4. Engage in social responsibility initiatives to enhance brand reputation and increase regional market share.

Authors Contribution

Amish Asim: Contributed to the conceptualization, data sorting, editing, referencing, analysis and write up of the paper.

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest w.r.t the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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