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CSR and Consumer Demographics: Understanding Brand Equity Formation in FMCG companies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in shaping brand equity, with a specific focus on demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and occupation. Using survey-based analysis of FMCG consumers, the research explores how different demographic segments perceive CSR activities and how these perceptions influence trust, loyalty, and overall brand equity. The findings suggest that younger consumers and highly educated respondents are more responsive to CSR initiatives related to sustainability and ethical practices, while older consumers emphasize community welfare and traditional responsibility. Gender differences highlight varying expectations, with female consumers showing stronger alignment with CSR initiatives in health and social welfare, whereas male consumers emphasize economic and employment-related contributions. Occupational status further influences brand equity formation, as professionals value CSR-driven innovation and quality, while non-professionals prioritize affordability and accessibility. The study underscores that CSR effectiveness in enhancing brand equity is contingent upon tailoring initiatives to diverse demographic expectations.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Equity, FMCG Industry, Responsible Branding etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to a company's conscious effort to operate ethically, sustainably, and in alignment with societal expectations. It encompasses a wide range of voluntary initiatives that go beyond legal compliance and profit generation addressing environmental stewardship, social welfare, employee well-being, and ethical governance. The core idea behind CSR is that businesses, as integral members of society, have a responsibility not only to shareholders but also to a broader set of stakeholders including customers, employees, communities, and the planet itself [1].
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a strategic imperative for companies across industries, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector where brand equity plays a decisive role in consumer choice. FMCG companies operate in highly competitive markets, and their ability to differentiate themselves often depends on how effectively they integrate social and environmental responsibility into their business practices. CSR initiatives such as sustainability programs, community development, ethical sourcing, and consumer welfare not only enhance corporate reputation but also contribute to building trust and loyalty among consumers. In this context, CSR is increasingly recognized as a driver of brand equity, influencing consumer perceptions and long-term engagement with brands.
The FMCG industry is unique in that it directly interacts with a wide and diverse consumer base. Consumers evaluate brands not only on product quality and price but also on the company's commitment to social responsibility. However, the impact of CSR on brand equity is not uniform; it varies across demographic segments. Factors such as age, gender, education, and occupation shape consumer expectations and responses to CSR initiatives. Younger consumers, for instance, may be more responsive to sustainability and innovation-driven CSR, while older consumers may value community welfare and traditional responsibility. Gender differences can influence perceptions of inclusivity and social welfare, while education levels affect awareness and appreciation of ethical practices. Occupation further dvaluees how consumers prioritize CSR, with professionals often valuing innovation and quality, while non-professionals emphasize affordability and accessibility [2].
Understanding these demographic variations is crucial for FMCG companies seeking to maximize the impact of CSR on brand equity. A one-size-fits-all approach to CSR may fail to resonate with diverse consumer groups, whereas tailored initiatives aligned with demographic expectations can strengthen brand identity and

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consumer loyalty. By analyzing how different demographic segments perceive CSR, companies can design more effective strategies that not only enhance brand equity but also contribute to sustainable business growth.
This study therefore aims to empirically examine the role of CSR in enhancing brand equity formation in FMCG companies, with a specific focus on demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and occupation. By exploring consumer perceptions across these segments, the research seeks to provide actionable insights into how CSR initiatives can be strategically aligned with demographic diversity.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Isaksson (2025) [1] explored the strategic shift of multinational corporations (MNCs) from philanthropic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices toward a more results-driven approach, emphasizing tangible benefits like improved Corporate Financial Performance (CFP) and intangible gains such as Reputational Capital (RC). The study proposed the concept of a 'sweet spot' where Strategic CSR (SCSR) optimally balances Corporate Social Performance (CSP) with CFP outcomes. By developing a conceptual model, the research addressed Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) engagement as a central element of this ‘sweet spot’ and offered a practical framework to support CSP evaluation and SCSR implementation. Key findings highlighted that MNCs could enhance both financial and reputational outcomes by embedding CSP into their core strategies. The framework provided actionable tools for executives to guide stakeholder engagement and elevate performance. Future research was recommended to empirically test the proposed model and examine its applicability across different industries and global contexts.

Zaborek et al. (2025) [2] evaluated how various dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) specifically social and environmental CSR along with price, influenced consumer purchase decisions in the cosmetics market. The study utilized an experimental design incorporating eight distinct scenarios that manipulated these variables and further assessed the moderating roles of intrinsic and extrinsic consumer motives. The findings demonstrated that both social and environmental CSR had significant positive effects on purchase intentions, with their combined influence being more substantial than their individual impacts. However, higher prices were found to weaken the effect of environmental CSR, while intrinsic motivation positively moderated this relationship, mitigating the adverse influence of price. These insights highlighted the nuanced interplay between ethical practices, pricing strategies, and consumer psychology. Future research was encouraged to apply this model to other consumer goods sectors and test long-term behavioral outcomes to validate and extend the findings.

Kencebay et al. (2025) [3] examined how brand equity mediated the relationship between sustainability practices and omnichannel operations, with the objective of identifying effective retail strategies in a competitive market. The researchers adopted a quantitative approach, utilizing a structured survey administered to 474 adult retail consumers in Turkey and Cyprus. The sample was selected to maintain a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Data was analyzed using ordinary least squares (OLS) path analysis to test the proposed mediation model. The results indicated that sustainability initiatives had both direct and indirect positive effects on omnichannel performance, with brand equity serving as a partial mediator. These findings underscored the significance of brand perception in maximizing the effectiveness of sustainability-driven retail strategies. Future studies were encouraged to explore these relationships in broader geographic contexts or across varying retail formats to deepen the understanding of sustainable branding’s role in omnichannel success.

Ho-dac et al. (2025) [4] investigated how standardized, reusable packaging influenced consumer perception within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, focusing on its implications for brand differentiation. The study was structured around two case studies. The first analyzed 219 tomato products using data collected from three Dutch supermarket websites to examine the drivers of packaging diversity, including packaging type, material, and size. The second employed an online survey to evaluate consumer responses across eight food and non-food brands, assessing perceived quality (PQ), willingness to buy (WTB), and brand perception. The findings revealed that while standardized reusable packaging had minimal impact on perceived quality, it held potential to encourage broader adoption by brands. However, willingness to buy varied—declining for food products but increasing for non-food items—highlighting category-specific consumer sensitivities. The study suggested that future research could further explore how reusable packaging strategies affect brand perception across different market segments and product types.

Swati et al. (2025) [5] investigated how corporate social responsibility (CSR) influences employee-based brand equity (EBBE), with a focus on the mediating role of psychological ownership and the moderating effect of internal brand knowledge. Using SmartPLS for structural equation modeling, the study assessed the strength of relationships among CSR, psychological ownership, and EBBE. The analysis revealed that CSR had a direct positive impact on both psychological ownership and EBBE, and that psychological ownership partially mediated the relationship between CSR and EBBE. These findings suggested that employees who perceive their organization's CSR efforts positively are more likely to develop a sense of ownership, which in turn enhances their contribution to brand equity. The study concluded that cultivating psychological ownership through CSR initiatives can effectively strengthen EBBE and recommended that future research explore additional internal psychological or cultural mechanisms that may further explain these dynamics across different organizational contexts.

Doyle et al. (2024) [6] compared the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in enhancing brand image within the Indonesian and Kazakhstani markets, particularly in sectors with high consumer visibility. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, conducting surveys with consumers alongside interviews with CSR managers to gather comprehensive insights. The study identified that specific CSR activities resonated differently across the two markets, influenced by distinct cultural values and consumer expectations. Results indicated that culturally tailored CSR initiatives significantly improved brand perception in both contexts. Based on these findings, the authors suggested that companies should customize their CSR strategies to align with local cultural norms and recommended that future research explore how these tailored approaches perform across other international markets.

Singh et al. (2024) [7] investigated the effects of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Service Quality (SQ) on Customer Loyalty (CL) within the Indian telecommunications sector, with a particular focus on the mediating roles of Customer Satisfaction (CS) and Trust (Tr). The study employed a structured questionnaire to gather data from 377 respondents, which was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), along with Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) to assess moderating effects based on gender, age, education, and income. Findings revealed that while CSR did not directly influence customer loyalty, it had an indirect impact when mediated by CS and Tr. In contrast, service quality showed both a direct and mediated influence on loyalty through CS. MGA results indicated that male respondents exhibited stronger commitment toward loyalty when customer satisfaction and trust were high. The study suggested that future research could further explore these relationships across different service industries and demographic segments to enhance the strategic use of CSR and service quality in fostering customer loyalty.

Adhikari et al. (2024) [8] examined the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on brand loyalty among fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) consumers in the Kathmandu Valley, addressing a notable gap in the literature. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design and collected data through structured questionnaires administered to FMCG consumers. Grounded in Carroll's CSR Pyramid and the Triple Bottom Line Theory, the analysis utilized mediation techniques to assess the roles of brand trust and perceived quality in the CSR–brand loyalty relationship. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between CSR initiatives and brand loyalty, with brand trust emerging as a key mediating variable. However, perceived quality did not demonstrate any direct or indirect effect on brand loyalty. These insights underscored the importance of CSR in cultivating consumer loyalty within Nepal's FMCG sector and suggested that future research could further investigate the role of other psychological or cultural variables in this relationship.

Chauhan (2024) [9] examined the strategic role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in strengthening brand equity, using Tata Group as a case study to illustrate real-world applications. The study positioned CSR as an ethical obligation for corporations to address social and environmental challenges arising from their operations. Through a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods, the research investigated how CSR initiatives—particularly in education, healthcare, rural development, and environmental sustainability—contributed to brand differentiation, customer loyalty, employee engagement, and overall market positioning. The findings demonstrated that Tata Group successfully leveraged CSR to build a brand image rooted in trust, integrity, and social commitment. Empirical analysis validated CSR as a powerful tool for brand enhancement, highlighting its potential to drive sustainable growth. The study

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concluded by encouraging companies to view CSR as a long-term strategic priority and recommended further research to explore its broader impact across industries and geographies.

Srivastava (2024) [10] explored the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on brand reputation and consumer behavior, with particular emphasis on sustainable marketing practices. The study investigated how CSR efforts—such as community engagement, ethical labor practices, and environmental responsibility—shaped public perception, trust, and customer loyalty. Using a mixed-method approach based on case studies and consumer surveys, the research found that companies actively involved in CSR experienced significant gains in reputation and long-term consumer commitment. The findings highlighted that modern consumers increasingly favored brands aligned with their personal values, particularly regarding sustainability. The study concluded that embedding CSR at the core of business strategy could help firms enhance brand image, foster customer loyalty, and gain a competitive edge. Future research was encouraged to examine the long-term impact of sector-specific CSR strategies and explore how authenticity in CSR communication affects consumer trust across diverse markets.

A. Research Gap

Although extensive literature exists on the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in shaping consumer perceptions and enhancing brand equity, most studies have focused on CSR as a generalized construct, without adequately considering the influence of demographic diversity. Prior research has largely examined CSR's impact on brand reputation, consumer trust, and loyalty in broad terms, but there is limited empirical evidence on how age, gender, education, and occupation specifically mediate consumer responses to CSR initiatives in the FMCG sector. Furthermore, existing studies often emphasize multinational corporations or global markets, leaving a gap in understanding how CSR strategies resonate with Indian consumers in the FMCG industry, where cultural and demographic heterogeneity is pronounced.

Another gap lies in the comparative analysis of demographic segments—for instance, younger versus older consumers, male versus female perceptions, or professional versus non-professional occupational groups. While some studies acknowledge demographic differences, they rarely provide a systematic framework to analyze how these factors influence brand equity formation. Additionally, most of the research has concentrated on CSR's external communication and image-building aspects, with insufficient attention to how consumer demographics shape the depth of engagement and long-term loyalty.

This study addresses these gaps by conducting a demographic-focused analysis of CSR's role in brand equity formation within FMCG companies. By integrating age, gender, education, and occupation into the research framework, it provides a nuanced understanding of how CSR initiatives can be strategically tailored to diverse consumer groups, thereby offering both theoretical advancement and practical insights for the FMCG industry.

3. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ENHANCING BRAND EQUITY OF COMPANIES IN FMCG INDUSTRY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a strategic role in enhancing brand equity within the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry [11].

1. Building Trust and Emotional Connection

- CSR initiatives like sustainable sourcing, community development, and health campaigns foster goodwill.

- Consumers perceive socially responsible brands as ethical, caring, and reliable, which strengthens emotional bonds.

2. Differentiation in a Crowded Market

- FMCG is highly competitive. CSR helps brands stand out by aligning with values like environmental sustainability, gender equality, or rural empowerment.

- Example: Hindustan Unilever's Project Shakti empowers rural women entrepreneurs, enhancing both social impact and brand visibility.

3. Improved Consumer Loyalty

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- Studies show that consumers are more likely to stay loyal to brands that reflect their values.
- CSR acts as a soft influencer not just selling products but selling purpose.

4. Positive Word-of-Mouth and Reputation

- CSR stories are shareable. Campaigns like Dove's Self-Esteem Project or ITC's e-Choupal generate buzz and reinforce brand image [12].
- This leads to earned media and organic brand promotion.

5. Attracting Conscious Consumers

- Millennials and Gen Z are value-driven buyers. CSR helps FMCG brands tap into this segment.
- Brands like Patanjali and Emami leverage Ayurveda and eco-consciousness to appeal to health and sustainability-focused consumers.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the backbone of any systematic investigation, providing a structured and logical plan for exploring questions and testing hypotheses. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from being a mere philanthropic gesture to a strategic tool that shapes the public perception and market positioning of companies. In the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry where brand loyalty and consumer trust are paramount CSR plays a pivotal role in cultivating a favorable brand image. The scope of this study encompasses a comprehensive examination of how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives impact brand equity within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector.

A. Research Objective

The objective of this study is to investigate how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives contribute to the formation and enhancement of brand equity in FMCG companies, with particular emphasis on the moderating role of consumer demographics such as age, gender, education, and occupation. The research aims to analyze variations in consumer perceptions and responses to CSR practices across these demographic segments, assessing how differences in awareness, expectations, and values influence trust, loyalty, and brand preference.

B. Research Design: Descriptive

Descriptive Research Design focuses on outlining and portraying the current state of CSR practices and brand equity perceptions among consumers. It aims to gather factual data without testing causality, using tools like surveys, interviews, and observation. This design helps in identifying what CSR initiatives FMCG companies are implementing and how various demographics interpret their impact on brand reputation [12].

C. Population

Consumers of FMCG products across urban and semi-urban regions of Haryana, who are exposed to CSR initiatives and whose perceptions influence brand equity. This sample area selection focuses on five key districts in Haryana—Gurugram, Faridabad, Panipat, Karnal, and Sonepat—each representing a significant node in the state's FMCG ecosystem. Gurugram and Faridabad, with the highest estimated FMCG units, were chosen for their robust corporate infrastructure and diverse branded product portfolios.

D. Regional Focus: Haryana

Haryana is a strategically significant choice for studying the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in enhancing brand equity within the FMCG industry due to its unique blend of industrial development, consumer diversity, and active CSR engagement. As a rapidly industrializing state with strong FMCG penetration in both urban centers like Gurugram and Faridabad and semi-urban hubs such as Panipat, Karnal, and Hisar, Haryana offers a representative cross-section of consumer behavior and brand dynamics.

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E. Sample Size

The sample size required for this study was concentrated with 500 respondents who are involved in CSR activities.

F. Sampling Technique

The sampling technique employed in this study is a purposive stratified approach, targeting districts with significant FMCG activity to ensure sectoral relevance and analytical depth.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a strategic tool for businesses across industries, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. With increasing consumer awareness and heightened expectations from stakeholders, companies are no longer evaluated solely on the basis of product quality and pricing. Instead, their commitment to social, environmental, and ethical responsibilities plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions. In the FMCG industry, where competition is intense and brand differentiation is vital, CSR initiatives serve as a powerful mechanism to build trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships with consumers.

Age Factor

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics based on Age Factor

Age	Frequency	Percent
21-30 Y	105	21.0
31-40 Y	168	33.6
41-50 Y	126	25.2
51-60 Y	101	20.2
Total	500	100.0

(Source: Primary Data)

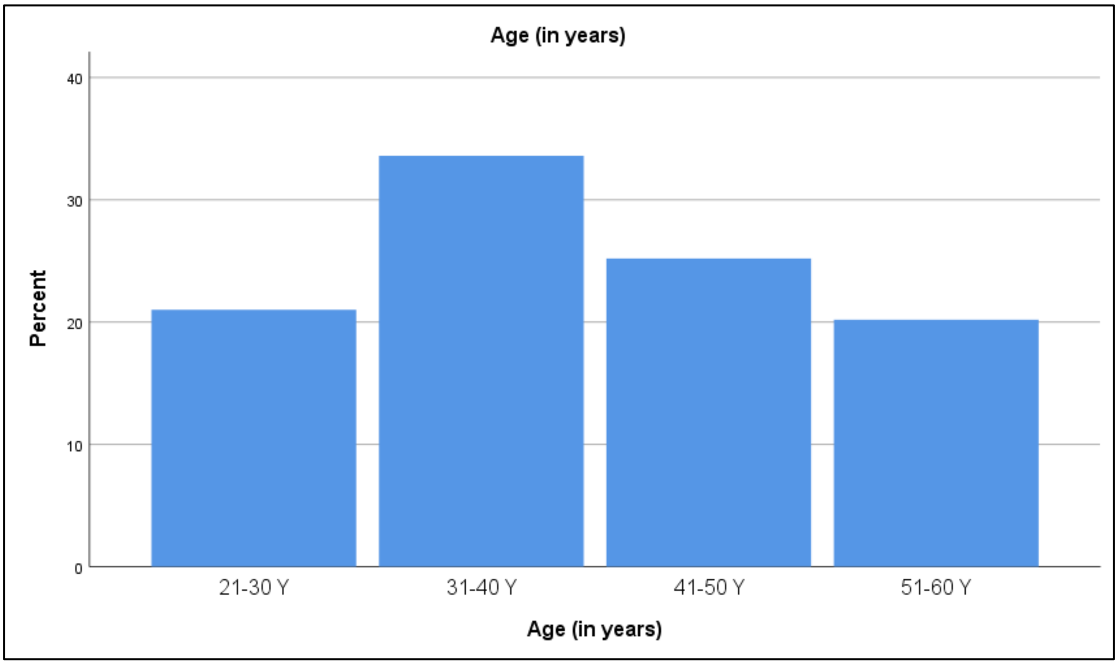

Fig 1: Descriptive Statistics based on Age Factor

Table 1 and fig 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to their age groups. Out of the total 500 participants, the largest proportion belonged to the 31–40 years category, with 168 respondents (33.6 percent). This was followed by the 41–50 years group, comprising 126 respondents (25.2 percent). The 21–30 years group accounted for 105 respondents (21.0 percent), while the 51–60 years group represented 101 respondents

(20.2 percent).
The data indicates that most respondents were in the middle age brackets (31–50 years), which together accounted for nearly 59 percent of the sample. This suggests that individuals in these age groups are more actively engaged in evaluating or responding to issues related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and brand equity in the FMCG industry. The presence of younger respondents (21–30 years) highlights the perspectives of emerging consumers, while the inclusion of older respondents (51–60 years) ensures representation of more experienced consumer segments. Overall, the age distribution reflects a balanced sample, with significant representation across all age categories.

Gender Factor

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics based on Gender Factor

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	200	40.0
Male	300	60.0
Total	500	100.0

(Source: Primary Data)

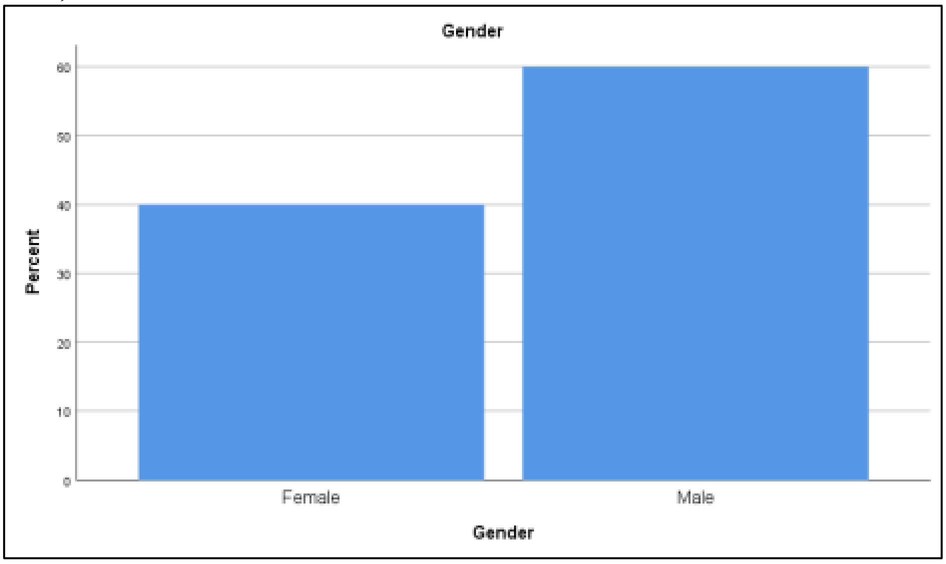

Fig 2: Descriptive Statistics based on Gender Factor

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents according to gender. Out of the total 500 participants, 300 respondents (60.0 percent) were male, while 200 respondents (40.0 percent) were female. This indicates that male respondents formed the majority of the sample, accounting for more than half of the total population surveyed.
The data suggests that perspectives on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and brand equity in the FMCG industry were captured from a gender-diverse sample, though with a higher representation of males. The inclusion of both male and female respondents ensures that the analysis reflects varied consumer insights, which is important in understanding how CSR initiatives influence brand equity across different demographic segments.

Education Factor

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics based on Education Factor

Education	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	114	22.8
Graduate	204	40.8
Others	19	3.8
Post Graduate	163	32.6
Total	500	100.0

(Source: Primary Data)

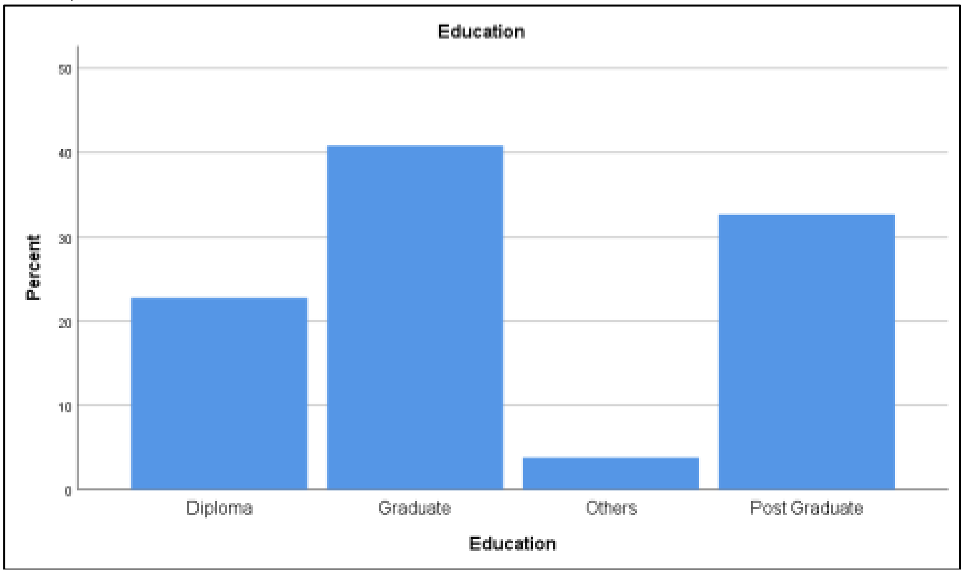

Fig 3: Descriptive Statistics based on Education Factor

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents according to their educational qualifications. Out of the total 500 participants, the largest proportion were graduates, with 204 respondents (40.8 percent). This was followed by postgraduates, comprising 163 respondents (32.6 percent). Diploma holders accounted for 114 respondents (22.8 percent), while a small group of 19 respondents (3.8 percent) reported belonging to the "others" category, which may include professional certifications or alternative educational backgrounds.
The data indicates that the majority of respondents had attained either graduate or postgraduate qualifications, together representing more than 73 percent of the sample. This suggests that the study primarily reflects the perspectives of relatively well-educated individuals, who are likely to be more aware of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and their impact on brand equity in the FMCG industry. The presence of diploma holders and respondents from other educational categories adds diversity to the sample, ensuring that insights are not limited to highly educated groups alone.

Occupation Factor

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics based on Occupation Factor

Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Consumer	176	35.2
Manufacturer	154	30.8
Others	22	4.4
Retailer	148	29.6
Total	500	100.0

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 4.5 presents the distribution of respondents according to their occupation. Out of the total 500 participants, the largest group comprised consumers, with 176 respondents (35.2 percent). This was followed by manufacturers, accounting for 154 respondents (30.8 percent), and retailers, with 148 respondents (29.6 percent). A smaller proportion of 22 respondents (4.4 percent) fell into the "others" category, which may include professionals or occupations not directly linked to the FMCG value chain.

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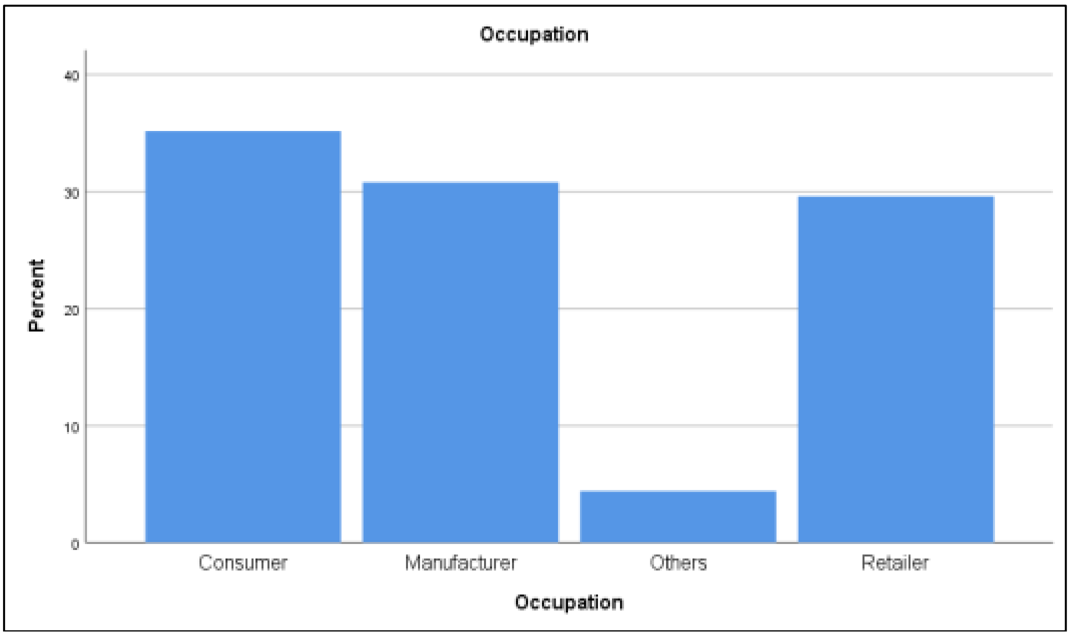

Fig 4: Descriptive Statistics based on Occupation Factor

The data indicates that the sample was well-balanced across key stakeholders in the FMCG industry, namely consumers, manufacturers, and retailers. Consumers formed the largest segment, reflecting the importance of capturing end-user perceptions regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR) and brand equity. Manufacturers and retailers also represented significant portions of the sample, ensuring that insights were gathered from those directly involved in production and distribution processes. The inclusion of respondents in the “others” category added diversity, though their representation was relatively small.

6. CONCLUSION

The research concludes that CSR plays a significant role in enhancing brand equity in FMCG companies, but its impact is not uniform across consumer demographics. Age, gender, education, and occupation shape distinct perceptions of CSR initiatives, influencing consumer trust, loyalty, and brand preference. FMCG firms that align their CSR strategies with demographic expectations are more successful in building strong brand equity, while generic or misaligned initiatives fail to resonate with diverse consumer groups. Thus, CSR must be viewed not only as a corporate obligation but also as a strategic tool for brand differentiation and consumer engagement.

7. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Future research and managerial practice should focus on developing demographically sensitive CSR frameworks that address the heterogeneous expectations of FMCG consumers. Companies can leverage consumer analytics to design CSR programs that resonate with specific age groups, gender perspectives, educational backgrounds, and occupational needs.

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